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Golden Mountains:

Pike's Peak, Western Capitalism, and the Making of the Colorado State: 1858-1876

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History Honors Thesis Project

6 April 2021

Acknowledgements

The completion and final product of this thesis could not have been achieved without the help and support of many dedicated individuals. I would first like to give my greatest thanks to my thesis advisor Professor Danae Jacobson, who provided endless feedback and advice throughout the entire research process. I would also like to thank Professor Rob Weisbrot for reading a completed draft of the paper and providing excellent insight holistically. Professor Arnout van der Meer and fellow thesis student Heather Jahrling were also very helpful in sharing ideas and tips throughout the process. I would also like to give sincere thanks to my history major advisor Professor Larissa Taylor, who first convinced me to write a thesis and instilled in me the highest confidence in my scholarly work. Lastly, I would like to thank the history department as a whole for retaining the excitement and wonder of the discipline, and friends and family for their continued support.

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Introduction: 19th Century Imperial Capitalism

(i) The People of the Centre

William Gilpin was born in 1815 in southeastern Pennsylvania. His family had come to America from England in the late 17th century. They established a large farm along the Susquehanna River in Southeastern Pennsylvania, exporting mainly wheat, tobacco, and corn to English markets. From this foundation the Gilpins diversified into many different business ventures, establishing a marketing village in Maryland called Gilpinton, setting up a dam and mills along the Brandywine river, and manufacturing paper.¹ William had a fairly prosperous childhood. His father sent him to a boarding school in England, then he studied at the University of Pennsylvania, and even examined mathematics and French for a stint at West Point. Throughout his early life, it was apparent to his family that Gilpin had a restless energy, shifting from one task to another with equal parts passion and brevity. He had a fairly turbulent life trajectory, lasting only six months as a student at West Point, then leaving due to disinterest, and partying with his brother Henry at his bachelor house in Philadelphia until he had to leave when Henry was to be married.² Gilpin then wandered West, where he would remain for the majority of his life, working as a farmer, soldier, lawyer, editor, politician, speculator, promoter, writer, speaker, and publicist.³ In each of his occupations, he approached life with the degree of eccentricity that became evident in his grandiose speeches of Westward expansion and incorporation.

Gilpin's characteristic vigor became most useful as he traveled West and entered the environment of the frontier, an area with significantly less institutional rigidity at the time than

¹ Thomas L. Karnes, *William Gilpin: Western Nationalist* (University of Texas Press: 1970), 7.

² Karnes, *William Gilpin*, 22.

³ Karnes, *William Gilpin*, 4.

his Eastern home. For his first exposure to the American West, Gilpin traveled to Oregon with the famous explorer John. C Fremont. He then spent significant time in the region as a soldier fighting in the Mexican American War. It was at this time, in 1847, that Gilpin first toured the Rocky Mountain area. Through this encounter he immediately began prophesying the abundant wealth of resources contained therein.⁴ A well-read man, Gilpin used scientific principles of geology and metallurgy to bolster his claims, which is evident in his later speeches. For these thoughts, many consider him to be America's first geopolitician.⁵ Gilpin helped form the consideration of the American continent in a geopolitical context that is now so widely studied in the works of Frymer, Immerwahr, and Meinig, amongst others.⁶

In 1858, William Green Russell discovered significant traces of gold in Pike's Peak Basin, a location within the area William Gilpin had been speaking of so highly for over a decade. In the frenzied mineral rush that ensued, Gilpin's claims were legitimized, and he ascended to prominence in the region, as he started to be seen as a Western prophet of prosperity. In the fall of 1858, he was asked to speak before a crowd in Kansas City concerning the outlook of the Rockies that now appeared to be bursting in newfound wealth.

In this speech, Gilpin highlighted the themes of imperialism, capitalism, and the environment that became so prominent within Coloradan development and discourse. Coming

⁴ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (University Press of Kansas, 1998), 237.

⁵ Karnes, *William Gilpin*, 3. This sentiment was first put forth by Bernard de Voto in "Geopolitics with the Dew on It," published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1944.

⁶ Paul Frymer, *Building an American Empire: the Era of Territorial and Political Expansion*. Princeton University Press, 2017.

Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an American Empire: a History of the Greater United States*. Princeton University Press, 2019.

Donald William Meinig, *The Shaping of America: a Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*. Yale University Press, 2010.

from a technical and well-educated background, Gilpin cited geological features as the reasons behind his claim for mineral abundance in Colorado. He began describing

how the surface of our continent arranges itself into basins and mountain chains, and thus classifies its undulations: the laws of Geology, which penetrate beneath the surface and explain the earths, the rocks, the metals as they appear upon the surface or descend beneath the exterior crust of the globe: the laws of Meteorology, as they explain the alternations of the atmosphere, controlling the varieties of climate and of vegetation.⁷

While forming grand visions of a Western empire, Gilpin grounded himself in the physical nature of the Colorado range, and appealed to this as a foundation for future prosperity. Like Gilpin, many Easterners seemed to bear a certain fascination with the environment and landscape of the Colorado Rockies and larger West. Incomers took note of a perceptible difference from Eastern landscapes. While taking place somewhat later, in 1873, Grace Greenwood kept a lively diary of her travel throughout the American West, marveling at the vast expanse of nature: "A perpetual wonder and delight were the vast grain-fields unrolling their mighty expanses of green and gold."⁸ The sentiments expressed by Gilpin using rational and formal scientific inquiry were also fairly common, as a means to make this unfamiliarity with the Western environment more digestible to Eastern audiences.

Much of this analysis went beyond observation, however. As Gilpin progressed in his speech, he incorporated these geographic features with Eastern political aspirations for the region. He noted this "linear" path of conquest in the West through gold and the environment:

All the precious metals in precious stones will also reveal themselves in equal abundance, in this region so propitious to their production. Such a development has nothing in it speculative or theoretical. It comes of necessity in the order of time and as an inevitable sequence in the planting of empire in Texas, in California, in Oregon, in Kansas and in Utah. As these other developments have

⁷ William Gilpin, *Guide to the Kansas gold mines at Pike's Peak, describing the routes, camping places, tools, outfits, etc.: From Notes of Capt. J.W. Gunnison Topographical Engineer. Also, An Address on the New Gold Mines, Delivered at Kansas City, by Colonel William Gilpin* (Cincinnati, OH: E. Mendenhall: 1859), 23.

⁸ Grace Greenwood, *New Life in New Lands: Notes of Travel* (New York: J.B. Ford, 1873), 28.

preceded it in the order of time, and encompass it all round, this now comes to unite, to complete, to consummate the rest, and to give form and power and splendor to the whole.⁹

Here Gilpin draws a clear relation between the natural power of the Western environment, through its endowment of natural resources and vast expanses of land, and its perceived potential within the scope of the American network, as areas of exploitation for Eastern markets. The explicit use of the term "empire" even reveals the imperialistic framework from which the East interacted with the West. Gilpin saw the natural elements of Colorado as its main source of potential, citing its many innate forces that coalesce:

All formations of the globe here come together, mingle with one another, acquire harmony, and arrange themselves side by side in gigantic proportions. Lava, porphyritic granite, sandstone, limestone, the precious and base metals, precious stones, salt, marble, coal, thermal, and medicinal streams, fantastic mountains, called cristones, or abrupt peaks, level mesas of great fertility, canons, delicious valleys, rivers, and great forests; all these, and a thousand other varieties find room, appear in succession, in perfect order, and in perfectly graceful proportions.¹⁰

Eastern observers appreciated these natural features, but only as a means to deriving a future in Colorado that transformed it into a place that could fit into the wider global system of capitalism and industrialization.

Toward the conclusion of his speech, Gilpin solidified this vision, placing the area of Colorado in longitudinal spatial relation to "the great cities of China and of India, of Babylon, Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, Paris, London, in the old continents - upon our continent the Seaboard cities, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore; Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis."¹¹ Gilpin saw the American interior as fitting into this wider system, with its wealth of natural resources contributing to external consumption markets. He finishes his oration by empowering the

⁹ Gilpin, *Guide to the Kansas gold mines at Pike's Peak*, 32.

¹⁰ Gilpin, *Guide to the Kansas gold mines at Pike's Peak*, 35.

¹¹ Gilpin, *Guide to the Kansas gold mines at Pike's Peak*, 38.

audience as agents of Western advancement: "We, then, the people of the centre, are upon the lines of intense and intelligent energy, where civilization has its largest field, its highest developments, its inspired form."¹²

Though these were just one man's thoughts, the lines of William Gilpin embody the sentiment of a whole swath of white Americans as they looked to mobilize and incorporate the West into their sphere of interaction and exchange. Easterners looked to places such as Colorado and identified its unique features of landscape and environment, and most importantly to them, its endowment of natural resources. As aspirations and ideologies developed, these Eastern actors envisioned ways to incorporate the Colorado area into the wider capitalist system of the American economy. Eastern speculators viewed trees, metals, land, and water all as economic units that could in some way attain profits in EuroAmerican markets of demand and consumption. One observer noted shortly after the rush that "A sawmill is much needed here, and would prove a rich speculation to the proprietor. Inferior lumber, ripped out with a whip saw is worth \$25 per hundred feet at present."¹³ New settlers envisioned development in ways that incorporated the West into the Eastern economy, so that Easterners could benefit from Western resources. These extractive visions clashed with the realities of the region, in its physical and spatial composition, as agents of capitalism were incapable of completely subverting the West to Eastern whims.

Petitioned for by the Kansas Governor, miners, and numerous politicians, President Lincoln appointed Gilpin as Colorado's first territorial governor in 1861.¹⁴ Once actually within the position, Gilpin was not especially fit for the role. He liberally issued warrants and

¹² Gilpin, *Guide to the Kansas gold mines at Pike's Peak*, 38.

¹³ Leroy R. Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush: Contemporary Letters and Reports 1858-1859* (Porcupine Press, 1974), 180.

¹⁴ Karnes, *William Gilpin*, 253.

significantly overspent the government budget. As historian Elliott West eloquently puts, "the fallacies of imperial fantasy soon were as clear as Gilpin's ineptitude."¹⁵ He was removed from office within a year. This failure highlighted Gilpin's character, as his eccentricity would always remain a step ahead of his actions. For the rest of his life he stayed in Colorado, preaching grand visions to incorporate the Western region into global markets. One such fantasy included the possibility of a bridge crossing the Bering Strait and connecting the economies of Europe and America via rail.¹⁶ He passed away in 1894 in Denver, Colorado, at the age of 80.

Gilpin's narrative illuminates the discourse on Coloradan development during the latter half of the 19th century. Federal and state officials, along with local and regional speculators and the rushers themselves, looked to Colorado with its wealth of resources and envisioned the various ways it could contribute value to the Eastern capitalist system, or to ways they could derive their own personal wealth for use in that system.¹⁷ Many of these agents overlooked the environmental intricacies of the region in their visions, and these complications became more apparent during actual development. The Pike's Peak Gold Rush that started in 1858 and the Western Gold Rushes throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century were about so much more than gold. The shiny metal was a manifestation of the aspirations Easterners applied to the West, seeing it as a place that could grow and develop for their own economic aspirations.

Gilpin's story more importantly illustrates the limitations of capitalist visions, and the incompatibility of "imperial fantasies" and sober realities. Just as grand economic visions of the

¹⁵ West, *The Contested Plains*, 238

¹⁶ West, *The Contested Plains*, 322.

¹⁷ I will mention here that the focus in this thesis is primarily on Eastern systems and the agents therein as it is imposed into the West. For that reason, I apply most focus to overall systems, as well as rushers and capitalists. I do not deal extensively with Native Americans and their dynamic interactions during this period, though I will reference them occasionally throughout to illustrate the opposition and subversion of capitalism. For a thorough and extensive account of Native American processes amidst this period in Colorado, see Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado*. University Press of Kansas, 1998.

West could not have been solely substantiated by the discovery of gold, Easterners could never make the West into the tributary region they projected it to be. The West was a region and economy in its own right, and it could not be entirely subjugated to ideological systems entering from the exterior. As Eastern agents of industrialism entered the American West, their failures as much as their successes highlight the unique nature of the Western environment with respect to Eastern systems, and explain the development of a distinct system of Western capitalism.

(ii) Western Capitalism

The story of Gilpin underlines the emerging connections between Eastern ideological systems and Western landscapes.¹⁸ This thesis focuses particularly on the interactions between capitalism and the Colorado environment around the mid 19th century, centering on the dual agency of these two factors and the implications of this exchange. Exploring this dynamic helps to explain both the capitalist enterprise and the disposition of the American West. It speaks to the urge of capitalism to convert all it encounters into standard, uniform measurements, and also showcases the ability of the West in some respects to defy these standards of uniformity.

Capitalism as an economic, political, social, and ideological system, has had pervasive effects throughout its history. Many global historians write of its early beginnings even before its use as a term. The mercantilist features of pre-capitalist imperial states as early as the 16th century exhibited principles of uniformity, mechanization, and productivity.¹⁹ Merchants

¹⁸ As I will refer to it many times throughout the course of this paper, I use the term "landscape" to describe both the physical and metaphorical environment of Colorado and the larger US West. It includes both the topography and terrain of mountain and desert combined with the more ideological visions of space. As a definition developed by the Council of Europe in 2000, landscape is described as "an area, perceived by the people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." (John Wylie, "A Landscape Cannot Be a Homeland." *Landscape Research*, 41(4): 2016, pp. 408–416.) As the juncture of human and environmental systems is a major focus throughout this thesis, I will apply the term landscape to refer to this phenomenon extensively throughout.

¹⁹ The sugar plantations of the English Caribbean, for example, exhibited many elements of proto-industrial production, with a particular focus on time and efficiency. (Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*)

inducted The Atlantic seaboard of America, and the Eastern colonies and eventual states, into capitalism through this global connection. In *Empire of Cotton*, Sven Beckert explores the global diffusion of capitalism through the cotton industry. Through a strong naval force, England appropriated the raw product of cotton from Asia and the Americas and infused it with manufacturing processes to transform cotton into the first truly global industry. He also shows how this period of violent, coercive "war capitalism" was a logical and closely related predecessor to modern industrial capitalism.²⁰ The sheer force and power of the capitalist structure continues to be central to American history.

How exactly to extend capitalist values into the Western interior became a pertinent question early in the lifetime of the independent United States. In 1803, President Jefferson brokered the Louisiana Purchase, acquiring the crucial trading port of New Orleans and also securing over 800,000 square miles of territory in the Western interior. Largely unfamiliar with the region, the US sent expeditions to explore and assess its value for the Atlantic coastal economy. William Clark and Meriwether Lewis went on such a voyage in 1804, taking note of Western elements including natural resources and tribal powers. Zebulon Pike conducted a military exploratory mission around the same time.²¹ Through both of these trips, US planners gained better understanding of the character of these newly acquired lands, and envisioned ways to bring its value back east.²² These were important expeditions, as the quasi-imperial US began to take inventory of its surrounding resources, and assessed what lands would be worth incorporating into the US domain.

²⁰ Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. Vintage, 2015.

²¹ Robert Hine, John Mack Faragher, and Jon T. Coleman, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (Yale University Press: 2017), 140-150.

²² As Hine writes, "Government fact finders, painters, and fur traders entered a complex place with a long history and began making sense of the frontier for American consumption." Hine, *The American West*, 147.

In many respects, the Western interior vastly differed from the Eastern landscape. Large portions of land, much of it nonarable with Eastern methods, separated localities with high economic prospects. Largely disconnected from major waterways, capitalism could not extend to the American Western interior in the same manner it arrived at the coast. Technological innovations in the mid to late 19th century appeared initially to subvert this narrative. Railroads and telegraphs "collapsed space and time," and reoriented life. It appeared to Eastern developers as though the reach of capitalism could be extended to the Western interior, with rail superseding the use of water. This was true to some extent, as technological developments coincided with large increases in Eastern migration to the West.

But this extension was not linear, certain, or absolute. Capitalism entered the American West through multiple agents, with varying degrees of intentionality. It entered with prospectors and speculators looking to boost the value of lands and establish markets. Some agents pushed capitalism into the interior without even stepping foot into it, providing funding from Eastern centers of financial power. Capitalism also entered with migrants and rushers, as well as laborers and corporate owners, looking in some ways to shirk the hegemony of industrial capitalism, but at the same time bringing its values that were so deeply ingrained in them.²³

As capitalism entered the American West, it engaged through these various agents with a new environment. Vast expanses of land existed far from international coasts. Climate and topography also drastically differed from the East. Although the technologies of railroad and telegraph brought the Eastern seaboard closer to the American interior, they did not actually collapse space and time; they only shrank it. The agents of capitalism negotiated with existing conditions, environmental and otherwise, in the West as they engaged with this new

²³ Kathryn Morse, in her book *Nature of Gold*, pushes this phenomenon of rushers unintentionally bringing industrial, mechanized values to the American West.

environment. Attrition and failure were just as common as domination and success, as this study explores.

Observing the aftermath of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush offers a poignant case study into this interaction between Eastern systems and Western environments. The rush began with an influx of white American settlers, indicating the potential for markets of demand for goods from the East. From 1858 to 1876, Colorado changed dramatically from an area largely inhabited by Native Americans to a territory and eventual state of the Union. Elements of capitalism, including corporations, infrastructure, and urbanization, developed in the area with varying results. This occurred both politically and economically, as institutions and infrastructures of power and wealth entered the Rocky Mountain domain. Political and economic infrastructure were influenced by the preexisting conditions of the Colorado environment, including mountains, waterways, and mineral deposits. Natural factors largely influenced the path of development, helping shape the towns, railroads, and political ideologies distinct to the region.

Through this development, the character of the Colorado environment both aided and limited capitalist intentions, and capitalistic phenomena never fully subverted the preexisting landscape. Endowed with a wealth of natural resources, primarily precious metals, and later land for agriculture and ranching, Colorado operated as an ideal site of resource extraction for Eastern markets. It was this very same Western environment, however, in its dispersion of mountains, land, and waterways, that also limited the extent to which Eastern capitalists could fully incorporate and connect the region to the East. Understanding this nonlinearity of Western capitalistic development reveals the historical uncertainty of capitalism as a dominant ideological

system and elevates environmental autonomy as a major agent of path-based economic development.²⁴

²⁴ The term "path-based" is used in economic literature as a way of describing the continuation of economic activity in particular locations due to historical characteristics and events.

Colorado and the 19th Century American West

1.1 Making Sense of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush

I am astonished to learn that the excitement which was created last October still continues to increase; for I have seen nothing yet which will warrant such an excitement, And when I read the immense excitements in the states in regard to this country and look around me here, I am forcibly reminded of a certain play in Shakespeare's works [Much Ado About Nothing].²⁵

Californians have no advantage over the rest of us, from the fact that the diggings are here beats them out - they're not confined to any particular location; but are scattered all over the country, traditions of over 200 miles. The whole country appears to be impregnated with gold.²⁶

The two quotes above are accounts of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush from an Aurorian trader and gold panner, in 1859 and 1858 respectively. It is hard to believe that both reference the same area in roughly the same period of time, and it is very telling to the discourse over whether gold in Colorado would prove successful or not. These perspectives, along with many others, filled the spectrum, ranging from glowing accounts of opportunity, potential, and success to miserable warnings of financial and social disaster.

When the first large number of Eastern settlers traveled through the plains of Colorado during the 1858-1861 Gold Rush, they brought with them a set of beliefs, ideologies, and values that were immediately complicated as they grappled with their new Western environment. Deeply embedded notions of Manifest Destiny and the Western frontier colored this influx of settlement and society.²⁷ Settlers then came in with preconceived ideas of the West that varied greatly with its physical and ideological landscape. Prospectors, merchants, speculators, and town boosters all provide varying accounts of wealth and growth.

²⁵ Leroy Hafen, *Colorado Gold Rush: Contemporary Letters and Reports, 1858-1859*, 238.

²⁶ Hafen, *Colorado Gold Rush*, 176.

²⁷ These are evidently two very loaded terms when analyzing the history of the American West, and I will discuss their connotations later in this chapter.

The secondary scholarship employed in this period ever since has tried to wrestle with these differing initial accounts and what this period of Western settlement actually entailed. Some historians have focused on the individuals and their social and labor history, while others have pointed to larger systems of capitalism, geopolitics, and the environment. In actuality, all of these frameworks had some semblance of truth, and their interplay provides the richest understanding of these processes in Western development.

This thesis aims to explore the nonlinear imposition of capitalism through all of these other themes in Western development. Ties to the environment and landscape of Colorado reveal the control, and lack thereof, Eastern systems of power exerted over the US West during its incipient stages. This system helped shape the dynamic relationships between worker and producer, settler and nature, and settler and Native American as they developed and matured in the West. Early political development in Colorado clashed with incoming capitalist ideals in values of egalitarianism, individualism, environmentalism, and anti-corporate sentiment. Capitalists, rushers, and the environment all played major roles in the economic development of the state, with mining specifically as well as through infrastructure and urbanization.²⁸ The development of knowledge within Colorado also pointed to an intimacy with the environment and showed signs of a capitalist structure trying to gain a stronger foothold in the area. These facets of development all focus on the tension between preexisting Western systems and the interpolation of capitalist ideologies.

An equally important aspect of development alongside capitalism is gold. Gold was a commodity of special value within the capitalist system, and its discovery and interactions with

²⁸ Through the extent of this thesis I define capitalists as the financial elites of industrial society. The most notable capitalists within this definition were the "robber barons" of John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Cornelius Vanderbilt. Many other lesser-known men of significant capital means also fall within this categorization.

capitalism drove settlement west, especially in Colorado. Capitalism and gold could not have achieved the fast and broad changes in the West without each other. The importance of the agency of gold extends beyond its strict interactions with capitalism as well. Through its intimate ties to nature, gold acted as a sort of liaison between capitalism and Western systems. Within politics, for example, gold discoveries guided the creation of Colorado's earliest polities through mineral districts and mineral law codes. This had many implications with how capitalism took hold in the West, as it engaged with an environment distinctly different from the East.

In analyzing the interactions between capitalism and gold in Colorado, I examine the exchange between Eastern ideology and Western systems. Exploring this relationship reveals both the nonlinearity of capitalistic development as well as the resistant and receptive features of the Western landscape toward capitalism. This framework provides newfound agency to preexisting Western systems during a period of prominent imperial capitalist rhetoric.

1.2 Interpreting and Analyzing the Historical American West

1.2.1 The Turner Thesis

Historiographically, the American West has received vibrant academic discourse through multiple generations of the discipline. Young historian Frederick Jackson Turner orated one of the first major and most influential critical understandings of the American West at the 1893 Colombian Exposition, in what would come to be known as the Frontier Thesis. In "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," he equated the meaning of the American West and the idea of a frontier with American identity. He argued that going west into the "wilderness," immersing into harsh conditions, and then "recivilizing" produced an American identity that was distinct from the European ethos representative of the East coast. Turner writes:

That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things,

lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.²⁹

Regardless of its validity, this notion by Turner that the West was an arena for Euro-Americans to come and form their identity separate from the Old World influence pervaded the academic literature of the next 50 to 75 years.³⁰ As is discussed in later literature, this theory overlooked much of the racial and cultural diversity existing in the West before European settlement as well as the imperial colonialist paradigm Easterners often entered this region on the pretext of.

The explorations of this thesis will diverge with some core assumptions that Turner makes about the frontier as a retreat from Eastern civilization. The motivations and incentives of immigrants to the West reveal that Eastern society deeply entrenched itself into Western settlement, and Eastern values determined worth in Western land for these settlers. Much of the immigration during this time, for example, was driven by push factors from the East in the busts of the business cycle as well as pull factors in the West from the capitalist-oriented monetary value of gold.

A piece that thoroughly explores these motivations and incentives for westward migration is Susan Schulten's "The Civil War and the Making of the Colorado Territory."³¹ In this article, Schulten contextualized the Colorado Gold Rush within the sectional crisis and the issue of slavery, while also framing it within the recent annexation of far Western lands such as

²⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (American Historical Association, World Columbian Exposition, 1893).

³⁰ In 1999, many of Turner's writings were published with a foreword by historian John M. Faragher titled *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner*. In his analysis, Faragher pushes back on this notion of the West as a small, agrarian polity, and instead frames it as a region especially dependent on the federal government, much like that of a colony. He cites the following line by Miriam Horn in "How the West Was Really Won": "The American West was not some rough-hewn egalitarian democracy, where every man had a piece of land and the promise of prosperity, but a world quickly dominated by big money and big government." These are themes I explore in this work.

³¹ Susan Schulten, "The Civil War and the Origins of the Colorado Territory." (*The Western Historical Quarterly* 44(1), 2013) pp. 21–46.

California, New Mexico, and Texas. She writes "The creation of the Colorado Territory was a function of both the political crisis in the East and the gold rush in the West, both of which occurred as Americans reconsidered the geography of the interior." In addition to the sectional crisis, the country had also undergone a significant recession in the Panic of 1857, making a lot of people financially desperate enough to gamble on success in the West. Gold's financial value within the capitalist structure symbolically evoked a promise of liberation from the financial woes of capitalism that many were suffering from. These events underscored the connections that existed between the East and West; through the operation of gold rushes, and their placement in the West paired with Eastern value, these regions became increasingly interdependent.

1.2.2 New Western History

A slew of field-shifting literature emerged around the 1990's by scholars William Cronon, Patricia Limerick, Richard White, and Donald Worster. These works collectively refuted lasting elements of Turner's Frontier Thesis by arguing against the understanding of the Western frontier as a place where the white man came to become American. These historians pointed out that Turner's portrayal of the West as a savage, undeveloped arena before white men entered was largely unsupported by historical evidence. They all wrote instead of the broad racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the region. Limerick's *Something in the Soil* provides a good synopsis of this "New Western History" emerging in the 90's. She describes this new understanding of the West through *continuity*, of land use, mineral extraction, water rights and the like, *convergence*, as a meeting point for white, black, mexican, asian, and indian people,

conquest, seeing the West as essentially a colony of the US, and *complexity*, mainly referring to the moral ambiguity of various events and processes that transpired.³²

In direct dialogue with Turner, White and Limerick released *The Frontier in American Culture: An Exhibition at the Newberry Library*, which contrasted the two popular and prevailing accounts of the Western frontier. The first account was from "Buffalo Bill" Cody and his reenactments of the white man battling Indians, and the other account was Turner's thesis. These scholars argued that the term "frontier," while having a fairly straightforward meaning in popular culture, has come to contain many nuances and complexities within the realm of academia, with a new emphasis on the diversity of Western inhabitants.³³ This brings up the important notion that society existed in the West before the rushes and large-scale Eastern intervention. The West differed greatly from Eastern structures, particularly in its geography and landscape, which guided much of human formation. Due to these differences, capitalism entered in ways that were not uniform. While gold promoted capitalism's arrival, it also showed the ways in which Western terrain could limit capitalism's hegemony. Similarly to these works that underline diversity, White writes in his own work *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own* that "The West began when Europeans sought to conquer various areas of the continent and when people of Indian, European, Asian, and African ancestry begin to meet in the territories west of the Missouri that would later be part of the United States."³⁴ Here, White clearly states his belief that the ethnic and cultural diversity that came at a juncture in the West was central to the forming identity of the region.

³² Patricia Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

³³ Richard White, et. al, *The Frontier in American Culture: An Exhibition at the Newberry Library, August 26, 1994-January 7, 1995* (University of California Press, 1994).

³⁴ Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": a New History of the American West* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 4.

When white Europeans immigrated West, they went with certain notions and expectations of imposing their existing systems in the area. Easterners entered the West coming from a largely white populace. What they encountered upon arrival were large populations of Native Americans, Mexicans, and Chinese immigrants, along with largely different physical environments. In many ways these white immigrants had to reconcile their preexisting notions with the reality they faced in the West.³⁵

As I explore in the following chapters, settlers came from the East to Colorado during the Gold Rush with preconceived plans and ideas. Grappling with the differing landscape of Colorado, and particularly its ties to gold, altered society in ways the migrants did not expect. The East heavily influenced this process of development, but in no way was it a carbon copy of Eastern capitalism, and the Western environment and people helped determine this.

This divergence in environment and people affected the imposition of all capitalist and industrial features of capitalism in the West, particularly with urban centers. William Cronon's seminal work *Nature's Metropolis* stressed the fluidity between city and country, just as much as between humans and nature, and examined how these interactions came to play together in the American West through Chicago. This challenged Turner's notion that immigrants entered the wilderness by asserting there was no real distinction between Western urban centers and rural hinterlands. In his opening remarks, Cronon writes, "If we concentrate our attention solely upon the city, seeing in it the ultimate symbol of man's conquest of nature, we miss the extent to which the city's inhabitants continue to rely as much on the non-human world as they do on each

³⁵ As Susan Johnson in *Roaring Camp* writes of the California Gold Rush, "On this meandering, even dead-end, path to industrialization, the dominance of Anglo American men and institutions was often - as we have seen - difficult to enforce, and groups of people united by shared interests could create for themselves spheres of autonomy and strategies for interdependence." Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: the Social World of the California Gold Rush*. WW Norton, 2001.

other."³⁶ Cronon also draws a tight relationship between cities and the ability to extend capital markets, so blurring the line between city and country in the American West implicitly draws together capitalism and the Western environment.³⁷ This capitalist dynamic with the Western environment is addressed explicitly throughout this paper.

1.3.1 Geopolitical History of the American West

The development of geopolitical history in the Western US also ties directly into how this thesis contributes to the historical literature, by connecting state building in Colorado to political ideology beyond boundaries. Donald Meinig was one of the first scholars to comprehensively describe the geopolitical development of the United States. In *The Shaping of America*, he writes, "The shape of the United States is the result of historical chance as well as geographic calculation, and none of it is 'natural' in any forceful sense of that term."³⁸ In contrast to the modern popular understanding of US boundaries as inherent in the state, historical engagement reveals a much more sporadic and unplanned process of state formation.³⁹

In a similar vein, historian Daniel Immerwahr recently published the work *How to Hide an Empire*, which also explores the topic of geopolitical development in the United States, framing Western settlement within the context of the US as a colonizing, imperial power. Immerwahr shows the similarities between Western territories and American colonies off the continent such as the Philippines or Puerto Rico, providing resources for the appetite of Eastern capital.⁴⁰ This concept relates to Meinig's work by deconstructing the modern popular

³⁶ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (W.W. Norton, 1997), 18.

³⁷ As he also writes, "Where human beings organize their economy around market exchange, trade between city and country will be among the most powerful forces influencing cultural geography and environmental change (50)."

³⁸ Donald William Meinig, *The Shaping of America: a Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History* (Yale University Press, 2010), 202.

³⁹ Richard White writes "Geography did not determine the boundaries of the west; rather, history created them." (White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, 3)

⁴⁰ Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: a History of the Greater United States* (Princeton University Press, 2019), 1-10.

understanding of the Western US as intrinsically tied to the Union. These are important works to consider when delving into historical analysis of the 19th century West because they remind modern viewers of their current biases in understanding national boundaries.⁴¹ Separating our current understanding of the state from what it was in the 19th century allows historians to explore the social, political, and economic conditions of that period with these biases in mind. Many look back anachronistically on the 19th century West as a region always destined to be an equal part of the Union. In actuality, the dynamic between the US West and federal government in this period was similar to that of an imperial power and vassal states. Getting at the root of this perspective in this thesis is crucial in understanding the meandering path of development that took place in the West as a result of capitalism and gold.

The geopolitical thinking developed here emphasizes development in the 19th century US West as unstable and uncertain. A lot of the structures and institutions observed in this area today may be taken for granted as predetermined or anticipated, when in actuality they formed in fits and starts, progressions and digressions, as many workers, producers, Natives, and the government vied power. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, the US Geological Survey, and the Forest Service, for example, were institutions that the federal government implemented to extend its reach and authority into the West. While beginning in earnest as Western bureaucracies, these organizations by the 20th century had consolidated into institutions centrally controlled by

⁴¹ A third work situated within the geopolitical realm is Paul Frymer's *Building an American Empire: the Era of Territorial and Political Expansion*. Princeton University Press (2017), which frames the US as a white settler state where the federal government fostered growth by ensuring white majorities could be maintained and achieve power through seemingly innocuous land policy in the West. Frymer too speaks of nonlinear geopolitical development, as in the lines, "From the perspective of the early 21st century, the representation of the territorial expansion is both familiar and natural, a reflection of a long-established American nation state seemingly destined to be situated between sea and shining sea. But the map is misleading. It truncates and flattens a lengthy, diverse, and contested project of national state formation, a project that evolve not so much money really but rather in fits and starts, but successes and failures, and in quite very geographic, demographic, political, and institutional contexts." The focus of this work on the federal government's hegemony complements the work of this thesis with its analysis of the larger capitalist structure.

Washington.⁴² Meinig, Immerwahr, and other scholars tangle this perceived linearity in the formation of the continental US, particularly within the studies of politics and geography.

I apply these themes of Eastern continuity and divergence in the West through the agency of gold as a symbol of the Western environment, and the ways white settlers interacted with gold to form polities, economies, and societies in Colorado. Explorations include the establishment and growth of various cities, political districts, schools, and infrastructure in relation to gold and the environment and the ways in which these institutions both inducted and flouted capitalist systems. Just as the success and growth of gold and mining was largely unstable and uncertain, so too was the path of capitalistic development in Western history.

1.3.2 Western Economic History

Economic history also exhibits a strong dialogue through the course of this thesis. In 1995, William G. Robbins brought the entire system of industrial capitalism to the forefront of the discussion of Western development. He argued that capitalism was central to Euro-American Western settlement, by presenting the West as an arena for natural resource exploitation.⁴³ In his foreword, he discusses the philosophy behind economic systems as driving forces of change:

The more plausible and enduring explanations for historical change, I believe, rest in the material world: in the economic relationships among people; in the ever-changing dynamics of particular economies; and in the set of values and assumptions, the mode of production, inherent in what we call capitalism, the basic organizing principle for much of the global economy from the onset of the Industrial Revolution to the present.⁴⁴

⁴² White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own,"* 58.

⁴³ Somewhat picking up on this theme much earlier came from American novelist Jack London. In "The Economics of the Klondike," London argues the cost and benefits of the Klondike Gold Rush could be analyzed at either the individual or the societal level, and each perspective would give a vastly different conclusion. He writes "though many of its individuals have lost, the world will have lost nothing by the Klondike. [...] Natural obstacles will be cleared away or surmounted, primitive methods abandoned, and hardship of toil and travel reduced to the smallest possible minimum. Exploration and transportation will be systematized." While individuals suffered immensely, they all contributed in inducting capitalism into the Western system.

⁴⁴ William G. Robbins, *Colony and Empire: the Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (University Press of Kansas), ix.

This discussion captures the pervasive effects of capitalism as a modern economic system, particularly in its sweeping effect over the US interior. This relationship is a major focus within this study. Robbins may, however, become too absolute in his appraisal of capitalism and Western development. As Meinig and Immerwahr have shown, Western formation was not linear. While capitalism played a major role in integrating the West into Eastern and global exchange, it did not achieve this in such a straightforward manner. Yet again, the differing landscape of Western systems brought on alterations in the Eastern capitalist structure as it was imposed upon the West. In order for systems of capitalism to become entrenched in the West, they had to change to fit the realities of the West. This included the diversion of infrastructure around mountains and even the alteration of political ideologies surrounding the environment. This thesis explores the nonlinear development of the capitalist structure as it grappled with the nuances of the Colorado landscape and situated itself among the various gold deposits in the area.

In the field of labor history, scholars explored this underlying relationship between worker and capital. Well beyond the years of focus for this research, Thomas Andrews explores the Ludlow Massacre of 1914 in Colorado, highlighting the tensions between workers and producers that culminated in violent battle. He pays special attention to the constant struggle over the wealth of natural resources, and particularly to the centrality of unionization in affecting this power balance between workers and capitalists. The intimacy miners shared with their product, the mineral they extracted, helped legitimize their claim to its value. This study is in intimate dialogue with the history of mining in Colorado all the way back to its inception, as Andrews writes

The key to moving beyond the standard history of the Colorado coalfield wars is to place the events within a broader context. Pushing our analysis backward in time recasts the

story of Ludlow by transforming it from an aberrant outbreak of violence into the culmination of more than half a century of bitter struggle between capitalists and miners.⁴⁵

My research will engage with this struggle between small workers and large producers, within the overarching framework of the capitalist structure beyond individual agents.

I will also explore this particular relationship between the actual miners who extracted resources from the ground and the capitalists who paid them, but at a more nascent stage of development in this interplay. From 1858 to 1876, some miners were still self-employed and thus this capitalist-worker dynamic did not always exist, although in other cases it did. Comparing these worker dynamics could add to the relationship Andrews explores, in further understanding the inception of these issues. My emphasis on the period of incipient development in Colorado can help to explain why such tense relations existed between capitalists and workers in the first place, and shed further light upon the dynamic between capitalism and the West through gold.

1.4 Western Divergence in Action

Within multiple different contexts and frameworks, scholars have applied this notion of nonlinear development to the American West. In *Roaring Camp*, Susan Johnson writes of the wavering dominance of white men in the California Gold Rush, emphasizing this same theme: "On this meandering, even dead-end, path to industrialization, the dominance of Anglo American men and institutions was often - as we have seen - difficult to enforce, and groups of people united by shared interests could create for themselves spheres of autonomy and strategies for interdependence."⁴⁶ Within another social context, Alice Cochran in *Miners, Merchants, and Missionaries* writes of the meandering development of morals in early Colorado: "Eruptions of sporadic violence and disorder [...] reminded civilizers that their task was not complete.

⁴⁵ Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 15.

⁴⁶ Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: the Social World of the California Gold Rush* (WW Norton, 2001), 51.

Sometimes they seemed to take two steps forward only to be pushed one step backward. The overall tendency [...] was toward increasing orderliness under the laws and increasing adherence to norms of moral behavior."⁴⁷ This speaks yet again to the nonlinear pattern of development in the West.

A more specific example of divergence from the East becomes evident in the anecdote provided in Henry Walker's *Wagonmasters* concerning the morals of teamsters going west:

Majors issued to each man a Bible or testament, which led them to be nicknamed Biblebacks. One of his irreverent employees remarked that the pages of these Bibles were just about the right size for rolling cigarettes. A boomwhacker with an arrival train, meeting a Russell, Majors and Waddell train coming down ran past in a cloud of profanity, noting that the drivers seem to have lost the word.⁴⁸

Although the East attempted to impose all of its systems upon the West, here in the case of moral values, the application of capitalism was never absolute. Areas of the West remote from intimate lines of communication and transportation to the East prevented the outright imposition of Eastern society.

Finally, from a broader, more theoretical perspective, James Scott writes in *Seeing Like A State*: "We must keep in mind not only the capacity of state simplifications to transform the world but also the capacity of the society to modify, subvert, block, and even overturn the categories imposed upon it."⁴⁹ This remark holds true in Coloradan development, as visions of the area applied from the federal government and Eastern sponsors clashed with the realities of the landscape. As White summarized in *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, "Local communities and local politics inhibited the growth of administrative power in the East."⁵⁰ The

⁴⁷ Alice Cowan Cochran, *Miners, Merchants, and Missionaries: the Roles of Missionaries and Pioneer Churches in the Colorado Gold Rush and Its Aftermath, 1858-1870* (Scarecrow, 1980), 48.

⁴⁸ Henry Walker, *The Wagonmasters* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 70.

⁴⁹ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, 49.

⁵⁰ White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own,"* 58.

political development chapter shows this to be especially true for Colorado, where mining district polities developed largely independently from national trajectories.

From a focus on the federal government, Paul Frymer speaks to the ability of Western areas not fully incorporated in the national system to develop their own area of self-rule: "Institutionally constructed from weaknesses in the capacity of the American state - weaknesses that enabled pockets of diversity to withstand the reach of the national state, and dust their own eradication, particularly on Frontier Borderlands."⁵¹ Such was the case in Colorado. Immigrants' intimacy within the Rocky Mountains in search of gold obstructed Eastern society and influence. Though lines of mail, freight, and federal authority eventually emerged, it took well past the initial years of the Gold Rush. In this early window of development, settlers achieved a degree political and economic autonomy that would mark these aspects of Colorado society for many years later. Even once railroads, bridges, towns, polities, and industries emerged in the Colorado domain, their allocation and composition were both heavily determined by existing geographic features of the landscape, such as waterways or mountains. This intimacy between the landscape and political/economic infrastructure led to enduring characteristics in the Coloradan culture.

1.5 The Material West

The material history of the West has an important place in this thesis from the perspective of gold's importance in Western development. Lecain writes a chapter in *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522* titled "Copper and Longhorns: Material and Human Power in Montana's Smelter Smoke War, 1860-1910." On a superficial level, the chapter provides a case study of the power struggle in the Montana Smoke War between farmers and smelters.

What is more important and distinct to the piece is how little these human actors are referenced

⁵¹ Paul Frymer, *Building an American Empire: the Era of Territorial and Political Expansion* (Princeton University Press, 2017), 15.

in the work; Lecain offers the agency of the story to the copper and surrounding environmental elements of the process.⁵² From this vantage point, he cites the derivation of the Anaconda Mining Company's social power to the material power of copper, solar power in coal and timber, and the surrounding environment in its ability to absorb the entropy produced from smelting. This case study emphasizes the importance of both humans and the environment for the process of growth and development, and relates directly to this research in that gold and capitalism had equal importance in 19th century permutations of the West. The interactions between gold and capitalism in this relationship can reveal extensive insight into these Western processes. My work especially emphasizes the centrality of the Colorado environment in shaping ideas and development in the region.

Environmental history plays a particularly important role in understanding early Coloradan development. This literature explores the intimacy of the mining industry with geography and nature. This alternate paradigm of Western history continues to display the power and influence of capitalism on the West, as it motivated individuals to enact distinct and pervasive changes on the environment. Randall Rohe's 1986 article "Man and the Land: Mining's Impact in the Far West" emerged toward the beginning of this field of analysis, considering the geomorphic effects of mining on vegetation, lumber scarcity, debris, and fish wildlife, among other areas.⁵³

Much more recently, environmental historian Andrew Isenberg framed the entirety of the West as an arena of natural resources exploited by Eastern. While Isenberg focused on the

⁵² Lecain powerfully asserts his work as "an attempt to resist the powerful human tendency to see the world solely as a reflection of ourselves, to suggest instead that we do not use matter so much as cooperate with it in ways that form and define us." Timothy J. Lecain, "Copper and Longhorns: Material and Human Power in Montana's Smelter Smoke War, 1860–1910." *In Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, edited by McNeill J. R. and Vrtis George, 166-90. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017).

⁵³ Rohe, Randall. "Man and the Land: Mining's Impact in the Far West," *Arizona and the West*, 28:4 (1986), 299-388.

environmental implications of Western natural resource exploitation, these considerations tie directly into the capitalist influence of the East on Western development. Land speculators and real estate agents, attempting to maximize their own profits, helped organize urban hubs in the West to extend the reach and influence of Eastern markets and further promote the environmental degradation of mineral extraction.⁵⁴

In *The Nature of Gold*, Kathryn Morse provides a case study of the Klondike Gold Rush, focusing on how miners and travellers interacted with the environment, both affecting and being affected by it. They first engaged in a long and arduous journey through the cold and often snowy terrain of western Canada. They then dug extensively into the ground of the Yukon, creating fires to thaw the ground and digging holes deep into the earth. They extracted gold that would be used to consume other elements of nature from animal skins and meats to manufactured products.

Morse unraveled the cultural value of gold from its natural use.⁵⁵ This shows how a popular perceived value of gold in part stemmed from industrial capitalist values: "Capitalist culture treated nature, the nature would be produced pork, beans, gold, and every other thing that humans valued, as an instrument to be harvested and exploited to the point of destruction for maximum profit. In the 19th century, that culture moved westward to exploit the abundant resources beyond the Mississippi."⁵⁶ Similar to Morse and Isenberg, I will show how the

⁵⁴ Another tangential and important environmental work is Timothy Lécain's *Mass Destruction*. Lécain implements this jarring title to relate the destruction inflicted upon mountains in mineral extraction to modern weapons of mass destruction. He also points to the parallel concepts between mass destruction and the contemporary emergence of mass production, particularly with the innovations of Henry Ford. There is somewhat of a logical inconsistency whereby humans see mass production as inherently good and mass destruction inherently bad, but they are both ways in which humans alter their environments.

⁵⁵ West also does this extensively in the case of Colorado in *Contested Plains*.

⁵⁶ Kathryn Taylor Morse, *The Nature of Gold: an Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (University of Washington Press, 2010), 12.

Colorado environment and gold helped shape development in the area through its effect on the discourse of value and profit.

1.6 Colorado Capitalism

To say that emigrants to Colorado inducted capitalism unconsciously is in no way to criticize their intelligence or decision making, but more so a comment on the obscuring nature of capitalism. The ability of capitalism to uniformly express all goods and commodities into one standardized cash currency had the consequence of removing consumers from their intimacy with the product. People lost some of their understanding of what labor, and environmental effects, went into the acquisition of a good. Cronon touches upon this phenomenon in *Nature's Metropolis*: "The market fosters exchange relationships of almost unimaginable complexity, and then hides them from us at the very instant they are created, in that last moment when cash and commodity exchange hands and we finally consumed the thing we have purchased."⁵⁷ This obscuring nature of capitalism is an important aspect of it as an economic system and particularly one that has broad implications for its transposition into Western society. This paper explores how agents brought capitalism to the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, and how the intentionality and lack thereof affected the nature of development.

Individuals went to Colorado in the 1860's in hopes of gaining personal wealth and security. They came with a perception of the value of gold conferred upon them by both centuries of human cultural value and value from the capitalist system. They came mining explicitly for gold, but implicitly mined for the opportunity to consume clothes, food, and all

⁵⁷ Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 384.

Lecain also touches upon this gap of knowledge in the community: "It is precisely that disconnect between human products and the environmental source of raw materials - between what we label "technology" and what we label "nature" - that needs to be closed if we are to better comprehend the dynamics of the modern world."

More specifically to the point Cronon is referring to here with the obscurity of capitalism, Lecain also writes in his chapter "Copper and Longhorns" "One of the key characteristics of capitalism is its ability to reduce everything to the same unit of measurement, an abstract price that obscures the original source of value."

other goods provided in the capitalist market. Without the ability of gold to purchase these other products, few people would likely have travelled to the Rocky Mountains for this rush. So in a way, many of the 59'ers to Colorado were unintentionally acting as agents of the capitalist system and helped induct it into the West.

In *The Nature of Gold*, Kathryn Morse points to the paradoxical and ironic nature of many agents who came to the rush in hopes of avoiding modern society, when many of their actions and decisions were actually playing right into it.⁵⁸ This analysis engages with the theme of unintended consequences that is so central to the work in my thesis. In Colorado, rushers often acted as cogs in the capitalist structure in an unconscious manner. Many of their motivations were created by capitalism's externalities, whether it be the opportunity for a new market or the desperation of financial insolvency. Many of the actions these travelers engaged in the West helped incorporate the region into the Eastern economy.⁵⁹

While federal constituents and wealthy elites were working to integrate Colorado quickly into the Union, it was not instantaneous, nor was it linear. This period of development was guided by the interests of various players, from miners, merchants, and funders, to the federal government and even the entire capitalist system as a whole.⁶⁰ They had their own interests,

⁵⁸ Kathryn Taylor Morse, *The Nature of Gold: an Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush*. (University of Washington Press, 2010).

⁵⁹ Along the theme of unintended consequences, Cochran also writes of this within the context of religious emigrants to Colorado: "The laity assumed that they migrated voluntarily and freely. But a notion (usually half-realized) of national calling usually underlay many of their actions and thoughts."

⁶⁰ Take a line from Susan Johnson on the California Gold Rush: "In an event as celebrated as the California Gold Rush, it is the struggle and exercise of power that is forgotten, the triumph that is remembered."

With regard to the federal government, Michael Amundson's article "Home on the Range No More: The Boom and Bust of a Wyoming Uranium Mining Town, 1957-1988" provides an illuminating case study on the dependence of Western economies on governmental demand and federal policy.

Speaking to the other players mentioned, Thomas Isern's thesis "The Making of a Gold Rush: Pike's Peak, 1858-1860" provides a comprehensive account on the interests of merchants, speculators, and boosters, and the propaganda they infused into Colorado to promote development. Consider his encompassing line "In the new goldfields the opportunists hoped to regain the old magic and create ephemeral empires of real estate." Largely unaddressed in his thesis is the overarching influence of capitalism in driving the incentives of all these players.

some overlapping and others diverging. Even those who did not come to Colorado during this time explicitly for gold, such as missionaries or entrepreneurs, were reacting to this surge in a population and brought over some cultural, religious, or economic forms of the East. This led to a multifaceted process of development that displayed both instances of conformity and opposition to the Eastern system of capitalism. Just one example of this yet again occurs in the political realm. In "The Miners' Laws of Colorado," Thomas M. Marshall speaks to the incipient polities that formed in Colorado as a result of its initial isolation from the federal government. In this period, basic law codes and forms of leadership organization developed in Colorado separate from the national structure.⁶¹

Specifically from a political perspective, Noam Maggor touches upon this concept well in his article "To Coddle and Caress These Great Capitalists: Eastern Money, Frontier Populism, and the Politics of Market-Making in the American West." In this piece, Maggor explores the various Western State Constitutions and shows that compared to the East, these states formed through various interests from farmers, workers, miners, lawyers, businessmen, etc. He frames this within the context of the Populist movement and a backlash against centralized capitalistic power. Drafters achieved various "small person" interests in these constitutions, from universal water rights to basic child and adult working conditions. When mining was essential to a state's economy, however, centralized interests continued to pervade law. In the 1890 Idaho State Constitution, for example, delegates enacted laws enforcing strong labor protection, outlawing privately contracted police, and setting an eight-hour workday for government positions. The influence of the mining industry was so pervasive, however, that no laws passed to regulate mine

⁶¹ Thomas Maitland Marshall, "The Miners' Laws of Colorado" *The American Historical Review* (1), 1920. Note that much of the mining law code in Colorado drew on precedent from the California mines, which in turn drew from medieval European mining codes. Rodman Wilson Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West* (University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 23.

safety, make employers liable for injury, or acquire taxes on net proceeds.⁶² While Maggor may exaggerate the success of the small Western individual, this analysis nonetheless underscores the development of the West amidst multiple interests.

In contrast, external control of the West is a main focus of Richard White in *Railroaded: the Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*, where he writes, "Although Americans still celebrate the West as a bastion of individualism, corporations, along with the federal government, were central to its creation."⁶³ He also references this nonlinear development of capitalism in *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*: "Perhaps because the growth of this extractive economy depended on "natural" products - cattle, weed, gold, lumber, Silver, and copper - it is easy to think of the evolution of the economy itself as natural and inevitable. It was neither. It was the result of conscious economic choices, and as it grew, it eliminated earlier competing economies."⁶⁴ This was certainly the case in Colorado, as elements of both the natural and human networks interacted to produce a political economy in the area.

This thesis ties in the concept of nonlinear development from the geopolitical theory previously mentioned, and incorporates it into the capitalist thesis of Robbins, advancing a more refined understanding of the formations taking place in Colorado from the Gold Rush to statehood. Much as Susan Johnson speaks in her foreword to *Roaring Camp* of the immeasurable difference between history and memory and her role as a historian to exist in the tension between

⁶² Noam Maggor, "To Coddle and Caress These Great Capitalists: Eastern Money, Frontier Populism, and the Politics of Market-Making in the American West" (*American Historical Review*, 2017), 81.

⁶³ In his monograph *The Republic for Which It Stands*, White writes "Mythologized as the heartland of individualism, the West became the kindergarten of the modern American state."

⁶⁴ Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": a New History of the American West* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 236.

the two, I situate this work in the tension between Eastern capitalism and Western gold through the development of Colorado.⁶⁵

1.7 Colorado v. The American West

Colorado has always been an area for economic pragmatism and exploitation. While other Western states may have at least in earnest begun with intentions to grow a small agrarian republic, composed of self-subsistent small-scale farmers, Colorado began as a prospective enterprise for profit and gain. As described in Stephen Leonard and Thomas Jacob's *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis*, "Denver's unusually strong and persistent dependence on mineral resources and its penchant for privatism - an emphasis on individual goals rather than on the public, common good. Unlike communities such as Salt Lake City, Denver never aspired to be a utopia, only a place to live and make money."⁶⁶ These origins began explicitly between capitalism and gold in the Rocky Mountains, and that intimacy continued through the arc of Coloradan development. This feature of Colorado makes it a critical case study for isolating the effects of both capitalism and gold in Western development.

Another reason for the implementation of Colorado as a case study relates to some of the work of Colorado historian Elliott West. In his article "Golden Dream," West speaks to the importance of the gold discovery in Colorado for uniting the coasts and filling in the center for the vision of the American state. He also speaks to the rearrangement of the nation from a focus on West to East, writing "Until now the push for reimagining this country had come from its Eastern border. Now a new vision was projected from its western edge, from the Rockies."⁶⁷ Speaking to the Rocky Mountain Range specifically, this feature made environmental

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 11.

⁶⁶ Leonard and Jacob, *Denver*, xii.

⁶⁷ Elliott West, "Golden Dream: Colorado, California, and the Reimagining of America" *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 49(3).

determinations of development particularly influential compared to more midwestern states. The mountains afforded a degree of isolation and autonomy that allowed for development independent from national trends. It is important to note that these new visions of the West were in part imposed upon by Eastern values. Eastern determination of value in the West highly depended on gold, while natives to the Western region did not necessarily see it this way. When individuals discovered gold in the West, it sparked a cerebral shift in the Eastern understanding of Western land, promoting a massive influx of migration and settlement.

Alice Cochran explores the social effects of religious transfusion into Colorado during and beyond the Gold Rush. In *Miners, Merchants, and Missionaries*, she explores how "civilizers" (merchants, teachers, missionaries) brought some semblance of a social order to Colorado. She also examined how these social diffusors extended their influence through various social institutions, including newspapers, theatres, schools, fraternal lodges, and churches. Yet again, Cochran notes the centrality of mining and gold, in this case with preachers using it as a focal point for greed and gluttony. She also asserts the process by which these missionaries, merchants, and teachers brought the Eastern set of social values and morals to the West. For instance, consider the line, "The Colorado pioneers were more interested in re-creating the patterns they brought with them than they were in innovation and were, moreover, more successful in this undertaking than the Turner hypothesis ever allowed for."⁶⁸ This also rebuts some of the Frontier Thesis in similar ways to the New Western History. Turner's assumption that Eastern settlers moved west to become distinctly American is flawed because they often did so to bring the culture and society of the East with them.

⁶⁸ Cochran, *Miners, Merchants, and Missionaries*, vi.

Focusing on the religious arena, Cochran writes of Eastern society getting gradually imposed upon the West: "The rise in church attendance and other religious activity demonstrates the extent to which the Colorado Frontier had changed from a society of adventuresome and lonely miners known to be violent, profane, wordly, and intemperate to a group of communities conforming to standards judged to be civilized and moral."⁶⁹ While this narrative projects a rather seamless application of Eastern ideas onto Western landscapes, it is important to note that this transposition did not implement perfectly, as the environments and characteristics of the East and West, from mountains and deserts to racial composition, were so starkly different. The story of gold in Colorado and people's interactions with the environment highlight this interplay between Eastern overarching structures and their application to the preexisting West.

1.8 Alternative Systems

Also in Colorado, Elliott West provides a good account of the 59'ers' interactions with the indigenous people in Colorado before the rush, Native Americans. In *The Contested Plains*, he studies the events of the Colorado Gold Rush with a particular emphasis on the power dynamic that shifted from Native Americans to immigrating Easterners. He writes on this phenomenon as follows

But like every story, it had its own perspective. It was told from east to west. Others were living the same experience from another angle - from west to east, from the plains outward. The same events look quite different when seen that way. The people living on the plains understood instantly that the march of the merry and lighthearted Argonauts was part of a shuffling of power and resources that raised some up and devastated others. One group's opportunity was another's disaster; what seemed an emigration to some was to others an invasion.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Cochran, *Miners, Merchants, and Missionaries*, 93.

⁷⁰ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (University Press of Kansas, 1998), 170.

This analysis helps reframe the story of Westward expansion from the existing perspective of the West, telling it from West to East. A crucial aspect of this story of Western settlement by Easterners is understanding that they did not enter into vast, untapped frontiers devoid of human impact, but rather entered into an existing system of the West. Being able to perfectly impose an Eastern system on the West could in theory be comprehensible if the West were a blank slate before Eastern arrival, but it was far from it. Reconciling this Eastern structure with the existing Western one lies at the core of Western development in this time period.

West does an excellent job of highlighting the bias of observing this change from East to West and underscores the perception of value and progress that has been imposed upon Western narratives by Eastern ideals. Understanding the Rush from preexisting Western conditions reveals this movement from the East as an invasion filled with rabid greed, starkly different from older notions like Turner that these immigrants came to civilize the land. As a result of his West-to-East focus, the other aspect of the power dynamic that West does not entirely explore is that between the Eastern immigrants and the overarching capitalist structure. There was an immense wealth of influence, both literal and metaphorical, within this capitalist-settlement relationship that drove the development of infrastructures, politics, and inquiry, and I explore the way this influence attempted to channel itself through the agency of gold.⁷¹

Agents and actors within the capitalist structure operated in ways in line with the incentives presented to them via capitalist values, but in doing so they often missed key considerations, such as native inhabitants or environmental effects. In *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott speaks abstractly in the political theory behind the modern state relating to how the

⁷¹ In *Something in the Soil*, for example, Limerick describes how the original arid conditions that were generally representative of the Western landscape were subverted through the construction of canals, dams, reservoirs, and ditches to conform the area to the needs of the Eastern economy.

standardization of space and time has brought implications beyond what state planners could possibly expect.⁷² In his analysis of the state, Scott also draws in the similar effects of capitalism: "As I make clear in examining scientific farming, industrial agriculture, and capitalist markets in general, large-scale capitalism is just as much an agency of homogenization, uniformity, grids, and heroic simplification as the state is."⁷³ The attempt of capitalism to homogenize its inputs and outputs found considerable obstacles in the Western arena as it engaged with vastly different circumstances in nature.

As Lecain notes toward the close of *Mass Destruction*, "The modernist promise of infinite progress through science and technology has repeatedly underestimated the complexity of technological and environmental systems, thus creating a host of new problems with every supposed solution."⁷⁴ One of the main issues with the scope of development through capitalism was the limited foresight its agents possessed for issues not directly in the capitalist network.⁷⁵ The environmental issues that are beginning to gain traction now reveal the development of the West in the 19th century in a completely different light. This was especially true in the history of gold mining, an industry intimately tied to the environment.

⁷² As Scott writes, "Designed or planned social order is necessarily schematic; it always ignores essential features of any real, functioning social order."

⁷³ James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 2020), 8.

⁷⁴ Timothy J. Lecain, *Mass Destruction: the Men and Giant Mines That Wired America and Scarred the Planet* (Rutgers University Press, 2009), 227.

⁷⁵ Yet again driving home this point is White in *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*: "Most Westerners saw the rapid development of the West as their greater Triumph. They calculated their achievement in the terms that development itself mandated: tons of ore, miles of rail, bushels of wheat, heads of cattle. They converted all of these things into dollar values, and there is no doubt that their achievement was great. They physically transformed the West and poured its resources out to a waiting world. But in calculating the cost of this effort they dismiss things that cannot be reduced to dollar values. No one subtracted crippled and dead miners or mill men from the gross national product [...] Few thought that the mountain valleys ruined by hydraulic waste or Buffalo rotting on the planes represented a cost that offset the gold mines produced or the cattle the ranches used." (White, 296)

1.9 Western Historiography in Review

The rich literature on 19th century development in the West can further evolve by focusing directly on capitalism and gold as the two central agents. While historical accounts are littered with individual anecdotes and personal stories, many connect in the reasons and incentives of their move, many of which were in some way motivated by larger capitalist ideals. As capitalism began to take root in the West, it was forced to grapple with the differing landscape it encountered. This point of contact between capitalism and the Western environment was most often achieved through gold. The extent to which Eastern capitalist structures were embraced and avoided throughout the formation of political economy relied closely on the extraction of gold and its determination of place for political, economic, and social structures. In moving west, these agents both brought and avoided Eastern spheres of influence, existing in this tension between two opposing powers and leading to a meandering path of development. Understanding this nonlinearity brings clarity to the arc of development around gold in the 19th century US West.

Coloradan Political Development: 1858-1876

2.1 A Fledgling Polity

In 1859, Eastern rushers into the Colorado area incorporated themselves into the territory of Jefferson, a political body not recognized by the federal government until the Colorado territory formed in 1861. In this sovereign political entity, the Jefferson territory created its own Constitution and legal code. This legal document includes a description of the territorial seal that would be used for identification, which is described in the Constitution as follows:

the Rocky Mountains to appear in the distance, at their base different planes reaching and covering the foreground of the same, on which an emigrant wagon to be shown with emigrants carrying mining tools, with an inscription around the edge of the same 'the Great Seal of the territory of Jefferson,' and in the upper side of said circle to appear the words, 'the people are the government.'⁷⁶

This territorial seal embodies the early political development of Colorado, from its reference to the Rocky Mountains and natural landscape, to emigrants and mining, and the assertion of government by the people. As is evident in this symbol of political ideas, Colorado political development began intimately within the mountains and environment of the Colorado landscape. Mining and the gold rush dispersed settlers into areas distant, both physically and logistically, from Eastern systems of power and influence. This led to the development of somewhat independent and autonomous legal structures, allowing for later political phenomena to develop in the area distinct from the East, namely in egalitarianism, environmentalism, and anti-corporate/communitarian sentiment.

Although early Coloradan politics in many ways eschewed larger systems of politics and power, the federal government still, in more nuanced channels, exerted authority and control. By the late 19th century, Colorado was largely incorporated within the overarching national system

⁷⁶ *Provisional laws and joint resolutions passed at the first and called sessions of the general assembly of Jefferson territory* (Robertson & Clark Printers, 1860), 264.

of the US. Much like the importance of early childhood development for a human, however, this early independent political development was crucial in defining the political environment of Colorado once it fully incorporated into the federal union.

2.2 Chronology

The Colorado Gold Rush of 1858 to 1861 attracted so many people to the Rocky Mountain area that it immediately necessitated basic political organization. As claims were central to the rush, establishing clear and strict standards for claim reports and property rights were essential for a successful enterprise, and miners needed political bodies to establish and enforce these stipulations.⁷⁷

Even before emigrants settled within the mountains, nascent forms of organization began. Many of the prospecting parties that formed on the way to the gold fields created "companies" to delegate different roles and organize their efforts. Take, for example, a letter from gold hunters in 1858 posted in the *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*

At Indian Creek, where we 'nooned,' we were joined by the two Wyandott companies, composed of two wagons with six men each [...] Here we organized, electing Mr. John I. Price captain, and Messrs Winchester and Gross, of Kansas City, assistants, whose duties were well-defined and specified in an article of agreement which had been framed before leaving Kansas City.⁷⁸

Evident in these early prospecting corporations are the inherent disposition of moving groups to organize politically, albeit sometimes in a crude fashion. This shares many parallels with the early political groups within the gold fields of the Colorado Rockies, who also quickly established political entities.

⁷⁷ This notion is underscored in a political history described in the *Rocky Mountain Gazetteer for 1871*.

⁷⁸ Leroy R. Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush: Contemporary Letters and Reports 1858-1859* (Porcupine Press, 1974), 78-79.

2.2.1 Mining Districts

Emigrants in the mountains saw the need for political bodies. This manifested itself in the creation of mining districts all throughout the Colorado mineral belt. The first of these was the Gregory District, named after the discoverer of the lode it surrounded.⁷⁹ Many other districts soon followed. These districts acted in many respects unilaterally, although they generally all followed the same guidelines of electing a president, secretary, treasurer, recorder, and marshall, setting clear guidelines on declaring claims, and establishing rules for public goods such as water and timber. The Colorado mining districts drew heavily on the precedent of California mining law code, which in turn was influenced by medieval European mining codes.⁸⁰

The 1871 Colorado Gazetteer provides a synopsis of these early political formations, describing the emigrants as "miners thronged [through] the mountain slopes, gulches, and valleys along Clear Creek [...] congregated in these wilds from all portions of the world [...] rigid laws were required." This account connects geographic dispersion with political development. Settlers found Kansas Territorial authority to be "inadequate to enforce laws and secure public safety."⁸¹ The solution to these ills were the miners' courts, also referred to as the *Peoples' Courts*, or more familiarly, mining districts. These basic polities established the miners themselves as "the enactors and administrators of laws, and the guardians of public peace and safety."⁸² This autonomy derived from the geographic constraints the Rocky Mountains placed on external systems trying to disseminate influence and control.

The beginnings of political formation in the Colorado area from the Gold Rush thus emerged in these individual mining districts. Their geographical isolation from established

⁷⁹ *The Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer for 1871* (S.S. Wallihan & Company, 1871), 26.

⁸⁰ Rodman Wilson Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West* (University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 23.

⁸¹ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 24.

⁸² *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 332.

structures in the East afforded them a significant degree of independence from external political systems. This isolation allowed Colorado to develop politically from the characteristics of their constituents and their own landscape. This autonomy differed from much of the previous Western expansion into states that are now identified as midwest, such as Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Ohio, etc. Although settlers had already crossed the Rocky Mountain landmark in droves for the California Gold Rush, no large group of Easterners had yet attempted to settle in and around this geographical marker. Captain John Mullan published an account of his travels in the American West in 1865, and wrote of the tough rigidity of the Rockies: "The mountains were expected to prove the key of our troubles; to leave them unexplored, left as unarmed in knowledge as to the real merits of the difficulties that must needs be discussed in the great question of a railroad line to the Pacific."⁸³ Colorado was also located further West than the preceding midwestern states, putting further strain on the infrastructure of an emerging federal power. In these respects, Colorado settlement marked an increasing independence of Westward development from Eastern systems.

This eventually led to features of the later Coloradan political climate that are distinct from existing Eastern American systems and emblematic of other Western mining frontiers. These features include egalitarianism, support for the poor, and environmentalism, and will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

2.2.2 Territorial and State Incorporation

In addition to the segmented formations of mining districts and mining courts within the mountains, larger scale forms of political organization also took place at this early stage in Coloradan development. This manifested in the creation of counties, a Territory, and eventually,

⁸³ John Mullan, *Miners and Travelers' Guide* (New York: William M. Franklin: 1865), 43.

a State. Shortly after settlers filled into the Rockies in search of gold, Kansas Governor James Denver organized the new gold region into a county within the Kansas Territory named Arapahoe, with Denver City as the county seat. To carry out necessary duties of the county he also appointed the officers of Probate Judge, District Attorney, Sheriff, and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, all of whom were in a LeCompton company that was already venturing out for their own stake in the gold fever.⁸⁴ Here it is evident that alongside the smaller mining district formations, larger organizations of politics grew from the outset of the rush. These also retained elements distinct to the region and at times divergent from national political narratives.

Concurrently with this county establishment there were already strong sentiments to form an independent territory from Kansas in and around the Pike's Peak area. Mining and the gold rush were central to this development, as expressed in an 1858 letter written by a miner and published in the *Nebraska Advertiser*: "There are about 800 men in the mines, and more coming continually. An election will be held next week to elect a representative of the mining interests in the territorial legislature."⁸⁵ While the political incorporations of the Pike's Peak area formally began within the authority of the Kansas territorial legislature, aspirations for an independent territory were evident almost immediately from the start of the rush, as described in the 1871 *Gazetteer*: "the delegate [elected to the Kansas Territorial legislature] proceeded to Washington at once, with instructions to do all in his power to prevail upon Congress to separate the Pike's Peak gold regions from the State of Kansas, and form thereof a new Territory."⁸⁶ Although much

⁸⁴ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 60 and 172.

⁸⁵ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 154.

For another reference of the intimacy between mining and early Coloradan political development, consider this excerpt from a letter by rusher W.D. McLain, published in the *Omaha Times*: "I have seen plenty of gold so I know it is here. We have taken the first steps toward organizing a territory, sending a delegate, etc." (Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 156).

⁸⁶ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 24.

of the affairs of the mining districts were carried out locally, many of the mining individuals retained interest in establishing and improving ties to the national political infrastructure of the country.

Not long after Territorial ambitions emerged came State sentiments. The visions of many new settlers in the Rocky Mountain area aligned in that they viewed their domain as on equal par with the existing states of the East. A line from an 1858 itinerary of a Christmas celebration in Denver city reads "The new territory of Colona. - May she soon realize her brightest anticipation, and take her place in the galaxy of stars, as a state."⁸⁷ When newspaper publisher Horace Greeley made his famous trip out to the Colorado gold diggings in 1859 "He spoke on the gold resources of the country, giving his opinion as to their origin and quantitative and qualitative extent, and advocated the speedy organization of a community of a state."⁸⁸ Within the confines of the Colorado area, inhabitants believed a state should take hold, in ways different from an Eastern state. It just became a matter of convincing those outside of Colorado, and particularly in Washington D.C., of this vision.

2.2.3 National Context

Colorado, distinct from other Western territories, was both ideologically and physically central to the formation of the modern American union. As Elliott West argues, the discovery of gold in the Pike's Peak region filled in the geopolitical center of what would eventually become the modern continental United States. Instead of two distinct coasts, America formed into one, coherent, identity.⁸⁹ In a more ideological sense, the state of Colorado incorporated in the centennial year following the birth of the nation, so this juncture brought legislators and settlers

⁸⁷ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 196.

⁸⁸ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 375.

⁸⁹ Elliott West, "Golden Dreams: Colorado, California, and the Reimagining of America," *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 49 no.3, (1999): 2-11.

alike to consider these implications, looking back on what the United States meant in general. Within this federal context, Coloradan development was both divergent and connecting with national narratives.

Throughout the development of Colorado into statehood, many national events took place that were relevant to this process. From 1861 to 1865, Northern and Southern states fought each other in a civil war fundamentally over the labor system of slavery. The conclusion of the war began a process known as Reconstruction where the federal government wrestled with challenges to reincorporating the Southern states and addressing the freed slave citizenship. Although they are often treated as distinct events, Westward expansion and this process of southern Reconstruction were heavily intertwined.⁹⁰ Much of the congressional acts incorporating Western lands into the Union passed after the secession of Southern states, which allowed for such a legislative majority of Northerners to do so.⁹¹ At the conclusion of the Civil War, many army regiments transferred West to address conflicts with Native Americans.⁹² Through these methods, the federal government addressed issues broadly in the South and West within a similar context, so developments in either region had cross interactions. From this perspective, Western interactions with the federal government can be observed within a larger context of emerging federal power as it dealt with all its developing holdings, from Southern states to Western territories.

Historian Elliott West makes this point of interconnectedness in *The Last Indian War*, coining the phrase "Greater Reconstruction" to collapse these two dynamics (between the North

⁹⁰ For a good overview of this interconnectedness specifically with respect to Colorado, see Susan Schulten's "The Civil War and the Origins of the Colorado Territory," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 44, no.1, (2013): 21-46.

⁹¹ Schulten, "The Civil War and the Origins of the Colorado Territory," 22.

⁹² Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 107.

and the South and the North and the West) into one coherent movement. He writes, "Those questions [of political admission, participation, and investment] were being asked as much about the West as about the South, and they were pushed to the front of national concern as much by territorial expansion as by the Civil War."⁹³ Many of these links were ideological and abstract, as Richard White writes, "Reconstruction in the West involved the same paradox as in the South: the expansion of individualism and contract freedom - hallmarks of liberalism ideologically opposed to strong governments - under the sponsorship of a newly powerful state."⁹⁴ Within this national context, my comments hereafter made to Eastern powers of influence and control will largely be in reference to the Northeastern region of the United States, where the majority of political and financial power was at this time. Understanding this connection to the Greater Reconstruction adds clarity to understanding this interaction between Western development and Eastern systems and structures, as it was a dynamic in dialogue with Southern Reconstruction.

2.3 Early Political Phenomena

2.3.1 Independence

Interwoven throughout the early political development of Colorado are several themes central to the arguments and narratives of this chapter. The first and one of the most important is the degree of independence early Colorado polities enjoyed as a result of their geographical remoteness. The Coloradan natural landscape predisposed itself to promote and harbor independent political development, as described in the following Territorial Mining Legislation:

prior to the organization of Colorado as a territory, in 1861, and the session of its first legislature, there were no general laws affecting the whole territory in force. The mining region was subdivided by natural boundaries into numerous mining districts, according to the convenience or caprice of the mining population. Each

⁹³ Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (Oxford University Press, 2009), xx.

⁹⁴ White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, 113.

district made its own laws. These were, from the very nature of the case, in every instance similar, varied, however, in their detail.⁹⁵

Especially crucial in this description of development is the use of the term "natural boundaries," which underscores the central role of the environment in helping guide these early Coloradan polities.

Through multiple instances at the start of the Rush, Kansas officials and legislators attempted to extend their influence over the Pike's Peak region, an area formally within the Kansas domain, but the miners and settlers within the area eschewed and often outright ignored these external attempts at authority. The following account from 1858 published in the *Lawrence Republican* describes an overt rejection of Kansas law:

The miners are resolved upon carrying out the doctrines of 'squatter sovereignty' to the utmost extent. They repudiate the officer sent out by Governor Denver, and claim the right to select officers for themselves. The Georgia men are the most excited about the matter, and threatened to hang the Denver officers if they attempt to exercise any official functions. The Lawrence boys, being some eight or nine miles distant, look on and laugh at the contest.⁹⁶

These early accounts suggest that although Kansas may have had formal authority over the Pike's Peak region, in practice they had very little control.⁹⁷ Settlers did not always express opposition violently. An 1859 excerpt from the *Kansas City Journal of Commerce* describes a meeting held by the citizens of South Platte in response to the appointing actions of Governor Denver, whereby they requested the officers resign and allow them to elect their own.⁹⁸ These settlers

⁹⁵ *Mining laws enacted by the Legislature of Colorado from first to ninth session, inclusive: and the laws of the United States concerning mines and minerals* (Collier & Hall, 1873), 13.

⁹⁶ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 132.

Similarly, an account published in the *Nebraska Advertiser* in 1859 speaks to local hostility expressed toward Kansas officials: "Since then, within the past few days, two men arrived here, claiming to have been sent from East Kansas, two actors sheriff and judge; with orders to lay off a county, located county seat, and, I suppose field the offices to the best advantage; but by some means, the men of the town below have told them that they would not like to live under the Kansas government, and I hear threatened to tar them." (Hafen ed. *Colorado Gold Rush*, 171)

⁹⁷ A different excerpt in 1859 from the *Leavenworth Times* reads "The squatters universally repudiate these officials, and will not recognize them in any manner whatever." (Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 135)

⁹⁸ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 173.

typically rejected external influence, with some success. This was in part due to the nature of the gold rush, both with the environmental locations it placed people into and the demographic of lower-class people it attracted.

The success of this movement toward autonomy is displayed in one instance in the *Nebraska Advertiser* in 1859. When Governor Denver's appointed officers entered Arapahoe county, the sheriff resigned and left nearly upon arrival, and the locals appointed their own man, Jack Jones, to the position.⁹⁹ In the proposed Jefferson Territory Constitution, legislation officially called for the creation of mining districts within the Territory, together with the establishment of Mining Courts. These Mining Courts were headed by a judge, elected by the miners of the districts on a trimonthly basis, and who "shall have original jurisdiction in all matters in regard to mining claims and miners' interests in working and operating the same; and he shall have power to try and decide all matters of dispute coming within his jurisdiction."¹⁰⁰ While allowing for appeals to the District and Supreme Court, this legal writing set aside a significant amount of autonomy for polities within these mineral districts and ascribed power to judges elected by the people within those districts.¹⁰¹

The proposed Jefferson Constitution also established guidelines for the creation of more mineral districts in the future, ensuring them autonomy as well:

Whenever it shall appear to the satisfaction of the county court that it is the wish of the citizens of any portion of their County to have mining districts laid off, and that the same will not be detrimental to the public interests, they shall proceed to lay off such districts, and provide for the election of such officers as may be

⁹⁹ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 178.

¹⁰⁰ *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 178.

¹⁰¹ In a similar vein, the 1861 law code of the Union Mining District writes that "No debt or demand of any nature shall be collected by suit in this court which has not originated either coming to this mining region or since the arrival of such debtor therein." (*Laws and regulations of Union District*, 1861) In this respect, the mining districts really tended to their own issues and kept other concerns out of their affairs.

required by law for such mining districts in the same manner as provided for the laying off of precincts and electing the officers thereof.¹⁰²

This writing establishes the mining districts as distinct legal bodies, much like that of a precinct, complete with its own set of officers and administrators. The federal legislation on mining passed in the 1870's upheld these sentiments, allowing mining districts to make their own rules and regulations concerning "the location, manner of recording, and amount of work necessary to hold possession of a mining claim."¹⁰³ In many different facets of their operations, settlers of the mining districts and overall early polities in Colorado achieved considerable autonomy and independence.

2.3.2 Precedence

Closely related to its independence, larger political systems recognized and upheld much of the legislation and practices established early in the political development of Colorado. Much of the political precedence established in the late 1850's in the mining districts upheld as precedent in Territorial, State, and even Federal law. This made the importance of early political formation in the mining districts far outlast their actual enforcement, as powerful political institutions largely adopted the practices established in this period. When the settlers initially came to the region during the Rush, they expected that the practices they established would be honored and incorporated once more formal institutions of political government formed in the area. This led them to create law and order in the belief that it would guide the future political outlook of the land, which in many ways it did do. This process is described in an 1859 letter published in the *Missouri Republican*:

We have a claim club, signed by half the men in the valley, whose business it is to see that all town sites and farming and timber claims are recorded. So far we have done well, and hope the county officers that will be elected in March will take up

¹⁰² *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 194.

¹⁰³ *Mining laws*, 49.

the business as we leave it. If so, there will be no trouble, if not, the bloody scenes and riots of eastern Kansas will again be enacted, and many good men will fall in the defense of their actual rights.¹⁰⁴

Again the threat of violence is prominent in upholding these established practices as precedent, and often it never came to this issue, as most laws upheld. This violence is indicative of the early formative nature of development, as projected disorder was only a credible threat in an area with limited federal infrastructure to easily squash violence.

The proposed 1859 Jefferson Constitution formally upheld all practices implemented by the mining districts explicitly in their writing: “The rules, laws and regulations heretofore established by the miners and inhabitants of the gold region of this territory, and the decisions of their various courts in meetings made in pursuance thereof, and not inconsistent therewith, are hereby legalized and declared valid.”¹⁰⁵ While still deferring to this territorial legislation, these laws explicitly allowed for the conduct undergone by mining districts to be recognized within the territorial legal infrastructure, giving it the proper legitimacy to foster future development.

At one of the earliest levels of larger political incorporation, the territorial scale, the emerging government recognized the practices and customs of the miners as valid.¹⁰⁶ This is a sentiment that would largely hold through the rest of the political development of Colorado. In a synopsis of the mining laws passed through the course of the Colorado Territorial Legislature, the first codification of mining laws is described as taking place in 1861. The Territorial administration passed a uniform law that would apply to all districts, and it did not invalidate any mining titles or district laws, but rather formally upheld them.¹⁰⁷ While becoming the new ruling

¹⁰⁴ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 216.

¹⁰⁵ *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 250.

¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the Jefferson Constitution also declared all "sales, transfers, and alienations heretofore made by miners and others" to be legal and valid. (*Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 250)

¹⁰⁷ *Mining laws*, 15.

law of the land, this code explicitly drew from the existing district law codes, bringing it to the territorial level.¹⁰⁸ In this sense, while much of the local law codes became overruled by territorial legislation, these new laws developed from the very rules they replaced, so mining district legislation continued to be the face of the Colorado political landscape, albeit in a somewhat indirect manner.

In the formation of the Colorado State Constitution, legislators assembled a subcommittee to evaluate the laws and regulations of the Mines. This committee submitted a report to the Convention that it had "much difficulty in ascertaining the subjects proper to embody in their report because of the absence of all precedent on this subject and because the mines are a peculiar species of property different in many respects from any other in the State."¹⁰⁹ They therefore ascribed a significantly limited degree of jurisdiction over these mining districts, deferring to the Districts themselves in many respects due to their specialized knowledge of those issues. A key theme to pick out of this is that larger political systems, from the state level and higher, had an extremely limited understanding of mining. Eastern systems deferred these matters to local authorities due to the limited historical precedent national administrators could rely on for the matter. In this sense, the uniqueness of mining, particularly with the environment it was situated in, allowed for local autonomy with lasting precedent.

This deference of political power becomes even clearer at the national level, where governmental systems had even less of an understanding of the mining industry than the

¹⁰⁸ A bill drafted and included in the 1864 House Journal reads "the records, laws and proceedings of Buckskin Joe, Montgomery, Independent and Mosquito mining districts, in the said county of Park, be taken as prima facie evidence in the matters concerned in such records or proceedings." (*House Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 176) Here is explicit upholding of the laws and customs of the mining districts.

¹⁰⁹ *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado* (The Smith-Brooks Press State Printers, 1875), 211.

Colorado Territorial Legislature. A compendium of early national mining laws explains for the early absence of federal regulations in the industry:

The discovery of Gold and Silver Mines within the United States had not been contemplated by our lawmakers. It was a subject little understood and lest legislation should be injurious it was omitted by the general government. In the meantime each State, Territory and District made such laws as best suited itself, regardless of the enactment of any other.¹¹⁰

This yet again supports the notion that larger political systems limited their involvement in the mining industry due to their narrow understanding of it. No federal legislation existed concerning mining until July 26, 1866.¹¹¹ One of the very first laws passed at the national level declared all mineral deposits in land owned by the United States "to be free and open to exploration and purchase" by US citizens.¹¹² A subtle yet important line in this federal legislation reads, "A very small portion of the lands within, or West of the mountains has thus far been surveyed, and hence the necessity for the Territorial law which still remains on our statute books." This is an important admission made here by the federal government. Due to the fact that they have not properly surveyed land West of the Rocky Mountains, the US political body was unable to extend a great deal of its influence into the Colorado area, and thus relied on the existing Coloradan laws as precedent.¹¹³ This partial incompatibility between Eastern systems and Western landscapes was a main driver of Western autonomy.

¹¹⁰ *Mining laws*, 39.

¹¹¹ *Mining laws*, 39.

¹¹² *Mining laws*, 48.

¹¹³ This is a phenomenon that largely holds true for the development of all states West of the Rocky Mountains. For a survey of this process, see Noam Maggor's "To Coddle and Caress These Great Capitalists: Eastern Money, Frontier Populism, and the Politics of Market-Making in the American West." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 122, no. 1, 2017, pp. 55–84.

2.3.3 Authority

In addition to independence and precedence, the political phenomena developed within the mining districts of incipient Colorado held actual authority and legitimacy in practice. The law codes of the Union Mining District, for example, place their court of law on par with any other institution in the area, in the following article: "The miners' court shall have equity as well as law jurisdiction, and may grant writs of injunction in all proper cases, and all other motions, upon proper cause shown, to be supported by affidavits alone, and to all such other acts as a court of equity has power to do."¹¹⁴ As is evident in most of the mining district law codes, the political authority of these districts were placed in equal legitimacy to other non-mining areas within the Colorado domain. In addition to this, a law passed by the Colorado Territorial House of Representatives in 1864 stated that all marriages authorized by a Mining District President, Judge, or mining district elect be deemed legitimate in the eyes of the territory.¹¹⁵ This law, while only pertaining to marriages, inherently legitimized the authority of the officials of mining districts, putting them on equal footing with any other public official in the Territory.

In the 1871 Colorado Gazetteer, the courts of the mining districts, including the president, judge, sheriff, collector, surveyor, and recorder, were referred to as the "Superior Courts" of the District.¹¹⁶ The laws in these areas were also generally enforced and followed in practice, as suggested in the following line: "The laws of the land are duly respected, and their enactments enforced as rigidly as in any country, and the life and property as safe in Colorado as in Massachusetts."¹¹⁷ Despite limited influence and intervention from larger political systems, the

¹¹⁴ *Laws and regulations of Union District, Clear Creek County: passed October 21, 1861* (Collier & Wells Printers, 1864), 6.

¹¹⁵ *House Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado* (Session 3, 1864), 214.

¹¹⁶ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 25.

¹¹⁷ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 113.

polities within the Colorado Rockies appeared to have their authority respected by the individuals they governed.

2.3.4 Drawbacks

Despite this evidence of strong independence, autonomy, and precedence, there still were some elements of early Coloradan political development reliant on external forces, or changed as external systems imposed their influence. The political formations created in Colorado at this time were instituted by migrants from Eastern and midwestern states. These settlers entered with their own understandings and biases crafted by the existing US system. One of the earlier rushers, in a letter home that was posted in the *St. Joseph Gazette* in 1859, mentioned that the claim club he was a part of was essentially copied from United States preemption law.¹¹⁸ In this respect, some of the practices that settlers brought with them were in fact preceded by the Eastern systems they came from. Along similar lines, the civil and criminal law code included in the Jefferson territorial constitution was adapted from the state law code of Iowa.¹¹⁹ It is not entirely surprising that political development derived from a midwestern state that was the former home to a noticeable portion of the area's immigrants.¹²⁰

In exceptional circumstances, the mining districts deferred to precedent or external political systems. The Union Mining District law code, for example, states, "In all cases of special proceedings, the practice prescribed by the laws of Kansas shall be observed."¹²¹

Although many forms of Kansas intervention were rejected, when district law needed to refer to existing precedent, it was somewhat more involved. A law passed by the Colorado Territorial

¹¹⁸ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 247.

¹¹⁹ *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 158.

¹²⁰ As Elliott West writes: "The huge majority of goldseekers came West from the Missouri and Ohio valleys, the middle Atlantic states, and the upper South." (West, *Contested Plains*, 117)

¹²¹ *Laws and regulations of Union District*, 8.

House Legislature also allowed for an overruling of Mining District law codes, albeit in a largely democratic manner:

That when the miners of any organized county in this Territory shall adopt, in mass convention, or convention of delegates from each election precinct therein, any rules or regulations concerning lode claims, not conflicting with the laws of this Territory or of the Congress of the United States, said mining laws shall be recorded in the office of the County Recorder, and shall thereafter become legal evidence in courts of this Territory, and take precedence, and annul all local mining District laws.¹²²

This introduction of county-wide mining laws marked an increase in the hegemony of the Territorial polity, but seeing that this overruling required a majority vote of the county citizens, it still maintained the autonomy and independence experienced by citizens in the mountain region. In this manner, the precedence of local mining polities continued to shape the outlook of the Coloradan political climate.

2.4 Support/Favor for Mining in Law

With the independence, precedence, and authority of Colorado Mining Courts in mind, the prominence and importance of the mining industry and its workers throughout the course of early Colorado politics becomes more intelligible. As the rush began the germinations of politics in the Rocky Mountain region, it held special consideration in local and regional politics, even well past the explicit importance of Mining Districts. When describing the political composition of the Colorado Territory in 1871, the *Gazetteer* writes, "The smallest, but most important, of the political divisions of Colorado, lies chiefly in the foothills, and embraces, within its limited borders, the richest gold mining region in the world."¹²³ This description notes that despite the small relative size of the gold region, the Gilpin area held considerable influence within all of Coloradan politics.

¹²² *1864 House Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 222.

¹²³ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 45.

Special favor for the industry and people of mining was no hidden phenomenon in Colorado, and politicians even made explicit acknowledgements to show their support for and awareness of this. A statement printed by the 1864 Colorado Territorial Legislature reads, "Mining is the most important interest of the Territory. Any legislation therefore may be calculated to foster and protect it, to encourage its more rapid development, or to render more secure the rights and privileges of miners, shall receive my hearty approval, and have my earnest cooperation in carrying it into execution."¹²⁴ The aura of the mining industry proved to be a guiding tenet in the developing forces of the Coloradan state.

The kind of favor for mining expressed here had lasting and tangible effects, even into the legislation of the State Constitution in 1876. In this document, legislators exempted mineral claims from taxes beyond the extent of extraction value, and even changed the election date from November to October to accommodate voting miners' travel from being hindered by the winter weather.¹²⁵ This second stipulation displays a particular awareness of the climate in the area and consideration for these factors within politics. Additionally, the State Constitution excluded mineral lodes from all taxation for the ten years following the ratification of the document.¹²⁶

Looking forward to federal support, the framers of the State Constitution noted the importance of having an increased presence for the mining industry and Colorado interests at the national stage upon achieving statehood:

¹²⁴ *1864 House Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 16.

Also, consider the following excerpt from a statement by the 1865 Territorial Legislature: "We, the council and house of representatives of the territory of Colorado, believe the mining interest here to be the great leading interest, and that its interruption and destruction, as would follow by the passage of the bill in congress, known as the Sherman Bill, would inevitably result in the depopulation of our territory." [*General laws and joint resolutions, memorials, and private acts passed at the Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado* (Rocky Mountain News Office, 1865), 176.]

¹²⁵ The exact line was "in order to prevent the men of certain mining districts from being disenfranchised by snows and storms." (*Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 271)

¹²⁶ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 483.

With two Senators and a Representative in the National Congress, we will be enabled to command respect, and to secure additional appropriations for the fostering of our industries, as well as [...] in the passing of laws concerning the title to mineral veins, and providing for the disposal of the mineral and pastoral lands of the State as suited to peculiar wants.¹²⁷

Despite being gradually incorporated into the federal system of government, mining and the origins of Colorado political development remain as key defining characteristics of its domain.

This helps explain why its more general features, including environmentalism and egalitarianism, continue to pervade the Coloradan political psyche.

2.4.1 Knowledge and Comparative Advantage

The unique and niche nature of gold and mining is what particularly allowed many aspects of Colorado politics to retain elements of its original autonomy. When selecting federal positions for the Colorado government, local legislators relied on the regional knowledge required for understanding the mining industry to get their own individuals in office. In an 1865 resolution drafted by the Territorial Legislature, for example, the congressmen proposed Moses Hallett, a citizen of the territory, to be the US District judge for their region. They cited unique knowledge and immersion as the rationale for this choice, writing, "the peculiar situation of the people, remote from all other communities, are almost unknown to the laws of the Eastern states; and persons residing in the territory have acquired a knowledge of these questions, necessary to a correct understanding of them, which is not possessed by residents of the Eastern states."¹²⁸ In this way, the local inhabitants of Colorado wielded their insight on the region's varying environment to gain political power over external overseers. The incompatibility of Eastern systems and Western landscapes discouraged overwhelming external control while also elevating internal leaders.

¹²⁷ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 733.

¹²⁸ *Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 181.

This unique knowledge and understanding was a valuable currency in Colorado. Dr. E.F. Holland, for example, was a physician, surgeon, and graduate of Harvard University who came to Colorado in 1860. He was reported as "largely interested in mining and Milling Enterprises, and well-informed in all matters pertaining to the mines and minerals of the district."¹²⁹ Holland eventually served in the territorial legislature on account of these insights. The power of developing this form of knowledge and expertise is a development that will be probed more in a Chapter 4.

2.5 Distinct Political Features

2.5.1 Egalitarianism

Aspects of the mountain mining polities maintained as distinct elements of the political climate of the region, well past the importance of the mining industry itself. One of the most prominent of these was of an egalitarian nature, whereby incoming rushers saw themselves on an equal plane with other movers. When thousands of settlers flooded into the Pike's Peak region during the rush, they came on similar standing. Those who came in search of fortune had little money to begin with, and they entered into this unknown area that held little more importance on each individual than their ability to use a pickaxe and search for minerals.¹³⁰ West alludes to this in his overview of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush, writing, "they were a collection of grocers and clerks, liverymen and farmboys who had recently come to Kansas and were suffering from tight times of the depression. The company's sudden creation suggested both the region's changed

¹²⁹ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 371.

¹³⁰ In reference to the effects of the Financial Panic of 1857, Elliott West writes "The middle border was full of restless men down on their luck and looking for a turn of fortune." (West, *Contested Plains*, 101)

circumstances and the early signs of a crowd mentality."¹³¹ As is shown in later laws supporting the poor, group solidarity emerged from these similar financial circumstances.

Due to the circumstances of this settlement, much of the early political formation in the region had a distinctly democratic nature. The Union Mining District law code, for example, allowed for miners' meetings to discuss any subject of importance whenever petitioned for by at least twelve miners in the district. Each year, miners democratically elected seven councilmen to act as the "legislative body of the district."¹³² The territorial law code allowed for citizenship and voting rights to "any person owning a claim, or working or living in the District."¹³³ The requirements for practicing law were also fairly lenient, written as "Any white male citizen of the United States who is actually an inhabitant of this Territory, and who shall by examination, satisfy the court, that he is of good moral character, may by such court be permitted to practice in all the District courts of the Territory upon taking the usual oath of office."¹³⁴ While use of the term "good moral character" allowed for subjective interpretations to take place, it still allowed for a large swath of people to enter such a respectable profession as law. This egalitarian virtue stems in part from the nature of the early Coloradan mining industry, which required little initial capital and attracted many lower-class individuals. As a communal endeavor, miners attained mutual respect for character and work ethic, and did not necessarily associate these morals with class. Mining was very forward looking in this sense, seeing the prospective future and potential despite a limited present value.

¹³¹ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (University Press of Kansas, 1998), 103.

¹³² *Laws and regulations of Union District*, 18.

¹³³ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 25.

¹³⁴ *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 84.

It is important to note that the democratic ideals purported here were severely restricted in the scope of whom it pertained. As seen above, legislators restricted law practice to white males. A similar theme emerges in the description of who is allowed to act as a witness in a legal case: "Every human being of sufficient capacity to understand the obligation of an oath, is a competent witness in all cases, both civil and criminal, except as otherwise here in declared. But an Indian, a negro, or mulatto or black person shall not be allowed to give testimony in any cause."¹³⁵ Here it becomes even more clear that white males were the main benefactors of this equality. Despite this limited scope, egalitarian values maintained and even expanded to other groups, particularly for males of other races, through the course of early political development. Being one of the first class of Eastern settlers, legislators made it clear that miners would be on equal footing with any other citizen in the domain, as expressed in this 1865 resolution:

That the hardy and enterprising class of men who are preferred the pursuit of mining to that of agriculture, cannot be expected to take a title inferior indignity or certainty to that enjoyed under the Homestead laws by their fellow citizens, engaged in agriculture, and that any attempt to permanently subject the inhabitants of the future mining states of this great Republic, to any system of laws different from those by which the agricultural states are governed, must, In the end, prove subversive of Liberty.¹³⁶

This treatise expounds upon strong democratic values that would remain emblematic of Coloradan political culture. It must also be noted that through this discourse Colorado legislators shrewdly used the endeavor of mining to ensure their territory be on equal footing with the other states and territories of the Union. Through this dialogue, the writers acknowledged the unique environments of the West while maintaining its legitimacy and validity with respect to Eastern systems. Using mining as a focal point, these politicians more widely argued that despite its

¹³⁵ *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 126.

¹³⁶ *Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 177.

differences from more established Eastern states, Colorado was just as viable an area for American development, both politically and economically speaking.

The State Constitution marked a maturity in these egalitarian values in many respects. One of the first lines written at the 1876 Convention stated, "The Constitution shall be Republican in form, and make no distinction in civil or political rights on account of race or color, except Indians not taxed."¹³⁷ This already marks an improvement and extension of equal rights for the Colorado electorate, expanding from white males to males of all ethnicities. In addition to this, the Constitution required that all laws, decrees, and regulations be published in English, Spanish, and German.¹³⁸ This indicated an acknowledgement of more than English-speaking Eastern immigrants to the States and allowed for the political incorporation of New Mexican settlers as well as German immigrants. An important statement the framers of the Constitution make in their drafting is that the people of Colorado would retain their governmental agency in the area, as maintained in the following line: "All political power is vested in and derived from the people; that all government of right originates from the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted solely for the good of the whole."¹³⁹ Distinct in the political formation of Colorado is an intimacy to its electorate, and as the diversity of that electorate evolved, so too did the political outlook of the state's laws and guidelines. This intimacy to the electorate can be traced back to the earliest mining districts in the region whereby handfuls of men congregated and elected their own leaders.

This is a sentiment that rings true back to the earliest polity formations within the Rockies. These early notions of equality improved to the point of the State Constitution drafting,

¹³⁷ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 10.

¹³⁸ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 100.

¹³⁹ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 88.

where it was much more aware and embracing of racial equality, as suggested by the following utterance in the Convention:

No man who has examined the subject doubts that the enfranchisement of the colored people put bread and butter into the mouths of their children. It enabled men to live by the labor of their hands who before were pariahs of the community, the foot balls of the police courts and officers, and the last who could secure a chance to earn a bone or crust for their children.¹⁴⁰

The perception of race displayed here could surely not have been enjoyed without the seeds of democracy that started during the Rush. The massive influx of white males all at a generally equal political level persisted and improved well beyond the mining districts and exhibited at the state level come 1876.

2.5.2 Support for the Poor/Anti-Corporate Sentiment

Similarly to the egalitarian quality of Coloradan politics, framers also gave special attention to the protection of the poor and safety from corporate power. Beyond political capital, the majority of immigrants who came to Colorado during the Rush entered on roughly equal economic footing as well. The Panic of 1857 left many middle to lower-class families and individuals in financial ruin, and this pushed prospectors to come. This point is echoed in a speech given by Hiram P Bennet in 1863: "The crying want of the country is men with sufficient capital to put up quartz mills. The great mass of miners are poor men, who went to that country from the Western States and Territories to recover fortunes lost in the financial crisis of 1857."¹⁴¹

This distinct demographic of lower to middle class individuals in the early Colorado populace promoted the development of support for the poor. This paired with a mistrust of corporations and capitalists, both in part due to the financial crisis as well as the large working-

¹⁴⁰ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 268.

¹⁴¹ Hiram P. Bennet, *Speech ... in the House of Representatives, Feb. 28, 1863, on the natural products, mineral resources, and future prospects of the territory of Colorado*, 7.

class population. This is evident in the Jefferson Constitution when describing the duties of the Territorial Chief Justice:

The Chief Justice by taking the oath of office before the president of the board of canvassers, that he will support the Constitution of the United States, the organic Act of the territory, and that he will without fear, favour, affection, or hope of reward, to the best of his knowledge and ability, administer Justice accordingly to law, equally to the rich and the poor.¹⁴²

This last statement, *equally to the rich and poor*, underlines not only the egalitarian nature of Colorado politics, but displays a particular focus on the dynamics of wealth. The majority of citizens at this time engaged in some manner to the prospect of mining, an endeavor that works to extract material wealth from the ground. As it seemed everybody in the process was equally likely to strike it big, and more importantly many would never find luck, this appeared to form a community that looked after each other regardless of economic outcomes.

Local laws preserved support and care for the poor. One mining regulation set at the territorial level, for example, required that one claim in each mining district be set aside in the name of the Territory of Colorado, and that its minerals be put toward a fund to support disabled miners and the poor in the area. A further stipulation of this law read:

That if any person, of the class of persons known to be miners, shall be disabled in the pursuit of his occupation as a miner, he shall be entitled to receive, out of the funds raised under the provisions of this act, a sum sufficient to pay his necessary expenses, incurred by reason of his disability or injury so encouraged, including necessary medical attendance.¹⁴³

This care for injured miners underscores the camaraderie of the industry. Another law passed by the Territorial Legislature in 1865 required that a Mining Bureau be established in the Territory, where all miners could go to get their ores assayed.¹⁴⁴ Miners considered this a core issue within

¹⁴² *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 174.

¹⁴³ *Mining laws*, 27.

¹⁴⁴ *Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 175.

the practice because before a standardized Bureau was put in place, miners could not ascertain the value of their findings for a cheap price. The lack of a cheap assayer could lead to a concentration of mining where the price of assaying value became a negligible part of the overall operation. Creating a Bureau with low assay values allowed miners with little liquid capital to remain and develop in the industry.

The following congressional memorial expressed these concerns about wealth controlling mining: "A large proportion that were prospectors and miners are men who are in moderate pecuniary circumstances, and the exorbitant demands made by assayers [...] render it almost impossible for them to obtain justice through these channels [...]"¹⁴⁵ The first portion of this commentary makes note of the lower financial standing of the people involved in the mining industry, and then explains the need for means of credit and support from the governing body to allow these lower wealth individuals to continue to operate. Legislators expressed an anxiety over capitalist control in the remainder of the memorial as follows:

giving to capitalists great and dangerous advantages over the laboring class, who have labored unceasingly for the development of our rich mineral resources, which are distributed along the rocky mountain range, upon which thousands of hard-working men are employed in exhuming the precious metals for the benefit of the world at large.¹⁴⁶

Clear here is an understanding that a direct and intimate relationship with extracting resources from the environment should inherently grant those extractors a portion of the value removed. This memorial touches upon a similar sentiment that developed in the Colorado political climate, which is a general mistrust of corporations and the capitalist system as a whole. As a result, the Territorial and State legislatures put many laws in place to limit the extent to which large corporations could exert control. This includes measures preventing ranchmen from

¹⁴⁵ *Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 175.

¹⁴⁶ *Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 175.

monopolizing timber and limiting companies to ownership of no more than one tract of land in mining districts.¹⁴⁷ Specifically with concern for political control, Colorado election laws placed heavy restrictions on newspapers and railroad companies endorsing political candidates, ensuring concentrated wealth would not dominate the political scene. Anti-corporate sentiment and communal values began as early as the gold rush and continued through the course of Coloradan political development.

2.5.3 Environmentalism/Conservation

One of the most distinct aspects of the Colorado political climate was its early considerations for environmental resource management. Eastern settlement into the Colorado landscape during the Gold Rush began immediately immersed into the landscape. Settlers flooded into the mountains and set out to move the earth in search of minerals, diverting streams for water flow and cutting down trees to develop drills and sluices. This intimacy with the environment at the outset led to an important consideration for these issues within a political context at a time much earlier than the rest of the nation. Richard White speaks to this phenomenon, writing "Work that has changed nature has simultaneously produced much of our knowledge of nature."¹⁴⁸ The environmentalism that emerged within the Rocky Mountains was different from the more intellectual conservation movement emerging from scientific forestry and promoted by social elites. In his book *Crimes Against Nature*, Karl Jacoby defines this as "moral ecology," an understanding of the value of intimacy between rural people and the environment.¹⁴⁹ So while more national developments around this time with respect to

¹⁴⁷ 1864 *House Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 49 and *Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Richard White, " 'Are You an Environmentalist? Or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature" in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (W.W. Norton Company, 1996), 172.

¹⁴⁹ Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (University of California Press, 2014), 3.

environmentalism occurred, the individuals in Pike's Peak developed close-knit relationships with nature, in ways distinctly different than their Eastern counterparts.¹⁵⁰

Strict regulation of environmental management was evident from the immediate start of Eastern immigration into Colorado. The Union Mining District law code took a stringent stance on these issues, as expressed in the following decree:

Any person or persons cutting or mutilating any green tree or trees in Empire City proper, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and be fined for each and every offense, as the court may deem proper [...] No person or persons shall be allowed to slaughter or slay any beef cattle, or animal of any kind, within the limits of Empire City, or within ten rods of any gulch, stream, or public road.¹⁵¹

Mining Districts had far-reaching considerations for the resources they relied on. This focus is not surprising considering the origins of these polities. The boundaries set to describe the domains of these districts are littered with environmental landmarks, from streams and gulches to mountain passes.¹⁵² These organizations derived from the environment itself, and thereby saw the long-term preservation of natural resources as essential in their own survival.

These issues were among lawmakers' concerns when drafting the Colorado State Constitution. At the Convention many members spoke of the scarcity of general resources as shown in the following lines: "greatest attention ought to be directed to the preservation and care of those resources upon which the welfare of the people depends."¹⁵³ This special focus on environmental conservation also receives direct attention specifically to timber and forestry, a resource which was intimately tied to mining through the construction of sluices and drills:

The devastation of the forest in Colorado is progressing at a rapid rate, so that their destruction will probably be completed before another generation will have passed away, and that's gradually deprived us of the means of developing the resources of the natural wealth of this country and at the same time to diminish

¹⁵⁰ Yellowstone National Park, for example, was established in 1872.

¹⁵¹ *Laws and regulations of Union District*, 17.

¹⁵² *Laws and regulations of Union District*, 2.

¹⁵³ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 297.

the chances of our prosperity and progress and expose us besides too many other dangers and discomforts.¹⁵⁴

Incorporated into these sentiments is an understanding that the health and prosperity of the Colorado political economy was intrinsically linked to its environment and landscape. Material change was what started the economic success of the region through mining, and further material change had the potential to bring the downfall. This fear was illustrated from the following quote at the Convention:

The consequences of such a calamity would lie severely felt, thousands of laborers would be thrown out of employment, who had made a living in cutting, transporting and working up the products of our forests. Sawmills would have to stop and smelting works have to be removed entirely out of our mountains; many mines could not be worked at all on account of want of timber, and thus our main resource of existence—mining—would be severely crippled.¹⁵⁵

The people of the emerging Coloradan State saw themselves as having a mutually beneficial relationship with their environment, and caring for it would likewise help their own prospects. As a proactive measure, the Constitutional Congress passed that all public forest lands not already sold to private owners would be maintained as public property, and a quarter of all public plains land would be dedicated to forest culture and development.¹⁵⁶ This was a fairly forward-looking idea for the late 19th century, but one that Colorado's legislators understood due to the environment's intimacy with development in the State. It is also representative of the political development in most Western States and Territories around this time with respect to the environment.

¹⁵⁴ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 66.

¹⁵⁵ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 298.

¹⁵⁶ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 66.

2.6 Qualifiers

2.6.1 *Seeing Like A State*

While in many respects local polities achieved early development in Colorado independently from the federal government and Eastern systems, external political authorities still imposed their hegemony through indirect and subtle means. From a superficial perspective, it appeared that much of the development in Colorado remained with local inhabitants, due to its unique environmental composition with respect to the East. This discordance of landscapes, both geographically and ideologically, is part of the reason why local leaders retained this authority. In some respects, however, the federal government laid down structures and practices in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the region.

The use of the term "understanding" in this context is used very shallowly, as it was not the interest of the federal government to truly understand the Colorado environment, but rather to organize it in a way that made it compatible with the existing infrastructure of the capitalist state. Political scientist James C. Scott writes in *Seeing Like A State* of a nation state, or capitalist system's tendency to homogenize its domain in an attempt to centralize power and authority. He writes: "every act of measurement was an act marked by the play of power relations."¹⁵⁷ This is the way in which the US federal government gradually imposed its influence on the emerging Colorado state.

In multiple ways the US government systematized the Colorado domain to increase their control over it. In an 1870 federal law, lawmakers overruled the preexisting practice of only surveying Western lands for township lines, and added all mineral lands in Colorado and the

¹⁵⁷ James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 2020), 27.

wider West to public surveys.¹⁵⁸ They additionally allowed for the Surveyor General of the United States to appoint as many surveyors as deemed necessary for each land district in the nation to survey mining claims.¹⁵⁹ In order to gain the clearest idea of the Colorado territory, the federal government required extremely detailed descriptions of claims, including multiple geographic references, as laid out below:

Should give the course and distance as nearly as practicable from the discovery shaft on the claim to some permanent, well-known points or objects, such, for instance, as stone monuments, blazed trees, the confluence of streams, point of intersection of well-known gulches, ravines or roads, prominent buttes, hills, etc, which may be in the immediate vicinity, and which will serve to perpetuate and fix the locus of the claim and render it susceptible of identification from the description thereof given in the record of locations in the district.¹⁶⁰

By setting up standards to create a clear understanding of space, national administrators attempted to gain a clearer understanding of their holdings in Colorado, with a specific interest in its environment. Another sign of the assimilation of the landscape appears in stipulations on numbering Western land tracts:

The Surveyor General must continue to designate all surveyed mineral claims as heretofore by a progressive series of numbers, beginning with Lot number 37 in each Township [...] describe the locus of the claim with reference to the lines of public surveys by a line connecting a corner of the claim with the nearest public corner of the United States surveys.¹⁶¹

This methodology shows that the federal government made efforts to reconcile the unknown terrain of Western territories with the existing framework of the Eastern system. Through these somewhat circuitous means, the US central government implicitly imposed control upon the Colorado domain despite being largely unfamiliar with its environmental features.

¹⁵⁸ *Mining laws*, 43.

¹⁵⁹ *Mining laws*, 54.

¹⁶⁰ *Mining laws*, 62.

¹⁶¹ *Mining laws*, 69.

Written almost as throwaway lines in federal legislation, national congressmen indirectly laid down structures for their influence to enter the Rocky Mountain landscape in due time. They achieved this through protocols that established measures of uniformity and standardization of mine claims and land surveys. This would gradually give the national government an increased awareness and understanding of the Colorado environment, allowing for increased federal control of the area in the future.

2.6.2 Native Americans

The analysis thus far has focused on the dynamic between Western settlers and Eastern systems, but Native Americans play an equally crucial role in this process. Being such a strong focal point of legislation, gold and mining often disguised or even promoted other ambitions. As in most emerging Western states, the increasing settlement of Easterners drove up land and resource scarcity, which led to increasing power struggles between US citizens and Native Americans. As Easterners gradually gained greater control of the Western domain, they relegated Native Americans to smaller portions of increasingly undesirable land, all the while euphemistically rationalizing their actions. In the case of Colorado, early development with respect to mining and gold already foreshadowed some of these power struggles. In a resolution passed by the Territorial House in 1872, Colorado legislatures looked to the mineral lands within the Ute Nation with intense desire:

Your memorialists would respectfully ask that you will exercise the power vested in you by the Constitution of the United States, and enter into a treaty with the Ute Nation for the purpose of either reducing the limits of the reservation, or securing to white citizens the right to peacefully enter upon and occupy such portions of this Reserve territory as may be valuable for mining purposes.¹⁶²

¹⁶² *General laws, private acts, joint resolutions, and memorials passed at the ninth session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado: convened at Denver, on the first day of January, A.D. 1872* (D.C. Collier, 1872), 227.

Through the reading of this request, one can sense far beyond the desire for mineral resources. The prospect of gold here functioned as a catalyst in worsening already tense relations with Native Americans, as they wanted the access to extract from Native lands. A lot of this was tied to an inherently different understanding of what it meant to live on land and in an environment. Many of the Native American groups at the time were largely nomadic, moving across large areas throughout the year on horses to hunt and graze.¹⁶³ The Eastern understanding of settlement and land property rights, in contrast, tied to a static form of settlement where people would hypothetically "improve" the land they lived on through agricultural or extractive methods. When settlers emerged in the Rocky Mountain area, they did not recognize the property rights of Native Americans because their conceptualization of settlement was different.¹⁶⁴

The perception of Native land as valuable through mineral extraction only exacerbated this resource contest. Federal legislators expressed in a series of mining laws that neglecting to work these mines in Ute Territory would "but greatly impede the settlement of Colorado and curtail its production of the precious metals."¹⁶⁵ While the subjugation of Native Americans in the Colorado boundaries was a gradual process, these early interactions facilitated through mining indicated a precarious relationship from the outset. While most of this chapter focused on the triumphs of local political power and an egalitarian ethos in the Rocky Mountain landscape by settlers from Eastern systems, an equally important and changing dynamic in the area displays this subjugation of Native political power. Mining served as a rationale for this subjugation and further exploitation.

¹⁶³ The Comanche Empire, for example, built their power structure upon highly nomadic activity, hunting and following buffalo throughout the Plains and raiding neighboring European societies. (Pekka Hämmäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67 no. 2, (2010): 180).

¹⁶⁴ For an overview of this dynamic, see West, *The Contested Plains*.

¹⁶⁵ *Mining laws*, 108.

2.7 The Centennial State

The particular features apparent in the earliest beginnings of Colorado's political formations had lasting effects on its long-term political climate. The influx of individuals, on generally equal political and economic footing, combined with the importance of mining and intimacy in the mountains, yielded a political outlook that paid special attention to white egalitarian and environmental values. The uniqueness of Colorado's landscape with respect to the East afforded it a significant deal of independence and autonomy in political development, although the federal government made efforts to gradually impose its will through methods of homogenization. This origin of local, individual rule helps to explain the distinct political character of Colorado well into statehood.

Coloradan Economic Development: 1858-1876

3.1 The Mountain Industry

Many of the economic developments, in mining, infrastructure, and town building, that took place in the incipient stages of the Colorado Territory and State were controlled largely by wealthy capitalists, those with the financial means to invest in large projects. The thousands of immigrants that physically stepped foot into the Rocky Mountain domain past the 1850's came in hopes of new financial opportunity, as most of their existing savings had been squandered by the Panic of 1857.¹⁶⁶ As a result, these incomers relied heavily on others' capital to develop their claims and prospects. This sponsorship was no minor detail. Capitalists, through paying to develop the mine claims in Colorado, laid claim to the majority of profits removed from the area. Economic control did not stop at the mines either; capital financed the freight of goods to these new societies and constructed crucial infrastructure such as railroads or wagon routes. The only major economic development where most settlers took control was in town development, where squatters' rights to land was the only prerequisite for prospecting.

Even once individuals gained wealth within the region itself and guided some of its economic development, they continued to operate within the existing paradigm of capitalism as when they resided in the East. Many of their actions and behaviors were imposed by the capitalism of the national economy. In somewhat of a paradox, as rushers came to Colorado in hopes to break free from the industrialization of the American economy, in many ways they

¹⁶⁶ The Panic of 1857 was a global monetary contraction that resulted from overextended specie markets as a result of the California and Australia gold rushes of the early 1850's. Speculation far exceeded secure practices, especially in America and with railroad stocks, and when the Bank of England restricted its credit to American development, it led to a rippling effect through the entire fledgling US economy. Many Panics of this nature occurred in the US throughout the latter half of the 19th century. Thomas Dean Isern, "The Making of a Gold Rush, Pike's Peak, 1858-1860," Oklahoma State University, 1975, p. 94-95.

operated fully into it, engaging in a manner of extraction, supporting the capitalist system as a whole, and providing the monetary instrument, gold, that sustains its practice.¹⁶⁷

Despite this control of financial capital, Eastern and capitalist domination was by no means absolute. In addition to collective labor power and local political hegemony, exploring only the dynamic between Western settlers and capitalists leaves out another extremely crucial agent: the Western environment. As Elliott West writes in his book on the Colorado Gold Rush: "People never master their environment; they bargain with it."¹⁶⁸ In this sense, the capitalists who had control over the economic development of Colorado could exert their command over the settlers to a significant degree, but in terms of the spatial allocation of economic activity in the region overall, the environment remained extremely influential.¹⁶⁹ Mills, railroads, and towns alike had to conform to the environmental characteristics of the terrain, emerging around and weaving throughout mountain areas. Capitalists had no way of avoiding these environmental features; they instead had to work with them. This power dynamic between humans and nature, one where people must negotiate with the existing standards set by the environment, is an important aspect to consider when observing the spatial allocation of economic activity in Colorado even to the present day. This becomes clear when noting how the towns, infrastructure, and economic identity of Colorado depend so intimately on its terrain, topography, and geography.

¹⁶⁷ In *The Nature of Gold*, Kathryn Morse explores this dynamic of rushers to the Yukon area inducting industrial capitalism to the region despite coming in many efforts as a refuge from the new system's caustic elements.

¹⁶⁸ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado*. University Press of Kansas, 1998.

¹⁶⁹ Collectivist resistance sometimes found discernable support through the instances of labor strikes, putting stops on production and forcing capitalists to address issues such as working conditions and livable wages. For more information on a Coal mining labor war in Colorado somewhat later, see Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

Before proceeding with the body of this chapter, one must first consider the precision of the phrase "economic development" within the scope of this argument. Within this context, economic development refers to the creation of physical and human centers of commerce and communication. This represents itself in the form of infrastructure such as railroads and wagon roads, mining industrial machinery and corporations, and town laying and building. These few examples all share elements of physical structures needing to be laid down, as well as humans and movement to necessitate such investments. Through the course of this chapter, development will refer to these channels of human and physical networks.

3.2 Chronology

Once explorers discovered traces of gold in the rivers of Colorado, an immigration craze westward took place only rivalled by that of the California Gold Rush ten years prior. The *Kansas Weekly Herald* reported "the excitement is still on the increase, and spreading in every direction. St Joseph, Council Bluffs, Nebraska and Omaha cities; Leavenworth, Kansas City, Independence, Westport, and Lawrence, are all preparing to send forward a living stream of emigration to the gold regions."¹⁷⁰ Midwest towns boosted the rush to attract travel and outfitting through their businesses, and plenty of people were interested in trying their luck to strike it big and find wealth. The role of the American midwest is crucial to understanding the story of Coloradan development. This area acted as a critical juncture between the solidly established institutions of the East coast and the largely undeveloped frontiers of the West. The midwest supplied many of the people for the Pike's Peak gold rush, and contained many investors in the growth of the Coloradan economy, particularly those of freighters.

¹⁷⁰ Leroy R. Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush: Contemporary Letters and Reports 1858-1859* (Porcupine Press, 1974), 50.

With this large migration in the Pike's Peak region, settlers established markets of demand that had not existed before. They needed supplies of food, clothing, and mining materials so greatly that it became profitable for merchants and freighters to ship them into the area. The *Missouri Democrat* writes, "our merchants look forward to a rich harvest in the spring from those emigrating to Pike's Peak, and appearances justify them in laying in a large lot of supplies for the expedition."¹⁷¹ This newfound population allowed for the profitable creation of networks of trade and communication, from wagon roads and railroads to towns and telegraph lines. The hope and optimism of the gold rush did not stop at the mines. Many prospectors and boosters came out to the land to establish towns and other forms of infrastructure, looking to reap the benefits of a future permanent population in Colorado.

In this path of economic development, many players vied for control and profits of this growth, the two broad groups being capitalists (both Eastern and Western) and the settlers physically entering the region. Each wanted to reap the benefits of the newfound economic success of the Rockies. Both groups had varying degrees of success in imposing economic control during these ventures.

3.3 Capitalists and Rushing Settlers

Despite the rushers' physical presence in the Rocky Mountain domain, most of the large funders in Coloradan economic development were financial elites of the American Northeast or Midwest, both within the capitalist system. The development of the early Colorado economy required extensive capital and financial investment, which needed to be put forth by well established monetary and financial institutions. The freight firm Russell, Majors, and Waddell is just one example of financial magnates using their wealth to take large control of the economic

¹⁷¹ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 57.

development of Colorado. This company encompassed three midwestern freighting financiers.¹⁷² It operated from 1854 to 1861, mainly supplying federal contracts for mail and military goods, but also helping to outfit and supply the emerging towns and mining camps of the Pike's Peak region.¹⁷³ The freighting of this firm was crucial to the establishment of the nascent Colorado economy, and areas along their lines of shipment flourished.

Settlers prospecting for gold and silver deposits were just one part of a large extraction and production process that required the investment of capital from financial elites. While much of the popular history is dominated by these images of optimistic individuals, the capitalists financing these ventures saw the miners as just one expense in an extraction process that entailed intricate machinery, smelting, and transportation. The decisions made by financial sponsors considered the overall economic outlook of the region, rather than the well-being of rushers themselves.

The rushers even established a new market in the Colorado region that demanded goods and shipping networks from freight and railroad corporations. In this manner, the Pike's Peak rushers acted as both employees and consumers of capitalists. They extracted ores in exchange for the clothes, food, and luxury items that made life both feasible and enjoyable in their new environment. Through these channels, the demand and labor of incoming settlers contained cyclical feedback effects.

In a somewhat perplexing manner, as miners and rushers to the Rockies attempted to find wealth outside the capitalist structure, they extracted metal whose only value was determined by these capitalist markets. As Kathryn Morse writes in her book *The Nature of Gold*, "Some miners

¹⁷² In fact, all three men spent the majority of their lives in Western Missouri.

¹⁷³ Certo, Joseph J. Di. "Russell, Majors and Waddell". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 17 Dec. 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Russell-Majors-and-Waddell>.

may have sought gold as an escape from regimented work lives, but they brought their watches and clocks with them."¹⁷⁴ In the same manner, as wealthy individuals arose within the confines of the Colorado area, they still became enmeshed within the system of capitalism emanating from the East. This is why I will tend to focus in this chapter more on the dynamic between settlers and capitalists, as the distinction between Eastern and local capitalists is minimal when considering their similarities in centralized control and financial power.

An article in 1859 from the *Kansas City Journal of Commerce* speaks further to the need for investment in the development of Colorado: "all this can be overcome by the influence of capital. Capital can accomplish anything - it can control politics, religion and commerce, and unless we bring to bear the agencies that Capital can accomplish, we certainly shall lose most, if not all the advantages that will be engendered by this immense immigration."¹⁷⁵ This source underscores the importance put on the power of money in its ability to develop. A surge of settlers is only one half of the necessary means to develop an area, with large amounts of financial investment being the other. Economic affairs were governed by the limited few, whether it be Eastern elites or Western capitalists, as they controlled the majority of investment.

In the development of an economy post-rush, prospectors and settlers alike were concerned with gaining the sufficient financial support to establish long lasting structures of sustained economic activity. They did so most commonly seeking investment and flaunting their locations for routes along the intercontinental railway system, but Westerners sought capital to finance mining and bonanza farming corporations as well. In accepting this investment from external donors, people in the Colorado area implicitly agreed to hand over portions of this

¹⁷⁴ Kathryn Taylor Morse, *The Nature of Gold: an Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (University of Washington Press, 2010), 136.

¹⁷⁵ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 267.

economic profit and control to sponsors. Funders decided which towns and locations would receive their financial backing for crucial infrastructure and other forms of development. Denver was not always the metropolis it is today, and that arc to urban supremacy was not inevitable. The connection of the city to the national railway system via the Denver Pacific and Kansas Pacific helped amplify the viability of the city, and granted it success over other early competitors such as Montana, St. Charles, and Aurora.¹⁷⁶ This had profound effects on shaping the future economic outlook of the Rocky Mountain region.

3.4 Human and Environmental Agents

While the focal point of much of this economic development has been between capitalists and the settlers entering the Rockies, an equally important and consequential historical figure must also be considered, and that is the Coloradan environment. Due to the construction of the American capitalist economy, financial elites could exert great control over the Colorado rushers, but the Colorado environment was not a participant in this human institution. It had no care for which individuals had more US treasury bills than others. The natural setting of Colorado existed long before Eastern settlers rushed in and in many respects these invading people lacked an ability to fully alter and change what they encountered to their idyllic visions, instead having to come to terms with it.

This framework giving agency to nature fits within the thought of the Annales School, headed by Fernand Braudel. They posit the *longue duree* argument, which says that "material forces of geography and climate shaped the broad outlines of human history."¹⁷⁷ In discussing

¹⁷⁶ Auroria was, in fact, the city directly across Cherry Creek in relation to Denver, and eventually became absorbed into the city. Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 131.

¹⁷⁷ Timothy J. Lecain, "Copper and Longhorns: Material and Human Power in Montana's Smelter Smoke War, 1860–1910." in *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, edited by McNeill J. R. and Vrtis George, 166-90 (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 167.

this class of thought, historian and environmentalist Timothy Lecaïn raises issues relevant to Colorado at the time: "An attempt to resist the powerful human tendency to see the world solely as a reflection of ourselves, to suggest instead that we do not use matter so much as cooperate with it in ways that form and define us."¹⁷⁸ With these thoughts and arguments in mind, one can observe how prominent the Colorado landscape and environment is in the scope of economic development.¹⁷⁹ Though not covered in more traditional economic historiography, including the agency of nature in the Rocky Mountains helps develop a much more informed understanding of this growth process.

3.3.1 Mining Industry: Rushers and Capitalists

The mining industry itself and its evolution during the incipient stages of Coloradan development is emblematic of the control capitalism asserted on Western landscapes. While '58 and '59 rushers were the first individuals to come into contact with gold and silver lodes, they soon became reliant on capital from non-rushers to construct extraction and purification machinery, as well as networks of transport to ship the bullion back east.

The process of mining in the Western US followed a similar trajectory in all states and territories that experienced gold rushes. Initial reports of gold traces attracted a large influx of people to search for sources along the rivers with no more materials than a shovel and sifter. This process was known as placer mining.¹⁸⁰ Soon after miners exhausted small traces of gold and located their origin in mineral veins, it required larger machinery to extract the quartz. This necessitated the funding of more capital for the mining process and began to centralize the

¹⁷⁸ Lecaïn, "Copper and Longhorns," 186.

¹⁷⁹ As mentioned previously, I use the term "landscape" to describe both the physical and metaphorical environment of Colorado and the larger US West. It includes both the topography and terrain of mountain and desert combined with the more ideological visions of space.

¹⁸⁰ James Belich describes this process in *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford, 2009).

control of the industry at a concentration much greater than when placer mining occurred. Hydraulic mining and underground quartz mining, in contrast to placer mining, required extensive capital, technology, and coordinated effort.¹⁸¹

The move toward capital control led to specialization and the division of labor within the mining industry, as mass production and economies of scale took over the extraction process.¹⁸² This gradual movement from egalitarian placer mining to centralized capitalist control is summarized plainly by John Kincade describing the California Gold Rush in 1871: "Mining is no longer generally prosecuted by those having a will to work, but is conducted by the few having capital to invest. All that class of mining that was easily discovered and worked has passed away."¹⁸³ Although most Western gold mining began as an equal opportunity venture, it quickly evolved into an enterprise that favored those with extensive financial means.¹⁸⁴ It is also important to note that the nature of this change from egalitarian to centralized control was imposed by the limitations of the Coloradan environment. The Rocky Mountain region was endowed with a limited amount of easily accessible placer gold, and as these reserves diminished, the loded terrain that remained promoted more centralized channels of control. This environmental agency in the power of mining will be further explored in the following section.

Colorado was no exception in this general trend of industrial mining. This point is made evident by a report of the Gregory Gold Mining Company in 1863, which wrote "At the present time, [Colorado] is the only mining region on the continent, contributing an equal amount of

¹⁸¹ Patricia Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 105.

¹⁸² Kent A. Curtis, *Gambling on Ore: The Nature of Metal Mining in the United States, 1860-1910* (University Press of Colorado, 2013), 56.

¹⁸³ Andrew Isenberg, *Mining California: An Ecological History* (Macmillan, 2005), 24.

¹⁸⁴ To learn more about this transition from egalitarian placer mining to centralized lode mining, see Kathryn Morse, *Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (University of Washington Press, 2003) and Susan Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

revenue, that is not effected by foreign capital. Every dollar is invested by Americans, and, until the present year, by residents of the Territory."¹⁸⁵ In the first five years since the rush's start, the majority of investment and control of the mining industry remained within the hands of the individuals physically within the area.

This was never the end goal of these prospectors, however. Many incoming settlers came in search of gold with the understanding that the later extraction would be funded and part of the profits reaped by wealthy capitalists. This sentiment is expressed in the guidebook written by Luke Tierney: "it was not our intention to work out those mines, or any others at that time, but simply to open them, ascertain their richness, and the quality of the gold, etc. Our business was to prospect the country, and make such discoveries as could be rendered available in the future."¹⁸⁶ While many rushers arrived with the belief that they could find a rich lode and become a self-made millionaire, those who remained after the initial frenzy found their best hope of making any money in locating profitable areas and getting paid a premium for these findings by corporations who would develop them.

Soon enough, capitalists, particularly those from the American Northeast, became the primary benefactors of Colorado mining. Just around when the Gregory Gold Mining Company made its report, New York and Boston companies quickly bought numbers of Colorado mines.¹⁸⁷ An 1864 report by the Bobtail Gold Mining Company spoke to this transfer of economic power from the individual to the corporation: "People have come to the conclusion, that mining on a small scale, with one hand and foot, if not both, tied for want of means, that isolated effort,

¹⁸⁵ Gregory Gold Mining Company, *Prospectus, Geological Survey And Report of the Gregory Gold Mining Company, Gregory District, Colorado Territory* (New York: 1863), 20.

¹⁸⁶ Hafen, LeRoy R, 1893-1985, Luke D Tierney, and William B. Parsons. *Pike's Peak Gold Rush Guidebooks of 1859* (The Arthur H. Clark Company: 1941), 111.

¹⁸⁷ Cushman, Samuel, writer on gold mines, and J.P. Waterman. *The Gold Mines of Gilpin County, Colorado: Historical, Descriptive And Statistical* (Register Steam Printing House: 1876), 35.

unless attended by the most extraordinary luck, will not answer the purpose. Hence the transfer of so much, and the sale of interests in much more mining property that are being effected this winter."¹⁸⁸ In this sense, the uncertainty of the gold mining industry required men of capital to absorb the lulls in discoveries.

Various mining company charters that emerged around this time were established under the incorporating laws of Northeastern states. As just a few examples, the Gregory Gold Mining Company, Bobtail Gold Mining Company, La Crosse Gold Mining Company, and Defiance Silver Mining Company all incorporated under the laws of the State of New York.¹⁸⁹ The Fulton Gold Mining Company formed under a special charter of Pennsylvania, and the office for the American Mining Company was located in Washington, D.C.¹⁹⁰ Mining Companies incorporated under the Colorado Territorial legislature in 1865 include the Colorado Gold Mining Company of Philadelphia, the American Exploring Company of Philadelphia, and even the London Prospecting and Mining Company of Colorado.¹⁹¹ The La Crosse company's main office was in New York City, while it had a branch office in Nevada City, Colorado to conduct on-ground

¹⁸⁸ *Report of the Organization And Operations of the Bobtail Gold Mining Company of Colorado* (New York, 1864), 5.

¹⁸⁹ Gregory Gold Mining Company, *Prospectus, Geological Survey And Report of the Gregory Gold Mining Company*, 3.
Bobtail Gold Mining Company, 5.

La Crosse Gold Mining Co. *Report to the Board of Trustees of the La Crosse Gold Mining Co. of Colorado* (New York: 1864).

Defiance Silver Mining Company of Colorado, *Prospectus And By-laws, Map, Scientific Reports, Letters, &c., of the Defiance Silver Mining Company, of Colorado: Located At Georgetown, Griffith District, Clear Creek County, Colorado. Organized Under the General Mining And Manufacturing Laws of the State of New York.* (New York: 1869).

¹⁹⁰ Fulton Gold Mining Company. *Prospectus, By-laws, And Charter of Fulton Gold Mining Company of Colorado ...: Office, Mauch Chunk, Pa.* (NY: Howe & Ferry, Printers and Stationers: 1865).

American Mining Company. *Statement of the American Mining Company* (Washington: H. Polkinhorn & Co., Printers: 1870).

¹⁹¹ *General laws and joint resolutions, memorials, and private acts passed at the Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado* (Rocky Mountain News Office, 1865), 170.

affairs.¹⁹² Even just five years after the rush had begun, prominent financial powers from the American Northeast and abroad began to stake their claim in the Colorado riches.

The location of company offices and origins of charters are not trivial matters; they instead guide much of the political and economic identity of the Colorado region and set the nature of these extractions. As the majority of companies possessed leadership outside of the territorial boundaries, one may consider this process of mining in Colorado as US resource extraction from a colony.¹⁹³ Investors in Colorado mining were not necessarily concerned with the long term economic development of the region, but instead cared about how these raw materials could increase their personal wealth and prospects for the East.¹⁹⁴

In addition to the direct control of mineral extraction, well established, Eastern-based institutions also assayed the value of most ores and bullion. As they reaped much of the profitability of these veins, it was paramount to Eastern funders to understand the quality of the mineral prospects they invested in. A speech given by Hiram P. Bennet in 1863 references Colorado gold yields in the Philadelphia Mint and assay office at New York City.¹⁹⁵ In 1863, the federal government established a US Branch Mint in Denver to certify gold before shipping it back east.¹⁹⁶ The Gregory Gold Mining Company even arranged for Professor Edward Kent of the US Assay Office of New York to travel to Colorado and assay the minerals being

¹⁹² La Crosse Gold Mining Company, 25.

¹⁹³ In their respective books, Immerwahr, Meinig, and Frymer all work to decentralize the current view of the American West as a tightly incorporated part of the union, arguing the reality of the 19th Century West was that it operated much more as a colony or vassal state.

¹⁹⁴ This may be somewhat too absolute and pessimistic a view on this front; in some cases promoting long term development was also in the profit-maximizing self interest of capitalist funders. Establishing structures to increase the efficiency of mining production, through railroads for example, had wide-reaching benefits in establishing persistent networks of overall commerce and communication.

¹⁹⁵ Hiram P. Bennet, *Speech ... in the House of Representatives, Feb. 28, 1863, on the natural products, mineral resources, and future prospects of the territory of Colorado*, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Gregory Gold Mining Company, *Prospectus, Geological Survey And Report of the Gregory Gold Mining Company*, 21.

extracted.¹⁹⁷ Eastern capitalists' particular interest in the value of Colorado minerals suggests their expanding control of the industry in general.

As has been explored in the more general Western historiography, Eastern capitalists were able to take control in the Coloradan mining economy because it required capital for constructing and shipping machinery that could further develop the mineral veins.¹⁹⁸ A line from a report of the La Crosse Gold Mining Company reads "These facts are becoming known to capitalists, and we may expect a very large increase in machinery and appliances devoted to the development of mines during the coming year."¹⁹⁹ A similar sentiment is echoed in a report by the Chase Gold Company: "I think if you can interest capitalists in the property, so as to put up the necessary machinery to work the mine properly, it will give you astonishing results."²⁰⁰ Local Coloradans sought Eastern investment as a catalyst for creating the machinery necessary in fully extracting discovered ores. While much of these operations occurred in a collaborative manner between locals and investors, the miners themselves gave up aspects of their autonomy as they accepted these external sponsorships.

Smelting and refining ores were a particular part of the mining process that relied on significant fixed costs. In the Summit District, a New York company paid for the construction of a ten-stamp mill to process the findings of the San Juan mines. A report asking for financial support in this development reads "The profits of smelting are so great that men led into the undertaking with too small a capital, and fail. It would be better if persons with from five to

¹⁹⁷ Gregory Gold Mining Company, *Prospectus, Geological Survey And Report of the Gregory Gold Mining Company*, 21.

¹⁹⁸ This general arc is described in the works by Isenberg, Belich, Curtis, and Limerick, amongst many others.

¹⁹⁹ La Crosse Gold Mining Company, 23.

²⁰⁰ Chase Gold Company, *Chase Gold Company: Incorporated August 13th, 1864, Under the Laws of the State of New York. Capital: 5,000 Shares of \$100 Each. Mines: 500 Feet On the "S.P. Chase Lode," Colorado ...* (New York: H. Croker, Jr., 1865).

twenty thousand dollars [...] put up concentration works."²⁰¹ Yet again, the prerequisite of large financial wealth was cited as essential in gaining control of Colorado's smelting operations. The Lake City Mining and Smelting Company asked for these types of individuals in the following entreaty:

To those who are dependent upon the regular and uninterrupted income from their little all for the means of daily support, we have nothing to offer. To those who have surplus capital, for which they seek investment that promises great returns in the near future, we believe the Lake City Mining and Smelting Co. presents inducements almost without parallel, and that those who fail to improve the opportunity will do so to their ultimate regret.²⁰²

This message underscores the main developments in the early Colorado mining industry, in that it relied heavily on large amounts of liquid money to finance extraction.

Corporate control of Colorado mining was not an absolute development. Multiple measures passed in the State Constitution worked to restrict centralized power in the extraction industry. One statute ensured that the government would retain authoritative control over mining property: "The General Assembly shall not delegate to any special commission, private corporation or association any power to make, supervise or interfere with any municipal improvement, mining property or effects, whether held in trust or otherwise, or to levy taxes or perform any municipal function whatever."²⁰³ While corporations and wealthy capitalists gained an immense degree of control in the Colorado mining industry, they did not gain absolute control of the entire Colorado political economy.

²⁰¹ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, *The San Juan Mines: a Compendium of the Mineral Resources of Southwestern Colorado, Together With a Description of Its Mountain Scenery ... Including the Mining Laws of Colorado And the Acts of Congress Relating Thereto* (Kansas City: 1876), 16.

²⁰² Lake City Mining and Smelting Co. *Prospectus, Articles of Incorporation And By-laws, of the Lake City Mining And Smelting Co., San Juan* (New Haven: Hoggson & Robinson: 1876), 8.

²⁰³ *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado* (The Smith-Brooks Press State Printers, 1875), 135.

3.4.1 Mining Industry and the Environment

The natural allocation of mineral deposits was a major influence upon the spatial allocation of activity in the Colorado economy. Corporations, mills, farms, and the like all arose in relation to the Rocky Mountains and the mineral veins they possessed. One early report posted in the *Council Bluffs Bugle* talks about the spatial dispersion of mineral veins throughout Colorado, writing "they're not confined to any particular location; but are scattered all over the country, traditions of over 200 miles. The whole country appears to be impregnated with gold."²⁰⁴ This geographic allocation of mineral resources is no trivial matter; it had profound effects upon the spatial allocation of economic activities, from smelters, to railroads, and even towns.

To fully understand the scope of Western economic development, one must consider the role the Western environment played in determining the spatial allocation of economic activity. Once nature is viewed as a historical actor similar to humans, this agency becomes much more clear. Consider this personification from an 1865 *Miners and Travelers' Guide* to the West

The scale upon which nature has worked in this region is wonderful. Though she has interposed great physical obstacles, both in rivers and on land, to the opening of the country and speedy travel, she has, nevertheless, at the same time placed in the same region great areas of gold fields, the wealth from which is destined to so meet these obstacles that it is only a question of time when this region will boast of as rapid and as cheap travel as regions where the physical difficulties have been fewer, but the ends sought not so stimulating as the search and mining for gold has proved to be.²⁰⁵

This excerpt touches upon the major geographic themes of the Rockies that helped shape historical outcomes. Though he may not have been aware of it at the time, this reporter's personification of nature throughout this passage is an implicit admission of the historical agency

²⁰⁴ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 176.

²⁰⁵ John Mullan, *Miners and Travelers' Guide* (New York: William M. Franklin: 1865), 43.

nature played in the economic development of the Colorado region. Just as any other settler or capitalist dealing in Coloradan affairs at the time, nature made decisions and imposed restrictions that helped guide the course of an emerging Coloradan economy.

The Colorado terrain influenced methods so crucial as mining techniques. A report by the American Mining Company notes that "the peculiar formation of mountains around Georgetown [...] are generally so steep and so high that by tunneling to strike a lode, the vein is struck at nearly as great a depth as could be obtained by sinking a shaft on the vein to the same point."²⁰⁶ This is an important distinction because tunneling horizontally into mineral lodes saves all of the energy that would be required to extract ores vertically from a hole. The very enterprise of mining in the region was bolstered by the fact that the altitude in most areas surrounding the mountains was too high to promote significant agriculturalism.²⁰⁷ Mineral discoveries were one of the main avenues for realizing the economic potential of this mountain region.

Another important environmental actor was flowing water. Rivers and streams provided the water to clear debris from mineral veins as well as the power to operate smelters and mills. Through this process, the mining industry depended entirely on river flow.²⁰⁸ Controlling the flow of water, imposing predictability on it, and how much or how little to use, equated to direct power and control in the industry. The *Guide* makes reference to the many uses of this water power:

These large bodies of water tend to modify the climate, supply mill sites, water farms, and grazing fields; enable the miner to work miles of sluice-boxes, the merchant to float, by steam, his wares to the very heart of the Rocky range, and stand ever ready and panting to be converted into steam for the iron horse that must soon invade their dominion.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ American Mining Company, 11.

²⁰⁷ Cathy Kindquist, *Stony Pass: The Tumbling and Impetuous Trail* (San Juan County Book Company: 1987), 19.

²⁰⁸ Isenberg, *Mining California*, 28.

²⁰⁹ *Miners and Travelers' Guide*, 47.

When making his remarks on the state of the Colorado Territory, Hiram P. Bennet comments "four great rivers, all take their rise in this Territory [...] and among some of the richest mines of the Territory."²¹⁰ This shows a connection between rivers, the natural power of the state, and mines, the economic (and also natural) power. The Gregory Gold Mining Company drew the power for its mill site from North Clear Creek.²¹¹ A report on the San Juan Mines determined the local water power was enough to "run a thousand stamp mills the year round."²¹² The natural rivers coursing through the Rocky Mountains provided immense amounts of energy for emerging economic structures.

In addition to water, the Colorado environment contained other geographic endowments that promoted development, particularly through coal and timber. The Colorado Gazetteer wrote about these desirable attributes:

The principal inducements for the investment of capital in manufacturing these are the abundance of cheap fuel, supplied by the immense coal deposits; the inexhaustible supplies of excellent Building Material; the existence of superior water powers in Mill sites, and the proximity of large deposits of minerals, including copper and iron in the county, and gold and silver in the adjoining counties of Boulder and Gilpin.²¹³

This statement shows that in conjunction with its rich mineral deposits, the entire natural landscape of Colorado provided for the potential of economic growth and development by humans. This environmental actor allowed for human success to occur.

3.3.2 Infrastructure

As alluded to in the development of the mining industry, infrastructure helped develop the trade and communication networks of the Colorado economy. As assets that typically

²¹⁰ Bennet, *Speech ... in the House of Representatives*.

²¹¹ Gregory Gold Mining Company, *Prospectus, Geological Survey And Report of the Gregory Gold Mining Company*, 31.

²¹² Kansas Pacific Railway Company, *The San Juan Mines*, 16.

²¹³ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 52.

required large fixed costs, these investments were also naturally headed by capitalists. Despite this control, many Colorado Territorial and State measures worked to restrict the monopolistic power of these corporations.

Networks for trade and communication typically developed along paths of least resistance, which were in turn determined by the geographic factors of the area. While many aspects of infrastructure seemed to achieve control and dominance over nature, they often negotiated with it. The *Miners and Travelers' Guide* writes of these important characteristics in relation to human networks:

The prevalent direction of the winds, the physical face of the country, its altitude, and the large volume of water, all, doubtless, enter to create this modification; but from whatsoever cause it arises, it exists as a fact that must for all time enter as an element worthy of every attention in lines of travel and communication from the eastern plains to the north Pacific.²¹⁴

These decisions in interaction with nature had long lasting effects on the outlook of the Western economy. In California, for example, large-scale control of water through ditches and canals for gold mining eventually transferred into the development of an agricultural economy.²¹⁵ This was the case for many other Western states and territories, and the initial economic structures established in gold rushes were essential for this switch.

3.3.2.1 Freight: Rushers and Capitalists

One of the earliest needs as a result of the Pike's Peak Gold rush was the shipping of goods to the Rocky Mountain region to satisfy the needs of this newly developed market. An 1858 report in the *Kansas City Journal of Commerce* writes, "Already has the Gold Fever excitement created a great demand for mules in our Market. It is generally believed that mule

²¹⁴ *Miners and Travelers' Guide*, 40.

²¹⁵ Isenberg, *Mining California*, 163.

trains will make the quickest and most successful trips."²¹⁶ This freighting was yet again undertaken by capitalists with large stores of wealth, ones with the means to invest in wagons, animals, and the other capital necessary for establishing a freighting line. This included Eastern and local wealthy elites, both operating under the capitalist paradigm.

Well established wealthy elites yet again undertook the majority of this development. In furnishing the travel toward Pike's Peak, for example, a Missouri native by the name of Mr. Russell had four hundred wagons and teams capable of handling them, transporting 2,000 travellers at a time.²¹⁷ Along with his partners, the firm Russell, Majors, and Waddell created supply trains of 26 wagons in length to ship goods to Colorado, with the *Nebraska City News* writing "52 wagons loaded with supplies will help support the miners in that region, and prove a fair remuneration for the enterprising gentleman who conducted the affair."²¹⁸ Two other major companies involved in the shipping of freight to the Rockies included the Kansas City Gold Hunters Express Transportation Company and the Leavenworth City and Pike's Peak Exportation Company, the latter of which was comprised of 40 five thousand dollar shares, split amongst only 10 individuals.²¹⁹ While this showcased corporate control from local backers instead of Eastern elites, it followed the same capitalist model of centralized control. Financial means remained as the main drivers of these ventures.

Not every shipping endeavor came under concentrated control. For those goods that took up less space and weight, little equipment was needed to transfer them. This was especially true with mail, and some of that transport was carried out by individuals as opposed to more centralized corporations. *The Nebraska Advertiser* writes "There is a man running an Express

²¹⁶ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 32.

²¹⁷ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 54.

²¹⁸ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 84.

²¹⁹ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 285 and 289.

from here to Leavenworth in Kansas City. He charges \$1 for every letter he carries. There's also an Express to Fort Laramie, which charges \$0.50 for the first letter in \$0.25 for each additional."²²⁰ Although this was on a much smaller scale, this one-man operation was still a capitalist endeavor, working within and through that structure, though it did not share the concentrated, centralized features that were often distinct to capitalism in the developing West.

By the time of the State Constitution, the Convention made sure to put in place measures to restrict the control of freighters within that industry, as shown in the following transcript:

The Committee on Commerce, whose duty it shall be to consider and report to this convention what are the rights and powers of the state over the subject of Commerce within the state, as to regulating the shipment, carriage, warehousing and delivery of merchandise by common carriers and warehousemen upon public roads and roads of corporations [...] will secure the regulation of charges upon passenger and transportation traffic at reasonable and just rates.²²¹

The State Constitution framers limited the control of capitalists by setting these shipping rates at fixed and fair prices.

3.3.2.2 Wagon Roads: Rushers and Capitalists

Wagon roads were the quickest and easiest method for developing networks of travel and transport. Though less materially intensive than railroad construction, wagon roads still necessitated the inputs and labor for fairly centralized control. Wagon roads were essential for the transport of people and goods into the mineral district areas, as argued in a passage from the 1870 Colorado Gazetteer:

It is, perhaps, needless to add that the mining interests of the territory have already received a fresh impetus from the success of this Enterprise, and that their future Prosperity will be largely enhanced by the means of cheap and rapid transportation for freed and passengers, which this road will afford, when completed, to the mining districts.²²²

²²⁰ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 170.

²²¹ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 72.

²²² *The Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer for 1871* (S.S. Wallihan & Company, 1871), 123.

The Jefferson Territorial Constitution included the charters of multiple companies with the state-given consent to construct wagon roads throughout the region, including the Denver, Aurora and South Park Wagon Road Company, the Boulder City, Gold Hill, and Lefthand Creek Wagon Road Company, the Denver, Aurora and Colorado Wagon Road Company, and the St. Vrain, Golden City, and Colorado Wagon Road Company.²²³ With so many different organizations forming, wagon roads became a clear tenet in the infrastructural development of the Coloradan economy.

Wagon road groups did not always form privately. One road spanning from Trinidad to Las Animas, for example, was financed by 250 thousand dollars worth of public county funds, a decision made by a democratic vote of constituents.²²⁴ At the drafting of the State Constitution, the legislature even allowed for the conversion of private roads into the public domain, in the following law: "All toll roads owned and controlled by specially chartered corporations may be taken and converted to the use of the public in the discretion of the several counties wherein such roads or parts of roads may be located, upon the payment of just compensation to such corporations."²²⁵ So while many wagon roads began as commercial enterprises under capitalist control, they gradually became public assets of the state property. In this regard, the publicization of transportation networks helped contain the intrusive tentacles of the capitalist system.

3.4.2.1 Wagon Roads and the Environment

Wagon Roads were also one of the most direct extensions of the environment into the human web. They cleared just enough area to allow access for travelers and small wagons. To

²²³ *Provisional laws and joint resolutions passed at the first and called sessions of the general assembly of Jefferson territory* (Robertson & Clark Printers, 1860).

²²⁴ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, *The San Juan Mines*, 24.

²²⁵ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 68.

allow for the easiest travel and construction, road builders became very aware of the terrain and climate conditions for where their road should be located, and these factors heavily influenced road placement. The tough snowy climate could obstruct the function of these roads many times throughout the year, as described by Captain John Mullan in the *Miners and Travelers' Guide* in the section of the Rocky Mountains in Western Montana and Northern Idaho:

There has been no one subject so little understood or so much misrepresented as the climate of the northern valleys of the Rocky Mountains and the plains extending to their either base. I am frank to admit that the section of our road from the Coeur-d'Alene mission to the Bitter Root Ferry does interpose the obstruction of snow to such an extent that I despair of seeing it traveled in winter unless a daily mail coach is placed upon the line, when the snow being beaten down twice a day, would, I think, keep the line constantly open.²²⁶

To be able to combat the harsh snows of the Colorado winter, road companies would need to ensure constant travel across their routes, which, considering the scarcity of travel during that season, would be an unlikely phenomenon.

Even beyond these considerations, roads in the Rocky Mountain region could still be difficult to traverse. Consider the following description of a Colorado wagon road in 1872: "The next twenty-five miles is hilly and stony, and in some places, it is boggy. About three miles before you reach the summit, the road turns toward the Northwest and follows up Deep Creek."²²⁷ As mentioned toward the end of this piece, many wagon roads also followed rivers, the most natural routes of travel, and what rushers had followed on the way to Pike's Peak before the development of roads in the area.

Beyond the factors of climate and terrain, the geospatial allocation of mineral deposits also guided road placement, as their use would be in connecting ores to Eastern markets of exchange. The Colorado Gazetteer writes, "The following roads are only a few among the many

²²⁶ *Miners and Travelers' Guide*, 38.

²²⁷ Kindquist, *Stony Pass*, 27.

in the mountains, which are equally as good in all respects. We give them, because they traverse the rich Gold and Silver mining regions, and afford excellent and safe communication between the principal mountain towns and cities."²²⁸ In an annual report, the Fulton Gold Mining Company cites the success of the Rocky Mountain mineral region to "a first-class natural road from the Missouri River to the mines."²²⁹ Mineral deposits lie intimately within the Rocky Mountains and the roads that emerged to connect them to national systems of communication and exchange.

As a case study into the nature of the environment influencing the development of wagon roads, consider the Stony Pass Route in Southwestern Colorado. This was a natural path utilized during the San Juan mines silver rush. Cathay Kindquist writes that "The Stony Pass Route was the primary link between the people of the San Juan mining districts and the settlements serving them to the East."²³⁰ Beginning as a natural route to the mineral lodes of Southwestern Colorado, humans capitalized on this path by developing wagon roads through the area. Despite this improvement, travelers still met great difficulty with nature through the winter season, as she writes:

Crossing the high passes of the upper Rio Grande required the adaptation of methods uniquely suited to the challenging terrain and climate of the area. The greatest obstacle presented by the gateway known as Stony Pass was snow. Its presence from October to June some years imposed certain constraints on travel. It was common practice for travelers crossing the pass to proceed in the middle of the night or the early hours of the morning. In this manner the crust which formed on top of the snow could support the weight of human beings and sometimes animals.²³¹

²²⁸ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 126.

²²⁹ Fulton Gold Mining Company, 5.

²³⁰ Kindquist, *Stony Pass*, xi.

²³¹ Kindquist, *Stony Pass*, 63.

Here it becomes ever more apparent that while settlers entering the Rockies did their best to improve the land and lines of travel, they had to constantly negotiate with an unwavering environment and climate, leading to many difficulties along the path of development.

3.3.2.3 Railroads: Rushers and Capitalists

Developers considered railroads an essential aspect of the Colorado economy, as these systems cheaply transported machinery and goods into the mountains and ores out of them. Rails also cost a significant investment and thus experienced one of the most highly centralized forms of control and ownership. Speculators linked railroads to the growth and development of the Colorado mining industry, and through this avenue rails gained much of their influence, bringing prosperity to some towns and folly to those it did not grace with its presence. The Colorado Gazetteer describes the Union Pacific Railroad in this fashion:

Thus, the first railway communication was made between the great cities of the East and the Queen City of the Plains - Denver. It is impossible to calculate the importance of this line, which is already done more toward developing our unrivalled resources than all other causes combined, it has placed our vast extent of agricultural lands, and untold mineral wealth, within the reach of all mankind.²³²

The historiography of general Western history cites railroads as bringing salvation to some mining economies. In their synopsis of the history of Denver, historians Stephen Leonard and Thomas Noel argue this to be the case, writing, "Only after iron horses reached the mines did Colorado's mineral riches pay off."²³³ Through this dependency by the mining industry, railroads amassed influence in the Rocky Mountain region.

Eastern interests operated and controlled much of these railroad corporations. The Kansas Pacific Railway expanded into the area through a 6.5 million dollar loan sold by New York

²³² *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 119.

²³³ Stephen Leonard and Thomas Jacob, *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis*, (University Press of Colorado, 1990), 39.

bankers Darney, Morgan, and Co. and M.K. Jesup & Co.²³⁴ A report on this extension wrote that the rail "will connect the Eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, including all that contains any discovered mineral or arable wealth, with St. Louis, Chicago, New York and the rest of the Atlantic seaboard."²³⁵ Later on in the report reads, "We shall have by this road the entire control of the trade [...] of Southern Colorado."²³⁶ The railroads showed a clear link to existing financial powers in the East, and through these trade networks they controlled a great deal of economic affairs within the Colorado domain.

This vast railroad influence became even more apparent in the expressions of lobbyists at the time of the State Constitution. Former Colorado Governor John Evans sent a petition to the Convention "praying that protection be given in the Constitution to railroad investments."²³⁷ This was an extremely important political endorsement, and underscored the importance of financial confidence in institutions as large as the railroad corporations. Additionally, a memorial read at the Convention stated:

Your memorialists, deeply interested in the development of every portion of our Territory and realizing the important relation which the building of railroads bears to said development, would respectfully ask your Honorable body to so frame the Constitution as that it shall render the value of capital invested in Colorado railroads secure from being impaired by unjust interference with the same. We would not ask any special benefits or exemptions for railroads over any other class of property, but we would not jeopardize the construction of more roads in the Territory, nor be unjust to those which are now in operation. Hence we ask your Honorable body to omit from the Constitution any provision which would make it the duty of the General Assembly of the State to legislate in opposition to the spirit of this petition.²³⁸

²³⁴ Kansas Pacific Railway Company. *Kansas Pacific Railway Gold Loan, \$6,500,000 ...* (New York: 1869), 5.

²³⁵ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, 9.

²³⁶ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, 17.

²³⁷ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 153.

²³⁸ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 191.

For these sentiments to make it onto the floor of the Constitutional Convention, they had to be backed by significant financial and political supporters. Despite these inquiries, the State Constitution ended up passing measures to restrict the prevailing economic power of railroad corporations. The completed document deemed all railroads public highways and all railroad companies common carriers.²³⁹ In the following section, the legislator laid out the rules and regulations railroad companies would need to abide by:

Every toll road, telegraph and railroad corporation shall be held liable to do and perform all acts and render all services contemplated by its charter to be done, performed or rendered at just and reasonable rates of charges in all cases; and the General Assembly shall by law provide against extortion, unwarrantable charges and unjust discrimination in charges by any railroad corporation for transporting passengers or freight, or by any telegraph company for transmitting messages, or by any toll road corporation for the use of its road by individuals.²⁴⁰

These explicit rules and standards allude to a prevailing period that experienced extreme control by rail corporations. Railroads were an extremely influential and predominantly capitalist enterprise in the early development of the Colorado economy. They underscore a region's development that ideologically centered around individualism despite this prominent external influence.²⁴¹ Through railroads, Eastern financial elites coordinated the extraction of Coloradoan mineral resources.²⁴²

3.4.2.2 Railroads and the Environment

While the traditional telling of the 19th century cites the railroad as collapsing space and time, in many ways it was still limited by the terrain and climate it travelled through. Particularly

²³⁹ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 333.

²⁴⁰ *Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado*, 428.

²⁴¹ Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (W.W. Norton and Company: 2012), xxii.

²⁴² Railroads are among the most thoroughly studied factors of 19th century America, particularly with respect to Western development. For wide coverage on the topic, see works such as Steven Hahn's *A Nation Without Borders*, Richard White's *The Republic for Which It Stands and Railroaded*, William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis*, Sarah Gordon's *Passage to the Union*, Albro Martin's *Railroads Triumphant*, and Craig Miner's *A Most Magnificent Machine*, among others.

in Colorado, the mountain terrain, steep inclines, and snowy weather strictly guided the placement of these networks.

Yet again, the decision of where to lay infrastructure was in part determined by the location of rich mineral deposits in the Rocky Mountain region, a naturally occurring phenomenon. A report from the Denver and Rio Grande writes, "the idea of a north and south railway following the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains from the principal city of the new West - Denver, southward to Mexico - arose from a conviction that this belt of country had especial advantages in its location, climate, and natural resources."²⁴³ This account suggests that infrastructure decisions were made in direct dialogue with the geographic endowments of Colorado, particularly its weather and minerals. With respect to the San Juan Mines, Kindquist writes "It was the attraction of the range's mineral wealth that produced a complete redirection of the narrow gauge system."²⁴⁴ Mineral discoveries altered the course of railroad infrastructure, so through these means the Colorado environment played an extremely active role in economic development.

A report by the Union Pacific Railroad illustrates many of these points concerning the environment as a historical agent in economic growth and activity. The description of the proposed route begins abounding with references and markers to the existing natural landscape, as described in the following report: "The route up the North Fork of the South Platte, would enter the mountains at the canon of the South Platte, follow up that stream about 10 miles to the mouth of the North Fork, thence up that stream 35 miles to the range, and thence connect with

²⁴³ Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company, *Annual Report*. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Denver and Rio Grande Railway: 1872).

²⁴⁴ Kindquist, *Stony Pass*, 72.

one of the heads of Snake river, an affluent of the Blue."²⁴⁵ The route then travelled through a 2.5 mile long tunnel, where planners anticipated to encounter mineral lodes that could provide additional funding for the project.²⁴⁶ The report later described the difficulty in traversing the terrain, and the lengthening of the route that would have to occur because of this:

In the matter of grades, I do not hesitate in the opinion that there is no route in Colorado with so easy an approach, on both sides of the main range of mountains, as this route. Yet the easy grades are made at the sacrifice of general alignment. There will be a line of about 145 miles in length to make 76 miles of westing between Denver and the mouth of the Blue.²⁴⁷

A clear negotiation with nature was made in this particular decision. Planners ideally preferred to establish the quickest route from Denver to the Blue, but they acquiesced somewhat to the environment due to existing levels of steepness, and constructed a route on flatter ground. One other concern expressed in the report is for the prevalence of avalanches along the route, which are common in certain parts of the mountains where snow tends to melt.²⁴⁸ This account marks the many issues Coloradan developers had to grapple with when laying tracks in the Rockies, from grades and minerals to rivers and snow.

3.3.2.4 Bridges and Dams

Other essential aspects of harnessing the mineral wealth of the Rocky Mountains included maneuvering and dealing with the area's natural water power, primarily through bridges and dams. As an oversupply of these structures would prove to be incredibly wasteful, the construction of bridges and dams closely monitored by the Territorial government right from the outset. In the Jefferson Territory Constitution, legislators established charters for the Cibolo

²⁴⁵ Union Pacific Railroad Company, *Union Pacific Railroad: Report of F.M. Case of Surveys of Cache La Poudre & South Platte Routes And Other Mountain Pass In Colorado* (Omaha: 1864), 2.

²⁴⁶ Union Pacific Railroad Company, *Report*, 3.

²⁴⁷ Union Pacific Railroad Company, *Report*, 4.

²⁴⁸ Union Pacific Railroad Company, *Report*, 8.

Hydraulic Company, the Fountain City Bridge Company, the Arapahoe Ditch Company, and the Consolidated Ditch Company. With these charters came specific guidelines for where bridges and dams should be constructed.²⁴⁹ They also came with strict, publicly enforced rates on water and travel access. Stipulations for both location and rates were shown in the charter for the Cibolo Hydraulic company, as just one example:

Said company shall have power to construct a dam across Clear Creek in Jefferson County, at some point by them to be located within the distance of 4 miles above the town of Golden City, and to turn not more than one-third of the water of Clear Creek, at that point, into a canal or race or ditch [...] the company shall have the right to use the water so taken from Clear Creek for agriculture, mining or medical purposes, and may sell the water to other parties at reasonable rates, say not more than \$1.25 per inch.

As projects that required a significant degree of materials and labor, bridges and dams had to be undertaken in part by corporations. Territorial and State administrations still did their best to limit corporate power in this channel of infrastructure. In one of the only exceptions, a Territorial Law passed in 1870 allowed for County Commissioners to subscribe to company stock if it were explicitly for the construction of ditches or flumes for mineral, milling, irrigating, or fire water supply.²⁵⁰ This is typically understood to be a conflict of interest, as municipalities should be welfare maximizing for their inhabitants, in stark contrast to the profit maximizing nature of corporations. In times like these, however, over-construction would be extremely wasteful, so it was actually prudent for governments to become involved in this aspect of development.²⁵¹ For these particular construction projects, state and corporate powers intimately connected.

²⁴⁹ *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory.*

²⁵⁰ *General laws and joint resolutions, memorials, and private acts passed at the Sixth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado* (Rocky Mountain News Office, 1870), 193.

²⁵¹ The early development of railroads, for example, was highly decentralized, following the basic principles of competition improving efficiency and economy. Due to the nature of these goods, however, ultimately only a few routes prospered, and thousands of miles of track laid down went to waste.

Yet again, the very construction of these projects was an admission to the power imposed by the environment, with planners forced to travel above waterways and channel water power. These interactions should be viewed as direct engagements between prospectors and nature. This dynamic crucially shaped the development of the Colorado economy as it evolved in this early stage.

3.3.3 Towns and Urbanization: Rushers and Capitalists

One of the few areas of economic development that settlers played a dominant role in was town development. This was in part due to the fact that the only requirement for establishing a land claim was getting there first. This sentiment emerged from a New York court case in 1805 titled *Palmer v. Mulligan*. Allowing the use of water for entrepreneurial interests, this case more broadly established the principle of squatter's rights when defining the meaning of property.²⁵² Much like prospecting for mineral lodes, a rusher could simply lay claim to a parcel of land for a small fee and divide it into town lots, hoping their value would grow in conjunction with nearby amenities, particularly minerals.

Many of the first major cities and towns of Colorado began as junction points between mining districts and the Eastern economy. They were close enough to the mountains for easy travel into the mines but far enough for expansion and growth. This development happened rather quickly. One account from the *Kansas City Journal of Commerce* writes "Here on this spot, where you now see a flourishing and enterprising town of nearly 1,000 inhabitants, with dry goods stores, 10 shops, real estate agencies, blacksmith shops, law offices and Doctor shops, four months ago was a beautiful Valley filled with game of every description."²⁵³ The same groups prospecting for gold were often those that also laid out town sites. Captain Curtis, for example,

²⁵² Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (Oxford: 1992), 90.

²⁵³ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 231.

went with a group from Council Bluffs to the Pike's Peak region and laid out the plans for Arapahoe City before heading into the mountains.²⁵⁴ The Lawrence prospecting party constructed cabins adjacent to the mountains for living arrangements in the winter, and developed a town site surrounding it for the other settlers to come in the spring.²⁵⁵

Generally speaking, the majority of town development was carried out by prospectors and boosters that physically went to the mining region of the Rockies. Unlike mining corporations and transportation infrastructure, towns were typically created and developed by people with less financial means than that of a wealthy capitalist. The following report describes the aims of a sole individual in developing a town in Colorado:

He has also a compass, Transit, level, chain, drafting instruments, paper, and all the other requisites for surveying. His plan of operation is to prospect the country with his pick and pan, until he is satisfied where to squat, when he will proceed to locate, preempt, survey, plat, map and lay out of town, and go into that line of business on his own hook. Such are the men who are now leaving Kansas City for the gold region. It will not take such boys long to develop the country. Hurrah for Young America.²⁵⁶

The nature of this on-the-ground urban development is one that could be achieved by those with limited capital so long as they were physically in the Rockies. All one simply had to do was go to Colorado and find an area of unclaimed land to complete their vision of a future center for commerce and settlement. Surely this process of town development was not as unrestricted as the above article from a booster town suggests, but it was certainly less hampered by the administrative rigidity of older Eastern institutions.

For groups that organized to lay claim on developing these lands, town companies were much less centralized than railroad corporations. The Aurora Town Company, for example,

²⁵⁴ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 212.

²⁵⁵ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 150.

²⁵⁶ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 40-41.

comprised 100 original stockholders, who each built a house within the bounds of the new municipality.²⁵⁷ While the towns of Pike's Peak formed democratically, they still drew on existing values and principles of their Eastern city counterparts, as was the case with almost all Western American urbanization in history. This precedent included means of transportation, distribution, and communication, as well as basic political and civic structures and positions. When speaking of a German pioneering group set to enter the Rockies and lay down a townsite, one newspaper reports "They are the men who have been the founders or first builders of all the principal commercial cities of the Union - New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis."²⁵⁸ Here it is evident that town development in Colorado took part in a much longer American narrative of city building. While many townsites in the region were set by modest individuals, it was within the context of a centuries-old practice of town laying in America, fitting into this older Eastern system.

Urbanization in the Rocky region at this time was not completely decentralized or external to Eastern systems of influence. The Jefferson Territory Constitution incorporated a few town companies with stipulations on the location and size of their plots. The Golden Gate Town Company, for example, was granted 640 acres to be divided into "parks, squares, blocks and lots."²⁵⁹ While the earliest development of Coloradan cities may have been by individuals and groups physically within the region, towns that found success were those that incorporated into the national metropolitan system, and through these means capitalists yet again imposed their influence. The Kansas Pacific railroad reported Denver as "the heart of this mighty region, the future metropolis of the Rocky Mountains and the plains. This road proposes to unite it with it's

²⁵⁷ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 147.

²⁵⁸ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 50.

²⁵⁹ *Provisional laws of Jefferson territory*, 280.

sister cities of the east [...] binding the heart of the great Rocky Mountain country to St. Louis, Chicago, and the cities of the East."²⁶⁰ Individuals and pioneers laid the foundations for the cities of Colorado, despite their later incorporation into the national urban network.

3.4.3 Towns and Urbanization and the Environment

As the value and success of towns depended heavily upon the water and wood access as well as the distribution of mineral lodes in its vicinity, it is apparent that the environment heavily determined this aspect of development as well. Some scholars have begun to grapple with this dynamic, including Andrew Isenberg in *Mining California: An Ecological History*. Isenberg writes of the industrial-environmental relation of the Western city, saying:

Cities were not simply byproducts of the industrial exploitation of Western natural resources. They were themselves economic enterprises, founded by land speculators who anticipated fortunes in real estate development. Cities organized vast spaces in the west, drawing to themselves capital, labor, and resources and dictating economic enterprises in far-flung hinterlands.²⁶¹

While bringing many ecological themes to the forefront of Western history, Isenberg may have not placed enough agency on the landscape and nature itself. Cities did not just draw resources to them, but their very locations were in part determined by the resources available closeby. There has been a tendency in scholarly work and popular understandings of history to partition the city and the country, particularly in the American West, but they actually share a common, integrated history.²⁶² To fully understand Western urban development, one must consider the powerful implications of the environment in this process.

Incipient towns throughout the Colorado Rockies emerged alongside natural features of the landscape. To begin with an analysis of this town development, one must first consider the

²⁶⁰ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, 28.

²⁶¹ Isenberg, *Mining California*, 12.

²⁶² William Cronon explores this dynamic in *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (W.W. Norton, 1997).

environment of the Rockies before rushers entered. The *Kansas City Journal of Commerce* describes it as "no habitation in sight or sign of civilization - but prairie - boundless, endless."²⁶³ While Native Americans had long been using the land before the gold rush, they did not use it in the form of settlement understood by American society.

Looking from a more holistic and abstract level, the Rocky Mountain area had certain broad, geographic features that helped heavily determine the spatial allocation of settlement. When he explored the region in 1853, Captain Mullan noticed a peculiar range of uncharacteristic heat spanning through a belt that would later be the areas of settlement for incoming rushers. He describes this strange occurrence as:

a meteorological phenomenon as useful now as it was then, which is destined to have a most marked bearing in the future settlement and development of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. It is what I have termed an atmospheric river of heat. I first noticed this feature in the BeaverHead Valley, on the Jefferson Fork, a region which today is being rapidly peopled by a hardy, thrifty class of miners, and which point in time is destined to be a marked geographical and populous centre.²⁶⁴

Another feature Captain Mullan took note of were the crests between the mountains, and he saw these areas also to be heavily conducive to settlement, particularly in this description of Montanan land:

the infinite number of sheltered valleys found embosomed in the mountains. These valleys constitute the home and abiding places of the Indians, and promise to be important nuclei in the settlement of the country. These valleys are all more or less connected together by natural wagon roads, and are already indeed being taken up by farmers and grazers.²⁶⁵

These expansive aspects also in the Colorado region were crucial in guiding the development of settlement.

²⁶³ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 83.

²⁶⁴ *Miners and Travelers' Guide*, 60.

²⁶⁵ *Miners and Travelers' Guide*, 66.

As Eastern settlers then began to develop towns in Colorado, a clear spatial relation emerged to the mineral strikes and other natural resources of the land. These formations depended on the environment and were not developed in a vacuum, as suggested in one case with the city of Black Hawk: "The location of Blackhawk is peculiar. The site is y shaped; the upper portions of the Y, Gregory and Chase gulches, and the tail, Clear Creek Valley. There is but little level space at any point, and the city is built irregularly along the gulches and against the mountainsides."²⁶⁶ This town developed interspersed throughout rivers, mountains, and mineral lodes, leading to a highly unique shape and character. The history of Central City is discussed with former natural mining features transitioning into aspects of the human city:

It is surrounded and mined by the richest gold mines in the world. The gulches, which are now its principal streets, were formerly rich placer diggings, and the surrounding mountains are furrowed and pitted by surface openings, mining shafts, and prospect holes. Its location in the center of the mining district, and midway between the great milling and mining cities of Black Hawk and Nevada, makes it readily accessible to most of the miners and millmen in the county; hence its importance in a business point of view.²⁶⁷

Central underscores the intimacy developed between city and town formation and the natural extraction of minerals from the Rockies.

Much more of the earlier cities abound with geospatial reference to water, timber, and other natural resources. A San Juan Mines report describes the town of Eureka with "the mountains [...] crowded close upon you on either side."²⁶⁸ The Lawrence Party laid the townsite for Montana City "near the mouth of Cherry Creek where the so-called Trappers' Trail from Taos, New Mexico and from the Arkansas River to Fort Laramie, crossed the Platte."²⁶⁹ St. Charles was yet another mining town, located at the junction of Cherry Creek and the Platte

²⁶⁶ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 332.

²⁶⁷ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 343.

²⁶⁸ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, *The San Juan Mines*, 9.

²⁶⁹ Agnes Spring, *Rush to the Rockies 1859* (Colorado Magazine), 91.

River.²⁷⁰ Located 10 miles from the mountains, Pike's Peak City was laid at the junction of Plumb Creek and the South Platte.²⁷¹ The town of Aurora developed at the junction of the Cherry Creek and South Platte River, and along a major road connecting New Mexico and Kansas to Salt Lake City and Fort Laramie.²⁷² These areas all emerged in relation to natural water sources, as planners coordinated value with the existing environment.²⁷³

Successful towns drew upon the material energy and power of its surroundings. These emerging cities then converted this material power into social power, harnessing the movement of the water for mills, using wood for buildings and sluice construction, and acquiring the monetary value of gold veins in Eastern markets. This concept of social and physical power connecting is probed in an article published in *Technology and Culture* titled "The Nature of Power." A group of scholars in the technological and environmental fields argued that energy goes from the natural to the human world, and those who are able to tap into and harness natural power are those with the most social, economic, and political power.²⁷⁴ Oil, gas, and mineral executives are prime examples of this harnessing of natural and human power in the 19th century US West. Within the context of Coloradan urban development, successful hubs harnessed the natural power and energy of their surroundings.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 119.

²⁷¹ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 164.

²⁷² Tierney and Parsons, *Pike's Peak Gold Rush Guidebooks*, 120.

²⁷³ In *Nature's Metropolis*, Cronon writes of these considerations, saying "Boosters believed that climate, soils, vegetation, transportation routes, and other features of the landscape all pointed toward key locations that nature had designated for urban greatness."

²⁷⁴ Edmund Russell, James Allison, Thomas Finger, John K. Brown, Brian Balogh, and W. Bernard Carlson, "The Nature of Power: Synthesizing the History of Technology and Environmental History," *Technology and Culture* 52:2 (2011), 246-259.

²⁷⁵ In "The Politics of Grass," Pekka Hämmäläinen explores the power of the Cherokee nomadic empire in the Southwestern US and specifically how this political power was in part derived from the grass of the Great Plains fueling their nomadic army of horses. This explores one of the many ways in which natural power could translate to political and human power. Pekka Hämmäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands" *The William and Mary Quarterly*: 67(2), 2010.

In this sense, an emerging mountain town achieved economic value through its ability to tap into the environmental power of the region, or, as "tributaries to its wealth and importance."²⁷⁶ A description of Boulder's origins, for example, cites not only its rich mineral resources, but also the ability to draw on the potential for agricultural productivity in the area:

The great mineral and agricultural wealth of the county, will eventually make Boulder's population equal that of the principal cities of Colorado, and place it beyond rivalry in wealth and importance [...] This alone would ensure large population and wealth, and taken in connection with the fact that Boulder County possesses one of the richest silver mining districts in Colorado, besides large deposits of gold ores, all in the neighborhood of the city, and readily accessible, makes a combination of advantages possessed a few locations even in this favorite country.²⁷⁷

Successful hubs of human networks in Colorado emerged clearly alongside natural placements of water, wood, and minerals. This natural power arose in other instances of town development as well. G.N. Woodward writes of the potential of Pike's Peak City, including reference to these three major environmental factors: "It is about 10 miles from the mountains, and in the center of the best mining region at present, and is surrounded by the best of pine timber. If we only had a sawmill, with the fine water power of Plumb Creek, a man could make a fortune."²⁷⁸ The Gazetteer description of the city of Golden looks to the location's endowments of fuel, water, and minerals as a pathway to establishing it as a manufacturing hub

The abundance of cheap fuel, fireclay and superior water powers at Golden, together with its proximity to the gold districts of Gilpin in Boulder County's, make it a suitable point for the erection of extensive reduction works for the treatment of all grades of Colorado ores, and no doubt these will soon be added to the manufacturing industries of this favorite City.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, 27.

²⁷⁷ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 386.

²⁷⁸ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 164.

²⁷⁹ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 319.

Just as the power of nature could determine the functional viability of a city, so too could it take away an area's use. The Gazetteer describes the decline of Colorado City in part due to "the discovery of the Gregory Gold Mines, in Gilpin County, to which Denver was the nearest market."²⁸⁰ As miners exhumed the Rockies' riches from its veins, certain areas became winners while others losers. This success and failure of urbanization in the economic development of Colorado owes much of its origins to the environmental features of the Rocky Mountain area.

3.5 The Material Economy

The development of the Colorado economy progressed as an exchange of interactions between American capitalists, Eastern rushers, and the Colorado environment. The population surge in the late 1850's that demanded new markets, networks, and hubs of human interaction were prompted by the discovery of naturally occurring mineral veins within the mountains. The mining industry generally began with placer mining in the rivers flowing out of the Rockies, in a largely egalitarian manner. Then, in the early to mid 1860's, through sources of lodes in the veins of the mountains, the finance of capitalism centralized industrial control.²⁸¹ Infrastructure from wagon roads and railroads to dams and bridges also required capitalist sponsorship, although money could still not buy over the environment in its unwavering features of terrain and climate. Town development and urbanization were engaged mostly at the individual and small group level, as rushers too made decisions in conjunction with their understanding of the region's water, wood, and minerals.

In *Nature's Metropolis*, historian William Cronon wrote of the capitalist structure that "Natural advantage and the movement of human populations together determined how individual

²⁸⁰ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 412.

²⁸¹ Rodman Wilson Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880* (University of New Mexico Press: 2001), 109.

cities, towns, and villages would fit into that system."²⁸² In this sense, humans and the environment negotiated with each other to produce economic outcomes around the Rockies. Rushers, capitalists, and nature were the three main co-creators of this Mountain State economy.

²⁸² Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 44.

Coloradan Thought Development: 1858-1876

4.1 Human Capital

One of the more intangible forms of development that arose from the Pike's Peak Gold Rush was in the formation of human capital, or of knowledge and inquiry. Reflecting on the first 30 years of mining in Colorado, historian Rodman Wilson Paul remarks "Perhaps the most important element was not material but intellectual."²⁸³ This flourishing of thought formed through two main, interacting channels: the area and the people.

The domain of Colorado itself was highly conducive to groundbreaking thinking. The nature of ore deposits, with the metals combined to silver and gold, differed from the deposits preceding them in California and Nevada, so scientists had to develop new insights for extraction and purification.²⁸⁴ When recounting his experience with Colorado ores, Nevada Comstock Lode veteran Almarin B. Paul said "Colorado's ores [are] more complex and rebellious, and hence more expensive to treat, than any [I] had encountered in California or Nevada."²⁸⁵ This led to many contributions in the fields of geology, mineralogy, and metallurgy.²⁸⁶ In the early development of the Colorado Territory and state, early institutional forms of knowledge and intellectual acquisition also began to appear, namely in schools and newspapers, both of which began in intimate connection with the mining industry and Colorado environment.

Social thought in Colorado at this time, as well as in the US more broadly, was founded on the principles of rationalized, scientific inquiry, along similar lines to the way mining pursuits evolved. Devising methods for efficient extraction and refinement of mineral ore developed in

²⁸³ Rodman Wilson Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West* (University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 129.

²⁸⁴ Colorado gold ore, once 100 feet below ground level, was typically combined chemically with a significant amount of sulphides and required extensive smelting processes for purification (Paul, 118).

²⁸⁵ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 123.

²⁸⁶ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 123.

rigorous scientific labs. These developments in rationalized scientific and social thought in Colorado during this time were not a divergent phenomenon, but rather emblematic of a more general movement in thought on a national scale. Heavily promoted by the interest of capitalist agents, methodological thought allowed corporations to fully maximize their exploitation of Western natural resources. Scientific inquiry into Colorado allowed investors to gain a stronger handle on their understanding of the natural assets they stood to gain from. In this sense, developing knowledge in the Rocky Mountain basin was a sign of capitalist tendencies looking to further their control into a region they were largely unfamiliar with.

Through the nature of the Rocky Mountain region and the individuals that decided to enter it in the 1860's, new findings and thoughts developed that increased the interconnectedness between Eastern ideological systems and the Western environment. This led to varying degrees of outcome and success for the agents involved, from natives and locals to capitalists and federal officials.

4.2 Chronology/Overview

When rushers began to mine in Pike's Peak, they found the placer gold that was so prominent in California and Nevada (and later in Idaho and Montana) in very limited amounts, while the major source of minerals remained in lodes within the mountains. These ores were especially difficult both to extract and smelt into pure content, as their chemical makeup with other rocks and materials was very different than that found in California.²⁸⁷ A report from the Gregory Gold Mining Company corroborates this claim: "The ores, however, contain several other metals besides gold, and consequently the application of science and improved methods of

²⁸⁷ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 123.

working are necessary to separate the gold in the most profitable manner."²⁸⁸ For this reason, scientists and sophisticated miners developed many advancements in the mining field within this region to help efficiently extract and refine the material.

Mining geologist Frederick L. Ransome even remarked "this is the region where so much in mining and metallurgical technique had its beginnings."²⁸⁹ Paul describes the wide swath of fields these techniques provided value to: "knowledge of chemistry, metallurgy, and mineralogy were essential, and geology desirable. In other words, for successful smelting a training in science was prerequisite."²⁹⁰ Through all of these early mining endeavors in Colorado, the scientific process played a prominent role in extraction and refinement, improving both the production of minerals as well as scientific methodology itself.²⁹¹

The scientific methodology of the mining process that developed within Colorado emerged amidst a much larger, national movement toward uniformity in the production process. In the late 19th century, the American economy was maturing and growing, helped through processes of industrialization. Immigration levels and birth rates both rose to significant levels and the country began to efficiently produce both natural resources and manufactured goods to the extent that it began to export many products. Cities grew significantly in size along with factories and wage work. One of the most significant changes in this era occurred with the widespread use of organizers and middlemen in corporations, being able to conduct far-reaching

²⁸⁸ Gregory Gold Mining Company, *Prospectus, Geological Survey And Report of the Gregory Gold Mining Company, Gregory District, Colorado Territory* (New York: 1863), 28.

²⁸⁹ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 115.

²⁹⁰ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 119.

²⁹¹ As a similar story, although the extraction of gold itself in Montana was short-lived, its legacy was extremely valuable, in the production of knowledge. There, the scramble for gold mining consequently led to a mapping of the wider mineral deposits of Rocky Mountains, crucial for silver and copper extraction later on. Insights developed for topography and geology at large.

Kent A. Curtis, *Gambling on Ore: The Nature of Metal Mining in the United States, 1860-1910* (University Press of Colorado, 2013), 61.

and complex aspects of business.²⁹² Historian Alfred Chandler calls this the "managerial revolution," and it entailed the use of middle managers in corporations (particularly railroads) for coordinating the production and consumption within a business.²⁹³ The effects of this particular shift in corporate style pervaded all throughout society, emerging in various fields through seeking ways to maximize outputs and minimize costs in production.²⁹⁴ This sentiment of maximizing efficiency applied to the mining industry as extractors scientifically sought for the best way to convert unrefined ores into marketable metals.

4.3 Mineral Extraction and Refinement

The precise nature of mineral dispersion within the Rockies promoted extensive scientific development within the field and a culture of expertise in the region. Mining corporations relied on this expert knowledge to gain an understanding of the region and maximize their exploitative tendencies. In an 1859 circulation of the *Missouri Republican*, George M. Willing Jr. writes about how this particular distribution of ores calls for dedicated efforts in taking them out: "I will tell them in plain terms, that the gold is here, but so erratic in its disposition in the mountains that it takes energy, perseverance, probation, and capital to work it out."²⁹⁵ Miners and the companies typically employing them focused this extractive "energy" in many different capacities, one of the major ways being the development of new insights in mining, geology, and chemistry.

This emerging class of technical experts played an extremely pivotal role in the development of the American West through mining. Historian Sarah M. Grossman writes of this

²⁹² Though this was not a distinct change. Sidney Mintz in *Sweetness and Power*, amongst other scholars argued that principles of uniformity and efficiency so present in modern capitalism formed on slave plantations in the mercantile era.

²⁹³ Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Belknap Press, 1977).

²⁹⁴ In a much more recent scholarship, Richard White's *Railroaded* also explores this dynamic of finance capitalism in the developing American West.

²⁹⁵ Leroy R. Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush: Contemporary Letters and Reports 1858-1859* (Porcupine Press, 1974), 385.

cruciality: "As mining engineers were situated at the nexus of technical expertise and cultural influence, they had tremendous influence on how private American capital was invested during an era notable for the rapid expansion of the U.S. economy."²⁹⁶ Mining corporations implemented these specialized mining engineers for both field management and consultation. They provided a good mix of skills to position them as liaisons between the developing West and sponsoring East. This included knowledge on mining topics more than a typical skilled miner, experience working with ores, scholarly understanding of mining at large, and a holistic view to be able to bring this all together within the context of a mining operation.²⁹⁷ With these skills, mining engineers communicated both with the miners operating the ores as well as the Eastern speculators providing funding. In other words, without the engineers and the special knowledge they held, the increasing influence of capitalism would not have been able to effectively penetrate the Western domain of Colorado.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of the mining corporations in Colorado were operated and controlled from outside of the state, particularly from the Northeast. For this reason, these companies relied heavily on experts in the Colorado area to effectively communicate information about the quality of their claims, the status of their operations, and the prospects of future investments. Grossman points out that in the development of expert culture in Western mining, "speculators, financiers, and company bosses relied on mining engineers for accurate surveys and valuations of selected ore bodies."²⁹⁸ For these reasons, experts in the fields of mining possessed an essential role in the extraction of resources throughout the Rockies.

²⁹⁶ Sarah E.M. Grossman, *Mining the Borderlands: Industry, Capital, and the Emergence of Engineers in the Southwest Territories, 1855-1910* (University of Nevada, 2018), 4.

²⁹⁷ Grossman, *Mining the Borderlands*, 5-10.

²⁹⁸ Grossman, *Mining the Borderlands*, 4.

Reports to investors and Northeastern controllers of Colorado mining abound with testimony by scientists and experts in the region. Chemist and Mining Geologist Charles P. Williams reports on the claims held by the Gregory Gold Mining Company. This firm also sent Professor Edward Kent, of the US Assay Office of New York, to assign value to their claims in the region.²⁹⁹ The Colorado Gold Mining Company of Philadelphia received a sketch of their Excelsior Lode from a mining engineer and geologist, and through Professor Du Bois they bought out complex lodes from inexperienced miners for proper development.³⁰⁰ The Defiance Silver Mining Company received reports on their property from metallurgists and mining engineers J.T. Herrick and Professor Van Buren Ryerson.³⁰¹ Professor F.V. Hayden, in a US Geologist report, provided information on the claims of the American Mining Company.³⁰² Examples such as these abound all throughout the mining development of the Colorado region, and they point to the essential role of expertise and knowledge in converting the raw information of the Rocky domain into capitalistic terms and images for Eastern sponsors.

Even independent of centralized mining corporations, a significant market existed for expertise and technical insight in the Colorado sphere. This is evident in the advertisements included in the 1871 Colorado Gazetteer, which included assayers, analytical chemists, mining engineers, and civil engineers, from areas including Georgetown and Central City, and coming from places such as the US survey and MIT.³⁰³ These experts aided the extractive natural

²⁹⁹ Gregory Gold Mining Company, *Prospectus, Geological Survey And Report of the Gregory Gold Mining Company*.

³⁰⁰ Defiance Silver Mining Company of Colorado, *Prospectus And By-laws, Map, Scientific Reports, Letters, &c., of the Defiance Silver Mining Company, of Colorado: Located At Georgetown, Griffith District, Clear Creek County, Colorado. Organized Under the General Mining And Manufacturing Laws of the State of New York.* (New York: 1869).

³⁰¹ Defiance Silver Mining Company of Colorado, *Prospectus And By-laws*.

³⁰² American Mining Company. *Statement of the American Mining Company* (Washington: H. Polkinhorn & Co., Printers: 1870).

³⁰³ *The Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer for 1871* (S.S. Wallihan & Company, 1871).

resource process of the mountain economy and helped centralized capitalists realize the profits of this venture, while also providing useful information for the local area to endure.

4.3.1 State/Governmental Knowledge

Also through mining, state and federal officials developed organizations and practices to extract knowledge and insight from Colorado ores and terrain. James Scott yet again provides the framework for understanding the motives and incentives for a state-funded production and acquisition of knowledge, writing that one of the ways the state can extend its authority is through "social engineering."³⁰⁴ Grossman alludes to this well for mining specifically, making the land quantifiable for its exploitation: "The work of mining engineers on the treatment and extraction of complex ore bodies was instrumental in creating and supporting a vision of the American industrial landscape as a quantifiable exploitable space - a technocratic landscape."³⁰⁵ In many different facets, the territorial and federal governments provided support for developing new insights in the Colorado terrain, both to public and corporate benefit.

The drafters of the Colorado State Constitution were wary of this public surveyance. An entreaty begins at the Convention by mentioning the preexisting Bureau of Mining Statistics operated at the national level, which provided reports on the Gold and Silver industries of the country. These were extremely popular accounts, as the Convention notes "the publications of this commission are well-known all over the West, and, being prepared by men of known ability, are highly valued, not only by Americans interested in our mines, but by foreigners."³⁰⁶ The

Cushman, Samuel, writer on gold mines, and J.P. Waterman. *The Gold Mines of Gilpin County, Colorado: Historical, Descriptive And Statistical* (Register Steam Printing House: 1876), 7.

³⁰⁴ James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 2020), 5.

³⁰⁵ Grossman, *Mining the Borderlands*, 18.

³⁰⁶ *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention for the State of Colorado* (The Smith-Brooks Press State Printers, 1875), 58.

framers saw this organization as essential in the growth of the mining industry, and thus proposed the creation of the Colorado Commissioner of Mines and Geology, a similar office but with a sole focus on the state of Colorado. Specific responsibilities included "an annual report on the condition of the mines of gold and silver, copper, lead, coal, iron in the various other minerals so abundant in Colorado, to prepare an official statement of the production and growth of this industry, and to be ready at all times to furnish to inquirers correct information of the technical nature of our mines."³⁰⁷ Information in a heavily physical state economy was an industry in its own right, and state officials recognized this newfound value of knowledge in an increasingly scientific society.

At the federal level, state officials continued to develop practices to extract information from the Colorado domain. Between 1873 and 1876, for example, the government authorized three surveys of the San Juan mining region. This included important and insightful features far beyond basic topography and transportation routes, including geologic, economic, and cultural traits.³⁰⁸ The proliferation of this information even helped promote the wider progression of the region in general, as Kindquist writes "By disseminating generally accurate information, particularly regarding the composition of the mines and access to them, the survey publications promoted population migration and regional development."³⁰⁹

In this sense, the production of knowledge had two, diverging effects. It first allowed for state developers to create enduring infrastructural, commercial, and migratory networks for the new settlers of the Colorado region.³¹⁰ Knowledge also enabled increased extraction and capitalist control in mining and the Colorado economy at large by centralized capitalists.

³⁰⁷ *Constitutional Convention*, 58.

³⁰⁸ Cathy Kindquist, *Stony Pass: The Tumbling and Impetuous Trail* (San Juan County Book Company: 1987), 37.

³⁰⁹ Kindquist, *Stony Pass*, 33.

³¹⁰ This new development was certainly not to the benefit of Native peoples or ecological systems.

Through these two main channels, capitalists and settlers implemented information in Colorado in varying ways.

Colorado saw some of the largest and most significant advancements in mining relative to other industries. In 1879, the US Federal Government formed the United States Geological Survey. One of their first major endeavors involved a comprehensive study into the mining of Leadville, Colorado. The bureau sent Samuel Emmons, a Harvard graduate, to lead the research. The publication that arose from this work, *Geology and Mining Industry of Leadville*, became the seminal book in the mining field, referred to fondly as the "Miners' Bible."³¹¹ This success proved and solidified the use of scientific inquiry in realizing significant gains in the mining industry. Yet again, the value of this finding mainly benefitted a centralized elite, as these insights were only relevant to heavily industrialized processes used by large mining corporations (as opposed to small, egalitarian placer miners). These new swaths of knowledge allowed for corporations to further exploit the resources of the Colorado domain.

4.3.1 Early Globalization

The expertise and knowledge funneled into the Rocky Mountain region from places as far away as Europe point to instances of globalization at the time. With its new discovery of particularly peculiar ores, Colorado functioned as a meeting point for experts from all over the world to share their insights and develop new knowledge together. Grossman notes the borderless nature of mining, writing that "Mine engineering is a transnational profession. Ore beds and rock formations are unconstrained by national boundaries, and mining follows suit."³¹² While geopolitics certainly played a role in the profit-driven nature of mineral resource extraction, mining experts through all political boundaries were interested in developing mineral

³¹¹ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 130.

³¹² Grossman, *Mining the Borderlands*, 9.

extraction anywhere, as it contributed to the overall growth of the field and science. Yet again, this science gave disproportionate rewards to the capitalists controlling resource extraction in the West. A centralization of capital also led to a centralization in this niche mining knowledge, furthering the advantage wealthy capitalists possessed over small-scale miners and workers. Through this understanding, the development of knowledge in Colorado further increased inequity.

A report on the condition of the San Juan mines writes "All over Europe men of science and capital are making most extensive preparations for exploring the entire mineral regions of the United States."³¹³ As suggested here, global interest abounded throughout American mining in general, but the ores found in Colorado and along the Rocky Mountains particularly invited the use of expertise and globally renowned knowledge. The placer heavy mining of California demanded less science in the majority of their extraction, but most Colorado ores required intensive extraction processes whose profitability relied heavily on breakthroughs in the sciences.³¹⁴ In later asserting their viability as a location for the world's experts in mining, the San Juan report states "Here, then, is a field for the research of scientific men and industrious laborers that no other part of the world can present."³¹⁵ Colorado provided an opportunity to push forward the global knowledge on mining and ore refinement, and leading industry leaders throughout the world took note of this potential.

Other instances of cross-national scientific exchange occurred in Colorado at this time as well. The Defiance Silver Mining Company received reports on its claims from the London

³¹³ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, *The San Juan Mines: a Compendium of the Mineral Resources of Southwestern Colorado, Together With a Description of Its Mountain Scenery ... Including the Mining Laws of Colorado And the Acts of Congress Relating Thereto* (Kansas City: 1876), 28.

³¹⁴ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 123.

³¹⁵ Kansas Pacific Railway Company, *The San Juan Mines*, 30.

Colorado Mining Bureau.³¹⁶ Nathaniel P. Hill, a prominent leader in Colorado smelting, was originally a chemist who studied at Brown University. Upon being tasked with establishing the smelting industry of Colorado, Hill brought with him Herman Baeger, a mining graduate of Freiburg Academy in Germany, and Richard Pearce, a veteran of mining at Cornwall, England.³¹⁷ In 1876, the St. Louis Smelting and Refining Company sent metallurgist August R. Meyer, a graduate of the Freiburg Academy as well, to Leadville to establish a smelter and evaluate the ore there.³¹⁸ As Colorado offered some of the more compelling ores in its time, the scientific mining community of the world was interested in developing new insights there for the wider benefit and improvement of that community.

The mention of a global scientific mining community necessitates further discussion within this international context. Colombian Expositions and World Fairs emerged across the globe in the latter half of the 19th century, displaying international advancements in industry and agriculture. In a similar fashion, a series of International Expositions on Mining and Metallurgy took place in 1883, 1885, 1890, and 1894, in Madrid, Spain, Nuremberg, Germany, London, United Kingdom, and Santiago, Chile, respectively. These events point to the global collaboration in the mining industry during this period, as thoughts and ideas exchanged on an international scale.

Just as mining provided the opportunity for transnational exchange, capitalism was also a mobile ideological and economic system. American mining expertise originated in Europe alongside notions of imperialism and capitalism. This intercontinental exchange of information points to the reach of capitalist extractive processes. As industrial nations shared their experts

³¹⁶Defiance Silver Mining Company of Colorado, *Prospectus And By-laws*.

³¹⁷ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 124.

³¹⁸ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 127.

and knowledge for improving mineral extraction, they expanded production for international markets of demand, to the increased benefit of wealthy global capitalists and the exacerbation of global and regional inequity.

4.4 Education

In a somewhat less direct avenue, the discovery and development of mining in Colorado paved the way for significant development in education in the region. These institutions provided on-site training and learning so aspiring engineers could directly engage with the environment they would later operate in as consultants or field managers. These establishments yet again provided this direct benefit to the extractive capitalists, but they also led to more enduring and beneficial educational systems for the Colorado locale.

State planners forged ties between mining and education in Colorado ever since its creation as a Territory. In the Jefferson Constitution, city councils required to set aside a portion of their property tax revenue (most of which at this time came from mining property claims) to establish and support schools for children, as in the following decree:

That for the purpose of more effectually supporting common schools in said City, and to secure the benefits of an education to all the children therein, it shall be the duty of the city council, and they are hereby authorized to levy and collect an annual tax of 1 mill on a dollar upon all the property in said City subject to taxation for City purposes, which shall be appropriated to defray the necessary expenses of said schools.³¹⁹

Explicit use of the success of mining for education even developed after this. An 1862 act by the Colorado Territorial Legislature set aside a mining claim under ownership of the state whose financial value would be put toward the "use and benefit of common schools."³²⁰ This was also

³¹⁹ *Provisional laws and joint resolutions passed at the first and called sessions of the general assembly of Jefferson territory* (Robertson & Clark Printers, 1860), 276.

³²⁰ *Mining laws enacted by the Legislature of Colorado from first to ninth session, inclusive: and the laws of the United States concerning mines and minerals* (Collier & Hall, 1873), 25.

the same year that the city of Denver opened its first free school.³²¹ An 1865 Territorial law described the process of this through the sale and leasing of mining claims:

The county superintendents shall pay over to the territorial treasurer all funds arising from the sale or lease of mining claims, under an act to which this is supplemental, who shall invest the same in United States bonds for the use of school fund, the interest arising therefrom to be paid by the treasurer to the county superintendents of the several counties.³²²

This practice raised significant money for the state in support of schooling, so much so that in 1870 that amount had amassed to \$3,872.45, and a law passed to appropriate the money for the School of Mines in Golden City, creating a building with a laboratory for the instruction of chemistry, mineralogy, metallurgy, and geology.³²³

The Territorial Legislature established many other higher institutions of learning throughout its existence, both for the explicit learning of mining techniques and chemistry as well as learning in general. This included the Colorado Mining College, the Agricultural College at Fort Collins, the Miners and Mechanics Institute, the University at Boulder, and the Education of Mutes at Colorado Springs.³²⁴ These institutions had various functions, but they all helped promote the processes of inquiry in the area. While this helped the direct extraction process of minerals, these schools had much more enduring value for the Colorado state, economy, and inhabitants well past the prominence of the mining industry.

In 1874, the Colorado Territorial Legislature established a School of Mines in Golden, and its founding documents provide great insight into the relationship between mining and

³²¹ Stephen Leonard and Thomas Jacob, *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis*, (University Press of Colorado, 1990), 27.

³²² *General laws and joint resolutions, memorials, and private acts passed at the Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado* (Rocky Mountain News Office, 1865), 82.

³²³ *Sixth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 146.

³²⁴ *Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 113.
Constitutional Convention, 326.
Colorado Gazetteer for 1871, 142.

knowledge acquisition, and particularly the role of physical phenomena in the learning process.

The opening prospectus immediately illustrates the importance of scientific development for

Colorado ores and its applicability for other technical endeavors

In no other mining region is the fact more conclusively demonstrated that a modified system of beneficiation is necessitated by the peculiar idiosyncrasies of the raw material. [...] The receiving and imparting of knowledge bearing upon exploitation and reduction of ore, and upon technical education being the service it is hoped will be performed.³²⁵

This theme of Colorado ore driving scientific development and inquiry in the region once again resurfaces.

Through this document for the school, many references occur to the use of physical specimens for learning, as well as a spatial relation to important and prolific mineral regions. The building itself contains many minerals and materials for study, including "numerous specimens, comprising the fossils so abundantly found in the vicinity, typical economic minerals, both domestic and foreign, lithological specimens of various geological strata."³²⁶ The vicinity to important and productive mines was posed as a central element of the teaching that would take place, allowing for "empirical conjointly with theoretical instruction."³²⁷ Placed one mile east from the base of the Rocky Mountains, the school was situated 35 miles west of mineral regions in Central, Nevada, and Black Hawk.³²⁸ While these schools were typically Eastern institutions in structure, drawing upon Eastern-originated faculty, a great deal of their curriculum was guided by the existence of various minerals in the area, and in this way the Western environment modified preexisting Eastern standards of education.

³²⁵ Colorado School of Mines, Golden. *Territorial School of Mines, Golden* (Golden: Transcript print, 1874), 9.

³²⁶ Golden, *Territorial School of Mines*, 10.

³²⁷ Golden, *Territorial School of Mines*, 10.

³²⁸ Golden, *Territorial School of Mines*, 12.

One of the crucial elements to learning in this manner required a deep intimacy with the surrounding environment, as the framers write: "Frequent excursions to mining districts thus become a feature of the school. By affording healthful exercise in the pure air of the mountains, both mind and body return invigorated, and studies are again pursued with deeper interest because their practical application is so forcibly presented."³²⁹ Here the symbiotic relationship between students and the mining environment is clear. As miners extracted ore from the Rockies, they exhumed not only the monetary value of the metals, but also the intuitive knowledge of such a process. The hands-on nature of learning supported an overall rational and scientific method of inquiry, as students could use their senses and physically deduce the nature of their experiments.

This education pervaded beyond the confined practice of mining itself. The original faculty of the Golden School of Mines was made of six teachers, specializing in areas including metallurgy, chemistry, civil engineering, and geology, but also mathematics, German, and Spanish.³³⁰ After focusing solely on methods of ore extraction and refinement, these learning processes ended up possessing spillover findings into other disciplines.

An 1874 speech by Professor T.N. Haskell gave a report on the state of education in Colorado, and provides valuable insights on the environment for learning in the area. One of his central arguments was of the importance of knowledge acquisition in Colorado, as over time it would far exceed the value of the ores being extracted: "The earth bringeth forth bread for man and it hath also dust of gold; but where shall wisdom be found and where is the place of understanding? It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price

³²⁹ Golden, *Territorial School of Mines*, 13.

³³⁰ Golden, *Territorial School of Mines*, 8.

thereof."³³¹ Once again, intimately connected to the pursuit of knowledge in the Rockies was an understanding and engagement with the physical environment, as Haskell asserts "we happily have the best sanitarium of the country, and laboratories of nature at our command, and educational work and wants in sister Territories both North and South."³³² Haskell's remarks succinctly embody the unique offer Western states provided in their contribution to the national discourse of higher education. Comparable quality in education of this physical nature, in metallurgy and elsewhere, could not be found in the East because it did not have the extensive minerals and other specimens to interact with.

This discourse also exists within the larger national dialogue of the period. As historians Richard White and Elliott West have discussed, the Greater Reconstruction of the late 19th century took place throughout all of the United States, as the federal government grappled with issues of incorporating all of its inhabitants and regions into one coherent union. The American West was a major point of focus for these discussions, and Haskell's speech within this context shows it to be a proposition for the value of Colorado and the West within the scope of the United States as a national power. He highlights the nature and physicality of the West in stark contrast to the industrial Northeast. While differences did appear, Northeastern developers transferred many industrial aspects to Colorado and farther West, while nature and the environment certainly played a role in the East as well.

4.4.1 Libraries

Tangential to schools, libraries were also institutions of thought development particularly in the 19th century, and instances of these structures also arose in incipient Colorado. The 1871

³³¹ Thomas Nelson Haskell, 1826-1906. *Collegiate Education In Colorado*. (Denver, Col.: Tribune steam book and job printing house, 1874).

³³² Haskell, *Collegiate Education In Colorado*.

Colorado Gazetteer reports of such a creation, by the Miners and Mechanics Institute of Central, Colorado: "In the winter of 1866, the leading citizens of Central concluded, in view of the rapid growth of their city, to organize, if possible, a public library and literary Institute."³³³ A further discussion of this process reveals the genuine interest by a mining body to set up measures for the more widespread promotion of knowledge and inquiry in the area:

The first systemized action in the matter was taken at a public meeting, convened by a general call in the newspapers of the day, which was held on the 13th day of December, 1866. The attendance at this first meeting, for the public discussion of the advantages of a public library and adoption of proper measures to speedily secure the desired object, was large, and a lively interest in the matter was manifested by all present.³³⁴

In this manner, the industry of mining helped promote the acquisition of knowledge, not only within metallurgy and geology, but in all arenas of thought.

Understanding the inequities imposed by libraries in the 19th century, however, provides another framework for observing the imbalanced benefit of thought production. Occurring farther east and somewhat later into the century, the robber barons of industry, from John Rockefeller to Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan began using some of their wealth for philanthropy, giving their money to various causes they believed to benefit the public. Carnegie writes of this practice in *The Gospel of Wealth*, justifying the amassing of money by individuals as it proves their intellectual worth in knowing how to best spend it for the public good. Using this money to create libraries is a prominent example in his argument, as Carnegie writes:

millions finally become the means of giving to this city a noble public library, where the treasures of the world contained in books will be open to all forever, without money and without price. Considering the good of that part of the race which congregates in and around Manhattan Island, would its permanent benefit have been better promoted had these millions been allowed to circulate in small sums through the hands of the masses?³³⁵

³³³ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 141.

³³⁴ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 141.

³³⁵ Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth* (New York, 1901).

At face value this seems like a compelling argument for the good of philanthropy and millionaires, but considering this all within the context of Gilded Age America reveals new insights. Carnegie argues that his charitable creation of a library helps his workers because it allows them to enrich their mind and become better citizens and individuals. At the same time his very wealth to create such a structure is supported by his employees working over 60 to 70 hours a week, not affording them the time to go to such a place.

This example highlights the inequity prominent in 19th century America with institutions of learning. They were often presented as universal goods, enriching the minds of the public, but only those with the luxury of time, not having to earn a wage and work, could realistically enter. In this same manner, most knowledge created and developed in Colorado only benefited a select few capitalists that sponsored heavily capitalized mineral extraction, while everybody in the region was expected to be content with the production of knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself. While common schools allowed for more equal access to education, these mining schools consumed a significant portion of state funds, as the mining industry garnered significant favor within the government.

4.5 Newspapers

In a similar vein to schools and libraries, newspapers were an extremely important tool for the dissemination of knowledge throughout the Rockies, and possessed a mutually beneficial relationship with the mining industry in general. An 1858 excerpt of a Christmas celebration in Colorado posted in the *Omaha Times* writes of this powerful force of the media in developing regions: "The press - that mighty engine which controls powers and principalities, converts the howling wilderness into smiling fields and busy marts of commerce."³³⁶ Specifically with

³³⁶ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 196.

mining, newspapers in the Rockies were crucial for development. Rushers publicized and inherently legitimized their claims on mining property by posting them in local newspapers.³³⁷ According to many mineral district law codes, claim making and disputing had to be engaged in through newspaper postings to allow for widespread communication to occur.³³⁸ In a natural resource endeavor that relied so heavily on property rights and institutional legitimacy, newspapers provided a crucial level of authority in an emerging economy.

Multiple significant newspapers circulated throughout Colorado even in its incipient stages of territorial and state development, including the *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Cherry Creek Pioneer*, the *Rocky Mountain Herald*, the *Miner's Register*, the *Western Mountaineer*, the *Gold Reporter*, and the *Boulder-Valley News*.³³⁹ The names of these papers alone suggest the environment and mining as major aspects of their identity and purpose. Some circulations explicitly existed for the dissemination of knowledge surrounding mining claims and ore quality, like the *Mining Journal* published in Black Hawk,³⁴⁰ or the *El Paso Miner* published at Pike's Peak.³⁴¹ The *Rocky Mountain News* was first printed out of Fort Laramie for its critical intimacy with the first mining region following the gold rush.³⁴²

Media widely defined in Colorado at the time was more generally a crucial tool for sharing information and insights about the rush. In 1859, the Denver City Correspondence writes to the *Missouri Republican*, and describes the Colorado post offices as a critical point of juncture: "The post office is, of course, a place of general rendezvous, crowds of immigrants and

³³⁷ *Mining laws enacted by the Legislature of Colorado*, 25.

³³⁸ *Laws and regulations of Union District*, 1861

³³⁹ Alice Cowan Cochran, *Miners, Merchants, and Missionaries: the Roles of Missionaries and Pioneer Churches in the Colorado Gold Rush and Its Aftermath, 1858-1870* (Scarecrow, 1980), 12.

³⁴⁰ *Report of the Organization And Operations of the Bobtail Gold Mining Company of Colorado* (New York, 1864).

³⁴¹ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 292.

³⁴² Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 275.

emigrants, diggers, traders, mountaineers, etc, can always be seen in and about, retelling their hopes and disappointments. The flow of humanity from end to this point is still continuing."³⁴³ Through these important areas of intellectual exchange, new settlers acquired and developed valuable thoughts and insights for the rush, in ways that provided value to the mining community far beyond the confines of the Peak.

4.6 Intellectual Thought

While many early developments of knowledge in Colorado concerned the mining industry specifically, thinkers applied their nature and form to other areas of inquiry, and ideas formed that would affect much larger proportions of the American population than mining alone. The opening page of the charter for the Territorial School of Mines in Golden provides a quote by Francis Bacon, who they call "the Father of Experimental Philosophy"

The unassisted hand, and the understanding left to itself, possesses but little power. Effects are produced by the means of instruments and helps, which the understanding requires no less than the hand, and as instruments either promote or regulate the motion of the hand, so those that are applied to the mind prompt or protect the understanding.³⁴⁴

This notion guided Colorado thought and inquiry in general, alongside emerging national notions of rigid efficiency and optimization. In a nature-centric extractive economy, learning and progress developed by engaging with the surrounding environment and physical nature of the region.

4.6.1 Philosophy/Social Thought

Positioned around the centennial of the nation's founding, the formation of the Colorado state took place with consideration for American values of egalitarianism and democracy that had been posited in the 18th century and developed through discourse ever since. Scholars in

³⁴³ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 370.

³⁴⁴ Golden, *Territorial School of Mines*.

Colorado approached these issues with the same rational, formulaic form of inquiry that scientists approached Colorado ore.

Colorado Chief Justice Stephen S. Harding delivered a speech at Denver theatre in 1864, reflecting on the state of the union amidst the Civil War and the prospect of slavery by looking back at the principles drafted by the founding fathers of the country. He made statements on human nature and reasoning much in line with the rationality of the time, saying "man is a sentient being, progressive in his ideas, capable of analyzing principles, and drawing conclusions from well known premises."³⁴⁵ Through analysis and synthesis, Harding argued, Americans should be able to solve the social dilemmas of their time. Much of this thinking reads as a precursor to the actions and ideals brought forth in the Progressive Era later. This structured form of reasoning and thought is very similar to the learning processes promoted by mineral extraction in Colorado and the wider Mining West.

Harding goes on further to assert the role of the environment in promoting the egalitarian democracy that is representative of the American spirit: "Inspired by the free atmosphere of this new world, and contemplating the majestic phenomena of mountain, forest, river, and, ocean with its eternal hymn, and 'looking up through Nature to Nature's God,' caught the inspiration of Liberty which for ages had dwelt in caves and dungeons."³⁴⁶ In this same manner, the Colorado environment, and particularly its endowment of mineral ores, interacted with miners and scientists in a way that allowed for the flourishing of intellectual thought. This thought could be applied in the country far beyond the confines of the minerals. At the same time, it is impossible to wrestle these notions purported by Harding from the underlying sentiments of Manifest

³⁴⁵ Stephen S. Harding, and Miscellaneous Pamphlet Collection (Library of Congress). *Oration*. (Denver: Col., Byers & Dailey, printers, 1864), 7.

³⁴⁶ Harding, *Oration*, 13.

Destiny and settler colonialism. Eastern settlers saw the favorable conditions of the West as opportunities for their own growth, not necessarily the growth of local and indigenous populations.

Frank Q. Stuart published *Natural Rights, Natural Liberty, and Natural Law: An Inquiry Into the Causes of Social Maladjustments - The Rational, Just and Adequate Remedy* out of Denver in 1886, a work he said to have worked on over the course of eight years.³⁴⁷ From the name alone, one can already sense the measured approach Stuart begins to engage in with such a conventionally abstract issue as social law. The core of his thesis begins by defending the fundamental law of governance first posited by English philosopher William Blackstone: "Every man has the right to do whatsoever he wills, provided that in the doing thereof he infringes not the equal right of any other man."³⁴⁸ This is a simple and clear rule that one is able to logically proceed from in calculating the best social outcome.

Stuart then goes on to say, "under the principle every one has the same equal natural rights, and no one can enjoy greater rights or exercise greater liberty than is accorded to every other person without violating natural law."³⁴⁹ In this sort of zero sum game, equity can be mathematically derived in a very consistent fashion. Stuart looks at the origin of man and asserts his ability to reason as a main component of our ability as a species: "[The Creator] laid certain immutable laws of human nature, whereby that free will is in some degree regulated and restrained and gave him also the faculty of reason to discover the purport of those laws."³⁵⁰ With

³⁴⁷ Note that this work was published somewhat past statehood and the main period of focus for this thesis. Its ideas are poignant for my discussion and Stuart likely developed these thoughts and arguments somewhat earlier, so I found it appropriate to include here.

³⁴⁸ Frank Q. Stuart, *Natural Rights, Natural Liberty And Natural Law: An Inquiry Into the Causes of Social Maladjustments - The Rational, Just And Adequate Remedy*. (Denver, Colo., 1886), 10.

³⁴⁹ Stuart, *Natural Rights, Natural Liberty And Natural Law*, 11.

³⁵⁰ Stuart, *Natural Rights, Natural Liberty And Natural Law*, 7.

this foundation, Stuart looks to reason as the primary channel through which to improve society. Toward the start of his argument, he even draws a direct link between scientific methodology and social thought, writing "Social problems must be treated scientifically. If we knew as much about sociology as we do about geology there would be less discontent in the world [...] If we were as well versed in the science of rights, as we are in other sciences, comparatively speaking, this world would be a paradise."³⁵¹ In forging this relation, Stuart links the scientific thought in Colorado mining and applies it to other facets of human inquiry. In this sense, the style of thought surrounding Colorado minerals had pervading effects through other arenas of thought in the area.

In one other excerpt, Stuart draws a link between the environment and thought by citing the line from *Social Statics*, "ethical truth is as exact and peremptory as physical truth."³⁵² In all these lines of reasoning, Stuart relayed the physical findings of Colorado, such as through its treatment with ores, and applying it to more abstract, overarching lines of thought. In this way the developments in mineral technology and processes fit within a much wider process of thinking and learning in the American state as it matured into a formidable capitalist economy. Methods of uniformity and calculation present in the mines of Colorado mirrored the factories of New England and the legislative halls of Washington, D.C. This ethic pervaded all throughout the production of goods and services in an emerging American enterprise.

4.7 Entrepreneurial/Innovation

In a similar fashion to intellectual thought, the innovation required of ore extraction in Colorado also permeated to other areas of development. Speaking to the mining industry specifically, Grossman calls mining engineers "successful innovators, devising new and

³⁵¹ Stuart, *Natural Rights, Natural Liberty And Natural Law*, 5.

³⁵² Stuart, *Natural Rights, Natural Liberty And Natural Law*, 7.

ingenious ways to extract mineral wealth [...] utilizing newly codified, and accessible, engineering knowledge."³⁵³ Solving complex problems in the extraction and refinement processes of mining required a significant degree of creative and inventive thinking.

These traits for thought extended far beyond mining. The type of people who were willing to take the risk of coming to such an undeveloped area as Colorado during this time were typically those with an unusual degree of creativity and atypical thinking. The Colorado Gazetteer describes this class of people:

It is always the most adventurous and enterprising individuals from all communities who make up the pioneers of remote countries. It requires energy and daring to overcome the great difficulties that present almost insurmountable barriers to the development of new and distance sections; and especially was this the case in Colorado, before the construction of railways.³⁵⁴

While this source certainly aims to speak the most highly of its inhabitants, it is certainly true that those willing to uproot their lives and move into an unknown territory were inherently different than those who chose to stay in the East.³⁵⁵ These high risk-taking individuals continued to push the boundaries of thought and capability once within Colorado, leading to some interesting developments.

One such example often looked upon is the attempt at the wind wagon. This was an invention that hoped to hasten the speed of travel to Pike's Peak, much like railroads had already done for the majority of the trip. A witness describes the features of this fantastical contraption:

The affair is on wheels which are mammoth concerns, about twenty feet in circumference, and the arrangements for passengers are built somewhat after the style of an omnibus-body. It is to be propelled by the wind, through the means of

³⁵³ Grossman, *Mining the Borderlands*, 157.

³⁵⁴ *Colorado Gazetteer for 1871*, 111.

³⁵⁵ A paper in economic history studies the degree of "rugged individualism," measured by the prevalence of uncommon names, found in migrators to frontier areas in the 19th century. It found that selectivity in migration played somewhat of a role in determining these factors. Bazzi S., Fiszbein M., and Gebresilasse M. (2017), "Frontier Culture: The Roots and Persistence of "Rugged Individualism" in the United States" (NBER Working Paper No. 23997).

sails. As to the wheels it looks like an overgrown omnibus; and as to the spars and sails, it looks like a diminutive schooner. It will seat about twenty-four passengers.³⁵⁶

Due to the uncertainty of wind patterns in the plains, the wind wagon never lived up to its claim of travelling to the Rockies in twelve days, a pace of 100 miles a day. Historian Elliott West explains the meaning of such a failed experiment, however, as it was one of many "fringe examples of a broad, intoxicating faith in technological wizardry among emigrants who, after all, had seen their nation dramatically shrunk by steamboats and railroads."³⁵⁷ In an area that contained such hope and optimism amidst a country plagued by financial panics and sectional tension, ideas in Colorado flourished.

4.8 Good Thinking

In both mining and the wider society of Colorado, early development in thought and knowledge, and the very process of inquiry, found significant advancements, not only for Colorado itself, but the country and wider world as well. This highly methodological, rational process of thinking was rooted in the development of the Colorado mining industry. Paul writes of the evolution of Colorado mining as a science: "The pursuit of mining to a fixed science, [...] enabling the miner to sink with intelligence, to drift with knowledge, to cross-cut with certainty, to discover, to extract and hoist the ore to the surface with economic appliances, securing the maximum results with the minimum cost of labor."³⁵⁸ This knowledge was mainly gained for the further and more profitable extraction of mineral resources by highly capitalized corporations. While spillover benefits occurred for locals at times, such as with schools, newspapers, or state

³⁵⁶ Hafen ed., *Colorado Gold Rush*, 297.

³⁵⁷ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (University Press of Kansas, 1998), 151.

³⁵⁸ Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*, 131.

surveys, the main enactors and beneficiaries of this knowledge were the capitalists who looked to maximize their exploitation of the region's mineral wealth.

These foundations of a mechanized, systematic approach pervaded throughout all of American capitalistic society at the time, even in areas of philosophy and social thought. Converting these inground minerals into intangible forms of knowledge were likely the most enduring outcomes from their exhumation, as the insights gained in geology and other tangential fields remain to this day.

Conclusion: Alternative Outcomes

5.1 From Pike's Peak to the Colorado State

As the course of this research has shown, the interpolation of capitalist ideologies into the Coloradan frontier was by no means absolute, linear, or predetermined. The preexisting landscape and environment of the Rocky Mountain region afforded a degree of autonomous development in the political economy. Elements of egalitarianism, conservation, and anti-corporate sentiment germinated in pocketed mining districts within the gulches and passes of the Rockies in the 1860's and persisted in the Colorado character well into statehood. Rushers and capitalists contested the wealth and control of mines, railroads, and towns, while the domineering landscape continued to shape these factors as well. Speculators developed institutions for knowledge acquisition, including schools, libraries, and newspapers, all as a means to gain greater awareness and control of the territory, and benefitting the wider populace as well. This perspective on the nonlinearity of Colorado capitalism places much needed focus on the importance and agency of material forces in the region as well as alternative systems of exchange and existence.

5.2 The Disease of Possession

Throughout this thesis, I explored the resistance to capitalist development in Colorado through both the environmental factors of the region as well as the distinct characteristics of Eastern settlers into the area. While not the main focus of this research, Native Americans also provide an important perspective to this phenomenon with evidence of the opportunity for alternative systems in the Colorado domain. A deep, sustained indigenous critique of capitalist

culture complements the findings of this work and reinforces the need to assess the precariousness of the modern industrial system.³⁵⁹

Historical evidence reminds us that capitalism in the West was not always the monolith it now appears to be. In the early urbanization of Colorado, for example, Elliott West writes of the incorporations made between town companies and white fur traders who married into Native American society. Incoming Eastern settlers proposed these political alliances out of necessity; Native polities far overpowered Eastern systems in the area at the time. White settlers had to strategically coordinate with Native Americans to ensure safety and protection while their town formations were vulnerable. Once towns and Eastern infrastructure in the area became more established, companies maneuvered to exclude Native Americans and their white spouses from their society.³⁶⁰ While this was a minor window in the wider process of Coloradan development, it underlines the indeterminacy of capitalism in the area at its start.

From the Eastern perspective the story of capitalist development in America is often told as a story of progress and emerging civilization. It is difficult for contemporary observers to remain unenthusiastic about the prospects of an area such as Colorado in the 1860's when William Gilpin spoke so passionately of it as "the Zodiac of Empires in the isothermal axis of progress!"³⁶¹ In an Eastern US economy ravaged by speculation and unstable economic growth, the West provided an area of hope and optimism for many lower class European Americans

³⁵⁹ In *Contested Plains*, Elliott West draws out this critique by amplifying alternate systems implemented by Native tribes in Colorado.

³⁶⁰ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (University Press of Kansas, 1998), 184-187..

³⁶¹ William Gilpin, *Guide to the Kansas gold mines at Pike's Peak, describing the routes, camping places, tools, outfits, etc.: From Notes of Capt. J.W. Gunnison Topographical Engineer. Also, An Address on the New Gold Mines, Delivered at Kansas City, by Colonel William Gilpin* (Cincinnati, OH: E. Mendenhall: 1859), 37.

being beaten down by the pangs of industrial capitalism. Colorado appeared as an escape from Eastern institutional power.

From the Natives' perspective, however, the unquenchable appetite of the 19th century capitalist enterprise comes into focus. Black Hawk, a Sauk leader who resisted cession of land in Illinois to encroaching Euro-American populations, spoke to the incongruity of capitalist ideals with Native American societies that had been operating on the land for centuries: "My reason teaches me that land cannot be sold. the great spirit gave it to his children to live upon, and cultivate, as far as is necessary for their subsistence. Nothing can be sold but such things as can be carried away."³⁶² Ute Indians and other Native American tribes within the Colorado domain expressed similar sentiments as US soldiers relegated them to gradually smaller portions of land. The particular use of land and property rights under the capitalist paradigm puzzled many Native Americans, and reasonably so. European Americans handled their land as they did with any other industrial commodity, and in many respects this is unsustainable.

This dynamic of conflict between Native Americans and white settlers persisted throughout the 19th century. The economic, social, and political ways of life between the two groups were largely incompatible, and they often had trouble coexisting. Much of this tension can be attributed to the ceaseless demand and growth of European Americans, and the trajectory global capitalist markets placed on American land and resources. Yet again, Native American perspectives offer valuable insight into these circumstances. Toward the close of his life, after observing the voracious and constant demand of European Americans grow decade over decade, Lakota leader Sitting Bull provides the following chilling analysis:

We have now to deal with another race - small and feeble when our fathers first met them but now great and overbearing. These people have made many rules that

³⁶² Robert Hine, John Mack Faragher, and Jon T. Coleman, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (Yale University Press: 2017), 183.

the rich may break but the poor may not [...] They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own and fence their neighbors away [...] Possession is a disease with them.³⁶³

From these peripheral accounts of the capitalist system, inarguable flaws become highly visible. While professing better outcomes for all under the guise of freedom and choice, both in the 19th century and today, capitalism works to concentrate financial and political power in an elite few, casting masses to forced wage labor and dependencies on the market, while also exploiting land and the environment to unsustainable lengths.

The story of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush and the ensuing aftermath highlights this common narrative of capitalistic development in the American West. Many individuals came hoping for autonomy from industrial ideals, discouraged by the series of financial panics decimating Eastern middle-class investors each decade. In coming to Colorado, however, they inducted many aspects of capitalism in the region. Their penetration of the area laid the groundwork for the later appropriation of economic activity by concentrated capitalists.

Specifically in this context, multiple Native groups immediately felt the effects of encroaching Pike's Peak Rushers. Many of the rich mineral deposits in Colorado overlapped with prime grazing lands for Native American tribes, and increased populations put increasing pressure on the viability of these areas for survival. Tensions between the two groups escalated as the situations of Natives became more tenuous, and culminated in 1864 in the Sand Creek Massacre, where federal troops slaughtered peace-seeking southern Cheyenne men, women, and children.³⁶⁴ This outburst of violence

³⁶³ Hine, *The American West*, 266.

³⁶⁴ United States. Congress. Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians: Thirty-eighth Congress, Second Session ... January 10, 1865*. [Washington: s.n., 1865.

indicated a nonconsensual transfer of power in the Colorado regime from Native groups to the Eastern consumer.

These issues between Natives, whites, and the Western environment have persisted to the present, both within the confines of Colorado as well as the American West more generally. Interestingly, Native groups have been found on either side of energy and resource contestation in Colorado. The Southern Ute Indians possess a large wealth of oil and gas wells within their reservations, and have lobbied 1.6 million dollars to get the federal government to ease their restrictions on drilling in the area. This stands in stark contrast with the Sioux, who continue to fight against oil extraction through the Dakota pipeline.³⁶⁵ The key issue that aligns both affairs, however, is that of sovereignty.

From the federal standpoint, powerful lobbyists of natural resource extraction companies have promoted measures to privatize Western land for resource extraction. The privatization of the massive amount of land in the US West would have vast implications for small Western ranchers, Native Americans, and general consumers of outdoor recreation. These are pressing issues, as the current Western system allows natural resource extraction companies to exhaust environmental ecosystems, leaving the burden of reconstruction on the American taxpayer.³⁶⁶ Land ownership, natural resources, and government authority against individual sovereignty continue to fill the Western discourse as they did in the 19th century.

³⁶⁵ Catherine Traywick, "A tale of two tribes: Colorado's Southern Utes want to drill as Sioux battle pipeline" *The Denver Post*, 2017.

³⁶⁶ *Public Trust: The Fight For America's Public Land*. Directed by David Byars. Patagonia, 2020.

5.3 Envirotechnical Outlooks

This account of development in the Colorado area reveals many meaningful implications for our modern society with respect to the environment. The uncertainty of the capitalist endeavor in the 19th century West illuminates the fact that alternate economic and ideological systems are possible, feasible, and should be considered. It is difficult to conceptualize alternative approaches to economic organization, as capitalism is so deeply embedded ideologically and materially into our current understanding of the world. This thesis shows that this was not always the case, that particularly the 19th century West was a place of unpredictable outcomes and many potential directions. This meandering path of development highlights the multiple potentialities that can arise from concerted efforts and mere happenstance, and it is highly dependent upon the paradigm through which we choose to perceive the world, capitalism being just one of many.

My decision to incorporate the agency of the environment in Coloradan development is not a trivial exercise. It instead reveals the profound importance of nature in shaping human networks and spheres. Traditional and even more modern retellings of US Western history depict an extractive capitalist society ravaging a land for its wealth of natural resources. While this is a valid framework for trying to develop altruistic conservation practices, it underemphasizes the severe effects changing our environment can have on us as a human species. As Richard Foltz writes in his article "Does Nature Have Historical Agency:" "Nature is infinitely patient, for unlike us, it has all the time in the world. If we spend our lives treating nature as an adversary to overcome, we may win occasional battles, even spectacular ones, but nature will win in the end."³⁶⁷ Giving the environment the credit it deserves in shaping human life can help to reorient

³⁶⁷ Richard Foltz, "Does Nature Have Historical Agency? World History, Environmental History, and How Historians Can Help Save the Planet," *The History Teacher* 37:1 (2003), 9-28.

societal values toward developing a more equitable and sustainable planetary ecosystem. Economic decisions can begin to incorporate the long-term environmental outlook and help improve the preservation of the human-ecological network.

Bringing considerations back to the American West, one can observe this extensive intersection of environmental and technological values. As William Cronon argued in *Nature's Metropolis*, the city and nature of the American West, and implicitly human and environmental networks, are inherently intertwined. American frontiersmen of the West relied on the region's natural animating power just as much as machinery and infrastructure imported from the East. As has been shown through the preceding chapters, capitalism did not enter a blank slate in Colorado and the American West; it instead encountered a complex and dynamic system and landscape that facilitated the character of Western capitalism. This was a multidirectional process of exchange, with important agents from both the West and East contributing to the distinctly Coloradan character that Americans identify today.

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