

The process of writing this book had a very simple beginning. Candy and I lived on the site of the former Great Western Sugar Company factory in Johnstown, Colorado, for almost three years. The Johnstown facility had been converted and operated as a cornstarch factory. One would think that due to the conversion of the site and time, all the fingerprints and footprints from the sugar company would have been erased. But we discovered this was not the case. During our evening walks around the amber-lit grounds we would stroll through the warehouse, mill, and administration building. We always felt we were not alone, even though we knew none of the employees were in the area. Soon after our nightly walks began Candy started writing a newsletter for the company, which always included a bit of history about the Johnstown factory, as well as other factories owned and operated by Great Western. Interestingly, in researching the company, she discovered there was no single source that recounted its entire history.

Then Candy decided to take some classes at Aims Community College in Greeley and Loveland. During her third semester she told me she was going to write the history of the Great Western Sugar Company for her class project. Obviously neither of us had any idea of the magnitude of this undertaking, as by the end of the semester it was all she could do to complete and turn in one chapter. By the end of the next semester, and only one more chapter, it became clear that this was going to be a BIG project. For the next four years our spare time and weekends were devoted to research, which we treated as a job (except an occasional break to fish!). We traveled to all thirteen Great Western factory sites in Colorado whether they had been abandoned, were only partially intact or still operational.

We also visited museums, historical societies, newspapers, and the local library in each community that had a Great Western factory to research this project. Hours were spent pouring through books, magazines, microfilm, and archived documents for information. The Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy Department, Fort Collins Public Library archives, City of Greeley Museums, Johnstown Historical Society, *Johnstown Breeze*, Longmont Public Library, and Overland Trail Museum yielded remarkable bits and pieces of information, particularly the Overland Trail Museum in Sterling, Colorado, where we discovered several boxes of Great Western's publication, *The Sugar Press*. I can still picture Candy sitting on the floor for hours (or was it days) with her printer and paper copying articles from those decades-old publications. Each picture and article became a treasure and integral piece to the Great Western Sugar Company historical puzzle.

At the perimeter of several of the factory sites we found remnants of the company's colonies for its Mexican field labor, an occasional German-Russian shanty, and company dormitories and manager housing. Some of the structures were in excellent condition and were being utilized by new companies, while others sat abandoned; four had been totally demolished except for their warehouses. Thirteen bricks, one from each site, were retrieved and are in Candy's possession. At each site there was a conspicuous "presence" that seemed to follow us around, very similar to the one that walked with us at Johnstown. *Footprints in the Sugar* will help preserve the memory of those whose footprints could not be erased by the passage of time.

- John Hamilton