

HISTORIC

Durango



C.F. Wood's Durango Boarding & Feed Stable circa 1900

C.F. Wood's Durango Boarding & Feed Stable was located on the corner of 7th Street and 2nd Avenue (now the home of Big A Auto Parts). Silent film star Harold Lloyd was a stable boy here at one time. The Rochester Hotel can be seen next door to the north.

Photo courtesy Animas Museum - Kenneth Logan Collection

May, 1995

A Publication of the La Plata County Historical Society

In the early 1970's a group of people fascinated by Durango's history started meeting, and out of those sessions emerged the La Plata County Historical Society. We looked about and saw that records, materials, and "old-timers" were rapidly disappearing. We also fell in love with local history and its many complexities.

Moved by a concern much like the Sioux saying, "A people without history is like the wind on the buffalo grass," we acted. If we were going to have collections, we needed some place to store and display them, but the rising cost of local real estate thwarted us. The eventual result was the purchase of the Animas School and the opening of the Animas Museum in 1983.

Our goal now is the same as it always has been—to collect and preserve Durango and La Plata County history and provide a place for the public to see its "roots" and research the local past. It is our goal also to promote preservation of old buildings, archaeological sites, and history in general. We also hope through such activities as the Turn-of-the-Century Classroom, Historic Bus Tours, and the Summer Lecture Series to "hook" young and old alike on the fascinating story of southwestern Colorado and Durango. History is alive and has much to tell about how we arrived here and where we may be going.

Duane A. Smith
President



1996 CALENDAR

Place your order now for the 1996 Historic Durango Calendar. A GREAT GIFT ITEM! Wholesale and quantity discounts are available. Call the Animas Museum at 259-2402.

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If you do not wish to keep this publication, please return it to the Animas Museum.

La Plata County Historical Society

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Animas Museum • P.O. Box 3384 • Durango, CO 81302 • 970-259-2402

The Historic Durango Publication and Historic Durango Calendar are publications of the La Plata County Historical Society. Designed and produced by PIKA Graphics - Durango, Colorado.

1995 Schedule of Events

MAY 1

Animas Museum Opening Day

MAY 14-20

National Historic Preservation Week

MAY 20

Local Appreciation Day

FREE Admission to Animas Museum
Historic Bus Tours with Host Duane Smith
Potluck Barbeque for Members & Friends

JUNE 16

DACRA Business After Hours

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

JULY-AUGUST

Annual Summer Lecture Series

AUGUST

Ice Cream Social

OCTOBER

Annual Wine Tasting Fundraiser
Delicious Food, Wine, Beer
and Non-Alcoholic Beverages

OCTOBER

Historical Society Annual Meeting

OCTOBER

Historic Exhibit Premier Opening -
"30 Years of Purgatory Memories"

OCTOBER 31

Animas Museum Closing Day

DECEMBER 2

Annual Christmas Social & Bazaar
Decorated Christmas Tree Contest
Ginger Bread House Contest
Handmade & Unique Gifts
Silent Auction

Dates are subject to change - call the Animas
Museum at 259-2402 for confirmation.

Volunteers are welcome, and always appreciated!
Please call the Museum if you can help with
our various projects and special events.

Pioneer Joy Cabin Comes Homes

by Robert McDaniel

One of Animas City's earliest pioneer cabins was recently moved from Durango's Brookside Park to the Animas Museum, where stabilization and restoration has been in progress. The cabin is an integral part of the Museum's future exhibit of pioneer architecture and lifestyle.

White settlers began moving into the Animas Valley in the wake of the Brunot Agreement with the Ute Indians in 1874. By terms of this agreement the Utes ceded a large parcel of land in Southwest Colorado from the reservation that had been created for them in 1868. Animas Valley pioneers established farms and ranches in response to the market opened up by the influx of miners into the mining regions of the San Juan Mountains. The Animas City townsite was platted in 1876 about two miles north of the future townsite of Durango by several of these valley settlers.

One newcomer to Animas City was a New England blacksmith named C.B. Joy. Using only hand tools such as a felling axe, a broadaxe, a couple of saws, and a hammer, he built a rough-hewn log cabin on the corner of 3rd St. and Main (now 31st St. and Main in north Durango), and established his blacksmith shop nearby. He was able to obtain sawn wood for floor, roof and trim work probably from a sawmill located near Parrot City fifteen miles to the west. Although not much is known about Joy, he was, apparently, quite a town character. Once, when Joy was accused of stealing a calf, he convinced a young attorney named Charles Alvin Pike to defend him. Pike was persuasive enough in his defense to obtain acquittal, although in later years Joy let it be known that certain events in his life happened

"before I stole the calf."

Joy sold his cabin and property to another pioneer blacksmith named Charles Naeglin about 1880. Naeglin had originally settled in Parrot City, but soon moved to the more thriving community of Animas City. By 1881 he had established himself in the new town of Durango, and located his blacksmith shop at 14th St. and Main, where it remained for many long years. Naeglin was a widely known and well respected La Plata County pioneer.

The ownership of the Joy Cabin between 1881 and 1902 is unclear, but in 1902 Mrs. Augusta Wilkerson purchased it from Thomas Loftus. With a three-room frame addition it served as the Wilkerson home until about 1942. Martha Simpson, a granddaughter of Mrs. Wilkerson, remembers that there was a particularly good well for the home. She also remembers her grandmother's beautiful organ, which someone stole from the house. Her mother, Vera Wilkerson Carman, was married in the home.

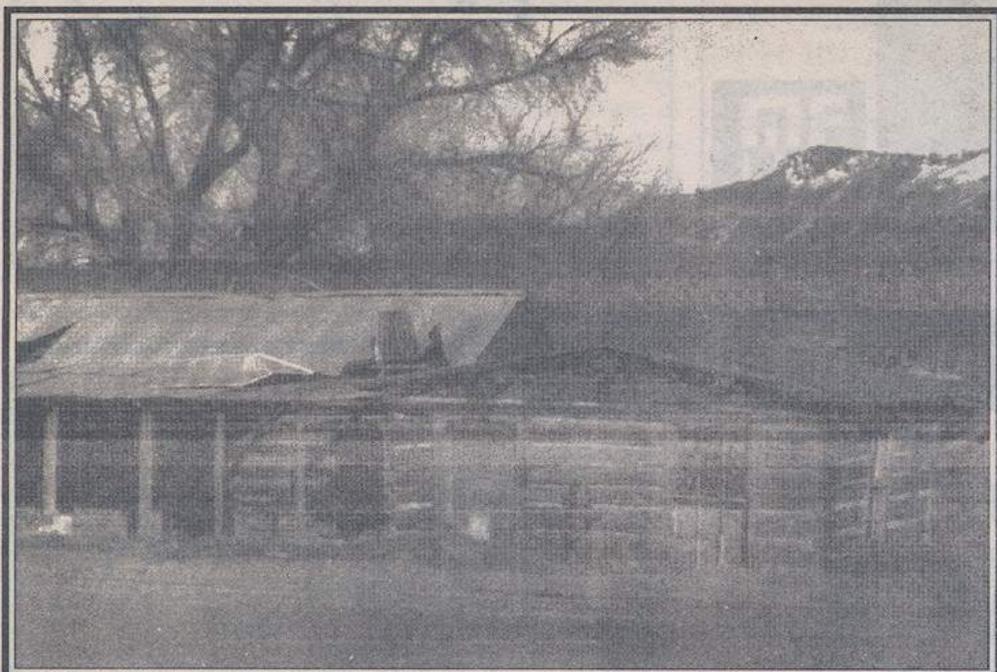
In 1946 the property was sold to Virgil Walls, who established the Log Cabin Antiques store there. The property changed hands a few more times, until 1958, when the City of Durango (which had annexed Animas City in 1948) sought to have the Joy Cabin demolished in an effort to improve that section of town. In order to save the cabin, it was donated to the Four Corners Museum Association, and moved to Brookside Park alongside the new Chamber of Commerce with financial help from the Helen Thatcher White Foundation.

Several years ago the Four Corners Museum Association disbanded, and ownership of the

cabin was transferred to the La Plata County Historical Society. The Historical Society had obtained the old Animas City School for use as a Museum in 1978, and plans were made to move the Joy Cabin to the museum grounds as soon as funding became available. Finally, in the summer of 1988, the Historical Society sought and received financial help from the City of Durango to make the move. By means of widespread community effort, which included donated material and time from Durango Concrete Construction, Burnett Construction, Dave McHenry and the Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College, Steve McCormack, Durango Public Works Department, Ted's Rental, the Strater Hotel and the Durango City Council, the move was finally made on October 4th. Because of the cabin's deteriorated condition, special precautions were taken to transport it.

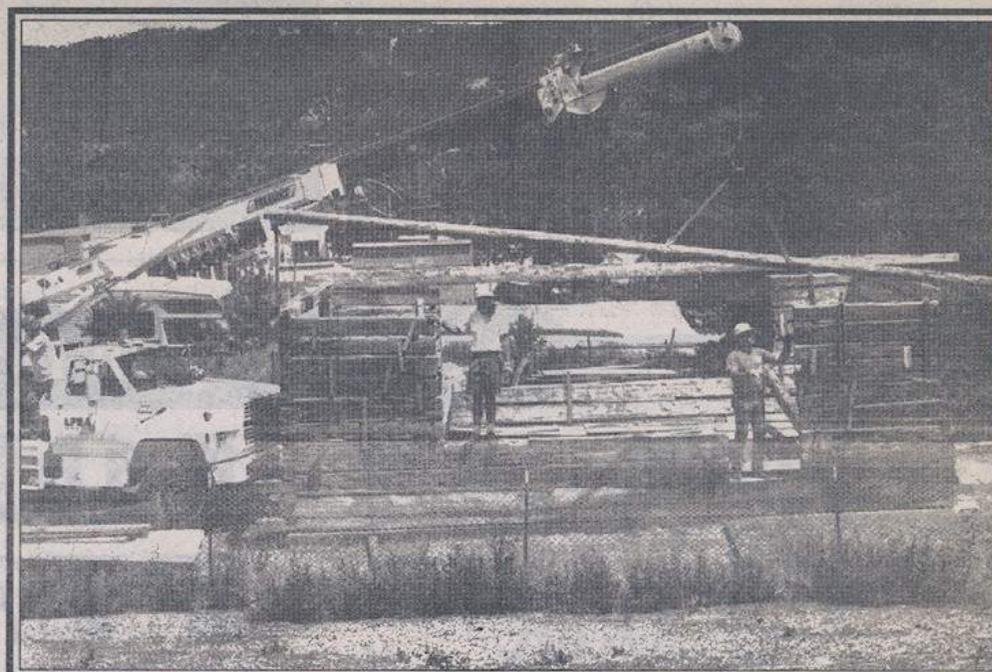
Since it is now located only one block from its original location, the Joy Cabin, in a sense, has "come home." It has required extensive stabilization and restoration, a complicated chore that has been masterminded by Charles A. DiFerdinando, Historical Society member and Museum employee. The area surrounding the Joy Cabin will be landscaped and planted with flora commonly imported by pioneers. The Historical Society also hopes to construct a replica of a blacksmith shop adjacent to the cabin. All of these features will add to the Museum's interpretive exhibits for the education and entertainment of locals and visitors alike. 🌿

Donations toward restoration of the Joy Cabin are welcome - please see the WISH LIST on the back page of this publication.



The Joy Cabin at its original location on 31st Street and Main Avenue in the 1950's. Built in Animas City in the 1870's, the cabin was moved to the Chamber of Commerce at Brookside Park in 1958, and then to the Animas Museum grounds in 1988.

Photo courtesy Animas Museum - David Buchanan Collection



Restoration work continued in 1994 when the Joy Cabin received a boost from La Plata Electric Association employees and boom truck, which hoisted the massive roof beams into place. Photo courtesy La Plata Electric Association

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN THE CITY OF DURANGO

The following materials are available from the Durango City Planning Office at 1235 Camino Del Rio (in the Fire Station Building), 385-2890.

ONLY \$10

Durango's Living History

Twelve-minute video on Durango history - may be borrowed or purchased.

Fourth Avenue Historic Building Survey Report - Publication.

Mercy/St. Columba Neighborhood Building Survey Report - Publication.

FREE

Durango Register of Historic Places

Information brochures and application forms.

Individual Building History Survey Forms

Available for many of the buildings on Main Avenue, East Third Avenue, East Fourth Avenue and the Mercy/St. Columba Neighborhood.

Speakers List

Historic Preservation Board members who are willing to speak to organizations.

Technical Publications

Various aspects of historic preservation.

Tax Credit and Grant Information

City Programs Preserve Local History

by Jill Seyfarth

Identifying the important historic aspects of our community is the first step in preserving them. To that end, the City of Durango has been conducting historic building surveys at various locations throughout the City.

The historic building surveys are one facet of the City of Durango Historic Preservation Program which operates out of the Office of Planning and Community Development. Established by ordinance in 1991, this new City program has already produced a twelve-minute video on local history and the preservation program, documented historic buildings on East Fourth Avenue and in the St. Columba/Mercy Hospital neighborhood, and published two popular walking tour brochures for Main Avenue and East Third Avenue.

Durango's Register of Historic Places is also administered through the Preservation Program. The Register is a listing of properties of historic value to the community. Placing a property on the Register protects the building's historic exterior, while still allowing additions and alterations to the structure. The city's Historic Preservation Board, a lively group of eight people appointed by the Durango City Council, reviews the nominations to Durango's

Register. Dr. Duane Smith, Board Chair, is a long-time city resident and is such a well-known advocate for historic preservation that some people would like to nominate Duane himself to the Register.

The Historic Preservation Board oversees a public education effort that includes a monthly column in the Durango Herald entitled "Durango's Living History." The Board works with the City's Planning staff to help people through the maze of state and national preservation programs, tax credits and grants. The City has used the preservation program to obtain a state grant to assist in the historic preservation element of the recent expansion at the Library.

Do you have an historic building worth protecting? Do you want to know more about historic preservation in Durango? Contact the City Planning Office at 385-2890 for more information. ☘

Visit the Animas Museum Gift Shop



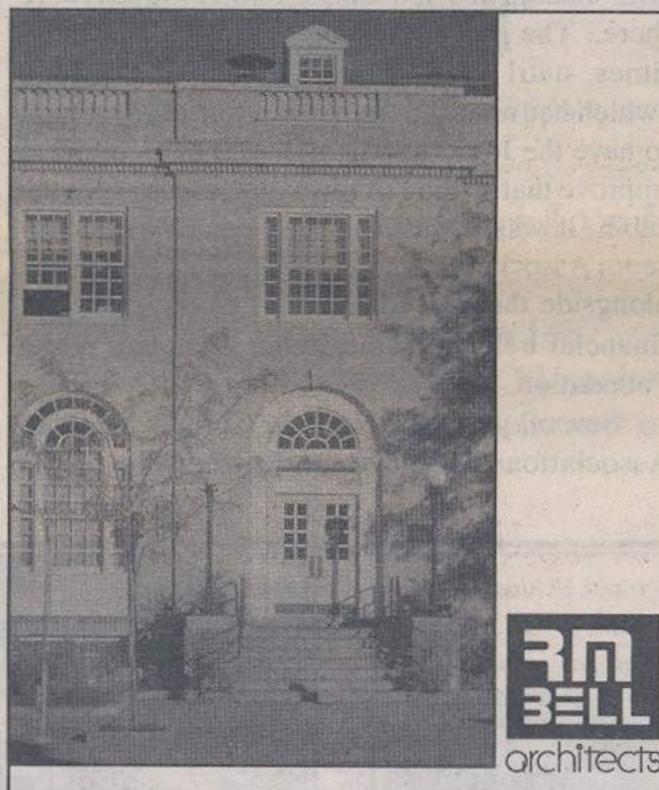
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MYSTERY ON THIRD AVENUE

by Frederic B. Wildfang

My wife Diane cashes in her birthday gift and calls a "phone psychic." She asks him about her new house on Third Avenue. He's concerned about that - says the house must be "cleaned" - something evil there - bad energy - something about a yellow light - swirling around - something in the ground.

So Diane calls in a medicine woman to exorcise the house. "It's kind of an emergency," she explains. "I need the house 'cleaned.'" The medicine woman arrives - just moved here from Chicago - looking like a legitimate business lady - dressed in Navy wool serge suit, make-up, earrings. She is carrying a Henry Bendel shopping bag filled with charms and crystals and "medicine bundles" - sage, lemon grass, salt, and candles to be burned in the house. She talks about a "mean old man" who lived in the house - and "a baby locked in the closet, asphyxiating." "Really a big problem," she says. "May have to call upon the Archangel Michael."

Then she walks through the living room, pokes around, muttering something about "the fireplace" - begins sifting salt about the house - up the stairs...

And suddenly she stops. "Here's where he is," she says, referring to the old man - pointing to a storage space under the eaves.

Who are these people - these ghosts haunting 761 Third Avenue?

WILLIAM P. VAILE

First, you start at the Animas Museum, home of the La Plata County Historical Society. The curator will give you whatever information he has, including photos.

No photos. But he has a name, Vaile. And a date, 1880.

Then you go to the Sanborn insurance maps at the public library.

Although the two-story, brick and shingle, Queen-Anne-style house at 761 Third Avenue does not appear on the Sanborn maps until February, 1893, it seems quite certain that the house was built in 1892 by William P. Vaile, Cashier of the First National Bank of Durango.

In 1890, according to the La Plata County tax assessment records, the property where the house at 761 Third now stands - lots 10 and 11 of block 42 - was indeed owned by William P. Vaile. Neither in 1890 nor in 1891, however, were any improvements on this property noted in the tax records. But in the following year, 1892, the "Value of Improvements" on the property suddenly jumped to \$1,000.00, indicating that the house was built sometime between 1891 and 1892.

The Benschel Directory Company's *Durango Directory for the Year 1892* confirms this, giving Mr. Vaile's residence as "on Third, between E and F Streets" (now 7th and 8th Streets) - corresponding to the 761 address.

The tax records and directories are at The Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College. The person-in-charge there will retrieve them for you from the closed stacks.

William P. Vaile first came to Durango in the spring of 1889. As reported in the *Durango Morning Herald*, March 5, 1889:

The stockholders of the First National Bank of this city, at a meeting held yesterday, elected the following named officers and directors: A.P. Camp, president; J.L. McNeil, vice president; Wm. P. Vaile, cashier... Mr. Vaile is a gentleman of long experience in the banking business, and has resigned the position of assistant cashier of the State National Bank of Denver to accept the cashiership here.

In an April 11, 1890, edition of the *Herald*, we find that Mr. and Mrs. Vaile were apparently well-settled in Durango and enjoying the social scene. To wit:

There gathered a pleasant company on Thursday evening of this week at the residence of Prof. and Mrs. T.O. Baker. Those present were Rev. and Mrs. Coffman, Mr. and Mrs. Young, Mr. and Mrs. J.F. Schutt, Mr. and Mrs. Boyle, Mr. and Mrs. Vaile.... To each guest was given a beautifully decorated card containing one line of a stanza from some popular author, the guesses to its authorship causing much merriment.

"When the game was finished," we are told, "there was found to be a tie between Mrs. Boyle and Mr. Vaile."

The public library also has directories. But more importantly, they have all of the local newspapers — on microfilm — since 1880, when the town was founded.

In a July 14, 1892, edition of the *Durango Morning Herald*, William P. Vaile is credited for his "prompt and expeditious management of a somewhat awkward circumstance" — namely helping to recover bank books during a fire that had destroyed the First National Bank building and half the block the night before. "W.P. Vaile," the article notes, "was on hand at an early stage of the fire, and...succeeded in saving valuable stationery and bank books."

Further clippings from the *Herald* in 1893 document what appear to be the normal business and social activities befitting a man in Vaile's position: Mr. Vaile's membership on the Committee of Legislation on the Durango Board of Trade — along with other such notables as T.C. Graden, J.E. Schutt, and H.H. Strater; and Mrs. Vaile's attendance at most of the premier social gatherings of the season.

By 1894, as a member-in-good-standing of the business community in Durango, Mr. Vaile has become involved in a number of speculative concerns, including mineral explorations in the La Platas and certain "mining interests" in Silverton, along with such public figures as T.C. Graden and Charles Newman, among others.

Also, we learn that Vaile has become active in politics - representing La Plata County at the Republican League meetings in Denver - again in league with Charles Newman.

That's "Colorado Senator Charles Newman, if you please," writes Duane A. Smith in *Rocky Mountain Boom Town*, the "pioneer druggist and Rico mine owner" who "symbolized Durango's power elite."

"Vallecito Dam, Vanadium Corporation of America, Vandegrift..." read the names in the index of Smith's *Rocky Mountain Boom Town* - but no "Vaile." Nor can the name "Vaile" be found in the index of the



761 Third Avenue, as it appeared in earlier days. Note the young trees that today tower over the boulevard. Photo courtesy Patricia Balliger

D.A.R.'s *Pioneers of the San Juan Country* - the other standard local reference text.

F.A. McKinney's *Durango and Durango District Directory* for the years 1911 and 1912 continues to list the 761 address for William P. Vaile. In 1916, however, the ownership of the house at 761 Third is ascribed to the "Estate" of William P. Vaile - indicating that perhaps Mr. Vaile is dead.

"Are you finding what you are looking for?" inquires the kindly librarian. Sure - loads of information - scanning the microfilm page by page - fuzzy photos of worn, crinkled newspaper - looking for familiar names. Usually, you find the local news under columns headed "Here and There" or "Purely Personal" or "As It Was Told To Us: A Terse Record of the Day's Happenings on the Street and Around Town."

You sit there for as long as you can stand it - two or three hours at most - wriggling around in a hard chair - trying to get comfortable - straining your eyes - trying to make sense out of the clusters of broken type on the screen... Then, later, examining the photocopies under a magnifying lens - you try to garner any nuance of a clue... It's kind of like detective work.

Finally, on the front page of the *Herald*, August 21, 1915, I spot the headline, "W.P. Vaile, Prominent Banker, Dies Suddenly." Here we are provided all the details.

A.P. Camp, president of the First National Bank, last night received a telegram from Dr. A.W. Morton... in San Francisco... had died there at 8 p.m. He succumbed from a stroke or paralysis received the day following his arrival...

Apparently, the illness of Mr. Vaile dated from the last Decoration Day, the article continues, "when he over-exerted himself in the G.A.R. parade." "He had been confined to his home for about two months before leaving for the coast."

The following story, filed on August 27, the evening after the funeral, adds these particulars about Mr. Vaile's personal history:

William P. Vaile, son of Rawson and Anna E. Vaile,

"Mystery," continued on page 8

Welcome to Durango's Main Avenue - A National Register Historic District

Historic Walking Tour of Main Avenue DURANGO



Durango's Living History

Courtesy of the City of Durango
Office of Planning & Community Development



Imagine stepping off the train in 1882. You would have arrived at this Denver and Rio Grande Railroad depot, which is now a National Historic Landmark. Salesmen stayed in the less expensive hotels in this block, but the more elegant hotels were located farther away from the bustle and soot of the train station. The smelter, located on the hill across the river to the south added to the smoke in the air.



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The Town Founded by the Railroad...

The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad founded Durango as a rival town. Unable to make a deal with Animas City, the railroad established a depot site two miles to the south. In 1880, General William J. Palmer, president of the railroad, along with William A. Bell and John A. Porter, formed the Durango Trust for the purpose of buying land and selling property for the proposed townsite of Durango. The original plan was a tidy grid of streets with the commercial enterprises near the railroad and the residential properties located upslope and away from the commerce. The grid is intact today. By 1881 Durango had a town government and issued its first ordinance. In November, by vote of the electors, Durango replaced Parrot City as the La Plata County seat.

It wasn't long before houses, and churches were constructed as was the San Juan and New York Mining and Smelter Company smelter. Smoke from the smelter choked the sky. The 1890 census recorded 2726 citizens. By 1892 locals enjoyed electric lights, a streetcar line, and at least three newspapers. In 1910, 4686 people lived in Durango, which by then had its own water works and electric companies. Although often described as a late 19th century boomtown, Durango has grown with periodic shifts in the economy to reflect changing times. The range of architectural styles on Main Avenue is a living link to the prosperous and the hard times in Durango's past. Our downtown buildings will also introduce you to some of the people who have made the city.



552 Built in 1906, this was The Bellevue saloon and rooming house. It was owned by John and Anton Baudino whose family owned the building for 50 years.

This block was a focal point for the Italian-American community in Durango in the first half of the 1900s. **528** was the DiUbaldo Grocery, **532** was primarily a saloon, although it served a short life as a soft drink fountain during Prohibition. **546** is a new building which replaced the Fiorini Home. The Fiorinis' monument shop still operates from property behind this store.

605 The Wetter Building is the oldest building in this block. Built as a boarding house in 1883 it housed a number of commercial ventures, including a soda water factory, the Durango Herald printing office, a tin shop, and a grocery store.

643-645 La Plata Bottling Works and Saloon. Owned by Adolph Coors until 1915, the brewery and bottling works were located at 643 with the saloon at 645. John Kellenberger, Durango's first Coca-Cola franchisee, purchased the operation during Prohibition.

APPALOOSA'S
Main Store
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259-1994

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Train Station

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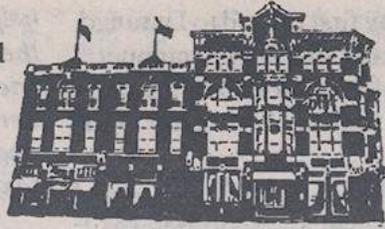
APPALOOSA'S
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385-1722

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Rochester Hotel

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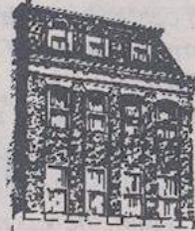
699 The Strater Hotel exemplifies a flush period of wealth from the railroad, the mines and the recently opened smelter. The building is an eclectic mix of Italianate, Romanesque, and Renaissance architectural styles. The hotel opened in 1888, and was almost immediately leased to H.L. Rice. The partnership soured quickly, however, and four years later Henry Strater built The Columbian immediately next door on the former site of the county courthouse. The two hotels are now one establishment.



901 The oldest bank in southwestern Colorado, the First National Bank of Durango moved south from Animas City in 1881 and operated here from 1882 until 1980. The elaborately detailed Queen Anne brickwork building with Romanesque sandstone arched windows was built for \$18,219 and replaced an earlier frame building that burned in 1892.



965 and 969 Two saloons operated here in the heyday of the saloon district. Bessie Rivers ran The Horseshoe Club at 969. After the saloons closed, two different families by the name of Wong operated cafes into the 1950s.



975 Built in 1892, the four-story French Second Empire structure characterized by the mansard roof has a varied history as a saloon, a post office, a bank, and a hotel. References to French culture were often included in Victorian commercial architecture as an allusion to the continental sophistication associated with the French.

713 The smooth, simple glazed tile storefronts and large glass panel windows illustrate Durango's "modern" downtown from the 1930s and 40s. In fact, 713 was remodeled from its original Victorian-era, red brick storefront to project the image of the progressive men's clothing store that occupied the building at the time.

801 Built in 1892 by Charles Newman, this handsome Romanesque sandstone building originally housed the Smelter National Bank (1892-1897). The bank sign is still visible on the back side of the building. Newman owned a chain of drug stores in Silverton, Alamosa, Animas City and Chama, New Mexico. The low building attached to the back of the Newman Building was called the Durango Novelty Works as the garage for some of the first cars in the area.

863-871 This showpiece of the D&RG's land development company was intended to be a model for future buildings. The D&RG tried in vain to require property owners to build in brick and stone, only to watch much of the city burn in 1889.

Descriptions below this line are located on the east side of Main Ave.

758-764 These two stores contain typical architectural elements of a turn-of-the-century storefront. The large windows provided a display area while allowing maximum light to enter the store. The central recessed entryway protected the doorway. The clerestory above the awnings provided extra light. The pressed metal cornice work was mass-produced and used on commercial storefronts throughout the country.

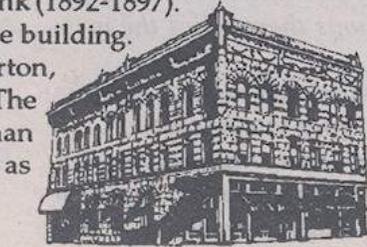
846 This brick storefront was "modernized" with a veneer of Carrera Glass, a structural glass popular in the slick, streamlined surfaces of the architectural styles of the 1930s and 40s. Carrera Glass is no longer made. Recent replacement of broken tiles on the storefront led to the discovery of a stash of Carrera Glass that a World War II veteran had brought back with him from Europe and had stored in his back yard for almost 50 years. Much of this "cache" has replaced cracked original pieces.

900 This Richardson/Romanesque style building housed the Colorado State Bank from 1892 until the Bank's failure during the silver crash of 1907. The Burns National Bank has operated here since 1910.

The OLD MULDOON Saloon

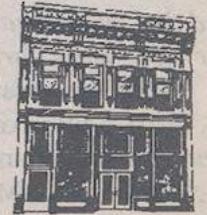
561 Main Avenue
247-1818

*Sumptuous Victorian Decor
Fine Spirits & Precocious Gab*



1001 An early Durango movie house, The Gem Theater was located in this building in 1915. The building's original 1890s storefront is gone, but the brick designs on the wall facing Main bring a unique element to the downtown.

1015 The cast iron and pressed metal front was made by Mesker Brothers of St. Louis, and probably came to Durango on the train. These early "pre-fab" products were popular because they were durable, fire resistant, and inexpensive.



1129 Built in 1890, this was the Chapman Hardware Store until the late 1920s. The glazed brick remodel on the first floor was another modernization project.

Descriptions above this line are located on the west side of Main Ave.



920 "A.C. Richey and Brother" operated a book store here, followed by Richey Confectionery and Stationary store. A well known local soda fountain for many years, the last remnants of the candy-making business are still on the front of the store where the marble tiles were added around 1945 and in the back of the building where the marble candymaking block sits, too heavy to move out of the building.

990 Built in 1889, the Schneider Block housed the Keeley Institute, a reform group devoted to the cure of liquor, opium and tobacco habits. One of four Colorado branches, the Institute operated between 1892 and the turn of the century. By 1900, part of the building had been transformed into a dance hall which stayed in the building until the 1920s. The corner storefront was the Palace Grocery and Meat Market from 1900 to the 1920s, and continued as a grocery until the late 1940s.



1138 The first occupant of this building was the Windsor Hotel. The Durango Democrat (Herald) moved into the first floor in the 1910s and remained there until the mid 1950s. Look for the old "ghost" sign for the Herald on the south side of the building.

Historic buildings dot Main Avenue as you continue north - livery buildings, bottling works and breweries - among others. Keep your eyes open and you will see living history on every block.

*We salute the Animas Museum and the
La Plata County Historical Society*

Thanks for the Memories!

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"Mystery," continued from page 5

was born December 27, 1840, in Richmond, Indiana. When he was a child his parents moved to Centerville, Wayne county, where he received his first schooling. In 1853 he entered the academy at Indianapolis. The family came to Kokomo in 1859, and it was there that he finished his studies. In 1862 he was appointed deputy auditor.... Mr. Vaile remained in the auditor's office except for a period spent in the army, four years, and then accepted the position of bookkeeper... until 1877, when he engaged in the loan and insurance business, continuing in it until 1879, when he became cashier of the Howard National bank... He saw one year of service in defense of his country, being a member of the 137th Indiana Volunteer Infantry. He was united in marriage with Miss Julie M. Andrews, daughter of an early day lumberman of Kokomo, July 3, 1862. Mrs. Vaile died five years ago. There are no surviving children.

But if William P. Vaile didn't die in the house at 761 Third Avenue, who did? His wife? In order to find that out, we have to go back to the local newspaper - five years earlier.

Working forward from 1909, I find it - in the April 26, 1910, edition of David F. Day's *Durango Democrat* - "Mrs. William Vaile Dead." And, then, on April 31, 1910, we see Mrs. Vaile "Laid to Rest":

The funeral of Julia M. Vaile... occurred yesterday afternoon from the family residence on the boulevard. The concourse of people at the appointed time of the funeral exercises was so large that they could not enter the home to view the remains and otherwise pay their respects to the deceased and to the bereaved husband.

Checking the *Durango Evening News* for this date, I find Caroline Westcott Romney's version of the week's events put much more eloquently:

BEYOND THE STARS

While the community in general knew that Mrs. William P. Vaile's condition was precarious for the past few days, few realized, even those nearest, how grave that condition was until about 8:30 last evening, when she became much worse. From the effects of that attack the sufferer did not recover and at 11:15 last night she passed beyond mortal ken - beyond the solemn Sea of Silence which rolls between us and the grave. There is nothing for which we should grieve in the passing on of so awed and immortal a character as that of Mrs. Vaile. Life is deathless and she lives on somewhere still, "working out the salvation" no one else may work out for her...

"Yeah, and maybe that 'somewhere still' is in our house," I think to myself.

The article concludes by saying "Mrs. Vaile will be buried in Greenmount Cemetery beside her mother... who died in Durango in 1895..."

What? What's this? Mrs. Vaile's mother died here too? "...at the age of 81," continues the article. What if she also died in the house at 761 Third Avenue? What if she's one of the ghosts?" I wonder to myself. Back to the library.

There is no mention of the death of Mrs. Vaile's mother, Mrs. Andrews, in the *Heralds* of 1895. I do seem to remember a "Mrs. Andrews," however, listed on register of the Grand Central Hotel - along with "W.P. Vaile, wife and mother" - as published in *Pioneers of the San Juan Country*. "July 1, 1889" says the entry. So Mrs. Andrews must have accompanied

Mr. and Mrs. Vaile when they first moved to Durango.

Checking the mortuary records at Greenmount, I find "Vaile, Julia Mirna" (block 4, lot 50 in the cemetery) listed there, but I find no listing for Mrs. Andrews.

Proceeding on foot to block 4, lot 50, though, I find her tombstone - "Elizabeth L. Andrews: 1813-1895" - right there in the family plot - just to the left of Mrs. Vaile's. Mr. Vaile's tombstone is just to the right of Mrs. Vaile's.

Mrs. Vaile's tombstone itself has been moved slightly off center by a thirty-foot juniper tree that has grown there - the roots of the tree evidently anchored in her coffin.

I decide to go back to the library and give the Herald one more try. I spend another two hours going through each issue of the 1895 Herald - page by page. But, again, there is no mention of Mrs. Andrews. Why is there no mention of Mrs. Andrews? No funeral? No obituary? Perhaps therein lies the mystery.

I'm going to have to funnel this place," says the medicine woman. Then she goes into her trance...

Wham! The door blows shut, rattling the windows. So Diane opens the door again and blocks it this time with a doorstep. But before she can step aside, a violent nausea grips her, propelling her out the door and into the backyard - actually doubling her over... Then, regaining her composure, Diane straightens up, baces the doorway, and shakes her fist. "Dammit," she shouts, "this is my house!" And immediately she feels better.

But there's more, "older" spirits in the basement - explains the medicine woman - underground. "People keep wanting to come in," she says, "strange visitors." "You need to bury something there, a talisman, a gift," she tells Diane - "to keep them from coming in" - "to thank them for staying away..."

DR. O.W. ROBBINS

In 1917, according to the *Assessment Roll and Tax List of the County of La Plata*, the house at 761 Third Avenue was sold to a Dr. Robbins - per haps the same Dr. Robbins who, according to the D.A.R.'s *Pioneers of the San Juan Country*, resided in Bayfield at the turn of the century. Indeed, the tax records for the previous year, 1916, confirm that fact - listing Robbins as the owner of Lot 10 in Block 3 in Bayfield.

It is a little eerie - sitting here in this windowless room in the basement of the library at the college - leafing through the tax records - huge volumes - page by page - each entry handwritten in elegant Victorian script - running my finger down the "block" and "lot" columns - then checking the name - recording it - noting the description of other properties owned - inevitably reaching up from the mildewed page to wipe the cobwebs from my eyes - which only makes them itch, and burn, and weep more urgently - bringing on a sneeze - finally forcing me to stumble out and up the stairs to sunlight and fresh air.

A February 6, 1902, article in the *Durango Herald* acknowledges the fact that "Dr. A.W. Robbins is a new arrival" in the area. "Dr. Robbins has been with St. Luke's Hospital, Denver," the article continues, "and is thoroughly versed in surgical work." Subsequent references to Dr. Robbins crop up in the *Herald* frequently.

It might be easier to trace the ownership of a piece of property by going to the Tax Assessor's Map Room at the county courthouse (rather than going to the Center of Southwest Studies). Don't bother to ask for

help; just go directly to the microfiche machine, open the bottom drawer in the cabinet next to it, and retrieve the microfiche that has your block and lot number on it. Then slide the microfiche under the lens and run your finger down the names of those who paid taxes for the year you're concerned with.

According to records on microfiche in the Tax Assessor's Map Room A.W. and Anna Robbins owned block 42, lots 10 and 11 from 1916 to 1929. In an April 4, 1929, edition of the *Durango Weekly Herald*, we see that Dr. Robbins - "due to the high altitude" - is leaving Durango for health reasons. As reported in the *Herald*:

Dr. A.W. Robbins, who for the past 27 years has made his home in Durango and La Plata county, left for San Antonio, Texas, this morning, where he expects to make his future home.... In 1902, following his hospital internship, Dr. Robbins moved to Durango and opened an office. In 1904, he was united in marriage with Miss Anna Melville.... For four years Dr. Robbins was a member of the school board of District No. 9, and during the time he was located in this city was one of the leaders in securing high class entertainment for students and residents of this community. The leaders of the child welfare department of the Civic Club will miss him greatly as he was very active in this work, giving his time and donating funds for carrying on this branch of service. It was also directly through Dr. Robbins' efforts that the mental hygiene clinic was held in Durango.

Carefully, I examine a collection of bottles exhumed from the basement of the house by the excavation crew - a variety of medicine bottles (large, medium, and small - all clear), a small vial (also clear), and a blue ink bottle (for writing prescriptions?).

DR. G.P. MORGAN

In 1930, according to tax records in the Tax Assessors Map Room, taxes were assessed to a Dr. G.P. Morgan.

In the year 1930, we find endless references to a Mrs. G.P. Morgan on the society pages of the *Herald*. In the January 16, 1930, edition of the *Weekly Herald*, for instance, we see that Mrs. G.P. Morgan has been initiated as a new office of the Sarah Rebekah Lodge of the Odd Fellows - and that she herself hosted "The Thursday Sewing Club" for their weekly meeting - presumably at the 761 Third Avenue address.

We also see in that same edition of the paper a reference to Mr. G.P. Morgan - appointed a member of the Financial Committee of the Durango Chamber of Commerce.

But, by and large, Mrs. G.P. Morgan gets most of the attention. On March 16, 1930, she is a principal at the Neo-Delphian Club's annual guest day. On March 20, 1930, she is the featured speaker at the Elks' Ladies meeting. Her talk on "Higher Ideals" - said to be "inspiring to her readers" - was scheduled to be repeated at the Lion's Luncheon the following day. The topic of this talk provided quite a contrast to the talk Mrs. Morgan was scheduled to give to the Civic Club on March 25 - the following Friday - a talk entitled "Hints on Housekeeping."

L.E. BAILEY

In the July 2, 1931, issue of the *Herald Weekly*, we see that the house at 761 Third Avenue is then owned by Mr. and Mrs. L.E. Bailey:

Mrs. LeRoy E. Bailey...extends a cordial invitation to parents, or anyone interest in piano, to call at her studio, 761 3rd Avenue, for information concerning lessons in the Progressive Series of Piano teaching. The studio is thoroughly equipped and is a model studio in every way and contains all the new helps for beginners.

Subsequent announcements in the *Durango Herald Democrat* - such as one on September 2, 1931 - confirm this fact: "Mrs. LeRoy E. Bailey...opening...her fall and winter classes in Progressive Service in Piano Teaching...at her studio [at] Seven sixty-one Third Avenue."

Other than that, references to the Baileys during the rest of 1930 remain fairly sparse: Mrs. L.E. Bailey, Helen, Mildred and Dick Bailey motoring to Mesa Verde Park (August 28) - Helen Bailey going back and forth to college in Boulder (September 18, December 25) - and so on.

And in the years after that there is only scant reference to the Baileys: Mrs. Bailey co-hosting a meeting of the P.E.O. - (May 7, 1936); Mrs. Bailey accompanying Rita Bell Zink at a Rebekah Mother and Daughter Banquet - as Mrs. Zink "charmed her listeners with her whistling of Springtime in the Rockies." (May 28, 1936).

Then in an article from "Saturday's Daily" in 1936, we learn that "Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Bailey...will leave...for California where they will make their new home." "For a number of years past," the article continues, "the Baileys have made their home in Durango, Mr. Bailey being the manager of the Parson Drug Co., and they have made many friends who regret to see them go, but wish them well in their new location."

Diane comes home and tells me that the most interesting thing happened at the house today. As the workmen were installing the heating - she tells me - someone inadvertently dropped a section of copper pipe on the concrete floor in the basement. And as the section of pipe clattered away, it sounded like the floor beneath it was hollow!

I get over there the next morning - before the work-

men leave - and get them to jackhammer up the area.

When I finally get a chance to dig it up, I am struck by two things. First, the hollow area is adjacent to a large boulder - anchored diagonally beneath the floor - the narrow top surface of the boulder looking like an arrow - pointing directly toward the area of the floor I am digging up. Then, as I proceed with my digging, I run into a layer of bricks...

DR. SCHUYLER C. PARKER

In 1937, according to the tax records in the Tax Assessor's Map Room, we see that the taxes were assessed to Dr. Schuyler C. and Ruth M. Parker.

The *La Plata County, Colorado, Mortuary Index* (found at the Durango Public Library) lists names, birth dates, death dates, and locations of graves for persons who have died in La Plata County since 1901. According to this index, Dr. Schuyler C. Parker was born on April 9, 1895, and died on February 26, 1979.

"Dr. Parker is survived by his wife, Ruth, of the family home," reads the obituary in the *Herald*, "Mrs. Robert (Patricia) Balliger and a grandson, Robert, both of Durango, and a granddaughter, Mrs. Robert (Penny) Allen, Plainfield, Ind.:

Since Dr. Parker was survived by his wife Ruth in 1979 - and since the Mortuary Index has not been updated since 1988, we still have to check the family plot at Greenmount Cemetery for information about Dr. Parker's wife's death.

On the NE 1/4 of lot 56, block 26 in the cemetery, I find it - "Ruth Marcum, Wife and Mother: 1898 - 1989" - engraved on a tombstone shared with her husband.

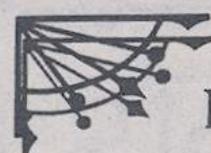
I look up "Balliger" in the phone book, but there's no "Patricia." So I leave a message on "Robert" Balliger's answering machine and hope that he calls me back.

Patricia Ruth Balliger calls me back the next morning. Her mother, Ruth Marcum Parker, she tells me, died at the Four Corners Nursing Home in November of 1989. She was 91. Patricia Balliger's father, Dr. S.C. Parker, she also tells me, died after taking a fall from the back step of the house at 761 Third and breaking his hip. Her father had bone cancer. Oddly, Patricia Balliger's mother Ruth also broke her hip that same day, while trying to rescue Dr. Parker. Thankfully, a neighbor, Don Bushnell, came along and rescued them both.

Patricia Balliger's grandfather, Schuyler C. Parker, Sr., and her grandmother, Elnora W. Parker, also lived at the house from time to time, between Schuyler Sr.'s various prospecting adventures.

During the war years, Patricia Balliger adds, the house was leased out to renters, but to her knowledge, no one else besides her father ever died in the house.

I ask Patricia Balliger about the bricks in the basement. She tells me her father laid a brick floor there. She scoffs at the notion of ghosts. 🍀



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HOW TO RESEARCH AN HISTORICAL BUILDING

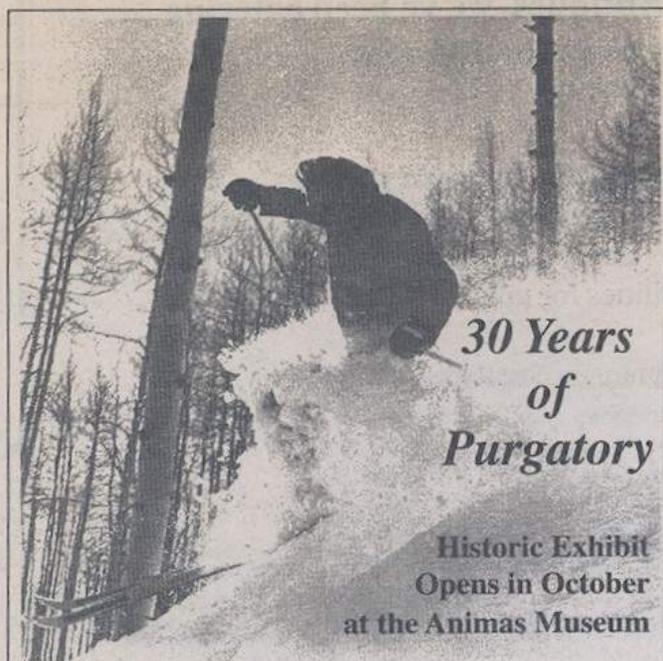
1. Start with the deed to your property; who last owned it? You might even have a title search.
2. Visit the Animas Museum and consult with the curator, Robert McDaniel.
3. Check the Sanborn insurance maps - on microfilm at the public library.
4. Once you find out approximately when your building was constructed, go to the tax records at the Center of Southwest Studies, Ft. Lewis College, and look up the owner. You can spend several hours leafing through the tax rolls looking for subsequent owners of the property in question.
5. You can also find a microfiche record of persons assessed for taxes on a particular piece of property at the Tax Assessors Map Room at the county courthouse.
6. Once you have an owner's name, check the indices of *Rocky Mountain Boom Town: A History of Durango* by Duane A. Smith and *Pioneer's of the San Juan Country* by the local chapter of the D.A.R. and see what's been published about your subjects. If you are truly interested in local history, you may want to read Duane Smith's book cover to cover.
7. Then prepare yourself for hours of work - skimming through old *Durango Heralds* on microfilm at the public library - looking for interesting stories about your subjects.
8. Check the local directories on file at the public library, the Animas Museum, and the Center of Southwest Studies while you're at it.
9. Of course, check the current directories for the phone numbers and addresses of descendants who may still be living in the area.
10. A few other resources:

If you have a date of death, check the death records at the San Juan Basin Health Department.

Check marriage and birth records at the County Clerk's office.

Check the mortuary records at the Durango Public Library. Cruise the Greenmount Cemetery.

Ask around. Talk about your project!



30 Years
of
Purgatory

Historic Exhibit
Opens in October
at the Animas Museum

The Animas Museum, in cooperation with Purgatory Resort, will premier a new exhibit entitled "Snow, Sun & Smiles - 30 Years of Purgatory Memories," next October, to commemorate Purgatory's 30th anniversary. The exhibit will include memorabilia and photos, such as this of former ski patrolman Dick Andrews skiing the powder on Lower Hades circa 1979. The Animas Museum is seeking photographs and memorabilia for the exhibit. *Photo courtesy Purgatory Ski Resort*

A Turn-of-the-Century Experience

by Mary Jane Hood

The Turn-of-the-Century Classroom Program has been ongoing at the Animas Museum since the 1979 school year, when it was created by Amy Thompson and Dr. Duane Smith. To date there have been approximately 5,000 students from throughout Southwestern Colorado who have participated in this enriching experience.

The Classroom Program is held in the Animas Museum at 31st Street and West Second Avenue, the location of the former Animas City School. The most enduring exhibit in the Museum is a functional, fully restored turn-of-the-century classroom.

During a typical classroom visit the teacher and students roll play, often dressed in attire appropriate to the days of their great-grandparents, as they perceive school might have been in 1908. "Principal" Smith, actually local historian Dr. Duane Smith, provides the historical background through slide shows and conversation. 1908 is the year selected because, according to Smith, an avid Chicago Cubs baseball fan, "1908 was the last year the Cubs won the World Series."

This popular classroom situation was first taught by Amy Thompson, a retired area school

teacher. The curriculum varies with the expertise of the various volunteer teachers who present the program. The McGuffey Reader is taught, in addition to practice in penmanship, spelling bees, and current (1908) history. Appropriate games are also included in the half-day educational ex-

perience.

The spring session of the Classroom Program takes place during April and May. It is primarily intended for fifth grade classes in the Durango area. For information on scheduling a classroom experience, contact Mary Jane Hood, 247-5348.



Miss Pickering's second grade class at the Animas City School takes a break from readin', ritin' and 'rithmetic in this photo dated about 1914. Durango area fourth and fifth grade classes relive school days from an earlier era when they participate in the Turn-of-the-Century Classroom Program.

Photo courtesy Animas Museum
Lillian Bailius Collection



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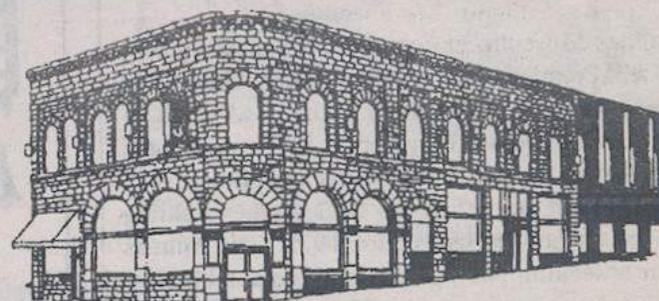
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Your membership contributions, tax deductible within the law, enable us to operate and maintain the Animas Museum; collect, preserve and interpret artifacts, archival holdings and other items pertinent to the history, culture and heritage of the San Juan Basin; promote public awareness and understanding of historical issues and events through various educational exhibits, programs and tours; and promote historic preservation by fostering an appreciation of history, historic structures, sites and landscaping.

Historical Society members receive the Artifacts newsletter filled with information about members, special events and interesting historical tidbits. Members also receive a 10% discount in the museum gift shop: rugs, pottery, jewelry, kachinas, note cards, postcards, books, calendars, magnets and more; plus special invitations to Historical Society events; the chance to volunteer in our gardens or with special projects; and the fantastic feeling of knowing that you are helping to preserve a window into the past for our children, grandchildren, visitors, and friends.

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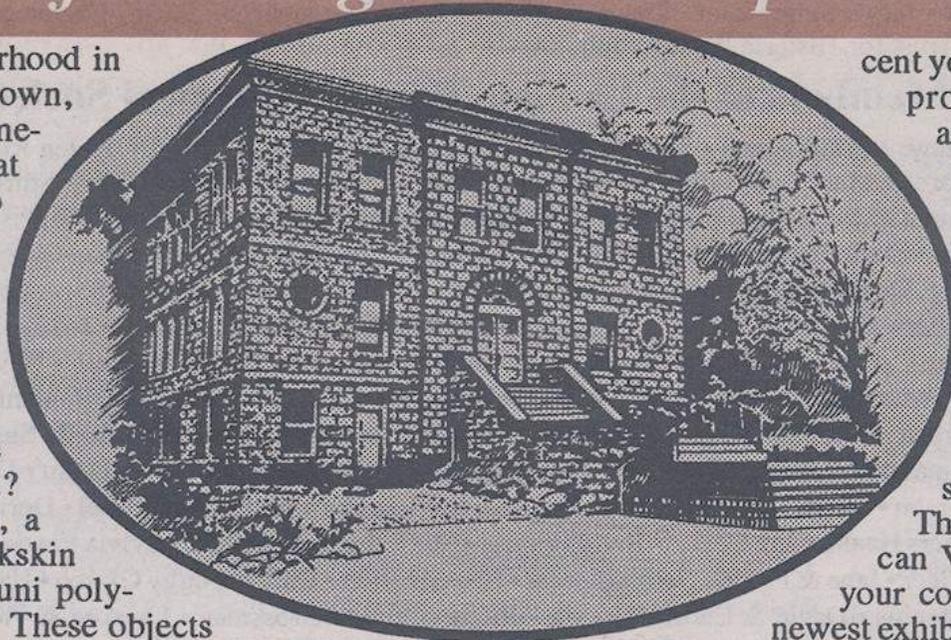
VISIT THE ANIMAS MUSEUM

One of Durango's Best Kept Secrets

Located in a residential neighborhood in the old Animas City section of town, Durango's only history museum is somewhat out of the public eye. But what surprises are in store for those who venture off the beaten path of north Main to visit the museum! Cloistered within the sandstone walls of the 90-year-old museum building are untold treasures of the San Juan Basin's rich and colorful heritage. Does an 1880's hand-crafted saddle made in Animas City intrigue you? Perhaps a porcelain Victorian doll, a D&RG railroad lantern, a pair of Buckskin Charlie's beaded moccasins or a Zuni polychrome olla is more to your liking. These objects and many more can be seen in the museum's exhibits.

Exhibits are perhaps the most obvious of the many activities that take place at the museum. For over twenty years the La Plata County Historical Society has served the community through a variety of programs and services. Our annual lecture series, for example, provides an excellent forum for local history and archeology. Historic tours of Durango are popular year after year. Our most enduring program, however, is the Turn-of-the-Century Classroom experience for school kids.

A growing demand for the museum's research library, archives and photograph collection has kept the staff increasingly busy in re-



cent years. Genealogists, owners of historic properties and serious scholars are among those who find the museum's resources useful. We make a special effort to collect and make available photographs and other information regarding historic properties in order to promote historic preservation within the community.

A visit to the museum is one of the best ways to get in touch with your community. Recent exhibits such as "Fiestas & Fairs," "Saddles & The West," and "Dolls & Dolls & African Violets" can teach you much about your community's heritage. The museum's newest exhibit, "Controlling the Fire Fiend," commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Durango Fire

Department in a bittersweet look at the destructive force of fire in the city's history. In the planning stages for 1995-96 is a new exhibit celebrating the 30th anniversary of Purgatory Resort.

Whether you tour the exhibits, do research, shop for bargains in our gift shop or simply spend a quiet moment in our award-winning gardens, the Animas Museum has something for you. Located at 31st St. & West 2nd Ave. the museum is open Monday through Saturday, 10-6 p.m., May through October. Look for local appreciation days and other special events coming this summer. Now the secret's out—we'll see you soon!

Robert McDaniel, Museum Director

Throughout the years the Animas Museum has benefitted from generous donations of materials and services, as well as historic collections. *It is these tax deductible gifts that have enabled the La Plata County Historical Society to do so much with so little.*

Has your business recently updated furniture, freeing up some still usable items? Are you a gardener who would love to purchase a rose bush for the Museum's rose garden? Would you like to help make the multiple levels of the Museum accessible to all visitors by contributing to an elevator fund? Review the WISH LIST to see how you might invest a little (or a lot) of yourself in the Museum. After all, it's *your* Museum!

Wish List

FACILITIES

Vacuum Cleaner (water filter type), \$1500
Portable Vacuum Cleaner (shoulder sling type)
24' Extension Ladder • Incandescent Lighting, \$200
Museum Entrance Rehabilitation, \$2,000-\$5,000
Elevator, \$65,000

OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Deskjet or Laserjet Printer • Fireproof File Cabinet
Desk Chair • Typing Chair • Computer Desk
Fax Machine • Photocopier • Cordless Telephone

JOY CABIN & LANDSCAPING

Refurbish Picnic Tables • Rose Bushes, \$17
Shrubs • Perennials • Sod • Peat Moss
Soil Amendments • Fertilizer

WISH LIST CONTRIBUTION FORM

I will contribute the following item(s) from the Wish List:

I will contribute funds to purchase an item from the Wish List.

Donation Amount: \$ _____

Memorial Contribution for: _____

Gift Contribution for: _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Thank You!

Return this form with check made payable to:

La Plata County Historical Society • P.O. Box 3384 • Durango, CO 81302