

CHAPTER ONE

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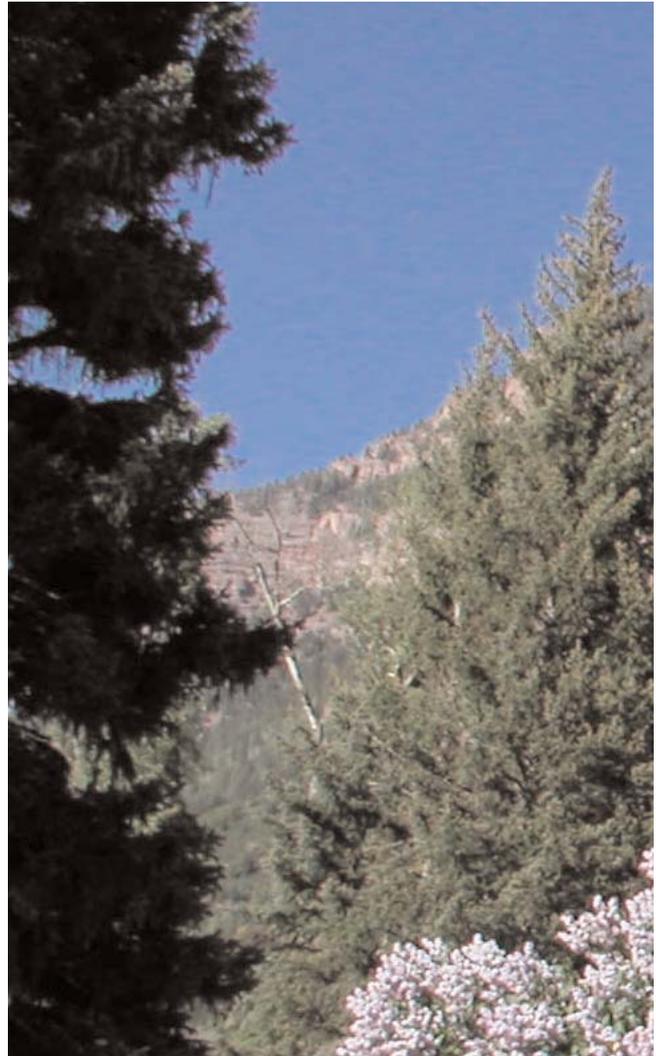
INTRODUCTION

Redstone, as with all the communities of the Roaring Fork and Crystal River valleys, owes its origins to the wealth of mineral deposits that exist in the region. The mountains of western Colorado were isolated from development well into the late 1800's by challenging terrain and weather, but more importantly by the domain of the Ute Indian tribe. As the surveyors of the 1870's began to explore the area and to record evidence of the subsurface wealth, the government began to move the Ute Indians out of the valley and on to the reservations in southern Colorado. By 1885 a number of the communities that exist today had been established and the wealth of the area was bringing in a surge of population. While silver was the economic engine of the upper Roaring Fork valley, coal was the resource that created the village of Redstone.

J.C. Osgood & The Early Settlements

John Cleveland Osgood (1851-1926) was born in Brooklyn, New York, and arrived in Colorado in 1882 as an agent of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. He was sent to investigate coal resources for the purpose of fueling trains. Railroads were an essential part of mining operations and throughout western Colorado in the 1880's, railroad companies were encouraging expansion of rail services to supplement the existing wagon roads.

Osgood's first foothold in the Crystal River valley was at Coal Basin, a coal-rich area 2,000 feet above what is now the village of Redstone. Osgood purchased the claim for \$500 and in 1887 organized



the red cliffs above Redstone

the Colorado Fuel Company, which later became the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I). By 1900 he oversaw 38 coal, coke and mining camps, the steel mill at Pueblo, several railroads and approximately 19,000 workers. Osgood was the head of CF&I from 1892 to 1903.

Coal was only the raw material; it had to be turned into coke for the purpose of fueling trains, steel mills and other industries. Coke is made by burning coal in coke ovens at high temperatures with low levels of oxygen. The product, coke, is almost pure carbon, which can then be used to produce the extremely high temperatures necessary for industrial use. The coal that CF&I mined from the

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lands in the Crystal River valley and Coal Basin produced a superior coke product.

While the coal was mined at Coal Basin, it was processed into coke at Redstone. At first coal from the mines was transported the 4.5 miles down the valley to the coke ovens at Redstone by teams of horses. In 1892 CF&I incorporated rail and toll road companies to form the Crystal River Railway. That line when completed in 1900 ran twenty miles to the north to Carbondale and Placita, including a narrow gauge spur to Coal Basin. Much of CF&I's income came from the sale of coke to precious metal smelters located elsewhere in Colorado.

In nearby Marble, Osgood found a second valuable resource in the valley, pure white marble of the finest quality. Osgood opened quarries on Yule Creek and shipped stone for many important buildings, including the new Colorado state capital building in Denver.

In addition to the diverse economic opportunities offered in the Crystal River valley, Osgood saw the potential to create a model industrial community by developing Coalbasin, as a company town based on the model of English mining towns. His goals were to create desirable amenities for the workers and to eliminate the unhealthful conditions prevalent in most mining camps. Osgood first brought the concept of a complete, self-reliant community for all of the coal miners and their families to the town of Coalbasin. Along with the residences he built community facilities, including a clubhouse, a school, a library and a store.

Shortly after the silver crash of 1892, which devastated much of the economy of the Roaring Fork River valley, activity picked up in Redstone. It was chosen as the site for producing coke from Coal Basin coal and for a rail transfer site from the Coal



John C. Osgood

Basin narrow gauge rail cars arriving at Redstone to the standard gauge cars running to Carbondale.

Early Redstone consisted of log buildings and tents built on platform bases, but Osgood's vision of a model company town would again result in a better living environment for the local coke and stone workers. Between 1901 and 1902 about eighty-five cottages were built in two phases for the married workers and their families, lining what is now Redstone Boulevard. The Elk Mountain Inn (now the Redstone Inn) was built in 1902 for bachelor workmen while larger houses were built on "The Hill" above Redstone for the managers. On December 14, 1901, Camp and Plant reported that: "They (coke and stone workers) believe that their health will thus greatly be improved (by construction of the cottages). Beauty has been the

guiding principle in the building up of our little town. We do not have monotonous rows of box-car houses with battened walls, painted a dreary mineral red, but tasteful little cottages in different styles, prettily ornamented, comfortably arranged internally and painted in every variety of restful color.”

The Redstone area development also included a ranch that provided food and ice, a schoolhouse that held daily classes for children and night courses for adults, and a company store filled with household necessities. Between 1900 and 1902 Redstone added more amenities including a clubhouse with an auditorium, a library, a doctor’s office, firehouse, washhouse, bowling alley, stables and garden plots. One mile from the village, Osgood chose to build his own home, the luxurious, state-of-the-art Cleveholm Manor, overlooking the Crystal valley and his model town.

The life of Osgood’s company town continued until the sudden closing of the Coal Basin mines in 1909. As a result the population of Redstone decreased dramatically. Osgood tried unsuccessfully to revitalize his Redstone in 1919, continuing to visit the area frequently. From 1925 until his death in 1926 he lived at Cleveholm Manor full-time.

With the closing of the coal mines in 1909 and Osgood’s death in 1926, the town languished and a number of the original buildings were demolished or allowed to deteriorate. It was not until the 1940’s that hunters and summer tourists began to rediscover Redstone’s natural beauty and hot springs.

Architectural History of Redstone

The beautiful Crystal River valley with Mount Sopris visible to the north and Chair Mountain to the south creates the dominant architectural axis of



Cleveholm Manor

Redstone. The main thoroughfare in the village is Redstone Boulevard (originally named River Road), which runs parallel to the eastern bank of the Crystal River for about a mile. The core of the village is strictly confined to a linear pattern between the river on the west and the steep rise of the mountain to the east. The original development plan for Redstone also included the slope on the east side of the river and the meadows to the south. The industrial property, including the coke ovens and rail lines, was located on the west side of the river in view of the village.

The consistency of the architectural character of Redstone is relatively unique among historic towns, due to its single architectural focus at all levels of detail and the short active life of its original economy. J. C. Osgood retained the prominent architect-

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tural firm of Boal & Harnois, which had received important residential commissions across the country. They were not innovators in architectural style, but built with obvious skill in the popular eclectic and revival styles of the turn of the 20th century. They were influenced by European tastes and contemporary trends and incorporated the natural and social forces of English mining towns that Osgood envisioned for his company town.

Boal & Harnois had designed the Grant-Humphreys mansion in Denver as well as important public buildings in Denver and elsewhere in Colorado, Utah, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. They were retained to design all elements of Osgood's model community from his own mansion to the cottages on the Boulevard. The design and construction of most of the buildings around Redstone took place between the late 1890's and 1902.

The social hierarchy, an integral part of Osgood's vision for a model company town, is clearly reflect-



the south gate house - relocated to Grand Junction



one of the hill houses

ed in all of the elements of the design from the layout of community to the level of detail on individual buildings. The simple, but decorative cottages on small lots along the Boulevard were for the worker families, while the larger lots and homes for the managers rose up along the hillside overlooking the cottages below. Completing the model is Osgood's extravagant Cleveholm Manor (also known as the Castle), located on a spacious, carefully landscaped estate to the south of town with its considerable number of support buildings, a farmhouse and barn, stables, carriage house, silo, gate house and icehouse.

The modest cottages used simple forms and incorporated details that were distilled from the more elaborate designs of the Castle and the managers' houses. Cottage lots on the south end of the Boulevard have consistent, wide setbacks of about fifty feet where native cottonwood, spruce and aspen trees have now grown large. The Redstone Inn at the south end of the Boulevard was built for single men and was convenient to the industrial site across the river. The managers' homes are more substantial and have higher level of detail, including stone foundations and decorative windows. They all



the boulevard in the early 1900's

fall within the same family of style, though none compete with the mansion itself. The quality of design and workmanship was intended to entice qualified people to fill necessary management positions.

Construction & Materials of Historic Buildings

Osgood's European taste, along with the construction techniques of the turn of the century, budget and natural constraints, highly influenced the design of the Redstone area buildings. The architects blended elements from many of the popular styles of the day to create a style unique to Redstone. The most dominant elements are English Tudor, such as ornamental half-timbering, stucco, and diamond paned windows. Aspects of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Shingle styles were also evident in Redstone's buildings. Cleveholm Manor, the Redstone Inn and the many public buildings used the highest style with the most elaborate materials and costly detail.

In the manager level homes, balloon framing was used along with substantial stone foundations. Painted wood clapboards or shingle siding dominated in these two-story homes with gable or gambrel roofs. The long rooflines with usable attic space and dormers gave more living space to these homes.

Steps usually led to covered porches with lattice-work underneath, which according to legend allowed evil spirits and poisonous gases to escape from under the house. While standard trim was still heavily relied upon for corner-boards and for doors and windows, costlier gingerbread and other decorative trim hinted at the superiority of these structures.

Boal & Harnois gained economies of scale by using the same basic design for each of the workers' cottages with minor individual variations in order to keep the costs low. The cottages along the Boulevard had about 700 square feet of interior floor area and were generally one story in height (about seventeen feet tall). Most were topped by shallow, sloping, wood-shingled hip roofs and had brick chimneys. They sat on minimal foundations, using local flat rocks to separate them from the dirt. Because of the high water table, the potential for flooding, and large underground rocks, the cottages did not have basements.

Cottages had individual board siding, usually clapboard or shiplap, with standard trim around windows and at corners to frame the ends of individual boards. Windows were originally double-hung, multi-pane with no shutters.. Nearly all the cottages had front steps leading to covered front



the gate keepers residence

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porches. The siding and trim were painted primarily in light, even pastel, colors. White board fencing ran the length of the Boulevard and reinforced the linearity and formality of the valley. At the north-east end of town where the setbacks vary and tend to be narrower, the fences today maintain the original regularity of the site plan.

Redstone Today

The rebirth of Redstone over recent years is dependant on a new set of economic trends. These trends are reflected in the resulting new construction. Motels, shops and new residences have filled the lots that were vacated by the original cottages on the Boulevard. The popularity of tourism and outdoor activities has sustained Redstone into the 21st century. While there has been significant new

construction in Redstone, Redstone's heritage is still visible through the Osgood era buildings that remain.

On the Boulevard about twenty-five original cottages have been rehabilitated. Many manager houses, the Inn and some of the support buildings associated with the original townsite are still intact. The Castle and a few of its support buildings remain, but many of the large public buildings that provided services for the coke and stone workers have been lost.

Redstone is fortunate to have the legacy of Osgood's industrial paternalism and his vision for a comprehensive architectural idea. Combined with the wealth of natural resources and its spectacular setting, this small village is unique among company towns and will continue to tell its story well into the future.



the Redstone Inn in the 1950's