

## South Valley Park Historical Background

The Front Range, foothills, and adjacent eastern plains have repeatedly been folded, faulted, uplifted, and eroded. South Valley Park offers a dramatic display of this geologic tumult. The entire depository history of the Fountain Formation is represented in South Valley Park, from its basal contact with the crystalline foothills to its upper contact with the overlying Lyons Formation. The thick Fountain Formation at South Valley is exposed across a wide area, with a broad terrace adjacent to the foothills and a flat valley floor by the Lyons Formation. South Valley's rock spires and outcroppings provided critical shelter for indigenous people.

For over 10,000 years, hunter-gatherers migrated through the Front Range area, wintering in the Hogback Valley of southeastern Jefferson County. South Valley's Falcon's Nest Site, the Swallow Shelter Site and the Crescent Rock Shelter Site are among the notable prehistoric sites in the area. Swallow Shelter Site, which represents the earliest occupations of the Hogback Valley, was probably a campsite for Early Archaic and Paleoindians. Evidence there indicates that it was occupied by hunter-gatherers 7,500 years before the Pyramids of Egypt were built. No well-defined hearths or firepits have been discovered, but there is evidence of charcoal, chipped stone tool manufacturing and resharpening, and animal and plant processing. A 10,000-year-old spear point of the type called "Folsom" was excavated at the Swallow Shelter Site. Such points have been found with mammoth remains, indicating these hunter-gatherers hunted big game. Deer provided the main meat on their menu, with prehistoric deer bones outnumbering bison bones ten to one.

From 12,000 to 7,000 years ago, Paleoindians followed wildlife and ripening vegetation from the plains to progressively higher elevations as far away as South, Middle and North Parks, and then wintered at South Valley and similar lower elevation sites before beginning their annual cycle again. South Valley's red sandstone cliffs and boulders face southwest; the dark rocks absorb heat from the sun during the day, with the heat being released at night. Paleoindians probably leaned poles against the rocks and put brush or hides over them for shelter. From 7,000 to about 2,000 years ago, semi-nomadic Archaic Indians settled in camps along the foothills, occupying open ridges, valleys and shelters among rock outcrops. They chose locations offering a combination of a reliable water source, shelter, diversity of plant and animal resources, and unobstructed views. Small groups began to stay in one place long enough to construct shelters and cultivate plants.

By the Late Archaic Period, from 3,000 to 1,800 years ago, the Indians used an increasing variety of stone tools and their projectile points' size had become smaller, making them better suited to hunting deer and antelope than mammoths. This is evidenced by artifacts found at the Falcon's Nest Site. The Falcon's Nest Site contained a burial of an adult male whose skull was carbon dated to approximately 1,900 years ago. In addition, 52 hearths and nearly 4,000 stone tools were excavated.

From 2,000 to 200 years ago Plains Ceramic Stage Native Americans were the first to use pottery and the bow and arrow. These Native Americans developed cultural ties to indigenous people of the plains and the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys. The Foothills region provided hunting grounds for multiple tribes, and the South Valley area continued to be used for winter camps and seasonal meeting grounds.

Following the arrival of Anglo settlers, South Valley apparently had numerous owners. A Mrs. Eagle owned the ranch for 20 years, before selling it to an investor named Shern, who held the property for a couple of years. In 1913 John Shaffer moved his family to Colorado to benefit the health of his two sons, Kent and Carroll. He bought a large property which he named Ken-Caryl Ranch, after his sons. Shaffer also bought The Rocky Mountain News. In 1926 Shaffer purchased the "south ranch" from Frank Mann, who is listed as an original landowner. Shaffer imported a bull named Domino 1, and introduced the first white-faced English cattle to this part of the country. He began building one of the West's greatest cattle breeding operations. Financial trouble beset Shaffer's empire in the 1930's, and he put the Ken-Caryl Ranch up as collateral for some large construction projects. Following the Great Stock Market Crash, the banks demanded that Shaffer pay off his real estate loans. Shaffer could not, and lost the Ranch.

Steel Industrialist, William Allen, purchased Ken-Caryl Ranch from the bank in 1937 to pursue his passionate interest in cattle breeding. Allen hired his son, William Jr., to operate the cattle ranch because he knew little about the business side of cattle breeding. The increasing costs of operating a cattle ranch, declining cattle prices and the beginning of World War II forced Allen to focus his attention on advising the government about steel production and sell the Ranch.

Allen sold the Ranch to Italian businessman, Joseph Minissale. Minissale, a wealthy real estate tycoon, bought the Ranch to offer his children a "ranch-like" living experience. Along with continuing breeding the cattle, Minissale experimented with raising turkeys. Several thousand turkeys escaped and went back to the wild.

The ranch changed hands again, and A.J. McDonald raised the same cattle strain, with improvements. McDonald sold the ranch to the Johns-Manville Corporation in 1971. A new corporate headquarters was soon constructed on the property. South Valley was operated as an active cattle ranch until 1980, when a subdivision plat was developed for a mixed-use community. By 1995 Lockheed-Martin was well along in the County's development review process. Local resistance to the development began to grow. Lockheed-Martin gave Jefferson County Open Space a six to twelve month window to complete acquisition of South Valley, or the opportunity to preserve this unique property would be lost forever. Support for Open Space's acquisition poured in from various government agencies, conservation groups, the Audobon Society, the Colorado Archaeological Society, citizen groups, local educators and area homeowners. 895-acre South Valley Park was purchased from Lockheed-Martin by Jefferson County Open Space early in 1997.