

Robert W. Speer and the Queen City

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The history of Denver has many important events and people that helped shape its course and made the city what it is today. Early in the city's history such major events included the discovery of gold in the Cherry Creek River and subsequent gold rush. William Larimer founded Denver City (later renamed Denver) in 1858 and the first decades of the city's history were engulfed in a race to become the regional hub. Due to the leadership of Larimer and others like John Evans and William Byers the city won the race and succeeded in becoming the region's largest city. These men gave Denver a competitive edge over places like Golden or Boulder through publications and deals with railroad companies. It is due to the strong leadership of Larimer, Byers, and Evans that Denver experienced the economic boom that it did in the mid-19th century. 1893 marks the beginning of a new, formative chapter in Denver's history, just as important as its foundation. In 1893, Colorado's silver-based economy crashed propelling Denver, Colorado's capital and largest city, into literal and figurative ruins. The banks of the city crashed, pioneers and miners who were once extremely wealthy now found themselves living in poverty, and the city swarmed with homeless workers who came down from the closed mines in the mountains. The city, which had held so much promise, was on the brink of stagnation if not total failure. It was not until 1904, when Robert W. Speer became Mayor of Denver, that change really began to happen. When he came into office the economy had leveled off, but was a far cry from its former glory and lacked many modern amenities like paved roads and a sewer system. By the time Speer died in 1918 he had turned Denver into one of the most beautiful and clean cities in the world. During his three terms in office (1904-12, 1916-18), Mayor Robert W. Speer resurrected Denver from the lingering effects of the silver crash of 1893 by focusing on infrastructure and city beautification using strong leadership and political maneuvering reminiscent of Denver's founders.

The written history of Denver dates back to its earliest years, the second half of the 19th century. However, the history of Robert W. Speer is much more recent. The earliest writings on Speer date to 1919, just one year after Speer's death in 1918. The work is entitled *Robert W. Speer: A City Builder*. This book is quite peculiar in nature because it was actually commissioned by the City Council of Denver to serve “not alone as a biography, but as a public record of Denver's golden age of development.”¹ As one might deduce from this statement, the biography is a glowing account of Speer and his time in office. It uses a political framework as it glorifies both the man and his work in rebuilding the city through political action.

One of the next important works on Speer was published in 1969 by Charles Johnson. entitled *Denver's Mayor Speer: The Forgotten Story of Robert W. Speer, the Political Boss with a Rather Unsavory Machine who Transformed Denver into one of the most Beautiful Cities*. Johnson focuses on the underside of Speer and his political maneuvering. Johnson dives into Speer's reputation “a ‘boss’ with all the connotations of smoke-filled back rooms that the term seemed to imply” by looking at how his political enemies viewed him.² Johnson's work represents a new look into Speer by analyzing what Speer's political opponents thought about him through a political framework.

In 1973, William Jones and Kenton Forrest published *Denver: A Pictorial History from Frontier Camp to Queen City of the Plains*. As the title suggests the book is a collection of pictures that paint a vivid history of Denver from its early, Wild-West days as a rough, unpaved town to 1973. The pictures collected around Speer all focus on his city beautification works. Primarily the city auditorium, the Civic Center, his tree project, and the massive welcome arch

¹ Edgar MacMechen, ed., *Robert W. Speer: A City Builder* (Denver, CO: Robert W. Speer Memorial Association, 1919), Preface.

² Charles Johnson, *Denver's Mayor Speer* (Denver, CO: Green Mountain Press, 1969), 1.

reinforce the 1919 history by connecting his tenure with major public works. The pictures certainly suggest his works defined his time in office through pictorial historical framework.

A 1979 history of Denver, *The Queen City: A History of Denver*, written by Lyle W. Dorsett follows the trend of avoiding individual politicians and offers a more wholistic history of Denver from its founding in 1858 until the late 1970's. Through political and economic frameworks, Dorsett organizes the city's history into time periods around major events like the foundation of Denver, its economic golden age, and Speer's election as Mayor. He focuses on the early founders' leadership while downplaying Speer's role in the city's history.

Authors Stephan Leonard and Thomas Noel wrote a textbook entitled *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis* in and to date is the most in-depth assessment of Denver from its foundation until modern day. It avoids any specific framework and attempts to be a total history of the subject. This book is different than other histories because it fully acknowledges the economic crash in 1893. Referencing to a theatre fire in the city in 1892, the authors claim that "Like the People's Theater, Denver had been built quickly. When economic disaster struck, it hit the city almost as suddenly as the fire had consumed the theater."³ The authors also return to the original notion that Speer was an extremely important figure in rebuilding the city.

In 2002, Kathleen Brosnan published *Uniting Mountain and Plain: Cities, Law, and Environmental Change along the Front Range*. Brosnan focuses on American settlement of the Front Range, defined as the area around Colorado Springs north until around Fort Collins, CO. Utilizing an environmental framework, with special focus on politics, Brosnan argues that Denver was successful because "it monopolized the area's transportation, communications, and

³ Stephen Leonard and Thomas Noel, *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1990), 102.

financial systems” thanks to its “experienced entrepreneurial leadership.”⁴ Her focus stops short of Speer’s contributions, but does talk in depth about the early founders and leaders of Denver.

One thing that all of the authors ignore is the connection between Speer and the early leaders of Denver. It is important that the two most formative times in Denver’s history were dominated by strong political figures. In the 1850’s-1870’s Larimer, Byers, and Evans brought the city above its regional competition as a result of their leadership. Speer, in the 1900’s-1910’s, utilized many of the same tools that made the other leaders successful and rebuilt the city in many ways. The authors, however, neglect their similarities.

My theoretical frameworks, for the study of Denver’s history with special focus on Mayor Robert W. Speer, are political and economic history. Denver’s early history is defined by politics and economics. For example, the foundation and rise to power of Denver was facilitated by two main factors, the gold-rush (economics) and early political leaders (politics). The period between foundation and 1893 was marked primarily by economic success and the rise of the silver market. 1893 was the first big step away from economics as the silver market crashed and Denver’s economy along with it. After 1893 Denver relied again on politics with the rise of Robert W. Speer as a political powerhouse and mayor. Economic and political frameworks show the truly formative times in Denver’s history and how Robert W. Speer was a resurgence of political prowess that had not been around since the founders, all thanks to a major economic crash.

Luckily, there are many primary sources on Denver’s history and Robert W. Speer himself. The first primary source I will use is a report of the Denver Board of Trade for the year

⁴ Kathleen Brosnan, *Uniting Mountain and Plain: Cities, Law, Environmental Change along the Front Range* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 10-11.

of 1877. This was published during the height of silver and gold exploitation in Colorado well before the devastating crash of 1893. It contains figures about the exact amount of money earned from bullion (silver and gold), agriculture, coal, cattle, and so forth. The product from the bullion dwarfs all other categories. This source demonstrates just how dependent Denver's economy was on the trade of gold and silver, and demonstrates the nature of Colorado's economy before the economic crash of 1893

The bulk of primary sources comes in the form of speeches or addresses by Robert W. Speer. One such speech was given by Speer in 1907 to the councilmen and business men of Denver. Within this speech Speer lays out how he feels about government and demonstrates his politicking in the form of the new city charter, spearheaded by him. Speer is often accredited as being a political boss and he demonstrates time again that he wanted to consolidate power in his office. In the same address Speer talks about his efforts to build parks and infrastructure and the success it has had. These two sections in Speer's speech greatly support my thesis in that they exactly explain how Speer rebuilt the city through city beautification and infrastructure.

To fully understand Speer and his contributions to Denver, one must first understand the history of Denver. The story begins in the late 1850's. Gold had been discovered in California in the 1840's and again in Colorado in the 1850's. Although, not yet a Gold Rush, men began pouring into the territory in search of Rocky Mountain riches. One such man was General William Larimer; in 1858 Larimer would found Denver City and begin the race to become the Queen City of the Plains and Rockies. From very early on, "discovery of natural resources in the area that is now Colorado made the development of a regional metropolis inevitable. That Denver would emerge as the service center and directive force of the regional economy was by

no means a foregone conclusion.”⁵ There were many other competitors in this race to supremacy including Colorado City, Colorado Springs, Golden, Boulder, or countless others. Denver was just as likely to become the Queen City as anywhere, except for one factor: the leadership of Denver. It can be said that, “Denver’s victory in the race to become the dominant city was the result of superior leadership.”⁶ The core group of leaders consists of William Larimer, William Byers, and John Evans, however, Larimer soon abandoned the city leaving Byers and Evans to steer the city towards greatness.

Very early on the city tried to distinguish itself from among the others by means of transportations and communication. In 1859 Denver City became the first regional city with an overland route and in the same year Byers opened the first weekly newspaper, also in Denver, and began advertising about the city in Omaha. The early efforts began to separate Denver and raise awareness of the town back East. This success, however, was not to continue without stress, “the supreme test of Denver’s emerging power elite came in November 1867”, Denverite’s had expected their town would become the terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad’s Transcontinental Railroad, this idea was crushed in 1866 when the UPRR announced Cheyenne would be the terminus.⁷ This greatly shocked the Denverite’s and shook their faith in their young town, meanwhile “Cheyenne’s leaders boasted of Denver’s imminent demise”, but Byers and Evans never gave up hope.⁸ Instead the leaders of the town raised enough money to bring the railroad to them, regardless of Cheyenne’s status as terminus, and in November 1867 the money was ready and promises of rails were made. 1869 saw the building of railways towards Denver and in 1870

⁵ Lyle Dorsett, *The Queen City: A History of Denver* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1977), 4.

⁶ Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 4.

⁷ Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 21.

⁸ Brosnan, *Uniting Mountain and Plain*, 20.

trains began pulling into the town. The leadership had brought communication and transportation to Denver and “Denver’s future as a great city was assured by 1870 because a group of diverse men pooled their talents and resources in a herculean effort to build a city.”⁹ Were it not for these men, who knows what would have become of the fledgling city on the banks of the Cherry Creek. Their leadership, however, set the stage for the massive economic expansion that would occur over the next several decades.

To call it a boom would be an understatement, the economic expansion of Denver that occurred after 1870 can be called nothing less than an explosion. All areas of the economy expanded, take for instance how the “First National Bank reported that its assets jumped from \$457,536 to \$1,538,606” in just one year, furthermore, “Denver, which had stagnated during the 1860’s, grew by over 700 percent during the 1870’s reaching a population of 35,629 in 1880.”¹⁰ More railways were built to Denver and from Denver. Links to the mountain towns and their valuable mines became a major focus of Denver businessmen. The terrain was not as tame as the East Coast, or most of the world, but the gold and silver held within the heart of the mountains was too valuable to not face the perils, and within two decades nearly the entire Rocky Mountains, within Colorado, were connected via rail. The train expansion was so successful that, “by the mid-1880’s a hundred trains a week snorted through Denver.”¹¹ The obsession over gold and silver was the, almost, sole focus of Coloradans at the time. It was the heart of the economy and the state.

One example of a person reaping the benefits of the economic expansion is the story of Horace Tabor. He is extremely well known as Colorado’s silver baron. But he was not always so

⁹ Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 4.

¹⁰ Leonard and Noel, *Denver*, 41.

¹¹ Leonard and Noel, *Denver*, 41.

well off. Originally from Vermont, “Tabor, a pioneer of 1859, and his first wife, Augusta, set up a general store near the future site of Leadville in the 1860’s. Lucky to be present at the birth of the area’s silver boom, he made a fortune” and earned his reputation as being the premier silver miner in Colorado.¹² He, like many others who made their fortune in the mountains, moved to Denver. He began to make hotels and theatres and lived an extremely luxurious life.

Gold and silver were so important that smelters began to spring up all over the city. The skyline was riddled with smokestacks and smog. The smelters were so important to the city that, “by 1890 these smelters had become the city’s largest industry.”¹³ The production of bullion was the lifeblood of the city. In a report made by the Denver Board of Trade in 1878 the city and states economies are explained in terms of monetary production in each category of the economy. In terms of bullion it says, “the bullion product for the year aggregated \$7,913,411, divided as follows: Gold, \$3,151,277; silver, \$3,197,861.”¹⁴ The next closest figure, in terms of monetary value, is agriculture which comes in at “\$3,862,500”, or in other words not even half the value of the production of bullion.¹⁵ Denver’s economy was tied to silver and gold in such a way that were anything to happen to the trade of silver and gold its economy would struggle.

Luckily for Denver, the economy continued without a hitch throughout the 1870’s and 1880’s. It was not until 1893 that the economy finally crashed. This was not an isolated event, but rather had a long build up beginning in the late 1880’s and especially in 1890. The silver and gold based economy “was in jeopardy even before plunging silver prices precipitated collapse in mid-1893. Overbuilt and underfinanced railroads frequently steamed into bankruptcy. Ranching

¹² Stephen Leonard and Thomas Noel, *A Short History of Denver* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2016), 61.

¹³ Leonard and Noel, *Denver*, 39.

¹⁴ *Report of the Denver Board of Trade Showing the Business of Denver and the Industrial Product of Colorado for 1877* (Denver, CO: Daily Times Steam Printing House, 1878), 9.

¹⁵ *Report of the Denver Board of Trade*, 11.

was declining by the 1890's... Mine owners also recklessly expanded."¹⁶ Tides changed, briefly, for Denverite's in 1890 with the passage of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. The act required that the Federal Government buy "four and a half million ounces of silver a month", which initially helped Denver while simultaneously it "nearly bankrupted the US Treasury, as silver holders exchanged silver for gold, thereby draining national gold reserves while cramming treasury vaults with tons of silver."¹⁷ For Denverite's this eased their worries and business returned to normal, at least for three years. When President Grover Cleveland was elected he convinced Congress to repeal the Silver Purchase act and sent the price of silver into a freefall. A few months before this "Denverites gasped in June 1893 as the price per ounce plummeted from 82 cents to 63 cents in four days" which might not have been the end of the world for Denver, except that Colorado produced over half of the nation's silver.¹⁸ The problem was only worsened when Denver "depositors rushed to their banks to withdraw their money, only to find that their savings accounts had disappeared because bankers had loaned the money to silver kings, real estate developers, and other pillars of the community who were unable to pay it back. A dozen local banks failed."¹⁹ In addition to the failure of the banks, many mines and smelters closed. The events of the early 1890's destroyed the Colorado and Denver economies. The high of the late 19th century came crashing down around the Denverite's as their fortunes ran dry.

Again, the perfect analogy for the experience of Denver is Horace Tabor. As established above, Tabor earned a fortune with the Leadville discovery and became synonymous with silver, the same could be said about the city of Denver. Although both enjoyed luxury for some time, it

¹⁶ Leonard and Noel, *Denver*, 103.

¹⁷ Leonard and Noel, *Short History of Denver*, 60.

¹⁸ Leonard and Noel, *Short History of Denver*, 60-61.

¹⁹ Leonard and Noel, *Short History of Denver*, 61.

all came crashing down in 1893. Tabor was “overly concentrated in mining and real estate” and when the economy crashed “in the early 1890’s” his wealth vanished and he was forced “to sell practically everything.”²⁰ The same analogy could be used when talking about Denver, its wealth went up in air and it was left penniless.

The depression took a major toll on the population of Colorado. Not long after the beginning of the crash “local unemployed were joined by thousands of homeless miners who drifted down from the mountains...the unemployment rate topped 20 percent, the poor and middle class suffered greatly.”²¹ There were many other wealthy folks who also experienced the riches to rags of Tabor, but the worst of the worst fell on the already poor. The situation was so bad that “a tent and shack city sprang up at Riverfront Park along the South Platte. Denver...gave lumber and supplies to the homeless to build flatboats on which, it was hoped, they would drift away” just as they had drifted into the city.²² The situation of the 1890’s led to great reform in Denver, and indeed for the whole state. After some years the economy leveled off but was a far cry from the former glory of the silver state. The time period after the crash was the scene of the rise of Robert W. Speer.

Speer was born in 1855 in Pennsylvania. Speer was infected with tuberculosis and, in an attempt to heal his ailment, moved to Colorado in 1878 to live in the high, dry air. The very same disease had taken the life of his sister, but Speer survived. In 1882 he was married and quickly “resumed his work as a real estate agent. Not content to devote his entire time to business, Speer became active in the local Democratic party.”²³ Speer got involved in politics from a fairly

²⁰ Leonard and Noel, *Short History of Denver*, 63.

²¹ Leonard and Noel, *Short History of Denver*, 61.

²² Leonard and Noel, *Denver*, 104.

²³ Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 121-122.

young age and it was his involvement in politics that kept him afloat during the 1893 crash. He had many real estate holdings in the city and even did business with Horace Tabor but it was his position in the city government that saw him through. Speer's political career began in earnest in 1891 when "Governor John L. Routt, a republican, named two Republicans and one Democrat to the newly created fire and police board", Speer was that Democrat.²⁴ He had a good reputation and used it to his advantage to try to make change while he was on the board. Luckily for Speer, he was absent from the board when it attempted to fight against the government, in what would be called the City Hall War. his political rise continued in 1901 when he became the head of the board of public works.

Around this time one of the reforms, a result of the crash, was coming to fruition. The city of Denver was attempting to institute a form of home rule; this would allow for the city of Denver to draft its own charter and control its own internal affairs without the intervention of the state government. Speer was a huge supporter of home rule and firmly believed "in the concentration of all administrative power in the hand of one official", however the first draft of the charter was not as friendly to Speer as he would have liked.²⁵ Speer then made considerable effort to get the charter to fail. Speer made a deal with corporations in which they sent money "to Speer who subsequently used the money for paying workers to get people to the polls; officials were bribed to pad the voting lists with fraudulent names."²⁶ This event tarnished his reputation forever, and still causes scholars to question his moral ethics. Regardless of morality Speer defeated the charter and later passed a version that was friendly to both himself and the

²⁴ Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 122.

²⁵ Robert W. Speer, "One-Man Power" (speech, before the Commercial Club of Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs, CO, March 29, 1917).

²⁶ Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 137.

corporations who backed him. The charter was passed in 1904 and “immediately afterward R.W. Speer became a candidate for mayor, was elected, and on June 1st of that year took office.”²⁷

This marked the beginning of his first eight years in office, during which he rebuilt the city.

Much has been made about whether or not Speer was a political boss or not. Such an argument is pointless because one side will never prevail over the other. The more compelling argument is what was Speer responsible for when he was in office and what did he do to raise the city out of the rut it was in after the crash.

Speer will forever be connected to the City Beautiful movement and city planning. One has already seen the politicking that Speer was capable of and the large coalition and corporate support he had received during his struggle over the city charter. Once in office Speer put on the role of strong leader and builder, over politician, since his position as mayor was firmly supported by the aforementioned coalition. His efforts to rebuild the city left lasting marks on the city that are still prominent today. His efforts can be broken down into two major categories: infrastructure and city beautification. Within infrastructure there are numerous examples of his works. Chief among them are the sewer systems, paved roads, and the Cherry Creek embankment. During the first three years in office Speer was able to accomplish much of what he set out to do. In a speech given to the businessmen of Denver, Speer claims that “The Board of Public Works expended in 1906 over \$600,000. For Sanitary and Storm Sewers about \$175,000. For grading, curbing, and surfacing about \$390,000. Paving, Cherry Creek Wall, etc., about \$60,000.”²⁸ Obviously Speer is trying to make himself and his administration look good,

²⁷ MacMechen, *Robert W. Speer*, 14.

²⁸ *Address of Mayor R.W. Speer to Councilmen and Business Men, Delivered January Seven, Nineteen Hundred Seven, at a Testimonial Banquet Tendered by the Business Men of Denver* (Denver, CO: State Historical and Natural History Society, 1907), 10.

but the numbers do not lie. His administration was spending mass amounts of money to rebuild the city. Starting with the infrastructure. It is often overlooked in terms of government spending but Speer made it a priority to improve the lives of Denver's citizens. Speer, when talking about the East Denver Sanitary Sewer, notes that "it would be absurd to build a small sewer for this territory, which would have to be duplicated in a few years. Therefore, this main sewer trunk is being built to accommodate the entire territory or a population of 150,000."²⁹ Speer was extremely serious about turning the infrastructure of the city into one that would rival any major city. The sewers, roads, and Cherry Creek were just a part of this. In addition to these efforts Speer also expanded the Street Cleaning Department by giving them new equipment, better facilities, and making sure "the asphalt streets are swept each morning by double-hooded rotary sweepers and pick-ups."³⁰ The improvements in infrastructure put to shame the dirty, western, frontier town that Denver used to be. Instead Speer rebuilt the city from the ground, or underground in the case of sewers, up. This alone would have made Speer beloved and remembered fondly, however, he did not stop there he also wanted to transform Denver into a City Beautiful.

Chief among the city beautification efforts are the numerous parks, the Civic Center, and the municipal auditorium. Speer was fully committed to the City Beautiful movement and "he twice travelled to Europe to study parks, parkways, and urban design" and as a result "he envisioned a new Denver, a city of grace and charm, an American Paris."³¹ The first major step in creating his Paris on the Platte was the parks. Speer was very serious about his park building, in the same speech Speer claims that "one year ago Denver had fourteen parks, containing 603

²⁹ *Address of Mayor R.W. Speer to Councilmen and Business Men*, 11.

³⁰ *Address of Mayor R.W. Speer to Councilmen and Business Men*, 13.

³¹ Leonard and Noel, *Denver*, 140-142.

acres. During the year 1906 seven new parks were purchased, containing 429 acres, at a cost of \$221,300, not a protest against their purchase was lodged with the Park Department.”³² In one year, Speer increased the number of parks by 50% and the land area of the parks by over 70%. In addition, he not only made them bigger but also opened their use. Speer’s park policies “called for their use to the fullest extent” to include the creation of several lakes, swimming areas, stocked fishing areas, and most importantly Speer “ordered the removal from the parks of all ‘Keep-off-the-grass’ signs.”³³ Like his efforts in the area of infrastructure, his park movement was actually for the benefit of Denverite’s, not just for votes. The parks were a major effort on Speers part and the effects can still be seen today, one need only visit Washington Park and see the countless people enjoying the open space.

The Civic Center is probably the most notable of the beautifications made by Speer because it stands as a gaping hole in the midst of seemingly endless skyscrapers. Positioned between the colossal Colorado state capitol and the City and County of Denver building, the Civic Center commands the heart of downtown Denver. The Civic Center proposal was first brought up by Speer in 1904 and was not approved until 1912, considering it was one of his only proposals that would entail demolishing houses and other buildings from which the city was making money off of.³⁴ During Speer’s hiatus from office, between 1912-1916, construction began on the massive center. Although the Civic Center is the largest of the beautification projects it was not Speer’s favorite. That spot was reserved for his municipal auditorium.

The auditorium was the centerpiece of Speers efforts for city beautification. Speer wanted to make the city more prestigious and in order “to make Denver a convention magnet, the mayor

³² *Address of Mayor R.W. Speer to Councilmen and Business Men*, 5.

³³ MacMechen, *Robert W. Speer*, 16.

³⁴ MacMechen, *Robert W. Speer*, 47.

campaigns for a half-million-dollar municipal auditorium- then the largest in the nation except for Madison Square Garden in New York City” and his efforts actually worked and Denver hosted the 1908 Democratic National Convention.³⁵ Much has been made about the auditorium and Speer’s fondness of it. It has been written that “the auditorium was the favorite child of Mayor Speer’s brain. He never tired of devising a new form of entertainment for the people, for the most part free entertainments. Nothing short of illness or absence from the city could keep him away.”³⁶ Speer made sure that the tickets were either free or less than \$1 so that all could enjoy the entertainment of the auditorium. Speer made sure that all of his improvements for the city were for the good of the people. He did not build anything for the rich but rather for all people of Denver.

The relation between Speer and the leaders of early Denver, primarily Byers and Evans, is not all together an obvious one. However, above all else these leaders demonstrated a love and commitment to the city that, if nothing else, made them great leaders. Both Speer and the early leaders tried to make Denver a better place for the people who lived there whether it be Speer’s infrastructure and beautification, or Evans securing the railroad connections. Of course, there was self-gain in both actions but the people of Denver benefitted nonetheless. Another connection is the strong leadership of the men, in the face of adversity. Byers and Evans faced all the other cities of Colorado and even Cheyenne for dominance and it was due to the strong-willed determination that Denver won the race to become the Queen City. Just as Byers and Evans faced adversity, so too did Speer, this time in the form of economic and political crisis. Speer guided Denver towards home-rule and a new charter, while rebuilding the city to make it a

³⁵ Leonard and Noel, *Short History of Denver*, 76.

³⁶ MacMechen, *Robert W. Speer*, 38.

place that people actually wanted to live and do business. Whether the acts of Byers and Evans or Speer were underhanded or boss-like is irrelevant, what matters is that Denver was stronger after their leadership. Both instances Denver emerged more beautiful and ready for new challenges and growth. Without these men Denver would not be the booming metropolis it is today. Speer should be seen as a revitalization of the leadership of Byers and Evans and placed on equal footing when it comes to who the most important men in Denver's history are.

In just a few short years, Speer rebuilt nearly the entire city of Denver. Still lingering from the effects of the major economic crash in 1893, Denver was in no shape to undergo such a massive change on its own. The leadership and politicking of Speer allowed him to rebuild from the (under)ground, up. The effects of Speer's time in office still dominate the layout of the city and will not soon be forgotten.

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