How the West Was Sung

Created by Colorado composer Samuel Lancaster and illustrated by artist Louisa Armbrust, this musical history program for family audiences and upper elementary and middle school students examines the western frontier of the late 1800s from a unique angle – what DID those pioneers and miners do for entertainment when their work was done and the sun went down – without computers, TV, radio, or even electricity? Well, there WAS opera – and plenty of other choices.

History is set to music in short excerpts from operas and a Broadway musical about famous Colorado characters like Silver King, Horace Tabor and his glamorous wife Baby Doe, former slave Clara Brown, and the unsinkable Molly Brown. The program also integrates Colorado historical information with social comment in soundbytes and anachronisms that enable students to remember the historical factoids as they are introduced. Hang onto your hats and round ’em up for a fast and funny covered wagon ride through history!

One teacher’s comment: “Excellent! This fit right into 7th grade studies of westward expansion and manifest destiny; the kids were engaged throughout the entire performance. The creators were definitely tuned into adolescent entertainment.”

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How the West Was Sung

Yes, SUNG. How the West Was Sung is a humorous and tuneful look at one of the most colorful, yet often overlooked, pieces of Wild West history - entertainment. The gradual increase of leisure time is one of the great developments of history. The variety and popularity of entertaining pursuits increased right along with the rise in leisure time. In this new century, the availability of leisure time for all ages is at a historic high, and filling that “empty” time are many forms of entertainment: films, television, music (live and recorded), computer and video games and the Internet. But these media-based forms are only some of the entertainment options in our modern times. Live performances of theatre, dance and music are also available to those of us who live in towns and cities.

In the earliest days of the mining camps in Colorado in the mid-1800s, there was not a lot of leisure time. The work in the camps and towns was demanding, and for many, the thirst for riches that first fired the rush to the gold fields gave way to disillusionment and boredom. So, as towns were established and survival pressures lessened, a gnawing emptiness grew. Entertainers began pouring into the camps, prospecting for their own kind of gold strike. From newspaper records, diaries and letters, it is apparent that the rowdy inhabitants of those early camps and towns thirsted for entertainment just as we do today. And they found it: a rich and spicy mix of opera, theater, minstrel shows, bear fights, dancing girls, marching bands, piano players, and . . . wait a minute . . . did you say opera? Communities not only had a thirst for entertainment in general, but for opera specifically. Today opera is far from a popular cultural pursuit, so it may come as a surprise to learn that opera was a mainstay of mining town culture.

It therefore seems appropriate that opera and musical theater should align itself with Colorado history in the forms of The Ballad of Baby Doe, The Unsinkable Molly Brown, and Gabriel’s Daughter. In The Ballad of Baby Doe the oversized romance of millionaire Horace Tabor and the beautiful Baby Doe is recreated against the exciting but unstable days of Colorado’s gold and silver rushes. Gabriel’s Daughter shows us the hard work and faith evidenced by those who didn’t strike it rich but were nevertheless important in the building of diverse communities in Colorado. Molly Brown was a woman who was not only unsinkable, but a crusader for better working conditions for miners; providing education for all children, rich or poor; and rights for women. What a marriage: operas bringing one of the brightest pages of Colorado history to life, and Colorado history providing the subject matter for a form of entertainment that was so popular in the 1860s and ’70s that it filled 52 solid weeks of performance in a ten-year period.

**PAINTINGS**
The paintings you see onstage as part of the performance were created by artist Louisa Armbrust. She worked from actual photos of the period, using sepia (brown) tones to give the impression of old photos.
COLORADO ACADEMIC STANDARDS
How this program and resource guide relate

How the West Was Sung relates to Colorado Academic Standards for History, Reading/Writing/Communicating, Theatre and Music:

History:
1. Chronology
2. Historical Inquiry
3. –
4. Science, technology, economic activity
5. –
6. –

Reading/Writing/Communicating:
1. Oral Expression and Listening
2. Reading for All Purposes
3. Writing and Composition
4. Research and Reasoning

Theatre:
1. –
2. –
3. Critically respond

Music:
1. Expression of Music
2. –
3. –
4. Aesthetic Valuation of Music

Related science activities on mining, agriculture and ecology are suggested.
**ANACHRONISM**

**Anachronism:** Anachronism is a person or thing that is placed in a time where it does not fit. (noun)

The human brain is a pattern-maker by necessity. One neurobiologist suggests that in order to process all incoming sensory information at any one time, we would need a brain the size of a semi-truck. But since our brain weighs only three pounds, and patterns are one of the ways we process sensory stimulus, anachronism causes a trip in the natural sequencing done by the brain and calls notice to the thing that seems out of place.

Anachronism, which is used extensively in *How the West Was Sung*, is not a mistake. It’s a spray of sour lemon juice on one’s consciousness. It makes our brains pucker. It makes us remember. It also aids in simple encoding (the fancy, schmancy name for remembering). The use of anachronism can help us understand distant things, people, times or situations through a common piece of everyday experience.

Some examples of anachronism in *How the West Was Sung* include:

1. **“I want a Pepsi!”** What did the inhabitants of the 1860’s mining camps drink? What would your day be like without the convenience of modern, easily portable containers such as aluminum cans or plastic bottles?

2. **“I told you to bring the 4-wheel drive!”** Have you ever tried to cross a river on foot?

“Steampunk” is a great example of anachronism. Modern items are re-imagined as they might have looked during the late 1800s. For example, a computer keyboard and monitor are retrofitted here to look like an early typewriter and ornate mirror or picture frame.

Anachronisms also refer to an extremely interesting but difficult concept: time. What is time? Is it sequential? How does Einstein’s theory of relativity affect our common (and perhaps incorrect) concept of time?
The story of Horace Austin Warner Tabor has all the pathos and joy of a Greek tragedy, but set on an Old West stage. Fabulous wealth, celebrity, prestige, high office and philanthropy highlighted the career of the man called the Silver King of the West during the region’s riotous mining days. But when he died 100 years ago - on April 10, 1899 - at age 69, he left only a morass of debt. The Silver Panic of 1893 and his own flamboyant business ventures destroyed his fabled way of life.

His beloved second wife, Baby Doe - whom he married in Washington, D.C., in 1883 with President Chester Arthur in attendance - and their two daughters lived in poverty after his death, relieved only by friends' occasional kindnesses. For the last years of her life, the penniless Baby Doe lived in a shack at Leadville's Matchless Mine - a silver mine her husband had owned. Meanwhile, Tabor's first wife, Augusta, whom he abandoned to marry the beguiling blond Baby Doe, died a millionaire after wisely investing her divorce settlement. She left an estate of $1.5 million when she died in Pasadena, Calif., on Feb. 1, 1898, the same year H.A.W. went bankrupt. Their son, Maxcy, became a successful Denver businessman.

H.A.W. Tabor's name remains etched in Denver, most notably on the Tabor Center, an upscale Downtown shopping mall that is home to the Westin Hotel, where the dining room is named the Augusta.

"The Ballad of Baby Doe," which premiered in 1956 at the Central City Opera House, became a popular American opera, although it gives little insight into the privation and despair Baby Doe endured during her last three decades.
How did it happen? How did a man who became one of the region's richest men, who built opera houses and a mansion, who saw his baby's diapers pinned with a diamond, wind up broke?

Tabor was born Nov. 26, 1830, in Vermont. He moved to Maine to learn a trade, but like other men of the time, came west to be a prospector. He lived in Kansas long enough to be elected to its legislature, and returned to Maine to marry his sweetheart, Augusta Louise Pierce, on Jan. 31, 1857.

In May 1859, they arrived with their son, Maxcy, at the Pikes Peak gold fields of Colorado. Augusta was the first white woman in the mining camp, and the miners built her an 18-by-24-foot cabin. She was postmistress and started a general store, selling milk, cream and baked goods to the miners.

In 1877, the Tabors moved to Leadville, where Augusta's industry supported the family while H.A.W. went prospecting. That same summer, Elizabeth Bonduel McCourt Doe, 18, arrived in Central City on her honeymoon with husband Harvey, son of the richest man in Oshkosh, Wis. With a tangle of blond curls, blue eyes, a diminutive, curvaceous figure and an educated but lively manner, "Bessie" captivated the miners, who promptly named her "Baby Doe." She dressed in overalls, carried a shovel into the mountains with Harvey during the day to search for gold, then went home at night to tend the house. Though she divorced Doe in 1880, she kept his name.

Meanwhile, H.A.W. finally found riches after 17 years of searching when, in May 1878, two miners he had grubstaked hit a bonanza on Fryer Hill.

The resulting Little Pittsburg Mine was the beginning of Tabor's fabulous riches. By 1879, his holdings were capitalized at $20 million - about $350 million in 1998 terms.

Tabor was a great believer that to make money, you had to spend money. He speculated in everything - banks, stamp mills, smelters, railroads, newspapers, North and South American real estate, public utilities, mahogany forests and mining - silver in Mexico, gold in Arizona. The richer he got, the grander his lifestyle became.

H.A.W. became Colorado's lieutenant governor in 1878. A year later, he built the $78,000 Tabor Opera House in Leadville and funded the town's fire department. He gave another $10,000 for a mounted police force, the Tabor Light Patrol, which was called out to protect mine owners in 1880 after miners demanded $4 a shift. (Ironically, after going bankrupt two decades later, he worked 10-hour days at the Globe smelter for $3-a-day wages.)
While still in his heyday, H.A.W. moved with Augusta to a Denver mansion in January 1879, but lived there only two years. In January 1881, he began to keep company with Baby Doe and moved out.

When the $800,000 Tabor Grand Opera House opened at 16th and Curtis Streets in Downtown Denver nine months later, Augusta was barred from the opening. At the opening, H.A.W. was given a solid gold watch fob, complete with an ore bucket and elaborate engraving, by grateful citizens; a newspaper called him "the state's most beloved citizen."

PHOTO: Tabor's gold watch fob is on display at the Colorado History Museum

The tide of public opinion began to turn once H.A.W.'s marriage began to unravel. Augusta refused to divorce him, but H.A.W. went to Durango and got a divorce on Sept. 30, 1882. He gave Augusta $280,000 as a settlement, then he and Baby Doe were quietly married in St. Louis by a justice of the peace. No announcement was made.

Tabor was defeated in a run for the U.S. Senate but went to Washington to fill a 30-day vacancy in 1883. There he set the stage for the fairy-tale wedding he and Baby Doe desired. On March 1, 1883, they were remarried at Washington's Willard Hotel. The bride wore a $7,000 white silk brocade dress and the $75,000 "Isabella" necklace, crowned by a 7-carat diamond Queen Isabella of Spain supposedly sold to help finance Christopher Columbus' explorations.

The president of the United States, Chester Arthur, was a wedding guest and said the bride was the most beautiful he had ever seen. The reception tables were set for 50 persons, but only seven guests attended; all the invited ladies declined.

There was another complication. The Catholic priest who presided had not been informed that both bride and groom were divorced; the angry cleric refused to sign the marriage certificate or record the marriage in the church records. This has led to historical discussions over whether the Tabors were legally married.

That didn't worry the new Sen. and Mrs. Tabor. They returned to Denver and lived a lavish lifestyle, which included a $3,000 gilded coach pulled by four horses in gold harness. The coach was attended by a footman and a coachman in red and gold livery.
No one from Denver's high society called on them, but when Augusta returned from California shortly after the divorce, 250 people held a gala surprise reception at her 22-room Denver mansion.

Tabor's new marriage was blessed with the birth of Elizabeth Bonduel Lily Tabor on July 13, 1884. Lily's christening gown cost $15,000, and her diapers were pinned with an $800 solitaire diamond. In 1887, the artist Thomas Nast painted Lily's portrait for the January 1887 cover of Harper's Bazaar, in which she was hailed as the most beautiful baby in the world.

A son was born and died in 1888. Rose Mary Echo Silver Dollar Tabor, another beautiful child, followed on Dec. 17, 1889, but by the time she arrived, H.A.W.'s fortunes were fading.

H.A.W. was elected president of the Denver Chamber of Commerce in 1891, but by 1892 he owed more than $800,000. With the Silver Panic of 1893, Tabor's investments collapsed. He lost the Leadville opera house, the mahogany forests in Mexico, the Tabor Grand Opera House in Downtown Denver, the Tabor Block office building (now the site of the Tabor Center) and, finally, his home.

By 1897, he was broke. The Tabors - parents and two little girls - moved to Ward, where they rented a shack for $10 a month. At age 67, the Silver King of the West made a living by working the tailings of an abandoned mine for $3 a day. Reports of the day said he never complained.

His friends had not totally forgotten him. In 1898, Tabor was appointed Denver postmaster for a $3,500 yearly salary; ironically, he had donated to the federal government the land the post office was built on. He was a good manager and housed his family in the Windsor Hotel.

The respite was brief. Tabor died of appendicitis on April 10, 1899. He lay in state at the State Capitol, surrounded by dozens of elaborate bouquets, and thousands came to pay their respects. He was first buried in Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery, but in 1935 was moved to Mount Olivet Cemetery to be with his beloved Baby Doe.

After spending more than a decade as H.A.W.'s pampered pet, Baby Doe lived out the rest of her life in poverty. Daughter Lily returned to Oshkosh to live with Baby Doe's favorite relatives in 1902, when she was 18. She later married and lived a life out of the spotlight. Letters found after Baby Doe's death showed mother and daughter stayed in touch.
Silver Dollar, only 9 when her father died, had a more pathetic life. With no formal training, she tried, unsuccessfully, an endless stream of jobs - retailing, writing, acting in movies in Colorado Springs. Though her mother had little, she often managed to spare a few dollars for Silver Dollar, though there were questions of whether she spent them on alcohol and drugs. The two women often were at odds and accused each other of not caring. At age 36, Silver Dollar was found dead in a cheap Chicago boardinghouse, the victim of an unexplained accident.

Baby Doe lived another decade. She sued D.H. Moffat over ownership of the Matchless Mine in Leadville, one of H.A.W.’s former holdings, and for 20 years battled unsuccessfully to reclaim it. In the interim, she was allowed to live in a shack alongside the mine. Her diamonds and anything else of value long since sold, she wrapped herself in burlap with rags around her feet, and lowered herself into the Matchless to scrape out pittances of ore to support herself. Some Leadville residents befriended her, but many thought she was crazy and avoided her.

On March 7, 1935, neighbors who were concerned about not having seen Baby Doe for several days went in search.

They found her emaciated body frozen to the floor; at age 75, she had been dead several days. The mine owner’s heirs paid for her burial in Denver, finally reuniting her with H.A.W.
**TABOR TIME LINE**

The man once called "Silver King of the West" left little behind other than his name and a tragic love story. Here are some key events in his tumultuous life:

**Nov. 26, 1830** Horace Tabor born in Vermont. Worked as a teen in Maine quarry owned by Augusta Pierce’s father.

**1855** Tabor immigrates to Kansas Territory to homestead a farm.

**1856** Elected to Kansas Legislature.

**Jan. 31, 1857** Married Augusta Pierce in Maine, returned to Kansas Territory.

**1859** Horace, Augusta and toddler Maxcy arrived at Pikes Peak area goldfields.

**1877** Elected Leadville’s first mayor.

**1877** Mrs. Harvey Doe (Baby Doe), 18, arrived in Central City on honeymoon. Her husband was to work his father’s half interest in a gold mine, but lost interest, so Mrs. Doe went into the mine and worked, apparently the first woman to do so in that area.

**1878** Tabor elected Lieutenant Governor of Colorado.

**May 1878** Two miners grubstaked by Tabor hit pay dirt. The stake becomes the Little Pittsburg mine.

**1879** Tabor Opera House in Leadville opened.

**1880** Tabor took up with Baby Doe (Elizabeth McCourt Doe, now divorced from Harvey).

**January 1881** Tabor moved out of home; Augusta refused divorce.

**Sept. 5, 1881** Tabor Grand Opera House Denver opened; Augusta barred from admission.

**September 1882** “Secret” divorce in Durango (Augusta never notified);

**January 1883** paid Augusta $280,000 in divorce settlement.

**Sept. 28, 1882** Baby Doe and Tabor allegedly married by St. Louis justice of peace.

**1883** appointed to serve out the U.S. Senate term of Henry M. Teller, who had resigned in order to become Secretary of the Interior.

**March 1, 1883** Tabor married Baby Doe in Washington, with President Chester Arthur attending.

**July 13, 1884** Elizabeth Bonduel Lily Tabor born.

**Dec. 12, 1889** Rose Mary Echo Silver Dollar Tabor born.

**1892** Tabor in debt for more than $800,000.

**1893** The “Silver Panic” causes silver to drastically lose value. Tabor fortune collapses.

**1897** Tabor, age 67, worked tailings of an abandoned mine for $3 a day.

**Feb. 1, 1898** Augusta, 62, a millionaire, died in Pasadena, Calif.

**1898** Friends got Tabor appointed Denver Postmaster; he moved into Windsor Hotel.

**April 10, 1899** Tabor died of infection from appendicitis.

**1903** Baby Doe moved to shack at the Matchless Mine, began guarding mine with a shotgun.

**1925** Silver Dollar found dead in unsavory Chicago boardinghouse.

**March 7, 1935** Baby Doe's rag-wrapped, emaciated body found frozen in her shack at the Matchless Mine.
THE BALLAD OF BABY DOE

Composed by Douglas Moore, Libretto by John Latouche, 1956
Premiered at Central City Opera, 1956
Recorded on the stage of the Central City Opera House by Newport Classics with John Moriarty, Conductor, 1996

THE STORY
Silver King Horace Tabor is celebrating with the townsfolk of Leadville on the opening of the new opera house. His wife Augusta disapproves of his boisterous behavior but he reminds her “dollars from that old saloon helped to build the opera house.” A beautiful young divorcée, Baby Doe, arrives in Leadville and catches Horace’s attention with a winsome ballad, “The Willow Song,” sung from her hotel parlor. Horace instantly responds to her beauty with “Warm as the autumn light.”

Augusta discovers a pair of gloves and a note Horace has written to Baby and they quarrel. Augusta confronts Baby, who has decided to leave Leadville but changes her mind after hearing Augusta’s contemptuous opinion of him.

Later, Augusta is told of Horace’s intention to divorce her and swears that she will “make him rue the day that he was ever born.” However, as women had few rights in 1890s Colorado, Horace divorces her without her consent or knowledge and marries Baby Doe.

A few years later, Augusta attends a party honoring Horace and tries to warn Baby that silver is “done for” and they will lose their fortune if Horace doesn’t quickly sell his silver interests. He interrupts their conversation and accuses Augusta of trying to turn Baby against him. She leaves and Baby promises to “always hold on to the Matchless Mine.” (History relates that Augusta died a wealthy woman due to her sound investments and business sense.)

Baby proves a loyal wife to Horace, supporting him as he loses his fortune and until his death. Her final aria “Always through the changing” describes her love and loyalty through moving poetry.

Highlighted phrases and descriptions are heard in HOW THE WEST WAS SUNG.

NOTES
Composer Douglas Moore and librettist John Latouche composed THE BALLAD OF BABY DOE in 1956 as a commission for Central City Opera, which premiered it to great acclaim. It has become one of the staples of American opera, beloved for both its timeless love triangle as well as for its accessible music and beautiful lyrics. Based on actual Colorado history, THE BALLAD OF BABY DOE is filled with waltzes, ballads, marches, even oratory, all original composition but based on actual musical styles of the period. Artistic Director Emeritus, John Moriarty, who conducted BABY DOE in 1996, said, “The opera deals with universal truths and values. It is a story of undying love (Baby), of suffocating pride (Augusta), of hubris punished by the gods (Horace).”
Tracing the history of any person in the 1800’s can be problematic. To find information about a slave can be even more daunting since birth certificates were not issued, and individuals were often sold from one state to another. Many sources say that Clara Brown was born in Tennessee around 1803. Her tombstone, located in Denver’s Riverside Cemetery, does not give a birth date, only that she was born in Kentucky. What we do know is that Clara Brown was sold as a slave to a Kentucky tobacco farmer named Ambrose Smith in 1809. She married another slave named Richard and together they had four children. The two youngest children were twin girls named Eliza Jane and Paulina; Paulina drowned at a young age.

In 1835 another calamity affected the family: Ambrose Smith died, and to settle the family debts it was decided the slaves should be sold. This decision separated Clara not only from Richard, but also from her three surviving children. Clara watched in horror as her children climbed onto the auction block. Clara was purchased by a merchant and friend of Smith, George Brown, a man with the reputation for treating his slaves well. Clara felt so much a part of Brown’s family that she adopted his surname. When George Brown died in 1857, he left a will that allowed Clara to gain her freedom. Kentucky law stated that a freed slave must leave the state within a year to remain free, so she moved first to St. Louis and then to Leavenworth, Kansas. She had two motives, the first being her own personal safety by avoiding slave traders who were kidnapping free slaves and selling them back into slavery, and second, the search for her children.

Hearing that African Americans enjoyed more freedom on the western frontier, she joined a wagon train that was leaving for Colorado. In exchange for her fare, she asked if she could cook. Two months later she arrived in Colorado at the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River called Auraria. Taking a job at the City Bakery, she cooked for and found great acceptance from the prospectors and miners. They saw the gold in her heart and began to call her Aunt Clara or Aunty. She became friends with a Methodist minister to the homeless, Jacob Adriance, and knowing that he barely had enough food for himself, let alone others, she would cook extra helpings and deliver the food to the minister.

Clara began to hear about a town in the mountains called Central City. Seeing a new opportunity, she moved to this gold mining town and opened a laundry, the first in the territory. Charging fifty cents per bundle of clothes, she saved and reinvested her earnings in mining claims. By the end of the Civil War, she had accumulated property worth $10,000. What money she didn’t invest, she donated. Clara contributed to the
building of two churches in Central City, St. James Methodist and St. Mary’s Catholic. Devoutly religious, denomination was of no importance to her.

Rarely spending money on herself, Clara dipped into her savings to return to Kentucky to look in vain for her husband and children. Unable to find them, but still invested in helping others, she paid the way for twenty-six former slaves to come to Colorado, housing them temporarily, and helping them get jobs or start businesses.

Due to her generosity and two Colorado catastrophes, Clara lost her fortune. The 1864 Denver flood washed out several of her properties. Then a fire in 1873 burned most of Central City, destroying three more of her houses, including her own residence. She now had to rely on the charity she had once offered others. Due to the kindness she had dispensed for so long, many came to her aid. The Colorado Pioneer Association was one benefactor that rushed to her assistance. She was the first African-American to become a member of this association.

In 1882 Clara received news that overshadowed all the misfortunes in her life. A friend wrote to tell her that her daughter, Eliza Jane, was living in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Friends offered to pay Clara’s way to the Midwest where her life-long search was finally fulfilled. Eliza Jane had been married but lost her husband during the Civil War. She had raised five children on her own. Clara brought Eliza Jane and a granddaughter back to Colorado. While Clara’s spirit soared, her health began to be a concern. Clara Brown died on October 26, 1885 with both her granddaughter and Eliza Jane by her side. The Colorado Pioneer Association held a funeral service at Central Presbyterian Church in Denver. She was buried at Denver’s Riverside Cemetery. Her image in stained glass now hangs in the Old Supreme Court Chambers of the state capitol, a permanent chair was dedicated to her at the Central City Opera House, a plaque in her honor hangs in St. James Methodist in Central City, and she was inducted into the Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame.

Clara Brown was remembered by the Colorado Pioneer Association as “a kind old friend whose heart always responded to the cry of distress, and who, rising from the humble position of slave to the angelic type of noble woman, won our sympathy and commanded our respect.”
Clara Brown’s Colorado

1857 Clara was a slave in Kentucky, owned by George Brown. Upon his death, Clara paid $100.00 to gain her freedom. She was around 55 years old.

1858 News of gold in the streams of the Pikes Peak region of the Kansas Territory spread east. Green Russell and a party of Georgians made the first gold strike that summer. They settled at the point where Speer Boulevard crosses Larimer Street today and called their camp Auraria.

Another group arrived and set up town stakes across Cherry Creek and called their settlement St. Charles. A granite building now stands at that site on the corner of 15th and Larimer Streets.

Yet another group arrived at St. Charles, led by General William H. Larimer Jr. from Kansas. They “jumped” the claim and renamed the town Denver City after James Denver, the territorial governor of Kansas. The main street was named after General Larimer.

Clara Brown moved from Kentucky to St. Louis, then on to Leavenworth, Kansas.

1859 John Gregory discovered “The Gregory Lode” in a gulch near present day Central City. Within two weeks the gold rush was on and within two months the population of the area grew to 10,000 people. William Byers, founder of the Rocky Mountain News, pitched his tent along with some companions in the center of the mining district and Central City was born. Gregory’s discovery is commemorated by a stone monument at the eastern end of the city.

Clara Brown’s attraction to Colorado was not gold, it was the hope that she might find her daughter, Eliza Jane. Clara took a job as a cook on a wagon train headed to Colorado. She was the only black woman of the six women on the 600 mile trek. The trip took eight weeks to complete. She settled in Denver City for a short while then journeyed up to Central City to find work. The trip to Central City took two weeks.

1860 Denver grew to a town of 25 buildings on Larimer Street. Auraria also grew, and the two towns existed as rivals until the spring of 1860. A torch lit ceremony on Larimer Street Bridge took place uniting the two towns into one Denver.
1861 General Larimer’s cabin, with doors made of coffin lids and the first glass window in Denver, was torn down. A one-story false front store took its place.

These were wild times in Central City. In 1861 alone there were 217 recorded fist fights, 97 revolver fights, 11 Bowie knife fights and one dog fight. Remarkably, no one was killed.

1864 Colorado Militia forces lead by Colonel J. M. Chivington attacked a Cheyenne and Arapaho camp in southeastern Colorado slaughtering peaceful men, women and children. Chief Black Kettle of the Southern Cheyenne nation survived the attack. At a meeting in which Governor Evans and Colonel Chivington were in attendance, Black Kettle had said “All we ask is that we have peace with the whites. We want to hold you by the hand...we want to take good tidings home to our people, that they may sleep in peace...” (Denver, 1864) The attack, known as the Sand Creek Massacre, was ultimately condemned after three federal investigations.

A flood in Denver washed out several of Clara Brown’s properties.

1865 The Civil War ended and all slaves were emancipated. This meant that Clara Brown could travel around the country freely. She had managed to save the tidy sum of $10,000.00. She made some wise investments in Colorado real estate and left for Virginia and Kentucky in search of her loved ones. She returned to Central City with thirty four members of her family and sixteen other freed slaves, finding jobs and housing for them. Unfortunately her daughter, Eliza Jane, was not one of the found family members.

Denver was deemed the capital of the new Colorado Territory.

1871 The Republican Convention took place in Central City. It, of course, turned rowdy and the second floor of Washington Hall collapsed and deposited 200 men into the Recorder’s office on the first floor. Nobody was injured.

1872 The Teller House Hotel, the finest hotel west of the Mississippi River, was built.
1873  President Ulysses S. Grant came to see his friend Henry Teller and his new hotel. To impress the President, mine owners decided to lay 26 ingots of solid silver in a path to the entrance of the Teller House so the President wouldn't have to dirty his boots. Legend has it that Grant became angry when he saw the silver bars and walked up the boardwalk instead. This was during the time that Congress was debating whether gold or silver should back the dollar. Grant apparently did not want to make a stand, or stand on silver.

In January a fire destroyed 16 buildings on Lawrence Street in Central City including 3 houses owned by Clara Brown

1874  Most of the buildings in Central City were destroyed by a second fire on May 21st. The fire was stopped by the Register Block (Masonic Lodge) and the Teller House, both sturdy, brick buildings. The town was rebuilt, this time primarily of brick and stone.

1878  The Central City Opera House opened, beginning a tradition of community theater, vaudeville and, of course, opera.

1882  Clara Brown received a report that Eliza Jane was well and living in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Friends raised money for the now impoverished Clara to take the train to Iowa. Mother and daughter were finally reunited in a tearful but happy reunion which was widely publicized in Midwestern newspapers.

1885  A Colorado pioneer and legend, Clara Brown died with her daughter and granddaughter at her side. She was buried with honors and her friends made sure her unlimited charitable deeds would not be forgotten.
MOLLY BROWN

Margaret Tobin Brown was born into a large Irish immigrant family in 1867 in Hannibal, Missouri (Mark Twain’s home town). Although she was called Maggie or Margaret throughout her life, the writer of the Broadway show loosely based on her life chose to call her Molly. When the hit movie starring Debbie Reynolds was released in 1964, “Molly” stuck for good.

Maggie and her brother Daniel made the wagon trip to Leadville, Colorado in 1885 when she was 18. She found a job working in the dry goods store and soon met James J. Brown (known as J.J. or Johnny), a miner, also of Irish descent. They were married a few months later and, while living in Leadville, had two children. Although Maggie knew how to read and write, she was determined to better educate herself and began to study literature and music. J.J. became superintendent of a mining company, then partner in another company. Just as silver prices crashed in 1893, gold was discovered in his company’s Little Jonny Mine. J.J. applied his engineering skills to prevent cave-ins in the mine and was well paid for his innovation. The Little Jonny gold strike became known as the world’s richest, making J.J. and Maggie unbelievably rich as well.

In 1894, the Browns moved to a beautiful mansion in the chic Capitol Hill area of Denver. The house still stands today and is called the Molly Brown House Museum. Maggie was now known as Margaret and became famous for her generosity to good causes as well as for her outrageously expensive gowns.

Margaret loved to travel and often visited Europe and other exotic places, sometimes with, but more often without J.J. She was in Paris in 1912 when she learned that her grandson was ill. She immediately booked passage on the next luxury ocean liner leaving Europe, the Titanic. Her first-class ticket for the maiden voyage cost $4350 and she expected the very best on the six-day crossing on the brand-new “unsinkable” liner. Late in the evening of April 14, she was thrown out of bed onto the floor when the ship grazed an iceberg that ripped a 300-foot gash in its hull.

A man in the hallway told her to get her life preserver and go up to the deck. She calmly dressed in the warmest clothes she had, went up and began helping others into the lifeboats. She would have remained on board, but a crew member picked her up and dropped her into a lowering lifeboat filled with other women and a quartermaster who was sure that their boat would sink. Margaret grabbed an oar and took control, convincing other women to row as well. They watched in horror as the huge ship slipped below the waves. Margaret kept them rowing
to keep warm and a few hours later they were picked up by the Carpathia answering the
distress call of the Titanic.

Exhausted as she was, Margaret refused to rest and helped organize rescue efforts. She knew
several languages and was able to translate instructions for the immigrant passengers. She
made lists of survivors and arranged for the names to be radioed ahead to their families. And,
together with a group of other wealthy survivors, she helped raise money for destitute victims.
Before the Carpathia docked in New York, they had raised nearly $10,000. Margaret stayed on
board the Carpathia until arrangements had been made for the last of the Titanic survivors. Her
heroic actions were brought to the attention of reporters who spread her story coast to coast
and across the Atlantic.

Now that she was a celebrity, Margaret used her stature and influence to support worthy
causes. She campaigned for education reforms and funded a playground and summer school
for hundreds of low-income children. She fought for equal rights for women, organized relief
efforts for miners’ families after a coal strike and lobbied for better working conditions in the
mines. She was outspoken and courageous and refused to be intimidated by politicians or
industry titans if she believed she was right.

Margaret lived an exciting life during exciting
times. Outrageous stories about her appeared
regularly in the newspapers of the day, but she
loved the publicity even though most of the
stories were untrue. She called herself “a
daughter of adventure,” which meant that she
“never experienced a dull moment and was
prepared for any eventuality.” When she died
of a stroke in 1932, The Denver Post said of
her, “She had a definite, fearless personality.
She knew what she wanted and went after it,
and seldom failed her goal.”
ACTIVITY

HISTORY, HERSTORY
MYSTORY (MY STORY)
OURSTORY

There is only a letter’s difference between the word for personal history, mystery and that word for something that is not fully understood, mystery. When we articulate our stories, we remove some of the mystery of our lives.

History surrounds us. The sometimes dull memorization of names and dates is only one way of converting mystery into mystory: Who are my ancestors, where did they come from? Almost anything around you holds a bit of history. Your name, for example...

Your name. Have you ever really thought about your name, wondered what it means, where it came from, and why your parents gave it to you in the first place? Our names are so familiar to us that we seldom think about them and yet, they can be the beginning of our very own personal history book.

Start by writing down ALL of your names. Find out your mom’s maiden name (maybe it’s your middle name!). Do you know what “surname” means?

Before you yawn and think, “Oh, come on! Everybody has a name. Big deal!” you might be interested to know that if you were living just 400 years ago, you might not have had a surname. Villages were small, and while everyone had a first name, they did not have surnames. They didn’t need them because everyone knew everybody else, and everyone was likely a part of one large family anyway. But then villages merged and settlements grew, and it became necessary to have a way of identifying people.

The easiest method for distinguishing between people seems to have been saying, “There’s Bill, Robert’s son.” Or perhaps the person’s occupation was the distinguishing feature: “There’s Bill, the baker.” Even the location of the person’s home was useful: “There’s Bill from over the hill.” (It’s best NOT to say your teacher is over the hill. It has a different meaning these days!)

People thus were named in one of several different ways:

1. Identification with their father by taking his name (This is called a patronym.)
2. A descriptive nickname
3. Where they lived
4. The time of year a person was born
5. Occupation
The origin of your name probably fits into one of these categories.

In the late middle ages, one of the easiest ways to identify yourself was with your father. So, when people asked who you were, you might have replied...I’m Robertson, Carlson, Stevenson (Stevens), Ben-David.

One of you ancestors may have had some physical feature that his friends (or enemies) used to refer to him...Youngman, Newman, Klein (small), Truman, Black.

**Where you lived** was also a convenient way to refer to you...Greenlee, Wells, Underwood, Atwater.

Maybe you became known by the time of year during which you were born or by a special event that occurred near the time of your birth...Winter, Summer, Valentine, Martinez (St. Martin’s Day).

**Occupation**, even today, is the way many people describe themselves: Baker, Miller, Smith, Carter, Farmer, Barber.

**C’mon, play the name game. It’s fun!!**
ACTIVITY

A FAMILY HISTORY QUIZ
(It’s fun, really!!)

For a quick look at how much you know about changing mystery into mystory, try your hand at the following questions without asking your parents for any of the answers.

1. What is your father’s full name? (first, last and everything in between)
2. When was he born?
3. Where was he born? (town, state, country)
4. What is your mother’s full name? (first, last and everything in between)
5. When was she born?
6. Where was she born? (Remember, no fair asking!)
7. What are the names of your grandparents? Your great-grandparents?
8. When and where were your grandparents born?
9. What are or were the occupations of your grandparents?
10. What countries did your paternal ancestors come from originally? How about your maternal ancestors? (Do you need to look up “parternal” and “maternal?”)
11. When did your ancestors from both sides of the family first come to this country?
12. Where did they first settle and why?
13. Which cities and states have your family lived in?
14. When was the town you live in established? How did it get its name?
15. Who (or what!) lived there before it became a town or city?
16. Why does your town happen to be where it is? (What events or circumstances led to the establishment of your town?)

Check your answers with your parents, grandparents or teachers, and give yourself one point for each correct answer.

12 or more – Congratulations! You’re already a backyard historian!
9 or more – Not bad! You’re on your way to solving your own history mystery.
6, more or less – Don’t worry! Find the person or people in your family who can help piece together your “mystery” and interview them. You just might uncover your hidden talents as an investigative reporter!
ACTIVITY

MUSIC AND HISTORY

The music played and listened to in a certain culture or time period is just one of many ways history can be told.

Hard as it is to imagine, your parents were once kids themselves and probably listened to music as eagerly as you do. (We hope you listen eagerly to all kinds of music!)

What music did your parents listen to? Did their parents (your grandparents) like and approve of their musical tastes? Did your parents or grandparents buy records? Cassettes? 8-track tapes? There’s an entire historical side-trip here...

CD’s and Itunes weren’t around when your parents were kids. In those days, you bought recorded music on mediums like those mentioned above. Are there any records or 8-track tapes at your house? Or a collection of Grandma’s 45’s stashed away in a box somewhere? Records came in different sizes and played at different speeds: 45’s were the smallest and usually had just one song recorded on each side; 78’s were medium sized; 33’s were big and had 10 or 12 songs recorded on each side. The number refers to the RPM, or revolutions per minute. If you played a 33 at 78 speed, the music sounded like a chattering squirrel gone mad. Back to history...

What kind of music did your parents dance to? What kind of dances did they do?

When rock and roll came along in the 1950’s, the music business changed dramatically. Before Elvis, most music recordings were purchased by adults. Then came Elvis (ever heard of him?) and all of a sudden, teens became the primary consumers of recorded music and they still are.

For an even more intriguing story, ask your grandparents what they listened to and what their parents listened to.

This kind of historical investigation helps turn mystery into history into mystery.