

V. HISTORIC CONTEXT

Introduction

Setting

New Castle is located twelve miles west of Glenwood Springs, at the mouth of Elk Creek, on the north side of the Colorado River, at an elevation of 5,552 feet above sea level. North of the town is a sandstone cliff designated Mt. Medaris, while on the west is a formation called Burning Mountain (originally Ward's Peak) because of the fire which smolders in a coal seam. Across the river on the south is Rodreick or Coal Ridge, which is part of the prominent Grand Hogback ridge which extends northwest and southeast for many miles and contains some of the richest coal reserves in the state. The Colorado River flows along the southern edge of town and is roughly paralleled by the tracks of the Denver and Rio Grande Western railroad and the routes of Interstate 70 and U.S. Highway 6.²

Garfield County

Garfield County was carved from a portion of Summit County (which originally included an immense portion of northwestern Colorado) on 10 February 1883, with Carbonate established as the county seat.³ Carbonate (originally Carbonate City), one of three original settlements in what became Garfield County, was established by prospectors and town developers in 1880. Carbonate City was founded at the site of what appeared to be a promising discovery, which was quickly abandoned when the ores proved to be of low quality. In 1883, a second carbonate excitement led to the creation of the town of Carbonate by the Carbonate Town Company. By April, a square mile of the town had been divided into blocks and lots and mining claims were selling at steep prices.⁴ The camp of three hundred persons became the county seat when Garfield County was created in February. By August 1883, however, mining in Carbonate had been abandoned and the county seat was moved to the more promising community of Glenwood Springs at the confluence of the Colorado and Roaring Fork rivers.⁵

²US Geological Survey, New Castle, Colorado, 7.5" Topographic Quadrangle, 1962, Rev. 1987; Halka Chronic, **Roadside Geology of Colorado** (Missoula, Mt.: Mountain Press Publishing Co., 1980), 131; New Castle Public School, "History of Garfield County," unpublished manuscript on file at the Garfield County Public Library, New Castle; and Edna Sample and Virginia Anderson, "New Castle History," unpublished manuscript on file at the Garfield County Public Library.

³Garfield County was named in honor of President James A. Garfield, who had been assassinated in 1881.

⁴Andrew Gulliford, **Boomtown Blues** (Niwot, Co.: University Press of Colorado, 1989).

⁵New Castle Public School, "History of Garfield County," manuscript on file at the Garfield County Public Library, 11; and Don Griswold and Jean Griswold, **Colorado's Century of Cities**, 168.

Founding of Glenwood Springs

In 1880, prospectors leaving Leadville established Defiance City, an aptly named settlement created in territory still occupied by the Ute Indians. The men believed their chosen site at the junction of the Colorado (called the Grand River until 1921) and Roaring Fork rivers was favorable for settlement due to its scenic beauty, abundance of game and mineral resources, and pleasing climate. The town founders platted a 160-acre townsite with lots offered at nominal prices to encourage rapid development.⁶ Most people, however, were not willing to risk settlement in the area and development did not occur until the removal of the Utes and land was officially opened for settlement in 1882.⁷ In that year, a town company established a new Defiance, and, in 1883, the first house was built. The name of the settlement was soon changed to Glenwood Springs, in honor of Glenwood, Iowa, former home of one of the town promoters. Glenwood Springs incorporated in 1885.⁸

Early Settlement in the Area of New Castle

Among the first settlers to establish homes in the area west of Glenwood Springs was Jasper Ward. Ward filed a homestead claim to 160 acres of land and built a log cabin on the west bank of Elk Creek at its confluence with the Colorado River in 1882. Like other dwellings in the early days, Ward's cabin was a simple structure with a dirt floor and without windows. Ward, who was described as "strong, powerful, athletic," raised freighting donkeys on his claim.⁹ Although he had little formal education, Ward was respected as a popular frontier preacher and was known for his "boundless hospitality" to those passing through the area. He became the first postmaster of the town established on his land and Ward's Peak, south of New Castle, now commonly referred to as "Burning Mountain," was named after him.¹⁰

In 1883, Ward sold a portion of his ranch to W.E. Shafer and William Gelder, who platted a townsite named Chapman. Ward retained the land where his house was situated and served as agent for the selling of lots and blocks in the new town.¹¹ In 1883, John Mace, another early settler in the area, sold his ranch to B. Clark Wheeler, an Aspen newspaperman. The transaction included the provision that Mace be involved in the platting of a town on the site and receive a substantial payment or interest in the development.¹² Wheeler had the land

⁶Griswold and Griswold, 169.

⁷J. Donald Hughes, *American Indians in Colorado* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1977), 69.

⁸Griswold and Griswold, 170; and Maxine Benson, *1001 Colorado Place Names*, (Lawrence, Ks.: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 85.

⁹*New Castle Nonpareil*, 17 February 1898; and Gulliford, 22.

¹⁰New Castle Historical Society; and Sample and Anderson.

¹¹Garfield County Public Library, New Castle History Notebook, unpublished manuscript on file at library. Ward was killed in 1887 during a dispute with Utes at Meeker.

¹²Garfield County Public Library, New Castle History Notebook.

subdivided into lots for a townsite called Grand Butte.¹³

Historic documents indicate that Chapman was the more successful of the two rival towns. Crofutt's 1885 **Gripsack Guide of Colorado** noted that Chapman was "on the Grand river, at the junction of Elk creek, 12 miles west from Glenwood Springs. Surroundings, agricultural and grazing lands." Chapman is also listed as being located on a postal road from Glenwood Springs.¹⁴ The post office operated from 19 May 1884 through 23 April 1888 as Chapman and was thence known as New Castle. However, the town was referred to as New Castle as early as 1887.¹⁵ Samuel Wraith, an early mine superintendent, was instrumental in changing the town's name to New Castle in honor of the English coal mining town of Newcastle-on-Tyne where he was born.¹⁶

Impact of Coal Mining and Railroad Development

New Castle owed its existence to the coal resources which lay nearby and its location along the proposed route of two important railroads, the Colorado Midland Railway and the Denver and Rio Grande. These factors were dependent upon each other, with the coal providing fuel and freight for the railroad, and the railroad providing a market and carrier for the coal. The mining of coal provided jobs for residents of the town, while the railroad connection insured that the community was connected to Glenwood Springs and points east.

As historian Thomas Noel notes,

railroad builders examining maps of the vast, treeless Great Plains looked for coal to fuel steam locomotives. They began an intensive search for coal and built rail lines to any significant deposits they found...Coal mining also provided coke for the giant smelters and steel mills that opened between the 1880s and the early 1900s. Besides fueling trains and factories, coal heated most Colorado homes and businesses.¹⁷

Development of Coal Mining

The first coal mines in the New Castle area were located in 1882. High grade bituminous deposits in the region drew the interest of several investors. From 1882 to 1885, however,

¹³Gulliford, 22.

¹⁴George A. Crofutt, **Crofutt's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado, 1885**, Reprint (Boulder, Co.: Johnson Books, 1981), 80 and 160.

¹⁵Maxine Benson, 154.

¹⁶Anna Johnson and Kathleen Yajko, **The Elusive Dream: A Relentless Quest for Coal in Colorado** (Glenwood Springs, Co.: Gran Farnum Printing and Publishing Co., 1983), 41.

¹⁷Thomas J. Noel, Paul F. Mahoney, and Richard E. Stevens, **Historical Atlas of Colorado** (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 40.

no real exploitation of the coal reserves occurred due to the lack of transportation systems. In 1886, Jasper Ward sold Ward's Peak to Jerome Wheeler, a New York businessman and owner of Aspen mining investments who was associated with the Colorado Midland. The rich seam of coal which passed through the peak came to be known as the Wheeler vein. Wheeler acquired extensive coal mining interests in Garfield County which were to be developed by his Grand River Coal and Coking Company.¹⁸

The Grand River Coal and Coke Company was incorporated in New York on 12 May 1886, by Samuel S. Sands, Rufus K. Terry, and Walter Devereaux, with the objective of obtaining and operating coal mines and coke ovens in Garfield and Pitkin counties and other locations in Colorado. Jerome Wheeler traded his mining claims, including the Ward's Peak land, for the company's stock and, together with James Hagerman, advanced the company money for its initial capital. Wheeler soon became president of the enterprise. Devereaux served as general manager, assigned to develop its properties.¹⁹

As CF&I historian Lee Scamehorn has noted, formation of Wheeler's company initiated competition to exploit the coal reserves south of Glenwood Springs and resulted in

a series of clashes between rival enterprises. The Colorado Coal and Iron Company, for example, dispatched armed men to guard its claims in that region. After several skirmishes, the dispute was resolved when the Pueblo firm agreed to abandon the area north of Thompson Creek. A short time later, the Colorado Fuel Company relinquished its rights on Rock Creek in favor of concentrating on the exploration of deposits in Coal Basin.²⁰

South of Glenwood Springs, the Grand River Coal and Coking Company opened the Marion Mine, which produced locomotive coal; Sunlight, which produced domestic coal; and Spring Gulch, which produced coking coal. Much of the product from these mines was sold to railroads, as was the output of the mine which opened at New Castle in 1888. In that year, the mine employed forty men and produced 15,000 tons of coal. The following year, sixty men produced 45,151 tons of coal.²¹

¹⁸Helen Finlay Tibbetts, "Saga of New Castle," 1969, unpublished manuscript on file at Garfield County Public Library.

¹⁹Scamehorn, 88.

²⁰Scamehorn, 89.

²¹Scamehorn, 89; State Inspector of Coal Mines, **Biennial Report, 1887-88** (Denver: Collier & Cleveland Lithograph Co., 1889), 117-18; and 1889-90, 57.

Scamehorn describes the company's Newcastle Mine²²:

a single slope, and later a shaft, exposed five seams that measured altogether more than 60 feet in thickness. Shipments of the excellent steam and domestic coal commenced in December 1888. Four years later, the railroad, at its own request, took almost all of its locomotive fuel from this property. Other markets for the coal included Leadville, Aspen, and Colorado Springs.²³

When the Grand River Coal and Coking Company successfully produced coke at Cardiff, the Colorado Fuel Company decided to eliminate the competition by acquiring its rival, thereby becoming the largest fuel producer in the West.²⁴ In 1892, Colorado Fuel Company merged with Colorado Coal and Iron Company to become Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. By 1896, the CF&I's Newcastle Mine was the largest producer in Garfield County.²⁵

Following the opening of the Newcastle Mine, several other coal operations were established in the New Castle area. Among other large producers were the Vulcan and Keystone mines.²⁶ Several small mines were opened by individual owners, mostly south of the river.²⁷ The Vulcan Mine was originally located by Francis W. Adams who had been a Leadville miner.²⁸

Arrival of the Railroads

The Colorado Midland Railway was organized in November 1883 by Denver and Colorado Springs businessmen for the purpose of constructing a line linking the towns of Colorado Springs, Leadville, and Aspen. Over the next two years, the railroad's authorized capital was increased and its proposed route was extended to the western border of Colorado. Unlike the Denver and Rio Grande, the Midland was a standard gauge railroad, the first such railroad to penetrate the Colorado mountains. The Midland's organizers calculated that its gauge would give it an operational advantage over its narrow gauge competitors in securing a share of freight traffic from eastern points.²⁹

²²Local residents refer to this mine as the Consolidated although CF&I historian Lee Scamehorn and the State Inspector of Coal Mines' Biennial Reports refer to the mine as the Newcastle.

²³Scamehorn, 89.

²⁴Scamehorn, 90.

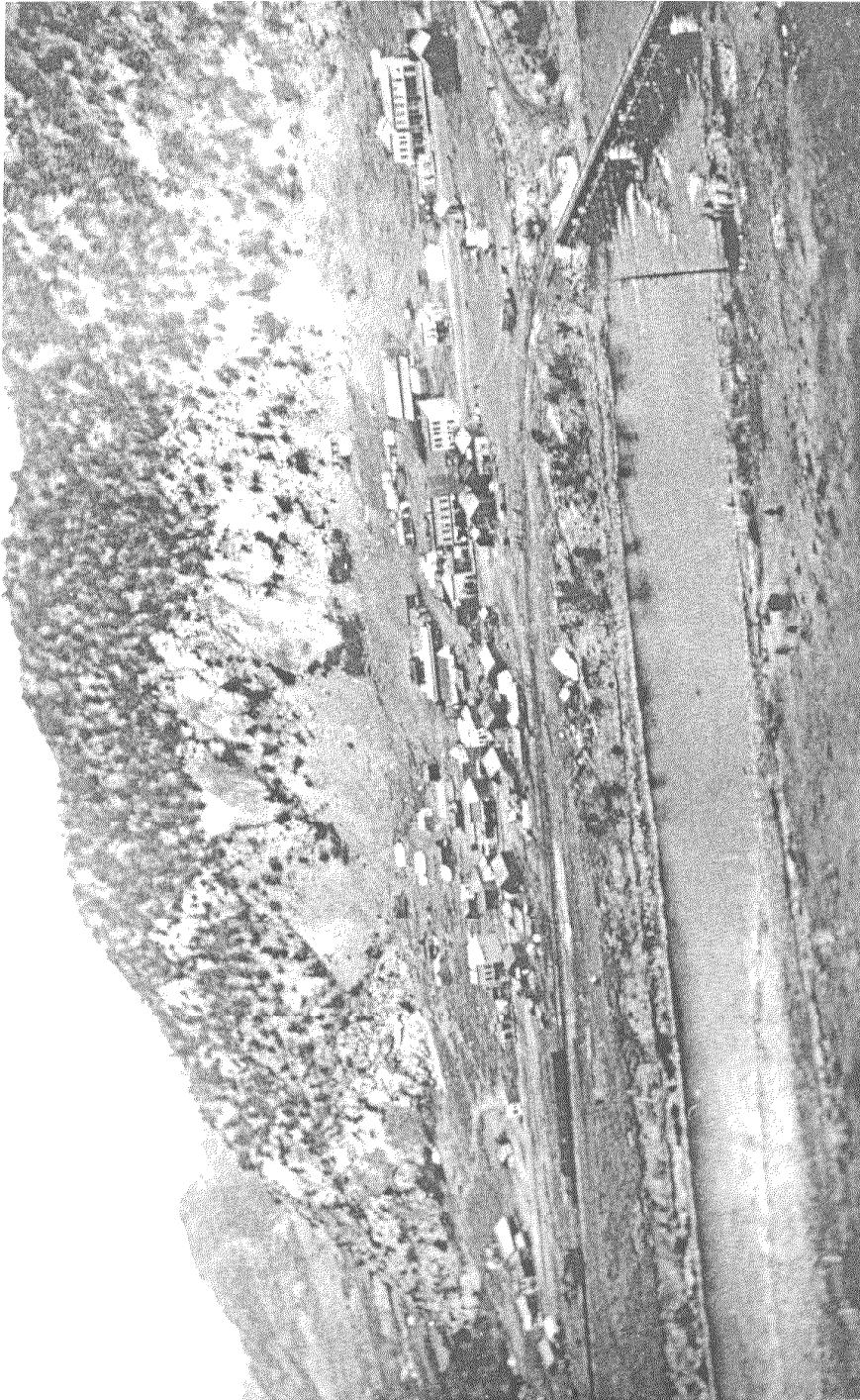
²⁵State Inspector of Coal Mines, **Biennial Report 1895-96** (Denver: Collier & Cleveland Lithograph Co., 1897), 39.

²⁶New Castle Historical Society.

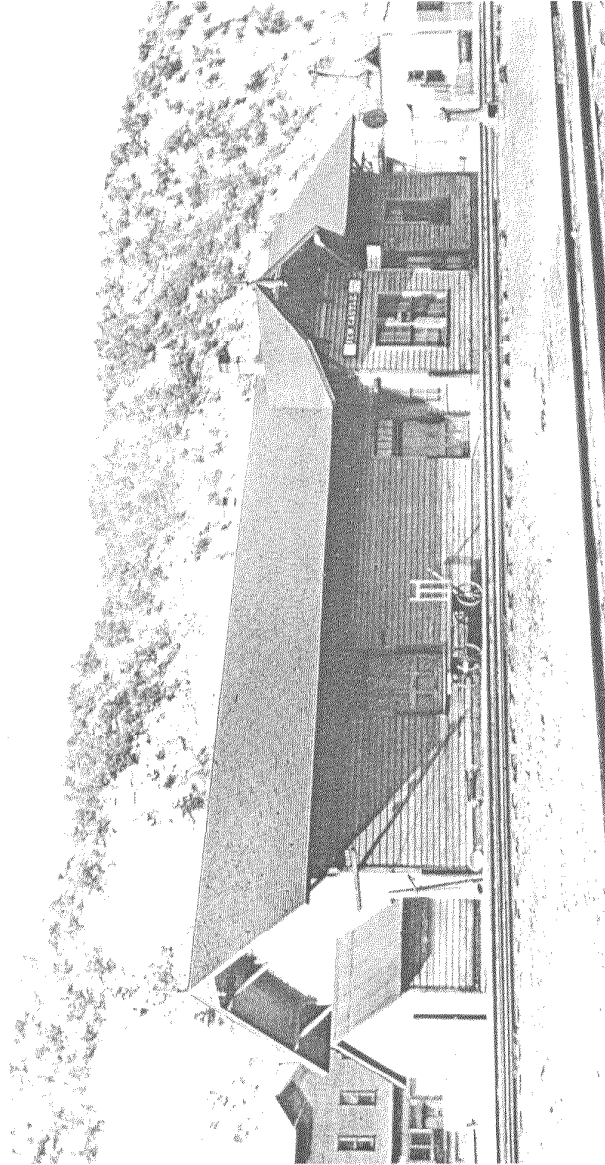
²⁷Sample and Anderson.

²⁸Glenwood Library Notebook.

²⁹Dan Abbott, **Colorado Midland Railway: Daylight Through the Divide** (Denver: Sundance Publications, Ltd., 1989), 13.



This 1888 photograph was taken after the arrival of the Colorado Midland rails and before the arrival of the Rio Grande. The view north from the south side of the Colorado (Grand) River shows Main Street extending east-west across the middle portion of the photograph. SOURCE: McFarland, 27.



The New Castle passenger and freight station was jointly used by the Colorado Midland and Rio Grande railroads. SOURCE: McFarland, 236, undated photograph.

Plans for the Midland stagnated until James J. Hagerman became interested in the project in 1885. Hagerman, a Milwaukee industrialist who had come to Colorado Springs for his health, invested in silver mines near Aspen and coal deposits near Glenwood Springs. He saw the production of his mines as a source of traffic for his railroad.³⁰ The Midland's projected route coincided with Hagerman's property interests and he became president of the Midland in June 1885. Hagerman visited New York in early 1886 and raised \$1.3 million in eastern capital for the line's construction.³¹ In April 1886, the Colorado Midland began building westward from Colorado Springs. From that city, the railroad traveled via Buena Vista and Leadville toward Glenwood Springs. The Midland completed the 2100-foot Hagerman Tunnel crossing the Continental Divide in June 1887. The rails then descended the western slope and followed the Roaring Fork into Glenwood Springs. Service to Glenwood Springs began on 18 December 1887.³²

The main line of the Midland followed the south bank of the Colorado River out of Glenwood Springs and original plans had it crossing the river near Rifle Creek. In July 1887, plans were revised to move the crossing twelve miles closer to Glenwood Springs at New Castle.³³ Tracks to New Castle, the end of the Midland's trackage, were completed on 15 October 1888. On 27 October 1888, it was reported that "the Midland Railway is now running its trains to New Castle. The people of New Castle gave a celebration in honor of the event on Saturday...a barbecue, with elk, deer, sheep, bear, was one of the features."³⁴

According to railroad historian Morris Cafky, the Colorado Midland facilities at New Castle included "a frame station, a section house, a box car body bunk house, stand pipe, a sixty-ton capacity truck scales, stock pens, a wye, and a small yard."³⁵ The Colorado Midland owned the New Castle depot, which it shared with the second railroad to enter the town, the Denver and Rio Grande.³⁶

The Denver and Rio Grande (D&RG) was organized in 1870 by railroad builder and town promoter General William Jackson Palmer of Colorado Springs, who planned a line from Denver to El Paso, Texas, with an eventual goal of Mexico City. Competition from the Colorado Midland prompted the D&RG to build toward Glenwood Springs and westward, down the Colorado River Valley.³⁷ In March 1888, the D&RG began surveying the route

³⁰Scamehorn, 88.

³¹Abbott, 13.

³²Abbott, 41, 51, 61, 68, and 70; and Tivis Wilkins, *Colorado Railroads*, 63.

³³Edward M. McFarland, *The Midland Route: A Colorado Midland Guide and Date Book* (Boulder, Co.: Pruett Publishing Co., 1980), 19; Morris Cafky, *Colorado Midland* (Denver: Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, 1965), 36.

³⁴Wilkins, 71; Abbott, 77.

³⁵Cafky, 335.

³⁶McFarland, 282.

³⁷Robert Athearn, *The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad: Rebel of the Rockies*, Reprint (Lincoln, Ne.: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 156.

of its Rifle Creek Extension west from Glenwood Springs along the north bank of the Colorado River to Rifle.³⁸ The DR&G entered New Castle in October 1889.³⁹ In 1890, the D&RG and the Midland completed the trackage of the Rio Grande Junction Railroad, which would connect both railroads with Grand Junction from a point just west of New Castle. An agreement allowed the Midland to use the D&RG tracks between New Castle and Rifle.⁴⁰

Growth of the Town of New Castle

Mrs. Ellen Ganley, the first bride in New Castle, recalled that, when she arrived in New Castle in 1887, the town had only three or four buildings and most people lived in tents.⁴¹ By August 1887, as a team of Colorado Midland workers prepared for the beginning of bridge construction across the Colorado River, construction activity in New Castle was brisk. The Glenwood Springs Ute Chief reported that "town lots are being sold rapidly throughout all portions of the townsite, while the rustling sound of the carpenter's hammer, saw and jack plane, as well as the mason's trowel are heard late and early on every hand."⁴² A large store building erected by Wolf and Schayer of Leadville was nearing completion at this time, while construction was underway on the Medaris Hotel, other commercial buildings, and a number of residences. The Ute Chief observed that "unlike most new places, New Castle has not a very large number of saloons, four now being all that the town can boast of and all of them being within a stone's throw of each other."⁴³

Given New Castle's proximity to coal and other natural resources, a December 1887 newspaper article hailed the town as "a new Pittsburgh," concluding that "it follows as a natural consequence, that blast furnaces, smelters, rolling mills and manufacturers of iron will grow up here faster than they ever materialized elsewhere."⁴⁴ Many of the early settlers were coal miners from Great Britain. Later, when more miners were needed, the mining companies sent to Italy or other countries in Eastern Europe for workers and paid their passage to Colorado as an advance against future earnings. The miners usually erected shacks near the mines, separate from the town. Most had a goal of earning enough money to leave the mines, buy their own land, and farm in the nearby valleys.⁴⁵ Some of the Italian miners were hired to work as stone masons on New Castle businesses, houses, and buildings such as the local jail. Many miners built their own homes of stone.⁴⁶

³⁸McFarland, 19; and Wilkins, 73.

³⁹Cafky, 45; and Wilkins, 73.

⁴⁰McFarland, 23; and Wilkins, 85.

⁴¹Garfield County Public Library, New Castle History Notebook.

⁴²Glenwood Springs Ute Chief, 20 August 1887.

⁴³Glenwood Springs Ute Chief, 13 August 1887.

⁴⁴Colorado Graphic, 12-3-1887:1.

⁴⁵Gulliford, 32.

⁴⁶Sample and Anderson.

The town incorporated in March 1888 and the first election in New Castle was held on 12 April 1888. M.C. Van Deventer was selected as mayor and also served as postmaster.⁴⁷ John W. Ritter was the second mayor, and Van Deventer's daughter and Ritter's wife, Mary E. Ritter, later was elected mayor.⁴⁸ The first board of trustees included Al Harris, W.D. Grant, W.S. Collins, Roy H. McBride, S.B. Stewart, R.H. Mitchel, and E.E. Drach. Town engineer was Floyd Peacock, T.H. Medaris served as police magistrate, M.D. Lyke was street commissioner, Robert Ware was town marshall, and town attorney was Owen Prentiss. Dr. W.W. Cook was the town physician.⁴⁹ In 1893-94, the town erected a town hall and hose house on Fourth Street, with offices for the town clerk and chambers of the town council, as well as storage space for fire equipment. About 1895, a stone jail was added to the town facilities.

Early citizens took advantage of the natural resources to establish businesses and industries, including brick kilns, quarries, saw mills, a cement factory, a brewery, and a canning factory. By 1889, the town's eight hundred residents could spend their money in saloons, restaurants, meat shops, groceries, clothing stores, drug stores, and furniture stores. Two physicians in New Castle provided health care to the community, while attorneys looked after the legal questions of its citizens. Hotels and boarding houses provided beds for those who had not acquired their own homes; a real estate agent lived in town. A bank gave the town an air of permanency, and the **Nonpareil** provided weekly commentary on its growth.

In appearance, New Castle quickly moved from being a town on the railroad frontier to a prosperous community. By 1888, two story brick buildings with stone trim with architectural details derived from styles seen on commercial buildings in larger cities were being erected. Slabs of local rock were removed from the nearby bluffs to build foundations and provide ornament to building facades.⁵⁰ Local brick was made at several sites near the town. The Glenwood Springs **Colorado Graphic** reported in December 1887 that "fire clay of best quality" was located within a mile of the town. The C.O. Pierson ranch on Main Elk Creek was the site of one brick yard.⁵¹ As Andrew Gulliford described the town,

New Castle, Colorado, possessed a typical boomtown population with urban characteristics. At the end of the day's shift, hundreds of workers from nearby mines swarmed through town, making Main Street "look much like Broadway in New York City at noon." Residents squeezed their homes into a narrow valley...Houses were built close together, and streets went up the ridge as far as building conditions permitted...None of the other communities at the west end of Garfield County could match the population density and

⁴⁷Tibbetts.

⁴⁸Tibbetts.

⁴⁹Garfield County Public Library, New Castle History Notebook.

⁵⁰Frank Breslin, New Castle, Interview, June 1996.

⁵¹Gulliford, 23; **Colorado Graphic**, December 1887.

urban atmosphere found in New Castle, but neither did the ranching communities face intense labor conflicts, mining disasters, and bitter union strife.⁵²

By 1893, with a population estimated at 1,800,⁵³ the New Castle business section included saloons, liverys, barber shops, meat markets, hotels, drug stores, restaurants, general stores, hardware and furniture stores, clothing stores, bakeries, offices, printing companies, and groceries. Three hotels, the Albany, the Grand, and the St. James, are shown on the 1893 Sanborn Map of the town and fourteen saloons are included in the area detailed on the map. One "female boarding house" is slightly north of the railroad tracks near a dance hall at the west end of town. The densest commercial construction was on the north side of the street between Sixth Street and Second Street and the south side of the street between Second and Third. Among the better known of the early businesses in New Castle were Bernoudy Brothers Saloon, H.R. Kamm & Company, Barry's store, Ritter & MacRae, C.A. Hahn's real estate and loans, W.H. Trimble's Little Gem Saloon, Max Schayer's stationery and cigar store, S.W. Stout's restaurant, Cohn & Company, and Noren's Livery.

In March 1889, J.W. Ross, W.J. Miller, and Paul Blount organized the Bank of New Castle.⁵⁴ The bank erected its offices at 302 W. Main in 1889. The bank suffered setbacks associated with the 1893 Silver Panic and closed about 1895.⁵⁵ New Castle State Bank opened in the same building on 14 May 1909, with a capital stock of \$10,000. The bank almost survived the Great Depression, closing in 1939.⁵⁶

Local industries included a brewery was established by a California group on the west end of town near the river in a two-story building located next to a large ice house.⁵⁷ A malt kiln was erected to hold local hops and barley. The brewery had a twenty-five barrel capacity. North of Coryell Town, in an area now known as Cement Gulch, was a cement plant, the New Castle Portland Cement Company.⁵⁸

Utilities and Infrastructure

The acquisition of water for town residents was an early concern. The first residents hauled water in barrels and sold it by the bucket. By 1893, a reservoir filled by a flume from East

⁵²Gulliford, 35.

⁵³This is the population given on the Sanborn Map of that year.

⁵⁴New Castle Public School, 17.

⁵⁵John C. Ritter, "Report Given to the New Castle Historical Society on October 25, 1982," unpublished manuscript on file at the New Castle Museum.

⁵⁶Sample and Anderson.

⁵⁷Garfield County Public Library, New Castle History Notebook.

⁵⁸Gulliford, 24.



The New Castle Cash Store was located on the lower floor of 500 W. Main Street. SOURCE: Steve Rippy, photographic collection.



The Ritter and MacRae dry goods store originally occupied the building at 239 W. Main Street. SOURCE: Steve Rippy, photographic collection.

Elk Creek supplied the town, but the system carried so little water that it froze in the winter. The town council spent much time planning a better water system which was to be constructed of locally made tile laid three feet deep from the creek to the reservoir. Water lines were laid up Main Street, outdoor hydrants were installed, and a fire department with forty-five volunteers and two hose carts was organized.⁵⁹

To transport workers from New Castle to the mines across the Colorado River, the Rodreick family, who homesteaded in the area in 1881, operated a ferry.⁶⁰ The Vulcan Mine was one such enterprise reached by crossing the river.⁶¹ However, the ferry was inconvenient and townspeople soon began requesting that a bridge be constructed across the river. Finally, in 1894, when the population of the town reached 1,800, the county commissioners advertised bids for the construction of a bridge. The bridge was finally completed in 1897 at the site of Rodreick's ferry. The structure was erected by the Youngstown Bridge Company of Youngstown, Ohio, and included stone from the Peachblow quarries near Aspen. The 1897 bridge, fondly called "the Orange Bridge" by local residents, was demolished following the completion of a new bridge over Interstate 70 in 1970.⁶²

The first telephone office in New Castle was established in 1904 and was located in the Trimble Building, with Mrs. E. Trimble as the first operator. The Garfield County Telephone Company was made up of town residents and citizens from the surrounding area. The Colorado Telephone Company, with Mrs. O.M. Clift, exchange manager, was also listed in the 1906 business directory.⁶³

The Rocky Mountain Fuel and Iron Company provided electricity to the town for a few years during the early 1900s, generating power for its use in the mine and selling the surplus to townspeople. After the mine closed, the Weller Brothers supplied electricity via a water wheel, although the use of appliances was prohibited and the service was erratic. Finally, in the late 1920s, Public Service Company of Colorado began to provide electricity to the town.⁶⁴

Schools

Schools were among the first institutions established by western towns to serve local families. In 1886, a local school district was organized and New Castle's first school was established in an empty whitewashed cabin. Serving fifteen students under the guidance of W.L. Cooley, the building was dubbed "the hencoop." About a year later, a frame building

⁵⁹Gulliford, 23.

⁶⁰Gulliford, 22.

⁶¹Johnson and Yajko, 41.

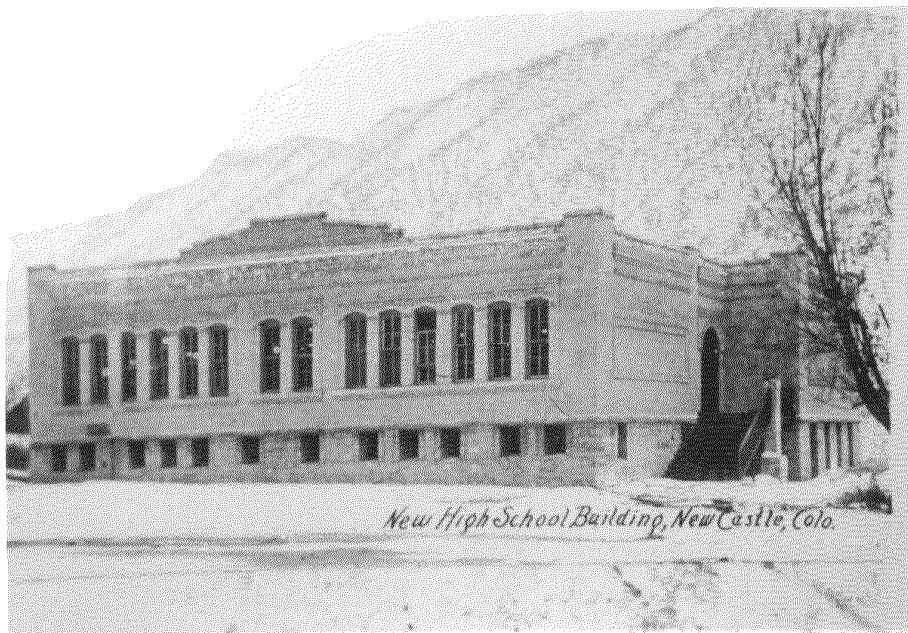
⁶²Nora Dwire, "New Castle Notes," November 1971 and Gulliford, 22.

⁶³Tibbetts; and *Colorado State Business Directory*, 1906.

⁶⁴Tibbetts.



The Brunetti and Son garage and service station was located at 502 W. Main Street through the 1940s. SOURCE: Steve Rippy, photographic collection, undated photograph.



The New Castle School was erected in 1912-13 to replace an earlier building that had been declared structurally unsafe. SOURCE: Steve Rippy, photographic collection.

was erected as a schoolhouse at the east end of town.⁶⁵

In 1892, the brick New Castle School, described as "substantial, as well as lovely," was erected at a cost of \$10,000.⁶⁶ The two-story building with a square belfry was built at the top of the hill between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Theodore Rosenberg, an architect from Glenwood Springs, designed the building and William Dougan served as contractor.⁶⁷ When completed, the school employed five teachers and served two hundred students. Unfortunately, a fault in the ground where the building was erected resulted in the school's being declared unsafe after only seven years of use and it was torn down in 1909.⁶⁸

For several years, classes were held in town churches and other public buildings. Finally, in 1912, New Castle received \$7,500 in emergency school funds from the state to assist in building a new school. The new building on Main Street was composed of bricks manufactured at the Ganley Ranch and stone obtained from a local quarry. The school, which originally did not include indoor plumbing, was ready for classes by Christmas 1913. The building had little space for athletic activities and space was leased in other town buildings for recreation after school and for basketball games. A gymnasium/auditorium and classroom addition was completed on the east side of the building with WPA labor in 1939, at a cost to the district of \$700. The addition was composed of adobe bricks manufactured on the school grounds. In 1972, the New Castle Elementary and Riverside Junior High School complex was built west of Elk Creek.⁶⁹

Churches

Once the town was established, New Castle residents began to provide for the community's cultural and spiritual life. During 1888-89, volunteers erected the New Castle Congregational Church on Sixth Street north of Main.⁷⁰ The church was described as a "barn-like" building with a tall corner belfry. Much of the cost for the building came from contributions from the saloons in town and payroll deductions from mine workers. The church was demolished in 1958 and an A-frame structure replaced it.⁷¹

In 1890-91, the Precious Blood Catholic Church was erected on Sixth Street in New Castle. The church was described as an impressive structure with beautiful stained glass windows.

⁶⁵Garfield County Public Library, New Castle Notebook; Sample and Anderson.

⁶⁶New Castle Public School, 18.

⁶⁷Garfield County Public Library, New Castle History Notebook.

⁶⁸Sample and Anderson.

⁶⁹Sample and Anderson; Mary Wade and Gladys Prendergast, "History of New Castle, Colorado;" Edna Sample. "Short History of New Castle Schools," 1990; and New Castle Historical Society, "City of Black Gold: A Walking Tour of the Town," 1988.

⁷⁰New Castle Public School, 17.

⁷¹Sample and Anderson.

The building served New Castle Catholics until the 1960s, when a boulder from Mt. Medaris broke off during a rainstorm and knocked the church off its foundation. The church was demolished and a new one was subsequently built on Fifth Street.⁷²

The oldest remaining religious structure in New Castle is St. John's Episcopal Church, built in 1908-09. The church was organized in the fall of 1907 and the rector of a church in Glenwood Springs officiated at its first meeting. In the spring of 1908, Reverend Percy Urban, a student from an eastern theological seminary came to lead the congregation and support it in the erection of a church. Reverend Urban and volunteers built many of the furnishings for the church using packing crates donated by Doll Brothers store; other furnishings came from local churches and members of the community. The first service in the building was held on Easter Sunday, 11 April 1909.⁷³

Recreation and Entertainment

Among the recreational activities enjoyed by local residents was baseball. Many of the town's team members were miners and games played against Glenwood Springs drew enthusiastic crowds. Social and fraternal lodges were also popular during the early days. The Knights of Pythias and the Pythian Sisters were two of the earliest groups in town.⁷⁴ Other active clubs were the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs, the Grange, the New Castle Reading Club, the New Castle Women's Club, the 4-H, and the church guilds.⁷⁵ The Grand River Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows held meetings and dances in the upstairs hall of the circa 1890 building at 500 W. Main St. A park and band stand were created for enjoyment of the townspeople. Three "opera houses" in town offered presentations such as plays and vaudeville shows as well as school programs.⁷⁶ Another form of recreation was pursued in area west of the creek near the river, known as the "Peach Orchard," where houses of prostitution were located.⁷⁷

The creeks, hills, and forests near New Castle were considered prime recreational land by hunters. On 22 April 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt and a hunting party visited New Castle aboard a special Colorado Midland train.⁷⁸ Roosevelt came for a three-week hunting trip in the Divide Creek area and study of the public lands. According to Gulliford, a New Castle ladies' group planned to commandeer the president and take him to their club rooms where they would present a program and offer him a gift. Roosevelt was warned of the

⁷²Sample and Anderson.

⁷³New Castle Historical Society, "City of Black Gold, A Walking Tour of the Town," 1988; New Castle Museum Display, "St. John's Episcopal Church;" "Colorado Episcopalian," August 1962, 8.

⁷⁴Johnson and Yajko, 42.

⁷⁵Tibbetts.

⁷⁶Tibbetts.

⁷⁷Gulliford, 23.

⁷⁸Gulliford 23 and Cafky, 231.

club's plans and ordered the train to travel beyond its expected stop so that his hunting trip would not be delayed. The ladies rushed after the train and managed to lift New Castle's little Alice Murray up to the car to present the president with the gift of a bridle for his daughter. Another local resident presented T.R. with a basket of potatoes.⁷⁹ Knowledge the President gained on the trip led to the introduction of grazing fees on the national forests.⁸⁰

Strikes and Disasters in the Mines

New Castle's population soared to 1,800 in 1893 and its fine coal production bolstered the prosperity of the town. However, dangerous conditions in the mines and the struggle for improved wages and union recognition led to the participation of New Castle miners in a series of strikes. During the same period, the danger of the highly inflammable dust and underground gases of the mines was made evident by several disasters which ultimately led to the abandonment of large scale production in New Castle. The effect of these difficulties is evidenced in the declining population of the town, listed at 900 in 1899 and 431 in 1900.⁸¹

The first strike in New Castle, in October 1893, was initiated by miners who had not been paid earned wages while coal companies dealt with financial problems resulting from the Panic of 1893. In 1893, the Newcastle Mine employed two hundred men and extracted 83,693 tons of coal, while the Vulcan, operated by the Vulcan Coal Company, employed one hundred men and produced 101,674 tons.⁸²

In 1894, a general strike initiated by the United Mine Workers encompassed the southern and mountain coal districts in Colorado. Causes for the strike included the fact that the workers had not been paid for two months and the mine companies introduction of scrip payment, of value only at the company stores. Among the miners' demands were recognition of the United Mine Workers and the abolition of scrip. The strike was accompanied by violence, including the burning of the Midland bridge to prevent U.S. marshalls from entering New Castle. Although most of the strikers, including those at the Vulcan Mine, returned to work by early July, the dispute continued at the Newcastle Mine, where workers continued to reject a reduction in wages. The owner, Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, stated that the wage scale had been too high and closed its mine until October, when most of the strike momentum had disappeared.⁸³ The miners agreed to a lower pay scale and the company allowed only 62 of the 162 striking workers to return to work.⁸⁴

⁷⁹Tibbetts.

⁸⁰Cafky 336; McFarland, 235; and Gulliford, 30.

⁸¹Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1893, 1899; and U.S. Census, 1900.

⁸²State Inspector of Coal Mines, **Biennial Report, 1893-94** (Denver: Smith-Brooks, 1895).

⁸³Scamehorn, 121.

⁸⁴Gulliford, 36.



U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt arrived at New Castle 5 April 1905 via the Colorado Midland for a hunting trip in the Colorado mountains. SOURCE: Jones and Jones, 32.

Disasters also took their toll on production and eventually resulted in the cessation of coal mining by the larger companies. On 18 February 1896, one of the worst disasters in Colorado coal mining history occurred when an explosion in the Vulcan Mine resulted in the deaths of forty-nine workers. Mine inspectors reports reported that "no definite cause could be found for the disaster."⁸⁵ Recovery of the bodies from the mine took four weeks. In April, the mine's operator, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Coal Company, closed and abandoned the workings to prevent any further problems.⁸⁶

The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company was faced with two serious explosions and fires which resulted in the termination of its operations in New Castle. The first explosion, on 20 July 1897, resulted when a defective fuse ignited gas and fire swept through underground workings of its mine. Efforts to extinguish the fire failed and mine officials diverted an irrigation ditch to the shaft to flood the mine, which was back in production by the end of August.⁸⁷ Another explosion in 1899 resulted in an unquenchable fire which caused the company to permanently end development of the site.⁸⁸ Thereafter, tourists on the Colorado Midland and D&RG trains were alerted to the "burning mountain."⁸⁹ After 1899, the Coryell Mining Company leased the mine, which it worked from an adjoining property.

Explosions in the Vulcan Mine in 1896 and 1913 and the Newcastle Mine fires in 1897 and 1899 resulted in the decline of coal mining in New Castle. In 1899, new coal fields opened in the Crystal River valley near Redstone, the **Denver Times** reported that "hundreds of the miners who have been employed at New Castle are moving to the new mines, many bringing their household effects to establish permanent homes" at the same time, the mining company removed the machinery from the mines they were abandoning.⁹⁰ The town population dwindled in response.

Several individuals operated small mines in Coal Ridge during the early twentieth century, including P.C. Coryell. He owned a large ranch north of New Castle which was divided into lots and laid out with streets. This area was known as Coryell Town and was annexed to New Castle in 1952. Many miners homes were built north and east of Coryell Town.⁹¹ Coryell, who had managed the Newcastle Mine for the Grand River Coal Company later owned the town newspaper, the **New Castle Nonpareil**, in which he often criticized the unions and miners who joined them. Coryell's mines were dynamited twice and when the homes of five union leaders were bombed during a strike in 1903, Coryell was suspected of

⁸⁵State Inspector of Coal Mines, **Biennial Report, 1895-96** (Denver: Collier & Cleveland Lithograph Co., 1897), 52.

⁸⁶Sample and Anderson.

⁸⁷Biennial Report, 1897-98, State Inspector of Coal Mines (Denver: Smith-Brooks, 1899), 72.

⁸⁸Scamehorn 122.

⁸⁹Cafky, 336.

⁹⁰**Denver Times**, 8-13-1899, 2.

⁹¹Tibbetts.

seeking revenge. In June 1904, Coryell shot United Mine Workers organizer John Lawson in New Castle and was jailed.⁹²

By 1913, the Vulcan Mine had been reopened and was operated by the Coryell Mine Leasing Company, with about forty-eight employees. On 16 December 1913, a massive dust explosion in the mine killed thirty-seven men. Many of the victims had either survived the 1896 explosion or were the sons of victims of the earlier disaster.⁹³ Almost everyone in New Castle lost a relative or friend in the disaster. The mine reopened at a reduced rate of production, operated by thirty-six employees of the Garfield Mine Leasing Company in 1914. In 1918, the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company operated the mine, known as the Garfield-Vulcan, with forty-three workers. On 4 November 1919, three miners were killed in an explosion at the Garfield-Vulcan. The mine continued to operate on a small scale until it caught fire in 1960 and was sealed. Since that date, no coal has been carried from New Castle.⁹⁴

New Castle's Economy in the Twentieth Century

By the time of the 1899 Sanborn Map, hotels in the commercial district had been reduced to one, the Albany, only five saloons were operating, and many of the buildings which had housed businesses in 1893 were vacant. Following the decline of coal mining, farming, ranching, and tourism became important elements of New Castle's economy.⁹⁵ In 1905, New Castle exported potatoes, livestock, hay, grain, vegetables, and apples.⁹⁶ After 1913, farming, cattle raising, and lumbering were the main factors in the local economy. New Castle was populated by miners whose dream was to leave the danger of the mines and move to the surrounding countryside populated by farmers and ranchers. Cattle ranching was the most important livestock activity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sheep raising did not begin until about 1916. Like disputes between the sheep and cattle growers in other parts of Colorado, a small war broke out between sheep and cattlemen on Garfield Creek.⁹⁷

Fruit growing, especially in Peach Valley west of New Castle, was a profitable activity in combination with livestock raising. Fruits included apples, cherries, peaches, pears, berries, and grapes. The popularity of fruit production resulted in the construction of a cannery in New Castle.⁹⁸ The factory was erected across the railroad tracks near the river. The canning factory lasted only a few years as fruit production was not sufficient to supply its

⁹²New Castle Nonpareil, 18 December 1903; Sample and Anderson.

⁹³New Castle Museum, Historical Files, Newspaper Clipping, 25 March 1992.

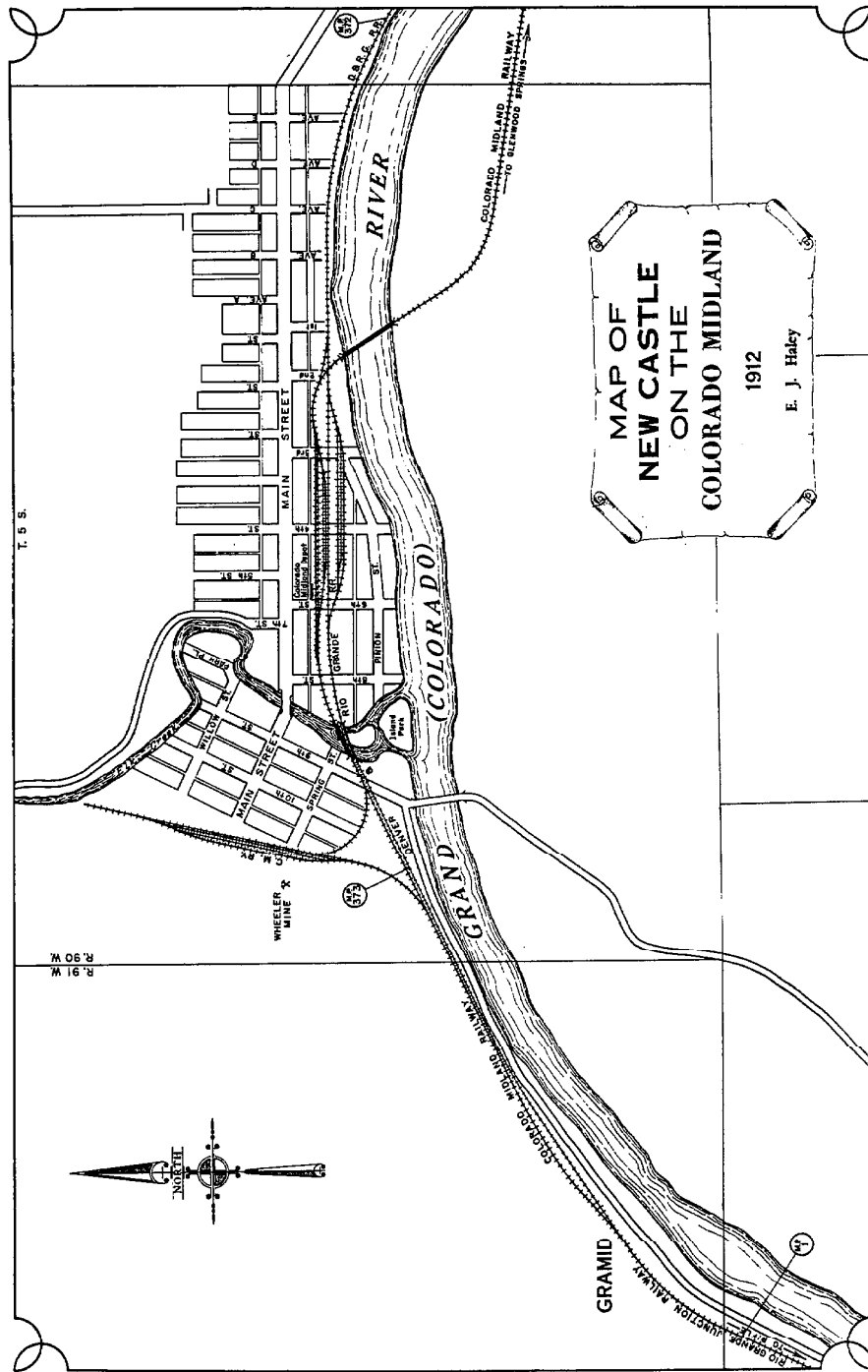
⁹⁴Sample and Anderson; Tibbetts.

⁹⁵Cafky, 336.

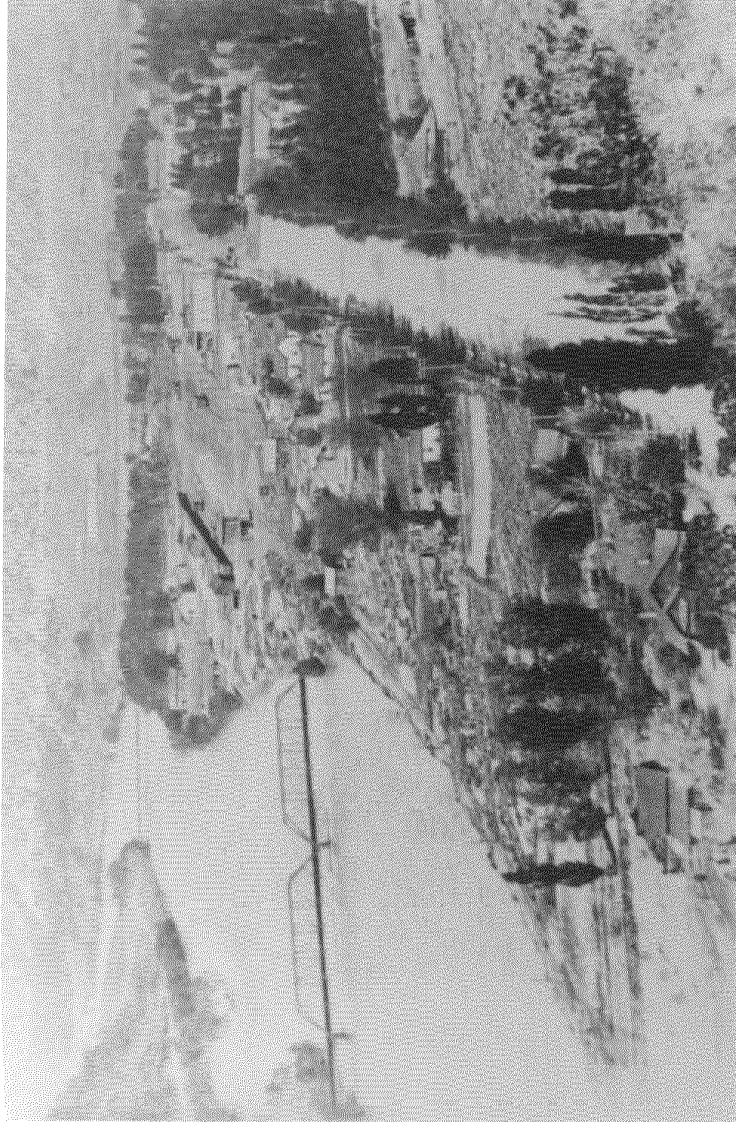
⁹⁶Cafky, 336.

⁹⁷Gulliford, 24.

⁹⁸Sample and Anderson.



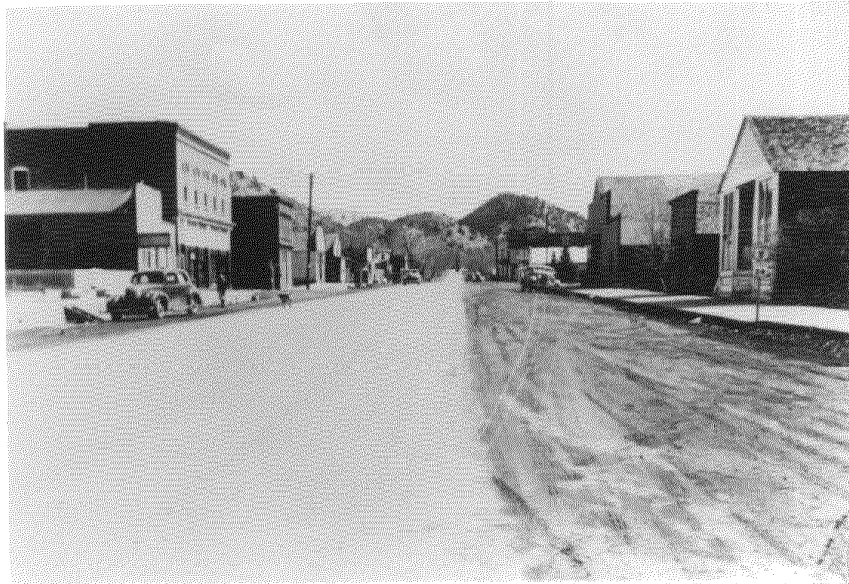
The railroad facilities and street layout of New Castle in 1912 is shown in this map produced in 1965.
 SOURCE: Cafky, 192.



The Colorado (Grand) River is shown on the left and the broad width of Main Street on the right in this view west of New Castle, circa 1912. SOURCE: Steve Rippy, photographic collection.



The Pete Mattivi Motor Company building at 298 W. Main Street was erected in 1937 and included a garage, service station, and vehicle sales. SOURCE: New Castle Historical Society, photographic collection.



This 1940s view of Main Street looking east shows 502 and 500 W. Main Street (the two-story brick buildings on the left) and 503 W. Main Street (the third building in from the right). SOURCE: Steve Rippey, photographic collection.

needs.⁹⁹

The Colorado Midland ceased operating in August 1918 and by October 1921 the rails had been removed between New Castle and Divide.¹⁰⁰ The Rio Grande Western Railroad continued to serve the town.

By the 1920s, tourism had become an important element of the local economy. New Castle was located on the Pike's Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway (U.S. Highway 6), and its proximity to the resort of Glenwood Springs made it a popular destination, especially for hunting and fishing. Elk Creek and Canon Creek were known for their fine fishing. The town provided free camp grounds with water for thirty-five cars. The White River National Forest north of New Castle was an area of scenic beauty which drew travelers once roads were improved.¹⁰¹

Oil Shale Development

In the 1980s, a number of new residents moved to New Castle to participate in the oil shale development occurring in Anvil Points. The growth in population resulted in the construction of a new school, a town hall, and a community center. In 1967, the Garfield County Public Library was erected. The oil shale boom attracted new people and new construction to New Castle. From 1900 through 1970, the population of the town remained fairly stable, between 431 and 499 people. Beginning in 1980, the number of residents began to climb, with 563 people counted in the 1980 census and 679 tallied in the 1990 enumeration.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Tibbetts.

¹⁰⁰Abbott 140 and McFarland, 102.

¹⁰¹Garfield County Public Library, New Castle History Notebook.

¹⁰²U.S. Census, 1900-1990.