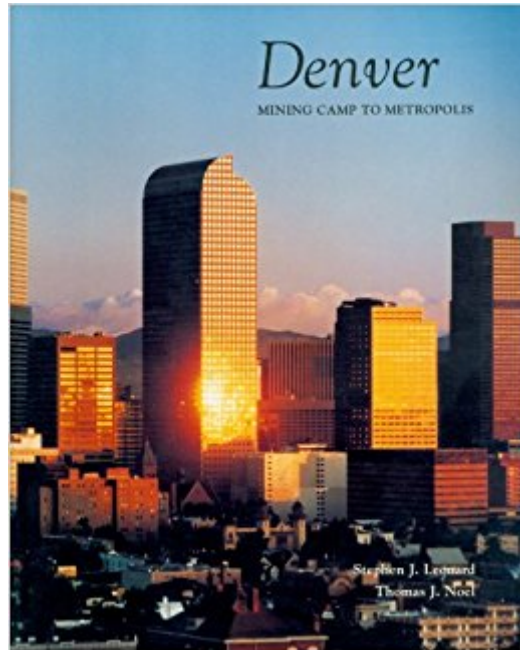


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Denver: Mining Camp To Metropolis



Synopsis

This lively best seller by leading Colorado historians Steve Leonard and Tom Noel is the most comprehensive survey ever written of the Mile High metropolis. Informative and richly illustrated, Denver covers the developing region from the mountain towns of Boulder and Jefferson counties to the High Plains settlements of Adams and Arapahoe counties, with more than two-thirds of the book devoted to the burgeoning five-county region since 1900. In retelling the tale of conquest and city building, the authors explore the role of previously neglected peoples--notably women, ethnic minorities, and the working class--while weaving several key themes throughout the book: Denver's persistent reliance on natural resources, the important role of transportation to overcome the city's isolation, and the city's emphasis on privatization rather than on the public, common good. Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis will fascinate and educated students and scholars, as well as all readers curious about the boom-and-bust metropolis of the Rockies.

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Customer Reviews

"... [E]ngaging history of one of America's most interesting cities. The authors, both academic historians, have written an unusually engaging work in which they explore the role of women, ethnics, and the working class in the growth of the city, its reliance on natural resources, and they examine how transportation played a key role in the city's development." - Steve Goddard's History Wire

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Denver where he is the director of Public History, Preservation & Colorado Studies, and is a columnist for the Denver Post. He has served as a Denver Landmark Commissioner and chair during the 1970s and 1980s and is a National Register Reviewer for Colorado. He is the author or coauthor of forty-one books on Colorado. Stephen J. Leonard is professor and chair of the Department of History at Metropolitan State College.

I bought and read this book to learn the history of Denver, having moved to the metro Denver area in the last few months. It was a successful purchase. The book is composed of three main sections covering the years 1859-1900, 1900-1950, and 1950-1990. Each section is organized into topical chapters. This leads to some repetition when individuals and events affect more than one topic, but it also permits reading chapters independently. The book is encyclopedic, with its cast of literally thousands listed in the index. It is difficult to know who is an important player and who is a walk-on. The detail wasn't required for my purposes, but I picked up little tidbits I might never have otherwise known. I did like the separate chapters on the surrounding counties. One main complaint: there are too few maps. Explaining the spatial extent and growth of the city by referencing neighborhoods and streets which are not laid out on a map is extremely difficult to follow for someone who is not already familiar with Denver. The six maps in the book are too busy and their typeface is too small. I sometimes disagree with the authors' perspectives. For example, the authors argue for regional government, like a super county covering all the metropolitan area. They see the many independent governments around Denver as wasteful and duplicative. I think the residents of counties surrounding Denver have reason to be wary, to see metropolitan government as likely to result in growth, wealth and control becoming more centralized in Denver. One current metro-wide government entity is the Regional Transportation District. The authors supported RTD and its development of rail transit. As it has turned out, the current and planned rail lines run radially outwards from downtown Denver (with one small circumferential spur). A rail system that was serving the metro area well would have many circumferential routes as well as radial ones. The system as planned is not a complex net but a starburst centered on downtown Denver. After the system is complete, any rail trip between Arvada and Lakewood (and many other near-neighbor pairs) will require a trip through downtown. Regardless of its intent, the RTD rail system will result in the enhancement of Denver compared to the rest of the metropolitan area, reason for voters and taxpayers outside Denver to be concerned about the likely results of other metropolitan governance.

I loved reading about the history of Denver from the point of view of urban planning/ growth and

In *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis*, authors Stephen Leonard and Thomas Noel have provided what is perhaps the best single-volume history of the mile-high city. This fascinating account takes readers from Denver's earliest days as a tiny mining camp to its twentieth-century role as a major metropolis. Leonard, chairman of the history department at Metropolitan State College in Denver, and Noel, a history professor at the University of Colorado Denver, are recognized experts in the history of Denver and Colorado. Both have published various books on these subjects. For this book, they have drawn upon published histories, biographies, and visitors' accounts, articles in *The Colorado Magazine*, masters' theses and doctoral dissertations, interviews, contemporary newspapers, government and private organizational publications, and the archival collections of the Colorado Historical Society and Denver Public Library's Western History Department. Leonard and Noel describe Denver's economic growth and diversification, from mining to finance, commerce, tourism, manufacturing, petroleum, and electronics. It traces the evolution of transportation from stagecoaches, to railroads, autos, and airplanes, and describes the city's growth, the role (or absence) of city planning, water systems, architectural trends, and the types of business districts and residential neighborhoods that gradually filled the city. Most previous books and articles have focused on the city and county of Denver, and its most prominent politicians and businessmen. While not neglecting these subjects, Leonard and Noel have expanded the scope of this volume to include workers, minorities, women, and political radicals, and the adjacent counties (Adams, Arapahoe, and Jefferson), which now constitute part of metropolitan Denver. This book also covers such institutions as schools, libraries, museums, and parks. And it does not overlook such unpleasant matters as depressions, discrimination, and the influence of the Ku Klux Klan. Nor such controversial issues as school busing, and fragmented and sometimes inefficient governmental entities. This 544-page volume is illustrated with many contemporary photographs of significant places and individuals, and is supplemented by appendices listing Denver's mayors from 1859 to 1991, and tracing population growth in Denver and the surrounding counties as reflected in the U.S. censuses from 1870 to 1990. It includes a 20-page index and 43 pages of endnotes. Preceding the endnotes for each chapter is a brief bibliographical guide to the relevant archival and published sources for that chapter's subject. Thus, this volume is not only a history, but also a preliminary guide for further research. Given the authors' penchant for citing addresses, one wishes they had included a number of detailed street maps—this is the book's most apparent deficiency.

Published in 1990, this book functions as a dense introduction to the full span of Denver history -- from the town's beginnings as a provider of goods and services to miners leaving for the mountains, to its rise as a transportation and medical hub of the Plains, to its recent oil and high-tech booms. The book is thoughtful and intelligent (and basically the only solid semi-recent book I can find about Denver). The ten years since the book was published have seen immense change in Denver (economic revival, massive suburban growth), however, and the volume sorely needs a discussion of how the recent decade's events and growth have changed the metropolitan area.

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