



The DENVER WESTERNERS
ROUNDUP

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Courtesy Denver Public Library, Western History Department, Z4989
George T. Clark, Mayor of Denver, 1865-1866

George Tillinghast Clark

1837 - 1888

By Richard Cavenah



Westerners Bookshelf



Objects of Survivance: A Material History of the American Indian School Experience, by Lindsay M. Montgomery and Chip Colwell. Denver Museum of Nature and Science & University Press of Colorado: Niwot, 2019. 243 pp. Illustrations (some color), references, chapter endnotes, index. Hardcover, \$37.95.

As an archivist this volume struck a particularly interesting note for me. It is based on a collection of materials housed at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Of particular note are the numerous photographs that were taken by Jesse H. Bratley while he was an instructor at several federally funded Indian schools around the U.S. from 1893 to 1903. He photographed “all aspects of life on the reservation he lived on, taking portraits and landscapes and documenting a wide range of intimate, religious, and everyday scenes.” He also collected many artifacts. Contained in the pages is the story of how the collection came to be at the museum.

The title of this book *Objects of Survivance* deserves a bit of explanation. The images and objects in this collection encapsulate domination and opposition, change and continuity, impotence and strength, loss and profit and shame and honor. These objects represent ways that Indians found to live within the colonial frame.

Perhaps the greatest value of this book is that it introduces a collection rich in historical significance that few of us would expect to find at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Unfortunately, this type of museum makes examining such a remarkable collection very difficult, unlike if it were housed in the Denver Public Library’s Western History Collection or at History Colorado, where reviewing the contents of such a collection are routine.

This book is the dream of many an archivist who falls in love with a collection while processing it. It creates the opportunity to share the important details of the vast contents of a collection that might otherwise be overlooked. This one also offers a rare look inside the Indian schools and the cultural subtraction that was the essence of the U.S. government’s plan for the natives of this continent.

— Roger Dudley