



MEHAFFEY PARK HISTORY

Thousands of people crossed south and north of this area in the 1840s and 1850s, but few had ventured into what is now Colorado. A new route opened in 1861 when Ben Holliday, the so-called "Stage King," took possession of the 3,300-mile Overland Stage Line.

By 1862, conflict between Indians and newcomers on the northern tier, and the emergence of Denver as an important commercial center to the south, contributed to changes in the Overland route. The new route followed the South Platte River westward to its confluence with the Poudre River, where the Latham stage station was established in 1859 just east of present-day Greeley. From there, the Overland route dipped southward to Denver then back to the north along the foothills, connecting the St. Vrain, Little Thompson, Namaqua, Spring Creek and Laporte stations.

Mehaffey Park is located along the Overland Trail route between Namaqua Station, a lively place on the Big Thompson River also known as Mariano's Crossing, and Spring Creek Station to the north. Later, early settler Winfield Scott Mehaffey owned and operated a 260-acre dryland wheat farm on this site. Descendent Ray Mehaffey, district forester for the Colorado State Forest Service, sold the property to the City of Loveland for use as a park, requesting that an arboretum be developed at the park to educate citizens about forestry and trees.