

Jessie Forshee, Colorado's First High School Graduate

Jessie Forshee, who would be the first high school graduate in Colorado, was born on July 16, 1858. She and her parents moved from Cayuga County in New York to enroll at St. Mary's Academy. On June 30, 1875, she made history by being awarded the first high school diploma conferred in the Colorado Territory.

The *Rocky Mountain News* wrote about the graduation whose attendees included civic and church leaders. The names of all 240 students (40 boarders and 200 day students) and the studies they were pursuing were read aloud. The ceremony showcased accomplishments in drama, elocution, vocal and instrumental music, and French.

Jessie Forshee joined the Sisters of Loretto, making significant contributions to the community as a teacher, mentor, and Dean of Webster College. In an era when few women were college-educated, Jessie earned a MA from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and a music degree from the Chicago Conservatory. She taught instrumental music, higher mathematics, science, composition, classical literature, history, and geography. She died in El Paso in 1937.