

Architectural Significance

The Crawford House, with its use of stone for the first two stories of the house and a semi-circular arch over the front door opening, is a rare local example of Romanesque Revival residential architecture. The style was more commonly used in churches and large institutional buildings during the latter half of the 19th century, but was seldom used in single residences. The house is also an example of the Foursquare style, displaying a simple square plan with 2 1/2 stories, hipped roof, large central dormer, roof overhang, and unadorned exterior.

Construction of the Crawford House began in 1893 by mason Charles Briggs. The stone initially came from Woodchuck Hill, just ¼ mile west of the Crawford House, but when a soft spot was encountered the rest of the stone was obtained from Emerald Mountain. This quarry later supplied stone for many buildings in Steamboat Springs such as the First National Bank (Rehder Building), the Maxwell Building, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and the Furlong Building. However, the Crawford House remains the only residence completely constructed of the native ashlar sandstone. Around 5,000 stones were used to build the foundation and all four sides of the house with a double wall 18" thick. The weight of the stone alone is around 350 tons.



The Crawford House parlor around 1900.

The Crawford House is a prominent visual element within the residential Old Town area. Once located on the hill on the outskirts of town, the Crawford House was built with optimism, to symbolize future growth and confidence in the community. Today, more recent growth and Craftsman-style residences surround the stone house. The unique presence and permanence of the building serves as a visual reminder to the establishment and growth of the community through the influence of the Crawford family.

Renovations and Restoration

Other than routine maintenance such as repainting, little has been done to alter the exterior of the building. The Crawford family added a small third floor dormer on the back of the house in the first ten years, a Colonial Revival-style porch sometime in the 1910s, and later a small shed on the back that was removed in 2006. A metal roof was added in the 1950s and removed in 2005. External stairs to the 2nd floor back porch were added in the 1970s and removed in 2006.



The Crawford House foyer around 1900.

The Crawford House has been owned by six families. After the death of Mrs. Crawford in 1939, the house remained in the Crawford family for another decade until John and Eileen Pluta purchased it in August 1950. The Plutas undertook the first modernization of the house by installing a metal roof, an indoor bathroom, and central heating with a coal furnace and interior ductwork. The Plutas sold the house in 1972 to David and Esther DelliQuadri, who in turn sold it in 1977 to Carl and LaVerne Jardine. Involved with the Church of Scientology, the Jardines often hosted meetings and church events at the house, and performed another round of renovations including the exterior stairs at the back of the house, another bathroom, and gas furnaces to replace the coal furnace. Jerry and Pamela Nettleton purchased the house in 1985 and maintained the 3rd floor as a bed-and-breakfast for part of the time.

In 2004, Jim Crawford, the great-grandson of James and Margaret Crawford, purchased the family home with his wife Anna Fang. They undertook a restoration under the direction of Bill Irvine to insure that the home will last another 100 years looking much the same as when the Crawfords first lived in it. Several original pieces of furniture from the Crawford era, including a piano, desk bed, and chairs have been returned.

The Crawford House of Steamboat Springs



The Crawford House when it was built in 1894.

The Crawford House became listed on the National Register of Historic Places in August of 2005. It was the primary residence of James Harvey Crawford, the "Father of Steamboat Springs", and his wife, Margaret Emerine (Bourn) Crawford, the "Mother of Routt County." The two of them were among the most influential pioneering families in northwest Colorado.

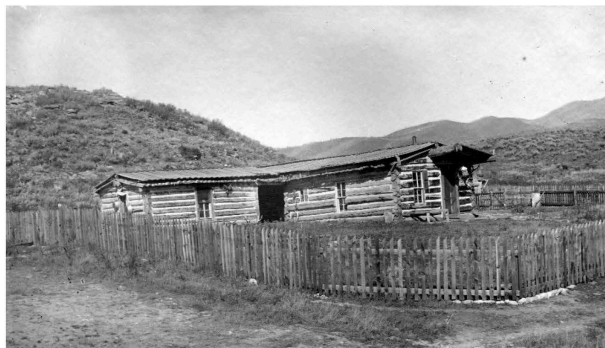


The Crawford House in 2008 at the corner of Crawford Ave. and 12th St.

For more information on the Crawfords see www.CrawfordPioneersOfSteamboatSprings.com
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Historical Background

The Crawford House was completed by James and Margaret Crawford in 1894 and was their primary residence until their deaths in 1930 and 1939, respectively. Their lives started on the farmlands of central Missouri. James was born March 30, 1845 on his father's farm six miles south of the town of Sedalia. Margaret was born January 18, 1849 on her father's farm, adjacent to the Crawford farm. Being neighbors, they knew each other growing up. James enlisted in the Union Army in 1862, and served for three years as a first lieutenant. They were married one month after he was mustered out of service. They bought land near their parents' farms, and during the next seven years led the quiet life of farmers, the only notable occurrences being the births of their first three children.



The Crawford Cabin in the 1880s.

Sandra Dallas said in *Gaslights and Gingerbread*, "American tradition likes to believe the West was settled by honest, brave men, not by greedy, grubbing miners as it often was, but by men with a vision, pioneers with a dream. Steamboat Springs was founded by just such a man, James H. Crawford."

James' dream led him to make an exploratory trip to Colorado in 1872. He liked what he saw, and in 1873 sold his farm, packed his family and belongings onto two wagons and led a small wagon train across the prairie to

Denver. They spent their first winter in Beaver Brook and the second in Hot Sulphur Springs. They were the first wagon to cross Rollins Pass, even before the road was completed to the summit, and James won a race to build the first permanent house in Hot Sulphur Springs. During the spring of 1874, James took an



exploratory trip west to the Yampa River with Missouri friends. When he saw the springs at the big bend in the river, he immediately knew that was where he wanted to live, and staked his homestead claim at the site that became Steamboat Springs. In 1875 he took four separate trips to Steamboat including one with his family and one with a land surveyor. In the spring of 1876 the family moved to Steamboat, where they built a cabin they called home for ten years.

For the next five years they were the only permanent family in the area. Margaret reflected later about how the hardest part of these years was enduring months at a time without hearing the sound of another woman's voice. Their most frequent visitors were the Ute Indian families that often camped nearby to enjoy the many springs. The Crawfords became friends with the Indians, in particular with the elderly sub-chief Yahmonite, and often traded with them, fed them, and tended to their medical needs. More than a hundred Indians came to the cabin on July 4, 1876 for the raising of the American Flag for Steamboat's first Fourth of July celebration.

Over the following years the Crawford cabin became the center of a growing settler community. It was the first post office, first school, first church, first library, and first newspaper office. During the scare of the Meeker Massacre, the cabin became a haven for the area. The Governor appointed James as the first County Judge of Routt County (1877), the first Postmaster (1878), and the first Superintendent of Schools (1879). He was twice elected to represent the county in the Colorado legislature (1879 and 1887), and once elected as County Judge (1883). In 1883 the first school was built near their cabin, with their daughter Lulie as the first teacher. In 1884 Margaret helped organize and build Union Church, a non-denominational church that was the first church building in northwest Colorado.



The Crawford House dining room around 1900.

Also in 1884 James organized the Steamboat Springs Town Company with financial backing of several investors from Boulder. The company laid out the town, sold lots, built a bathhouse, and promoted the town in diverse ways such as running the brickyard and financing the first printing presses for the *Steamboat Pilot* newspaper. With the addition of the Suttle sawmill in 1883, the town grew rapidly over the late 1880s and 1890s. The Crawfords built a small frame house in 1886, followed in 1894 by their "stone mansion", where they lived the rest of their lives.

In 1900, the Steamboat Springs Company incorporated the town, with James as the first mayor of Steamboat Springs. He continued to be instrumental in developing land for the new town: half of the original townsite lies on his homestead. He was also active with developing mineral resources in Routt County. He discovered one of the large coal deposits north of Hayden, leading to the Elkhead Anthracite Coal



The Crawford House in the 1920s.

Company. He discovered the largest onyx mine in Colorado and managed the Colorado Onyx Company, which supplied the onyx used to form the columns and walls at the entrance to the Colorado Mineral Exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904.

Throughout their lives, the Crawfords welcomed one and all to visit and spend the night, and their house was always the social hub of the community. The largest event ever held at the Crawford House was in 1915, when hundreds came to help them celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. Charles Leckenby, long-time editor of the *Steamboat Pilot*, said, "By unanimous consent he is conceded to have been the foremost and most influential private citizen of Northwestern Colorado for many years." Margaret was honored during the Colorado State Centennial as one of 18 women depicted in a wall hanging in the Colorado Capitol.