

## Kiowa County, Colorado

Kiowa County (population 1,585) was created in 1889 and named for the Kiowa Indians who lived in the region before Europeans arrived.

Throughout the 20th century Kiowa County grew in population and reached its peak population in the 1950s when there were a number of large schools, large towns, and plenty of commerce moving along the train lines and highways of the county. The closure of the locally-owned bank in 1983 began a decline, which continues today.

But in 2000, the county purchased the historic Nipps-Bransgrove Building in Eads' central business district. Following a rehabilitation funded by state and local partners, the building once again contributes to the economic vitality of the area. Occupancy on Maine Street has increased, as have business and employment opportunities and services, with the building now home to a day care center, the county department of social services, and the county economic development foundation. The success of this project has served as a model and led to strong interest in taking on other preservation efforts in the area.

Kiowa County adopted a historic preservation ordinance and established a county historic preservation commission in March 2005. Since then, Kiowa County has qualified as a Certified Local Government and has listed seven properties as local historic landmarks.

Currently a large, recently-formed non-profit group is trying to save three historical buildings on Maine Street to create the Crow-Luther Cultural Events Center. Across the street there are plans to develop an interpretive center and a base for tours for the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site.

Many creative projects connect youth with local history. Eads High School offers an elective in community development, increasing awareness of heritage resources and local planning issues.

The community has been awarded a grant from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to develop recreational trails along various heritage and historic resources to promote community and public appreciation of these treasures. This linkage of cultural and natural resources should also help draw visitors to the area and benefit the local economy.