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A Town Built By the Railroad!

The Great Western Railroad was a defining moment for the Town of Mead. This railroad came to what is now called Mead and helped many farmers throughout the area. The railroad that connected Longmont and Johnstown was built early in the year of 1905. The Great Western railroad traveled through many towns throughout Colorado, helping to transport sugar beets, food goods, and later on passengers. Many townspeople appreciated this railroad and respected what it did for their community.

Highlandlake was the original settlements in the Mead area. The Highlandlake community (an unincorporated community that is still in existence and is located about one and a half miles west of Mead) had many shops including a jail, a library, a school, and a post office. Something that was missing in the town though was a railroad. As a result, the people had to transport their goods by horse and wagon. Even though the closest railroad was located in Longmont, it took over 2 hours to transport the sugar beets, which were then loaded on a train in Longmont. Paul Mead, an original property owner where Mead is now located, had first used his land for farming and storing goods.

The Great Western Sugar Company (the GWSC) manufactured the sugar beets that were transported by train from Longmont, Johnstown, Loveland, Windsor, and Eaton. When this company decided to extend the railroad from Longmont to Johnstown in 1905, the tracks cut through Paul Mead's property. The GWSC, shortly after the railroad was laid between these two towns, decided to continue the railroad through Paul Mead's property. The land surveyors recognized this place to put a railroad at because of the flat land and the fact that it was a shorter route from Longmont to Johnstown as they wouldn't have to go around. The decision of putting the tracks through Paul Mead's property was a turning point in Mead's history.

Paul Mead realized that a new railway would be a great opportunity for the farmers to get sugar beets to town quicker. Getting sugar beets to town was hard work for the people of Highlandlake. For instance, it took one hour to load the sugar beets onto the wagon and traveling took 2 – 3 hours to arrive at the highline in Longmont. The highline was a place where the farmers took their sugar beets and drove up a ramp. They would then dump the sugar beets into a train wagon below. Unloading was another struggle because going up the ramp with a horse and wagon was a challenge. Then after the farmers unloaded, they still had to travel the 2-3 hours to get back to Highlandlake. With a railroad on Paul's property, transporting goods would take less time because the loading onto the train wagon would be closer; therefore, taking less travel time. This would create more time for families to spend together and a more efficient way to transport sugar beets.

When the news about the chance to have the Great Western Sugar Beet railroad go through Paul Mead's property came to Highlandlake there were mixed feelings throughout the town. Many farmers saw this as a chance to spend more time with family and transport crops and goods quicker. Others saw it differently though. The people of Highlandlake understood the importance of the railroad; however, they didn't want to lose their beautiful town. After the railroad was finally laid, many families decided to do

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whatever they could to get as close to the railroad as possible. Even though it wasn't easy they knew that they had to, but first, they had to get Paul Mead's approval to move onto his property to be closer to the railroad.

The railroad was built by the sugar beet industry while the industry was still young. After a while, the railroad was being used by most of the local people. The sugar beet company later decided to extend the railroad 2 extra miles on February 16, 1906 making the total amount of track about 85 miles. The siding (a track that is not the main track, but is a side track) was then used to go through more of Mead's property and into the Highlandlake community. With more people moving onto Paul Mead's property, to be closer to the Great Western Railroad, Paul Mead later proposed giving up his land to form a new town. His only stipulation was that the town be named Mead. Many people didn't like this though because Deacon L.C. Mead was the one who discovered "Mead" and the name of the town was not recognizing him it was recognizing Paul Mead.

After the siding was placed, the Town of Mead really started to grow. People who worked for the railroad built homes and raised their families. Later on, the sugar beet company decided to use the train to transport people and goods when the sugar beets weren't in season during the summer. The train also provided jobs for men and women; therefore, providing money for families and bringing in items to help their family grow, making it even easier for people to travel, transport, and sell their goods. Since the siding had gone into the Highlandlake area some families moved back due to the fact that Mead was growing and getting larger, but the Highlandlake area never went back to its original town. Now that people could live at Highlandlake *and* Mead, the train tracks were even more useful, for they transported people from Highlandlake to Mead and visa versa.

When Mead was at its peak, the town had developed a hotel, three general stores that held the town's foods, a grocery and a meat market combined. It also had two hair salons, a butcher shop, a gas station, two auto garages, and one implement company. Two livery stables containing horses, a lumberyard, a blacksmith shop, and a drug and merchandise store were also in the town. A hoe and harness repair shop, a post office, and two doctors' offices were included in the town as well. Two banks were also located in Mead, the two banks were, the First National Bank of Mead and the Farmers' and Merchants Bank. Mead also had a newspaper, called The Mead Messenger. Now the Mead newsletter is called the Mead Messenger. Three churches were in Mead, two are still active and running, Guardian Angel Catholic Church and Mead United Methodist. Of course, the Great Western Railroad is around too.



The Great Western Railroad helped the Town of Mead discover one of their town mottos: "A Little Town with a Big Future." This motto shows that the people went from a town with a lake and a few buildings, to a town with a railroad that brought many great economic opportunities to the people of Mead. Bringing the railroad to Mead was a great decision because it brought the people of Mead together. It brought hope, happiness and prosperity for many people. Finally, the railroad showed and proved that even the smallest town can be transformed into a thriving community.

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Bibliography

Primary resource

***<http://mead-co.gov/index>**
***<http://www.margemercurio.com>**
***<http://www.google.com>**
***<http://www.googleimages.com>**

Secondary resources

***<http://answers.com>**
***<http://mead-co>.**
***Mrs. KT/ Mrs. Frasure- Social Studies teachers**