

# City Hall War of 1894

In 1893, Denver was in the middle of a major depression. Jobs of any kind were hard to come by. Some of the most coveted jobs were in the city or government, and the people who held these jobs went to great lengths to keep them.

Governor Davis Waite had previously appointed three men to the police and fire board. These men were able to influence the hiring and firing of municipal police officers and fire-fighters. In late 1893, two of Waite's appointees were acting contrary to his will. This began action by the governor to remove them from the board. The bickering between Governor Waite and the two board members continued until March 1894.



At this time, the Governor decided to forcibly remove the two police and fire board members, and several other appointees from the Denver City Hall. When the people within City Hall learned of this, they barricaded themselves and prepared for battle. A large group of Denver Police and Arapahoe County Deputy Sheriff's armed themselves and joined the others inside the building. By March 14, the entire Denver Police Force, along with a large number of deputy sheriffs waited inside City Hall for the Colorado Infantry.

The Infantry had been called out by the Governor to storm City Hall. By Thursday, March 25, 1894, the court ruled that the Governor had the authority

to remove the board members, but lacked the authority to call out the Colorado Infantry to enforce his orders. The court called for the board members to relinquish their seats on April 18, 1894. They did so quietly.

Arapahoe County Sheriff William K. Burchinell supported the men at City Hall because the Governor had acted without authority in calling out the Infantry. Fearing another confrontation, Sheriff Burchinell ordered 50 Winchester Model 1886 rifles in 40-82 caliber on an Arapahoe County purchase order. The guns were engraved "Arapahoe County" on the receiver. They were shipped by Winchester on July 14, 1894. State Archives records show the county paid for the rifles in September of 1894. One rifle is owned by the Littleton Historical Museum, and has been loaned to the Sheriff's Office for display. The others are believed to be in the hands of collectors.

