

WOMEN FROM OUR PAST

since well-behaved women rarely make history...



Milner. You recognize her family name immediately. As in Milner Pass (Rocky Mountain National Park), Milner Mountain (Horsetooth Mountain Park) and even Milner Avenue off of U.S. Highway 34 in Loveland.

The Sarah Milner Elementary School on Carlisle in Loveland, however, commemorates only the woman herself, the first public school teacher in the Big Thompson Valley.

Sarah's enterprising father kept his family "living in style" in Canada – where Sarah was born in 1844 – and later in Chicago and Rockford, Ill. Raised there as a gentlewoman, Sarah's skills included music (she loved singing), drawing and sewing. She made fine broadcloth suits and shirts for her father and brothers. She was a student teacher, worked as secretary to an ambitious pastor and taught Sunday school, all in Illinois.

Sarah would later be quoted in Eugene Smith's book "Pioneer Epic" as saying: "...all unconsciously, I had been acquiring training and skills that proved to be of inestimable value to me in the raw region (of Colorado)... although my two oldest brothers had been sent to college... my entire training had been along practical lines – a matter for which I was supremely thankful in all my later life."

Sarah Milner arrived unceremoniously in Denver on July 4, 1864 from Illinois after a long three months' trek in an ox-drawn wagon with her parents and brothers.

Twenty-year-old Sarah taught in the school on the Big Thompson at Old St. Louis, and had the honor of graduating the first high school students in Larimer County. She married Edward Smith in 1870, opened a boarding house in 1878 and later taught in Washington School, Loveland's first brick schoolhouse, now renovated into Loveland's municipal offices.

Widowed with three children, she ran a boarding house, sewed, homesteaded, ran a dairy business, taught school (again) and raised Angus cattle. This resourceful lady's perseverance and determination teach a valuable life lesson for all. ❖

PAST ARTICLE BY MARYJO FAITH MORGAN ❖ JOURNEY CONTRIBUTOR

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