

Poundcake Rock?

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We could be living in Poundcake Rock, Colorado, not Castle Rock. Here's the story of how our town got its name.

For some time historians believed that the distinctive rock outcropping we call Castle Rock was named in 1820, during the scientific expedition of Stephen H. Long (Longs Peak) up the South Platte River. In his report, he mentioned passing by "Castle Rock," but his description most likely referred to "Elephant Rock" located between Monument and Palmer Lake.

In 1843 John C. Fremont led another expedition along the South Platte River and sighted a distinctive outcropping that his men named "Poundcake Rock" because they were hungry and thought the rock bore a resemblance from a certain angle. We can all be glad the name did not stick.

Most historians now believe that Castle Rock got its name from David Kellogg. In late 1858, Kellogg led a group of gold-seekers along Cherry Creek. On Christmas Eve he and a smaller prospecting party began exploring along Plum Creek. In his diary, Kellogg recorded what happened next:

"At the bend of Plum Creek stands a large flat-topped round rock resting on a pyramid base. It is an isolated part of the original rock formation, the softer part below being worn away. We fire our guns and christen the place 'Castle Rock,' thinking we are the first to give it a name. Bob Willis climbed this rock a week ago and claims he was the first white man to do so."

Kellogg was wrong about being the first to give the rock a name (remember "Poundcake"); and there is no way of knowing if Bob Willis was the first white man to climb it. After all, the rock had been there a long time, in full view of the white trappers, Cheyenne, and Arapaho who traveled up and down Plum Creek Valley. We do not know what any of them called the rock. But we can be thankful that the name Kellogg gave it stuck.

When homesteaders started laying claim to land around the rock, everybody called it Castle Rock. Who wouldn't prefer to live in the shadow of a majestic castle than a dessert cake?

If that is how Castle Rock got its name, how did the town we know get started? In the weeks ahead, we'll remember the people and events that made the Town of Castle Rock.