

ASTOR CITY

ASTOR CITY is distinguished as being the first trading post in Colorado. It was established by John Astor just below Battle Mountain on the northwestern slope a little below where Rex is now located. The dates given are approximately 1780 to 1820.

John Jacob Astor came from Germany to New York. He became interested in fur trading industry and established two fur trading routes to the Oregon Territory. One was by land and the other by sea. Astor City, in Colorado, was one of his chain of posts through the west to Astoria, in Oregon.

Astor City consisted of three cabins within a stockade made of huge boulders. The main building, or trading post, was of huge proportions. The ridge pole was three feet in diameter. This gives us an idea of the size of the cabin. There were also some cabins across the river against the mountain side. They were later destroyed by a snowslide.

A man by the name of Walter Sturrock ran a saloon there in 1882. Mr. Hager of Red Cliff tells the story of a man who was killed in a drunken brawl at Astor City. It was necessary to pack him to Red Cliff. Three days were required to get him there over the trails.

According to Mr. Daggett's account, the Astors were Catholic missionaries. They had worked among the Indians in this territory and had succeeded in converting some of them. The record shows that special dispensations were made to the Indians on the Western Slope, in that they were allowed to eat meat on Friday and the Ute bucks were privileged to have more than one squaw.

The following is a quotation from Longfellow's "Evangeline":

"There is a mountain in the distant west
That sun defying, in its deep ravine
Displays a cross of snow upon it's side."

Evangeline, in her search for Gabriel, came to Astor City with Sarah Daugherty, of Gypsum. They were just a little too late, for Gabriel had gone farther on into the western wilderness. When Evangeline went to the priest, she confessed that she had lost her faith in God and she firmly believed that Gabriel would never return. In his effort to restore to Evangeline that lost faith, the priest persuaded her to take the journey to the Mount of the Holy Cross. They started before daybreak the next morning and made most of the trip to Notch Mountain on horseback. When they had trudged the last weary mile to the Notch, they found that a heavy fog had placed a veil over the Holy Cross. They sat down and waited for the fog to lift. It was still quite early in the day, but they did not have to wait long. When the fog began to lift, there appeared to the anxious Evangeline one of the most beautiful sights she had ever seen. A brilliant rainbow reached from the Notch to the foot of the Cross. As the fog raised higher and higher, Evangeline beheld the Cross and to the right of the Cross, the Supplicating Virgin. When the party started back down the trail this wonderful sight had accomplished just what the priest had hoped, as there was one young woman in the group from whose heart a heavy load had been lifted.....Evangeline once more had faith in God and her lover.