

# A look back at Edgerton

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David Edgerton is a pioneer in the Pikes Peak region, yet many people today have never heard of him.

Edgerton's foresight and vision, however, were key to the development of northern Colorado Springs and the Tri-Lakes area.

Edgerton homesteaded a track of land 160 acres south of Monument along the Monument Creek in 1872. It bordered the land owned by Lydia "Leafy" Teachout and her son, Harlow. The Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, owned and operated by Colorado Springs founder General William Jackson Palmer, came right through Mr. Edgerton's property. And from his ranch was a village bearing his name.

Edgerton, the village, was first recognized in the 1877 Colorado Business Directory as being a railroad station. The town of Edgerton grew with the addition of the Edgerton Hotel and post office in 1881. Also in this time, Dr. A.W. Beach was the local doctor in Edgerton. By 1890, Edgerton's population was 50 citizens. Soon W.M. Smith, who was also the postmaster, established a general store. By 1902 Edgerton had grown to 350 people.

Many of Edgerton's citizens were called "lungers" (those suffering from lung disease) who came for the beneficial effects of the cool, dry air of Colorado. Years later the Woodmen Sanatorium was established in the Woodmen Valley (today's Rockrimmon area) for these health seekers.

Ice harvesting and distribution was a big deal in the area more than 100 years ago, and the town of Edgerton played a key role. In 1893, the Cascade Ice Company was first noted in the Colorado Business Directory. The Cascade Ice Company constructed several stone dams on the West Branch of the Monument Creek and created three small lakes for cutting blocks of ice in the wintertime. The present Ice Lake at the Air Force Academy was built in 1969. Except for some stone dam ruins, there's no evidence of the original Cascade Company's "Ice Lakes."

District 20's first grammar school was located near Edgerton. It was on the mesa about a quarter mile west of the Ice Lake trailhead. Hints of an old road leading northwest up to the Edgerton School can still be seen from where the access road crosses the railroad tracks and leads east to the trailhead parking area. The Edgerton School was built in 1874 and held classes until 1915. Kids from as far away as the Woodmen Valley would walk or ride horses to attend grades one through eight at Edgerton School.

Edgerton was also the location of a mysterious murder that occurred in 1886. Frank Hall captured the story of the Edgerton murder in his 1891 essay on El Paso County history. According to Hall, an elderly lady and her grandson lived quietly together at their Edgerton ranch. The "air of desertion around the ranch was not unusual," but after what appeared to be a longer than normal absence, the neighbors grew suspicious.

An investigation incurred and the house was found to be vacant. But the dinner table was set for three. Only two people lived there, so who was the third place setting for? The neighbors then went to the barn and found the door had been broken open. Upon entering they discovered the bodies of the lady and the child. It was believed they were attacked in the house and sought refuge in the barn, but met their untimely death there. The murders remain an unsolved mystery of that era.

Edgerton eventually met its demise in the 1920s when the highway was built connecting Colorado Springs to Denver. The road by-passed Edgerton and it faded away as a village.