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SILT: THE STOUT FOUNDATIONS OF A WESTERN SLOPE TOWN

By

Paul Harvey

A THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

### SILT: THE STOUT FOUNDATIONS OF A WESTERN SLOPE TOWN

By Paul Harvey

Located on the Western Slope of Colorado, Silt is largely overlooked compared to its larger neighbors in Garfield County. While other towns in the county were founded for mining opportunities or as tourist destinations, Silt started as a crossroads for those working in agriculture. To many people that are unfamiliar to the area, the town is unique only for its quirky name, but the town has a rich history of growth and struggles that closely mirror the larger trends of the United States. Founded in 1915, the town celebrates its centennial this year, but its identity is still in question. Founded as an agricultural community that provided economic opportunities for the surrounding farms, ranches, and orchards, Silt's development was also influenced by mining and transportation trends. Slowly the agriculture and mining of the region were replaced with jobs outside of the town. Silt's true calling is being an Everytown, USA that united aspects of the American Dream for a population that was more diverse than some areas. The small community of Silt and its surrounding areas is the epitome of middle America trying to make its way in this nation while riding the trends of the economy and the federal government. World events and advances in technology also drastically altered life in town, but Silt never lost its small town feel. There is nothing extraordinary or disastrous that made up its legacy; instead it lived, worked, and grew towards the future like most Americans of all ethnicities did throughout history.

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Dedicated to my loving family; Katherine, Emerson, Christopher, and Kensington.

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## Introduction

Located on the Western Slope of Colorado, Silt is largely overlooked in comparison to its larger neighbors in Garfield County. While other towns in the county were founded for mining opportunities or as tourist destinations, Silt started as a crossroads for those working in agriculture. To many people that are unfamiliar to the area, the town is unique only for its quirky name, but the town has a rich history of growth and struggles that closer mirror the larger trends of the United States. Founded in 1915, the town celebrates its centennial this year, but its identity is continually evolving. Founded as an agricultural community that provided economic opportunities for the surrounding farms, ranches, and orchards, Silt's development was later influenced by mining and transportation trends. Slowly the agriculture and mining of the region were replaced with jobs outside of the town. Located an hour's drive from both Aspen and Vail, Silt lacks the allure of these famous and glitzy resorts. It's true calling is being an Everytown, USA that united aspects of the American Dream for a population that was more diverse than some areas, mainly the notion that anyone with determination and a strong work ethic could improve their lives. Silt's story is one that mirrors countless tales of individuals and families trying to attain their piece of the American Dream. Through the agricultural and mining sectors, the town grew from immigrants moving to the area for work, and from emigrants trekking to western Colorado for new opportunities. Likewise, temporary workers from various backgrounds toiled during labor shortages to expose the residents to a larger variety of cultures than many areas. The small community of Silt and its surrounding areas is the epitome of middle America trying to make its way in this nation while riding the trends of the economy and the federal government. World

events and advances in technology as drastically altered life in town, but Silt still exemplified all that is the typical American life. There is nothing extraordinary or disastrous that made up its legacy; instead it lived, worked, and grew towards the future like most Americans of all ethnicities did throughout history.

In 2010, Silt, Colorado had a population of 2,930 according to the U.S. Census, making it the second smallest town in Garfield County just ahead of tiny Parachute.<sup>1</sup> That number is deceiving because the community of Parachute is closely connected to Battlement Mesa, a large development of 4,471 people that lies in unincorporated Garfield County.<sup>2</sup> Silt is the smallest community in the county and often the most overlooked. Books about the neighboring towns of Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Rifle, New Castle, and even Parachute chronicle their histories, but Silt lacked a large-scale investigation about the town in particular.<sup>3</sup> At least two books describe the history of nearby Glenwood Springs: *Glenwood Springs: Spa in the Mountains* by Lena Urquhart, and *Glenwood Springs: The History of a Rocky Mountain Resort* by Jim Nelson, to go along with numerous smaller pieces about the tourist haven.<sup>4</sup> Rifle's history was chronicled in the 1973 collection of stories, *Rifle Shots*. New Castle's past was revealed in *The Legend of the Burning Mountain: The Early History of New Castle*, by Dale Shrull. Though brief, Shrull's work was thorough and well written. Parachute's history was described in *Lest We Forget: A Short History of Early Grand Valley, Colorado, originally called Parachute, Colorado*, by Erlene Durrany Murray in 1973. With the exception of Jim Nelson's history of Glenwood Springs and Shrull's work in New Castle, Andrew Gulliford used all of the previous works listed above in his history of Garfield County from 1983. *Garfield County, Colorado: The First Hundred Years*, provided the

only published history of Silt until the past decade.<sup>5</sup> Gulliford, a history professor at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, provided the most extensive and thorough work on the history of the county to date. More importantly for this work, he provided a rich trove of resources to examine as a starting point for the history of Silt.<sup>6</sup> It was through these sources and contact with the Silt Historical Society that the basis of this new history of Silt began.

Alice Boulton, a member of the Silt Historical Society and a relative to early pioneers to the area, published *Silt, Colorado Homesteads, 1880-1940*, in 2007. The work was well researched and thorough, but it had a larger scope of research for the surrounding rural areas of Silt. Mrs. Boulton did a tremendous job documenting the pioneers in the area and their attempts to carve out economic livelihood in an untamed land. Her coverage on the agricultural areas surrounding Silt, including; Dry Hollow, Divide Creek, Silt Mesa, Antlers, and Peach Valley. Mrs. Boulton documented the construction of the irrigation ditches for these agricultural areas along with the arrival of reliable transportation to the valley. She also investigated the establishment of civilized institutions in the valley like churches and schools, but only spent one chapter on the establishment of the Town of Silt. Mrs. Boulton's work thoroughly demonstrated how civilization arrived in Silt and the surrounding areas, but the focus of this Silt piece was both the establishment and the growth of Silt as it coincided with larger forces in American History that altered the course of the town's growth.

It was with this foundation that this particular work on Silt's history began, but some personal motives influenced the piece as well. My family moved to Rifle when I was an infant in 1978, and except for five years for college in Grand Junction, it has

been my home since then. I have lived in every town in Garfield County, except Carbondale, and currently teach history at Coal Ridge High School. It was at this position that I was routinely asked about local history by the students, which led to this investigation. Coal Ridge, which opened in 2005 to serve the communities of New Castle and Silt, sorely needed some history and tradition. Previous generations of students, including myself, had to attend Rifle High School after the district consolidated by closing Silt, New Castle, and Riverside High Schools in the 1960s. Silt and New Castle had their own high schools until 1963, when New Castle was closed. Students from New Castle were sent to the Silt High School, which was rechristened Riverside High School, home of the Falcons in 1964. Three classes graduated from Riverside before the building was condemned and closed in the summer of 1966. Residents of Silt and New Castle voted down four bond issues to build a new high school in Rifle to stop the consolidation. Lawsuits, recall elections, and even a fistfight at a school board meeting could not stop the district from forcing all of the students in the district to attend Rifle High School. The old Silt High School was demolished in 1972 and the old New Castle High school was used as a middle school until the early 1980s.<sup>7</sup>

As a resident of New Castle in my childhood, students were confused why I attended Coal Ridge's rival, Rifle, for high school. This discussion sparked an interest in the students and myself into the lost history of the previously closed schools. These talks led to action as the seniors at Coal Ridge had to perform some form of service learning to fulfill their graduation requirements. Several students started working to collect artifacts and information to eventually build a display. Eventually the composites of the graduation classes for the New Castle Tigers and the Silt Pirates were acquired along

with some artifacts to be displayed once an area is constructed. This project put me in contact with the Silt Historical Society around the same time as my graduate program for history began with Adams State. In searching for a thesis topic, it occurred to me that Silt's centennial was due to arrive in 2015, the same year I was due to complete the master's program for Adams. This insight led to this project of nearly two years of research, writing, and editing. Initially the project was going to cover the entire scope of Silt's history, one hundred years, but the task was too daunting for a parent, husband, teacher, and basketball coach to fulfill.

With the personal story put aside, research commenced mainly through the use of the Rifle Library's extensive collection of newspapers from *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* since there were only a handful of known Silt newspapers still in existence. Alice Boulton's work was used as a starting point to provide direction into the research. The pieces on the Native Americans were scant in her work along with a distinct antiquarian style that failed to take the larger scope of western expansion in application to Silt. Charles S. Marsh's *People of the Shining Mountains* provided essential background knowledge and perspective on the Ute Indian's struggle to maintain their homeland in the face of pressure from white settlers. The book examined the history, culture, and eventual removal of the Ute tribes from western Colorado. Tracing the tribes back to its mysterious appearance from the Puebloan or Anasazi tribes of the region, Marsh identified the Spanish influence on the Utes and the adoption of the horse as critical changes to their way of life that propelled the people to prominence in western Colorado. Though small in numbers, the tribe controlled a large swath of territory and was feared by surrounding tribes for their prowess on horseback and in hunting. Though many hunters

and explorers made their way over the Rocky Mountains from the east, large-scale settlement by whites was delayed in comparison to the rest of Colorado. Only after mining discoveries attracted large numbers of prospectors to the San Juan Mountains, and the violent “Meeker Massacre,” were the Utes effectively removed from the region. Marsh examined the fate of the tribe in the next century and their changes in culture to show the resiliency of the people. His perspective provided a welcome balance to the overwhelming about of Turnerian perspective of conquering the west that was so prevalent in the local newspapers from the nineteenth century. In describing the Utes, Marsh stated, “Intelligence and a fortunate geographic location allowed these rugged, individualistic people to live in freedom for 200 years.”<sup>8</sup> This idea helped solidify the notion that the lands surrounding Silt were bountiful for settlement and not dependent upon white Americans’ industriousness to make them habitable.

Sidney Jocknick’s *Early Days On the Western Slope of Colorado* was remarkable for its unique perspective, plain storytelling style, and rich treasure of information on the infant days of the western half of the state. The work also provided a wealth of information on the formation of the Western Slope as Jocknick crossed paths with nearly every event and person that shaped the early history of the region. He also possessed a forward thinking perspective that rejected many of the accepted notions of the dominant contemporaries. With the unique perspective of living among the Utes before widespread white settlement, Jocknick sympathized with the tribes as he thought it was wrong that the U.S. reneged on its agreement with the Utes, and for the encroaching prospectors to gain access to the area he called, “fit for the gods.”<sup>9</sup> He believed the land the Utes occupied was so abundant as a hunter’s paradise, that there was no need to build a

civilization. Life was nearly perfect in his mind for the Utes before the arrival of the whites.<sup>10</sup> Jocknick's appreciation for Native culture and some of his views on preservation of forests also acted as a counterweight to the dominant Anglo-centric perspective of tradition history texts and from the local news writers. This work provided arguably the most reliable primary source for the history of western Colorado that is available in one place. The works for Jocknick, Marsh, and Boulton provided a stout foundation upon which to erect a narrative, but they also provided balance in the research of the town's history.

While amassing a significant amount of research and information, organizing the facts into a coherent piece became a challenge, as a lack of an overarching theme was not immediately evident. Two research methods yielded themes to explore. First, questions were sent to the town leaders to get their perspectives on what defined Silt, made it unique, and cemented its legacy over the past one hundred years. Sadly, none of the town leaders responded to the questions so interview sessions were advertised in the local newspapers for any townspeople to come by the library and express their views. This attempt also failed to gain anyone interested in sharing his or her views on Silt. Doubts crept in, as the elusive theme was not within grasp to really direct the focus of the research. The second method to attain a theme or legacy for Silt was to compare it to its neighboring towns. Glenwood Springs was the most famous city in Garfield County. It was built as a resort town because of the natural hot springs in the area. It boasted the world's largest hot springs pool, a world-class resort hotel, and slew of celebrities who spent time in the area. The magnetism of Glenwood Springs and its unique attractions affected the neighboring towns in Garfield County by injecting interest and capital into

the area. Presidents Benjamin Harrison, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Howard Taft all visited the city at one point while in office. William “Buffalo Bill” Cody, John Phillip Sousa, Tom Mix, Al Capone, Carry Nation, and even the son of Baha’u’lla’h, the founder of the Baha’i faith journeyed to the healing waters of the area.<sup>11</sup> Two famous outlaws, Doc Holliday and Kid Curry, died and were buried in the cemetery above Glenwood. Jim Nelson’s book, *Glenwood Springs: The History of a Rocky Mountain Resort*, chronicled into the foundations of the city from the mining boom in the late nineteenth century, to its struggles in the early twentieth century, and finally the city’s emergence as a tourist attraction in the second half the last century. Besides belonging to the same county as Glenwood Springs, Silt was merely a blip on the roads to the tourist giant.

The other towns in Garfield County also had rich histories and famous entities that the residents could boast about. New Castle was famous for its coal, its tragic mine explosions, and the burning mountains that scarred the landscape.<sup>12</sup> Parachute had a quirky name, which was changed to Grand Valley for seventy-six years, and then reverted back to Grand Valley in 1980.<sup>13</sup> Harvey Logan, more famously known as Kid Curry of Butch Cassidy’s gang, robbed a train near Parachute before being killed in a shoot out and buried in Glenwood Springs.<sup>14</sup> Rifle, the second largest city in the county, had a heritage most akin to Silt’s. Founded as an agricultural town on a crossroads of trade, Rifle grew large in its early years. Mineral wealth made the town’s population gain steam as oil shale in the Piceance Basin, vanadium north of town, and eventually uranium tailings to the west brought waves of people looking for work in the area.<sup>15</sup> Both Rifle and Silt shared unique names, but Rifle’s location as a crossroads between Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction for east-west travelers, and its location due south of Meeker

that helped in grow larger. Silt seemed hopeless surrounded by its famous neighbors, but its name provided the first crack at a theme.

Silt, Colorado is the only town in the world with its name. There is an island in Germany named Sylt, but it had a different spelling and was not a town.<sup>16</sup> Silt was named from the Denver and Rio Grande (D&RG) Railroad Company when they built a train depot near the Ferguson Ranch. Legends stated that signs warned train conductors to “Watch Out for Silt,” because of the fine dirt that washed across the tracks at times.<sup>17</sup> The revelation on Silt’s name being distinctive in the United States spawned the theme for the entire thesis. Like most Americans, people have their own name, but their lives are invariably similar within the American culture. In the same vein, every town in the United States, but go through similar events as a part of the nation. It is how the outside forces of history interact with communities’ unique qualities that create different perceptions of American History. Silt’s own distinctive town paired with common forces of American history spawn an engaging and enlightening version of the nation’s history, which has not been described to date. It was precisely that similarity to the American life and the American Dream that Silt adhered to so well throughout its history. The town struggled to make its way through the course of time, overcoming adversity in order to create a brighter future for the future generations. For most people living in America, especially those in the middle class, this was precisely how people went about their lives. Just as most people did not become famous or perform incredible feats of heroism, the Town of Silt was decidedly normal. Its legacy was directly tied to the winds of American history that had far-reaching consequences across the land.

The first half of the twentieth century transformed the United States like no other time in the country's history. The nation was transformed from an isolationist, agrarian place, to an industrial world power from the events during these years. The onset of World War I, the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, and World War II vastly altered the course of America with towns like Silt being affected just as much as the large cities. Silt's legacy was being a prime example of Middle America being shaped by the forces of history. The town represented one of many sails on the ship of the United States. The winds of global events stretched and tested Silt's sail, altering it to some degree, while pushing the entire ship to a new destination and a new legacy that endures to this day. Though Silt may be unremarkable when viewed as whole, the individuals who stepped onto the global stage from the town were truly remarkable in their deeds to aid America in its great trials and tribulations. Members of the Greatest Generation from Silt were especially prolific in their role in serving the nation during WWII. With the backdrop of comparing American history to the Town of Silt, the thesis gained steam and direction towards the people in the community living out their own version of American history, which formed a symbiotic partnership. Residents of the area were molded by the events of American history as they in turn helped mold the outcome of the national events with their contributions.

The opening chapter of this work largely focused on the foundations of the town. The naming of the town and the controversy of the years from residents who did not like living in a town that was associated with dirt opened this piece. Next, the origins of the town's beginnings were explored, the removal of the Utes, George Ferguson's cabin near the Grand River, the arrival of agricultural pioneers, and the completion of the railroads

in 1889. The railroads symbolized the coming of civilization to residents in Silt, as more technologies slowly appeared to modify the course of the town's history. Agriculture thrived with the completion of irrigation projects to the point that Silt became world-renowned for some of its products. The town voted to incorporate as a town and held elections for officers in 1912, but the D&RG Railroad sued the town to block its formation as a town. The company did not want their property to be taxed so the town's official start was put on hold for over three years. Finally the Colorado Supreme Court ruled in favor of the town on May 19, 1915 to officially incorporate the Town of Silt.<sup>18</sup>

The second chapter of the thesis took on a wider lens of history as world events shaped the course of Silt's development. The United States joining World War I in 1917 had tremendous effects on the small town. Not only did its men go off to Europe to fight, but also the citizens at home worked diligently to contribute to the Allied war effort. The needs for food products for the war drive prices up, which meant strong economic times for Silt. The extra income earned from the war enabled the people to purchase their first cars, tractors, and electric appliances. With the close of the war, the 1920s boom and distinct culture took hold of Silt. The town grew during the strong economic times, although those in the agricultural sector dealt with dropping prices for crops. The culture of the town coincided with changes across the nation. Electricity was widely being used, along with radios and telephones during the decade. The motor age was upon Silt as well as more citizens purchased their first cars. Spectator sports and entertainment became favorite pastimes for the people, especially baseball. The town fielded one or two teams in the county leagues during the entire decade. Prohibition brought profound changes to the town as well. Many saloons switched to be dance or pool halls to stay in

business. Law enforcement did their best to stem the tide of illegal alcohol flowing into town, but their infrequent raids on stills in the mountains did little to stop the flow of booze. Organized crime did not take root in Silt from Prohibition as it had in the major cities across America, but petty crimes were a persistent problem for the area. Silt took its first steps in unison with the nation towards modernity, but progress was greatly slowed by the Great Depression.

Silt was out of step with the rest of the nation when the Great Depression crippled the economy of the nation during the 1930s. Silt's strong and diversified agricultural sector provided income and jobs for those in need during the tough times. Sugar beet production, up to 3,000 acres per year, propped up the economy, but also brought forces of big corporations and the federal government to Silt's doorstep.<sup>19</sup> Contracts with the Holly Sugar Company had to be negotiated and agreed upon annually so locals had to deal with an entity solely driven on making profits. This conflict led the organization of associations of sugar beet growers who mutually worked together in the community. Franklin D. Roosevelt's creation of the New Deal delivered the federal government's influence to the main streets of Silt. The AAA, CCC, NRA, and WPA all had profound influence on the town as government money and programs floated in to boost the economy. Not all was great in the town of Silt during the Depression as tax collections dropped, unemployment increased, and even the high school had to close early one year because of a lack of money. However, the widespread destitution and hardships associated with the Great Depression were largely absent for residents of Silt. Most people had to adopt more thrifty ways of living, but suffering was not commonplace. The population of the town increased during the decade despite the tough economic times. As

the decade wore on, people's attention turned away from the economic situation, and towards the growing tension in Europe and Asia. War seemed eminent, but the people of Silt shared the view of the nation as isolationism was in vogue again.

Though America had prepared for the impending war during the early portion of the 1940s, the shock of the attack on Pearl Harbor was astounding to people in western Colorado. Residents of Silt fought WWII on two fronts; the men engaged in battle in far-flung places across the globe, and the residents at home who did all they could guarantee the troops had the tools to win the war. International conflict helped the economy recover from the doldrums of the Depression and placed the United States into a leadership role. The home front in Silt was marked with rationing, conservation of precious materials, and financial support for war. Townspeople of all ages collected scrap metal, donated money for defense stamps, and followed the newspapers nervously as their loved ones went off to fight the war. The heroics of the men and women from Silt were remarkable and typical of the generation they hailed from. Seventy-seven men served in some capacity from Silt and the surrounding farming communities, with sixteen men giving the ultimate sacrifice for their country as they perished in combat.<sup>20</sup> The entire graduating class of 1938 not only served their country, but also remarkably survived the war to reunite in 1946 at a classmate's home.<sup>21</sup> WWII forever changed the lives of the men who served, but it also transformed the course of American and its small towns like Silt, especially for those families touch first-hand by the horrors of war.

Though this history of Silt ends with the close of WWII, there are much more stories and events from that point to the present that were not covered. Time and money constraints prevented the full investigation into the one hundred years of Silt. Though this

endeavor ended years before its goal, hopefully it represents the most thorough investigation into the history of the town. Meticulous steps were also taken to insure this piece was not pure antiquarian history, but rather a commentary on the growth of Silt through the lens of American history. Fortunately, the wealth of books and materials from the master's program through Adams State provided ample information as a backdrop for the comparison of Silt and America. It has been a tremendous experience, full of difficult tasks, rewarding insights, and relationships with new people to complete this course work. I only hope this thesis is a reflection not only my hard work, but also a consideration of the guidance and support from the history department at Adams State University.

## Chapter 1: A Foundation Made of Silt

Silt, Colorado, a small town in western Colorado town with an odd name, has long battled its larger neighbors for notoriety and influence. According to the 2010 census, 2,930 people call Silt home, but the community greatly exceeds its town limits.<sup>1</sup> The town's impact on the neighboring lands is substantial as it sits conveniently along Interstate 70 and is a crossroads for many of the agricultural lands that surround the area. Silt struggles to this day with its identity, and is often called a bedroom community because many of its residents work elsewhere in the tourist havens of Glenwood Springs, Aspen, or Vail. Founded as a trading community for local farmers and ranchers near a ferry crossing the Grand River (Colorado today), the town grew slowly in population. The surrounding areas quickly filled up with pioneers as land was gobbled up from the Homestead Act. Coal mining near Harvey Gap to the north provided a viable industry for a short time, but the area relied heavily on agriculture trade for most of the town's century of existence. No matter how one views Silt's identity, it is unmistakably a gathering place for people of diverse backgrounds and occupations to form a close-knit community. Whether they are in town to purchase supplies or just visiting the town because of its easy access to legendary outdoors activities, people ended up in Silt. Though the official population is small compared to the rest of the towns and cities in Garfield County, Silt encompasses a much larger body of people who meet up for the benefits of small-town America that has been preserved in town.

When naming a town, communities often use patriotic names of America's founding fathers, prominent politicians of the day, or simply use the Native American names already in place. Some communities use geographic features nearby for the name

of their location. The initial settlement was called Ferguson, after the first settler to the area and operator of the ferry, George Ferguson.<sup>2</sup> Early documents from the land office in Glenwood Springs listed the area as “Ferguson, Colorado” at the bottom, with “Ute Indians,” written across the northern area near present-day Harvey Gap in red pencil.<sup>3</sup> Silt, Colorado has somewhat of geographic moniker, but it was a railroad company that gave the name to the budding community. Railroad officials and workers from the Denver & Rio Grande saw the large amount of silt that was left by the river in the area so they named their depot in the area Silt, instead of Ferguson. Legend has it that signs along the tracks read, “Watch out for Silt.”<sup>4</sup> Silt and neighboring Silt Mesa, lie within the Wasatch formation, which deposited large amounts of pinkish gray sandstone and shale in the area. The formation was created as dirt washed away from the Rocky Mountains and Uncompahgre Plateau into the basin between them where Silt would be located.<sup>5</sup> No other town in the world is named Silt, so it’s unique in that respect. There is a Sylt, Germany, which is pronounced similarly and consists of an island on the North Sea side of the Jutland peninsula. The island, dubbed the Queen of the North Sea, is a large tourist draw for people attending the Windsurf World Cup, or simply sightseeing the surrounding Wadden Sea that is a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site.<sup>6</sup>

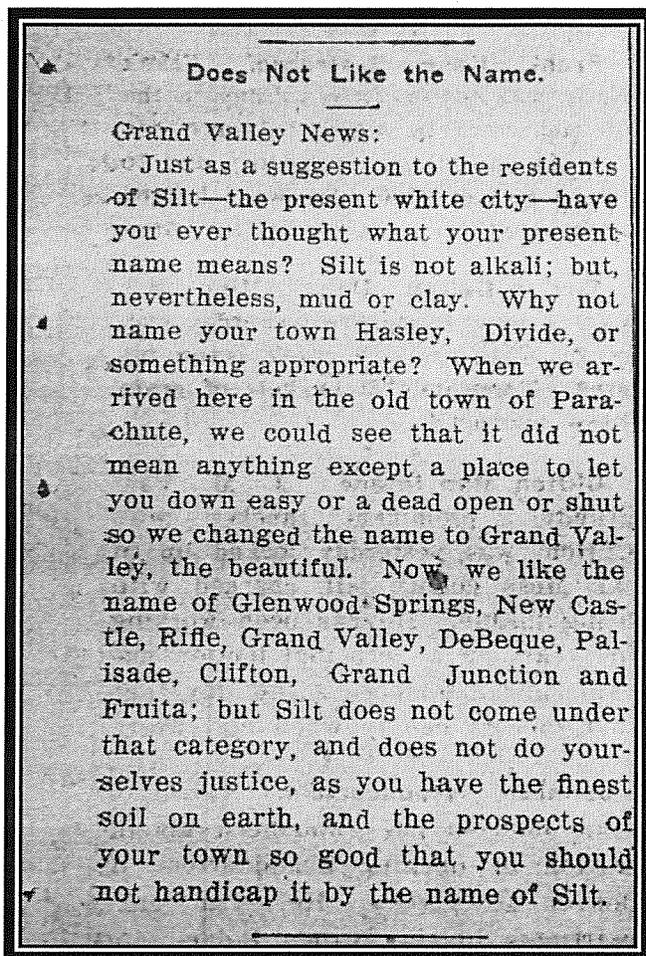


Figure 1.1:  
*The Avalanche-Echo*  
July 2, 1908

The name has brought controversy and notoriety to the town over the years. A 1908 editorial in the *Avalanche Echo* urged the town to change its name. The unnamed author, who hailed from Grand Valley, a town that changed its name from Parachute, argued that every town in the county had a great name, except Silt. He offered new town names like Hasley or Divide, but did not want to put the down the community. The editorial simply argued that such beautiful place that was full of potential

deserved a stronger name.<sup>7</sup> Twice, citizens of Silt have petitioned to change the name of the town, claiming it was considered by many to be a dirty name. In both 1992 and 2006, the idea for a new name came up in town council meetings. A Denver radio station held a contest to rename the town in 1992. Suggestions for the new name were Ferguson, Ferguson's Crossing, Cactus Valley, Grand View, or Grand River. Mayor Dave Moore explained the situation by stating, "There are a lot of people who are unhappy with the name of Silt. They don't think Silt is an attractive name."<sup>8</sup> Some residents, mainly the high schoolers of the area who universally dislike their home towns, believe that Silt is an acronym that stands for: Sorry It's Like This. Their youthful cynicism cannot eclipse the natural beauty and small-town feel of the community.<sup>9</sup> Recently, the town has adopted their own

acronym for the town on the official website: Simply Irresistible Little Town.<sup>10</sup> In 1989, the Rocky Mountain News ran a report about the local popularity of bumper stickers that read, “Silt Happens.”<sup>11</sup> The sticker was obviously a variation of the more popular and vulgar bumper sticker of the day. The sensation over the bumper stickers eventually made it to national news and an appearance on Good Morning America.<sup>12</sup> Either way, Silt battled its unique and controversial name that was planted on the community by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad over the course of a century.

The history of people in the Silt region began between 700 BC and 800 AD when the earliest known people lived in the region and left rock art behind as artifacts.<sup>13</sup> The Fremont people hunted and gathered food in northwestern and central western Colorado between 650 and 1200 AD. Popularly known as the Ancestral Puebloans or Anasazi, they were known to leave art on canyons and rock walls. The Fremont people eventually disappeared because of a combination of drought, continual warfare, soil depletion, and extensive deforestation during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>14</sup> The arrival or appearance of the Utes around 1300 AD probably hastened to Puebloan people to flee the region in southwestern Colorado because of the competition for scarce goods.<sup>15</sup> The particular band of northern Utes that lived in the present-day area of Silt were known as the Blue Sky People to other tribes, but they called themselves the Yuuattaa.<sup>16</sup> Life continued unchanged generation after generation for the Utes until the arrival of whites signaled new ways of life were abound.

The Utes’ beginnings are shrouded in mystery as they replaced the last vestiges of the Ancestral Puebloan peoples who famously built the cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde. The first record of the Utes came from Spanish territorial records in Santa Fe in the year

1626.<sup>17</sup> The Spanish influence transformed the tribe as Utes evolved from their possessions, especially the horse, or “magic dog,” as the Utes called them.<sup>18</sup> With the

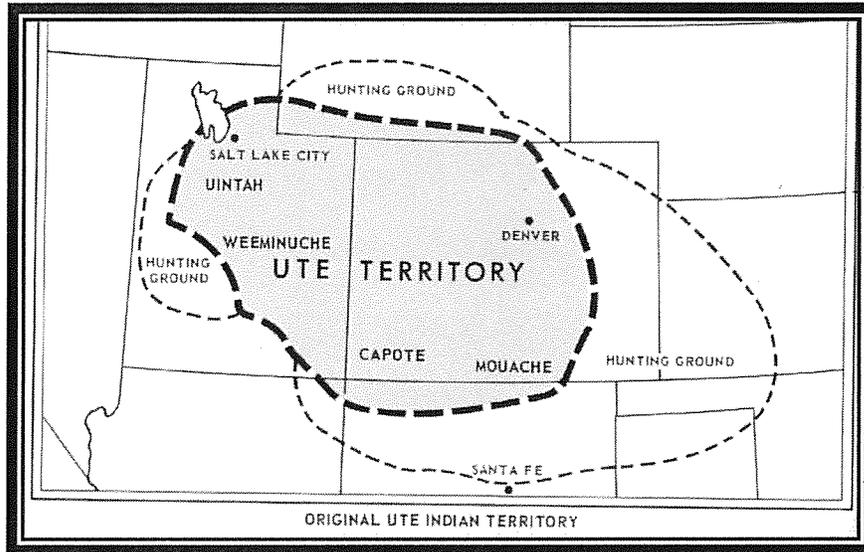


Figure 1.2: Charles S. Marsh, *People of the Shining Mountains: The Utes of Colorado* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Pub. Co., ©1982),

immense power, speed, and range of the horse, the tribe became excellent hunters, following bison, elk, and deer as they migrated through the seasons. Horses also enabled the people to raid neighboring tribes and

the Spanish for possessions and people. Their fearsome nature and aggressive tactics deterred people from penetrating the Ute lands in western Colorado, eastern Utah, and even parts of northern New Mexico.<sup>19</sup> Neighboring tribes called the Utes the Blue Sky People, and their domain was the “Shining Mountains.”<sup>20</sup> To the natives, the Western Slope was, “a hunter’s paradise, a region fit for the gods.”<sup>21</sup>

The 1776 expedition of Spanish explorers, led by the Franciscan priests, Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante entered western Colorado in search of viable routes to California.<sup>22</sup> The expedition met up with the Utes near present-day Montrose and proceeded towards the Grand River (modern day Colorado River).<sup>23</sup> There the priests named the present day Divide Creek, *Rio De San*

*Antonio Martir*. They also named the two buttes of Mamm Creek, *San Silvestre and Nebucare*, along with Mamm Creek being named *Rio de Santa Rosalia*. They followed Divide Creek down to the Grand River, christened the *Rio de San Rafael*, and then journeyed out of the valley towards the White River.<sup>24</sup> The expedition represented the first contact with Europeans to the areas surrounding Silt. Within fifty years, fur traders would penetrate the valley and set up trading for nearly twenty years until the fur market slowed. The Spanish owned Western Colorado until Mexican independence in 1821. Americans living in Texas declared independence from Mexico and won their freedom in

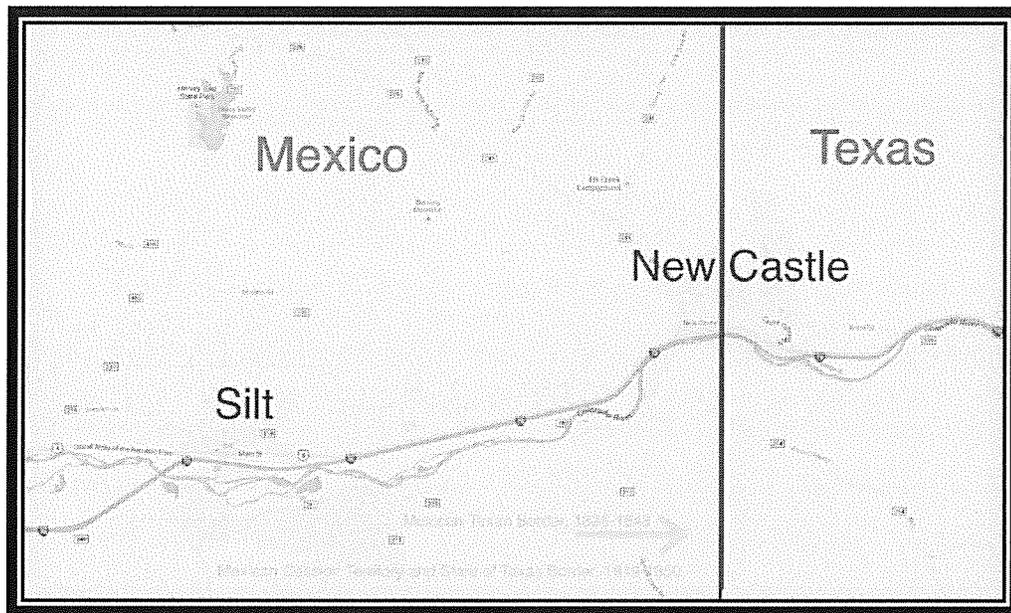


Figure 1.3: Map was drawn from the specifications of treaties between Mexico and Texas. The Daughters of the Texas Revolution site, <http://www.drinfo.org/education/republic-of-texas-2/boundaries-of-the-republic-of-texas>

1836 by defeating the Mexican forces at the Battle of San Jacinto. With the victory, a portion of Texan territory stretched northward into present-day Colorado.<sup>25</sup> Extending northward from the Rio Grande, Garfield County was split in two by the border of Texas and Mexico until Mexican cession in 1848. Garfield County remained divided until the

Compromise of 1850 gave Texas a trim in terms of territory. Though no known whites lived permanently in the area, Silt lay within Mexico, while neighboring New Castle cut in half by the border. Any evidence of white settlement seemed to be temporary, except one trading outpost near present-day Grand Junction that was built by Joseph Roubideaux in 1839.<sup>26</sup> The Utes' mystique and power was unchallenged in the region until the arrival of prospectors, mainly white Americans, blinded with the allure of riches from the Colorado gold rush of 1859.

Though an estimated 100,000 people trekked across the Great Plains in 1859 in search of riches, possibly 40,000 reached the boomtown of Denver, and 25,000 penetrated the mountains in search of the source of placer gold.<sup>27</sup> Even fewer prospectors crossed the continental divide to the central Rockies or further to the Western Slope of Colorado. The Utes' contact with whites was limited to a handful of fur trappers, some army expeditions through the area, and small collection of fortune seekers. With this pressure from the outside world, the Utes began to isolate themselves to the western and central Rockies by 1860.<sup>28</sup> Chief Nevava of the Tabeguache, or Uncompahgre band, who once helped sign the first treaty with the U.S. at Abiquiu, witnessed people trample on their hunting lands of the plains and slaughter the buffalo on their march to gold seeking.

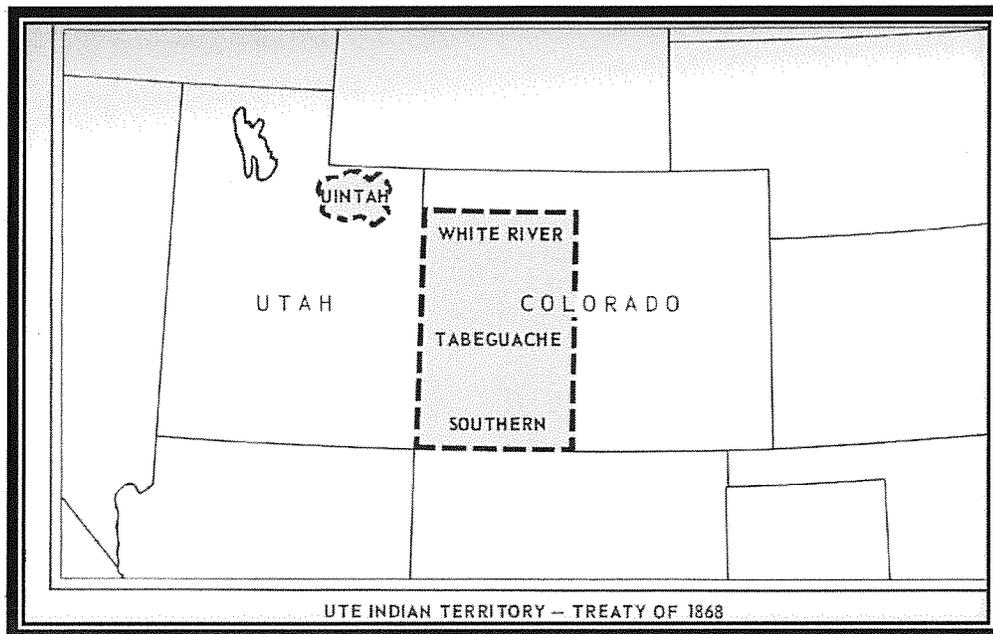


Figure 1.4: Charles S. Marsh, *People of the Shining Mountains: The Utes of Colorado* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Pub. Co., ©1982), 27.

Chief Ouray, also of the Tabeguache, urged Nevava to sign more binding agreements with the government after witnessing the sheer amount of people amassing at the tent city of Denver. Chief Nevava refused to sign new treaties with the government, but died the same year as the fateful Colorado gold rush.<sup>29</sup> Through careful negotiations, Ouray eventually secured one of the most favorable treaties in the history of Native Americans from the U.S. government. The Treaty of 1868 forced the Utes out of central Colorado and the San Luis Valley, but gave the tribes all land west of the 107th meridian (near present day Snowmass), and south from the 40th parallel. These 16 million acres and \$60,000 annual payments for thirty years represented a tremendous victory for the Utes. Numerous prospectors in western Colorado were forced eastward, out of Ute lands because of the treaty as well.<sup>30</sup> Though it ultimately did not work out, the Utes enjoyed twelve additional years of freedom and peace from white settlers.<sup>31</sup>

The removal of the Utes began as more mineral seekers flooded the San Juan Mountains in southwestern Colorado. Because of their large numbers, the government once again tried to negotiate with the Utes. Chief Ouray, angry with promises being rescinded just five years after his monumental treaty, was invited along with other chiefs to Washington DC. Otto Mears, the great road builder San Juans, accompanied the delegation eastward and acted as a translator for the group. Though the negotiations were tough, Ouray and the other Ute chiefs agreed to sign the 1873 Brunot Agreement, which paid the tribe an annual sum, allowed hunting in the area, but ceded one-fourth of their lands to the U.S. Chief Ouray was pleased because their western hunting lands remained intact and his people avoided war, which many American tribes were unable to do.<sup>32</sup>

A U.S. expedition led by Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden in 1874 explored the Grand River Valley extensively. The party named the Grand Hogback that border the region north of Silt and the low-lying area where the town would develop, Cactus Valley. This name delayed settlement near Silt because people feared it was too dry to make a living, especially in agriculture.<sup>33</sup> Chipeta, the wife of Chief Ouray, was quoted about wintering in the same areas described by the Hayden expedition stated, "The sun was warm. Grass was as high as a tall Ute's shoulders. Deer and elk as thick as palefaces cattle now. Fish were in the river. If the snow was too deep, ponies were driven to the river where they ate cottonwood twigs."<sup>34</sup> The Hayden men discovered oil shale and coal while also creating detailed surveys of the geology, geography, flora, and fauna of the area. The publication of the Hayden Survey sparked interest in settlement in the valley. Their findings and accurate maps of the region were published in 1876 in the *Eight Annual Report of the Survey of the Territories*.<sup>35</sup> Three years later, William Gant built

the first known cabin between Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction at the mouth of Divide Creek near the Grand River. He survived by grubbing sagebrush and selling crops, often onions that were in abundance, to miners in Leadville and Aspen.<sup>36</sup> His presence was a violation of the treaties signed with the Utes, but it signaled the rising tide of white settlers to the area. The final piece of widespread settlement of the Grand River Valley was the removal of the Native Utes, which many whites clamored for in the 1870s.

Peace did not last because white settlers and Indian agencies, which aided the Utes, changed the course of the tribe's future. The Colorado state legislature, surrounded by calls of "The Utes must go," from newspapers and white citizens, petitioned Congress to remove the Utes to the Indian Territory in 1876.<sup>37</sup> The White River Agency, in the northern portion of the Ute lands, sealed the fate of the Utes, when Nathan Meeker arrived to run the agency. Meeker, a former reporter for Horace Greeley's *New York Daily Tribune*, arrived at the agency in 1878 after being driven from the Union Colony (modern-day Greeley) he helped start, for his mismanagement of the settlement.<sup>38</sup> He forced farming and other "civilized" activities upon the Ute people in the agency. Meeker demanded the Utes plant crops and even plow up precious grazing lands for horses, a symbol of wealth and power in Ute culture. A Ute medicine man, Canalla or Johnson as the whites called him, confronted and assaulted Meeker over the request to plow up the grasslands. This attack forced Meeker to wire for the military to come from Wyoming to help restore order.<sup>39</sup>

The forces under Major Thomas Thornburgh marched from Fort Steele towards the White River agency. Fearful this was a sign the government was going to remove the

tribe to present-day Oklahoma, the Utes attacked the military force at Milk Creek on September 29, 1879. Eleven men including Thornburgh were killed in the attack. When news reached the agency, the Utes also attacked Meeker and his companions, ramming a barrel stave down his throat, killing ten other men, and seizing several hostages, including Meeker's wife.<sup>40</sup> This act of violence undermined all of the years of work Chief Ouray had done to establish peace and safety for his people. He quickly sent riders to stop the fighting and to secure the release of the hostages. Though this was accomplished, the hostility in the press and among the white public was too great to overcome. Spurred on by increased calls of the "Utes must go," Coloradans demanded Congress remove the natives. In 1880, delegates met in Washington, DC to negotiate a new treaty, but in reality it was simply forced upon the Utes.<sup>41</sup> The original treaty stated the Utes would be removed to a reservation near present-day Grand Junction or in an adjacent territory. The Utes stood firm, but ultimately knew they were beaten. Otto Mears paid two dollars to every Ute to get the agreement signed, which was ratified the following year by Congress.<sup>42</sup> The reservation never came to be at the junction of the Grand and Gunnison Rivers, which is the present location of Grand Junction. Instead the Utes were moved to lands in an "adjacent territory," which taken literally meant they were shipped to Utah, at that time a U.S. territory, not a state, west of Colorado.<sup>43</sup> In 1881, the same year Ouray died, the northern Utes were removed from western Colorado to eastern Utah. The southern bands were allowed to stay in Colorado, but they were sequestered to the southwest corner of the state.<sup>44</sup> The great expanse of western Colorado, nearly 12 million acres of hunting grounds for less than 10,000 Utes, was now open to widespread settlement.<sup>45</sup> Chief Ouray's strategy did not completely fail though. Western Colorado

was one of the last areas to open to large-scale settlement in the nation, and the tribe was the only Native group to retain any of their original lands in Colorado. The Ute Mountain Reservation in Southwestern Colorado is home to valuable fossil fuel and water resources today.<sup>46</sup>

With the removal of the Natives, settlers poured into the Grand River Valley to stake out their own homestead. William Gant's brothers, Jonathon and Emanuel, arrived and filed homesteads on Mamm Creek.<sup>47</sup> Jonathon Gant also filed for one of the earliest claims for water rights in 1881 in the area.<sup>48</sup> John Harvey filed his land claim north of the eventual town site in hopes of making a living in coal mining. His ranch later became the area where Harvey Gap reservoir is located today.<sup>49</sup> Soon settlers from Italy, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, and the eastern portion of America flooded the valley armed with dreams of making a living by tilling their own soil.<sup>50</sup> This influx diversified the areas around Silt and many of the ethnic surnames remain. George S. Clason later described western Colorado and its abundant opportunities as follows:

Of all the lands in this State suitable for farming only one-fifth are under cultivation at the present time. Colorado has been very widely advertised for its scenic attractions. Every one is familiar with the pictures of Pikes Peak and our other sky-piercing mountains. Very few people living outside of the State realize that the mountain ranges cross the State north and south and only cover about one-fourth of the total area. The rest is made up principally of plains with mountain valleys and mountain parks.

The value of farm lands in Colorado is far below what it should be. This is easily accounted for from the fact that the available farm lands exceed the supply of farmers in the State five to one.<sup>51</sup>

Reading like an extended advertising piece, his *Free Homestead Lands of Colorado*, was an attempt to sell Colorado and its opportunities to the nation. Clason headed his own map company in Denver and published this book to attract more settlers and their money

to the state. Most of the book consisted of brief descriptions of lands still available for homesteading along with the township information. It also provided the means and information to claim the available land. The following excerpt describes land near Silt:

Township 9 S., R. 92 W. - Along Grand River, which crosses the township, there are some very fine agricultural lands. To the north of the river there is a low mesa country, called Cactus Valley, containing a few cedar and piñon covered hills. South of the river the country is more broken, and just west of Mann (sic) creek there is a very level mesa covered with dense underbrush. Elevation, 5,500 feet. Annual rainfall, 10 to 15 inches. Crossed by a railroad. Value, \$5 to \$10 per acre.<sup>52</sup>

To make a claim, one had to file for the homestead in Leadville initially. Later the land office moved to Collbran before finally settling in Glenwood Springs, the county seat of Garfield County. At the time of the initial settlements of the Grand River Valley, a three dollars fee was imposed for putting in a claim on land.<sup>53</sup>

Upon hearing rumors that a Ute reservation would be located nearby, George Ferguson, who owned a blacksmith shop with Jacob Loesh in Durango, decided to move north to the lands vacated by the tribes. Each man staked a claim near the Grand River in 1881, with Ferguson's being the eventual starting point for the Town of Silt.<sup>54</sup> Ferguson's land claim was filed with county on April 21, 1886 with a Patent certificate #4,121- Ute Series. Most of the early settlers squatted on their land until the government surveyed and plotted the land.<sup>55</sup> Ferguson used his location to construct a ferry, a wagon barn, and a livery across the Grand River to profit from the traffic between Meeker and Collbran. He also started a post office and a store at his location.<sup>56</sup> Before this, there nearest post office for residents of Divide Creek was in Aspen.<sup>57</sup> Fred Munro built a mercantile store close to Ferguson shortly after this and the first inklings of town were present.<sup>58</sup> The Utes of

the area were leaving as Ferguson built his cabin along the Grand River. North of his homestead was the vacated Ute quarters, “Old Squaw Camp,” which John Harvey claimed for his ranch. South of the ranch was the Hog Back Pass, which later became a coalmine and the site of a dam to create the reservoir, Harvey Gap.<sup>59</sup> Some of the other settlers who staked the earliest claims were James Porter in 1881<sup>60</sup> and many of the

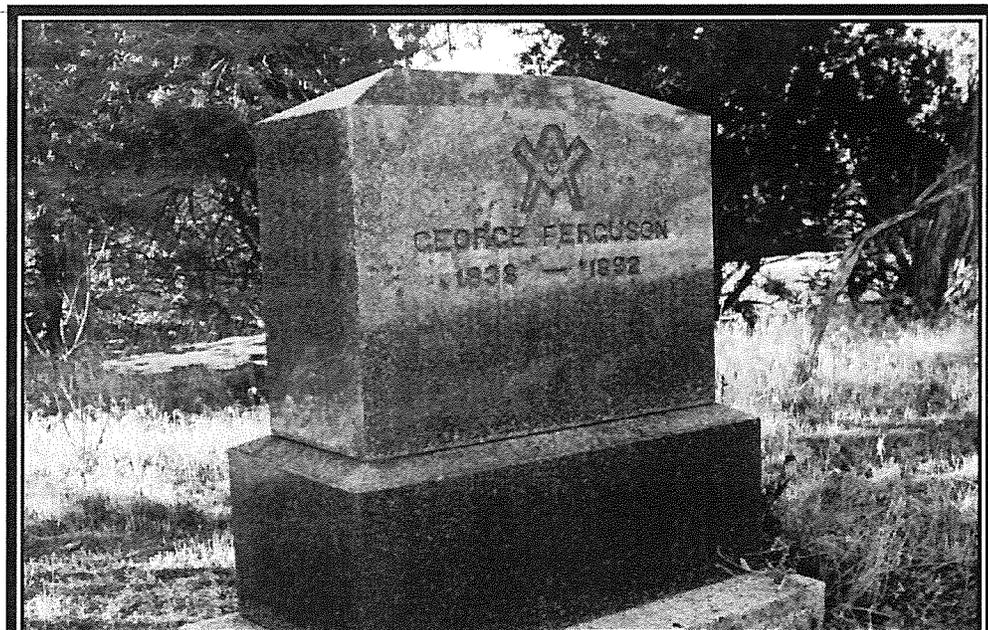


Figure 1.5: George Ferguson's grave at the Highland Cemetery in New Castle, CO  
Photograph by Paul Harvey

Boultons. John and Abe Boulton were caught in a heavy winter storm in the early 1880s and holed up in a dugout on East Divide Creek, subsisting on wild game they killed for the duration of the winter. Robert Boulton plowed over an old Ute Indian racetrack in 1893 for his homestead, and with it, the last obvious evidence the Utes lived in the region was erased. Most of the Native names vanished to more American-sounding ones, and their only lasting legacy lived through histories and artifacts.<sup>61</sup>

Before the arrival of the railroads, travel to the area near Silt was extremely difficult. The Grand River passed through South Canyon west of Glenwood Springs, but

the river route was impassable because of huge red slabs of rock in the canyon. People either had to traverse up and over the Flat Tops to the north, or go up Four Mile Creek and down Divide Creek just to go from Glenwood Springs to Rifle.<sup>62</sup> Soon a road was constructed to carry freight and mail up the Four Mile and Divide Creek route with the road arriving at the river near Ferguson's ferry.<sup>63</sup> The ferry was located in the prime spot for traffic coming down from Divide creek or vice versa. Only Glenwood Springs had a bridge across the river early in Garfield County's history as the other towns operated ferries like Ferguson's.<sup>64</sup> Men raising cattle, in these days had to drive their cattle along the same route to either Aspen or Leadville because the railroads had not reached Glenwood Springs at that point.<sup>65</sup> J.D. Taylor, Jay Cox, and their crew constructed a primitive road in 1886 through South Canyon.<sup>66</sup> The area that would become Silt was directly linked to the growing town of Glenwood Springs at that point.

The race to the Grand River Valley for railroads was fierce and competitive. The Colorado Midland Railroad pushed from Leadville to the Roaring Fork Valley and downriver towards Glenwood. Meanwhile, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) followed the path of the Grand River through Glenwood Canyon, which was considered a gamble by many because of the difficult terrain. The D&RG won the race, arriving in Glenwood Springs on October 5, 1887 to a large throng of people who gathered to celebrate the occasion. The Colorado Midland completed their work to Glenwood Springs on December 12<sup>th</sup>, and then pushed west to New Castle.<sup>67</sup> The D&RG trains pushed west as well, arriving at Ferguson's ferry in 1889. At this point, the two companies joined forces, formed the Rio Grande Junction Railway Company, and extended the rail lines westward to Grand Junction.<sup>68</sup> The D&RG built a train station at

the division point between New Castle and Rifle, which was named Silt.<sup>69</sup> With the depot built, traffic rose, along with the number of businesses. Fred Munro sold his business east of the depot and moved to the new site to build a new store, which was later sold to Dodson and Cowden.<sup>70</sup> Gulliford's history of the county stated that when the railroads reached Rifle the same year, most of the county was already "taken up."<sup>71</sup> During the first fall after the arrival of the railroads, 5,000 head of cattle per week were loaded on the trains at the newly constructed Silt stockyards. Henry Hasley started the first meat processing company the same year near the stockyards.<sup>72</sup> The post office in Silt opened on October 27, 1889 eventually forcing the post office at Ferguson to close in 1891.<sup>73</sup>

Around the same time the railroads arrived, Silt and the surrounding area's agriculture desperately needed reliable water for crops so they turned to the construction of irrigation ditches. In 1887, an English corporation, the Grass Valley Land & Water Company, purchased most of the land between Rifle and Silt that was north of the river. The company established the town of Antlers as an orchard and farming community, which held a post office until 1954. Construction on the Grass Valley Reservoir, at the site of present day Harvey Gap, started on April 1, 1891, but was not finished until December 24, 1894.<sup>74</sup> On March 27, 1895, the dam broke, sending sixty-six million cubic feet of water, in the form of a 30 feet high wall in some spots, into the Antlers Valley. Railroad tracks, bridges, and numerous farms and orchards were flooded.<sup>75</sup> Many farmers went out of business without reliable irrigation that summer while the flood permanently left a gash in the land.<sup>76</sup> In the meantime, farmers worked until 1898 to finish the Cactus Valley Ditch to make up for the lost dam. The Farmer's Irrigation Company rebuilt a much smaller dam in 1903 at the same site. William Devereaux, constructor of the Hotel

Colorado in Glenwood Springs, invested in the area with the Antlers Orchard Development Company. Legal issues over water rights persisted between the Antler Land and Reservoir and Grass Valley Land, Loan, and Irrigation Company lasted until 1901, which forced the Grass Valley Co. to close.<sup>77</sup> Using Japanese laborers, Devereaux had the dam enlarged, with construction starting in 1907.<sup>78</sup> In 1909, when Harvey Gap was finally finished, it had a storage capacity of 5,900 acre-feet and fed most of the area north of the Grand River with much needed water.<sup>79</sup> The reservoir remains today, but the Antlers Orchard Development Company folded in 1915.<sup>80</sup>

Reliable water for crops enabled farmers to grow a wide variety of crops in the area. Farmers and ranchers pitched in to build the Gant, East Divide, William H. Reynolds, Clear Creek, Ward and Reynolds, Tallmadge and Gibson, Porter, West Divide, and Louis Ditches between 1882-1886 to water much of the surrounding lands of Silt.<sup>81</sup> People in these areas grew potatoes, radishes, turnips, onions, cabbage, lettuce, rutabagas, and even some fruits. Orchards sprouted up in neighboring Peach Valley, Antlers, and Silt Mesa to grow cherries, apricots, peaches, pears, and a variety of apples.<sup>82</sup> In 1899, two hundred and sixty farmers in the Grand Valley signed contracts with the Colorado Sugar Manufacturing Company to grow sugar beets on 3,500 acres over a period of three years. To grow this substantial amount of sugar beets, 75,000 pounds of beet seed was imported from Magdeburg, Germany in May 1898. Between New Castle and Rifle, 3,000 acres were planted and beet dumps appeared in Rifle, Antlers, Silt, and New Castle for farmers to ship in bulk for lower rates.<sup>83</sup> To harvest the beets in an efficient manner, German-Russian laborers were brought in. Many of those workers made decent wages and eventually bought land to remain in the valley. Mexican workers were also brought

in to work in the fields after the German-Russians worked for themselves. Sugar beets did well in the valley from 1913-1948, but local farmers succumbed to a national trend in agriculture, many of the small farming enterprises were put out of business because of the lack of resources to compete with larger, corporate farms with mechanization across the nation.<sup>84</sup>

Farmers in the valley grew world-renowned products. At the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, local W.S. Parks of Silt took first prize for his peaches and apples. Coe and Fleming (no first names given) won prizes for their fruit along with Eugene Grubb in the potato-growing category. Henry Hasley had the esteemed distinction of growing the largest sugar beet at the fair.<sup>85</sup> According the Garfield County directory from the 1910s, "Some of the finest fruit grown anywhere is raised here. The famous box of apples which was bought for \$52.30 (the highest price ever paid for apples) at the Denver Apple Show in 1910 and presented to President Taft were grown in the Silt district."<sup>86</sup> There was even a cooperative effort to grow lettuce up Divide Creek in 1926-27, but a fungus in the food made it nearly impossible to sell the crops.<sup>87</sup>

Transportation, mainly the railroads, provided the connection to the rest of the nation the settlers of the valley desperately needed, while enable the budding community to establish more civilized institutions for their growth. With the arrival of tracks in 1889, time and money were saved in shipping and travel expenses. More people and business poured in to the region and Silt began to steadily grow. Schools were some of the first institutions founded after the arrival of the railroads to demonstrate the region's transition to modernity and civilization. Frontiersmen carved out enough of a life in the wild lands of western Colorado to establish small schools near their farming communities. Small

communities in many of the outlying areas around Silt not only had schools, but some had post offices. Raven, south of Silt on Divide Creek, had the smallest post office in America for twenty years. The small collection of farmers also established the Blue Goose School in 1905, which hosted President Theodore Roosevelt for a speech while he was on a hunting trip in the area.<sup>88</sup> Adelaide Dorothea Miller, who taught at the Mamm Creek School and later married famed forest ranger, Jim Cayton, provided a hand-written account of the speech witnessed by an estimated 1,400 people on April 29, 1905. She later wed Cayton in Raven in 1909.<sup>89</sup> The Antlers, Austin, Larson, Mamm Creek, Peach Valley, Harvey Gap, Lower Mamm Creek, Fairview, Hunter, Dry Hollow, and Flat Iron Schools all served the region before the era of consolidation.<sup>90</sup> The Fairview School had around 150 students at one point. Esma Lewis, a famous early teacher in Garfield County who eventually had an elementary school named after her, had to teach students who spoke English, German, Spanish, Russian, Polish, and Czechoslovakian during her years at both the Silt and Antlers Schools.<sup>91</sup>

The Silt School District 17 was founded on March 20, 1888, in the corner of George Ferguson's cabin. The first board was composed of P. Urquhart, President; J.W. Clark, Secretary; and George Ferguson, Treasurer. The first teacher hired for Silt was Miss Molly Nobile. Ferguson served on the board until his death in 1892, while his widow, Mrs. Ferguson, was elected to the board in 1895. The Silt School bought a one-story building east of Silt near Davis Point. The building was hauled to the town and used as the first half of a school. Local carpenters built another half of the building and connected them to double the size of the school for the students.<sup>92</sup> Later a second story and pitched roof was added to the building. First through twelfth grades met in the

building that was heated by a coal furnace, which was supplied from the mines near Harvey Gap. The first graduating class from Silt High School completed their schooling in 1918. The primitive school lasted until 1920 when Districts 14, 23, and 33 were consolidated into the Silt Consolidated District #1.<sup>93</sup> Interviews with John Cozza, who arrived in Silt in 1917, stated the first school was located at the corner of 7th and Grand, the current location of the decommissioned post office. Silt Union High School was constructed and opened in 1921 to accommodate the school's growth at 9th and Orchard. The high school remained open until 1963 and was eventually demolished in 1971 at the sight of the old Roy Moore Elementary building.

The community of Silt grew because of its central location, the river ferry, and the rail connection that were badly needed by the people of the outlying rural areas. Henry Hasley, who bought George Ferguson's ranch after his death in 1892, had the town of Silt surveyed and platted on October 11, 1907.<sup>94</sup> He partnered with Henry Ballard to form the Silt Land and Improvement Company in order to create a modern community for the residents.<sup>95</sup> With growth in mind, J.R. DeRemer polled local farmers west of Glenwood about where a new railroad depot for the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad would best benefit them. Ninety-eight percent of them wanted the depot to remain in Silt. Railroad officials agreed to build a new depot two hundred feet to east of the existing building.<sup>96</sup> A bridge to span the Grand River was finally constructed to help settlers living up Divide Creek and Dry Hollow, which meant more business for establishments located near its construction. Silt wanted the bridge near the rail depot, but John and Fred Munro laid out and platted the town of Grand River to the east of Silt on June 3, 1908. This collection of buildings was also called Ferguson to confusion of residents and historians years later.

The location of Grand River’s Main Street was the present-day 16th Street in Silt.<sup>97</sup> The bridge was located near the Munros’ town site, but the pull of the railway depot in Silt proper was strong enough to keep the community growing. The old ferry was closed shortly after the bridge opened, but Silt continued to grow, while Grand River lagged behind, eventually being swallowed up by the town. The economy at the time was excellent and residents poured in from all over the state and the country. The Congregational Church of Silt was built in 1909 and the Silt State Bank was opened in 1912.<sup>98</sup>

It seemed Silt was eager to incorporate into a town so the residents petitioned to do so in May 6, 1912.<sup>99</sup> The petition was filed to the county on May 10, 1912, and signed by the elected commissioners, H.H. Ballard, W.M. Price, John Fuller, E.F. Schwartz, and R.N. Coffey.<sup>100</sup> Ten notices for the election were posted by Fred Herwick; at the First State Bank, the Corner of Main and 7th Streets, the Silt Fruit and Mercantile Co., the York Col. Co. Office, the Silt Drug Store, the Post Office, the Munro Mercantile Co., the City Livery Barne (sic), the Silver Club Saloon, and the Ballard & Co. Store to prepare

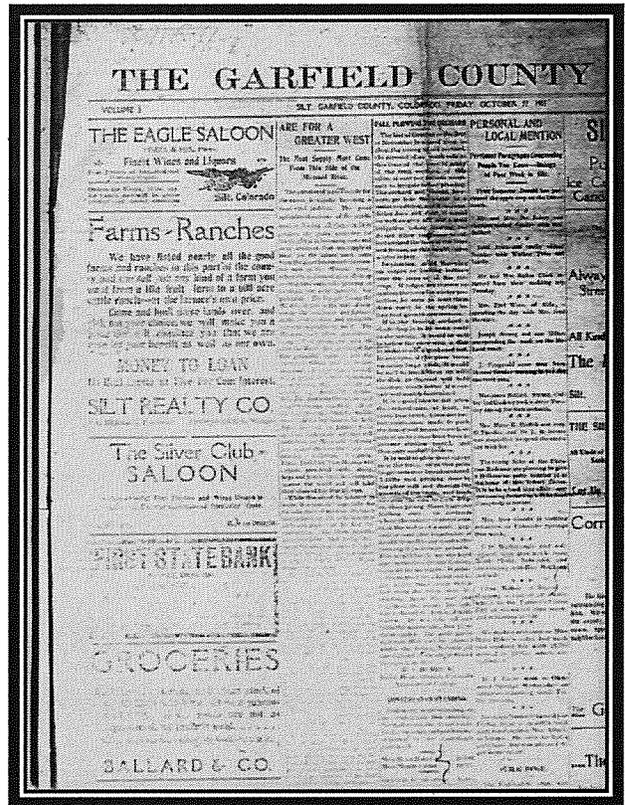


Figure 1.6: October 1911 copy of *The Garfield County News*, a Silt Newspaper. Photo Courtesy of Frontier Historical Museum, Glenwood Springs, CO

the citizens for the vote.<sup>101</sup> The town held an election on June 1, 1912, at the First State Bank. The town's move to incorporate did not draw much attention in neighboring towns.

*The Rifle Reveille* only published the following paragraph on the events of 1912:

Advertising is being done for the incorporation of the town of Silt. The election is called for June 1. Silt will do well to incorporate at this time, for under incorporation the town can do much self-improving which otherwise cannot be done.<sup>102</sup>

The petition to the Garfield County court was filed to the Honorable R.J. Smith included requests to incorporate under the name, "The Town of Silt," and the ability to hold elections for the 150 people in town. The land included for the proposed town was as follows:

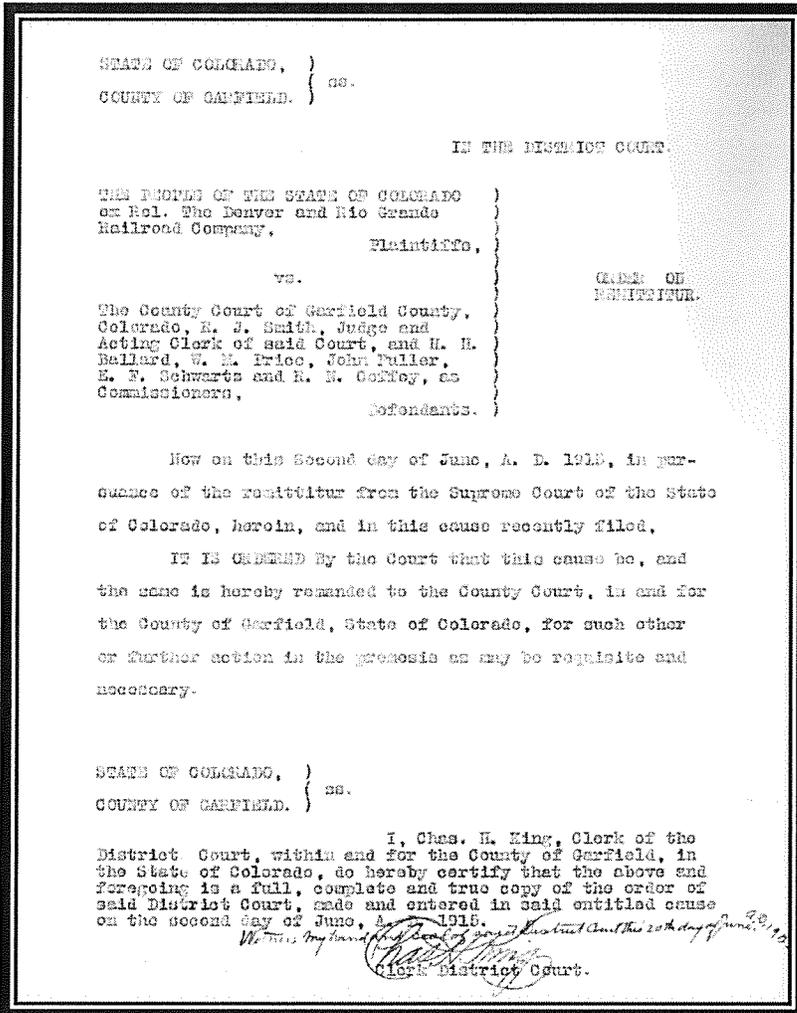
The northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of Section No. Ten, Township Six South, Range No. Ninety-two west of the Sixth Principal Meridian; lying north of the south line of the right of way of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Company, (or Rio Grande Junction Railroad);

All that part of the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of Section No. Three, Township No. Six South, Range No. Ninety-two West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, lying north of the south line of said Section 3 and south of a line running east and west and at all points parallel to and nine hundred feet north of said south line of said Section 3, and

All that part of the southwest quarter of the southwest quarters of Section No. Three, township No. Six South, Range No. Ninety-two west of the Sixth Principal Meridian described by metes and bounds, courses and distances as follows:- beginning at a point thirteen hundred and twenty-three and one-tenth fee east of the southwest corner of said Section 3, being the southeast corner of said SW 1/4, SW 1/4 of said Section No. 3, running thence north along the east line of said quarter section nine hundred feet; thence west six hundred and twenty feet; thence south nine hundred feet to the south line of said Section No. 3; thence east, along said south line of said Section No. 3, six hundred and twenty feet to the place of beginning; all of said lands so described lying and being in the County of Garfield, in the State of Colorado, and including

within its boundaries the townsite (sic) of Silt, and the Ballard Addition to the Townsite of Silt, as of record in the County Recorder's office of said County, the right of way of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Company, (or Rio Grande Junction Railroad), and other contiguous and adjoining lands.<sup>103</sup>

Forty-nine votes were cast; all in favor of incorporation, but the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad put a screeching halt to the formation of the town. Not wanting their property to be apart of the town and subsequently taxed, the company filed an injunction



on May 27, 1912, to stop the creation of the new town.<sup>104</sup> The case was appealed all the way to the Colorado Supreme Court, where it ruled in favor of the town on May 19, 1915, nearly three years after the initial petition to incorporate was filed, although the official ruling was not handed

Figure 1.7: Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Company v. County Court of Garfield County, R.J. Smith, Judge and Acting Clerk of Said Court and H.H. Ballard, W.M. Price, John Fuller, E.F.Schwartz, and R.N. Coffey. State of Colorado Document No. 52202 (July 28, 1915).

out until June 2, 1915.<sup>105</sup> Giles A. Ellis, of the *Garfield County Leader*,

a weekly newspaper in Silt, was tasked with posting the notice of the favorable court

ruling on May 20, 1915. He also posted five notices for the people at the Silt Post Office and Drug Store, the Butcher Shop, the Munro Mercantile Store, McMurphy's General Store, and the Silt Pass Time.<sup>106</sup> The confusion over the three-year legal battle led many to wonder if Silt was legally a town years later. Part of the confusion also stemmed from whether the Document No. 52202 was filed properly or not. Housed at the Garfield Clerk and Recorder in the Land Office, located in Glenwood Springs, the copy that was forwarded to the office of the Secretary of State was either misplaced or never forwarded, but Silt was officially a town after an investigation was conducted.<sup>107</sup> Silt was officially classified as a town on May 19, 1915 after the court ruling, but the legal battle also forced the town to hold new municipal elections as three of its first commissioners, John Fuller, E.F. Schwartz, and R.M. McMurphy, had moved out town so they were no longer eligible to serve in their offices.<sup>108</sup> The new election was held on June 29, 1915 in which the people selected C.H. Coe as Mayor, along with C.C. McMurphy, W. M. Price, R. W. Carpenter, and J. K. R. Cowden to serve on the initial town council. R. G. Tippatt was also elected to work as the town clerk.<sup>109</sup> Silt was finally an official town and stormed off into the future. Symbolic of its propulsion into the modern age with incorporation, the town began to generate its own electricity south of the river the same year.<sup>110</sup>

After strange beginnings for a town with a strange name, Silt looked to the future with optimism, hope, and good helping of the American Dream. Over the next century, the town with the odd name struggled to gain its own sustainable economy like many of its neighbors in Garfield County. Booms and busts affected the town just as they did the rest of the region, state, and country during the twentieth century. The citizens of Silt would be tested by incredibly perilous crises the United States faced in the twentieth

century. The men were sent all around the world to defend the country's and Silt's freedoms. The peaks and valleys of the next century in American history cast long shadows over the small town in western Colorado.

## Chapter 2: Silt's Early Years, The Great War and the 1920s

Nine days before Silt was officially incorporated as a town, German U-Boats sank the *HMS Lusitania*, and America was gripped with war fever to join the Great War.<sup>1</sup> For Silt, Colorado, there wasn't much time to grow and mature as a town. Finally incorporated in 1915 after a three-year legal battle with the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, Silt was thrust into the modern age as America transformed from the industrial boom, technological advances, and the burden to two world wars. Silt was no stranger to the advances in technology, but the changes must have felt unsettling for many of the original homesteaders and their families. When one compares the twenty-five years that preceded and then followed the official incorporation of the town, it was staggering the amount of changes the small town went through in fifty years. There were scant settlers strewn along the outlying areas of present day Silt as settlers tried to tame the arid lands of western Colorado in 1890. Residents of the community of Silt in 1900 had just finished the first known house in the future town and the Ballard Depot for trains was just constructed.<sup>2</sup> Agriculture and mining were the main draws for settlers to the area that were trying to make a living. Progress seemed slow by modern standards as the town was surveyed and platted in 1907, and the bridge spanning the old Grand River, today's Colorado River, was completed the following year. The first bank and schools opened in 1912 while the town began the process to incorporate.<sup>3</sup> The next twenty-five years after 1915, changes hastened and modern lifestyles crept into the small town in the heart of Garfield County. By 1940, the last true year of peace before World War II, Silt had generated its first electricity, sent men off to Europe in the Great War, built primitive water systems, constructed a city hall, purchased automobiles, tuned their radios,

installed telephones and electric lights, and broadened their view outside of the rural community to take interest in national and international affairs.<sup>4</sup> No period in Silt's history witnessed such great changes in lifestyles that were primarily caused by the influx of technology and an American culture that was spawned by mass media.

At the time of the town's incorporation, Silt had twenty businesses, including the First State Bank of Silt and a newspaper, *The Silt Leader*.<sup>5</sup> Local agriculturists that came into town for supplies could utilize one of the town's six dry goods stores, two blacksmith shops, or one of the several implement dealers. Guests to the burgeoning town could stay at the Belvedere Hotel after 1917.<sup>6</sup> The post office was located in the downstairs portion of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF). The same year the United States joined the Great War; Silt residents could buy the new Titan 10-20 tractor from J.K.R. Cowden or get a loan from Frank W. Crawford at the bank. There was a barbershop in town and plenty of stockyards to house the cattle driven down the trail from Collbran or from the local ranches.<sup>7</sup> The town really seemed to be growing substantially with improvements being added every year.

Silt's inaugural year as an official town witnessed the construction of the first sidewalks, which currently are still being built around town. This century-long project of adding sidewalks in the municipality has been a challenge for the little town struggling against modernity, but the recent downtown upgrades have made a substantial improvement in the aesthetics and functionality of the commercial areas in recent times. The town also generated its first electricity using a gas-powered generator by the railroad tracks. Modern electrical systems did not arrive in town until 1929 when the Public Service Company began providing power to the residents. The town contracted the

company to install lighting, wiring, and poles in February, but work was not finished until July.<sup>8</sup> Finally after some delay to the project because of slow deliveries of the light poles, the town threw a huge celebration to light the town on July 27th and 28th. The two-day program included baseball games, a free dance, prize contests, and barbecue, and special feature picture show.<sup>9</sup> The party to illuminate over one hundred lights was a “complete success” according to *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*, except for a huge rainstorm and the Silt Sluggers losing both baseball games.<sup>10</sup> The storm was so bad that it flooded many streets in Silt, especially 16th street.<sup>11</sup> An Italian ranch hand, Tony Taffalo, was killed in a flash flood north of town in the Harvey Gap region. He was hired by Jack Munro to cut posts for his ranch and lived in a tent near the area when the flood claimed the seventy-nine year old’s life.<sup>12</sup>

The town continued improving its infrastructure as the town installed its first water system in 1917, though not in time to save the Munro Store. On February 2, 1917, Miss Tolby, a restaurant operator in town, got up to let her cat out when she noticed the store ablaze. The lack of waterworks in town forced the townspeople to work harder to prevent the fire from spreading to more buildings. Luckily snow on the ground aided the people and the firefighters to prevent the fire from spreading to a nearby lumberyard. Even with this colossal effort, the Munro store, along with its contents and billiards hall were lost. Damages were estimated to be around \$9,000 for the fire, but the town could have been wiped out.<sup>13</sup> Beginning on September 4, 1917, a \$15,000 bond, four-inch wooden pipes and nine fire hydrants were installed in the downtown area.<sup>14</sup> W.B. Vedder and Son Company of Grand Junction dug ditches, laid pipes and hydrants, and installed a twenty-five horsepower gasoline engine that would pump water from a well on the

Hasley Ranch that was near the river to a 150,000 gallon reservoir on the mesa above the school house.<sup>15</sup> Town officials later installed a concrete reservoir to use irrigation water for drinking use in 1923. Harry Flynn, the news reporter who provided information for the “Silt Happenings” and “Sift Siftings” sections of *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* in the late 1920s and early 1930s, reported the water supply was greatly improved in January 1929 by stating, “We now have almost a constant supply, much to the satisfaction of users.”<sup>16</sup> As a part of the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) installed four inch steel water pipes to replace the old wooden ones in 1940. Most of the old pipes were dug up by hand, but the new pipes were much more durable and safe. Sadly for residents, the first sewers were not installed until 1952 so outhouses and septic tanks received the town’s waste for a long time.<sup>17</sup> For all of the progress Silt witnessed, the town seemed detached from the rest of the country at times, but world events would hasten Silt’s incorporation to a larger stage.

Grim news littered the front page of *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* on April 6, 1917, as news of Congress’ declaration of war against Germany shared space with revelation that Colorado voted to go “dry” with alcohol well before the rest of the country adopted Prohibition.<sup>18</sup> The commencement of war coupled with cessation of alcohol importation to Colorado, the sale and manufacture of booze was banned long before, would have long-reaching effects on the community of Silt for years to come.<sup>19</sup> The United State’s entry into the Great War brought almost immediate changes to both Silt and the entire county. Agriculture, one of the founding industries of the town, boomed from the tremendous need for supplies for the American Dough Boys and the rest of the Allies that were fighting the Central Powers. The weekly papers were so filled with



Figure 2.1: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*  
April 6, 1917

patriotic headlines and pictures, while farmers were urged to work harder with headlines like, “Every

Acre in Colorado Must Produce Food This Year if People are to Eat.”<sup>20</sup> Unused land that was once used for agriculture was quickly reclaimed for orchards or the growth of sugar beets, potatoes, and grains. Sugar beets were especially important to the river valley as the Holly Sugar Company shipped beet seeds from Grand Junction to be grown in the areas around Silt, Rifle, and Antlers. At its height, nearly 3,000 acres of sugar beets were

grown in the area with the farmers depositing their crops into communal beet dumps that were loaded onto trains in the fall and sent to Grand Junction for processing into sugar.<sup>21</sup> In 1920, nine tons of seed, worth \$6,000 dollars was shipped to Thad S. Tharp for distribution to local farmers. This substantial amount of seeds was about half of the amount needed to grow the beets during the war.<sup>22</sup> Dairy farmers would bring cream from their cows to the train station to be sent along to processing centers on the “Milk Train.” There was a shortage of labor so the valley employed immigrant workers from Central Europe, Russia, and Mexico to work in the fields. To maximize production, the Colorado Extension Service provided county agents to help local farmers increase their output to help the war effort. Alfred and Vance Lough were the agents most active near Silt during WWI. With this help and loans from the federal government to increase production, most people in the agricultural sector made tremendous profits that enabled many farmers and ranchers to purchase gas powered tractors for the first time.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 2.2: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* January 25, 1918

The culture and mood of the valley shifted to focus on winning the war. The first modern, total war caused an upsurge in patriotism and people pitching in to do their part. The local newspapers were filled with

guidelines from the Food Administration to help with the voluntary rationing that was organized by future president Herbert Hoover. Recipes to help housewives cope without certain ingredients were included in the papers to make sure the troops had enough to eat. Wheatless biscuits and other food items were listed on a weekly basis in these sections.<sup>24</sup> The Red Cross was featured prominently on the front page of *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* to prompt people to donate money, knit blankets, or to roll bandages to help the men fighting in France.<sup>25</sup> The agricultural section had articles like, “Why the Colorado Farmer Should Grow Sugar Beets,” while Liberty Loan drives were widely advertised to raise money for the war. Loan drives, war bonds, and Red Cross fundraising efforts routinely made the front page of the paper. The people of Silt raised \$818 for a Red Cross



Figure 2.3: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* March 15, 1918

drive even though their share was only \$720.<sup>26</sup> The community spirit toward helping the entire country was prevalent in Silt as it raised more than its share multiple times. The third loan drive’s results were posted for the entire county in a competition of sorts. Silt’s First State Bank generated forty-five subscriptions to raise \$5,400 for the war.<sup>27</sup> The upsurge in the economy led to the reopening of the Harvey Gap coal mine after being closed for a year after a fire broke out in 1917. The old workings of the mine were caved in to snuff out the blaze, but the

Colorado Fuel and Iron Company reopened the mine by leasing it to Pete Cozza and Damien Baken. Wagon service to deliver coal was also

restarted to ease the burden of obtaining fuel for residents of Silt, Rifle, and Divide Creek.<sup>28</sup> Readers in both Rifle and Silt followed the weekly updates from the front, serials about the fighting from Arthur Guy Empey’s “Over the Top,” and stories about local boys’ exploits and location in the military. Seemingly every page was filled with war-related materials as this local community was enveloped by the war effort in a manner similar to the rest of the nation. Since alcohol was banned in Colorado as of 1916,<sup>29</sup> Anheuser-Busch advertised its Bevo Beverage in every paper, as the beer giant tried to remain in business without its main product. Men who did not contribute in some manner to the effort were labeled “loafers” or “slackers” by the local papers.<sup>30</sup>

The local boys that served overseas were tracked closely in the newspaper as any story about them garnered front-page headlines. Updates were given in the section, “News from Rifle Sammies,”<sup>31</sup> but other information was brought forth through letters then men wrote home to their families. Seventy-four men joined the Colorado Calvary during the summer of 1917, and many were still attached to that regiment that was a part of the 157th Infantry. These troop “M” boys had many active members serving their country while many others had mustered out and returned home. Most men were called to border duty to protect against the Mexican threat after the Zimmerman Note tried to form a German-Mexican alliance. Though no men from Silt proper joined the cavalry, nearly ten men volunteered from the surrounding

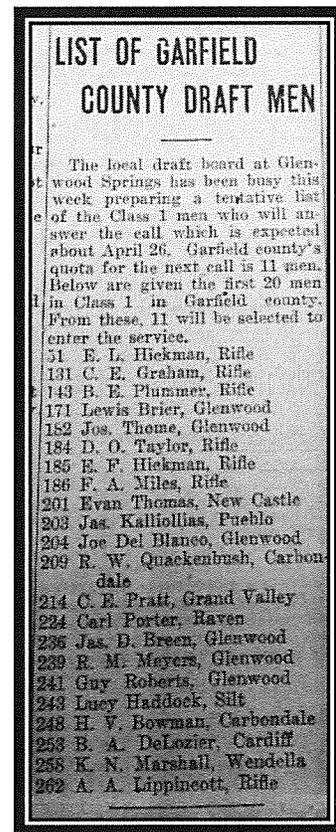


Figure 2.4: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*

rural areas.<sup>32</sup> Draft notices were published to show every man conscripted for possible service into the military. As the 1918 progressed, the list of drafted men grew longer and more extensive. After news of the armistice reached the valley on November 11, 1918, impromptu parades were held in

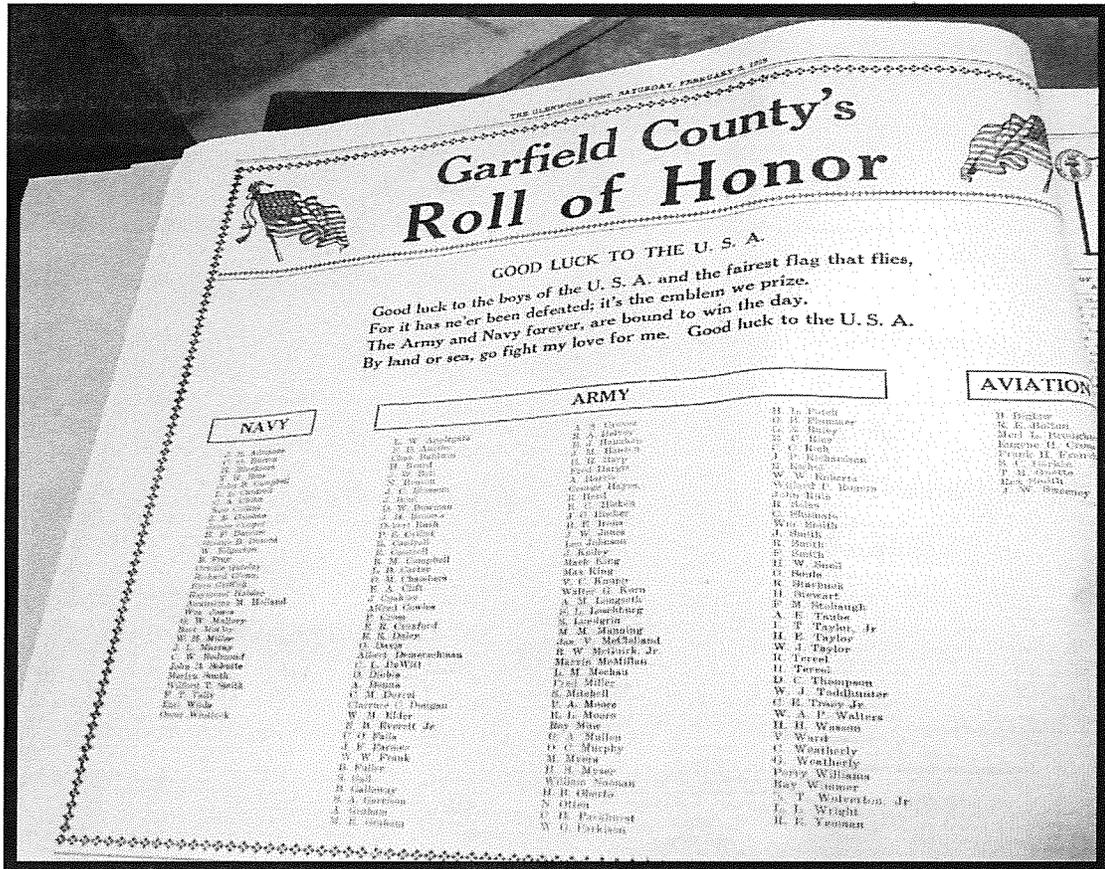


Figure 2.5: *The Glenwood Post*  
February 6, 1918

Rifle. After the motorcade of twenty cars was finished joyriding in Rifle, they traveled to Silt to hold another parade down the main streets.<sup>33</sup> The jubilation of victory was tempered however because one month after the ceasefire, news arrived of the first death for a Silt resident. Hary J. Kelly, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Nelly of Mamm Creek, died October 17, 1918, in a military hospital. He was 24 years old and had enlisted in

June 1917 before being killed in France.<sup>34</sup> *The Glenwood Post* carried a weekly feature during and after the war to show all of the men who served in the military. “Garfield County’s Roll of Honor,” listed all of the names of men serving in the Navy, Army, and Aviation Forces, and grew substantially as the war progressed.<sup>35</sup>

Even before the war had ended, the next threat to normal living had struck Silt and the surrounding areas along the Grand River Valley. Transmittable diseases were a larger threat to people living in the 1910s compared to people in modern times. Smallpox struck the Silt school in November 1917, when Miss Esther Hyduck, a teacher, contracted the disease. The school was closed and Dr. Smith vaccinated seventy-four children to prevent further outbreaks.<sup>36</sup> The infamous Spanish influenza, which eventually killed over 8,000 people in Colorado<sup>37</sup> and killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide<sup>38</sup>, struck Garfield County savagely in 1918-1919. The first documentation of the flu appeared in the October 18, 1918 edition of *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*.<sup>39</sup> Details and statistics from the deadly strain of the flu in the worst years were not available, but later incidents of the flu hitting the valley provided information on how the residents coped with the problem. In 1920, the flu struck again to the point that Rifle had 170 cases and Glenwood Springs had over 300 cases.<sup>40</sup> Homes were quarantined and listed in the local papers for residents to avoid. The schools were closed for three weeks forcing students to make up lost time by attending classes in June and July.<sup>41</sup> The majority of cases seemed to be light, but two deaths were attributed to the flu in Glenwood. As the towns healed and improved, the outlying rural areas were then struck, necessitating further quarantines.<sup>42</sup> Although Silt is not explicitly listed in these articles, one can imagine the situation in town was very similar to neighboring municipalities. The flu virus of the

winter of 1918-1919 was particularly deadly as it attacked young people harshly. Mislabeled as Spanish influenza, it may have originated in China, and was deadly to young people because it morphed into a strain of flu that was not evident prior to 1889. New findings on this particular strain explained why young people were so viscerously attacked while older people survived. The younger generation had not been exposed to the strain of flu that reared its ugly head in 1918. The virus killed about one in every two hundred people who contracted it.<sup>43</sup> Surely Silt's young people suffered all the same as the rest of the world in the tumultuous days of 1918 and 1919.

Adjustment back to peacetime seemed easier for the rural communities of Garfield County than for the rest of the nation. There were no labor strikes, race riots, or communist raids in this area like the rest of the nation experienced in the hectic year of



Figure 2.6: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* February 6, 1920

1919. There were some national headlines included in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* that discussed the forced labor of "Reds" who were awaiting deportation, and a photograph of communist agitators that was aimed to scare the locals of suspected communists.<sup>44</sup> These stories were carried on the inner pages of the paper while headlines of Elizabeth Brewsher winning three first prizes for canning chicken, cucumbers, and mutton at the Denver Stock Show made front-page news.

Brewsher, a freshman at Silt Union High School,

won a set of first class kitchen utensils valued at \$14.50 for her effort that included canning 434 products, which was the most submitted at the competition.<sup>45</sup> Clearly the focus of Silt residents was local and agricultural. Throughout 1919 and the upcoming decade of the 1920s, local news took precedence routinely over news from the rest of the country and the world. The paper carried stories about locals shopping in town, marriages, births, deaths, vacations, and local sports stories in lieu of the big events one learns in an American history class. The 1920 census was published with Silt being counted for the first time as a town. The newspaper reported the town had 379 residents and 544 people in the areas nearby. Strangely, the official records from the Census Bureau show only 165 people when accessed on the Garfield County website today. The discrepancy may derive from the large number of people living in surrounding rural areas. Divide Creek reported 519 people and the slowly vanishing neighboring town of Antlers had 197, down from 570 people in 1910.<sup>46</sup>

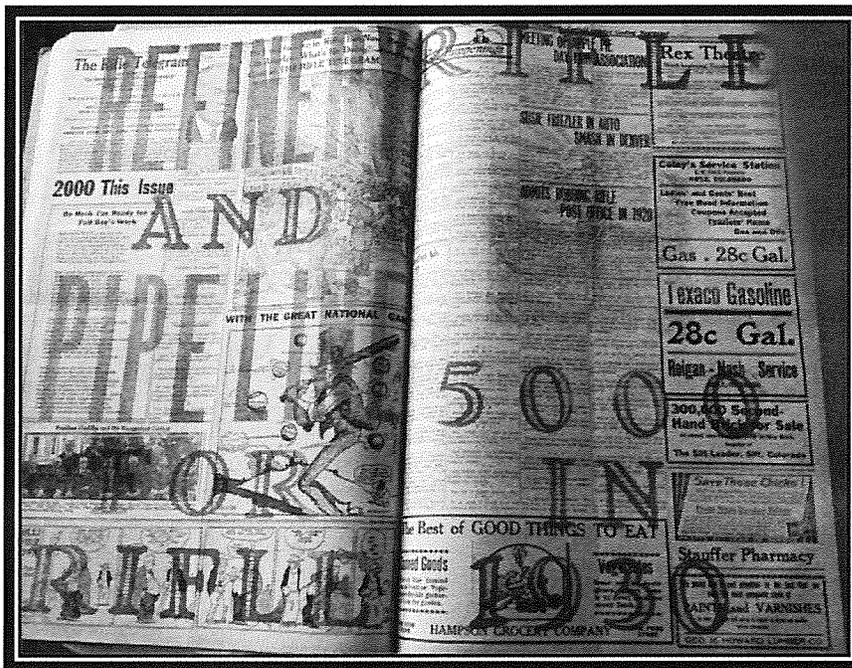
At the dawn of the new decade, veterans that returned home from war were amazed at the changes that occurred in the valley during their absence. Prosperity had come to many of the ranchers and farmers so that many of them owned cars, remodeled their homes, or constructed brand new houses from the influx of money. Rifle's Keel-Hansen Post No. 78, American Legion provided a place for veterans to gather, socialize, and work for the betterment of the community. The veterans of the Great War picked up where the previous generation of the Grand Army of the Republic had left off in aiding the community.<sup>47</sup> The veterans also noted that agriculture had diversified during their service abroad. More crops were being grown and many of the younger generations were operating the local farms. Many of the original settlers were passing their property down

to their kids or selling out to neighbors to create larger farms.<sup>48</sup> One of the original settlers to the area, C.J. Shidler, sold 700 acres to Carl Nordgren of South Dakota in 1920. Nordgren's purchase promised the installation of a silo system of feeding for animals, included all of the improvements, 300 acres of irrigated land, and expansive views of the valley from Divide Creek for the cost of \$65,000.<sup>49</sup> This was just one example of a pioneer leaving agriculture for an easier lifestyle in town.

The economy of the valley was shifting towards the modern age in the postwar world, but agriculture was still the primary means for making a living in the area and continued to do so for the duration of the 1920s. Any news that impacted agriculture carried significant weight with the locals. A large snowstorm hit Silt in November 1919 that hurt the cattle industry badly as neighboring Rifle reported twenty inches of snow that delayed trains on the Denver and Rio Grande Line for some time.<sup>50</sup> Ranching was very important to the area as it was at the time of settlement. The Western Slope Stockgrowers Protective Association was a strong lobbying group that met annually to help area ranchers. They routinely protested high grazing fees and shipping costs, but also offered support to others in raising healthy cattle.<sup>51</sup> Some modern feeding techniques were tested north of Silt in 1929 as John R. Munro and Senator Claude H. Rees of Rifle used a mixture of alfalfa, roller ground barely, sugar beet pulp, and cotton seed cake. The alfalfa and barley were in abundance in this region.<sup>52</sup> Farming suffered some during the decade as demand for crops dwindled after the war and prices dropped. *The Glenwood Post* reported that potatoes, corn, and sugar beets were losing value by mid-decade. The beet crop in particular lost over a million tons which put a pinch on local farmers.<sup>53</sup> Still, it must not have been too bad as the old beet dump in Silt was torn down and replaced

with a new one in 1928. The community used the dump, which was reported to be the most modern dump on the Western Slope, for all of their sugar beets to be hauled all at once to the sugar factories in the late portion of fall.<sup>54</sup> Shipping all of the town's beets at once saved the people money in shipping costs.

Though some unfortunate events marred the boom times of the 1920s, like a fire that destroyed the Price Grocery Store in 1923, the people of Silt remained optimistic about the future.<sup>55</sup> The newspapers grew thicker from more advertising and were filled with stories of new filling stations or the prospects for oil shale in the area. Though centered west of Silt, the possibility of a boom and subsequent bust from oil shale production has loomed since the first settlements to the area. *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* frequently carried stories of shale development and urged the construction of a refinery and pipeline to help Rifle. It even predicted substantial growth to push Rifle to 5,000 residents by 1930.<sup>56</sup> These lofty goals never panned out, but most likely peaked the



optimism of the Silt residents as well. One industry started in the 1920s and did well throughout the decade was the U.S. Vanadium Company that operated below Rifle Falls. It opened in December

Figure 2.7: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* May 1, 1924.

1924<sup>57</sup> and a refinery was built in Rifle to process

the rare metal that was good for refining steel.<sup>58</sup> The mine did so well known that a Soviet official, Mr. Alexandroff, visited the area in 1929 because of his expertise in rare metals so he could take back the knowledge to aid in one of Stalin's Five Year Plans for growth in the Soviet Union.<sup>59</sup>

Coal mining continued during the 1920s as the Harvey Gap mine was the largest near Silt. There was an industrial accident in 1926 as the Bracken Mine exploded, killing

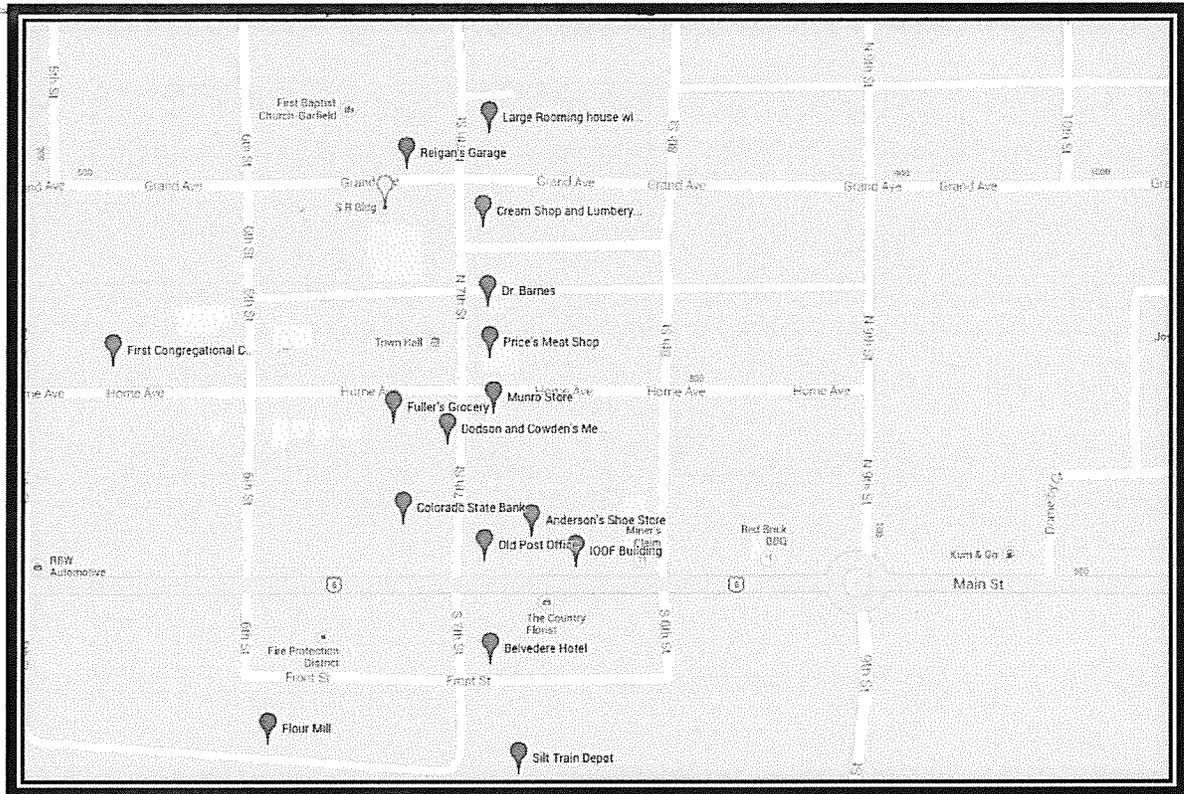


Figure 2.8: Map of Silt, circa 1920s. (Based on information from Alice Boulton's *Silt, Colorado Homesteads*)

three people on January 23, 1926. Dan Bracken, Ernest Otten, and Billy Cook lost their lives while working when the mine exploded at 10:30 AM.<sup>60</sup> Even with tragedies like this and the terrible ones in previous years in New Castle, coal mining was necessary for fuel in the 1920s. The Lewellyn Coal Mine opened in 1929 near Davis Point, which was east of town, and began delivery service.<sup>61</sup>

Silt and the surrounding communities were not immune to the trends of the nation and more of the mass culture of America crept into the region as the 1920s progressed. Automobiles grew in popularity to the point that the local paper included an automobile



Figure 2.9: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* September 2, 1920.

section to help car owners with maintenance and new purchases.<sup>62</sup> With increased car traffic and the advent of school buses, small community schools were threatened, as school consolidation became an issue in the valley. Though each town had its own high school in 1920, a delegation of educators from Glenwood Springs, New Castle, Silt, and Rifle visited Grand Junction to

investigate the idea of forging the community schools

together. Silt's superintendent of schools, A.M. Craven and three teachers, Miss Bowles, Mr. Benedetti, and Mr. Wright, attended the meeting, but school consolidation was ultimately postponed for several decades.<sup>63</sup> Silt High School remained open until 1963, but during the 1920s it thrived and grew into a modern high school. The first version of the Silt High School Criterion appeared in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* in 1921.

Published by the students and faculty of the school, it carried stories about class spirit, the senior class play, and the athletic teams.<sup>64</sup> *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* routinely reported

the arrival of new teachers, including the new principal, Mr. Amspoker in 1921<sup>65</sup>, along with which kids missed classes or were ill. School plays, social gatherings, and sporting events were news to the entire community. Silt fielded a high school basketball team for both boys and girls during the 1920s, but did not have a football team of note. By the latter half of the 1920s, the school had grown to the point that the school board arranged another bus for the increased number of pupils. Six buses were needed to haul the

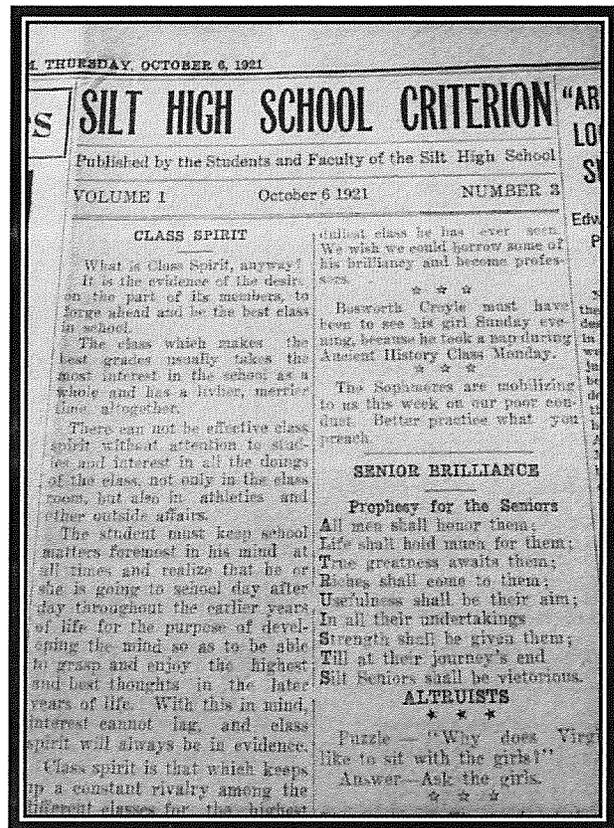


Figure 2.10: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* October 6, 1921

students that represented first through twelfth grades.<sup>66</sup> By 1929, the Silt School housed fifty high school students and 163 pupils in the grades.<sup>67</sup>

Though Silt was a small community, it was not immune from the ravages of crime. Stories of violence and bootlegging were sensationalized in the local newspapers much like some of the bigger cases across the country. John Breuss was murdered on his ranch outside of Silt in 1919 with Lee Martinez, Tonio Martinez, and Cruze Romero being held in connection to the crime. Sheriff Fravert used evidence to build the case against the men, as the watch stolen from Breuss was the clue to tie everything together.<sup>68</sup> A 1922 murder case in Canyon Creek, about five miles west of Glenwood Springs, peaked the interest if the county once again as Henry Ashbaugh was put on trial for the

murder of Blanche Tibbets. Every new twist and turn in the case garnered huge headlines as Ashbaugh was eventually convicted of involuntary manslaughter.<sup>69</sup> The town of Silt was not immune from these violent crimes. The First State Bank at Silt was robbed on October 23, 1921, as bandits made off with \$57,000 in notes and securities, \$2,900 in town and other warrants, and \$15.50 in nickels and dimes. The robbers stole railroad tools and blasted the inner doors of the vault to grab the loot. Because they failed to steal much cash, the bank was able to stay open without aid from neighboring banks,<sup>70</sup> but the suspects seemed to get away with the crime as no articles were published in subsequent weeks of arrests being made. Another robbery hit the Williams Brothers General Merchandise Store the following week and the robbers made off with \$300 in merchandise and \$5 in cash.<sup>71</sup> The following summer, Mrs. Leslie Hasley of Silt was bound and gagged by a masked thug. She was alone on her ranch east of town when she heard a knock on the door. Upon opening the door and seeing a masked man, she fainted only to awake being tied up and gagged with her house ransacked for \$2.50 in cash. After the ordeal, she was able to make it to her porch and notify a man nearby to contact the authorities in Silt. A posse was sent out to the surrounding areas, but no one was ever caught for the crime.<sup>72</sup>

One of the more bizarre cases in Silt's history involved a shooting at the Palace Pool Hall on March 30, 1927. William Underwood shot Leonard Arondale in the groin after an altercation broke out over a card game. After being attacked with a chair, Underwood grabbed a 45-caliber revolver from behind the bar and fired a single shot. He then used the telephone to call Sheriff Winters to let him know about the incident and to ask to be arrested for his role in the fight. Winters arrived and arrested Underwood

around 1:30 AM.<sup>73</sup> Later that year, a jury found Underwood guilty of assault with a deadly weapon with intent to do great bodily harm, and sentenced him to 51 weeks in jail with a \$500 fine. Originally charged with intent to kill, the reduced sentence was won by the defense for Underwood. Details of the case were refined during the trial as the origin of the fight was discovered. Arondale had made fun of Underwood for having a wooden leg instead of a card game as first reported by the newspaper, but the conviction still stood.<sup>74</sup>

Bootlegging cases were more frequent during the 1920s as Prohibition from the Eighteenth Amendment ruled the nation. Enforced by the weak Volstead Act, the county sheriff bore the brunt of the task of keeping the county dry. Numerous articles appeared throughout the decade about raids on outlying rural areas. Sheriff Fravert rounded up bootleggers and gamblers up Divide Creek in 1920<sup>75</sup> A large still was found in the Mamm Creek District in 1925 as officers hid out in the brush for four days to catch the owners when they showed up to work on their booze.<sup>76</sup> Another bust occurred in the Harvey Gap District in 1929, as Sheriff Winters and a federal agent, William Tremble, drove up from Rifle to take Tony Zarlingo into custody for operating a 35-gallon still and possessing 50 gallons of “whitemule.”<sup>77</sup> Though these crimes attracted attention of the papers, over the period of a decade they were not substantial enough to call Silt a crime-ridden town. The town dealt with many lesser crimes like the closing of the pool hall for having too many foreigners with vague connections to gambling involved.<sup>78</sup> Silt also had a brief instance with someone mailing lewd materials to residents and a “peeper,” but these incidents vanished quickly after Harry Flynn publicized the incidents in the paper.<sup>79</sup>

Transportation was a vital link to Silt as it competed with its larger and more famous neighbors. Rifle was booming from possible oil shale development and Glenwood Springs bragged about being the “Mecca of the World,” for tourists, health seekers, and recreation hunters.<sup>80</sup> Railroads were vital to agriculture for shipping, but the lack of a direct connection to a transcontinental line limited the area. Efficiency in train travel and shipping had grown, as evidenced by the speed in which trains were rerouted



Figure 2.11: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*  
May 15, 1924

after a forty-car derailment occurred west of Silt on May 10, 1924. Though the wreck caused \$16,000 dollars in damage, few delays for mail or passenger travel happened as crews worked to clean up the mess.<sup>81</sup> The dream of linking the Western Slope to a transcontinental line came closer to reality with the construction of the Moffat Tunnel in 1927.<sup>82</sup> News of the project and construction were important to Silt as its completion

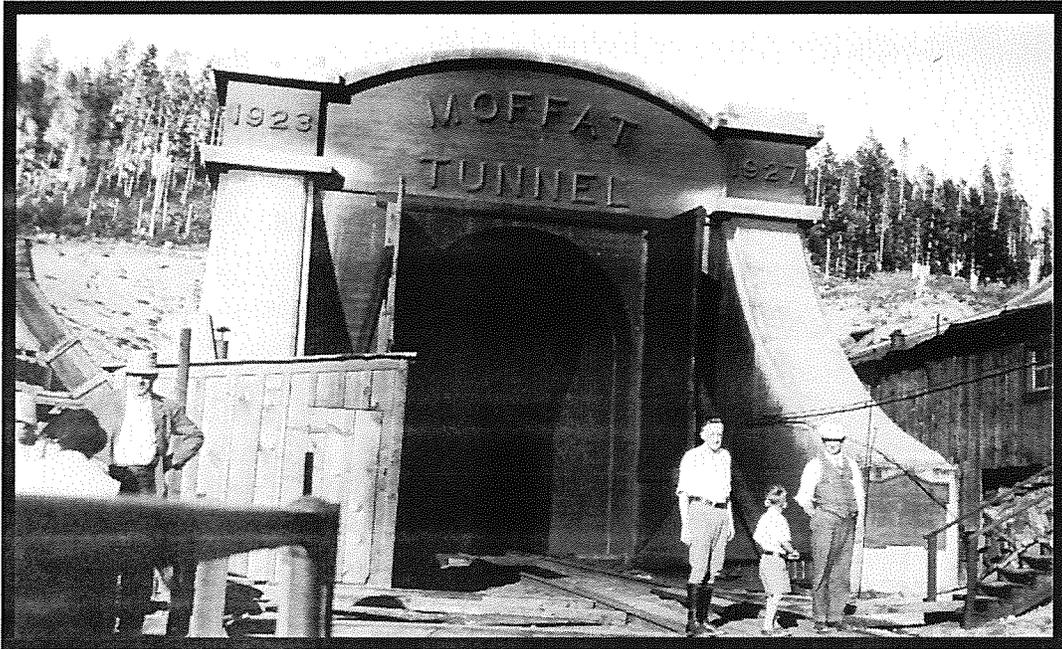


Figure 2.12: The Moffat Tunnel, Personal Photo from the Brehm Family

brought the town one step closer to being on the main line. The Dotsero Cutoff was the final link to connect Silt to a line between Salt Lake City and Denver directly. Before this, traveling to Denver required passengers to traverse over Tennessee Pass and then change trains in Pueblo, before heading to the state capital. The Cutoff was completed with the aid of federal financing during the Great Depression in 1934.<sup>83</sup> Silt and the rest of Garfield County were finally connected just as train ridership was on the decline because of the rise in popularity of cars and the construction of highways.

Henry Ford's creation of an affordable and reliable car for the masses touched every corner of America, including residents of Silt. Utilizing the assembly line techniques, Ford made his Model T available for \$310 in 1921.<sup>84</sup> It had been noted already about the increase of cars in the area immediately after the war, but the surge in auto sales continued through the 1920s. Though statistics were not readily available, browsing through a decade's worth of newspapers makes one appreciate the

impact cars had on the town. Modern advertising, one of the side effects of the war because of the extensive use of propaganda from the Office of War Information, was prevalent in the papers, especially ads for cars and trucks. There certainly was a lot of articles about road quality, or lack of quality, in Garfield County. New drivers had to traverse dangerous roads throughout the area, especially when the weather turned foul. The Lincoln Highway was improved some when it became a part of the Pike's Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway in 1913, but there were still treacherous portions of the road like South Canyon and Glenwood Canyon.<sup>85</sup> When William Underwood shot Leonard Arondale in 1927, Sheriff Winters did not arrive on the scene until 1:30 AM, largely due to almost impassable roads.<sup>86</sup> Whether people traveled to Grand Junction or Glenwood Springs to catch a movie, or a team of baseball players drove to towns all over the Western Slope for a game, road conditions were routinely an issue. Two carloads of people had to spend the night in their cars in March 1929 because they were stuck in the mud and could not go out for help until daybreak.<sup>87</sup> The Chambers of Commerce for Grand Valley (Parachute), Rifle, and Silt met jointly to draft a letter to the state government to maintain the roads on November 21, 1929. Their letter was follows:

Resolution adopted unanimously at a joint meeting of the Chambers of Commerce of Rifle, Grand Valley, and Silt, in Rifle November 12, 1929: Resolved by the Chambers of Commerce of Silt, Grand Valley, and Rifle in joint meeting this 12th day of November, 1929, that the main highway (US 40S) east and west thru Garfield County, is an important link of transcontinental travel, and of vital concern to all local interests. We therefore urge that this road be kept in passable condition at all times and that this road be drained, graded, and surface-graveled to such a degree as will prevent a recurrence of the disastrous blockade of the winter of 1928-29.<sup>88</sup>

Harry Flynn also noted the following spring after that particularly bad winter that, "Silt boasts the best dirt streets in the Western Slope right now, and the smoothest. Thanks to

the efficient workmanship of Francis Smith and the road crew.”<sup>89</sup> Earlier that same year, Silt added speed limit signs to the town so people could no longer play dumb when zooming through town about not knowing the law.<sup>90</sup> Obviously from the amount of advertising in the papers and the frequent Locals sections of the paper that wrote about every person that went to different towns, people in Silt had cars and loved to use them. Modern life had arrived in the valley because of Ford and other auto manufactures. Even an airplane made an appearance at the 1920 version of Rifle’s Apple Pie Days festival.<sup>91</sup>

Aspects of social life in Silt and the surrounding communities also transformed towards the modern age of the twentieth century during the 1920s. People still had a strong sense of community as gatherings, festivals, celebrations, and barbecues drew large crowds. The Farmer’s Union of Silt held a barbecue for around 1,000 people on September 16, 1920. Free food and advice from James M. Collins was given to farmers, but the main purpose of the barbecue was the political campaigning of candidates for the upcoming election that fall.<sup>92</sup> In the era before mass communications, this was the preferred way to campaign for candidates, but those days were numbered with the development of radio. Still other gatherings offered a chance to socialize and to break the monotony of everyday living. Whether it was the Firemen’s Ball or an ice cream social put on by the Ladies Aid, attendance was usually strong.<sup>93</sup> The Fourth of July was a large celebration with municipalities and even locals competing to hold the biggest and best celebration in the area. Numerous motorists braved poor roads to travel to Meeker every year for Independence Day, while other went up to Dry Hollow to watch the annual rodeo and barbecue celebration put on by William Flynn.<sup>94</sup> Silt took its turn at the annual party in 1922 when the town was in charge of the big celebration because Rifle was not holding

one that year. L.M. Cowden headed up the two-day celebration by lining out events, a parade, and the construction of new fairgrounds with a new baseball field, a half-mile racetrack, and a grand stand.<sup>95</sup> The hard work paid off as the celebration was lauded by the newspaper and locals who traveled from all around to take part in the festivities. Monday's attendance on the 3rd was smaller, but the 4th witnessed large crowds for the music, dances, games, rodeo, and fireworks. Cash prizes for the contests were handed out at the big gala and Silt beat rival Grand Valley in baseball 3-1.<sup>96</sup> After some smaller and less publicized celebrations, Silt held another large celebration for the 4th of July in 1929. It was so successful that the committee in charge began considering having it as an annual event.<sup>97</sup> Any feat of progress seemed to have a celebration associated with it. Just as it was previously noted that Silt threw a large gathering for the completion of its electrical work, the town went out for a picnic to commemorate the completion of the road between Silt and Collbran. At least four hundred people attended and enjoyed the nice weather.<sup>98</sup> During the spring and summer months, locals loved to attend dances, usually held at the Palace Hall in Silt. Saturday night dances were the big draw throughout the summer.<sup>99</sup>

Sports were growing in popularity all over the nation and Silt was no exception to the trend. Boxing, wrestling, football, basketball, and baseball were all very popular in the area. Not only did the local schools field teams, but also each town had ball clubs to challenge the other towns. These games charged for attendance and gave the winning teams a share of the gate. Baseball games were very popular and usually garnered front-page coverage in the paper. The Silt Sluggers' main rivals were the neighboring towns of Rifle, New Castle, and Grand Valley, which still holds true in many respects today for

sports. Boxing matches were held in town as well. The biggest fight of note was held at the Gibson Palace Dance Hall between Meek and Purcell. Meek, the fighter from Silt defeated “Red” Purcell of Meeker in the 1924 bout while the largest and most enthusiastic crowd at the hall enjoyed the match.<sup>100</sup>



Figure 2.13: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* June 2, 1921

Churches, social clubs, and schools provided the strongest bond of community for Silt as events brought the people together. The Silt Congregationalist Church was the only church in town until 1928, when construction on the First Baptist Church began. The church had ninety-nine kids in Sunday school and over one hundred people attend church in the spring of 1927.<sup>101</sup> The First Baptist Church was formally organized in 1937, and still remains in town to this day.<sup>102</sup> The Independent Order of Odd Fellows and the

Rebekahs were active in the community; providing community services holding meetings, raising money, and electing officers.<sup>103</sup> Schools were extremely important in brining the community together. Whether it was the senior class holding a play, or the entire county’s pupils competing in academic competitions like spelling bees, the people of Silt followed the activities of the school closely.<sup>104</sup> Even the freshmen class provided entertainment as they held a Valentine’s Party on a Friday evening that included games, dancing, and costumes.<sup>105</sup> Athletic competitions drew the biggest crowds and Silt High School was a big draw, especially in basketball and baseball. Not only did the oldest

students compete, but the lower grades also fielded teams for competition. Towns would often hold tournaments for teams all over the Western Slope to attend to compete for trophies and prizes. The following excerpt is from a 1929 basketball game between Silt and Grand Valley to show how different basketball games were during the decade when compared to today:

The games last Friday were very exciting. Silt played Grand Valley basketball teams. The girls' game was to the opinion of most people, the most interesting game they had seen in some time. It was nip and tuck all the way thru. The Silt girls were ahead the last quarter up until the last few minutes, when the Grand Valley girls forged ahead and when the horn sounded the score was 17 to 15, in favor of Grand Valley. The boys' game was very exciting also; the score at the end being 20 to 17, in favor of the Silt boys. After the games the teams were entertained at the schoolhouse.<sup>106</sup>

Socially, all was not well as the Ku Klux Klan mysteriously appeared briefly in the valley. Spurred on by xenophobia that gripped the nation, the KKK grew out of the South to gain two million members by 1924. Colorado had over 100,000-hooded Klansmen from Denver to Grand Junction and became a political power in the state by helping elect a governor of the state and the mayor of Denver.<sup>107</sup> Mysteriously, a cross was burned above Rifle on the Prefontaine Mesa, on September 20, 1923, but no other mention of the KKK appears in the papers after that one incident.<sup>108</sup> The Invisible Empire seemed to dabble in Garfield County, but did not have a lasting impact like the rest of the state.

Silt's growth mirrored the nation in many other ways that did not always make for large headlines, but cultural trends tended to match the country. The weekly newspapers carried diagrams on how to build a radio and later listed programming schedules for the various channels. The papers also provided tips for women's fashion that flaunted the flapper style of the day. Residents of Silt read about new home designs of bungalows that

incorporated electricity and indoor plumbing into their design. The comic and sports sections of the newspaper first ran in 1923, while the first crossword puzzle challenged people a year later.<sup>109</sup> More features on national figures and the world outside of America filled back pages as the 1920s went forward. People read about Jack Dempsey, Babe Ruth, and Roald Amundsen's alleged flight over the North Pole. *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* provided the first glimpse of Benito Mussolini and his Black Shirts for local residents who had no inkling of their impact in the next decade. Chain stores showed up and competed with the local business. Both Glenwood Springs and Rifle had a J.C. Penney store by the end of the decade, while the former opened a Safeway in 1927.<sup>110</sup> Talking pictures arrived in Rifle in 1930 as the Rex Theater remodeled to accommodate the new wave of movies.<sup>111</sup> National politics were closely followed as well, especially the presidential elections during the 1920s.<sup>112</sup> Silt was firmly within the national scene for mass media and culture as evidenced by these stories and trends, but retained its small-town feel in many ways.

For all of its progress, Silt was still detached from the national scene in many ways. The epic flight of Charles Lindbergh that caught the attention of millions of people was barely noted in the local papers. It was featured for two weeks in the national section on the inner pages of *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*. The execution of Sacco and Vanzetti garnered a few paragraphs, but no outrage was noted in Silt or the surrounding communities even though there was a significant Italian population in town.<sup>113</sup> The largest oversight of note from the era is the complete lack of coverage to the stock market crash in 1929. Neither *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* nor *The Glenwood Post* carried the story of the dual crashes on October 24th and 29th of 1929. Instead of reading about the

gathering storm clouds of economic strife, readers in Silt were blitzed by headlines of a massive contest for prizes sponsored by the paper.<sup>114</sup> Only Harry Flynn's "Silt Siftings," mentioned the crash as follows, "If that shakeup on Wall Street last a little longer the billionaires will be stealing from themselves and that won't do at all."<sup>115</sup> The crash was later mentioned in two paragraphs in the national section two weeks afterwards and in the Chronology of the Year section in the last paper of 1929. 1930 opened with stories about record construction and the strength of industrial forecast for the future.<sup>116</sup> It seemed no one foresaw the strife heading for the nation at the dawn of 1930. The Great Depression was not a reality and residents of Silt had yet to lay eyes on Adolf Hitler in their local newspapers. The incredible events that would eventually shape the Greatest Generation seemed light years away from the prosperous times of 1929 and early portion of 1930. Maybe they should have heeded the foreshadowing in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* one month before the stock market crash that detailed "Black Friday" from the Panic of 1873, one of the worst economic depressions in American history.<sup>117</sup> Tough times were ahead, but no one noticed as of 1930 because they were happy with their modern and prosperous lifestyle.

### Chapter 3: The Not-so-Great Depression

The Great Depression arrived late in Silt and the rest of Garfield County during the 1930s. Little attention was paid to the stock market crashes in 1929 by the local newspapers. The term “depression,” did not even appear in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* until June 18, 1931, when the noted economist, Roger W. Babson, predicted the nation would witness unparalleled prosperity after the forthcoming slow and tedious recovery.<sup>1</sup> Babson, a presidential candidate for the Prohibition Party in 1940, was the first financial forecaster to predict the stock market crash, but his broad view of national economics overlooked the economic dynamics of Garfield County during the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> Certainly the Depression took its toll on families in the region, but the widespread destitution seemed to skip Silt and the surrounding communities. The agricultural sector remained strong throughout the decade and ensured most families had plenty to eat. Residents of Silt enjoyed new connections in transportation and spent time recreating. The population of Silt increased during the 1930s as well, but shockwaves from the Depression hit the area, especially the psychological effects of a nation living in hard times. Tax collections dropped and political upheaval revealed that all was not prosperous in Silt, while the era of big government from the federal level appeared on the Western Slope during the 1930s. The Great Depression altered the people of Silt’s lives by making them thoroughly thrifty and conscious of money issues, but extensive difficulties and sufferings were prevented by a strong agricultural sector and the influx of federal money from the New Deal.

The Great Depression seemed to skip Silt and Garfield County to start the 1930 as newspaper headlines touted growth and progress. *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* announced its purchase of a new building and addition equipment because, “A bigger and better Rifle needs a bigger and better news and job printing plant.”<sup>3</sup> Though the paper touted the growth of Rifle, the economic fortunes of Silt, and that of the rest of Garfield County, closely reflected the optimism and growth of Rifle. In the months leading up to the fateful stock market crashes of October of 1929, the newspaper buzzed with stories of government oil shale plants resuming operations near Rulison, the construction of a new “picture house” in Rifle, and the opening of new wholesale feed and flour business for Silt, which was operated by the Noreen Brothers.<sup>4</sup> A new J.C. Penney store opened in Rifle one month before the collapse on Wall Street, but actual crash was not covered on the front pages of the newspaper.<sup>5</sup> There was four paragraphs written about the downturn for stock investors, but it was included in the National News section in both *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* and *The Glenwood Post*.<sup>6</sup> Even as the new decade dawned, signs of the Depression were missing from Silt.

The economic downturn caused by the stock market crashes became the Great Depression by 1931 as the economic shutdown gripped the industrial centers of America and the banking industry.<sup>7</sup> The devalued stock market led to a massive reduction of capital for the United States banking system, which in turn caused international economic problems because the numerous outstanding loans from World War I and the accompanying reparations payments forced upon Germany from the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>8</sup> The United States, felt short-changed by the results of WWI, demanded those payments be paid in full as a small vestige of revenge for the perceived wasted lives

and money from the war. When Great Britain ended the gold standard on September 21, 1931, more than twenty nations followed suit and international business slowed to a crawl.<sup>9</sup> International trade plummeted in 1932 to one-third the volume of 1929, while foreign depositors withdrew both gold and money from American banks, causing panics across the nation as people made runs on banks to withdraw their lifesavings. One month after the British decision to end the gold standard, over five hundred American banks failed. By the close of 1931, nearly 2,300 American banks were finished and the Great Depression gripped the nation and the world.<sup>10</sup> The Federal Reserve, operating on old gold standard preconceptions, raised interest rates to slow the amount of money in the economy, but the smaller banks needed easier access to loans in order to stay in business.<sup>11</sup> These banking policies, not the legendary Black Thursday and Black Tuesday stock market crashes brought the Great Depression to Silt's doorstep. Though the economic struggles of the town were small in comparison to industrial cities like Chicago and Detroit that had nearly fifty percent unemployment,<sup>12</sup> the Great Depression called for belt-tightening frugality, but the damage caused to the region was more psychological than anything. American confidence was shaken for the future and progress stalled. Silt staved off the most of the calamities of the Great Depression largely because of its large agricultural center.

Silt and its surrounding area had a diversified and robust agricultural economy. The region mixed farming and ranching to utilize the land to its greatest potential. Farmers planted fruit orchards, raised gardens, and worked the fields for potatoes and sugar beets. Both cattle and sheep ranchers were prevalent in the valley as well. *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* carried numerous stories about cattle shipments to the Denver market

for the National Western Stock Show, as well as news for big shipments of turkeys to Denver. Silt became a famous turkey market in 1931 to add to the other agricultural pursuits.<sup>13</sup> Cattle receipts were included in the newspaper as the town read about which ranchers shipped heifers or steers to Denver via the railroad. The prices fetched were included as well. This short blurb appeared on October 13, 1938, “Bessie Toland and W.N. Dunn of Silt, 12 heifers, wt. 795, \$6.50, 27 heifers, wt. 575, \$6.40, W.J. Jenkins of Silt, 13 heifers, 25 steers.”<sup>14</sup> Any cattleman meeting, grazing permit notice, or sheepherder organization election was news to the people of Silt as it affected numerous people in the community and the local businesses that depended on their economic fortunes. With all of this information, people still complained there was not enough coverage for agricultural matters. Harry Flynn included this quip in the “Silt Siftings” section of the paper on November 5, 1931, “We have been cussed for overlooking cattle, spud, beet, and wheat shipments from silt. What we are supposed to write is news. The above is not news, it is an everyday occurrence and everybody knows it.”<sup>15</sup> Ironically, most of the Silt Siftings section of the paper was about the people in Silt’s social interactions and shopping habits. Hardly hard-hitting news coverage, but it was still news to a small town. To add to the list of agricultural variety, Jake Mall, who lived on the south side of the river, produced 800 cases of comb honey and seven tons of extracted honey for the Caldwell Honey Company in 1937.<sup>16</sup> No matter the product, agricultural production was news to the people in town because it meant vitality to the valley.

Though ranching was critical to the livelihood of many people in the outlying areas of Silt, sugar beets dominated the lives of many local farmers, and also garnered a great deal of coverage in the local paper. Sugar beet production in valley surrounding Silt dated back to 1898, when 75,000 pounds of seed was shipped in from the Kleinwanzlebener

Sugar Works in Magdeburg, Germany.<sup>17</sup> Henry Hasley grew the largest sugar beet shown at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. Hasley was a resident of Silt who purchased the original ranch from George Ferguson.<sup>18</sup> Newspaper articles urged farmers in Colorado to plant and cultivate sugar beets during the final year of the Great War.<sup>19</sup> The onset of the Great Depression, and later WWII, made sugar beet growing in Silt big business and the focus of many in the community. A 1936 article in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*, described the 2,260 acres of land that was used for sugar beet crops in Garfield County as the "sweetest crop," in the entire county. The acreage used for beets comprised one-seventh of the cultivated area near the towns of Rifle, Antlers, Silt, and New Castle. Silt was the center of a twenty-mile long strip of fertile land that extended two miles from the Colorado River.<sup>20</sup> Those factors, coupled with the agricultural programs from the New Deal, thrust sugar beet cultivation to the front page of the local newspapers. A federal ruling in Washington, DC, concerning with loans on beets through crop production offices, made the crop favorable for people to grow as "one sure cash crop." Garfield County would grow 2,824 acres of sugar beets the upcoming season with the favorable ruling.<sup>21</sup> The allure of a steady flow of capital enticed many residents of the area, but it also forced them to deal with corporate American and the federal government. The history of sugar beets in western Colorado provided an excellent mirror that reflected the national and international trends in history and their effects on the small community of Silt.

The entire county grew beets of the Holly Sugar Company, which meant the people had to deal with a national corporation, whose sole purpose was to make profits. Every year, the Western Slope Beet Growers Association, met to sign new contracts with the company. Three counties, Garfield, Mesa, and Delta, made up the association, with a two-thirds majority from the counties needed to approve the annual contracts.<sup>22</sup> Between

1933 and 1939, the association rejected the contracts with Holly three times, twice it led



Figure 3.1: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*  
December 7, 1933

to the local farmers being released to sign their own contracts with the company.<sup>23</sup> For much of the decade, C.B. Cooper, a resident of Silt, served as the president of the association. Charles Cooper, who was also a resident of Silt, preceded him as president. Meetings were usually held for local farmers at the International Organization of Odd Fellows (IOOF) building or at the American Theater in town.<sup>24</sup> Cooper also traveled to Grand

Junction to attend meetings involving the other counties' leadership. Cooper lobbied the Holly Sugar

Company to reopen the long-closed, beet factory in Grand Junction to lessen shipping costs from Garfield County to Delta. The attempt failed, but he always kept the best interest of Garfield County in mind.<sup>25</sup> The Colorado association also competed with beet farmers in eastern Utah, who also worked for Holly Sugar.

Sugar beet farming required careful timing and abundant water supplies. The dry climate of western Colorado required irrigation for the beets to thrive, which is why sugar beet farming only extended out from the Colorado River two miles. Seeds needed to be planted in late March or early April, depending on how severe the previous winter was. The growing season lasted about five months, with harvest time occurring in October and November. The harvest had to be carefully timed so the beets would not be frozen in the ground, but once harvested, the air had to be cold enough to preserve the beets while they

waited to be loaded and shipped to the factory in Delta. Once there, the beets would be sliced and processed to extract the precious sucrose.<sup>26</sup> Sugar beet farmers in Price, UT, were not so fortunate in 1938, when an early freeze hit the area and left about half of their crops frozen in the ground.<sup>27</sup> Local farmers took their crops to local beet dumps, where they were loaded in rail cars and shipped. Garfield County's beet dumps were located in Peach Valley (Doll's Spur), Silt, Antlers, Rifle, and Rulison. Loading the beets into railcars was completed by the beginning of December before the ground froze and significant snows arrived. Silt was the most used dump, as more carloads of sugar beets were loaded there than any other location in the county.<sup>28</sup> The 1933 statistics showed the extent of sugar beet cultivation in the county. Garfield County produced 712 carloads of beets, 264 of them coming from the Silt location alone.<sup>29</sup> Each carload held 50 tons of beets, which meant Silt produced 13,200 tons of sugar beets in 1933 alone.<sup>30</sup> With Silt's surrounding areas producing nearly two-fifths of the sugar beets in the county, the town was the leader in production for the entire 1930s and through the WWII years.

With the harvest complete, local farmers enjoyed the holidays, especially since checks from the Holly Sugar Company usually arrived. The 1933 payment totaled \$600,000 in western Colorado, of which Garfield County accounted for about \$230,000 of the total when one calculates the tonnage along with the prices offered in the contracts.<sup>31</sup> While the hard-earned money was appreciated and a sign of relief, the stress of the upcoming growing season quickly followed the payments. New contracts, which the Holly Sugar Company adjusted for seed cost, sugar prices, and other factors, had to be accepted late in the winter. The 1934 contract proposal offered \$6.50 per ton of beets, but local growers rejected the deal because the company tried to pass a processing tax

onto the farmers.<sup>32</sup> The negotiations stalled that year, delaying the critical time to plant the sugar beets. The Western Slope Association rejected the contract in mid April, even though their competitors in eastern Utah accepted it earlier in the spring.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the growers accepted a new contract on April 26, 1934, and 30,000 pounds of beet seed was shipped to the area.<sup>34</sup> The accepted contact eliminated Clause 17, a hedge clause, which

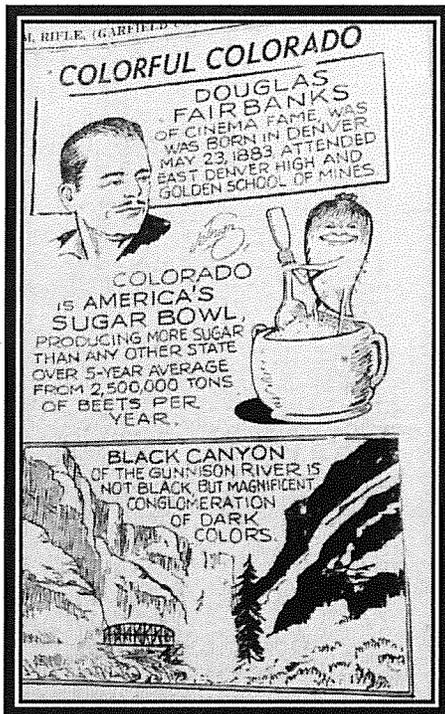


Figure 3.2: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* September 6, 1939

allowed the corporation to cancel the contracts if the federal government changed its regulations. Holly Sugar Company agreed to buy all of the beets they were contracted for, but 1,000 less acres were planted because of the substantial delay. The local growers received the original \$6.50 per ton, and there was no mention of the processing tax in the local papers.<sup>35</sup> 1934's beet harvest was reduced by 128 carloads, but the valley still produced 25,000 tons of beets, which brought in \$162,500 to the area.<sup>36</sup> The 1935 contracts were signed without

protest from local growers, mainly because the federal government's influence on farming during the Great

Depression contributed to changing attitudes and culture in Silt and the surrounding communities. The growth of the federal government's influence arrived several years before these contract disputes with the shift in politics in 1933. The Democrats, swept into power by the previous year's election, took their turn at solving the problems of the Great Depression.

For the nation, the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933 marked the most devastating portion of the Great Depression. Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected on November 8, 1932, but could not take over as president until Inauguration Day on March 4, 1933. During this interval, the entire American banking system nearly collapsed.<sup>37</sup> President Hoover, his hands tied from the impending end of his term, sent a ten-page handwritten letter to FDR to offer his advice for fixing the collapsing banking industry.<sup>38</sup> The Democratic Party, who won control of both houses of Congress and the White House, had to wait idly while the country sank deeper into despair. Garfield County, normally a strong Republican stronghold, witnessed seven of its ten elections go for the Democrats as local politics mirrored the national trend.<sup>39</sup> President-elect Roosevelt, the head of the party, was armed with his own perspective of government that would alter the course of America to this day. Raymond Moley, one Roosevelt's trusted "Brain Trust" experts who advised the president, remarked, "He believed that government not only could, but should, achieve the subordination of private interests to collective interests, substitute cooperation for the mad scramble of selfish individualism."<sup>40</sup> In his inaugural address, FDR stated, "Our greatest primary task is to put people to work," so he called a special session of Congress to address the Depression.<sup>41</sup>

The Hundred Day Congress passed fourteen of Roosevelt's fifteen proposals, but none of the New Deal would have more impact on Silt than the creation of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) and the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). Signed into law on May 12, 1933, the AAA limited the amount of acreage of agriculture grown in the United States in hopes of decreasing the supply of products.<sup>42</sup> With a simple reduction in supply, prices for the crops would rise to the point where

farmers and ranchers could survive financially. The Administration offered income supplements for those willing to reduce their production, but the government would supervise the farmers and ranchers to insure lowered output.<sup>43</sup> A.V. Lough, the federal government's agent in Garfield County, served for the length the Depression in the area. He negotiated contracts and distributed payments from the federal government to the local farmers.<sup>44</sup> The NIRA and its subsidiaries, the National Recovery Act (NRA) and Public Works Administration (PWA), aimed to regulate the industrial sector of America. The act also greatly affected Garfield County as the federal government regulated the maximum hours and the minimum wages for workers.<sup>45</sup> Local merchants in Silt agreed to new business hours as a part of the NRA regulations to benefit the economy. Local shops opened eight to five on weekdays, eight to eight on Saturdays, and closed on Sundays altogether.<sup>46</sup>

The first sign the New Deal arrived in Silt was the bank holiday imposed by President Roosevelt to prevent a total collapse of the banking system. The Rifle National Bank was closed by the federal mandated holiday and reopened after Congress passed the Emergency Banking Act.<sup>47</sup> The bank in Silt closed voluntarily because it was not federally mandated to adhere to the holiday because it was a state bank.<sup>48</sup> The act worked as the banking industry was saved and deposits increased after Roosevelt's first radio "Fireside Chat," soothed Americans across the nation.<sup>49</sup> The next influx of federal money came with the news that twenty-two men were reemployed in the county because of the NIRA in 1933.<sup>50</sup> The federal government's programs arrived in full-force the following year as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built a camp in Rifle Mountain Park. The camp opened on May 15, 1934 in a wilderness area fifteen miles north of Rifle.<sup>51</sup> For

seven months, the CCC camp improved the park grounds, fought forest fires, and hosted community events. The camp spent \$85,000 during this time, which included monthly expenditures of \$3,500 for food, supplies, and materials.<sup>52</sup> The camp transferred to Glenwood Springs that winter, which became the county's permanent home of the CCC until World War II necessitated its closure in 1942. The CCC men still worked throughout the county, preserving the rugged splendor of the area, fighting fires, building trails, and even constructing an early ski area in Glenwood Springs with one of the earliest chair lifts in America.<sup>53</sup> For Silt residents, the improved outdoors and infused money gave the town a boost economically and greater confidence in the government's ability to help those in need. Fred Michelson was the first resident of town who joined the CCC, enlisting early in 1935 and taking up residence at the Glenwood Camp.<sup>54</sup>

The AAA had a larger impact economically on the areas surrounding Silt as government dollars were infused into the local pocketbooks. Sugar beet growers turned down their contracts with the Holly Sugar Corporation because they wanted the chance to get fair prices through the AAA.<sup>55</sup> Later the beet growers agreed to the contracts and quickly earned their first checks from the AAA, forty checks that totaled \$5,815.80.<sup>56</sup> The federal government paid the local beet farmers to plant less acreage to insure the prices rose for the crop. The plan worked as Holly Sugar raised its prices to twenty-one cents per ton.<sup>57</sup> Local farmers also found ways to maximize their reduced acreage by planting the beets eight inches apart instead of the standard twelve-inch spaces.<sup>58</sup> Holly Sugar shipped a new "resistant seed," that was developed to combat the dreaded "curly top" disease.<sup>59</sup> Even though less acreage of beets was planted and the crop was delayed by contract negotiations, the county still shipped 30,000 tons of beets in December 1935.

The Silt loading station was again the county leader, having shipped 351 of the county's 666 carloads.<sup>60</sup>

Sugar beet farmers were not the only beneficiaries from the AAA program. By the early months of 1935, the AAA program had already paid out \$16,778 to local farmers and ranchers who produced wheat, corn, and hogs.<sup>61</sup> The Supreme Court struck the AAA down in January 1936 for its unconstitutional tax on food processors.<sup>62</sup> Rancher and farmers across the nation were upset to lose their government money, which paid them to not work. Garfield County agent A.V. Lough distributed the last AAA payments during the summer of 1936. During the three years of the program, the federal government paid \$65,530.97 to Garfield County farmers and ranchers. Corn and hog growers accounted for \$25,028.41, sugar beet growers made \$33,628.04, and wheat farmers were paid \$6,874.52.<sup>63</sup> Congress quickly created new programs with the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, as well as a new Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1938.<sup>64</sup> Local agrarians in Garfield County signed up for the soil conservation programs to supplement income. 403 county farmers joined the new soil conservation program in order to receive similar payments as the AAA.<sup>65</sup> Sugar beets depleted the soil so the government paid locals to grow less acreage than they were able to grow.<sup>66</sup> Overall, the federal influence on agriculture greatly benefitted the areas surrounding Silt as both money and higher crop values were imparted to the area farmers. By 1936, crop values were 53% higher in Colorado than in previous years.<sup>67</sup> This two-fold benefit made it often seem like the Depression had skipped Silt altogether.

Other instances of the federal government's growth were evident throughout the decade of the 1930s. Colorado residents voted by a three to one margin to repeal

Prohibition in 1933. Silt residents voted 111-16 in favor of bringing booze back to legal status.<sup>68</sup> Liquor licenses were issued across the state on December 6, 1933, and one aspect of American life seemed to return to normal.<sup>69</sup> An Old Age Pension Club, organized by J.W. Brown, met at the American Theater and gathered nearly three hundred names to petition the government for aid for the elderly.<sup>70</sup> The group mirrored similar ones across the country that were founded on Dr. Francis Townsend's old-age pension plan. President Roosevelt pushed his own version through Congress and signed the Social Security Act into law on August 14, 1935. The act included unemployment insurance and old-age pension.<sup>71</sup> The taxes for the massive program went into effect on January 1, 1936,<sup>72</sup> and the first Social Security office opened in Grand Junction in 1937. The office was supposed to handle the claims of twenty western Colorado counties.<sup>73</sup>

Roosevelt's Second New Deal in 1935 brought more forth more programs to relieve the hardships of the Great Depression. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was created in mid-1935 and soon became the largest federal program in Colorado. The new administration, aimed at getting Americans working again eventually spent \$100 million in Colorado and became the largest employer in the state by March 1936. The WPA paid more than 43,000 workers at that point.<sup>74</sup> The WPA ran recreational activities in Silt during the summers. Aimed at kids that were out of school, the program was ran by Miss Lucile Bowles to create works of art and handicrafts. The activities were free to the children, but a small charge was instituted to pay for craft supplies.<sup>75</sup> At the end of the summer, a community workshop to show off the children's creations to the public was held.<sup>76</sup> In 1940, the WPA approved a Silt water project. Congressman Edward Taylor informed the town officials that the administration would spend \$6,232 towards

the projected \$8,310 project to improve the water distribution system. The town made up the difference, but the improvements were badly needed. The water project laid 3,700 feet of pipe, 700 feet of two-inch pipe was replaced by four-inch pipes, three fire hydrants were installed, and cross streets were connected to eliminate dead zones.<sup>77</sup> The new system replaced the original four-inch wooden pipes with modern steel pipes, but the town had to wait another twelve years for a sewage system to be installed. Most homes still used outhouses or septic tanks until 1952.<sup>78</sup>

The federal government also aided the construction of new rail lines and highways during the 1930s. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Dotsero Cutoff provided a direct link to Denver for residents of Silt through the Moffat Tunnel. Trains no longer had to traverse Tennessee Pass and then go south to Pueblo before heading back north to Denver.<sup>79</sup> The Dotsero Cutoff, financed largely with federal dollars, opened on June 16, 1934 with the arrival of the Zephyr train, a silver bullet train that set a speed record for a trip between Chicago and Denver.<sup>80</sup> Though the train did not stop in Silt, residents came out to catch a glimpse of the modern marvel. Many people drove to Glenwood Springs to see the train up close and to join in the celebration for the opening of the rail line.<sup>81</sup>

The popularity of the automobile grew tremendously during the 1920s. Automobile ownership tripled in the decade preceding the Great Depression to the point that four-fifths of American families owned a car by 1930.<sup>82</sup> The purchase of a car, truck, or tractor was major undertaking for most families, but the availability of credit made it easier for people to make larger purchases.<sup>83</sup> Truck and tractor investments led to higher output per acre and per man-hour during the 1920s in agriculture, which increased the income of families to recreate or purchase material goods.<sup>84</sup> Road construction came

close to catching up with the boom of automobiles in the early portion of the 1930s. The old road that went through Silt had a variety of names over the years. It originally was the Taylor State Highway, then it was a part of the Lincoln Transcontinental Highway, and later was included in the Pike's Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway.<sup>85</sup> Construction and improvement to the road commenced in 1931 after some legal disputes with the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. U.S. Highway 40 South was barely slowed because the right of way issue through South Canyon, east of New Castle. The construction planners had an alternative route on the southern side of the canyon that would use the defunct Colorado Midland Railroad route, but a settlement was reached in time to build the road on the north side.<sup>86</sup> The portion of the road between Rifle and New Castle opened on August 10, 1932, and featured white posts for aesthetics and safer driving at night. The fifteen miles of road was built for the cost of \$271,567.80 by the A.R. Mackey Construction Company out of Greeley, Colorado.<sup>87</sup> Safety signs were added a few months later to better aid drivers in being safe.<sup>88</sup> The stretch of road between New Castle and Glenwood Springs was not completed until March 1935 because of the extensive work needed to build a wider road through South Canyon. Traffic was diverted to the south side of the canyon for two months while the road was built.<sup>89</sup> Bus service between Denver and Salt Lake City on the Rio Grande Motor Way started shortly after the road was finished, giving the residents of Silt another option for transportation.<sup>90</sup> Highway 40S was rechristened Highway 6 when the road was extended from Greeley to the Pacific later in the decade.<sup>91</sup> The U.S. Highway 6 Group met in Denver in 1938 to promote the road nationally, boasted that ninety-five percent of the road was either blacktop or

concrete. Bill Adams of Rifle represented the county at the meeting because the road was such a vital link for the local communities.<sup>92</sup>

Not all matters involving the automobile were met with enthusiasm like a new car or a new road did. The government's direct involvement in people's lives grew further in the 1930s as driving tests were required for the first time in Colorado history. Starting in 1936, all drivers, even ones who previously had a license, had to take the new "auto driving examination" by completing an eye test, hearing test, twenty question written test, and road test. Applicants were required to bring their old license, car registration, a car, and one dollar for the fee. The test had to be completed every three years and was seen by many politicians as a means to drum up revenue during the sagging economic times of the 1930s. Sixteen year olds needed a parent's signature to take the test, but were not allowed to drive with inflammable materials until age seventeen. With nearly 3,500 drivers in the county requiring the test, County Clerk Frost hired examiners, including Homer E. Eddy of Silt to speed up the process.<sup>93</sup> Old driver's licenses were invalid after January 15, 1937, so residents across the county had a good deal of time to fulfill the requirements.<sup>94</sup> One can imagine the frustration of the entire county waiting for driver's tests, and the humor of every person taking the same tests. The car represented the ultimate degree of freedom in American society, a tool to earn wages, but also a means to recreate in people's free time. Though the nation suffered through the toughest economic times in its history, people all across the country found ways to enjoy life and Silt was a model for many to follow.

Sidney Jocknick, one of the few whites allowed to live on the Western Slope during the days of the Utes, called the whole region "a hunter's paradise, a region fit for

the gods.”<sup>95</sup> Hunting and fishing has long been an attraction to the areas surrounding Silt, but it appeared the residents took these opportunities for granted. The newspapers rarely carried stories about these outdoor activities outside of the dates which seasons were open. It may have so been significant to residents of the area that it was simply woven into the cultural fabric of Silt to the point it did not need reporting in the media. There were plenty of other ways people found ways to entertain themselves in Silt. The Dreamland Dance Hall in town was a big hit for residents in and around town. An expansion was completed and Red Nelson opened the remodeled hall on March 7, 1931. The Helen Young Orchestra of Collbran performed to commemorate the new forty by ninety foot hardwood dance floor for the adoring public.<sup>96</sup> Nelson’s establishment hosted a variety of activities over the years, including a Children’s Day Frolic at the close of summer that offered a playground, candy, popcorn, nuts, lemonade, and dancing for no charge. The festivity included pie and bun eating contests in addition to the traditional field-day type events. Cash and merchandise prizes were given away to the victors of the contests.<sup>97</sup> The tolls of the Depression made this wholesome event disappear in the following years, but it seemed like a successful event for kids before heading back to school.

The Dreamland Dance Hall was the center of attention for the Fourth of July celebration in 1931 as well. It hosted five boxing matches and two dances over the course the weekend celebration. Red Nelson and Bert Taylor organized the boxing matches that featured locals, including ones involving Silt residents Stanley Bradbury, “Terror” Perry, and Dutch Bagley. The two dances were well attended; especially the Sunday night dance that featured the Harmony Girls and over one hundred couples. The rest of the

celebration occurred outside as the town held a parade, rodeo, baseball game, tug-of-war, and a fat man's race for the public to enjoy.<sup>98</sup>

As the Depression gripped the nation, large-scale celebrations grew rare, but people found more reasonable ways to spend their free time. Whereas baseball was extremely popular in the previous decade, softball became the summer pastime for the residents of town. Roy Dodson and Harry Flynn replaced the Silt Slugger hardball team with a softball team in 1933. They organized a team who played other towns across the valley during the summer leagues.<sup>99</sup> The town fielded two teams for the first year of the league, the Silt Sluggers and the under-eighteen year-old Silt Rinky Dinks.<sup>100</sup> The Sluggers performed very well that season, finishing first in the league and qualifying for a tournament in Glenwood. The Rifle Fireman 8-7 upset them so the team did not qualify for the Western Slope Title that was held the following week in Grand Junction.<sup>101</sup> The Silt Sluggers continued to play in the softball league for the duration of the decade, usually they finished near the top of the standings, but the squad failed to capture the Western Slope Title.

Recreation was found in a variety of places in and around Silt. Other leisure activities required some commuting to enjoy, but people drove all over for their pursuits. Rifle had an early golf course near town that attracted many duffers. The town even laid out a ski course in Rifle Mountain Park in 1938 so Silt skiers could choose between there or Glenwood's Red Mountain ski run for winter fun.<sup>102</sup> Moviegoers could attend the American Theater in Silt or drive to Rifle to watch the flicks at the Ute Theater. *Gone With the Wind*, the most popular movie in American history in terms of tickets sold,<sup>103</sup> had a very successful run at the Ute Theater in 1940.<sup>104</sup> People often stayed home for

entertainment so they could enjoy the warm glow of the radio as their favorite program was broadcast. Regular radio listings appeared in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* in 1936 along with the weekly movie showing.<sup>105</sup> Community events, put on by groups in Silt, were held at various times. The Silt Community Church held a talent show in 1936 at the high school. In addition to the talent portion, sixty adults and kids performed in the three-act musical comedy, *Flapper Grandmother*.<sup>106</sup> The Silt Congregational Church hosted a Young People's Rally in 1938, which combined the efforts of many valley churches. The Christian endeavor hosted groups from the Glenwood Springs Presbyterian Church, the Rifle Christian Church, and several groups from Clifton and Grand Junction churches.<sup>107</sup>

The final piece of evidence that the Great Depression did not cripple the people of Silt was the census figures for the 1930s. Silt's population increased by ninety-five people during the decade, a thirty-six percent increase that witnessed the population grow from 264 people to 359. Every town in Garfield County grew during the 1930s, but Silt had the second highest percentage increase. Carbondale, whose population increased by fifty-four percent, was the fastest growing town during the Depression.<sup>108</sup> For Silt, the increase represented the last significant increase in population until the 1980 census.<sup>109</sup> The influx of people to the county was largely due to the agricultural strength of the area and the hardships of other plains, mainly the Great Plains. The Dust Bowl wreaked havoc on farmers on the Great Plains and pushed people westward. Many settled in Denver, others went to the Western Slope, and 27,000 Coloradans moved to California. Neighboring Mesa County, witnessed an increase of thirty percent from displaced plains farmers.<sup>110</sup> Though the total population of Garfield County only increased by six percent during the 1930s, the cities and towns of increased by eighteen percent. The county

mirrored the national trend of urbanization as the percentage of people living within city limits increased from forty-three to forty-nine percent from 1930 to 1940.<sup>111</sup> Silt was one of the leaders of that trend.

With all of these successes during the Great Depression, it was undeniable that tougher economic times gripped the nation. Though the decade started with a buzz over the construction projects in Silt, like what *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* wrote in 1931, “There is perhaps no more building activity in Silt than any other town on the Western Slope regardless of size,” those boastful statements soon faded as the nation fell further into the depths of the Depression.<sup>112</sup> There was physical and psychological evidence that Silt did not emerge from the Great Depression unscathed, including lower tax collections, unemployment, businesses closing, school funds running out, and a general shift towards being more thrifty as the decade progressed. *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* cut the size of its publication in half in 1931 and began running regular political cartoons that dealt with the Depression through humor.<sup>113</sup> The first big sign of trouble for the area was the closing of the United States Vanadium Mill north of Rifle after eight years of operation. One hundred and twenty-five men were laid off, which sapped the area out of over fifteen thousand dollars in payroll checks per month.<sup>114</sup> The mill remained closed until the outbreak of WWII necessitated the need for vanadium, a mineral needed in steel production. The mill resumed production in 1941.<sup>115</sup> Though the word “depression” was not present in the newspapers until 1931, other hardships crept into people’s lives.

The residents of Garfield County were better prepared to stave off the economic downturn than people in the industrial centers in the east. To combat the downward spiral of the national economy, Rifle businesses held a prosperity fair to attract shoppers with

enticing deals and sales.<sup>116</sup> The county applied for \$25,000 in relief to help with unemployment. Winter roadwork required seasonal workers and the county received 242 applications from people who needed work.<sup>117</sup> The county only received \$1,000 from the application from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. A committee interviewed needy families to determine the amount of money they might receive.<sup>118</sup> Other signs of a slow down popped during 1932 and 1933 as well. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad cut back its operations by discontinuing train numbers fifteen and sixteen.<sup>119</sup> Crime rates jumped in the area as people grew more desperate. The Costanzo Brothers Store was robbed in Silt on May 17, 1933. Thieves broke the glass on a side door and made off with clothes, shoes, and cigarettes. The business had no insurance to cover the losses.<sup>120</sup> A year later, the Dodson and Cowden store was robbed for fifty dollars worth of merchandise.<sup>121</sup> Instances of petty crime pilfered the newspaper headlines for the duration of the Great Depression.

Economic statistics are often hard to find in newspapers articles, but one telling sign of economic troubles was the decrease in tax collections in the county. A 1933 article stated that revenues were only at forty-four percent of their average, a figure dramatically down from previous years.<sup>122</sup> Lower revenues meant local and state governments had to either cut spending or look for other sources of income. The state of Colorado instituted the first state sales tax, a two percent retail tax, in 1935 and forced ranchers to purchase grazing permits for the use of national forests as a part of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. Residents of Silt had to get a permit from R.O. Taylor, a forest ranger in the area. Permit applications were available at the Dodson and Cowden Store.<sup>123</sup> Many proponents for ending Prohibition supported bringing alcohol back for the tax

revenue it would generate.<sup>124</sup> Later in the decade, when recovery seemed imminent, tax collections were slow still. Silt High School had to close two weeks earlier than usual because the institution ran out of money. The class of 1939 had eleven seniors and fourteen eighth graders graduate sooner than expected because the school ran out of options at that point.<sup>125</sup>

As demonstrated earlier, the New Deal had a large impact on the communities of Garfield County. The output of the federal government showed that people needed some help in this area. The Garfield County Welfare Board paid \$67,606 in just seven months of operation in 1936.<sup>126</sup> Sugar beet growers reduced their acreage of planting as the decade progressed, but their income was supplemented by the AAA and later by the soil conservation agencies. By 1940, the federal government paid \$43,000 for all agriculture producers in the county, \$13,000 of which went to beet growers. These agriculture conservation checks enabled farmers to make a decent living while battling webworms, frost, and fluctuating sugar prices.<sup>127</sup>

No matter the statistics involved, the psychological toll of the Great Depression was evident as page after page bombarded people with tales of woe, tips to save money, of economic forecasts. People in and around Silt made due throughout the decade with a diversified agrarian-based economy and thrifty habits. The cost of surviving the Depression was the loss of autonomy from the federal government. The New Deal marked the beginning of the big government era, an era Silt was unable to escape. The state of Colorado, conservative by nature and lacking strong labor unions, avoided instituting its own “Little New Deal,” but the state did benefit vastly from the federal government’s work.<sup>128</sup> Colorado received the tenth most aid in the country from the New

Deal in per capita expenditures.<sup>129</sup> As the decade drew to a close, international forces were permeating from Europe and Asia to change the course of the United States' future again. The gathering clouds of war were not fully ignored by residents in Silt, though people wanted to avoid another costly world war. The Great Depression had brought the federal government to the doorstep of Silt, Colorado, but World War II would bring forces outside of America's realm to affect, alter, and change the lives of ordinary Americans in western Colorado.

## Chapter 4: Silt and World War II

Most people misattribute the phrase, “a war to end all wars,” to Woodrow Wilson’s speech to Congress on April 2, 1917, but the phrase originated with an H.G. Wells book, *The War that Will End Wars*. Wilson only used the phrase once publicly, but the tone of his war speech to Congress hinted towards that theme. Wilson described the Great War as a conflict to “make the world safe for democracy,” that would lead to “the final triumph of justice.”<sup>1</sup> People gravitated toward the idealism of Wilson’s ideas because in hindsight, they were so blatantly wrong. Though the world made war illegal in 1928 with the Kellogg-Briand Pact, peace only lasted twelve years after the Treaty of Versailles when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931.<sup>2</sup> Europe had twenty years of peace until Nazi Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. The Great War was renamed World War I as nations across the globe set off for World War II. No other conflict in the history of mankind was so destructive in terms of lives lost and property destroyed. The world was remade into the modern era and the United States emerged from its one hundred and fifty year isolationist cocoon to become a dominant global power. Every town and city in America was affected by the global conflict and Silt was no exception.

Residents of Silt watched nervously as war became more likely during the 1930s. As the decade progressed, more disturbing stories in the newspaper appeared about aggressive tactics of nations far from the safety of the Colorado River valley near Silt. The names of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Hideki Tojo went from back-page world news filler to front-page headlines. As the conflict grew into reality, America took steps to prepare for the possibility of war. When Pearl Harbor was attacked on December

7, 1941, America officially joined the conflict and sent men abroad to fight two separate wars.<sup>3</sup> The gravity of the situation necessitated a total war in which every American had to do their part to insure the Allies won the war. Residents of Silt fought WWII on two fronts; the men engaged in battle in far-flung places across the globe, and the residents at home who did all they could guarantee the troops had the tools to win the war. International conflict helped the economy recover from the doldrums of the Depression and placed the United States into a leadership role. One could argue WWII had as much impact on Silt as the removal of the Utes or the oil shale boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Life in the small Western Slope town would never be the same after going through the harrowing experience of WWII.

The Great War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. The participants of the peace conference were determined to avoid another war of the magnitude and destruction of the Great War, but most countries left the conference unsatisfied.<sup>4</sup> Germany was not allowed to negotiate the peace settlement and was punished so harshly, success for the new Weimar Republic seemed doubtful. They had to admit they were solely and totally responsible for the war in signing the treaty. The treaty also took Germany's colonies, reduced its military to a negligible amount, forced reparations on the government, and allowed France to occupy German industrial areas.<sup>5</sup> Those areas included critical coal, iron, and steel centers of the nation, which coupled with the \$33 billion war reparations; there was little hope for Germany's economic future.<sup>6</sup> Italy and Japan felt shorted by the treaty because they were not justly rewarded for their efforts in WWI. Russia, who signed its own treaty with Germany before the end of the Great War, was embroiled in civil war that would eventually lead to the

establishment of the Soviet Union. France wanted to punish Germany severely to prevent another invasion of their country. They spent the interlude years preparing their defenses in case of a revitalized Germany. Great Britain grappled with the waning of their prestigious empire and a pacified Parliament that was bent on avoiding war.<sup>7</sup> The United States' people soundly rejected their country getting involved in international politics after the wasteful war that only netted \$32 billion spent<sup>8</sup> and 116,000 Americans killed.<sup>9</sup> The Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles in 1920 and never joined the League of Nations, the brainchild Woodrow Wilson.<sup>10</sup> The Great War generation seemed to wash their hands of the situation as they tried to return to life they had previously known. This indifference to the present by some nations and the obsession of preventing another catastrophic conflict by others paved the road to war for the globe.

*The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* carried a story on September 24, 1931 titled, "War Clouds Disappearing," that chronicled the strained relations between Germany and France. There was talk of putting armaments under the League of Nations' control and reparation payments by Germany as a part of the Treaty of Versailles, which led experts to believe the situation in Europe improved to avoid another war.<sup>11</sup> The article and the rest of the newspaper completely overlooked the Japanese invasion of Manchuria the week before on September 18, 1931. The League of Nations tried to organize an international boycott of Japan, but it was dead on arrival without the support of the United States. President Herbert Hoover refused to go along with a boycott and all the league could do was condemn the invasion.<sup>12</sup> Few could predict it, but the indifference and lack of action allowed the conflict to grow to eventually embroil the United States into a global war.

With unemployment running amok, falling food prices, and economic troubles across the nation, few people in America noticed the rise to power of Adolf Hitler. Hitler was named the Chancellor of Germany in January 1933,<sup>13</sup> but the local paper failed to take notice. In fact, *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* failed to report on the Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933, the evocation of the Enabling Law to allow Hitler to be a temporary dictator, the consolidation of power by the Nazis, their reign of terror, or Germany's exit from the League of Nations at all.<sup>14</sup> The first time Adolf Hitler graced the pages of Silt and Rifle's newspaper was on March 28, 1935, the week after Hitler announced Germany was no longer bound to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>15</sup> The paper carried the story on Germany's move and its increase of the army by four times, but it did not name Hitler specifically.<sup>16</sup> With the threat of war growing because of dictators rearming their nations, the news shifted to include updates on the brewing global conflict. Italy's aggressive armament production was described the following week.<sup>17</sup> Japan's invasion into greater Manchuria garnered attention that summer as experts predicted their move was possibly preparation for an invasion of the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> America's attention was diverted momentarily from its financial crisis, albeit on the back pages of the newspapers in the World News Briefs.

For the middle portion of the 1930s, foreign events became blips on the radar of news reports that popped up sporadically, especially from the lens of a small-town newspaper in a rural setting. America had regretted its involvement in the Great War and slowly digressed to its previous isolationist ways.<sup>19</sup> Italy's 1936 invasion of Ethiopia gained front-page headlines in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*,<sup>20</sup> as did Hitler's ascension to total power in becoming *der Führer* in 1936.<sup>21</sup> The newspaper failed to take note of the

Nazi's seizure of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936;<sup>22</sup> instead it ran numerous articles on sugar beet contracts. America's indifference to world events was reflected in the official action in regards to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. The League of Nations considered an embargo on Italy, but America, a non-member nation, refused to go along with it. Instead, American exports of essential war materials to Italy tripled in the months following the invasion.<sup>23</sup> In the midst of these activities, Silt resident Mrs. John Smith traveled to Germany for four months. She visited her native country and reported coffee sold for a dollar a pound, a very high price for the time, and witnessed the inaugural flight of the ill-fated *Hindenburg* zeppelin. When asked about the conditions under Hitler's rule she preferred to not be quoted, instead stating that everyone in Germany seemed pretty busy and had plenty to do.<sup>24</sup> Mrs. John Smith's lack of comment on the Hitler situation was perplexing, but her descriptions of Germany in 1936 offered a glimpse into the living situations outside of rural Colorado.

The local newspaper coverage of world events returned to its usual back-page status as resident of Silt still focused on local events, mainly agricultural news. Neither the Spanish Civil War, the Japanese invasion of China, nor Congress' passage of a series of neutrality acts to prevent the same mistakes that forced the United States into the Great War were headline grabbing articles.<sup>25</sup> Only after Nazi Germany absorbed Austria in March 1938, did world events return to the front page.<sup>26</sup> The events leading up to Second World War became big stories as the nation followed the news on the Munich Conference, the Nazi take over of Czechoslovakia, and the Non-Aggression Pact signed between the Soviet Union and Germany on August 23, 1939.<sup>27</sup> The Nazi invasion of Poland coupled with Britain and France's declarations of war in retaliation signaled to the

residents of Silt that peace was gone.<sup>28</sup> The war in Asia had long been overlooked, but now that Europe was engaged in another war, the tone of the newspaper shifted to maintaining neutrality, but also preparedness in case America was drug into the war again. The economic climate was still written about, but it was described through the lens of war instead of the Depression. From that point until the close of WWII in 1945, the focus of Garfield County's residents was squarely on world events.

Though officially neutral in the war, the United States was greatly affected by the fighting across the globe. Two weeks after the war in Europe started, President Roosevelt lifted sugar quotas because of an expected shortage in Europe. Roosevelt wanted to keep prices low for Americans, but this move hurt local sugar beet farmers.<sup>29</sup> The nature of sugar beet farming changed in the late 1930s as local farmers were subject to a federal Sugar Bill that changed the quota system for production in 1937. The bill proposed to divide the domestic quota for sugar by dividing the amounts as followed: American beet growers: 41.72% of the crop, American cane growers 11.31%, Hawaii: 25.25%, Puerto Rico: 21.48%, and the Virgin Islands: .24%. Foreign quotas were altered as well to give the Philippines 35.7%, Cuba 64.41%, and other nations .89% of the sugar crops.<sup>30</sup> Both houses of Congress passed the bill, but Roosevelt did not sign it immediately, to the point of delaying the 1938 contracts and plantings for Silt farmers.<sup>31</sup> Finally the bill was signed, the Sugar Control Act went into effect, and seeds were planted, but they were in the ground three weeks late.<sup>32</sup> The influence of national and international influences on sugar beet growers was indicative of the times to come for residents of Silt as the war grew in size and destructive power.

After the initial fighting in Poland, the war slowed down until the spring of 1940. The *Sitzkrieg* lull between engagements gave a pause in the fighting, but the issues that coincided with war were still on going.<sup>33</sup> An article in early 1940 stated the war was not bringing the normal boom in food exports for America, but former President Hoover warned the demand for foodstuffs was inevitable.<sup>34</sup> Agrarian based economies like Silt's stood to gain substantially from an increased in food demands. To prepare for the sharp increase in demand for food, restrictions on sugar beet acreage were lifted and with it, the last vestiges of the New Deal's effects on the crop in Silt were gone.<sup>35</sup> With the invasion of Norway and Denmark, Europe was totally embroiled in war once again.<sup>36</sup> The news coverage in Silt shifted away from local stories to national and international events. Editorials on American policies and preparedness appeared, but the biggest change in 1940 for locals was when President Roosevelt signed the only peacetime draft into law.

The Burke-Wadsworth selective service bill was signed into law on September 16, 1940. The bill enjoyed unprecedented bipartisan support in Congress, as well as both presidential candidates' pledge to support it. Roosevelt, running for a third term and his opponent, Wendell Willkie, the Republican candidate, both spoke in favor of the bill to insure national security. Within a month, sixteen million men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five were registered for the draft.<sup>37</sup> In Garfield County, 1,480 men registered for the draft and the possibility of war came one step closer to reality.<sup>38</sup> After registration, the men had five days to fill out questionnaires that were sent out from the draft board. Through the questionnaire, the men's availability for service was determined. Those put into Class 1 were deemed available for service, Class 2 were deferred for occupational reasons, Class 3 were deferred for dependency reasons, and Class 4 were for

all other deferments, including those deemed mentally and physically unfit for service. The county had a state quota of providing one hundred and eighty-two men who were classified 1A, which meant only two men needed to be drafted for the first round.<sup>39</sup> One hundred eighty men had already volunteered for service in the county.<sup>40</sup> This enthusiasm for service was a sign for how the county conducted itself when the actual fighting began.

1940 proved to be the darkest hour for the Allies in WWII as the Nazi *Wehrmacht* ran roughshod over the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg in a matter of days. Winston Churchill was appointed the Prime Minister of Great Britain on the same day as the Nazi invasion through the neighboring countries of France.<sup>41</sup> France was quickly over after 338,000 British and French troops were evacuated at Dunkirk, and formally surrendered on June 22, 1940.<sup>42</sup> This left the British virtually alone to ward off Nazi aggressions in Europe. The Battle of Britain started on July 10, 1940 with air raids from the German Luftwaffe, or air force. Though the land invasion was called off, the German “blitz” that targeted civilian targets in the cities propelled the United States to get more involved.<sup>43</sup> Shortly after the “blitz” began, the peacetime draft was instituted, decommissioned destroyers were given to Britain, and financial support was instituted to help Britain continue their fight with Germany.<sup>44</sup> Churchill successfully got America to step further onto the Allies’ side when he persuaded Roosevelt to pass the Lend-Lease Act on March 11, 1941. This bill eliminated the previous “cash and carry” clauses of trade with Britain so that surplus military goods could be lent to Britain and hauled by American ships.<sup>45</sup> America was fully on the side of the Allies at this point, making it only a matter of time before the nation officially joined the fight.

At home, the economy produced more war materials to aid Britain and eventually the Soviet Union, who the Nazis invaded on June 22, 1941.<sup>46</sup> The first scrap aluminum collection started in Rifle in July,<sup>47</sup> and Colorado considered switching to plastic tokens for taxes to conserve the metal for the forthcoming war effort.<sup>48</sup> The state decided against using plastic because of the costs, but used a hard, fibrous material that was bright red for tax tokens was used instead.<sup>49</sup> The vanadium mine reopened to aid in building war materials and soon employed sixty-eight locals.<sup>50</sup> Business was booming and any semblance of the Depression was gone for the residents of Silt and the neighboring communities. The paper predicted holiday trade would exceed spending of 1929, the last year of prosperity, but the war prosperity officially came with costs in human lives on December 7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>51</sup>

The United States Navy fought an undeclared war with the Nazis for nearly nine months before the country was officially thrust into the war. The public was not blind to these matters, as articles appeared to document the progress of the sea war off the coast of Iceland and Greenland.<sup>52</sup> These naval battles did not prepare America for the shock of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Japan attacked the United States in retaliation for its economic sanctions, namely an oil embargo, and America's minuscule support to China through the Lend-Lease Act.<sup>53</sup> The attack was planned and executed by Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, whose Kidō Butai, or "Mobile Force" of six large aircraft carriers launched three hundred and fifty planes against the American base.<sup>54</sup> Yamamoto summed up Japan's goal with the attack in a letter to the Navy Ministry in January 1941, "The most important thing we have to do first of all in a war with the U.S., is the fiercely attack and destroy the U.S. main fleet at the outset of the

war, so that the morale of the U.S. Navy and her people goes down to such an extent that it cannot be recovered.”<sup>55</sup> From 7:55 to 10:00 AM, the Japanese killed 2,403 men, sank or heavily damaged eighteen naval vessels, including eight battleships, destroyed 180 aircraft, damaged 120 more, and wounded 1,178 men.<sup>56</sup> The reaction at was one of shock and quiet determination to avenge the deeds of the Japanese. President Roosevelt asked for a declaration of war the following day, getting every vote in both houses of Congress except one.<sup>57</sup> For good measure, Germany and Italy, aligned in the Axis Powers with



Japan, declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941.<sup>58</sup> As devastating as the defeat at Pearl Harbor was, it was not a total loss. The American aircraft carriers, the most vital piece of military hardware in the Pacific war, escaped damage along with the dry docks to repair damaged ships, a submarine base, and virtually all of the oil reserves for the Pacific fleet.<sup>59</sup> Winston Churchill was confident in the America’s resolve to bounce back

Figure 4.1: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* December 11, 1941

and win the war. He remembered thinking, “So we had won after all...! Hitler’s fate was sealed. Mussolini’s fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder.”<sup>60</sup> There was much work to be done, but the confidence of the rest of the Allies was strongly bolstered.

For most Americans, especially those who believed the U.S. was at peace, the attack on Pearl Harbor was especially shocking with its suddenness and devastation. Facing the daunting task of fighting two wars separated by half the globe, the situation compelled people to give a total war effort. First the U.S. had to raise a massive fighting force to fight in Europe and in the Pacific. Contrary to popular lore, not all men rushed to enlist after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The draft was expanded to include all men aged eighteen to sixty-five years after the attack. Obviously the military did not want a bunch of men nearly retirement age, so they refused anyone over the age of forty-six, but preferred men under twenty-six to fight. The new draft laws made forty-three million men eligible to fight.<sup>61</sup> The military also did not prefer those under the age of twenty to fight so they kept those men in reserve for the long war.<sup>62</sup> There were 6,443 local draft boards across the nation with Silt resident’s using the office Glenwood Springs. The local board was in charge of giving deferments for a wide range of factors. Men who worked in the agricultural and industrial sectors could get deferred for their work, which was deemed necessary to the war effort.<sup>63</sup> The first wave of draftees received deferments for being married, which caused forty percent of twenty-one year olds to get married in the first six weeks after marriage.<sup>64</sup> Fathers were held out of the war until 1944, when nearly one million fathers were drafted.<sup>65</sup> The most controversial deferments were handed out to conscientious objectors, men opposed to fighting in general. They were forced to serve in

other capacities, mainly in CCC-style camps across the nation.<sup>66</sup> Even with these deferments, eventually sixteen million men and women served in the armed forces during WWII, which meant nearly one out every five families provided at least one person to serve, over eighteen percent of the nation's families.<sup>67</sup>

The second portion of mobilizing the nation to fight was providing all of the war materials for the troops, but also sustaining the fighting forces of the rest of the Allies. President Roosevelt wanted 185,000 planes, 120,000 tanks, 55,000 antiaircraft guns, and 16 million tons of merchant ships to be produced by the U.S. in 1942 and 1943 alone.<sup>68</sup> To pay for this giant undertaking, Congress and Roosevelt passed the Revenue Act of 1942 to go along with the liberty loan and war bonds drives across the nation. Eventually the United States spent \$304 billion on the war, of which forty-five percent came from taxes.<sup>69</sup> It was in both realms, men serving and supplying the troops that Silt contributed to the Allied effort. In addition to these two components, every resident of the United States had to make sacrifices to sustain the war effort. Whether it was rationing goods, or living in the fear of loved ones serving abroad, Americans trained by lean years in the Depression, sacrificed greatly to bring down the Axis menace.

Residents of Silt received information from Hawaii about the devastation at Pearl Harbor from a former resident of town. Mrs. Frank Cowden, whose sister and in-laws lived in Silt at the time, lived on Oahu and wrote a letter to her family to describe the situation. Both her husband and her son, Bobby, worked on the defenses at Pearl Harbor. Her letter was given to *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* and published for the public to read:

Things have sort of calmed now, but the suspense gets you down. You don't know what might happen next. I think I will stay here unless they evacuate us- and that might happen. Of course, Frank and Bobby are stuck. They can't quit- the job has to be finished. They are just the same as in the

army or navy now.

Frank doesn't think there is much danger now that they are on alert. As far the bombing was concerned, I didn't know what was going on until it was nearly over as they are always practicing firing and flying planes. So I never pay attention to it. But Frank and Bobby were just getting off work and were right in the middle of it and saw it all.

There was no damage out where we live. We had some evacuees in the house with us for a few days- a family from Grass Valley, Calif.

The mail is censored so I have to be careful what I say.

Christmas will be rather dull I think- no liquor, no Christmas trees, no lights. Every night is a blackout. No shows. Probably no turkey either. We haven't gone hungry yet, but it was sure hard to get into a store in first few days. You had to stand in line for hours. Everyone started to hoard food, but they put a stop to it right away.

No one is allowed out of the house after dark.

The letter gave a small glimpse into life in Hawaii after the attack and at the beginning stages of the war. It surely personalized the monumental events for people in Silt instead of simply being a news story or radio report.

Even before the shock of Pearl Harbor wore off, changes to life in Silt were abound. Changes to the draft affected most of the men living in the area and the first round of rationing started early in the war. Tire rationing, which was especially important for military vehicles, and because the Japanese controlled much of the rubber producing areas, started in the early months of 1942.<sup>70</sup> Lower speed limits were later instituted to conserve both fuel and rubber for the military.<sup>71</sup> Seemingly every weekly edition of *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* described the changes to how people lived on the home front and chronicled the efforts of local people to help win the war. Volunteers in the area made bandages for the men out of old sheets in the early stages of the war.<sup>72</sup> The Office of Production Management announced the government halted the sale of passenger cars and trucks of all classes.<sup>73</sup> New cars were unavailable for the duration of the conflict. Soon

the Censor Office banned some uses of radio to insure the airwaves were clear for defense purposes.<sup>74</sup> Later there was the report that the rubber shortage would stop the production of girdles for women.<sup>75</sup> The War Production Board eventually banned double-breasted suits, vests, trouser cuffs, and patch pockets in an effort to save fabrics for uniforms. For women, hemlines went up, pleated skirts were discontinued, bathing suits became more revealing,<sup>76</sup> and nylons were virtually impossible to find because of their use in parachutes. Nylon was produced by the DuPont Company starting in 1939 and quickly became the newest fashion craze in America. At the outbreak of the war, the government contracted DuPont to produce materials solely for the military, including the use of nylon in parachutes, tire cords, ropes, and mosquito netting. The only way to get nylons was through an expensive black market and the reintroduction after the war actually led to “nylon riots.”<sup>77</sup>

These all were inconveniences, but they did not alter the everyday life of Silt residents. The first big change to the lifestyle of people in Garfield County was the start of sugar rationing. Initially each family was given a pound a week for sugar, but modifications to the rationing program came quickly.<sup>78</sup> To modern readers, one pound of sugar a week may seem excessive, but to farmers who needed sugar to preserve many of their crops by canning, it was a major change. Soon area restaurants pulled their complimentary sugar bowls from the tables of diners to prevent waste or theft and honey producers were in high demand because they were exempt to rationing.<sup>79</sup> As more details trickled out from the government, news on sugar rationing competed for front-page space with news of battles. People had to register for a ration book at the local school by providing their name, address, age, height, weight, and sex of each family member, the

color of the family member's eyes and hair, and the amount of sugar the family already had on hand at the date of registration. They took out stamps from the booklet for having more than two pounds of sugar per family member. Families that possessed more than six pounds of sugar per person were not issued a ration book, but those who needed it for canning could apply for additional allowances.<sup>80</sup> The other headlines that dealt with sugar in the April 23, 1942 edition of *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* was quite staggering.

“Registration for Bulk Sugar Users is Next Tues. and Wed.,” “Sugar Registration for Business Hours,” and “Households Advised to Sell Back Excess Sugar,” all appeared in

**OFFICIAL TABLE OF POINT VALUES FOR PROCESSED FOOD**  
No. 1—Effective March 1, 1943

**WEIGHT**      **POINT VALUES**

ITEM	WEIGHT														
	1 lb.	2 lbs.	3 lbs.	4 lbs.	5 lbs.	6 lbs.	8 lbs.	10 lbs.	12 lbs.	15 lbs.					
<b>FRUITS AND FRUIT JUICES</b>															
Canned and Bottled (excluding Spiced Fruits)															
APPLES (including Crabapples)	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
APRICOTS	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
AWORNS	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
BERRIES, all varieties	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
CHERRIES, all varieties	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
CHERRIES, sour	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
CRABAPPLES AND RANGES	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
FRUITS FOR JAM and FRUIT COCKTAILS	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
GRAPES	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
GUAVA	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
ORANGE JUICE	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
PEACHES	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
PEARS	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
PINEAPPLE	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
PINEAPPLE JUICE	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
All other canned and bottled fruits, fruit juices, and concentrates	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
<b>FRUITS</b>															
ORANGES	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
PEACHES	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
STRAWBERRIES	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
BERRIES, other	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
All other fruits (fresh)	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
<b>MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS</b>															
BACON	3	8	11	15	20	25	31	38	43	48	53	58	63	68	73
BALISUN	3	8	11	15	20	25	31	38	43	48	53	58	63	68	73
MEAT, other	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
<b>VEGETABLES AND VEGETABLE JUICES</b>															
Canned and Bottled															
ASPARAGUS	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
BEANS, GREEN ( Lima )	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
BEANS, GREEN AND MEAT	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
BEANS, all other (not bottled for soups) (including Broad Beans, Spanish, Kidney, Navy, and Black Beans, Chickpeas, Lentils, etc.)	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
BUTTER (including margarine)	1	2	3	4	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25
CARROTS	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
CORN	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
PEAS	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
SPINACH	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
SPINACH, frozen	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
TOMATOES	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
TOMATO, CANNED and CHILE SAUCE	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
TOMATO JUICE	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
TOMATO PRODUCTS, all other	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
All other canned and bottled vegetables, vegetable soups, and concentrates	1	4	6	8	11	14	17	21	23	26	29	32	34	37	40
<b>FRUITS</b>															
ASPARAGUS	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
BEANS, Lima	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
BEANS, GREEN AND MEAT	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
BUTTER	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
CORN	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
PEAS	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
SPINACH	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
SPINACH, frozen	2	5	7	10	13	16	20	24	28	31	34	37	41	44	47
All other fresh vegetables	1	3	5	6	8	10	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
<b>OTHER PROCESSED FOODS</b>															
LUMP, CANNED AND BOTTLED															
BREAD, all varieties															
CEREALS, all varieties															
EGGS, all varieties															
FLOUR, all varieties															
MILK, all varieties															
MEAT, all varieties															
OILS, all varieties															
SUGAR, all varieties															
WATER, all varieties															

Figure 4.2: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* February 11, 1943

one newspaper. The sad irony was Silt produced more acres of sugar beets in Garfield County and yet had no way to process those crops into refined sugar.

As the year progressed, more consumer products were added to the ration lists. Gasoline rationing started on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, which allowed four gallons per week for the basic ration.

The plan gave people 2,880 miles of driving per year if their vehicle got fifteen miles per gallon.<sup>81</sup> Applications for ration books were held at the school again, with teachers acting as registrars.<sup>82</sup> People with jobs essential to the war effort were given larger gasoline rations. A C-book came with a C ration sticker that was placed on the windshield to show the person received an additional 479 miles of driving for the year. Doctors, nurses, farm workers, and other essential war workers could get the C-book.<sup>83</sup> Coffee rations started on November 28<sup>th</sup>, giving people one pound for every five weeks. The annual quota for an individual was set at 10.4 pounds, a reduction of 38% because the average American consumed thirteen pounds of coffee per year at that point.<sup>84</sup> 1943 brought a new round of rationing, as more materials were needed for the men fighting overseas. Shoe rations allowed one pair of shoes between February and June 15, 1943.<sup>85</sup> Five thousand food Number Two ration books were issued at area high schools,<sup>86</sup> but the biggest blow to the American diet was the restriction on the purchase of beef, pork, lamb, butter, cheese, and edible fats on March 29, 1943.<sup>87</sup> After meat rationing began, the restriction on goods was more or less a way of life. The newspaper stopped reporting on the changes, but rather published charts to show how many ration tickets or points certain items required in addition to their monetary costs. People in Silt and the surrounding areas, just like the rest of the nation, reduced their intake of vital products to assure the troops had plenty of supplies to take on the enemy. To supplement the lack of products, many people planted victory gardens. The government needed 149 million cases of canned food in 1944 so people were encouraged to produce as much food as they could.<sup>88</sup> Colorado grew 138,400 gardens in 1944, which was a five percent increase from the previous year and two hundred and fifty percent increase from 1942.<sup>89</sup>

# OFFICIAL TABLE OF CONSUMER POINT VALUES FOR MEAT, FATS, FISH, AND CHEESE

No. 1—Effective March 29, 1943

COMMODITY	Points per lb.	COMMODITY	Points per lb.	COMMODITY	Points per lb.	COMMODITY	Points per lb.
<b>BEEF</b>		<b>BEEF</b>		<b>LAMB—MUTTON</b>		<b>PORK</b>	
<b>STEAKS</b>		<b>VARIETY MEATS</b>		<b>STEAKS AND CHOPS</b>		<b>STEAKS AND CHOPS</b>	
Porterhouse	8	Brains	3	Loin Chops	8	Center Chops	8
T-Bone	8	Hearts	4	Rib Chops	7	End Chops	7
Club	7	Kidneys	4	Rib Chops	7	Loin—boneless, fresh and cured only	10
Rib—10-inch cut	8	Livers	3	Leg Chops	7	Tenderloin	10
Rib—7-inch cut	8	Sweetbreads	4	Shoulder Chops—blade or arm chops	7	Ham, slices	8
Sirloin	8	Tails (ex joints)	3			Shoulder Chops and Steaks	7
Sirloin—boneless	9	Tongues	6	<b>ROASTS</b>		Butter, fresh and cured only	6
Round	8	Tips	3	Leg—whole or part	6	<b>ROASTS</b>	
Top Round	8	<b>VEAL</b>		Sirloin Roast—bone in	6	Loin—whole, half, or end cuts	7
Bottom Round	8	<b>STEAKS AND CHOPS</b>		Yoke, Rattle, or Triangle—bone in	5	Loin—center cuts	8
Round Tip	8	Loin Chops	8	Yoke, Rattle, or Triangle—boneless	7	Ham—whole or half	7
Chuck or Shoulder	7	Rib Chops	7	Chuck or Shoulder, square cut—bone in	6	Ham—butt or shank end	7
Flank	8	Shoulder Chops	6	Chuck or Shoulder, square cut—boneless	8	Ham—boneless	9
<b>FOASTS</b>		Round Steak (cutlets)	8	Chuck or Shoulder, cross-cut—bone in	5	Shoulder—shank half (picnic) bone in	6
Rib—standing (chine bone on) (10" cut)	7	Sirloin Steak or Chops	7	<b>STEW AND OTHER CUTS</b>		Shoulder—shank half (picnic) boneless	8
Blade Rib—standing (chine bone on) (10" cut)	6	<b>ROASTS</b>		Breast and Flank	3	Shoulder—butt half (Boston butt)—bone in	7
Rib—standing (chine bone on) (7" cut)	8	Rump and Sirloin—bone in	6	Neck—bone in	4	Shoulder—butt half (Boston butt)—boneless	8
Blade Rib—standing (chine bone on) (7" cut)	7	Hump and Sirloin—boneless	8	Neck—boneless	6	<b>OTHER PORK CUTS</b>	
Round Tip	7	Leg	6	Shoulder—bone in	6	Spareribs	4
Round—bone in	5	Shoulder—boneless	8	Shank—bone in	4	Neck and Backbones	2
Round—boneless	8	<b>STEW AND OTHER CUTS</b>		Lamb Patties—lamb ground from necks, flanks, shanks, breasts and miscellaneous lamb trimmings	6	Feet—bone in	1
Chuck or Shoulder—bone in	6	Breast—bone in	4	<b>VARIETY MEATS</b>		Fat Backs and Clear Plates	4
Chuck or Shoulder—boneless	7	Breast—boneless	6	Brains	3	Plates, regular	4
<b>STEW AND OTHER CUTS</b>		Flank Meat	5	Hearts	3	Leaf Fat	5
Short Ribs	4	Neck—bone in	5	Livers	6	<b>VARIETY MEATS</b>	
Pizzle—bone in	4	Neck—boneless	6	Kidneys	4	Brains	3
Pizzle—boneless	5	Shank—bone in	4	Sweetbreads	3	Chitterlings	4
Bisket—bone in	4	Shank and Heel Meat—boneless	6	Tongues	6	Hearts	3
Bisket—boneless	6	Ground Veal and Patties—veal ground from necks, flanks, shanks, breasts and miscellaneous veal trimmings	6	<b>BACON</b>		Kidneys	2
Flank Meat	5	<b>VARIETY MEATS</b>		Bacon—slab or piece, rind on	7	Livers	5
Neck—bone in	5	Brains	4	Bacon—slab or piece, rind off	8	Tongues	6
Neck—boneless	6	Hearts	5	Bacon—head, rind off	8	Ears	1
Head of Round—boneless	6	Kidneys	5	Bacon—Canadian style, piece or sliced	11	Tails	3
Shank—bone in	4	Livers	8	Bacon—rinds	1	Snouts	2
Shank—boneless	6	Sweetbreads	6	Bacon—plate and jowl squares	5	<b>READY-TO-EAT MEATS</b>	
<b>HAMBURGER</b>		Tongues	6			<b>COOKED, BOILED, BAKED, AND BARBECUED</b>	
Beef ground from necks, flanks, shanks, briskets, plates, and miscellaneous beef trimmings and beef fat	5					Dried Beef	12

MEATS (In tin or glass containers)	Points per lb.	MEATS (In tin or glass containers)	Points per lb.	FISH (In any hermetically sealed container)	Points per lb.	FATS AND OILS	Points per lb.	CHEESES*	Points per lb.	CHEESES*	Points per lb.
Brains	3	Pigs Feet, boned cutlets	3	Bonito	7	Butter*	8	Examples of refined cheeses:		Grank (all hard varieties)	AN
Bulk Sausage	7	Potted and Dextiled Meats	4	Caviar	7	Lard*	5	Cheddar (American)		Process Cheese	8
Chili Con Carne	3	Sausage in Oil	4	Crabmeat	7	Shortening*	5	Swiss		Cheese Foods	
Deviled Ham	6	Tamales	2	Fish Roe	7	Margarine	5	Brick		Some cheeses are not rationed. The important examples are:	
Dried Beef	12	Tongue, Beef	7	Mackerel	7	Salad and Cooking Oils (1 pint—1 pound)	6	Munster		Cream Cheese, Neuf-châtel, Cottage, Camembert, Lindensauce, Brie, Blue.	
Hams and Picnics (whole or half)	10	Tongue, Lamb	7	Salmon	7	<b>CHEESES*</b>		Limburger		(For a complete list of cheeses not rationed, see the Regulations.)	
Luncheon Meat	7	Tongue, Pork	6	Sardines	7	Rationed cheeses include national cheeses and products containing 20 percent or more by weight of national cheeses.		Dehydrated—Grated	All		
Meat Loaf	7	Tongue, Veal	7	Sea Herring	7			Club			
Meat Spreads	6	Vienna Sausage	7	Tuna	7			Gouda			
Pigs Feet, bone in	2	All Other	7	Yellow Tail	7			Edam			
				All Other	7			Smoked			
								Italian (all hard varieties)			

\*Rationed cheeses to bulk units containing more than five (5) pounds (not subdivided into units of 5 pounds or less). For each purchase see Official Table of Trade Point Values.

Figure 4.3: Table of Consumer Point Values after March 29, 1943  
The Rifle Telegram-Reveille  
March 18, 1943

People at home contributed to the war effort in many different ways outside of rationing. Residents in every corner of Garfield County provided both material and financial support to the war effort through work outside of those methods dictated by law. The Defense Council of Silt held a Victory Dance on April 25, 1942 to raise funds for the latest defense stamp drive. There was also an auction to raise more support for purchasing defense stamps.<sup>90</sup> The Silt Thimble Club sponsored contests on orations, essays, portfolios, and tableaux under the theme of America the Beautiful. Prizes in the amount of twenty-four dollars in defense stamps were given to the winners of the contests.<sup>91</sup> The Rebekah's Lodge organized a Silt Victory Sale on Thanksgiving night in 1942 and raised over \$2,500 in cash, defense stamps, and war bonds sold during the fundraiser. The total war bonds sold in the district reached nearly thirty-two thousand dollars for 1942, with Silt raising \$3,110.65 in bonds and \$485.65 in defense stamps.<sup>92</sup> Local businesses observed the "Minute Women at War Week" promotion to sell more bonds

and stamps for the final push for the sales drives.<sup>93</sup> Even Silt High School got into the act. The students helped with the bond drive for the Second War Loan as a part of the Buy-a-



Figure 4.4: Propaganda from *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* 1942 was a regular feature during WWII.

Jeep program. They came up with the motto, “Do your bit to send Silt’s Jeep to call on Herr Hitler or Hirohito.”<sup>94</sup> The students had a goal to raise \$1,580, but raised double that with \$3,296. Those involved were very satisfied to send a jeep to help topple both Berlin and Tokyo.<sup>95</sup> At the start of the following school year, the students were presented with a certificate for their efforts raising money to purchase jeeps for the men.<sup>96</sup>

For the length of the war, people in Silt routinely answer the call to aid the nation’s troops. The Rebekah’s lodge held dances to purchase bonds<sup>97</sup> and the American Legion sent cigarettes to the men fighting.<sup>98</sup> The Red Cross also held bond drives in the

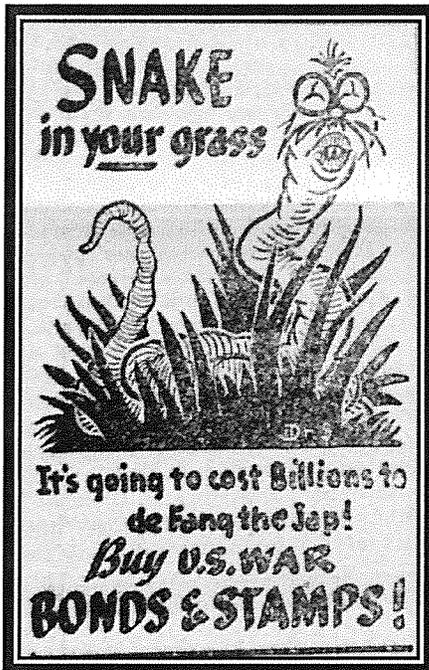


Figure 4.5: Dr. Seuss propaganda was routinely featured in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* for the duration of the war

county to raise money. At one particular event featured a minstrel singer and a pie supper, but it came up eighty-five dollars short of the goal. Upon announcing the shortfall, the crowd quickly raised enough money to reach the quota.<sup>99</sup> Silt performed especially well for the 5<sup>th</sup> War Loan as Merlin Cowden organized the drive. To raise \$25,000, he divided the amount into two parts; \$15,000 for people in Silt and Silt Mesa, and \$10,000 for residents of Divide Creek.<sup>100</sup> The seventh

and eighth graders at the Silt Grade School bought war stamps instead of buying Valentines in 1945. They sold seventy-five dollars, which was twenty-five dollars

over their quota.<sup>101</sup> All of this money contributed the war effort, especially since fifty-five percent of the total amount spent on the war came from sources outside of taxes.<sup>102</sup>

People in Silt contributed their fair share to the Allied victory over the Axis.

**NOW FOR THE BIG PUSH!**

**IT'S "ZERO HOUR"**  
**ON THE HOME FRONT, TOO!**

**THIS IS IT!** This is the big push you have been waiting for! This is the "zero hour"! Our fighting men are ready—ready to strike anywhere . . . anytime . . . anyhow . . . **BAR NOTHING!**

What about *you*? Are you ready to match this spirit with your War Bond purchases? Every Bond you buy is so much more power behind the big push . . . the push that will send Hitler and Tojo into oblivion.

Get behind the invasion drive! Invest **MORE** than ever before! Double . . . triple . . . what you've done in any previous drive. The job is big—you've got to *dig!*

**Back the Attack! - BUY MORE THAN BEFORE**

**THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK**  
Glenwood Springs, Colo.

Figure 4.6: Advertisement for the 5<sup>th</sup> War Loan Drive from *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* in 1944



culture were present during the war to conserve materials. Group riding plans, carpooling today, were organized to save fuel and to obtain more tire rations in the area.<sup>106</sup> No matter the materials needed, people in Silt did their part to conserve and reuse any materials that were beneficial to the war effort.

Local sugar beet farmers were greatly affected by the start of WWII. With sugar rationing in place, demand for all sources of sugar spiked dramatically. The boom in the industry was tempered some from a general shortage of labor because so many men were off serving their country. Silt and the surrounding areas did their best to meet the demands of the sugar industry during the war. The first contract with the Holly Sugar Company during the war increased the price per ton by as much as twenty cents. Acreage restrictions were lifted as well to meet the worldwide demand for sugar.<sup>107</sup> As an attempt to be proactive for the foreseen labor shortages, wages for laborers were increased by twenty-two percent in 1942 to \$2-3.50 per acre. The Sugar Act of 1937 also made producers to pay the minimum wage for laborers in order to gain benefit payments from the Department of Agriculture.<sup>108</sup> The move did not work and sugar beet farmers were in need of help by the summer of 1942. Twenty African-American workers from Oklahoma were brought in to help with the beets in Garfield County that summer.<sup>109</sup> The shortage of men to work hurt school enrollment in 1942 and forced beet growers to use school kids for workers to help harvest their crop that fall.<sup>110</sup> With one thousand acres still needed harvesting, the local growers contracted the use of Japanese laborers from Preston, Arizona.<sup>111</sup> Thirty-seven American-born Japanese men were brought in to finish the sugar beet harvest. Each grower requested laborers and had to provide food and quarters to the men while they worked in their fields. The Japanese men, all who had volunteered for the

work, were good workers according to the local growers. The sugar beet men were “well-satisfied” with the work that was done in 1942.<sup>112</sup>

As the war drug on, the issue of finding enough workers did not go away. The 1943 sugar beet harvest used forty-two Hispanic workers who were shipped in from the Holly Sugar Company to finish the harvest. Dexter Lillie, the field representative for the company, organized the extra workers to finish the harvest.<sup>113</sup> Sugar beet growers still increased their production of sugar beets at the same time as the labor shortage because of climbing prices. Cane sugar supplies slumped because of the loss of the Philippines, and it was being used for industrial alcohol and synthetic rubber. The government increased the 1944 prices for beets by \$1.50 to twelve dollars per ton.<sup>114</sup> Many in the beet industry finally adopted mechanization for seeding and thinning of the crops because of the lack of workers. It was predicted two thousand machines would soon do the work of ten thousand men in the industry.<sup>115</sup> No information on how the area coped with the 1944 harvest was in the newspaper, but the 1945 season used German POWs to aid the local laborers. Floyd Bowers, the manager of the Rifle Farm Improvement Association, handled the prisoners to harvest the 1,200 acres of beets in the district.<sup>116</sup> The district harvested 15,650 tons that season, with Felix Diemoz producing the most with 21.78 tons of beets.<sup>117</sup> That amount was less than previous decades, but given the annual issues with finding enough people to work in the fields, it was still a remarkable amount of production for Silt to contribute to the war effort. The labor shortages also affected the area schools, as teachers were difficult to find. Those teachers who remained in school, worked harder, and took on more tasks outside of their normal routine. The variety of classes was limited and school supplies were lacking.<sup>118</sup>

Though people on the home front sacrificed a great deal to help push America to victory, those men and women who served in the military sacrificed far beyond the average American. 138,832 men and women served in the military from Colorado, which represented one-eighth of the state's population.<sup>119</sup> More than 3,400 Coloradans died in their service during WWII,<sup>120</sup> with Silt contributing sixteen men to that final toll.<sup>121</sup> Numerous men and women from Silt and the surrounding rural areas served their country in a variety of capacities. Some of the individual stories and contributions of Silt residents will be chronicled from information gathered from the local newspapers. The heroes from Silt gave every possible measure to push the Allies to victory and some of their stories are as follows.

Conscription for WWII started before the war, but was expanded after Pearl Harbor to include all eighteen to sixty-five year old men. This meant all men born between 1877 and 1924 were eligible for the first wave of the draft in 1942. Unofficially, sixty-six men and women served from Silt. Many volunteered, but many were drafted to serve their country.<sup>122</sup> One of the first men from Silt to gain recognition for his military deeds volunteered for the war. James H. Cowden, son of Mr. and Mrs. L.M. Cowden, who entered the Army Air Corps and trained at Kelly Field in Texas. He graduated from the University of Colorado and became an officer after graduating from the Advanced Flying School.<sup>123</sup> Lieutenant Cowden went on to fly missions over Japanese territory from his base in India. He reported it was very gratifying to see the results of the bombs with smoke billowing up to 26,000 feet high over Manchuria.<sup>124</sup> While flying these bombing runs, Cowden and his crew once had to abandon their plane over China. They parachuted down and were aided back to their base by Chinese farmers. The men

survived on boiled water, hard-boiled eggs, tangerines, and their remaining rations on the journey. For his efforts, Cowden was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to go along with his two Oak Cluster and an Air Medal.<sup>125</sup> At the close of the war, Cowden flew pathfinder planes in B-29 missions over Tokyo to drop incendiaries. He received a Purple Heart for wounds he sustained during a night mission over the Japanese capital. On May 26, 1945 his pathfinder plane, designed to guide the bombers into position, took an antiaircraft shell and caused wounds. Cowden was transferred from India to Tinian in the Marianas Islands after his wounds.<sup>126</sup> When the war ended, Cowden, at that point a captain, flew a cross-country trip from Sacramento, CA to Denver, CO. He circled his B-29 over Silt en route to Denver to the delight of the people in town.<sup>127</sup>

Another Silt airman made a name for himself as an aerial gunner. Gerald W. Galloway enlisted shortly after Pearl Harbor on December 30, 1941, earned his silver wings, and was promoted to a sergeant in the United States Army Air Forces in 1942. He was trained at Tyndall Field in Panama City, FL.<sup>128</sup> While stationed in England, he worked as an engineer gunner aboard B-25s, and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and six Oak Leaf Clusters. Galloway was honorably discharged on May 20, 1945 after his service during the war.<sup>129</sup> Lawrence L. Boydston had an experience very similar to Galloway's

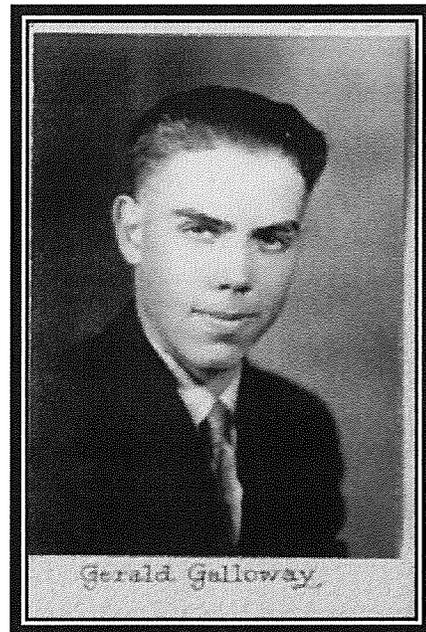


Figure 4.8: Silt High School Class of 1938 Graduate Composite

war service. A graduate and classmate of Galloway of Silt High School in 1938, Boydston joined the Army Air Force (AAF) in June 1942. He was also a gunner engineer and served on the Liberator, "Touch of Texas."<sup>130</sup> After successfully flying thirty missions from his base in England, he was transferred to Keesler Field in Mississippi for school.<sup>131</sup> Boydston earned an honorable discharge in 1945 and returned to his wife and children in Silt the same year.<sup>132</sup>

Both Galloway and Boydston were graduates of Silt High School in 1938, but further investigation showed that every boy in that class went on to serve in WWII. Though the class was small, all five boys from the graduating class not only served, but also returned home safely. In February 1946 a reunion was held at the home of Mrs. Ethel Bracken in Palisade. The five graduates gathered for a surprise party for Danny Bracken, who had recently returned home from service. Galloway and Boydston were joined by classmates Roy McClung and Charles Cooper, to enjoy the camaraderie of being home and reuniting with friends after their harrowing experiences.<sup>133</sup> Though sacrifices like this occurred across the nation, it was remarkable that all five graduating seniors served and survived. The following classes from Silt High School were not so lucky.



Figure 4.9: Silt High School Class of 1938  
 All five boys, Chas Cooper, Lawrence Boydston, Gerald Galloway, Roy McClung, and Donnie Bracken, served in WWII and returned home safely.

The class of 1937 had its entire class serve in war except for Wilbur Pretti, who stayed back because he was a farmer. The class included Rudy Cordova, who served in the Aleutians and New Guinea, but it was his classmate, Edgar Allen Roe who was the first from Silt to make the supreme sacrifice.<sup>134</sup> He was killed over Europe on August 17, 1943 when his plane was shot down. Staff Sergeant Edgar Allan Roe was honored in a local ceremony and his mother was awarded his Air Medal. He was born in Rifle on March 7, 1920 and his family moved to Silt shortly afterwards. He joined the Army Air Force a few months after Pearl Harbor and was sent to Buckley Field, where he graduated

with high grades in Class 2 of the armament school. He was a member of the 767th Technical School Squadron. The citation with the Air Medal read as followed, "For meritorious achievement in the destruction of one enemy plane while serving as crewman on a bombardment mission over enemy occupied Continental Europe. The courage, coolness, and skill displayed by this enlisted man upon these occasions reflects great credit upon him and the Armed Forces of the United States." At the memorial, "Now comes the test-the test of man in life," a poem written by Roe while at Silt High School was read to the crowd.<sup>135</sup> Today, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post in Silt was named after the first man from the town to die in WWII.<sup>136</sup>

After the death of Staff Sergeant Roe, news from the war grew grimmer and more destructive. Eventually sixteen men from Silt died in combat during the war. Max Hall



Figure 4.10: Fenno Toller  
Silt High School  
Class of 1940 Composite

was killed in action in the Pacific theater, but details were not given for his final outcome.<sup>137</sup> Sergeant Robert T. Jones of Divide Creek was killed on March 25, 1944 at Anzio in Italy. Her served for eleven months, but his final battle was described as the worst conditions for the military.<sup>138</sup> Robert Chambers was killed serving in the Italian theater on June 18, 1944. He was a member of the 141<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment in the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

Chambers, who was born in nearby Antlers on May 1, 1913, left behind his wife, Irene Chambers with his untimely death.<sup>139</sup> The next Silt resident killed was PFC. Fenno Toller, a 1940 graduate of

Silt High School. Toller was born and raised in Silt, volunteered for service, and took basic training at Camp Rucker in Alabama. While growing up, he raised pigs for the 4-H Club and was a talented accordion player. Some of his letters were published in the newspaper, describing how much he enjoyed training and loved reading the local paper while at camp. He was killed while fighting in the Philippines on October 18, 1944.<sup>140</sup>

Mrs. Sonoma Castillo went through tremendous heartache as she had two sons serving overseas. Mrs. Castillo received two telegrams in one day. The first one, delivered in the morning frightened her, but to her relief, it was news that her son Richard was transferring from California to Florida after serving at Guadalcanal in the Pacific. Later that afternoon, another telegraph arrived bearing the worst news. Her other son, Faustino Castillo, was killed in action somewhere in Germany on January 30, 1945. Faustino left Silt High School early to join the Army Infantry. He was trained at Fort McClellan in Alabama and received advanced training at Fort George E. Meade in Maryland. Castillo arrived in England in February 1944 and then shipped to France, where he was wounded and received a Purple Heart. He was wounded again in November, but returned to active duty and was promoted to Staff Sergeant. Unbeknownst to Castillo, his brother-in-law, Sgt. Joe Martinez, was missing in the Pacific at the same time.<sup>141</sup> Joe Martinez was killed near Luzon in the Philippines on January 14, 1945, which was crushing news to his mother in Silt, Vivianita Martinez.<sup>142</sup> She received her son's Silver Star and a letter that described his deeds as follows,

For Gallantry in action against the enemy on January 14, 1945. Sgt. Joe A. Martinez and his platoon were acting as advance guard and point for the infantry battalion's advance. Suspecting danger in a particular areas the platoon and in company with Sgt. Martinez and two others, advanced to investigate possible enemy emplacements which might prove disastrous to

his company. Suddenly the enemy opened with intense automatic fire from well-prepared positions. The platoon commander, upon seeing the danger to his men, ordered them to seek more tenable positions while he and the other men of the point covered the withdrawal. It was necessary to deliver the covering fire from an exposed position but Sgt. Martinez unhesitatingly performed his duty until he was killed. Sgt. Martinez's bravery and devotion to duty were beyond question.<sup>143</sup>

Others who died in action did not receive as much publicity as those described previously, but other men from Silt had unique experiences in their time at war. PFC and later Cpl. Clarence Barnett served in the fierce fighting in Sicily, Italy, and Germany with the 7<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>144</sup> Kenneth Queen was in the first group of bombers to hit Rome, sank two ships in the Mediterranean, and was shot down sixty miles behind enemy lines while flying over North Africa, but somehow made it back alive.<sup>145</sup> He earned the Air Medal, nine Oak Leaf Clusters, the Good Conduct Medal, the European, African, and Middle Eastern Service Ribbons, and the Distinguished Unit Badge for Outstanding Performance of Duty for his service.<sup>146</sup> General Charles De Gaulle cited Sergeant Norbert R. Smith for his work as an automotive mechanic for the 12<sup>th</sup> AAF B-26 Marauder Bomber Division. Smith worked on the planes that flew five thousand sorties and dropped ten thousand tons of bombs on the enemies.<sup>147</sup> Staff Sergeant Andrew Julius spent thirty-three months working as a ground mechanic for the Army Air Force in China.<sup>148</sup> Mrs. Joseph Scherer arrived home from Wilmington, CA after she served in the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services (WAVES) and earned an honorable discharge.<sup>149</sup> PFC Joe Diaz received the Certificate of Merit Award for his activities Germany September 29, 1944. Diaz trained a tank division in Indianatown Gap, PA and went through extremely difficult fighting since landing in France on D-Day.<sup>150</sup> Later Diaz sent his mother some souvenirs from Germany that included a sword, two bayonets, and two German flags.<sup>151</sup>

Sergeant Harry Anson went missing after his B-17 was shot down flying over Germany. The Silt High School graduate, whose father was the postmaster in Silt, flew as a tail gunner from his base in Italy.<sup>152</sup> He was liberated at the end of the European war and quickly sent word home to his parents that he was fine after spending time in a German prison camp.<sup>153</sup> Frank Conner was not treated so well in the German camps. He returned to Silt in June 1945 after going missing in March 1944. The treatment was so poor that he lost forty-nine pounds while in captivity.<sup>154</sup>

These feats were incredible, but the “Fruit Salad Kid,” Eloy H. Trujillo may have topped them all with his tale of heroism. He earned the nickname from the newspaper for the numerous awards and campaign ribbons he earned during his time flying for the Army Air Force. Trujillo was a farm boy and a handy mechanic during his time in Silt. After graduating in 1940, he joined the Army Air Force in 1942.<sup>155</sup> He became a pilot for



Figure 4.11: Eloy Trujillo  
Class of 1940  
Silt High School Composite

the Twelfth Air Force, flying P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers. Initially he flew missions in support of the Mediterranean theater.<sup>156</sup> While flying over northeastern France, he earned a Silver Star and Purple Heart for his dive-bombing effectiveness on rail targets. During a 400 mile-per-hour dive through flak, his plane was hit and his arm went dead. He struggled to steer the aircraft with one arm, but he righted his plane and struggled to fly back to the base in Corsica. Covered in blood and nearly fainting twice, the men in his squadron had to talk him back to base.

Trujillo nearly bailed out, but after an hour he made it back to Corsica, landed his plane and promptly passed out.<sup>157</sup> After several weeks in the hospital, he got out, was promoted to Captain, and started flying missions over Germany. By the time he was finished, he won the Distinguished Flying Cross, a Silver Star, an Air Medal with six Oak Leaf Clusters, and a Croix de Guerre from the French government. He flew over one hundred missions over and behind enemy lines.<sup>158</sup>

The town of Silt cared deeply about their boys in war and followed their stories as best they could. The residents at home also stayed up to date on the big picture of the war in terms of all of the large military operations. Residents read about the Island Hopping

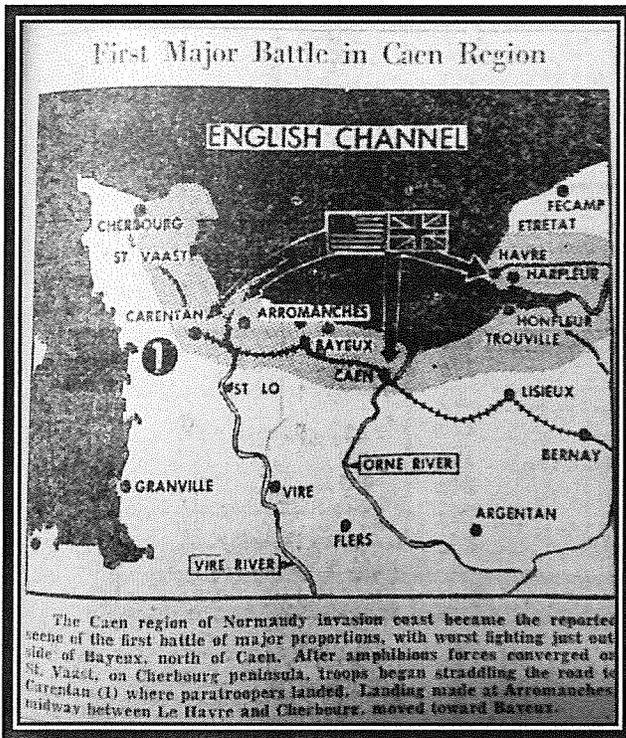


Figure 4.12: Map of D-Day Invasion in *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* July 13, 1944

campaign in the Pacific and traced America's moves towards Germany from North Africa to Italy, and then to France. A siren sounded at two AM in the towns in Garfield County to signal the invasion of Europe had finally begun after months of planning. People woke up and tuned their radios into the news to hear the latest from Normandy, France.<sup>159</sup> Muted celebrations broke out

in the area when the Nazis surrendered on May 7, 1945, because the task before the nation in the Pacific still loomed.<sup>160</sup> There were even rumors the

Japanese war could last ten to twenty more years, but Admiral Frederick C. Sherman

called them ridiculous.<sup>161</sup> The public was stunned and amazed when V-J Day was declared after a pair of atomic bombs was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>162</sup> Spontaneous celebrations broke out across the nation, as people were jubilant that the war was suddenly over. The largest crowds in the history of the Garfield County Fair attended the celebration at the Rifle Fairgrounds.<sup>163</sup>



Figure 4.13: *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* August 16, 1945

Happiness could not be contained, but people also wanted life to return to normal. Normal life would be hard to define after more than sixteen years of economic hardships and global war. The United States produced 5,777 merchant ships, 1,556 naval vessels, 299,293 aircraft, 634,569 jeeps, 88,410 tanks, 2,383,311 trucks, 6.5 million rifles, and 40 billion bullets.<sup>164</sup> The economy of the U.S. hummed with prosperity, but destruction across the globe tempered things. 405,399 Americans perished in the war while millions across the globe perished. Much of Europe

and Asia were in ruins, utterly destroyed by years of war and merciless bombing campaigns. The United States emerged relatively unscathed at home. After the war, the nation controlled half of the world's manufacturing and possessed two-thirds of the world's gold reserves.<sup>165</sup> With these advantages, Americans were in a hurry to live the good life after so many tough years. People wanted the troops to return home, rationing to be lifted, and consumer goods to return to the stores. Men and women on the home front worked hard during the war, saved their money, and now wanted to spend it after years of lean living. Many were upset when President Harry S. Truman announced food rationing would continue until at least January 1, 1946 because the U.S. had to feed the war-torn nations of Europe.<sup>166</sup>

On May 26, 1946, the Silt Memorial Park was dedicated to the fallen heroes of WWII. A reading in honor of the flag was given Mrs. Mildred Roe, mother of Allen Roe who was the first Silt resident to perish in the war. The park remains today along with the plaque commemorating the fallen men.<sup>167</sup> Additions to the plaque were made after the United States fought on the global stage in Korea and Vietnam. Few could imagine it, but the next conflict had already begun between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Two months before the park's dedication, *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille* published an article about the aggressiveness of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Parliament opened in Moscow in a determined and in a fighting mood to stay on its chosen path without deviation. *Isvestia*, state newspaper for the Soviets, warned the western powers to not risk a show of strength because it would lead the U.S. and Great Britain down a fatal road.<sup>168</sup> The local paper had not even stopped running their "Those in Service," section yet, but a new conflict was on the horizon with the potential to be more deadly with the advent of atomic weapons. Not

all was bleak for Silt as the close of 1946 brought new sections to the newspaper that were labeled “Veteran’s News” and “Births.”<sup>169</sup> The greatest era of prosperity and was upon America and Silt gladly stepped forth to injury the fruits of their hard labor. The baby boom began across the nation and with it, the birth of the modern age in American history.



Figure 4.14: Veterans Memorial Park Plaque, Silt, CO  
Photo by Paul Harvey

## Conclusion

Silt, Colorado emerged from the first half of the twentieth century stronger and modernized, but more susceptible to national and global events. This closely mirrored the growth and development of the United States during the same time period. Though the town may never develop into a glitzy ski resort or a renowned tourist destination like many of its neighbors in the Rocky Mountains, but Silt's legacy is being relatable to Americans across the nation. Most people in this country never become celebrities or become rich and powerful, but they still live meaningful and important lives that form the backbone of the nation. Silt's story is accessible to readers because most Americans can relate to the struggles of town trying to find its way in life, searching for economic viability, and producing some sort of meaning to their life. In the end, most Americans fulfill their piece of the American Dream by creating a better life for their children and the generations to follow. Silt's children are its residents who work hard to improve the town so future residents may enjoy a better life and a better town. It is an American tale that can be replicated across the country, but each small town had its own unique setting, cast of characters, and action to form its own story.

Though Silt's development was delayed by the Ute's possession of western Colorado until the 1880s, the town and the surrounding agricultural areas grew rapidly with the influx of farmers and ranchers from many places. The arrival of reliable transportation accelerated the growth of the nascent community. After the lengthy legal battle, Silt officially became a town on May 19, 1915, but the onset of World War I brought international forces to the town's door sooner than it would hope. The war thrust

the growing town into the national fold, but after the war ended, Silt retreated to its isolationist roots like the rest of the country. Modern technology rapidly altered life in 1920s, but Silt still seemed like a small town cut off from the big stories of history during the decade.

The rise of the automobile and the adoption of electricity helped the small town develop further in line with the rest of the country. The rural area was still predominately agricultural when the rest of the nation was rapidly urbanizing. The dependence on the agricultural sector allowed the community to continue to grow during the 1920s and 1930s, despite setbacks for those industries nationally because of falling food prices after the war. Silt's agricultural sector was diverse enough to ward off bad seasons as most farmers mixed some farming and ranching. Sugar beets emerged as the one industry that was truly connected to the national trends as the community was at the mercy of the Holly Sugar Company in terms of prices and contracts. Silt's isolation came to an end with the onset of the Great Depression.

Though the town emerged largely unscathed by the downturn of the Great Depression, the town would never escape the federal government and national corporations again. The New Deal brought the federal government's reach to the community, though it was largely positive for the people in and around town. Local farmers battled the Holly Sugar Company over contract disputes throughout the decade, but also waded through federal regulation as the AAA affected their lives as well. The rural setting of Silt allowed the town to stave off most of the ill effects from the economic downturn of the 1930s, but it could not resist the rise of international forces who brought global war back at the end of the decade.

World War II witnessed the town of Silt on the global stage once again, with its people serving heroically in numerous places and citizens at home doing their part to aide the war effort. Silt's isolation was completely done away with and the town grew rapidly during the time. Modern America arrived completely for the town's residents. The growth into a modern town was quick in comparison to the rest of the nation, but its own trials and tribulations made Silt what it is today. The character of the town was forged in the crises of the early twentieth century.

Today Silt largely holds true to that character from its early days. Hard work and a strong sense of community are still prevalent in town today. The town still does not have a strong identity that is solely unique to its area, but it still reflects the American Dream for a typical family or community. Silt's celebration of one hundred years in 2015 is a testament to the work ethic and vision of its founders. The town is still a great place for every citizen to fulfill their own portion of the American Dream. It is a town where the middle class can thrive to pass on all of the fruits of their labor to future generations. The town of Silt is enjoying those fruits now, but continually sowing more seeds for the future residents of town.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### List of Voters who approved Town of Silt Incorporation, June 1, 1912:

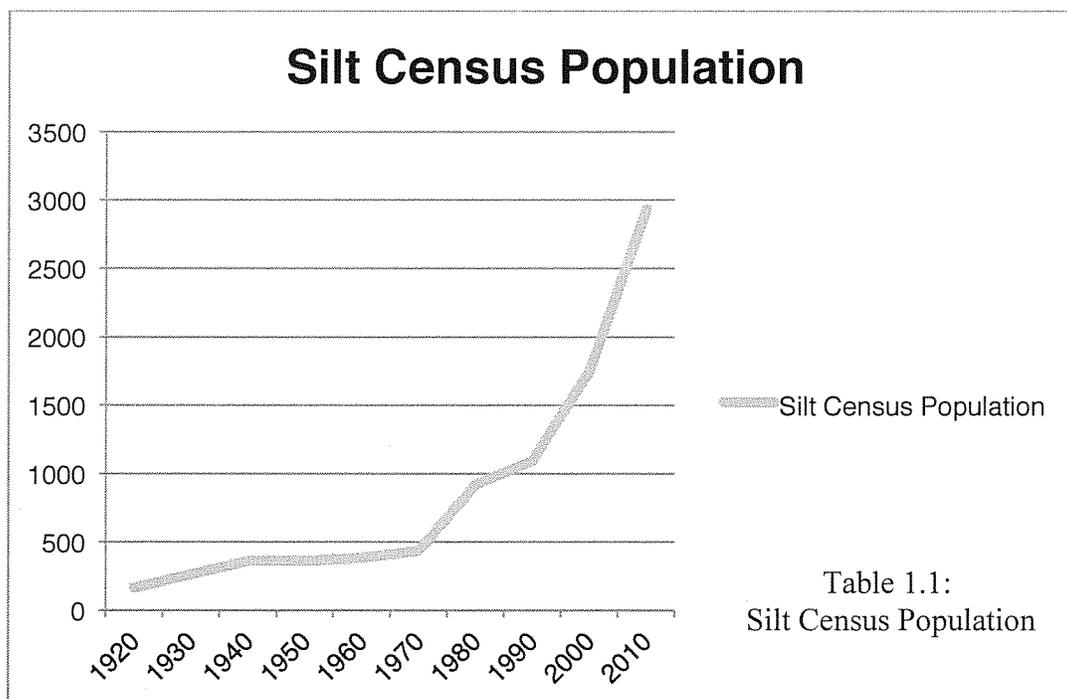
Ira Hancock	Mrs. G.J. Kean
Fred Herwick	Cliff. Raymon
Senate Beard	Mrs. Ruby F. Doste
R.N. Coffey	Mrs. Wallace Price
Don Hover	Mrs. J.H. Nunns
Mrs. R.N. Coffey	Tut Schwartz
Mrs. Dr. Hepler	C.R. Sutton
Mrs. John Fuller	Wallace Price
Mrs. Pete Cozza	Mrs. Frank Coze
Mrs. Ira Hancock	Tina Cozza
Pete Cozza	Mrs. Dr. Barnes
Dr. A. L. Barnes	Maud Maxwell
Harry Dean	Bert Confeneso
J.D. Miles	Roy Penny
J.W. Cooksey	Cal Gavelle
Walt. Maxwell	Mrs. Cal Gavelle
Sam McClung	Mrs. Sam McClung
Mrs. Senate Beard	Mrs. K.E. Hamblott
H.J. Crayle	Mrs. J.C.Faines
Mrs. M. Hovor	Henry Thompson
Mrs. J.H. Cooksey	Bill Hawley
Jo. H. Nunns	
Mrs. M.E. Schwartz	
Mrs. Irene Herwick	
Carl Doste	

## Appendix B

### Historical Census Population of Silt

([https://dola.colorado.gov/demog\\_webapps/hcpParameters.jsf](https://dola.colorado.gov/demog_webapps/hcpParameters.jsf))

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>
1910	N/A	(Town was incorporated in 1915)
1920	165	N/A
1930	264	60%
1940	359	36%
1950	361	.5%
1960	384	6%
1970	434	13%
1980	923	113%
1990	1,095	19%
2000	1,740	59%
2010	2,930	68%



## Appendix C

### List of Men Drafted and Served in the Military from Silt and the Surrounding Areas During WWII

(From *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*)

Anson, Harry D.	Jones, Robert T.
Anson, Tom	Julius, Andrew
Barnett, Clarence	Julius, Clifford
Barnett, Frank	Kinney, Joe
Bendetti, John P.	Learn, John
Best Jr., Archie	LeDonne, Edward
Best, Allen	Leohardy, Horace W.
Boydstun, Lawrence	Loesch, Edward J.
Boydstun, Leonard	Lumpkin, Lee R.
Bracken, Danny	Martinez, Joe E.
Brosius, George E.	McCanny, Hubert L.
Castillo, Faustino	McClung, Roy
Castillo, Richard	Michelsen, Orville A.
Chambers, Robert	Montano Jr., Bailon
Chapman, Roy	Neuberger, Walter
Conner, Frank	Patch, Alfred L.
Coombs, Harry	Penfield, Clarence
Cooper, Charles	Queen, Kenneth
Cordova, Armand	Reynolds, Earl
Cordova, Fred	Ricketts, Robert E.
Cordova, Rudolph	Roe, Edgar Allen
Cowden, James H.	Romero, Alonzo
Diaz, Joe	Scherer, Mrs. Joseph
Diaz, Theodore	Shults Jr., Walter O.
Dixon, William V.	Smith, Norbert R.
Fazzi, Joe	Toller, Feno
Fazzi, Richard	Tomlinson, Douglas
Flynn, William	Trujillo, Eloy
Galloway, Gerald W.	Vaughn, Tom
Hall, Max K.	Von Dette, A.J.
Hansen, Carl G.	Vigil, Pacomio
Hutton Jr., Edwin B.	Weatherly, George
Johnson, Arthur J.	Wilson, Maurice K.
Jones, Irvin E.	

Appendix D

**List of Men Killed in Action in WWII**

Source: Veteran's Park Memorial Plaque and *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*

Frank Barnett  
George E. Brosius  
Faustino Castillo  
Robert Chambers  
Roy Chapman  
Max K. Hall  
Arthur J. Johnson  
Robert T. Jones  
Joe E. Martinez  
Orville A. Michelsen  
Bailon Montano Jr.  
Earl Reynolds  
Edgar Allen Roe  
Walter O. Shults Jr.  
Feno Teller  
Von Dette, A.J.

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### Introduction

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- <sup>2</sup> Garfield County, Colorado Website. <http://garfield-county.com/economic-development/battlement-mesa.aspx>
- <sup>3</sup> Dale Shrull, *The Legend of the Burning Mountain: An Early History of New Castle* (Glenwood Springs, Colo.: Stoney Mountain Pub., 2000), xi.
- <sup>4</sup> Jim Nelson, *Glenwood Springs: The History of a Rocky Mountain Resort*. (. Lake City, CO: Western Reflections, 1999), v.
- <sup>5</sup> Andrew Gulliford, *Garfield County, Colorado: The First Hundred Years, 1883-1983*. (Glenwood Springs, CO: Grand River Museum Alliance, 1983), 44-46.
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- <sup>11</sup> Ibid, 146.
- <sup>12</sup> Shrull, *The Legend of the Burning Mountain*, xi.
- <sup>13</sup> Gulliford, *Garfield County, Colorado*, 28.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, 33.
- <sup>15</sup> Rifle Reading Club, *Rifle Shots*, (Rifle, CO: Rifle Reading Club), 224-225.
- <sup>16</sup> "The Island of Sylt," Tourism in Germany, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://www.germany.travel/en/leisure-and-recreation/germanys-islands/sylt-island.html>.
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- <sup>19</sup> "2,824 Acres of Sugar Beets to be Grown in Garfield County," *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*, April 6, 1933
- <sup>20</sup> Silt Veteran's Park War Memorial Plaque, Silt, CO.
- <sup>21</sup> "With Those in Service," *The Rifle Telegram-Reveille*, February 28, 1946.

### Chapter 1

- <sup>1</sup> Garfield County, Colorado Website. <http://www.garfield-county.com/economic-development/silt.aspx>

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- <sup>2</sup> Alice Boulton, *Reflections of Dry Hollow Ranch Memories*, 35.
- <sup>3</sup> Alice Boulton, *Silt, Colorado Homesteads*, 199-201.
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- <sup>7</sup> "Grand Valley News," *The Avalanche-Echo*, July 2, 1908.
- <sup>8</sup> Rice, "Fine Whine: New Name for Silt?" *Post Independent*.
- <sup>9</sup> As a high school teacher, I routinely here the gripes about students' home towns, but they tend to end up back here after college, military, or work. There is a positive acronym as well that I need to find it for the thesis.
- <sup>10</sup> Town of Silt, Colorado Website. <http://www.townofsilt.org/history>. Accessed October, 28, 2014.
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- <sup>17</sup> Marsh, *People of the Shining Mountain*, 3.
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- <sup>19</sup> Abbot, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 18-19.
- <sup>20</sup> Marsh, *People of the Shining Mountains*, 2-3.
- <sup>21</sup> Sidney Jocknick, *Early Days On the Western Slope of Colorado* (Ouray, Colo.: Western Reflections, 1998), 32.
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- <sup>23</sup> The Grand River was renamed the Colorado River in 1921 by the Colorado State legislature.
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- <sup>25</sup> James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Knopf ;, ©1982), 53-54.
- <sup>26</sup> Jocknick, *Early Days On the Western Slope of Colorado*, 319.
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- <sup>28</sup> Marsh, *People of the Shining Mountains*, 55.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, 57.
- <sup>30</sup> Abbot, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 115.
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- <sup>32</sup> Ibid, 73.
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- <sup>34</sup> Gulliford, *Garfield County, Colorado*, 4.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid, 3.
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- <sup>44</sup> Marsh, *People of the Shining Mountains*, 103-104.
- <sup>45</sup> Abbot, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 114.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid, 117.
- <sup>47</sup> Boulton, *Silt, Colorado Homesteads*, 16.
- <sup>48</sup> Dupew, *History of Divide and Mamm Creeks*, 37.
- <sup>49</sup> Boulton, *Silt, Colorado Homesteads*, 202.
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- <sup>54</sup> Boulton, *Reflections of Dry Hollow Ranch Memories*, 35.
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- <sup>57</sup> Gulliford, *Garfield County, Colorado*, 7.
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- <sup>64</sup> Dupew, *Recollections of Early Days*.
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- <sup>67</sup> Ibid, 84-85.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid, 89.
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