

America's Switzerland—Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park, the Growth Years, by James H. Pickering. Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado. 2005. 458 pages, photographs, endnotes, bibliography, index. 2020 Softcover edition \$28.00

Built on Pickering's extensive research of Estes Park history, *America's Switzerland* is a comprehensive history of the village and surroundings during the first half of the twentieth century. Originally released in 2005, this paperback version of the book makes the history readily available to the thousands of visitors who visit Estes Park every year. To those of us who have made Estes a regular destination for much of our lifetimes, it is an in-depth examination of our favorite Colorado town. For those who are discovering Estes Park for the first time, *America's Switzerland* is a thoughtful history of the village, the natural wonders surrounding it and the people who turned it into a destination. The reader encounters F.O. Stanley, creator of the Stanley Steamer and builder of the Stanley Hotel, and Enos Mills, a driving force behind the creation of Rocky Mountain National Park. There are also the lesser-known stories of local hotel proprietors, businesspeople and entrepreneurs.



Unlike other Colorado resort communities like Aspen, Telluride and Crested Butte, Estes Park did not begin as a mining town, but was a tourist destination from the beginning. The natural beauty surrounding Estes, as well as the teaming wildlife in its hills, attracted sightseers, hunters and fishermen. The book begins with the opening of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915, a pivotal event that solidified the town's tourism future. As Pickering explains, the proximity of the national park also created challenges and controversies that few communities face. Otherwise-simple tasks like building roads into and through the park were complicated by local, state and national politics. Hoteliers and operators of sightseeing tours tussled with parks superintendents and each other over regulations designed to both protect and exploit the national park. The economic and physical wellbeing of the village itself became dependent upon the ebb and flow of visitors, who nearly overwhelmed it during the summer and virtually disappeared during the winter.

Pickering carefully, yet entertainingly, provides background on many of the familiar places and names in one of Colorado's most beloved tourist towns. The book ends in the 1940s with a brief mention of developments in Rocky Mountain National Park in the following years. I hope that we will eventually see another volume from Pickering, applying his excellent research and writing to the second half of the twentieth century, a period of even greater growth and change in the village of Estes Park. — Steve Friesen