



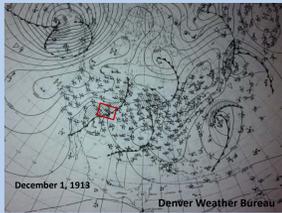
The Great Colorado Snowstorm of 1913



On December 1, 1913, a low-pressure system developed over northern Arizona, bringing precipitation to most of Eastern Colorado. What followed over the next several days was the greatest snowstorm Colorado has ever seen.

Synoptic Scale

December 1



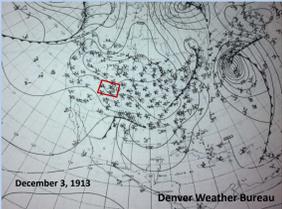
- Upper trough and cold front sweeps across the state.
- Low pressure over New Mexico with high pressure building in from Wyoming gave a period of upslope flow to Eastern Colorado.
- Clouds thickened across the Front Range, light snow and rain began to fall (wet snow above 5000 feet)
- Precipitation increased later in the day on the 1st, and continued into the 2nd

December 2

- Surface high pressure over the northern Rockies with low pressure in Texas continued weak upslope flow over eastern Colorado.



December 3



- Precipitation stopped early in the morning
- Seemed like a typical Southern Rockies storm
- Later in the day, clouds began to thicken again
- In the afternoon/evening, snow fell in S. Colorado

December 4

- Deepening surface low surges north in eastern Colorado, combining with high pressure over northern Plains to produce increasing northeasterly upslope winds.
- Heavy snows developed over the Front Range, with rain in eastern Colorado; some areas reporting 1-3"
- Denver Weather Bureau reported wind speeds of 35-40 mph
- Temperatures rose to 32°F instead of falling



December 5



- Low-pressure still settled over Colorado
- Continued to dump snow over much of the eastern mountains and plains
- Moisture from the Gulf is drawn in across the Gulf Coast and headed northeast to Colorado

December 6

- System moves out of Colorado and heads east
- By afternoon, it is centered over Topeka, KS
- Snowfall ends in Colorado, however high winds remain



Snowfall Totals

Location	Total for December 1-5
Georgetown	86"
Estes Park	53"
Denver	45.7"
Boulder	43.75"
Ft. Collins	33.5"
Colorado Springs	24.4"

Data from Colorado Climate Center

In 1913, the daily snowfall record for Colorado was set in Georgetown, with 63" of snow in 24 hours.

December 1913 also holds the title of "wettest winter" with total precipitation of 5.21". No other year comes close!

Newspaper Reports

"Over two feet of snow and slush demoralized traffic yesterday, while streets in all parts of the city were choked with drifts of snow."

Rocky Mountain News
December 5, 1913

WORST STORM IN HISTORY RAGING IN COLORADO

The Daily Journal
December 5, 1913

"Blizzard Sweeping Over Entire State: Record-Breaking Snowfall and General Crippling of Railroads Reported"

Headline, Rocky Mountain News
December 5, 1913

WEEK OF RAIN AND SNOW

Yuma Pioneer
December 5, 1913

"Rain, then snow, then more rain, and cloudy all the time is what the weatherman has been doing for us all this week."

Yuma Pioneer
December 5, 1913

Storm Impacts

The traffic blockade continued and extended to the railroads. In addition to blocked traffic conditions great damage was done to flat roofed buildings and in several cases buildings with flat roofs collapsed.

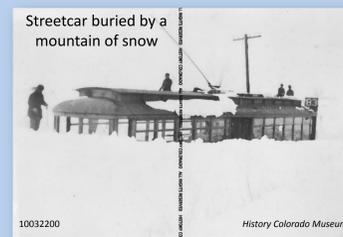
"The traffic [blockade] continued and extended to the railroads. In addition to [blockaded] traffic conditions, great damage was done to flat roofed buildings and in several cases buildings with flat roofs collapsed."

-Weather Bureau Record
December 5, 1913

Trains, Streetcars, & Automobiles



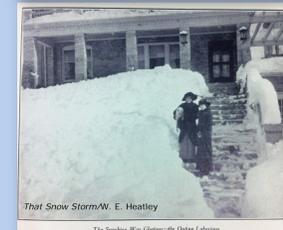
Wagner, F. The Colorado Road: History, Motive Power & the Equipment of the Colorado, Southern, Fort Worth and Denver Railways. Denver: Inter-mountain Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, 1970. Print.



Streetcar buried by a mountain of snow
History Colorado Museum



That Snow Storm/W. E. Heatley
Along Streets that were the Capital Building



That Snow Storm/W. E. Heatley
The Snow Was Choked by the Oiling Lubricator



That Snow Storm/W. E. Heatley
Men Were Stranded in the Streets

Heatley, W. E. That Snow Storm. Denver, 1914. Print.

- **Trains:** By Thursday, December 4, train traffic was nearly at a standstill. The next day, about 20 trains were stranded; either derailed or stopped by huge drifts.
- **Streetcars:** On Thursday evening, there were about 210 abandoned streetcars. This was the first time that Denver had closed the tramway system. As soon as one line was cleared by plows, another would be "choked".
- **Automobiles:** Many commuters in Denver became stranded on their way home from work. Ironically, autos were hauled to garages by teams of horses. Hotels in Denver opened up for stranded commuters.
- **Pedestrians:** A sturdy pair of legs and a pair of skis were deemed the only possible method of transportation!

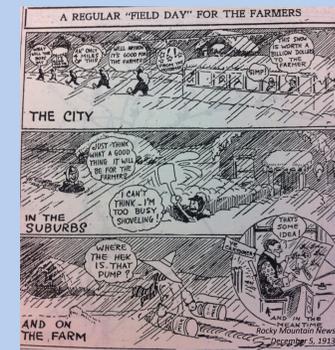
Skiing Industry



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History Colorado Museum

Skiing as a recreational activity did not exist prior to the 1920's. The start of the ski industry in Colorado can be traced back to the snows brought by the Snowstorm of 1913.

Farming Moisture



Rocky Mountain News
December 5, 1913

- Immense value to agriculture and irrigation alike
- Estimated "millions of dollar additional wealth" would be brought to Colorado through the 1914 crop
- Residents in cities kept spirits up by considering the benefits to farmland from the abundant snow

Seeking Employment

Tramway Has Jobs for Everybody Today

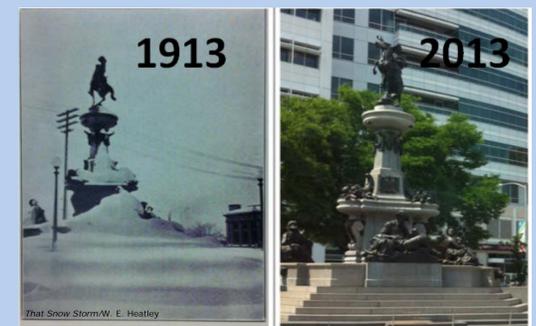
Anyone may have work today by applying to the Tramway company. Hundreds of men are wanted to shovel snow, and no one who wants to work will be turned away.

Seven hundred and eighty men were employed by the Tramway company yesterday to clear the tracks of snow. Over 200 men found work with the city dump wagons at salaries of \$2.50 a day. Both the Tramway company and Highway Commissioner Sheriff are seeking more men.

By noon today there will be no unemployed men of able body in the city of Denver.

Rocky Mountain News
December 5, 1913

Then and Now



Kit Carson Pioneer Statue in Downtown Denver