
A Brief History of Wiley, Colorado

Incorporated 1907 • Arkansas Valley • Named for W.M. Wiley of the Holly Sugar Company

The Town of Wiley was incorporated in 1907 by the Big Bend Town Company. The big push on building and expansion came just at the turn of the century. Many farms were already operating in the area, and water from the Fort Lyon Canal brought progress to local farmers and ranchers. A branch of the Santa Fe Railroad—known as the Arkansas Valley Line, or “A.V.”—was built through the heart of the agricultural land.

The need for a town arose so residents could obtain home and farm goods locally and market crops of corn, alfalfa, sugar beets, wheat, and livestock. The Big Bend Town Company purchased 80 acres from J.F. Rowe and laid out a city plan featuring wide streets. The commercial section for an elevator and depot was placed near the railroad tracks. Wiley was named for W.M. Wiley, president of the Holly Sugar Company.

Local contractor Edward Pierson, a member of the Town Company, used his cement-block machine to produce 100 blocks per day. Buildings rose rapidly and were occupied as soon as they were finished. Several of these early concrete-block houses still stand. The first merchants included J.N. Hudson, H.S. Parker, O.B. Yoeman, and W.H. Blosser (also the first postmaster in 1908). The opera house, built of the same blocks on the site of the present post office, served as the cultural center—hosting traveling shows, melodramas, and later a movie theater.

A livery stable stood just west of the business district, offering horses and carriages for hire. The Wiley Cooperative Creamery was built about 1915; after a condensary opened in Lamar it became a pickle factory (1925) and later a prosperous turkey processing plant. The State Bank of Wiley was organized in 1907 by H.G. Lamson, the town’s first mayor; its present building was constructed in 1909. The I.O.O.F. Building (1910) and several churches followed in the next decade.

The first school opened on Main Street in 1907; the first high-school class graduated in 1912. Silverdale was the first country school to consolidate with Wiley—and the first such consolidation in Colorado. A hot-lunch program was another statewide “first.” Early businesses also included a grain elevator, weekly newspaper, sugar-beet dump, drug store, hotels, and a theater that brought the first “talkies” to the area. By the early twentieth century Wiley had become a bustling service center for the farms and ranches of the Arkansas Valley.



Wiley Livery and Feed Yard



Wiley's Main Street



Wiley Cooperative Creamery (later Cheese & Turkey Plant)



Equity Building — Bank of Wiley (1909)