

FIRST DRAFT

Colorado's first lieutenant governor was much more than a politician

Lafayette Head served as Colorado's first lieutenant governor, but that was really a small item in his career. He was also a soldier, rancher, an agent with the U.S. Indian Agency and Indian fighter, sheriff and a politician in Colorado and New Mexico.

He also was a leader in the San Luis Valley community but was accused of holding American Indian children as slaves.

Head was born on the Missouri frontier in 1825. As a teenager, he met a former Missourian who had become an explorer: Christopher Kit Carson.

They reconnected later in New Mexico and remained friends until Carson's death in 1868.

In 1846, at the beginning of the Mexican War, Head enlisted in the Missouri Mounted Volunteers. His unit joined Gen. Stephen Watt Kearney's army to capture New Mexico, then part of Mexico.

When New Mexico surrendered without a shot fired, Kearney and most of his troops headed west to California.

Head's unit remained in New Mexico to protect the civilian government Kearney had installed. In January 1847, the appointed governor, Charles Bent, and other U.S. officials were killed by Latinos and Pueblo Indians at Taos.

Head and his unit surrounded the rebels near Taos. He was wounded in February 1847, when rebels tried to break through the U.S. lines.

The revolt was put down, and Head was discharged from the Army in September 1847. He remained in Santa Fe rather than return to Missouri.

When the war ended in February 1848, New Mexico, California and the future states of Utah, Nevada and Arizona, as well as western Colorado, joined the United States.

Head worked as a clerk in Santa Fe until 1849, when he moved northwest to Abiquiu, N.M.

There, Head opened his own trading post, conducting business with Latinos and Ute and Jicarilla Apache Indians.

Also in Abiquiu, he met a young widow named Marina Martina Martinez Sisneros, from a prominent New Mexican family. They married about 1850.

While in Abiquiu, Head was appointed Deputy U.S. Marshal for northwestern New Mexico. His duties included tax collecting and keeping the peace between Indians and settlers. His tenure was relatively uneventful.

Soon, Head and his family moved northeast, to near Ojo Caliente. There, he was appointed sheriff of newly created Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. Also in 1852, Head was named a special agent for the Ute and Apache tribes.

In 1854, Head led a small group of New Mexicans to settle along the Conejos River in the San Luis Valley in today's Colorado. They began building the town of Conejos. It wasn't easy. The Utes had long considered the San Luis Valley their hunting ground. Tension increased throughout 1854. Some settlers' livestock were stolen.



COLORADO PRESERVATION INC.

Lafayette Head's home near Conejos, Colorado, as it appears today.



Lafayette Head as he appeared in middle age.

Next, Utes attacked 20 residents of the fur-trading post called Fort Pueblo, east of the valley across the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and 17 occupants of the fort were killed. Several children were taken hostage.

Because the San Luis Valley was still considered part of New Mexico, volunteers were sought for the New Mexico Territorial Army. Head joined, as did Kit Carson.

They chased the Utes through the San Luis Valley and fought battles at Cochetopa and Poncha Pass. Finally, in September, the Utes surrendered.

Head returned to Conejos, where he built a large, single-story adobe home, a flour mill and a sawmill. His home still stands, and last year, Colorado Preservation Inc. placed the Lafayette Head Home and Ute Indian Agency on its list of endangered places. The nonprofit group is working to preserve the building.

In 1856, he became a representative to the New Mexico Territorial Legislature. He served until 1859.

In 1860, at the suggestion of Kit Carson, Head was named Indian Agent for the Tabeguache band of Utes. Also at Carson's suggestion, Head hired a young Tabeguache sub-chief as an interpreter. His name was Ouray.

In 1861, Colorado Territory was established by Congress, and Head was elected as a representative to the Territorial Legislature.

With the Civil War rag-

ing in 1862, Head, Ouray and at least six other Tabeguache Ute leaders headed to Washington, D.C., to discuss a possible treaty. They met with President Abraham Lincoln and other government leaders.

Ouray knew he couldn't speak for the other six Ute bands, so he asked the president to send representatives to Colorado to negotiate.

That occurred in October 1863 at Head's home in Conejos. But, for a variety of reasons, no treaty was made.

Head went back to work as an agent, sheep rancher, mill owner and local businessman.

In 1864, a group of San Luis Valley men asked the government to remove Head as an agent, saying he mistreated the Indians and thereby endangered whites. Officials who received the petition dismissed it.

Then, in 1865, President Andrew Johnson ordered all Indian agents to submit reports detailing the number of white or Latino families in their regions who held American Indian slaves. Head listed 160 people in Conejos and Costilla counties who had Indians living with them. But he failed to mention at least three Ute children he and Martina had in their home.

White and Latino acquisitions of American Indian children, who usually became household servants and family members, were common in the early 19th century. Head maintained his Ute

children were orphans who would have died without his family's help. People still debate whether he and Martina's Ute children were essentially slaves or informally adopted members of the family.

Most of their children were baptized with the Head surname. One Ute woman raised by the Heads inherited part of the Head estate.

Government officials found nothing illegal in Head's care of the children, and he weathered another storm.

In 1868, Head and Ouray again traveled to Washington, this time with leaders of all Ute bands, along with Carson and other Coloradans.

This time, a treaty was accepted by both sides, outlining the boundaries of the Ute Reservation in Colorado and arranging for annual supplies for the Utes.

After the 1868 treaty was made, Head quit his post as an agent. The Indian Agency was moved to near the top of Cochetopa Pass and became known as the Los Piños Agency.

By 1874, Lafayette Head was back in politics, elected as a member of Colorado Territorial Legislature.

By then, it was clear the territory would soon become a state, and efforts were soon underway to draft a Constitution.

Head was one of 31 men selected to write the document. He wrote the preamble that still stands today, as well as several measures related to agriculture and water rights.

Colorado officially became a state on Aug. 1, 1876, and it needed a governor, lieutenant governor and other officials.

Head was first suggested as a Republican candidate for governor, but rather than face a prolonged fight, he agreed to let John Routt seek the post while he ran for lieutenant governor. Both won by hefty margins.

After one term, Head retired to his ranch in 1879. He helped raise a grandson by his adopted Ute daughter, oversaw ranch work and remained active in the community. He died in 1897.

Sources: "The Life and Times of Lafayette Head," by Cynthia S. Becker and P. David Smith; "Lafayette Head," by Claire L. Lanier, *Colorado Encyclopedia*, <https://coloradoencyclopedia.org>; "Head Home and Indian Agency," *Colorado Preservation Inc.*, <http://coloradopreservation.org>.

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Denver homeless program struggles to reduce death rates

By JENNIFER BROWN
The Colorado Sun

DENVER — When people who had been homeless for years moved off the Denver streets and into apartments, they were far less likely to end up in hospital emergency rooms or get locked up in jail.

But they still died at the same rate as those who lived outside.

That's the grim finding from a new study of Denver's social impact bond program, which sends outreach workers to find the highest users of taxpayer-funded services including hospitals, detox centers and the jail. Hundreds of people who were chronically homeless have been housed through the program, which began seven years ago.

Previous research showed that the first 250 participants had cost the government a total of \$7.3 million per year when they lived outside and in shelters and cycled through the health

care and criminal justice systems. After they were housed, researchers found a 40% reduction in arrests, a 30% reduction in jail stays, a 65% decrease in hospital emergency services and a 40% drop in emergency department visits.

But as those researchers, from the Urban Institute based in Washington, D.C., worked on the previous study, they noticed high levels of mortality among those who were living in supportive housing, which comes not only with rent assistance but also mental health and addiction treatment.

A second study confirmed it: the death rate among those in apartments was the same as those living outside.

About 10% of the housed group — 53 people — had died, a number that researchers called "extremely tragic." Meanwhile, 9% of those who were still homeless had died.

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