



Battlement Mesa: An Emerging New Community

By Keith Lammey, President

Don't you think that is a catchy title? The truth is, I borrowed it from a document that I found on the Western Research Institute's website, which is a Wyoming-based nonprofit that researches advanced energy systems.

I would gladly give credit to the person that chose the title and for the article but I have no idea who wrote it since the piece was unattributed. It was also undated, but had to have been written in the mid-1980's.

The piece begins by explaining that "the Rocky Mountain Area has over the years experienced a number of resource development 'booms.' In the early years, these were related to mining of gold and silver, or other metals. Recently, the focus has been on energy – oil, gas, coal, uranium and now oil shale. The booms often have had the effect of drawing people to isolated areas."

"With the development of oil shale," the article continues, "western Colorado may be on the verge of the biggest, most sustained boom of all. I would like to share with you some of the plans and experiences of the Colony shale oil project in dealing with the problem of trying to build/develop a stable and permanent community where none existed before." This is the Story of Battlement Mesa!

If you have studied our history or just lived here for a long time you know that Battlement Mesa's residential community resulted from The Colony Shale Oil Project. Located 15 miles north of Parachute, it was a joint venture between ARCO and Tosco Corporation. When Exxon purchased ARCO's 60 percent interest in the project, Exxon decided to build Battlement Mesa under the premise that thousands of Colony workers would need housing.

But why did Exxon choose to build a new community rather than expand Parachute? The article explains that "because of the terrain in the area, these workers cannot live closer to the Colony Project than Parachute, a town which had about 300 residents in 1980" then continues with "the location is attractive, but it is sufficiently rural to make the addition of several thousand new residents a difficult problem."

According to the article, Exxon chose to build Battlement Mesa versus expanding Parachute because, "Parachute's expansion is blocked by the river and the mountains in several directions, and the only large flat areas near town have been designated as staging areas for the Colony and Union Oil Shale projects."

They believed that "there was no way that all the workers needed for these projects could be accommodated in Parachute" and argued that "the level of activity needed to provide thousands of dwelling units and related infrastructure in a timely manner could probably not have been achieved within the political and practical constraints of an existing small town."

I can't help but wonder what Parachute's residents thought about the idea of Exxon taking over the town. Perhaps that is what the author meant by "political and practical constraints."

In recent years, our developer, Battlement Mesa Company (BMC) has promoted Battlement Mesa for its lifestyle and natural beauty. Many have probably concluded that the BMC has coined those terms, but apparently this is incorrect. The article states that "the intent is not simply to provide housing, but to create a lifestyle that will attract and retain" residents and that presumably Exxon hoped "that the amenities provided, together with the natural beauty of the site will attract... residents and businesses as well" to create "an independent, thriving community."

According to the article, "the 3100 acre Battlement Mesa planned unit development... stretching several miles along the river," [is a] "picturesque site that slopes up towards the mountains of Grand Mesa National Forest" and "by the time it is fully built out in the early 1990's, Battlement Mesa will have up to 8,000 living units and a population of 24,000 to 25,000."

Some of the author's projections haven't come true but, I believe that he chose the right title, "Battlement Mesa: An Emerging New Community." The timing was just wrong. As communities go, Battlement Mesa is still a very young community, situated in a beautiful area and we're still "An Emerging New Community" that is creating a life style that attracts residents and businesses.

The Colorado Dream

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