

Subject: Colorado's Early Attempts At Statehood

In 1864 Congress passed the first Enabling Act which gave people the right to enter the Union if: (1) they wrote a constitution; and (2) it was accepted by a popular vote. For more than 10 years Colorado attempted to gain statehood, but for various reasons failed.

- (1) 1864: Not enough support because of the voters fears of high taxes and military inscription.
- (2) 1865 & 1866: The voters approved, but President Andrew Johnson vetoed both times. He feared impeachment by the Republicans and Colorado would have sent Republican Senators. Despite Johnson's veto, John Evans and Jerome Chaffee acted as U.S. Senators but they were ignored in Washington.
- (3) 1868: Evans tried again, but his attempts failed when Henry More Teller, who wanted to be a Senator when Colorado gained statehood and was still fighting with Chaffee for the position, told Congress that Colorado had less than half of the 75,000 population Evans claimed.

People's attitudes were a prime factor in the failures listed above. Some feared the tax burden that supporting a state government would impose. Others feared that statehood would attract many more settlers and thus enhance the Indian problem. Colorado's economic decline during the 1860's killed Eastern enthusiasm. They believed Colorado could not contribute much to the Union and also that the "semi-barbaric" residents of Colorado should not possess the same privileges as the civilized people of Pennsylvania, New York, etc...

It was not until 1876 that Colorado finally obtained statehood, becoming the 38th state to enter the Union.