

Base from U.S. Geological Survey, 1954
Revised 1977
100,000-foot grid based on Colorado
coordinate system, north line

Trail abbreviations:
Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Road—solid
Smoky Hill North Trail—dashed
Smoky Hill North Trail—dashed
Smoky Hill North Trail—dashed

SCALE 1:250,000
5 0 5 10 MILES
5 0 5 10 KILOMETERS

INTRODUCTION

Many of the historic trails in the Limon quadrangle were used by Indians long before the white man reached the area. The earliest recorded use of the trails by white men in the Limon quadrangle was in the 1830's to 1850's for trade with the Indians and when roads were built to the new settlement of Denver. Discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains in central Colorado in 1858 led to the surveying and use of several major new trails. In the Limon quadrangle, these new trails included segments of the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Road, Smoky Hill North Trail, and the Smoky Hill South Trail. The two Smoky Hill Trails were nearly 120 miles shorter than the Overland Trail along the South Platte River, and unlike the Overland Trail, they traversed very little wind-blown sand. However, they crossed the mostly dry high plains where availability of water was uncertain. In addition to the named major trails, many new local trails were opened to afford connection to the major trails, stage stations, trading posts, and military posts. Many of the local trails were used extensively, but in the Limon quadrangle few were worn deep enough to still be visible on aerial photographs.

Stage lines and stations were established along both the Smoky Hill South and Smoky Hill North Trails (where the station names and locations still are well known) and along the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Road (where the stations were numbered and their locations are very poorly known). Nevertheless, all the known station along the trails have been placed as accurately on the map as the information will allow.

When the trails were built, an effort was made to choose level routes; however, very little grading was done, so stage drivers were constantly traveling down into valleys and back up the other sides or were forcing streams. Diaries of the travelers give accounts of stages turning over where traversing tilted stream banks along valleys. The stages traveled as rapidly as the drivers would let the horses run, and to keep the horses vigorous they were changed about every 10–15 miles at stations where extra stock were the passengers, because stops were only long enough to change the teams of horses or mules. About every fourth station was equipped with a kitchen and dining room so that the passengers could eat meals three times a day. These stations were called "home" stations. Some of them had beds, but generally the stages did not stop for the night and the passengers had to sleep on the coach as it traveled through the night. Because of the scarcity of trees for making lumber along the stage routes, many of the stations were simply dugouts into the banks of streams or into the sides of hills. Some stations were made of adobe or of lumber.

Part of the profit for the stage companies came from the transport of mail and freight. The stage contractors had to bid for the privilege of carrying the mail, and the competition along some stage lines was very keen, even though the profit was meager. Although the stage routes were established by contractors to haul mail and passengers, the routes were also used by freighters, immigrants, and gold seekers. During most of the time the trails were used, travel was hazardous for several reasons. The best known reason was that the Indians were antagonized by the intrusion of white settlers into their native lands. The Pawnee, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Comanche were particularly troublesome for the white settlers in eastern Colorado. Treaties were agreed to but were not kept by either the Indians or the white intruders. In the early years (1858–

1863) when there were fewer travelers into Colorado, there was much less trouble than in the later years (1864–1869). Trouble increased when the military attempted to prevent the Indians from harassing travelers along the stage lines. Retaliation by the Indians became most active after the Sand Creek battle on November 29, 1864, along Big Sandy Creek southeast of Kit Carson. Travel along all of the stage lines into Colorado was slowed or curtailed for several months after that battle. To protect the travelers along the stage routes, the U.S. Government fortified some existing stage stations and set up new forts along the trails and garrisoned them with small units of cavalry. The cavalry controlled the size of traveling groups and provided escorts to assure their safety from Indian attacks. A systematic effort to kill off the bison on the plains, and thus deprive the Indians of their main food supply, probably accomplished more than anything else to stop the depredations of the Indians and force them onto reservations.

Even if the Indian Tribes had been peaceful, travel along the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Road and the Smoky Hill routes was hazardous because of the lack of water and game. The only source of water was from scarce springs, ephemeral water holes, and a few ephemeral streams. For example, in the summer of 1859 when the stage along the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Road was operating, the Republican River in the Limon quadrangle contained only a few water holes. Even Big Sandy Creek in the Limon quadrangle was ephemeral and dried up in many years. The shortage of game resulted from the early travelers eliminating the game or driving it away; thus, later travelers had difficulty in procuring meat. Along the Smoky Hill routes, many people died of thirst or starvation during the summers or froze to death during the harsh winters.

Westward movement and settlement of whites onto the Great Plains was encouraged by the Homestead Act of 1862. Many persons displaced by the Civil War moved onto the newly opened land, even though the Indians were still a potential menace. After the General Land Office completed the land surveys in about 1870, many of the Indians had already moved out of the area. Much of the land had become safe for settlement and small towns sprang up, generally spaced no more than 10 miles apart—the distance a team and wagon could travel to town and back in a day. Roads were built to connect the new communities and to provide access to the major trails. Railroads were built westward and were gradually completed across the Limon quadrangle to meet the needs of an expanding population.

UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

Locations of many stage stations, ranches (the popular phrase in the 1860's), and ghost towns are not well known because available records provide few detailed maps or descriptions of the exact locations of these features. Most early maps were very generalized and lacked a surveyed grid; even after the General Land Office township grid became available, county features commonly were placed in different spots on almost every map published. In addition, many features, such as stage stations and trails, were abandoned before the land was surveyed and before counties were organized, so these features cannot be found on the land plats or on county deed records. After the stage lines were abandoned, the station buildings were almost immediately torn down and scavenged as material for constructing buildings elsewhere. Cultivation of the land followed settlement, and most of the trails were plowed over or were obliterated by wind-blown sand and silt from nearby plowed fields.

METHOD OF PREPARATION OF THE HISTORIC TRAIL MAP

The most reliable sources of accurate locations of the trails were aerial photographs, the original General Land Office (GLO) land plats, and the early surveyor's field notes that were prepared only a few years after the trails were in use. The railroads were located from many excellent maps and books about the railroads. The names and locations of towns were obtained from old maps, gazetteers, postal guides, and the earliest site localities in the official applications for the establishment of post offices. The location for many towns was obtained from U.S. Postal Service site maps; however, some towns did not have site maps, so accurate locations of some towns cannot be assured. In addition, the locations of post offices have changed over the years; however, each place where a town post office existed is shown. Excellent articles about events along the historic trails in the quadrangle have been published and were a great help in preparing the map. U.S. Army high-altitude aerial photographs taken in 1953 at a scale of almost 1:62,500 were used to locate some of the trails; in addition, all trails plotted from the land plats were searched for on the aerial photographs. Because of plowing, erosion, and the relatively slight use of some trails during the 20th century, most trails are no longer detectable on the aerial photographs. Almost none of the land in the Limon quadrangle is in its original prairie condition; most of the land has been cleared for about 120 years. Every stereo-pair of aerial photographs of the Limon quadrangle was studied with a stereoscope in order to find old trails; however, very few segments were found. Therefore, most of the trails were plotted from trails on the land plats made during the 1870's. Finally, the trails, railroads, stage stations, and towns were photogrammetrically transferred to a major base map of the Limon quadrangle.

About 90 published and unpublished maps as well as many books and articles were examined. Unfortunately, because the locations of many cultural features varied over the years, the exact locations were difficult to determine, therefore some features may not be accurately located on the map. Where the location of a town or other feature is uncertain, the term "location?" is added on the map.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This map was prepared principally at the request of Lynn Taylor and other librarians at the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library. Other researchers of early immigration trails also have requested that additional historic trail maps of eastern Colorado be published. Most of the research was done in the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library. Its comprehensive collection of maps and books about the history of Western United States was the primary source for most of the information used in this report. For their kind help, I thank the department personnel, especially Philip J. Parson, map specialist. The Colorado Archives and the Colorado Historical Society Library helped solve some special problems. Postal site location applications were studied at the Denver Regional Office of the National Archives and at the local office of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Also the General Land Office Plats and surveyor's field notes and deed records of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 2850 Youngfield St., Wheat Ridge, Colorado, and my work on this map has benefited greatly from the assistance of the BLM staff. Andrew J. Senti, historian of the BLM provided copies of many historic land and Indian documents. The U.S. Geological Survey Library, Building 20, Denver Federal Center, gave access to early topographic and geologic maps held in their files. Paul Bentrup, P.O. Box 11, Deerfield, Kansas 67838, helped find the locations of some camps that were named and used by the Colorado Cavalry in the 1860's. Edmund T. Morris of Greeley, Colorado, an expert on the early cattle trails in Colorado, plotted the location of one cattle trail in the Limon quadrangle. Robert O. Rupp of Fort Collins, Colorado, who is knowledgeable about the activities of Colorado military groups, provided information about the names and locations of camps occupied during Civil War days in Colorado. Edward J. Haley, one of the foremost authorities on railroads of Colorado, reviewed the map and text and made additions and corrections to the names and placement of railroads. Information about the Chicago Rock Island & Pacific Railroad was provided by Charles Alt of the Colorado Railroad Museum.

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RAILROADS IN THE LIMON QUADRANGLE

C & L.C. Ry.—Cadillac & Lake City Railway. Former Rock Island track purchased in 1980 and used as an excursion line from 1980 to 1990[?] from Falcon to Limon. Track dismantled in 1993.
C.K. & N. Ry.—Chicago Kansas & Nebraska Railway, 1888–1891, then absorbed by the Rock Island. Earlier name of the C.R.I. & P. R.R.
C.R.I. & P. R.R.—Chicago Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, 1891–1980. On Clason's guide map of Colorado in 1917 called "Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean or Golden Belt Route". In 1980, track east of Limon was bought by the Mid States Port Authority and run by the Kiowa Railways, 1980–today, to carry grain to eastern markets.
K.P. R.R.—Kansas Pacific Railroad, 1870–1880, then purchased by the U.P. R.R.
K. Ry.—Kiowa Railway, Former Rock Island track east of Limon bought by Mid States Port Authority and run by the Kiowa Railways along the right-of-way for hauling grain, 1980–today.
U.P. R.R.—Union Pacific Railroad, 1880–today.

PAPER RAILROAD

A "paper railroad" is a railroad that was planned but never built.
C.S. & B.R. R.R.—Colorado Springs [sic] & River Bend Railroad, 1873. Proposed alignment almost identical to the later alignment of the Rock Island Railroad.

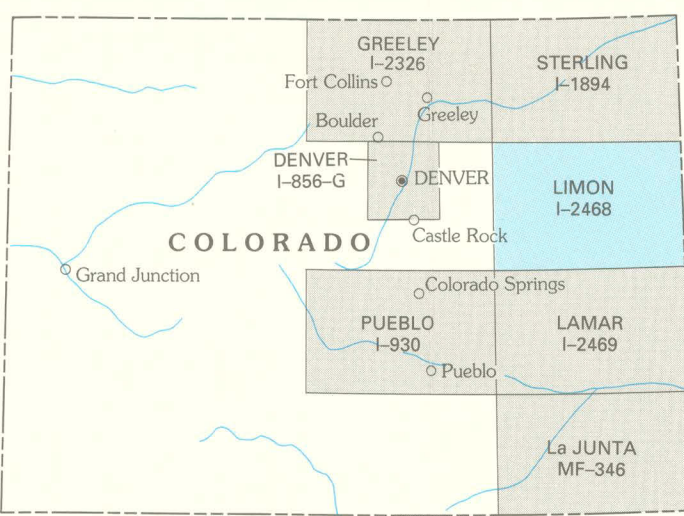
FORT AND CAMPS NAMED AND USED BY THE COLORADO CAVALRY IN THE 1860'S OR PROBABLY IN THE LIMON QUADRANGLE

[See microfilm MS94, reel 4, drawer 31.9, at Denver Regional Office, National Archives.]

Fort Cedar Point—NE-WNE 1/4 sec. 19, T. 8 S., R. 57 W., Elbert County.
Camp Relief—66 miles from Fort Lyon on the way to Denver (possibly in the Lamar quadrangle?).
Camp Splitrock—No information on location.
Camp Stillwell—No information on location.

EXPLANATION

Trail or road—Dashed where approximately located; queried where inferred. Dates of use shown for some roads. Routes plotted from General Land Office (GLO) land plats, early maps, or aerial photographs. Most trail or road names are from original sources such as land plats. Some shorter trails and trail segments on the GLO land plats were omitted here to avoid cluttering the map excessively. Some trails are terminated or their continuation is queried where their destination was not shown on original source. Locally, parts of the early trails are adjusted to better fit modern courses of streams. Trails date from 1850's to 1880's.
Town or other cultural feature—Approximately located; showing approximate date of founding of a town or establishment of a post office, not generally the date of the first person to arrive, alternate town names and dates are in parentheses. Most newer town names are in brown. Locations of towns shown on previously published maps vary widely, and some locations shown here may be inaccurate. Abbreviation used: F.O. = Post Office.
Topographic feature
Railroad—Date shows beginning or duration of operation. Railroads are shown in brown. Abbreviations of railroads are explained in the text. For more details about railroads, see books about railroads listed in the "Sources of Information".
Cattle trail



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CONVERSION FACTORS		
Multiply	To obtain	
inches (in)	2.54	centimeters (cm)
feet (ft)	0.3048	meters (m)
miles (mi)	1.609	kilometers (km)

Any use of trade names in this publication is for descriptive purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Geological Survey.

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HISTORIC TRAIL MAP OF THE LIMON 1° x 2° QUADRANGLE, COLORADO AND KANSAS

By
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1994