

Long-Lost Pre-Territorial Records and Gold Rush Journals Unearthed

Amateur historian Larry Obermesik's findings reveal Colorado's earliest settlers and bring new voices from the 1859 Gold Rush to light

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- A discovery of historic proportions is reshaping Colorado's early story. Amateur historian and researcher Larry Obermesik has uncovered a cache of pre-territorial records once thought lost and has transcribed never-before-published journals from the 1859 Pikes Peak Gold Rush. The findings, now featured by [History Colorado](#) and the Pikes Peak Library District, shed light on a formative but little-documented period in the American West.

The journey began in 2019 when Obermesik located a set of Gold Rush-era journals held at the Library of Congress. Written by prospector Daniel Jenks of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, the journals chronicled Jenks's overland trek from Kansas City to the Rockies during the Pikes Peak Gold Rush. Unlike many accounts, the journals had never been transcribed or published. During the pandemic, Obermesik painstakingly brought them to print as The Lost Gold Rush Journals of Daniel Jenks.



After publication, Obermesik turned his attention to the route Jenks traveled in 1859. Using maps, records, and fieldwork, he reconstructed the journey in Google Earth, producing an interactive resource that tracks Jenks's movements across the continent. [The project, available online](#), offers educators and history enthusiasts a new way to follow a Gold Rush journey.

Jenks himself deemed the Pikes Peak diggings a “humbug” and moved on to California. But Obermesik’s deeper dive into public records revealed that Jenks’s cousins—Loren, Judson, and Elizabeth Jenks—remained in Colorado. That discovery led to years of archival work in courthouses and libraries, culminating in a find that surprised professional historians: a trove of pre-territorial Colorado records once assumed lost.

When the Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) learned of Obermesik’s work, the institution invited him to lecture at its 2024 Regional History Symposium. Soon after, PPLD launched a new digital collection, Colorado’s Oldest Records, to preserve and share the documents.

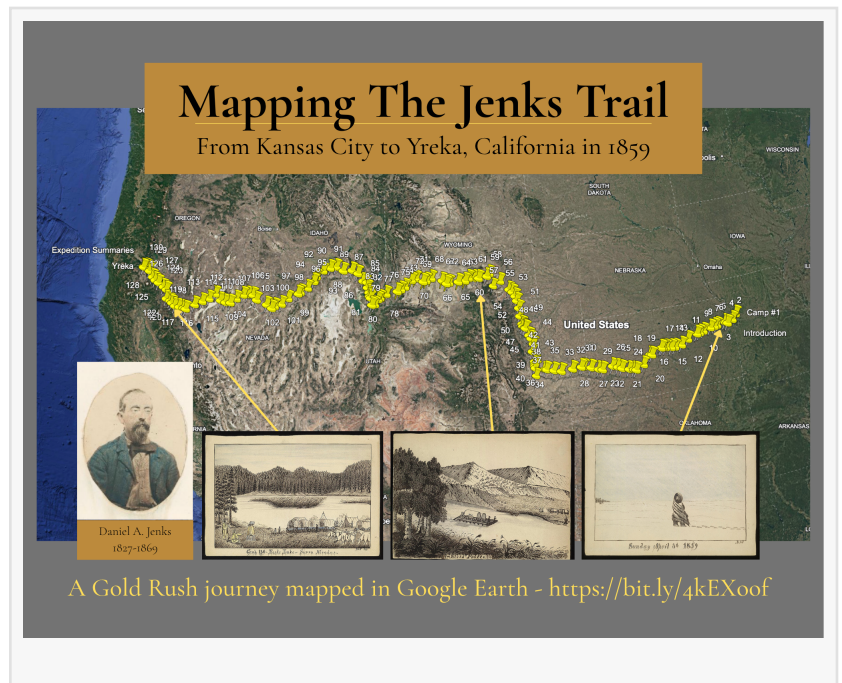
In April 2025, History Colorado published an eight-page feature on Obermesik’s research in The Colorado Magazine. The article was later highlighted in the July print edition, marking the first major media coverage of the discovery.

“These records add texture to the story of Colorado’s earliest settlers,” said Obermesik. “They remind us that history is not fixed—it’s waiting to be rediscovered in overlooked archives and forgotten ledgers.”

Obermesik’s work has also reached wider audiences through public lectures, a dedicated YouTube channel, and his website, [TheLostGoldRushJournals.com](https://thelostgoldrushjournals.com). His projects aim to make early Colorado history accessible, whether through transcribed journals, digital mapping, or curated archival catalogs.

With new material surfacing and institutional support growing, the discoveries invite both scholars and the public to revisit the origins of Colorado settlement. As Obermesik notes, “Every record we recover gives voice to people who shaped the region before it was even a territory.”

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