

Chapter Three: Clara Brown_Colorado, 1870s

Clara Brown lived amidst the turmoil of the 1850s, feeling the absence of her daughter Eliza, whom she yearned to find. Residing in Missouri and Kansas, she was reminded daily of her plight and the sentiments reinforced by Roger Taney's ruling that she was not a citizen. Amidst the chaos of Bleeding Kansas, the allure of the Colorado gold rush sparked her imagination. Clara resolved to head west, inspired by a belief that Eliza might also seek opportunity there.

By the spring of 1859, Clara joined a caravan led by Colonel Benjamin Wadsworth, where her towering figure and resolve led him to accept her as their cook. Over eight weeks, she journeyed seven hundred miles to Colorado, maintaining her strength as she prepared meals for the crew. Once in Colorado, Clara was likely the first Black woman to arrive, and she quickly established a laundry and cooking business. Her innate kindness, nurtured by her age and experience, allowed her to offer comfort to the miners and workers, earning their loyalty in return.

As the mining communities began to grow, the demand for services burgeoned. Clara opened her home to the sick and became a midwife, nurturing others as she had sought to nurture Eliza. Her reputation as the "Angel of the Rockies" spread far and wide; she was known for her generosity and warmth. Clara also engaged in real estate, hoping to build a better future as her fortune grew.

However, her prosperity was short-lived. By 1873, her properties fell victim to flood and fire, while an unscrupulous attorney drained her savings. Despite her struggles, Clara sought the pension reserved for "official pioneers," only to be denied due to her race and gender. Nevertheless, her community rallied in support, helping her secure the designation.

Despite the hardships, Clara's hope to find Eliza never waned. At age eighty-two, a breakthrough came when she learned of a potential connection to her daughter in Iowa. With the support of her community, Clara embarked on the journey, culminating in a heartwarming reunion with Eliza. Clara's life was characterized by resilience, generosity, and an unwavering spirit until her passing in 1885. She was lovingly remembered for her altruism, resilience, and selfless devotion to others in need .