

Three Founders of Castle Rock

Tim Weber

Among the most important movers-and-shakers in early Castle Rock were Gould, Craig, and Wilcox.

Jeremiah Gould (1837-1903). Born in Providence, R.I., he served in the Civil War and, like so many veterans, came west for a fresh start. He homesteaded the 160 acres south of Castle Rock in 1869. "Uncle Jerry's Cabin" became a popular stopping place for campers moving through Plum Creek Valley.

In 1874 he donated 120 acres for the new town of Castle Rock, then another few dozen acres east of the railroad tracks (the Craig-Gould Addition), which became the town's first mainly residential area.

Gould then moved on. He went to Denver, got involved in Democratic party politics, worked in the freight business, and built and managed the Narragansett Hotel in Denver. He died in 1903.

John H. Craig (1827-1891). Craig was born in Pennsylvania and joined the gold rush to Colorado in 1859. He settled in Happy Canyon and after a tough winter relocated to D.C. Oakes' sawmill (Daniel's Park). In 1865 he homesteaded where East and West Plum Creeks joined. The place was called Round Corral then; but after he sold it in 1870, it eventually became known as Sedalia.

He moved to Castle Rock, where he was part of the group that platted the new town in 1874. He and his friend Gould donated land for the neighborhood that still bears his name.

Over the years he became a Probate Judge, Justice of the Peace, and coroner for Douglas County. In 1882 he was elected to the state legislature and also served multiple-terms as Castle Rock's mayor from 1886 to 1891, when he died just before Christmas.

Philip P. Wilcox (1824-1911). Wilcox was also from Pennsylvania. A successful lawyer, in 1855 he became a U.S. Commissioner in the Kansas Territory. In 1860 he took his family to Denver, where he quickly got involved in business and politics.

He and partner William Liptrap started a cattle ranch outside Frankstown; but he spent most of his time in Denver, where he tried his hand at banking, became Judge of the Police Court, a Justice of the Peace, city alderman, and U.S. Commissioner of Deeds for the District Court.

In 1868 he moved to Douglas County where he made himself equally useful as a notary public, Douglas County Commissioner, and a county judge. In 1874 he became Douglas County

Attorney and was involved in drawing up the town plat for Castle Rock. In 1875 he donated 80 acres that expanded the town's northern boundary to include the Rock itself. Wilcox Avenue is named after him.

He was a delegate in the Colorado Constitutional Convention, was appointed U.S. Marshall for Colorado, and became the Indian Agent for the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona and put Geronimo behind bars. Bad investments broke him; and he died in the Denver county hospital in 1911.

Of the Big Three, only John Craig is buried in Castle Rock.