Wish You Were Here

Journeys to La Plata County
We’re here! Whether we arrived at Mercy Hospital or the La Plata County Airport, we are here. Some arrive by car for a vacation, others have been here for generations, but we are all here. The stories of how we came to be in La Plata County are part of our history. This edition of History La Plata tells some of those stories. From the earliest travelers who passed through southwest Colorado on their journeys of exploration to modern tourists visiting to explore the scenic beauty of La Plata County, all have a story to tell.

In 2014 we will tell more of those stories with help from the Smithsonian Institution. From January 17 to March 18 the Animas Museum will host Journey Stories, a traveling Smithsonian exhibition. The exhibit will explore modes of travel and Americans’ desire to feel free to move. It is the large stories of immigration, migration, innovation and freedom. It is the smaller stories of family vacations and packing a truck to move for a new job. Additionally, the Animas Museum is planning an exhibit to complement the Smithsonian exhibition which will tell La Plata County’s journey stories. “Wish You Were Here” will explore the many ways people have travelled to our area, and what compelled them to do so.

Journey Stories is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and State Humanities Councils nationwide. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress. Locally, it is supported by Colorado Humanities. One fifth of all Americans live in rural areas and one-half of all U.S. museums are located in small towns. Through traveling exhibits, residents of rural areas may experience the Smithsonian in their own hometown. It is an opportunity not to be missed.

The Smithsonian comes to Durango in January 2014 but there is no need to wait that long to visit a museum. The Animas Museum’s current exhibits include “Forged by Flame” and “Law & Disorder” which illustrates that truth, can indeed, be stranger than fiction. And as long as you are journeying to a museum, visit the other museums in Durango and then venture out of town. Many area communities have wonderful historical and art museums. Pay them a visit and celebrate how happy we are to be here!
I n July 1776 events in Philadelphia laid the foundation for our nation. Out West, important events were also occurring. Two Franciscan missionaries were searching for a route from Santa Fe, in today’s New Mexico, to Monterey in California. With their party of eight other men, they explored along a route of over 2,000 miles and peacefully encountered more than a dozen native tribes.

Francisco Atanasio Domínez, Silvestre Vélez de Escalante and their party left Santa Fe on July 29. The journal kept by Fray Escalante provides us a detailed accounting of their journey, and a written account of some of the earliest non-native visitors to southwest Colorado. Excerpts from that journal follow. (From The Domínez-Escalante Journal, translated by Fray Angelico Chavez)

August 7 “…Here it has a large meadow, very abundant with pastures, especially of grama grass, extensive and good lands for farming through irrigation, with all the rest that may be desired for a goodly settlement. We stopped in it, naming it La Vega de San Cayetano. [flat land along the Pine River, south of today’s Ignacio] Today a little more than six leagues” [nearly 16 miles]

August 8 “…we set out west-northwest from La Vega de San Cayetano and Rio de los Pinos, [Pine River] and at the end of four leagues arrived at El Río Florido, [the Florida River] which is medium sized and smaller than that of Los Pinos. It rises in the same sierra farther to the west, and where we crossed it has a larger meadow, of good land for farming with the aid of irrigation. The pastures on the meadow are good, but not in the immediate vicinity, although it evidently has them in wet years. Having crossed El Río Florido, we traveled west two leagues and west-northwest a little more than another two. We went down a rocky and not too lengthy incline and arrived at El Río de las Ánimas, [Animas River] near the western point of La Sierra de la Plata [La Plata Mountains] where it has its origin. We crossed it and halted on the opposite side [approximately 4 miles south of downtown Durango, near today’s aptly named Escalante Middle School.] It is as large as El Norte [Rio Grande] and now carried somewhat more water and with greater rapidity, because here its currents, which run from north to south, have a steeper fall…Through here it runs through a box channel, but farther down it is said to have good meadows. Today eight leagues, a little more. [21 miles] There is no good pasturage here, but there is some a little farther on.”

August 9 “…ascended the incline west of the river, although it is not too lengthy, is quite steep, consisting of plenty of rock and being very steep in places. We passed the small forest on its crest with which it must measure a little more than a quarter of a league. We entered a narrow valley of abundant pastures [Ridges Basin] traveled through it one league to the west, and turned west by northwest; then after going through a leafy forest of good pasturage, we reached El Río de San Joaquin de La Plata.” [La Plata River]

“It rises at the same point of La Sierra de la Plata and descends through the same canyon in which there are said to be veins and outcroppings of metallic ore…the terrain is very moist, since it rains very frequently because of its proximity to the sierra; as a result, both in the mountain forest – which consists of very tall and straight pines, scrub oak, and several kinds of wild fruits- and in its narrow valleys there are the prettiest of pastures. The climate here is excessively cold even the months of July and August. Among the fruits mentioned there grows a small one of black hue, pleasant taste…We did not proceed ahead today because the mounts had not fed enough the night before and were rather weak by now, and also because a thick and prolonged heavy downpour made us halt.” [This campsite was near today’s Hesperus.]

They headed west toward the Mancos and then Dolores rivers, then north to the Grand Mesa and well into Central Utah. The expedition turned south passing through northern Arizona and back to Santa Fe. Even though they did not reach Monterey it was a remarkable journey.

Compiled by Animas Museum staff
The very long Old Spanish National Historic Trail features stories about the mix of people who have lived, explored, and traveled on it. The trail, linking Santa Fe, New Mexico to California, passes through southwestern Colorado. The Utes long ago traded with tribes from California, Central America, and the Mississippi Valley. Mexican travelers traded in California starting in 1829. A few trappers came west in the 1820s. They took the Old Spanish Trail to California starting in 1830. The tales of these people's journeys on the trail gives some idea of the early history of La Plata County and southwest Colorado.

The Ute People

The Ute people have journeyed all over Colorado and Utah for thousands of years. They don't have a story of “coming from” another place. Their oral history says simply, we have lived here forever and their annual journeys were their life cycles.

Their homeland was two-thirds of Colorado and Utah; they circulated through it. Muache, Capote, and Weeminuche Ute bands lived on both sides of today’s Colorado-New Mexico border. Often they were in family groups of a few to a score of people of all ages.

During the autumn and spring seasons of 1829-1848, trading caravans from New Mexico passed through southwest Colorado. Ute families were living there, in what we now call Archuleta, La Plata, Montezuma, and Dolores Counties. They saw and hosted some of the travelers.

The caravans may have passed near a large ceremonial celebration with many families from several bands of Utes along with guests who were Pueblos, Apaches and Navajos. Imagine coming upon the view of the Piedra or Los Pinos River lined with family tepees or wickiups, hearing drumbeats and songs, then seeing the stately dances of a hundred people.

Many of the Utes interacted with the trading and emigrant groups, usually in a friendly manner. Some acted as guides or scouts. Others may have assisted arrieros (packers) with their mules and their packs. Still others helped with herding the horses and mules coming back from California. Their stories of travel were oral and are disappearing.

Some simply sought tribute or payment for crossing tribal homelands. The tribute probably was something like a new blanket, a horse, a weapon, or utensils.

Many Utes had seen New Mexican towns, farms, and trappers, but few had seen anything like Vigil’s 200 men herding over 4,000 horses and mules from California toward Santa Fe in the 1840s. Thousands of hooves trotted through their clean, clear rivers. The caravan camped on and pastured the springtime grasslands regularly used by Ute horses and sheep. Seeking tribute seemed only logical.

George Calvert Yount Trapping Trip (1830)

Like so many young men in the 1800s, North Carolinian George Yount was on the move. He went to Missouri where he farmed and fought in Indian battles. He left his wife and three children on the farm and moved to Santa Fe to become a trapper. He trapped in New Mexico, southwest Colorado and Utah. Ute Indians befriended him. He never forgot their kindness.

In 1830, Yount, William Wolfskill, and 20 other trappers followed a new route into central Utah and on southwest to California. They realigned the Armijo Route, making it easier, with plenty of water and better pastures on the eastern half of the 1,200 mile trail. One of the best decisions was to come into Archuleta County via Carracas Canyon, then La Plata, Montezuma, and Dolores Counties.

They trapped beaver in the rivers and creeks that flow through today’s Southern Ute lands, plus a few others to the west. That probably involved two weeks or more. Yount and Wolfskill got to know this country and the Ute people quite well. Their new trail became the Main Branch of the Old Spanish Trail.

They also packed many southwestern Colorado beaver pelts to California. They turned them in for cash and they both remained in California for the rest of their lives. Wolfskill ranted and raised Valen-
EARLY JOURNEYS INTO LA PLATA COUNTY

Francisco Estevan Vigil's Trading Caravans

Vigil's 1841-42 and 1847-48 caravans followed the trail's main route from Santa Fé to Abiquiu, NM; then northwest to today's sites of Ignacio, Durango, Man- cos, and Dolores, Colorado; then to Green River, Parowan and Shivwits, Utah; Moapa and Las Vegas, Nevada; and finally to Barstow and Los Angeles, California. Although the Old Spanish Trail had been regularly traveled, it was mostly wild country; no forts, or way stations offered respite to travelers. Only Uto-Aztecan tribes used the land and could survive on it.

Vigil took large quantities of woolen goods to trade to Californians in exchange for horses and mules. He brought well over 4,000 horses and mules back to Santa Fe on each trip. He had to split the groups into several groups to have clean water and pasturage for them.

Vigil had a positive reputation as being courteous, law-abiding, and a fair and honest commander. His first trading caravan was accompanied by a large number of Mexican and Anglo persons emigrating from New Mexico to California. Vigil was charged with overseeing both groups, although they generally stayed separated by a day or more.

Mexico and the U.S. had struggled with land claims on this part of the continent. During Vigil's 1848 trip, the U.S. and Mexico signed a treaty that formalized U.S. control over California, New Mexico, and areas between.

Vigil's huge herd of equines returned the way he went, through southwest Colorado. They camped at least 8 times, near the rivers, probably making a physical impression on the moist spring soil as well as an emotional impression on the Ute people.

Kit Carson and George Brewerton traveled as Army couriers, a bit ahead of the huge group. One of the messages they carried to Santa Fe announced that "all traders leaving New Mexico for California would have to pay a duty of 20% on all goods arriving at the first military post they reach" [in California]. These big taxes threw a wet blanket on the woolen blanket trade.

Most early eastern writers saw the mountain west as "unoccupied" in the early 1800s. Their culture saw an individual's property as limited to a few fenced acres of rich farm land. In contrast, the Utes had a philosophy of shared use of their homelands. Utes "occupied" a vast arid area with a sophisticated system of living off of the land.

Dr. James M. Jefferson, Historian, Ignacio, CO and Dr. Pablo Vigil, Physician, Las Vegas, NM provided research for this article. They, and the author, are members and past board members of the Old Spanish Trail Association.
The San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado make up the southern part of the Colorado Mineral Belt that runs through the central mountains of Colorado. The Pikes Peak gold rush of 1859 brought national attention to the possibility of mineral riches in the Colorado mountains. Prospectors searched for precious metals in other parts of the Colorado Territory including the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado. Prospecting parties such as the Baker Expedition pushed into the San Juans, naming the upper Animas River area Baker’s Park (today’s Silverton). Due to lack of roads, exploration in the San Juans was limited to only the most adventurous prospectors. The extreme winters, mountainous conditions and conflict with the Utes kept many from even trying.

With the end of the Civil War and emigration of veterans to the West looking for a new start, there was renewed interest in the San Juan Mountains. Reports of mineral finds by Charles Baker and others continued to attract the adventurous to western Colorado. The Brunot Agreement with the Utes to allow mining activity in the western San Juans brought many after 1874. A silver boom at Leadville in 1879 placed Colorado in the national spotlight, again attracting fortune hunters.

Colorado, prior to 1880, attracted immigrants of Scandinavian, Irish, English, Scottish and German decent who labored in the mining, railroad, and farming industries of eastern Colorado. With the opening of western Colorado and the growth of mining and railroads in the San Juan Mountains, a need for cheap labor brought new immigrants from eastern, central and southern Europe.

Colorado’s population grew rapidly. Due to economic booms and busts, La Plata County did not grow in the same manner. Census numbers for the county tell the tale. The population in 1880 increased from 1,110 to 5,509 in 1890 and 18,054 in 1900. By 1910 the population had dropped to 10,600, and further decreased to 6,630 by 1920.

The national trend of increased immigration from central, southern and eastern Europe after 1890 changed the ethnic makeup of the United States and the western mining districts that needed cheap labor for the railroad, mining and related manufacturing industries. Opportunities for a better life in a new land and escape from the poverty and wars of Europe attracted Italians, Poles, Slavs, Greeks and Russians. Some railroads and mining companies recruited European laborers, offering passage to the U.S. in exchange for a period of labor. Between 1891 and 1920, 64% of immigrants came from central, southern and eastern Europe.

With the growth of hard rock mining, the need for coal to fuel railroads and the associated industries lead to the development of Colorado’s vast coal deposits and the need for more labor. Most skilled mining jobs went to northern European immigrants. Miners from Cornwall, England were well-known for mining in dangerous conditions and dealing with water and deep shafts. Cornwall was famous for its deep tin mines that had existed since the Roman occupation of Britain. Welsh miners brought coal mining knowledge and skills to western coal mines.

Many mine companies employed English and Scottish managers and superintendents. Harsh working conditions led to labor disputes and attempts to organize labor by unions such as the Western Federation of Miners, Knights of Labor, and United Mine Workers. The unions called for strikes, and many ended in violence. Sometimes new immigrant laborers were brought in as strikebreakers, causing more conflict between established miners and new immigrants.

European migration to the U.S. peaked in 1907 with 1,285,349 arrivals. From 1836-1914, 30 million Europeans had immigrated to the U.S. and by 1910 there were 13.5 million immigrants living in the U.S.
Most coal produced in La Plata County supplied the railroads, smelters, foundries, hard rock mines, businesses and domestic homes with fuel. Coal was shipped via railroad to the mining camps surrounding Silverton and Telluride. The demand for coal declined greatly by 1930 when the smelter closed in Durango and much of the hard rock mining had shut down. Perins Coal Camp existed from 1906 to 1926, when the mine was shut down. The Porter mine closed in 1908 after fire destroyed most of the mine facilities and ignited the mine.

The 1911 Hesperus town directory suggests a diverse ethnic population with many Welsh, Italian, Irish, Austrian and Hispanic residents. The coal camp of Perins in 1915 listed 76 people; many were miners employed by the Calumet Fuel Company. Many of the miners had Italian family names such as Angeloni, Baudino, Conceno, Richardi, Rizzi, Frasca, Longo, Martino, Odoricco, Toffoli and Zancanella. 

Names of the mine’s key employees help illustrate the ethnic diversity. The mine superintendent was Leo McCormick, Foreman - Tom Rowe, Trackman - August Whalberg, Stableman - W.H Thompson, Electrician - M.T Lommarson, Watchman - Manuel Martinez, Postmaster/Storekeeper - John Meston, Saloon Proprietor - John Jakino and Driver - David Milinarie.

Many immigrants only worked in the mines long enough to save money so they could buy land or go into business. Tony Frasca opened a shoe repair business in Durango. The Jakino family farmed and had a dairy on the Florida Mesa. John Baudino owned a saloon and boarding house in Durango, and later, the Morning Star Coal Mine.

Charles DiFerdinando is a local historian descended from immigrants and emigrants. He is on the LPCHS Board of Directors.

A JAck P Acker’s Journey

Olga Little’s journeys made her a legend in her own time. Believed to be the only lady “jack packer” in the annals of the American West, Olga packed supplies and ores out of the mines in the La Plata Mountains.

Much has been written about this diminutive, plucky woman who performed strenuous labor, endured harsh conditions in rugged mountain terrain, and took personal risks that some veteran men packers were reluctant to take.

Born Olga Schaaf on July 26, 1883 in Essen, Germany, Olga was shy of two years old when she embarked on her first journey, immigrating to America with her family in 1885. They came to Colorado in 1887, settling near Holyoke. Around 1893, the family moved again to Chama, New Mexico.

Ten-year-old Olga began learning how to wrangle both horses and cattle on this 400-mile trek. Family history has it that Indians drove off some of the cattle along the route, and several of the eight head of horses died from the effects of high altitude on Raton and Cumbres Passes.

Pulling up stakes again, the Schaafs relocated to Animas City in the late 1890s. By age 17, Olga and her younger brother, Alvin, were breaking and training young horses for ranchers. Driving livery teams, Olga took sightseers into the mountains and occasionally delivered groceries to several of the mines.

Flooding in the Animas River basin in 1909 proved to be a turning point in Olga’s life. With roads and bridges washed out, Frank Rivers couldn’t get supplies to his mine up Junction Creek, and he asked Olga if she could lead a pack string up to the mine. Reluctantly, she agreed. Though she didn’t realize it at the time, this one-time job led to a 30-year career packing to and from the remote mines in the La Platas.

At first, Olga used horses for her pack string. Family stories even mention the occasional use of mules. She soon learned, however, that burros were best for packing. These pint-sized animals were more sure-footed and even tempered, and could pack nearly as much as a horse or mule. In recent years, articles about Olga have referred to her as a “mule skinner,” but burro or jack packer more accurately describes her, (jennies, or female burros, were used, too).

Stories about Olga’s amazing exploits abound and have often been recounted in newspaper and magazine articles. There was the time three of her burros died in a fall off the Eagle Pass Trail, while the dynamite they were packing survived; or the time she heroically rescued her horse after it slipped on the icy Neglected Trail, sliding several hundred feet down a steep, snow covered slope; or the time she led a rescue party on an all-day and half-the-night trek through deep snow to deliver food for the snowed-in crew at the Neglected Mine. Such stories seem endless.

In 1913, she married a miner who fancied her – Scottish immigrant Bill Little. Bill joined her in the packing business for several years, but eventually confined himself to ranch work and jewelry making on their spread at the mouth of La Plata Canyon. By the late 1930s, both Olga and the mines she supplied were slowing down. Except for an occasional parade or public appearance, her remaining burros retired to pastures of deep clover.

Olga Little’s extraordinary career was chronicled in 1958 at the Denver Coliseum on Ralph Edwards’ popular television show “This is Your Life”. Summarizing a life’s journey well-traveled, Edwards stated, “Wherever tales are told of the days of gold and silver, a part of that glory will always land upon your name.”

Robert McDaniel
Otto Mears, often named the Pathfinder of the San Juans, is best known as the tireless builder of lines of communication and travel all over southwestern Colorado. His activities in the state have been well documented by historians, but it is also worth investigating his childhood journey, the journey that made the man.

In 1865, Mears arrived in Colorado at the age of 24, with an already adventurous life story. He is credited with developing towns, publishing newspapers, building 450 miles of toll roads including today's Million Dollar Highway, introducing telegraph lines, building three railroads, aiding in the negotiation of two Ute treaties, and being a state representative. In our area, he is best known for his work in the development of the Saguache and San Juan Mountain areas of southwestern Colorado. What is less known is his journey before he arrived in Colorado.

Otto Mears was born in Courland Province, Russia (present day Latvia) on May 3, 1840 to a Russian Jewish mother and an English father. Both of his parents had died by his third birthday and he was sent to live with an uncle, aunt and their 12 children. The arrangement was less than accommodating and after six years, his uncle sent him on a lumber freighter across the Baltic Sea to live with an uncle, aunt and their 12 children. The voyage included his first train ride. The living arrangement did not work out either, and within a year, he set sail for six weeks from England to New York City on a ship full of Irish immigrants. Here he stayed with an uncle for nearly a year before he was shipped out yet again, this time to San Francisco, to live with four uncles who were reportedly living there at the time.

The voyage of a lone ten year old from New York City to San Francisco in 1850 was a grand adventure. A ship navigating that route sailed south along the Atlantic coastline down to Gran Columbia (present day Panama) and docked at the newly founded city of Colón. There the passengers disembarked and begin a horseback trek and dugout canoe ride across the isthmus to Panama City. They then boarded another ship and headed north along the Pacific coastline. On both of Mears' ocean voyages he was looked after by an older woman and the captain, both strangers to the young boy.

Arriving in San Francisco in 1851, he found his uncles had already left for the gold mines of Australia and he was forced to fend for himself. The woman who had looked after him put Mears up in her husband's boarding house where he sold newspapers to pay for his room and board, his first job. He developed a good wit, a keen sense of human nature and excellent salesmanship skills, which helped him succeed throughout the rest of his life. The area in San Francisco where he settled was called Sydney Town because its residents were mostly criminals from the British Commonwealth. Among them, English Jim of the infamous Sydney Ducks was hanged by the Vigilance Committee around the time that Mears arrived. This nine-block red-light district in San Francisco was known for arson, burglaries, gambling, piracy, prostitution and other seedy criminal activities. In the 1860s, the area was renamed the Barbary Coast after the region in North Africa where Arab pirates attacked Mediterranean ships.

From ages 11 to 21, Mears lived in San Francisco and around the California gold fields working in various mercantile and freighting businesses, milking cows, learning tinsmithing, investing in gold mining in California and Nevada, and developing ambitious enterprising skills. At the age of 21, he became a U.S. citizen and enlisted in the Union Army's First Regiment of California Volunteers.

His military service took him on foot across Arizona and New Mexico into the fight against the Navajo resistance under Kit Carson. During this time one of his jobs was as a baker for the soldiers. He developed a money-making scheme where he sold excess Army-issued flour to the Navajos. His profits totaled $1,500 by the time he was discharged on August 31, 1864. With his grubstake, he set off looking for the next venture. He spent 1864-65 in Santa Fe working as a clerk in the Ellsberg and Amberg firm and then opened his own store with the assistance of the Staab brothers. He learned about the cattle business and became a government beef contractor for range cattle. He got wanderlust yet again and after scouting the region, he hired a team of oxen and wagon and headed north to Conejos where his Colorado exploits began.

Clearly, Otto Mears possessed a natural entrepreneurial zeal. He came to America at a time when thousands of other European immigrants were seeking a new life. Exemplifying the new American ideals, he seized opportunities as they arose. Mears' ability to turn these opportunities into successes was due as much to luck as to his practical intelligence. Reading situations well, he was able to extract what he wanted from them, which usually involved money. By constantly applying lessons learned in business and investment ventures from his youth, he succeeded throughout his life. Otto Mears' early journey from boyhood to manhood, from Russia to Colorado, proves that he had the skills and the moxie to succeed in any endeavor he embarked upon.

Looking for more information about Otto Mears' road building legacy in the San Juans? Come check out the exhibit titled “Trails, Roads, and Rails” at the Animas Museum.

Amron Gravett is a librarian and indexer at Wild Clover Book Services.
“rough going” to Durango

Edna Dell Nephew arrived in Durango in the summer of 1911 at age 22. Originally a school teacher from Ohio, she traveled west as escort to an elderly aunt who was desirous of visiting family in Denver. On arriving in the capital, Edna began to make plans to visit an uncle in Durango. Edna’s relatives could not imagine why she would want to go so far out of the way stating, “Good Lord Edna, what do you want to go to Durango for! I’ve been there before and it’s a jumping off place.” Even so, she pushed on, daring the 24 hour train ride over the Rocky Mountains on the Denver and Rio Grande (D&RG) which her cousin referred to as “Dirty & Rough Going”.

Miss Nephew bore the hardships of the journey well. She slept sitting up in the day car with a rented pillow. “I was divided between awe and fear as we went around and around, passing the same section-house four times; each time a little higher... As the train approached town, Edna thought, “Thank God I have tickets home.” When the train pulled into Durango proper, the sight of the platform and the big depot made it all seem somehow less remote.

Edna spent the rest of her life in La Plata County working as a teacher, first in the Animas Valley, then later in Elco, south of Durango. In 1911 Miss Nephew was introduced to Mr. John Bryce, and the two were married in 1914.

Edna continued to educate La Plata County until her death in 1974. A member of the National League of American Pen Women, she was also a prolific poet interested in all forms of verse. Mrs. Bryce wrote the “Florida Mesa News” as well as numerous historical columns for the Durango Herald and a number of articles in Volume IV of Pioneers of the San Juan Country. She was an active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Brianna McCormick

EMMA SWEENEY

Star of the 1950 film A Ticket to Tomahawk

Help us restore Miss Emma to her former beauty as a colorful movie star. Visit Miss Emma at Santa Rita Park next to the Visitor Center.

Be a friend to Emma:
- Volunteer to help: simple skills as in household repairs & maintenance - cleaning to painting
- Donate to help cover expenses.
- Join the Society.

Do YOU know anything about Emma or the movie? Have photos?
Please search your family’s old scrapbooks, photo albums, and shoeboxes!

Were YOU involved with the filming in Silverton or Durango?
We need photos, articles, and anecdotes for our exhibits.

Please contact George Niederauer, 382-0875, georgen@bresnan.net

Durango Railroad Historical Society
Box 654, Durango CO 81302
For more information: www.drhs315.org

ARRIVING BY WAGON

By Robert McDaniel

William Valliant cleverly averted disaster on his wagon trip over Stony Pass in the late spring of 1875. In company of three other men with wagons, the party reached the Continental Divide from the Rio Grande side at what they called Grassy Hill around the 10th of June.

We crossed on the crust of the snow all right, but had the worst time getting off the mountain; it was so steep and rocky that the wagons had to be snubbed. The big trees along the way were all barked from snubbing wagons. The rest of the outfit left me at Grassy Hill and when I started down I had no one to help me and no rope to snub with. But I wasn't to be outdone; I hitched one yoke of oxen to the tongue and three behind; then I got into the wagon and went down the hill and I beat the rest into Howardsville by half a day.

Negotiating steep mountain passes with wagons presented distinctly different problems from traveling on the prairie, and immigrants to southwest Colorado almost always had to traverse a mountain pass like Stony, Cumbres, or Wolf Creek.

Wagon travel over flat lands and mountains in the West, however, had certain things in common. The wagons were much smaller and lighter than the cumbersome Conestoga wagons used in the East, and oxen were the draft animals of choice. Horses, mules and even burros, though, were also commonly used.

Stephen B. Kellogg and Thomas Pollock brought the first wagons into the San Juan region as part of the “Baker Expedition” in 1861. Kellogg had grubstaked Charles Baker’s prospecting party to the headwaters of the Animas River the previous summer, and Pollock hoped to capitalize on
the mercantile possibilities inherent in such an undertaking.

Pollock's entourage included 11 sturdy army wagons, with either six or eight yoke of oxen to each wagon. His stock – consisting of flour, bacon, coffee, sugar and other staples, as well as tools and other basic supplies – was estimated at $50,000. He also drove about 200 head of beef cattle. His wife, Sarah, traveled in a spring wagon, and there were some utility wagons with tents and camping gear, all drawn by mule teams.

Leaving Denver in mid-December 1860, the wagon train made its way to Abiquiu, then followed portions of the Old Spanish Trail into present day southwest Colorado. A crude roadway had to be built most of the way to accommodate the heavy wagons. Fording the tributaries of the San Juan River and climbing and descending the hills, all during the winter, presented plenty of challenges.

The Kellogg-Pollock party turned north from the Old Spanish Trail somewhere near the Florida River, probably crossing into the Animas River drainage via Spring Creek near present day Florida Road. Their destination was the first Animas City, just south of Baker's Bridge. Since there was no currency and little gold in the settlement, Pollock was unable to sell his goods and lost his investment. Nevertheless, he likely saved many of the Baker Expedition participants from starvation before the area was abandoned by the summer of 1861.

After the Brunot Agreement with the Utes opened much of southwest Colorado to non-Indian settlement in 1874, large numbers of settlers immigrated. Initially, nearly everything needed for mining, homesteading and town development was brought in by wagons, including sawmills, mining machinery and even pianos.

Few who made the trip by wagon into the San Juan country ever forgot it. Frances Keegan Heffernan recalled her family’s trip to Durango by stagecoach in January 1881:

To my people, unaccustomed to mountain driving, it must have been a terrifying ordeal, especially that last day when the stage had tipped over, the passengers all spilling out into the deep snow. Fortunately, no one was hurt. My father threw me out into a snow bank and my tiny sister after me so that we might be clear of the falling stagecoach and the frightened horses.

Mamie Hight Greenough on her family’s trip over the “Conejos Range” on their way to Hermosa in 1877:

When we could get our wagons to the summit, we started down the western slope of the mountain by following a trail. Often, three men would have to ride on the upper outside of the wagon as they were rounding a hill to keep the wagon from turning over.

Martha A. Roberts on leaving the Animas Valley in December 1880 after losing her husband during an eventful five-year stay at Hermosa:

In the course of our journey the next day [from their campsite on the Piedra River] a dangerous incident occurred; after ascending a steep hill, we were about to descend the other side when we discovered that one side of the road was covered with snow and the other with ice. The men in the first wagon tried the snow and descended safely; the second wagon then followed the first. Mr. Day instructed my driver to follow the tracks of the first, but, instead of obeying his order, he turned on to the ice. We did not have time to think, the horses’ feet went from under them and we went down the hill as if shot from a cannon’s mouth. The four men ran to the heads and sides of the horses and held them close to the bank. We were forced to delay an hour to quiet them.

Once the railroad reached Durango in 1881, transportation of people, goods and ores to and from the region became safer and much more efficient. Wagons, however, continued in use for several decades. Durango even had its own resident wagon maker – pioneer blacksmith Harry Jackson. His shop made wooden-axle wagons, spring wagons, buggies and other conveyances until he “quit the business” sometime after World War I. Ironically, as one of La Plata County’s first automobile owners, Jackson himself symbolized the end of the horse and buggy era.

Robert McDaniel is a fourth-generation native of southwest Colorado and is descended from miners, cowboys, farmers and a water attorney.

The wagon shop on the east side of the 1100 block of today’s Main Avenue in Durango ca. 1882. In addition to offering wagon repairs, the establishment also offered horseshoeing for the convenience of wagon travelers. Photo courtesy Animas Museum Photo Archives.
Elmer Franklin Taylor a young Mormon man of seventeen was riding horseback through Hesperus on his way to Fruitland, NM to visit his mother. Over the years he would often make this trip and pass by a deep, bone-dry arroyo in the middle of the desert. Who would have thought that in approximately thirty-five years he would build a successful flour mill there powered by water!

Congress passed an act on May 17, 1900 to provide free homesteading in the eastern portion of the Southern Ute Reservation to qualifying families. Pioneering families (many of them Mormon) started moving into La Plata County. Land was being cleared on Fort Lewis Mesa north of Redmesa. Water was being diverted from the La Plata River to provide irrigation. As a result water started to flow south into the dry arroyo. The arroyo eventually had a steady stream and became known as Long Hollow Creek.

The idea was now planted in Elmer’s mind to build a water powered mill. By 1922 Long Hollow Mill was under way. The land he needed to build his mill on was still part of the Indian reservation. He purchased land in Bayfield, CO, and the Indians readily traded him land for water. He obtained water rights; now all that was left was to build the mill. He received milling equipment from an older mill in Kirtland, NM. The brick for the building was made on-site out of adobe that was fired in a homemade kiln. A water turbine was installed. By 1924, Long Hollow Mill Company, a water-powered mill in the middle of the desert was complete and in operation. In its prime the mill produced forty barrels per day (barrel = 196 lbs) of flour and grain. The family owned mill had a hard time getting enough wheat to run the mill; people from the surrounding area traded wheat for flour. Lloyd, one of Elmer’s sons, took over operation in 1932. He ran it for several years. When Lloyd moved his family to Kirtland, other family members took over. The business stayed in operation changing hands with other family members through the years until 2001 when the family decided to dissolve the Long Hollow Company. Today the mill is only a skeleton of what it used to be. A new dam is currently being constructed just east of the old mill to store water for delivery to New Mexico to meet a water compact agreement.

Hiram Martin Taylor, Elmer’s brother, originally moved his family to Mancos, CO, where he helped build the Mormon Trail. This was a steep wagon road that led out of the canyon south of Mancos connecting with the Dryside of La Plata County. It was used by many of the early settlers for travel to and from Mancos. In 1906 Hiram was called by his church leaders to help settle the community of Redmesa. He became the first Bishop of the Redmesa Ward of the LDS Church which was organized in 1908. He also ran a store in Redmesa. Hiram left the area a few years later. His son Leo was called as the second Bishop in 1912 when he was only nineteen years old. When Leo was Bishop construction began on the Redmesa Dam (Mormon Reservoir) on Hay Gulch stream. James Slade was an advisor, first to Hiram, then to Leo. At the time they didn’t have an engineer so James took the job as one of the directors of construction. In 1911 a terrible thunderstorm hit the area causing a flood that destroyed the dam. James remembered, “It was night time, Mother and I were walking the floor in anxiety when the dreadful thing happened. There was a terrible pounding, then an even more terrible rushing of mighty waters down the river only a short distance from our home. I stood aghast, all color drained from my face. It has gone!” For the reconstruction of the reservoir the church called in an engineer. Many years of hard work completed the dam and reservoir, which is still in use today. Life became a little easier when electricity was brought to the area in 1946. The early pioneers of La Plata County left behind a legacy that is still evident today in the roads, farms, buildings and reservoirs built by these people. This large combined Mormon and non-Mormon community is a loving and helpful one where everyone takes care of one another. It is easy to see why pioneers worked so hard to live here and why so many of their descendants still live here today with the La Plata Mountains as a beautiful backdrop.
By the time Roy Hall (who is probably the ill-fated “Roy” in the poem) brought a one or two cylinder driving machine to La Plata County, local promoters were already advocating for automobile roads. In 1902, a Mr. Roehrig came to Durango to raise support for a Durango to Farmington “automobile line”. He told the Durango Wage Earner that he thought there would certainly be a demand for a road to Trimble Hot Springs and another “line” up the Pine River Valley. T.D. Burns, owner of Trimble Hot Springs, also promoted the route, offering $300 towards constructing it. A Durango mechanical/machinery/electrical business, called the Durango Novelty Works, began to stock cars for sale and offered a ride service to Trimble Hot Springs for $1.

The State of Colorado quickly realized the need for passable roads. In 1909 Governor John Shafroth appointed a three-person State Highway Commission, including Durango resident Thomas Tulley, to plan a statewide road system.

Some entities resisted the signs of sweeping change. “NO! NEVER!” proclaimed a headline in a 1910 Durango Wage Earner. “Autos are owned by rich men, wagons by poor men. If the autoists want a road to joy-ride on let them build it….Surely our present board of county commissioners will not put six thousand dollars of the people’s money into such a sink hole.” The Wage Earner’s pleas were in vain. In 1913, Colorado passed laws to license and register automobiles, and in 1919 Colorado became one of the first four states to levy a one cent per gallon gasoline tax to fund road construction.

The Federal Highway Act of 1916 provided matching funds for state highway construction projects. Using about $100,000 of the new funds, Colorado went straight to work, opening Wolf Creek Pass to automobiles on August 21, 1916. The treacherous one-lane gravel road ranged from 12 to 16 feet wide with turnouts for passing vehicles. The steep grade could wreak havoc on automobiles with only partially filled gravity-flow gas tanks, causing an occasional driver to drive backwards up portions of the road. The road over Red Mountain Pass was improved in the early 1920s, offering a route to motor into La Plata County from the north.

Local roads did not see much improvement until the Great Depression, when federal construction programs provided funding for grading and oiling some of the county roads in the 1930s and early 1940s. Federal projects also built and improved roads for Vallecito Dam, for the transport of radioactive materials for nuclear development during and after World War II, and later on for Navajo Dam.

With almost 200 miles of paved roads and about 500 miles of gravel roads, La Plata County road conditions are much improved from the early days. Drivers no longer negotiate the deeply rutted muddy routes of long ago, but it’s a sure bet that more than a few motorists can invoke the tale of Roy with his early motor car as they weave through the autos and bicycles that make up local traffic today.

Jill Seyfarth is a professional archaeologist and historian and a long-time resident of Animas City.
Today tourists from Denver arrive daily by car for vacations in La Plata County. In 1917 it was newsworthy. The Durango Semi Weekly Herald of September 10, 1917 covered the event. More than a dozen Oldsmobile owners set out on Saturday, September 1 to visit Mesa Verde. They reached Cañon City the first night. The next day they crossed Poncha Pass and the San Luis Valley, stopping for the night in Del Norte. On Monday they took the new road over Wolf Creek Pass and paused to rest for an hour. Word reached Durango by phone that they were on the way. Members of the Durango Exchange, which later became the Chamber of Commerce, the press and others gathered a group to meet the Oldsmobiles east of Durango and escort them into town.

The group took advantage of Durango’s position as the gateway to Mesa Verde to prepare for their trip to the park. The Durango Weekly Herald noted, “On Tuesday morning the San Juan sun arose as usual in all his glory. The wonder seekers gathered themselves together, refilled their gasoline tanks and supplied themselves with other necessaries of the auto tourists and by the hour of 10 a.m. had lined up along lower Main Avenue, ready for the prospective trip.” They decided it would be helpful to have a local motorist along, as well as a reporter. A writer from the Herald and Jim Jarvis joined the group. Also accompanying the party was a serviceman from the Fisk Tire Company and one from Oldsmobile. The group was proclaimed to be the first automobile club to visit the park and it was noted that there was no jollier party.

The group arrived in Durango at 3:30 and after purchasing supplies departed for Trimble Springs. There was time for a dip in the springs before dinner, after which the group “repaired to the dance hall” where they danced until nearly midnight.

The group headed to Silverton the next day. Since there was not yet an auto road to take them, the drivers motored to Durango and loaded the Oldsmobiles onto the train for shipment. The train stopped at Trimble for the rest of the party to board for the trip north. At Silverton they prepared to drive to Ouray, where they planned to spend the night.

The Herald concluded that the Oldsmobile Club run was “one of the best advertising events in the history of the San Juan and was a great advertiser for the Oldsmobile car for which Jas. J. Jarvis is the San Juan agent.” The railroad was also praised for their efforts to get the autos to Silverton and the group itself earned the gratitude of the newspaper writer. As many have said of their travels to southwest Colorado, “The trip will be long remembered.” “Adios, Oldsmobilists.”

Carolyn Bowra is the Director of the Animas Museum and a seasoned motorist.

Oldsmobile advertisements such as this pointed out the comforts of the French leather upholstery and leg room for passengers. With the powerful 88 horsepower engine and 14-17 miles per gallon it would be just the thing for touring Colorado.
In the fall of 1903, Durango hardware and wagon dealer Harry Jackson bought a Model XIV Winton automobile. “What a beauty it was, red with solid brass trim,” he would later recall about the first of his many Winton purchases. “It cost me $2,500 and about that much to keep it running. …All in all I could have purchased several good ranches for the money I spent on Winton cars.”

Jackson - a prosperous local merchant - started a car craze among the more prominent citizens of La Plata County. Before Henry Ford came out with the Model T in 1908, cars were novelties owned only by the wealthy. A 1904 Jeffery Auto Rambler, for instance sold for $1,200 to $1,350. Headlights cost extra. Tires for Harry Jackson’s Winton cost $80 apiece.

This new contraption introduced some new terminology. It was called an automobile, or a motor car, and was often referred to as “the machine”; new auto-worthy roads were referred to as automobile “lines.” In La Plata County an early (possibly the earliest) auto dealership was fittingly named the Durango Novelty Works. The company also provided expertise in machinery and another fairly new technology-electricity. In 1908, the Durango Novelty Works advertised that they could fix anything at their 1130 Main location (now the offices of Korn Ferry).

In 1911, Ben Hocker and his son, Jess, bought the Novelty Works from Orville Chapman. Within four years, the Hockers had relocated to 125 West 8th Street. One of their old garage door openings now has a nice awning and provides the entrance to the current establishment (Pongas); the outline and headers from two other garage doors can still be seen in the stone wall. The Hockers sold Jeffery and Saxon cars from this shop. With a price of $395 for the 1913 model, Saxons were a more affordable option, although you had to pay extra for headlights. By 1915, the Saxons sold for $785 with electric starters and headlights as standard equipment.

The Hockers had one other early competitor in the car business. L.L. Conover opened the Durango Motor Car Company by 1911, followed by J.W. Jarvis who expanded his Eagle Livery and Stable into the Jarvis Garage at 702 2nd Avenue. The Hockers added a taxi service in the 1920s with three cars - a Nash Rambler, an Overland and a Jeffery. The taxi was mostly used by doctors on house calls. In 1929, Hocker Motors opened a fancy new showroom on East 2nd Avenue. Today the building is the home of the Durango Arts Center. The theater in the back half of the building has the exposed roof trusses that were part of the auto garage.

Durango was well on its way to becoming a car town. In the 1930s, automobile dealerships, garages and service stations lined the streets. By 1952, at least nine dealerships competed for the drivers’ dollars along Main and East 2nd Avenues. Here is a list of them - see if you can find them today:

- Graden Weinland at 651 Main sold Dodges and Plymouths
- Drum and Proctor at 1315 Main were Chrysler-Plymouth dealers
- Southwestern Motor Company at 1910 Main
- Durango Motor Company at 160 East 6th Street (they might have only sold auto parts)
- La Plata Motors at 600 East 2nd Avenue (E.D. Arndt, proprietor)
- TCT Motor Sales of Oldsmobiles and GMC Trucks at 679 East 2nd Avenue
- Locke-Nash Motor Company at 801 East 2nd Avenue
- Hocker Chevrolet at 802 East 2nd Avenue
- Miller Motor Company at 990 East 2nd Avenue (burned down and now home to the Durango Police Department)

Jill Seyfarth is a professional archaeologist and historian and a long time resident of Animas City.

Henry Jackson and his Model XIV 1903 Winton 4 cylinder touring car on Florida Mesa ca. 1904. Photo courtesy Animas Museum Photo Archives.

Durango Novelty Works in the 100 block of East 8th Street, in 1912. In addition to selling “machines” the company offered expertise in electricity. Photo courtesy Animas Museum Photo Archives.

Read the Fascinating Story about Silverton's Old Hundred Mine

Ghosts and Gold
The History of the Old Hundred Mine
Scott Fetchenhier

Available at the Animas Museum Giftshop
Meet the author at Fetch’s Mining & Mercantile
On Greene Street in Silverton
(970) 587-5812
In 1903 when the Wright brothers performed the first successful flight, an exciting time in history took off. The appeal of airplanes spread quickly. A mere ten years later this newest form of travel came to Durango. In 1913 the La Plata County Fair hosted the first flight over Durango. As the newspaper of the day observed, "As this will be the first chance and probably the only chance for a long time to come for the vast majority of people in southwestern Colorado and northern New Mexico to see the most wonderful invention of the age, in practical operation, it is confidently expected by the fair directors that the attendance this year will be double what it has been in any previous year." The fairgrounds, on north Main, became the local airport, until townspeople became uncomfortable with planes taking off and landing in town.

In 1929, the airport moved to Reservoir Hill, where Fort Lewis College is today. The local newspaper noted that Durango was not on the national "air map." The new airport would connect Durango to many other places and was an exciting prospect to locals; "The only draw-back Durango and the great San Juan Basin has ever had is transportation. Due to its location the basin is shut off from the rest of the world by natural barriers... With the perfection of the airplane and the establishment of a municipal airfield in this city, a new day is dawning for Durango and the San Juan Basin and it will be a matter of only a very short time until the drone of motors of commercial airplanes coming and going from the local airport will be as commonplace as the movement of trains and tracks is today."

Even though planes took passengers from Durango to Denver as early as the 1920s and 30s, it was not until 1946 that a regularly scheduled flight to Denver was started. A tiny company named Monarch Airlines led the way for commercially viable Denver/Durango passenger flights. Due to occasionally choppy conditions the flights were known informally as the "Vomit Comet." Priced at $18.46, a traveler could now reach Denver in a single afternoon, even though the plane stopped in Alamosa, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs on the way. Now Durango companies could conduct business in Denver and be back within 24 hours.

More frequently, everyday people wanted to use the airlines. In 1950 the airport was moved to its current location off of Highway 172, southeast of Durango, in order to accommodate the higher volume of traffic with bigger planes and more of them. By the late 1980s, over 85,000 passengers traveled to Durango by airplane for work and play. This business model remained in place until 2008 when Frontier airlines returned to Durango bringing lower airfares that allowed people who usually drove their own cars from Denver and Albuquerque to Durango, to hop on a plane instead. Prices now ranged from about two to six hundred dollars, making air travel a reasonable alternative to automotive travel.

From a novelty show, to air mail and the "Vomit Comet", to visitors purchasing inexpensive tickets; flight has been important to Durango for a hundred years. It connects Durango to bigger cities and allows people to easily visit our special small town in the mountains.

Orianna Keating is a 2013 graduate of Fort Lewis College, with a degree in history. She has been an intern at the Animas Museum.
Destination: La Plata County - Attractions at Journey’s End

**TEELAWUKET - A SUMMER HOME**

*By Ruth Lambert*

Teelawuket is a mysterious word that means “Summer Home” in Ute. The name conjures up images of imposing mountains, sparkling waters and tall fragrant pines. Over the years the area has been the summer home to many travelers, first the Utes visiting their beloved high country, later tourists on hunting adventures, then young boys and more recently families experiencing the beauty of La Plata County. It is no wonder that many people journeyed to our area with such an exotic destination as Teelawuket.

The place we now know as Teelawuket is northeast of Vallecito Lake in a narrow valley trending up to the Weminuche Wilderness. The land was originally homesteaded as the Graham Park Homestead in 1886 by brothers Charles C. and Joseph H. Graham. The Grahams came to Colorado with their father from Indiana in 1879. Their original homestead cabin is still standing. In 1894, they sold out to “Coal Oil” John(ny) Kirkpatrick, and Charles moved on to other ventures, including the fish hatcheries at nearby Emerald Lake, another hatchery in the Animas Valley and later a hatchery at Electra Lake.

Kirkpatrick, who had made a fortune in the oil business, loved to entertain, and ran in powerful circles. He imported Swedish builders to construct the grand main house in 1895. He installed a bell tuned to B-flat to call guests to meals and he ran 2,000 Herefords on the property. He also built the barn, several cabins, the cookhouse and gathering room. All of this, as well as barns, tool house, sheds and the hot and cold running water impressed a party of visitors in 1905.

In 1917, Pete Scott, a sheep man from Aztec, New Mexico, bought the ranch. He raised sheep and cattle, hosted paying guests and in an agreement with H.C. Pollock, developed a boys’ camp on the property. Pollock and other investors purchased the ranch in 1926 and expanded the boys’ camp to run “Rancho Mesa Verde”, a boys’ camp that had two locations—at Teelawuket and a location about 60 miles south near Allison, Colorado. Guests would arrive in Ignacio on the train and be transported to the remote ranch in wagons or on horseback and in later years, guests came by car. The ranch continued as a guest ranch in the 1950s and early 1960s. Many of the guests left their signatures with their hometowns and years visited on the walls of the old reception building that also served as a bar in the 1950s and 1960s before it was converted into the tool shed. A brochure to promote the Teelawuket Ranch prominently featured the 7TX brand and advertised that the rates were on the “American (Wife's Vacation) Plan”. The brochure proclaimed the ranch “Little Switzerland” with adventures for the entire family such as high country horseback rides and fishing. The guest ranch changed hands in the following years until it was sold to the Graham family (no relation to the original homesteading Graham), who had been frequent visitors to the guest ranch.

Today, the Grahams continue to own and preserve the ranch as a family retreat. The early 1886 homestead, numerous cabins, the main house, large cookhouse and living room, tool shed, and barn still exist. The pastures and field are open and undeveloped. The ranch appears almost timeless and it is easy to image it as a destination for many journeys into La Plata County. For numerous youth and families, Teelawuket served as an introduction to our area that sparked return visits, and for many, a later permanent home.

Ruth E. Lambert is the Cultural Program Director for the San Juan Mountains Association. Jill Seyfarth provided the research for this article.

For additional information see:

It would be difficult to tell the story of travel and tourism in our fair community without frequent forays into stories of narrow gauge railroading. An interesting tale lies in an unpredictable chain of events that led to the existence of our local treasure, now known as the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. With ever increasing recognition of heritage railroads across our nation, our famous narrow gauge line has a unique history of continued growth befitting each new era, yet it maintains a quaintness that harkens to its own rich heritage, one that was in the making years before most of us became residents of La Plata County.

By the late 1940s, the nearly 70-year-old Denver and Rio Grande Western (D&RGW) mainline serving Durango from the east, was in the early refrains of its swan song. Waning freight traffic due to improving roads and the increased use of trucks was finally starting to provide a rest for the antiquated steam engines and old wooden freight cars. But a little stepchild branch of the fabled narrow gauge system was beginning to sing a new tune.

Mesa Verde had continued to grow in popularity after the Second World War, and the new-found American love affair with motorized travel generally beckoned summertime tourists to venture into the “wild west” of southwestern Colorado. In 1949, the twice-weekly mixed train (both freight and passenger) from Durango to Silverton was but a pedestrian and humble affair when compared to what would become the famous “Trip to Yesterday”. However, something was stirring in our community, and also among the local railroaders, as vacationers began to fill the sparse trains in growing numbers for each year following WW II. The best part was the reason they were starting to frequent the Durango ticket office - simply for the purpose of riding behind an old steam engine in 1880s era varnished coaches. The D&RG originally built the line in 1881 to tap into local mineral resources, which were finally playing out. A new commodity, however, was beginning to arrive in droves, one that would become a centerpiece of our modern day success.

The memorable Chicago Railroad Fair held during the summers of 1948 and 1949 featured railroad exhibits from across the West. In keeping with the theme of the event, various railroad companies proudly exhibited their vintage and contemporary examples of rolling stock and locomotives that had contributed to Western expansion. In 1949, the D&RGW Railroad presented an exhibit consisting of an 1882 narrow gauge locomotive and various pieces of early rolling stock. Resplendent in Aspen Gold paint and punctuated with snappy black pin-striping, old locomotive 268 was an eye-catching number meant to attract the attention of fair-goers visiting Chicago from throughout the country. Immediately following the fair, Twentieth Century-Fox came calling to Durango in August and September of the same year, and the Silverton Branch would...
receive an unexpected benefit in the coming tourist season. “Ticket to Tomahawk” was filmed along the Animas River using a 19th Century steam locomotive with a brightly painted complement of cars that glistened for the Technicolor cameras. The lighthearted western romp featured Dan Dailey, Anne Baxter, Walter Brennan and a new (uncredited) actress, Marilyn Monroe. It premiered in Durango’s Kiva movie theater on April 16, 1950. That spring, many of the nation’s moviegoers received an unprecedented preview of what awaited them in “Colorful Colorado.” Local community members (led in part by Mrs. Marguerite Clark) quickly persuaded the railroad to consider adorning a locomotive and smattering old coaches in the Aspen Gold paint similar to the movie colors seen on screens across the country. In addition, the short summer schedule for the Silverton mixed train would be expanded to three days per week commencing on June 18th, 1950. Steam locomotive number 473 (of 1923 vintage) was adorned with a phony 1880s type of diamond-shaped smokestack and a simulated oil burning headlight shroud, thus ushering in a new era of railroad-themed western entertainment that would propel Durango for decades to come.

Adding to the growing popularity of Colorado narrow gauge railroading, movie companies continued to favor the Durango area throughout the 1950s while scouting locations for the popular western movie genre. The Silverton Branch was on its way. By 1955, the train schedule expanded to seven days a week, and ridership saw a steady increase that would continue to rise with each passing year. Without question, the success of the Silverton train as a tourist destination is due in large part to our earlier boosters of La Plata County, Durango and Silverton, and to those first tourists and rail fans who tirelessly promoted the line through grass-roots efforts. Some of the information recounted in this article was reported “as it happened” by well-known railroad historian Robert W. Richardson. His regular updates of noteworthy events on the narrow gauge in the 1950s were shared via a mimeographed one pager distributed as “The Narrow Gauge News.” It is well-understood among the railroad historian community the apathy that was often displayed from the upper management of the D&RGW railroad in the 1950s concerning the future of the Silverton line - to wit, the ongoing attempts by the company to abandon or sell the line even as its popularity grew. While the company may have possessed their own business reasons for these actions, the communities of Durango and Silverton were not to be denied their own manifest destiny of becoming a tourist mecca. Durango based conductors Alva Lyons, Wayland Bruce, Myron Henry, and others took great pride in the growth of the tourist sector of narrow gauge railroading. When these aging gentlemen had originally hired on with the railroad, their mandate was to safely and efficiently move freight and passengers along the railroad. By the early 1950s, they found themselves punching souvenir tickets while donning old frock coats and 19th century styled hats, much to the delight of Cold War era travelers seeking respite in the fantasy of old west railroading. Walking through the coaches serving donuts, fresh coffee, and smiles, a new tradition of service and narrow gauge storytelling was born, one that survives to this day.

In the 1960s, the D&RGW railroad began to truly rise to the occasion by investing in additional railroad equipment while acquiring and remodeling properties along lower Main Avenue to attract and please the growing throngs of travelers to our community. The railroad company was finally able to divest itself of the antique narrow gauge line in 1981, and another wonderful chapter was opened that continues to this day. The Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad thrives as the centerpiece of our vibrant community.

Many books are available which detail the continued growth and history of the Silverton train, but it is hoped that these few paragraphs may serve as a simple reminder of the humble beginnings of our local railroad institution, one that is loved worldwide. Let us give one more round of thanks to a small yet dedicated group of our local forebears who shared a vision that bore great fruit and brought about new traditions. Their legacy will live on, to be enjoyed by our future generations.

Jeff Johnson arrived in La Plata County in 1981 and began a 22 year career in railroading that started on the Durango and Silverton, currently serving as the Project Manager for Blackstone Models. He is a member of the LPCHS Board of Directors.

In the late spring of 1890, a young Swedish archeologist named Gustaf Nordenskiold stepped off a Denver and Rio Grande Railroad train in Durango, with the intent of spending only a few nights in the small city while on his way to Japan. In a matter of days, however, young Nordenskiold had joined in the excavations at nearby Mesa Verde and found temporary relief of his tuberculosis in the clear air of southwest Colorado. Nordenskiold soon sent a telegraph to his father to inform him that he would not be continuing his travel and that he needed money for an extended stay in Durango. Although Nordenskiold is best remembered today for his sometimes controversial role in the excavations of Mesa Verde, his spirit is reflected in the many thousands of tourists who come to La Plata County annually for its still abundant clear mountain air and bountiful recreational opportunities.

For over a hundred years, tourists, residents, and college students have arrived in Durango as rapidly as their means of transportation allowed. Their reasons for coming are plentiful, but few incentives have kept residents living in and tourists returning to Durango and La Plata County, as have the endless opportunities for year-round recreation that the city and county boast.

Only five years after Nordenskiold’s arrival in Durango, the Durango Wheel Club established the first organized presence of bicyclists in the city. Despite the fact that bicycles were expensive, costing at least $40 for the cheapest models, and riding in dress clothes (as was the custom of the
club) was awkward, bicycle culture survived. Today La Plata County is home to more than 2,000 miles of mountain biking trails, and the Fort Lewis College cycling team recently ranked as number one in the nation. Cycling however, is not just for the competition-minded. Fort Lewis students of all backgrounds also appreciate the bicycle and pedestrian trail leading from campus into the heart of downtown Durango, allowing students to commute without the use of cars.

Even Purgatory at Durango Mountain Resort, the largest and most popular ski area in La Plata County, can be reached by residents and tourists without access to private vehicles, by Durango Transit bus service that runs regularly during the winter. At the time of its opening in 1965, the price of a chairlift ticket was only $4.50. Today a lift ticket can cost $75 but avid skiers and snowboarders appreciate the resort’s growth from just eight trails and a single chairlift to over 450 acres, nine chairlifts and 40 trails.

West of Durango, the much smaller Ski Hesperus opened three years earlier in 1962. Unlike Purgatory, Hesperus has opened and closed periodically at the mercy of shifting ownership and snow conditions.

Long before the Chapman Hill indoor ice rink opened to Durango residents, local resident Charlie Raish dug out an artificial pond near the fish hatchery and dubbed it “Huck Finn Pond”. In the winter, the frozen pond created La Plata County’s first public ice skating rink. Today the Chapman Hill facilities provide ice skating in the winter and rollerblading in the summer, as well as in-town skiing on its namesake hill when weather and snow conditions permit.

Trimble Hot Springs north of Durango, has served as a year round destination for tourists, locals, and even celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe since the 1870s. William Frank Trimble and his wife Rufina homesteaded the property in 1874 and built a two-story hotel five years before the opening of the Strater Hotel. Today the elegant hotels built by Frank Trimble and later, T.D. Burns, no longer exist, but the hot springs and spa continue to attract plenty of patrons.

During a 2012 campaign stop in Durango, First Lady Michelle Obama became the latest celebrity traveler to make note of La Plata County’s charm as a destination saying, “This is such a beautiful part of the state, I don’t know if I want to leave.” Michelle Obama is far from alone. Since the time of Gustaf Nordenskiold’s arrival in 1890, millions of travelers, including Buzz Aldrin, Robert Redford, Jane Fonda, and Gerald Ford, have visited La Plata County, sharing with local residents its wealth of recreational opportunities. From skiing and hiking, to snowboarding and bicycling, La Plata County invites its year-round residents and visitors to find in themselves Nordenskiold’s spirit of adventure.

Evan West is in his junior year at Fort Lewis College. He is majoring in history, with an interest in the theater.
community heritage Awards

The La Plata County Historical Society will present its annual Community Heritage Awards on Friday, May 24 at the Bar D Chuckwagon. This year the Davin Montoya family and the Durango Elks Lodge, BPOE #507, will be honored for their contributions to the heritage of La Plata County.

One of the finest journeys one can take is a drive north on County Road 250 to the Bar D Chuckwagon; where a plate of authentic cowboy cuisine awaits. Gates will open at 5:30 to allow plenty of time to browse in the shops or ride the Bar D train. Folks will want to be in the dining area at 6:00 when the first pie goes on the auction block. There will be spirited bidding for ownership of some of the finest pies ever baked in the country. Dinner will be served promptly at 7:30 followed by the presentation of awards. A special performance by the Bar D Wranglers will cap off the festivities. Tickets are $40 each or you may wish to gather a group and purchase a table. Center tables seating 12 are $480; outer tables seating 10 are $400. Proceeds benefit the La Plata County Historical Society and the Animas Museum. Individual and table reservations may be made by calling 970-259-2402, on-line at www.animasmuseum.org, or at the Animas Museum, 3065 W. 2nd Ave. Reservation deadline is Friday, May 17. Special thanks to our sponsors: Southwest Federal Credit Union, R.H. Crossland Foundation and Historical Museum, La Plata Electric Association, Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, First National Bank of Durango and co-sponsor: The Durango Herald.

A bit more than a half a century ago, I recall walking with my grandfather along Durango’s East 2nd Avenue at the corner of 9th Street. The large brick building there, to a boy of five, looked like an imposing structure that probably housed an important town enterprise. Hanging at the corner of the building was an equally impressive neon sign with the letters “B P O E.” As a bit of a precocious kid, I asked my granddad, “What is BPOE?” With a wry smile he replied, “It stands for the Best People On Earth.” And to make sure his little joke would stick, he also told me that the only people who could enter the building were special folks who met very high standards. As a kid who believed every word grandpa said, I took his explanation as gospel, and I imagined the kind of special people who would be allowed to go into that unique building.

It wasn’t long until grandpa’s joke got exposed. I told a school friend about the ‘best people on earth’ building and, since his dad was actually a member, he quickly set me straight. “It stands for the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.” Having seen live elk, I now imagined a group of people who went into the building to tend to the needs of the four-legged, wild creatures I’d seen in the woods. How did the elk get into the building and what did they do in there? For a not-too-bright kid, the whole thing had become a tangled mystery.

Eventually I learned that the “Elks” were a lodge group who engaged in both social and community activities aimed at improving people’s lives. The Elks were much more than a social group or another community club. They took the words “Benevolent” and “Protective” seriously for more than 100 years. They have fostered and contributed to community-building in ways that extend far beyond their Second Avenue structure, touching the lives of countless area people and groups. They are also active preservationists, maintaining their own history museum and promoting the idea of sustaining the heritage of their group and the community as a whole.

The BPOE organization began with the “Jolly Corks” - a name they took based on a clever trick with corks that the first members performed on the uninitiated to win rounds of drinks. The ‘Corks’ were a group of actors and entertainers dedicated to having fun and avoiding a New York 1867 Excise Tax. At the time, the Excise Law was being strictly enforced, and Sunday in New York City was a very dry day. Meeting in Mrs. Giesman’s boarding house, this group of revelers would gather to hold social conventions under the inspiring influences of a stock of beer laid in the night before.

As the membership grew, so did the vision to become more helpful as community benefactors. Based on this, The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America will serve the people and communities through benevolent programs, demonstrating that Elks Care and Elks Share.

With a new spirit and direction, the BPOE now began to help with groups such as veterans, scouting, and scholarships - “wherever Charity, Justice and Brotherly Love were needed.”

Over time 2,870 Lodges were formed across America to embrace and extend this mission. In this spirit, the Durango Colorado Lodge # 507 was instituted on June 6, 1899. The first Exalted Ruler of Lodge 507 was Harry Jackson. Other key Lodge leaders were: Harry Turner, as Esteemed Leading Knight; Rod Day, Esteemed Loyal Knight; C.S. Bailey, Esteemed Lecturing Knight; Al Kuebler, Secretary; Charles Stillwell, Treasurer;
A Publication of the La Plata County Historical Society

History La Plata May 5, 2013 Vol. XIX

From the earliest days the lodge aided the community. In April of 1914 they raised money for flood relief in Telluride. In 1917 they sold potatoes to raise money for charity. The Lodge challenged the American Legion to a baseball game in 1920, with proceeds going to fund the Cascade Boys and Girls Club - raising some $118.45. Later, in 1931, the Elk's Charity Ball raised $250 for needy children in La Plata County. Unfortunately, this money was stolen, but the Lodge members pitched in and collected it again. Post-World War I, Lodge 507 worked with the Red Cross and veterans groups, and at one time there was an "Elk's Room" in the old Mercy Hospital. During the Great Depression, the Durango Elks were the only area fraternal organization on the Community Council to provide unemployment relief to 56 area Hispanic families.

The organization may have attracted a few 'rowdy' types. At one point, they tried to kick a member out of the Lodge for leaving his wife at the edge of town, then departing for Wyoming with another man's wife!

For an organization that began as kind of a 'drinking club', the new Elks of the late 1890s and early 1900s had evolved in surprising ways. That evolution was reflected in the Durango Lodge as the group maintained a bit of the 'Corks' traditions while quietly engaging in great heritage-building activities. Just to highlight some of those (almost) invisible community resource-building traditions:

- The Elk's Picnic Grounds along the Florida River just northeast of Durango were built and improved collaboratively with a local area Boy Scout troop. Almost any community group or business can arrange to use this picnicking place for an event, and a picnic at the "Elk's" has long been a local tradition.

- In keeping with their own traditions as a 'fun-loving' group, many locals have competed in Elk's-sponsored athletic competitions. Annual sports events include an Elks Golf Tournament and a yearly Hoops Shoot event for boys and girls. The Elks also host an annual Basketball Shoot contest and an ongoing Junior Golf project. These sports events also double as fund-raisers for other community-based projects.

- The heritage of "Benevolence" stands as a tangible way that our Elks invest in the area's future while acknowledging past excellence in the students and area schools. Durango Elks traditionally provide scholarships for multiple local students headed to college. Most years this scholarship support exceeds $5,000, and is often closer to $10,000. Last year, the Durango Elks provided some $8,000 in scholarships. These scholarships are given throughout the region and include schools and students from across La Plata County.

- Beyond the fun programs, our local Elks contribute to and help conduct the area's Safety Town program, teaching safety to preschoolers and elementary students. The Elks are staunch supporters of various local and national Drug Awareness programs. Over a long period, these youth-focused safety and health programs have made a powerful impact in the area. They highlight the Elks' commitment to the "Protective" heritage.

- Elks community events such as Sweetheart Dances, Spaghetti Dinners, Meatloaf Cook-offs, St. Patrick's Day Dinners, Fourth of July and Flag Day events, participation in the Veterans' Day Parade, and the Annual Charity Balls help raise money for their mission and bring people together. They have also become a part of the fabric of the community and our shared and ongoing living heritage.

For the Durango Lodge 507 and the Elks organization, the transformation into a 'benevolent and protective' order remains central. In keeping with their founding traditions, the Elks have a vibrant social life. But no purely 'for-fun' group could keep going for so long if their driving ideals did not extend beyond enjoyment. The ability of such a group to make this vision real in any local area comes down to the people who have elected to become involved. The Durango BPOE Lodge 507 has earned the Community Heritage Award for their role as a vital part of our community.

Bruce Spinning is descended from Florida Mesa pioneers. He is a member of the La Plata County Historical Society Board of Directors.
As stewards of their land Davin and Theresa Montoya share with their ancestors a sense of belonging to a place, culture and history handed down through several generations of northern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado ranchers. Following nature’s cycles and the grazing needs of their cattle, the Montoyas rotate their herd between homeland pastures in Hesperus, Hay Gulch (west of Breen) and La Plata, New Mexico. The Montoyas can lay claim to a long ranching presence in this region dating back to the family sheep ranch started by Davin’s grandfather Jose Belarmino. Yet the family’s sheep legacy would, by 1978, yield to cattle ranching due to sheep losses inflicted by predators.

Colorado’s sheep and cattle are part of the legacy of the Spaniard Juan de Onate who, in 1598, left Santa Barbara, Mexico for northern New Mexico with 700 cattle and 5,000 sheep. While early cattle ranching in New Mexico never achieved the success that it did in Colorado, possibly due to its blockade by priests in pueblos, agricultural areas, by 1869 Colorado could boast as many as one million head. One southwestern exception was in New Mexico’s Chama Valley where the Piedra Lumbre/Polvadera grant was awarded, its range used in the 1740’s by a branch of the Montoya family, and the only profitable large cattle operation in northern New Mexico. The sheep and cattle ranch lands of Davin’s grandfather Jose Belarmino were, however, not recipients of the land grants system.

In the American southwest the Montoya name can be traced back to 1678, and beyond that to Mexico and the Spanish born Don Hernan Cortez who, in 1510, married Emperatriz Tenochica Dona Ysabe Moctezuma, the daughter of the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II. The Montoya’s European lineage reaches back to Fernando IV, king of Castille in Spain. Moving forward in time, Davin’s great-grandfather, Juan N. Jaquez, was a territorial delegate to the House of Representatives prior to New Mexico’s statehood.

Theresa Montoya has roots in the upper reaches of Cherry Creek. Centennial Farm, now a historical landmark and where she was raised, has been a family property since 1886. Theresa oversees the financial records for the Montoya business, balancing bookkeeping with her skills as mechanic, excavator and welder. Davin and Theresa have four sons, Michael, Ted, Cody and Jesse. Each has pursued careers far removed from ranching with the exception of Jesse who augments ranching with a welding business. Ted, the eldest of the four brothers, is an engineer currently working on the Panama Canal. Mike is in law enforcement in Washington D.C., and Cody works for Stone Age, a company which develops high pressure water tools. Despite the different paths taken by each, Mike notes that “nothing can replace the skills, knowledge and work ethic obtained from our parents”.

The Montoya’s cow/calf operation continually endeavors to improve their line through genetic selection as do many such operations today. Technological advances have also resulted in fences run by solar power and wireless cameras for monitoring their cattle. Although cattle numbers across the country today are comparable to those of the 1950s, contemporary cattle yield more weight. Yet adhering to an environmentally conscious and sustainable cow/calf operation requires a capital investment to make it work. The Montoyas operated an excavation business for 30 years to fund their cattle business and purchase adequate acreage to prevent overgrazing. This pay as you go philosophy yields ranches of much more modest means. One common downside is tracts too small to divide among upcoming generations who might wish to sustain and continue a similar ranching way of life.

Small scale family ranchers, such as the Montoyas, diligently avoid past overgrazing practices. This overgrazing led to the decimation of vast expanses of the West by 1900, ultimately contributing to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Yet they note that, concomitant with our increasing value of land, an equivalent start-up enterprise with its dependable income would be almost impossible today.

The Montoyas are strongly committed to resolving community issues that confront regional land owners. As a board member of LPEA for 22 years Davin worked to influence rules regarding power line intrusions through private property. He also served on the board of Wesodi, Western Energy Services of Durango, a subsidiary of LPEA. In addition Davin managed Fast Track, a fiber optics communications company dedicated to providing reliable high speed data transport to western Colorado. During multiple terms as president of the Cattlemen’s Association, Montoya focused on promoting and producing educational programs to increase public awareness about issues surrounding food production. His driving goal while on the La Plata Cattlemen’s Association and County Farm Bureau was to unite the agricultural producers in our region.

Serving regional irrigation needs are central to Montoya family goals. Davin’s father Chano worked throughout his life to promote the building of the Animas-La Plata Project. An integral part of the original concept was an irrigation water component to alleviate water needs along the La Plata River. Reality collided with expectations. Now on the La Plata Water Conservancy District’s Board, Davin is working with the Long Hollow Reservoir Dam project, a construction project scheduled for completion in January 2014. Water from springs which feeds creeks in Long Hollow and Marvel, below Red Mesa, will be held in a combined natural entrainment/reservoir dam project now under construction. Seeded by $15 million in funding set aside by Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority and $3 million from the Ute Mountain Ute tribe, the water will help alleviate water shortages for Colorado irrigators whose water needs can’t be met due, in part, to New Mexico’s rights to La Plata River water.

For their efforts as advocates for La County Plata County’s agricultural and ranching community, their goals to promote and protect sustainable water and ranching practices and their desire to preserve distinctive features of our La Plata County, the La Plata County Historical Society has selected the Montoya family for its annual Community Heritage Award.

Marilee Jantzer-White is an art historian and an emeritus professor at Fort Lewis College.
WALKING DURANGO:
HISTORY, SIGHTS, AND STORIES
A Journey to the Past

Very soon, you’ll be able to take a guided tour of Durango’s Historic Districts, any time you want. This summer, the Durango Herald Small Press is set to release Walking Durango: History, Sights, and Stories, by Peggy Winkworth, the first in a projected series of regional guidebooks from the Press aptly named “Detours.”

The La Plata County Historical Society is proud to be a collaborator with Winkworth on this entertaining and informative book that takes you on a history scavenger hunt through Durango’s downtown historic districts. Winkworth’s close-up photographs will give you clues to what you’re looking for as you walk up Main Avenue and down the Boulevard. Find what you see in the photo, then turn the page and learn interesting details about the buildings, the people, and the events that have shaped Durango.

The book is lavishly illustrated with historic photos from the Animas Museum’s archives. Stories from the past add to the fun. What did the train haul to Silverton before there were tourists? Why did outlaws kidnap a minister, and what did they force him to do at gunpoint? Who are the two Civil War Medal of Honor recipients who played an important part in our history? What department store owner had his clerks throw pennies on the floor, and why?

First time visitors will enjoy the leisurely trip through Durango’s past, while long-time residents and returning visitors will learn new facts about familiar places. Walking Durango: History, Sights, and Stories belongs on everyone’s bookshelf – and in their hands as they stroll through downtown.

The book is scheduled for release by early June, and will be for sale all over town. Best of all, visit the Animas Museum first. Buy a copy in the Museum Store, look around the Museum, then head downtown for your tour. Wherever you buy it, the La Plata County Historical Society will earn royalties. So buy more than one copy. Make it your “welcome to town” gift whenever you have visitors. They’ll thank you, and so will we.

Walking Durango
HISTORY, SIGHTS, and STORIES
Peggy Winkworth

UPCOMING EVENTS
There is always something happening at the Animas Museum!

Saturday, May 18, Family Day - Drop by between 1-3 for a fun craft. Museum admission charges apply, but as always, members are free.

Friday, May 24 - Community Heritage Awards at the Bar D Chuckwagon. Gates open at 5:30, dinner is at 7:30 followed by a performance by the Bar D Wranglers. Tickets are $40, reservation deadline is Friday, May 17.

Saturday, June 1 - Join us at Greenmount Cemetery at 10 a.m. for the tour, “Barkeeps, Ruffians and Shady Ladies.” Bring a hat and water bottle and learn about some of the characters that made La Plata County so interesting. Free, but donations will benefit the Animas Museum.

Saturday Summer fun is always on tap at the Museum. Stop by between 1 and 3 for a craft and museum exploration. Regular admission is charged, but there is no additional charge for the craft.

June 29 - Get ready for Independence Day with a patriotic craft
July 27 - Beat the heat with an old-fashioned fan
August 31 - Get ready to go back to school with a stamped bookcover
September 28 - Catch fall breezes with a handmade kite

Saturday, September 7 - Animas City Day festivities will celebrate the town that pre-dates Durango. Now known as north Durango, Animas City was founded in 1876. Also that day we will host the Animas City School Reunion. If you attended school in the building that now houses the Museum, be sure to let us know your contact information so we can keep your posted about this special occasion.

Saturday, October 12 - Durango Heritage Celebration activities at the Museum 1-3, Museum admission charges apply.

Friday, December 6 - Preview the treasures at the annual Old-Fashioned Christmas Bazaar from 5-7 and join us in the Joy Cabin for holiday treats by candlelight. Warm up by the fire and celebrate in 1876 style!

Saturday, December 7 - Local artists will fill the Museum with handcrafted items perfect for holiday giving, 9-3.

We are always adding informative interesting programs and fun events to our calendar, so visit our website at www.animasmuseum.org or follow us on Facebook for the very latest schedule.
The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, “Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.” At the La Plata County Historical Society our journey takes us down the road of our community’s past. From humble beginnings with only a vision of a museum “someday”, we have grown to operate a unique facility in a magnificent historic building. Our exhibits and programming tell the stories of our community and preserve the artifacts that will be a legacy for future generations.

Accompany us on this journey and take that first step by joining the La Plata County Historical Society. Our exhibits and programming tell the stories of our community and preserve the artifacts that will be a legacy for future generations.

Use the form on this page to join the historical society and call the Museum at 259-2402 for more information about volunteering. You may also join online by visiting our website at www.animasmuseum.org.

La Plata County Historical Society Membership Form

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**Ask for information about becoming a lifetime member!**

Name ____________________________

Address __________________________

City ____________________________ State __________ Zip Code __________

Phone (___) ____________

Email ____________________________

I would like to make an additional donation of $ _________ to the:

General Fund $ ____________ Building Fund $ ____________

Collections Care Fund $ ____________ Endowment Fund ($500 min) $ ____________

In memory of ____________________________

Please make checks payable to LPCHS and send with this form to:

LPCHS P.O. Box 3384 Durango CO 81302