

1904 Counties of El Paso and Teller Ballot



Colorado Springs
PIONEERS MUSEUM

This ballot is for the Colorado counties of El Paso and Teller from the 1904 election. Six political parties are represented on the ticket: Republican, Democratic, People's (Populists), Socialist, Socialist Labor, and Prohibition. The ballot is designed for straight-ticket voting: it has instructions on how to vote straight-ticket and how to vote straight-ticket with exceptions. Assuming this ballot was finished, the owner was voting straight-ticket Democratic with 8 exceptions (of 38 possible votes). It is interesting to note that the ballot actually has the presidential electors listed by name (along with their candidate) rather than just the name of the candidates.

Behind the 1904 El Paso/Teller Counties Ballot

Colorado was growing rapidly at the turn of the century. Between 1900 and 1910 the population grew from 539,700 to 799,024. The population of women was growing especially quickly. In 1880 the ratio of men to women was nearly 2:1; by 1910, however, the ratio was down to 1.2:1. The sugar beet industry was developing in Colorado and proving to be a boon to the economy; powerful businesses like the Great Western Sugar Company promoted the development of irrigation and some of the dry counties of Colorado saw population increases of as much as 600% in the 10 years between 1900 and 1910.

During the 1904 election, six well-represented parties were vying for power in Colorado. Each party had Presidential Electors and candidates for the positions of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Auditor of State, and Superintendent of Public Instruction. Colorado has the political reputation of leaning towards Republicans throughout its statehood. In the 1904 election for El Paso and Teller Counties, the Republicans fielded 38 candidates, the only party with a candidate for every position in the election. That is not to say, however, that the Democratic party was not also strong with 37 candidates in the election. A year before the 1904 election, Republican Governor Peabody (who was running for re-election in 1904) had used military force to quell strikes and riots among Colorado laborers. After this use of force, the labor vote favored Democratic. In fact, the Democratic candidate for Governor, Alva Adams, ran on a platform opposing Peabody's tactics. The (Marx-influenced) Socialists had 32 candidates in the election, including Electors for their first presidential candidate. They attracted many trade unionists, immigrants, social reformers, and a number of former Populists. In 1893, Colorado women won the right to vote and, in the years following, many of the women that fought for voting rights joined temperance movements and the Prohibition Party. Although the Prohibitionists had been in politics since the 1880s, they had been largely unsuccessful in their efforts to outlaw liquor through direct policy. With time, however, their support was increasing and they had 25 candidates on the 1904 El Paso/Teller ballot. Still, despite the Prohibitionist Party's growth, it was not until 1916 that "local option" laws were replaced by full-fledged prohibition throughout Colorado (Colorado Springs was alcohol free from its founding in 1871 until the end of prohibition in the 1930s). Although the People's Party, also known as Populists, were very powerful in Colorado in the 1890s due to their endorsement of silver and policies that benefited Colorado rather than the Eastern states, they were waning and only fielded 15 candidates. The enfranchisement of women had been very important to the growth of Populism (and Populism was integral in to the suffrage movement's victory in 1893), but many of its early adherents had thrown

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their support to the Socialists. The Socialist Labor Party, with only 13 candidates, was the least represented party on the ticket. Like the Socialist Party and the People's Party, the Socialist Labor Party enjoyed a great deal of support from farmers, urban workers, and small merchants. Although they were the smallest group on the ballot, they are also one of the most enduring parties: established in 1876, the SLP is the oldest socialist party in the United States and they fielded national tickets in every presidential campaign between 1892 and 1976.

Historical Importance of the Ballot

There are a number of reasons this 1904 ballot is an important document. Perhaps the most obvious is that it is a piece of the past that can be readily compared to the present: Presidential Electors by name rather than just the Presidential candidates; instructions on straight-ticket voting, and the ability to vote for partial amendments. The ballot also shows a powerful activism in the Colorado's people, especially among the women and laborers, through the representation of the different parties. These people were challenging the status quo and, even when their parties failed to win a seat, they sent a powerful message to those in power. Finally, this ballot tells an important, but subtle, story about the women's rights in early Colorado. The representation of the parties was influenced largely by women's votes and political activism. This is very important because, in 1904, only three states allowed women to vote: Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho (in 1870 women had been granted the right to vote in the Utah Territory, but the Edmunds-Tucker Act, a Congressional attempt to weaken the Mormon Church, disenfranchised women in 1887). It was a common argument that women lacked political savviness and, therefore, should not be allowed to vote, but the force they put behind their causes shows that women were quite adept in politics. In 1894, within a year of Colorado women's enfranchisement, the voters elected the first three female state legislators in the history of the United States. Ten years later, this ballot shows the expanding influence of women in the government with candidates for Auditor of State, Superintendent of Public Instruction (for this position, all six parties had female candidates), Regents of the University of Colorado, Superintendent of Schools, and Mrs. Minnie Mace as a Presidential Elector for the SLP.

Additional Resources:

- A Colorado History by Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith
- Colorado Politics and Government: Governing the Centennial State by Thomas E. Cronin and Robert D. Loevy
- How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914 by Rebecca J. Mead
- The Historical Encyclopedia of Colorado edited by Thomas S. Chamblin
- History of Colorado edited by Wilbur Fisk Stone
- Colorado and its People edited by LeRoy R. Hafen; Colorado: A Bicentennial History by Marshall Sprague
- Colorado: A History of the Centennial State by Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb;
- <http://www.slp.org>