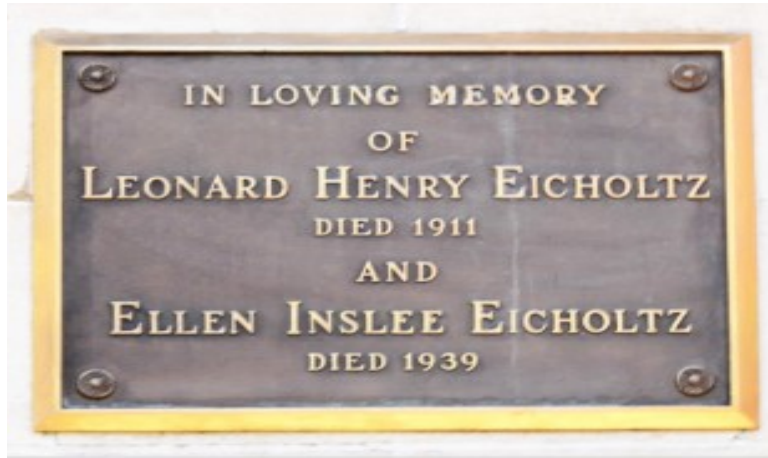


From Arts & Architecture: Leonard Henry Eicholtz Memorial Plaque



Another very simple bronze plaque on the east wall of the cathedral greets us with the familiar words: “In Loving Memory.” And once again another story in the long history of Saint John’s is there to be revealed.

In May of 1952, the University of Wyoming received the gift of 57 diaries written by Leonard Henry Eicholtz. Given by his son, Leonard

Henry Jr., the diaries cover the life of the man a 1911 newspaper headline called a “Colorado Pioneer.”

The pioneer days of Leonard Henry Eicholtz actually did not begin in Colorado, but rather in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he was born in 1827. He studied civil engineering at the Moravian Academy, then worked for several years with the corps of engineers in the early days of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and then the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad.

During these years he began what was to become a lifelong series of diaries. His early accounts of his days of railway construction in the eastern states changed in scope in 1857 when he traveled to Honduras. He was hired by the Honduras Inter-Oceanic Railway to work on plans for a railway, the brain child of controversial U. S. diplomat, E. George Squier. Eicholtz’s assignment was to work on a survey for a possible railroad to go across the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. His year-long diary entries from all across the country are filled with the dangers of work in rough weather and topography, accounts of fever conditions, and the adventure of sailing around Cape Horn in a clipper ship.

Following his return to the United States, Eicholtz continued his railway engineering work in the east, and in 1861, soon after the beginning of the Civil War, he volunteered as assistant engineer with the construction corps of the United States Military railroad. Serving under General William T. Sherman in the Military Division of the Mississippi, he worked on reconstruction of railroads destroyed by both Union and Confederate armies, and the construction of new railroad lines to bring supplies to the troops. His diary entries take him, often under fire, through Tennessee, Kentucky, and Georgia, and on Sherman’s memorable march to Atlanta. At the end of the war he had achieved the rank of Colonel and was chief engineer of military railroads of the Division of the Mississippi.

Our pioneer then decided to head west to Kansas where, in 1866, he became resident engineer of the Kansas Pacific Railway Company. Congress had just passed an act authorizing the extension of the railroad westward, and he conducted a survey of the 32nd parallel through Colorado, New Mexico,

Arizona and California. Diary entries relate the adventures and dangers of his travels through sometimes unfriendly territory, making the trip on horseback accompanied by a guard of U. S. soldiers.

Following his years of western survey work, in 1868 Eicholtz was asked to become superintendent of bridge-building for the Union Pacific railway, working on a section of the road from Nebraska westward, which would result in the completion of the transcontinental railroad. As a participant in this project, he was present at the historic meeting of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific at the Promontory Summit in Utah, and witnessed the driving of the Golden Spike on May 19, 1869. He is the fourth man from the right in the photograph.



On its line coming west, the Union Pacific had decided late in 1866 to build tracks, not through Denver, but on an easier route

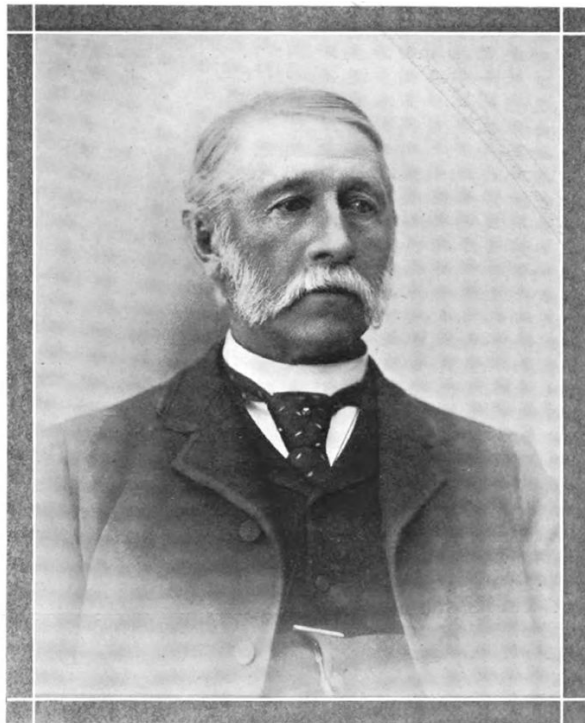
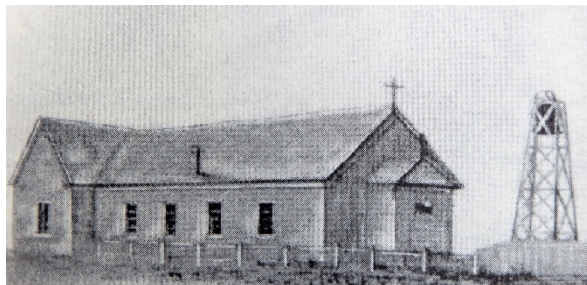
to the north, through Cheyenne. As a result, the two young towns of Denver and Golden, rivals for leadership in the territory, were in dispute about the establishment of two separate rail lines—the Colorado Central from Golden or the Denver Pacific from Denver--to link up with the Union Pacific in Cheyenne. Political lines were drawn, but finally Governor Evans arranged for the financing and construction of the Denver Pacific railroad to go the 106 miles from Denver to Cheyenne. Leonard Eicholtz was appointed chief engineer and superintendent for this project, and, according to a local newspaper “on June 22, 1870 he brought the first railroad train to Denver”.



By this time, Eicholtz had made Denver his home. His diaries continue to describe his engineering work, with the construction of the Denver and South Park railroad to Buena Vista and over the Alpine Pass to Gunnison, his travels in the Midwest and trips to the east, and then his decision to devote his time to his Denver brokerage business. He established an office in the Kassler block at 15th and Lawrence, and he bought

a home at 1360 Champa.

In 1872, at the age of 45, Eicholtz married young Ellen Inslee in St. Joseph, Missouri. The first of their five children, Leonard Henry Jr., was baptized in 1874 at the little church of Saint John's in the Wilderness by our third rector, the Reverend Peter Finch. Leonard Sr. served on the vestry there, along with his friend Charles Kountze, from 1875 to 1879, and then, after the arrival of Dean Hart and the construction of the first cathedral, in 1882 and 1883.



Eicholtz continued his occasional railroad consulting work, and in 1878 was elected director of the First National Bank of Denver, a position he held for the rest of his life. The last entry in his diaries was written in 1910, and Leonard Henry Eicholtz died on January 3, 1911. His grave joins those of so many other Colorado pioneers, known and unknown, in Fairmount Cemetery.

