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The Discovery of Gold in Colorado

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THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD IN COLORADO.

[Letter of Hon. J. Sterling Morton to Secretary Howard, Jan. 2, 1886.]

Since replying to your letter this A.M., in looking over a daily journal for 1859, I find recorded on the 5th day of January of that year the advent to Omaha from the Rocky mountains, of Al. Steinberger and Colonel Wynkoop, bringing the first gold from Cherry creek placers, where Denver now stands. The precious metal was in goose quills. The feather end had been cut off below the pith, right where the hollow trunk begins, and into this delicate, translucent receptacle the scale gold had been poured. There were not to exceed six quills full altogether, but there were enough to energize, organize, and enthuse a cavalcade of fortune hunters the succeeding spring which reached from the Missouri river to Pike's Peak.

The indices of Denver, the pointing fingers of fortune, were gloved in those insignificant auriferous feather ends. The marvelous unlocking of nature's safety deposit of silver at Leadville and gold at Georgetown and Golden, which has followed the discoveries of 1859, make the advent of Steinberger and Wynkoop at the old Herndon, in Omaha, on the 5th day of January of that year, a sort of metallic milestone in the development of the mighty mineral resources of the Rocky mountains.*

*The following extract from a letter of Mr. A. G. Barnes, of Lincoln, was published in the *Daily State Journal*, Jan. 15, 1886:

"I notice in a report of the meeting of the Historical Society a letter written by Hon. J. Sterling Morton, wherein he says: 'In looking over a daily journal for 1859, I find recorded on the 5th day of January of that year the advent to Omaha from the Rocky mountains of Al. Steinberger and Colonel Wynkoop, bringing in the first gold from Cherry creek placers.' The coming of these men at that time is true—I knew them well and both were from St. Joe, Missouri—but they were not the first to return from Pike's Peak to the river with gold dust.

"On the 25th day of December, 1858, I landed at Plattsmouth, and in a quill from a mountain eagle I carried about fifty cents worth of gold dust which I had found and panned myself at what was called the Mexican diggings, three miles above the mouth of Cherry creek on the banks of the Platte river.

"At that time there were about half a dozen Mexicans working there and getting from fifty cents to $1.50 a day per man.

"Moses Stocking, Milo Fellows, and myself, leaving part of our company, started about November 20, 1858, for Plattsmouth, 600 miles distant, with cattle. In about twenty days we

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