

C O L O R A D O

# Heritage



The Magazine of History Colorado

Spring 2017

## BACK STORY

### WESTERN AMERICAN ART IN CONTEXT

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FOUNDATION

At the History Colorado Center

Hattie McDaniel: World Icon,  
Colorado Unknown

The One-Chance Men: The Hastings Mine  
Disaster of 1917

Backstory Features Denver  
& Rio Grande Chinaware

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*Colorado Heritage* (ISSN 0272-9377), published by History Colorado, contains articles of broad general and educational interest that link the present to the past. *Heritage* is distributed quarterly to History Colorado members, to libraries, and to institutions of higher learning. Manuscripts must be documented when submitted, and originals are retained in the Publications office. An Author's Guide is available; contact the Publications office. History Colorado disclaims responsibility for statements of fact or of opinion made by contributors. History Colorado also publishes *Explore*, a bimonthly publication of programs, events, and exhibition listings.

Postage paid at Denver, Colorado

All History Colorado members receive *Colorado Heritage* as a benefit of membership. Individual subscriptions are available through the Membership office for \$40 per year (four issues).

To receive copies of this or other History Colorado or Colorado Historical Society publications, contact the Publications office at 303/866-4532 or [publications@state.co.us](mailto:publications@state.co.us).

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## The Backstory on *Backstory*

What's the story on our newest exhibition, *Backstory: Western American Art in Context*?

Now open at the History Colorado Center, *Backstory* marks a brand-new collaboration with a neighboring institution, the Denver

Art Museum. Recently, the perfect opportunity arose for History Colorado not just to showcase fifty of the DAM's masterworks of western art, but to create an exciting exhibition experience by infusing the spaces with artifacts that give context—that give *backstory*—to the stories told in the art.

For instance, as our Senior Curator of Artifacts Alisa DiGiacomo points out, post-Civil War objects like surveyors' instruments, broadsides advertising free land, and railroad artifacts (see pages 2–3) show that people weren't just *pushed* west by war, but *pulled* west by the promise of homesteading and the chance to see this heralded land for themselves. Works by painters like Albert Bierstadt (shown on our cover) gave hope to war-weary eastern audiences by capturing grand imagery of the West—a land Bierstadt himself called a “wellspring of amazement and wonder” and an “American Garden of Eden.” Other artifacts speak to the people already here: American Indian tribes and a Hispanic population moving north into today's Colorado.

And how did artists see the West in the decades that followed? You can find out for yourself with a visit to *Backstory*.

Sponsored by The Sturm Family Foundation with generous support from the The Anschutz Foundation, CoBiz Financial, and US Bank, *Backstory* is just the first in a new lineup of major homegrown exhibitions that draw from the vast collections of History Colorado—the collections you've been telling us you want more of. We hope you like what you see.

Steve W. Turner, Executive Director

### MISSION

*History Colorado inspires generations to find wonder and meaning in our past and to engage in creating a better Colorado.*

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Albert Bierstadt, *Estes Park, Long's Peak (detail)*, 1877. Oil on canvas; 62 x 98 inches. Lent by the Denver Public Library, Western History Department, 35.2008. On view in *Backstory: Western American Art in Context* at the History Colorado Center in Denver.

All images are from the collections of History Colorado unless otherwise noted.

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Spotlight On . . .

## Denver & Rio Grande Western Collection

### *Rolling Restaurants and Elegant Meals*

BY ALISA DiGIACOMO,  
SENIOR CURATOR OF ARTIFACTS,  
CURATOR OF ART & DESIGN

Was your last trip—whether by car, train, or plane—elegant and relaxing? Was your last in-flight meal served on china by porters whose job it was to welcome you and tend to your needs? Did the airline menu offer fresh mountain trout, pork chops, or fried potatoes to order? Did you feel at home while dining with your friends and family at a table with room to stretch your legs?

Likely . . . no. Yet, during the golden era of train travel on scenic lines in America—the late 1890s through the 1960s—this all came standard.

Before airplanes, cars, and miles of highway, passenger trains crisscrossing America were the way to travel. After the Civil War, railroad construction accelerated—with trackage increasing from around 35,000 miles in 1865 to more than 250,000 by 1916. With little competition, railroads in 1916 carried about 77 percent of all freight shipped in America and 98 percent of all passenger business, including vacationers.

Always in competition for business, rail companies actively promoted themselves and their services. Newspapers and magazines advertised adventure, value, and comfort; brochures announced the newest routes, rates, and amenities; and calendars and other giveaways reminded people that trains were an opportunity for adventure and a relaxing getaway.

In Colorado, William Jackson Palmer founded the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad in 1870. Serving customers primarily between Denver and Salt Lake City, the D&RG successfully tapped into the wealth and needs of Colorado's booming gold and silver towns. Initially a way to get from point A to point B, passenger travel evolved to embrace tourism.



# BACK STORY

WESTERN  
AMERICAN ART  
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In the 1880s, the D&RG started promoting its scenic routes, including the Royal Gorge and the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River, where passengers viewed the famous Curecanti Needle, a 700-foot-high geological landmark. So popular were their scenic lines that the company adopted the slogan “Scenic Line of the World” and in 1884 incorporated it into its logo, along with a view of the Curecanti Needle against a rising sun.

Like other railroad companies all competing for each other’s customers, the D&RG expanded its operations in the 1880s and ’90s to include upscale sleeping and dining cars.

And, of course, gorgeous scenery rolled by for miles, uninterrupted by traffic lights, rest stops, or traffic.

History Colorado’s permanent collection includes silver teapots, butter dishes, toothpick holders, forks, corn prongs, knives, spoons, and crumb scoops; china plates, cups, saucers, and platters, and linen tablecloths and napkins, all used by the D&RG prior to 1944. These artifacts document the dining car experience and a time in American history when quality and good customer service were essential to attracting and keeping railroad customers.

Also in the collection are waiters’ badges, fare tables, brochures, D&RG oil lamps, a locomotive bell, furniture belonging to former D&RG board member and president David H. Moffat in 1885–91, and a beautiful walnut desk used in 1870–82 by General William J. Palmer, founder and first president of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway.

Interested in seeing some of History Colorado’s D&RG artifacts yourself? Be sure to see *Backstory: Western American Art in Context*.

**On View Now at the History Colorado Center**

And, search our online collection at [h-co.org/collections](http://h-co.org/collections).



Railroad diners used this chinaware prior to 1944. H.1734.18.A.,B.,21,40.A.

Facing: A D&RG dining car (shown here around 1920–30) offered meals as elegant as the views were beautiful. Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad Company Collection. PH.PROP.5349

Prior to 1890, some dining cars were in service, offering basic meals. But most travelers brought their own food or ate at a stop along the line. Not until restaurateur Fred Harvey did dining become an elegant experience both on and off the train. Following the Harvey example, the D&RG added dining cars to its scenic lines in 1899. These rolling restaurants—with their plush upholstery, white linens, and fresh-cut flowers on tables—offered patrons elegance, quality food, and good service.

Passenger Jay Christopher recalled this about his dining car experiences in the late ’50s and early ’60s:

The tables were set with gleaming china plates, water glasses, and polished silver serving pieces. The porters in their white starched uniforms swayed back and forth down the crowded aisles with their trays, delivering orders without spilling a drop. My favorite meals were always French toast and orange juice in the morning; a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich with a Coke at lunch; and roasted turkey with stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, and a glass of cold milk at dinner, with hot apple pie and ice cream for dessert.

A brochure from 1899 advertises the rail line’s dining car service. Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad Company Collection.

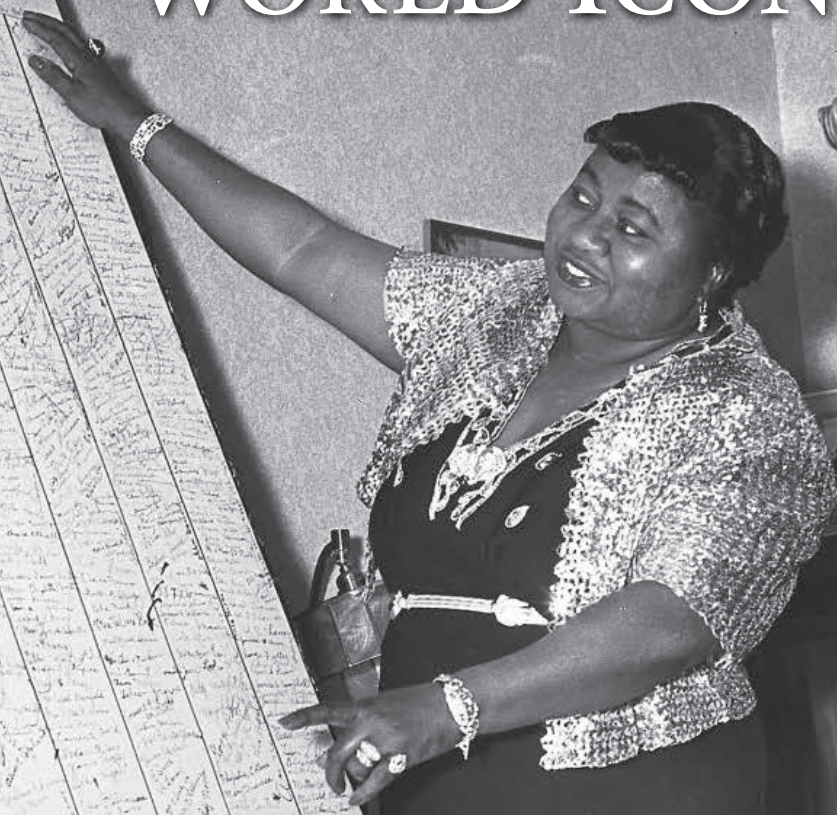


WESTERN UNION  
NEWCOMB CARLTON, President  
DANIEL EDWIN MAYER STUDIOS  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA  
WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATORS  
BRILLIANT WORK IN "GONE WITH THE WIND."  
PAYAL IS A MONUMENT TO WHICH WE PAY HOMAGE. WE PREDICT IT WILL GO  
AS ONE OF THE GREAT ROLES OF ALL-TIMES.

# HATTIE McDANIEL

## WORLD ICON,

# COLORADO UNKNOWN



Shown here around 1929, the *Gone With the Wind* actress spent her youth in Denver and Fort Collins, Colorado. Photos from the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

BY CHARLENE PORTER

**A**cademy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, fellow members of the motion picture industry, and honored guests: This is one of the happiest moments of my life, and I want to thank each one of you who had a part in selecting me for one of the awards, for your kindness.

*It has made me feel very, very humble; and I shall always hold it as a beacon for anything that I may be able to do in the future.*

*I sincerely hope I shall always be a credit to my race and to the motion picture industry. My heart is too full to tell you just how I feel, and may I say thank you and God bless you.*

—Hattie McDaniel, upon receiving the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress, 1940

**T**he Coppolas. The Fondas. The Barrymores. Each family a renowned Hollywood dynasty.

But for the ingrained inequities of the field, Denver's McDaniel family might have attained similar acclaim.

The McDaniel family? Of Denver, Colorado?

Yes.

With more stage and Hollywood screen credits collectively than the Coppolas, Fondas, and Barrymores, theatrical talent was a McDaniel family heirloom. Henry, Hattie's father, had taught himself to play the banjo and guitar. Mother Susan was a gifted gospel singer. Of their surviving eight of thirteen children, four loved being on stage. Especially the youngest, Hattie.

Henry was born enslaved on a Virginia plantation. Since he never knew his parents, his birth year was a guess; likely 1838. At age nine he was sold to Tennessee farmer John McDaniel. Susan, whose birth was recorded as 1850, was enslaved on the Tennessee plantation of Pleasant Holbert.

They were freed on January 1, 1863, by President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. One week later

*“Denver is the only real home I ever had and I hope to be able to stay here again someday.”*

—Hattie McDaniel,  
Rocky Mountain News,  
April 14, 1941

Henry joined the Union's Twelfth United States Colored Infantry. In 1878 Henry and Susan were married in a ceremony conducted by their African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) pastor. By then the backlash against Reconstruction had grown more severe. The McDaniels were residing in Tennessee, the home state of Ku Klux Klan cofounder and former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Moving their growing family to Kansas, where abolitionist John Brown had staged anti-slavery campaigns, seemed the opportunity for a fresh start. They joined other “Exodusters” and headed west, to the town of Manhattan. Upon settling there, they helped establish Bethel A.M.E. Church. Several years later, they relocated to Wichita, where Hattie was born in 1895.

A year later, the Supreme Court established that so-called “separate but equal” conditions were acceptable under federal law.

In 1898, the McDaniels moved on, to Denver, Colorado, where there was a black community of around four thousand. They settled in a neighborhood northeast of downtown called Five Points, named for the vertices where four streets meet: Twenty-Sixth and Twenty-Seventh Avenues and Washington and Welton Streets.

Although the area had originated in the 1880s as an upper-middle-class enclave, around the late 1890s prosperous African American families began moving in. Whites took flight to communities that were covenant restricted—with home sales not allowed specifically to black people. Thus was created Denver's African American neighborhood, just as there were Italian, Irish, Jewish, Chinese, Polish, German, and Mexican ones.

The economic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries made for a tight-knit social fabric. The McDaniel family had only to walk a few blocks to their new church, Campbell A.M.E. Chapel, where Susan and Hattie became active in the choir. Susan, for a time, served as choir director. As Jill Watts writes in *Hattie McDaniel: Black Ambition, White Hollywood*, Campbell's pastor, Reverend James Washington, “was an innovator and experimented with a variety of evangelistic techniques, including illustrated sermons and, on occasion, early motion pictures.

“He also encouraged parishioners to use the church's facilities for secular events . . . plays, tableaux, contests, literary gatherings, as well as political forums on race relations.”

For the McDaniel siblings this meant performing in an array of theatrical presentations, which in turn developed

*Facing: In 2017, African American actors earned a record six Oscar nominations, and with performances in films like Moonlight, Fences, and Hidden Figures, an actor of color was nominated in every category. Seventy-seven years ago, Hattie McDaniel was the first African American nominated for an Oscar and the first actor of color to win.*



Starting in 1947, McDaniel performed on radio for millions of weekly listeners.

## FAMOUS JAZZ BAND TO GIVE CONCERT AT THE POST WEDNESDAY

Home again after a triumphal tour of England, George Morrison's jazz band, known as the foremost aggregation of Negro singers and players in the United States, is to give a free concert at The Denver Post at noon Wednesday.

Morrison's jazz band, which is appearing at the Empress theater all this week, is made up wholly of Denver talent. During recent months it has been touring vaudeville circuits in England at the highest salaries ever paid Negro entertainers in that country.

Hattie McDaniel, whose fame as a singer of jazz songs has become international, will sing "Daddy" and the "Crazy Blues" on the balcony of The Post building Wednesday noon. The band, led by George Morrison himself, will accompany her and will play other jazzy numbers which will make your feet itch.

McDaniel toured as a vocalist for five years in the 1920s with George Morrison's Denver-based Melody Hounds Jazz Orchestra. The Denver Post, August 15, 1922.



McDaniel in *Gone With the Wind*. Courtesy Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.



Hattie and brother Sam McDaniel appeared together in *The Great Lie*, 1941. Courtesy Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

To My Sister & Pal  
 Roberta Hyson,  
 With health, happiness,  
 success and best wishes  
 from  
 Sam R. "Deacon" McDaniel  
 Brother 6/5/41  
 and  
 Hattie McDaniel  
 Sister from Mo.  
 The Grandest Little Lady



The previous year's Best Supporting Actress—Fay Bainter, for her work in *Jezebel*—presented the Oscar to McDaniel. Courtesy Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Facing: As chair of the Negro Division of the Hollywood Victory Committee, McDaniel leads entertainers and hostesses to a performance for World War II soldiers. Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration.



their stage presence and confidence. Soon, they became traveling performers, likely to A.M.E. churches within a two- or three-day wagon ride such as in Pueblo. Eventually, father and sons Otis and Sam and daughter Etta (Susan considered Hattie too young to traipse up and down the road) became the Henry McDaniel Vaudeville Show.

Hattie's teacher at 24th Street Elementary (today's Crofton-Community Ed) recognized and encouraged Hattie's precociousness in front of audiences. Acting was Hattie's favorite pastime. As soon as her mother allowed, she spent school vacations as a member of the family's local stage engagements. At fifteen, during her sophomore year at East High School, Hattie entered the Women's Christian Temperance Union oratory contest. Her reading of the fifteen-stanza melodrama "Convict Joe" won the gold medal.



By then Henry's Civil War battle injuries had worsened into permanent disability. Susan's health was also declining. When Hattie had only completed tenth grade, there was no convincing her to continue with school. By performing full-time, alongside her brothers and sister, she could contribute to the necessary support and care of their parents. For several years the company was a sure ticket seller. Then, when Otis, their driving force, died suddenly, all else changed.

Sam and Etta struck out on their own, while Hattie remained at home taking on domestic jobs with her mother, or sometimes working as a store clerk. When violinist

George Morrison—husband of Willa May, her dear friend since elementary school—needed a singer for his nationally touring group, the Melody Hounds Jazz Orchestra, Hattie leaped at the chance.

For five years they went coast to coast and to cities in between, performing on the Pantages, Shriners, Elks, and TOBA (black-owned theaters) circuits.

Her parents both died during this time, and Hattie was widowed after only three months of marriage.

On December 15, 1925, the band performed over the airwaves of Denver's newly operating radio station, KOA—making Hattie the first black woman to sing on the radio.

The day would also come, following Hattie McDaniel's Oscar win, that she would be the first black woman to star in a situation comedy: the fifteen-minute weeknight radio program "The Beulah Show," with 20 million loyal listeners. Her Hollywood Walk of Fame star for contributions to radio (noted by the relief of a microphone)—located at 6933 Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles—gives testament to this achievement to some ten million tourists a year.

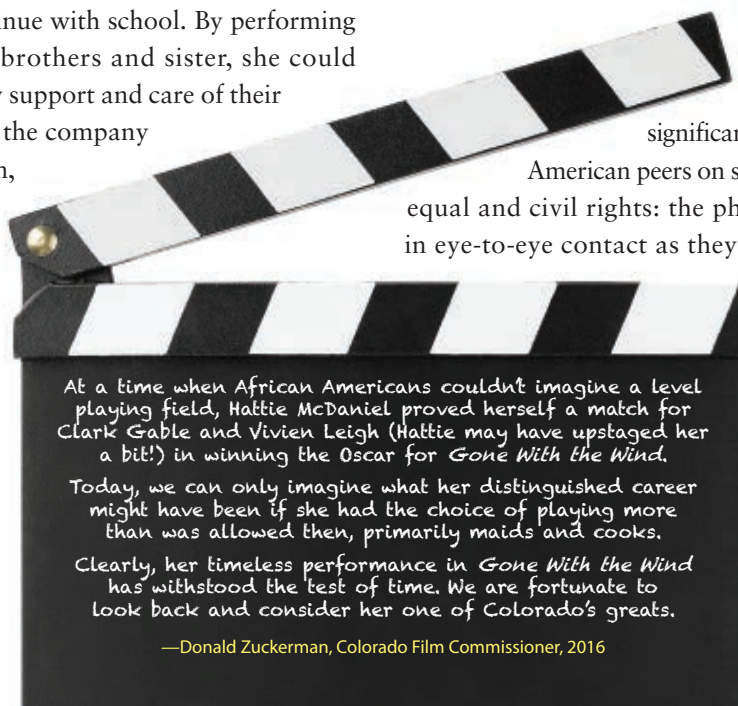
As well, there are McDaniel's more than 300 appearances in motion pictures, including, of course, the film many consider one of the greatest of all time—*Gone With the Wind*—with much of the credit going to her performance. For these achievements, a rare second Hollywood Walk of Fame star was dedicated to her, at 1719 Vine.

McDaniel's civic contributions were likewise extraordinary—such as her funding and participating in the "Sugar Hill" lawsuit which ended restricted mortgage covenants in Los Angeles, at a time when public restrooms, baseball, theaters, lunch counters, hotels, buses, schools, and the military were years away from desegregation.

One particular item of memorabilia speaks emphatically to Hattie McDaniel's significant role (and that of her African American peers on stage and screen) in advancing equal and civil rights: the photo of her and Fay Bainter in eye-to-eye contact as they commemorate McDaniel's

Oscar breakthrough. Such would have never been possible for Henry and Susan McDaniel to witness.

Now, it must be asked, how is it that Hattie McDaniel is one



of Hollywood's, and the world's, foremost entertainment icons . . . yet so few in the town she was so proud to call home have any idea of who she is or of all that she accomplished?

## Selected Filmography

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1934</b> — <i>Judge Priest</i> (as Aunt Dilsey), with Will Rogers and Stepin Fetchit (Lincoln Perry) | <b>1941</b> — <i>The Great Lie</i> (as Violet), with Bette Davis; featuring Hattie's brother Sam McDaniel  |
| <b>1935</b> — <i>The Little Colonel</i> (as Mom Beck), with Shirley Temple and John Barrymore           | <b>1942</b> — <i>The Male Animal</i> (as Cleota), with Henry Fonda and Olivia de Havilland                 |
| <b>1935</b> — <i>Alice Adams</i> (as Malena Burns), with Katharine Hepburn and Fred MacMurray           | <b>1943</b> — <i>Thank Your Lucky Stars</i> (as a concerned neighbor), with Humphrey Bogart and Ida Lupino |
| <b>1936</b> — <i>Show Boat</i> (as Queenie), with Irene Dunne and Paul Robeson                          | <b>1944</b> — <i>Hi, Beautiful</i> (as Millie), with Martha O'Driscoll                                     |
| <b>1937</b> — <i>True Confession</i> (as Ella), with Carole Lombard and Edgar Kennedy                   | <b>1946</b> — <i>Song of the South</i> (as Aunt Tempy), with James Baskett                                 |
| <b>1938</b> — <i>The Mad Miss Manton</i> (as Hilda), with Barbara Stanwyck and Henry Fonda              | <b>1947</b> — <i>The Flame</i> (as Celia), with Broderick Crawford   |
| <b>1939</b> — <i>Gone With the Wind</i> (as Mammy), with Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh                   | <b>1948</b> — <i>Family Honeymoon</i> (as Phyllis), with Claudette Colbert                                 |
| <b>1940</b> — <i>Maryland</i> (as Aunt Carrie), with Walter Brennan                                     | <b>1949</b> — <i>The Big Wheel</i> (as Minnie), with Mickey Rooney   |

## SHOW BOAT

The 1927 Broadway hit *Show Boat*, based on the 1926 bestselling novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edna Ferber, caused considerable social consternation as it was the first Broadway musical to seriously depict interracial marriage. At the time, thirty out of the then forty-eight states enforced laws prohibiting marriage between whites and blacks. During this era, Jim Crow dictates—state laws repressing the civic, personal, educational, employment, housing, transportation, and social rights of black Americans—were also enforced.

In Denver, black people were relegated to the balconies (the “crow’s nest”) of theaters; subjected to restricted

mortgage covenants; forbidden to swim in Washington Park lake; refused contract employment in Denver Public Schools and the Denver Symphony; discouraged from entering department stores through front entrances; confined to segregated military housing at Lowry Airfield; and denied membership in service, business, and athletic clubs.

Hattie McDaniel was in the chorus of the musical's late-1920s national touring company, then went on to portray the central character, Queenie, in Hollywood's 1936 movie starring Paul Robeson.

## THE OSCAR WIN

On Thursday evening, February 29, 1940, Hattie McDaniel won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in the David O. Selznick production *Gone With the Wind*. Fay Bainter, the previous year's winner, presented the award to McDaniel in Los Angeles at the Ambassador Hotel's Coconut Grove nightclub.



McDaniel starred with Paul Robeson in the 1936 film *Show Boat*. Courtesy Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

**1838**

Henry McDaniel is born enslaved on a Virginia plantation; is later sold at age six to the McDaniel plantation.

**1850**

Susan Holbert is born enslaved on a Tennessee plantation.

**1857**

The Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* case holds that “a negro could not be an American citizen . . . and had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”

**1863**

January 1: President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation. One week later, Henry McDaniel joins the U.S. Colored Infantry.

**1868**

14th Amendment ratified, making African Americans full U.S. citizens.

**1875**

Henry and Susan are married in Tennessee by an African Methodist Episcopal minister.

**1890**

The McDaniels join the Exoduster movement and help establish Bethel AME Church in Manhattan, Kansas. They relocate 130 miles south to Wichita.

**1895**

The McDaniels' thirteenth and last child, Hattie, is born on June 10.

**1896**

*Plessy v. Ferguson*: By a vote of 7 to 1 the Supreme Court upholds state racial segregation laws for public facilities under the doctrine of “separate but equal.”

**1898**

The McDaniel family relocates to Denver.

**1900**

The McDaniel family moves briefly to 317 Cherry Street in Fort Collins, Colorado.

George Morrison and his brother relocate with their parents from Fayette, Missouri, to Boulder, Colorado. Self-taught violinist George and his brother perform in area mining camps.

# Hattie McDaniel Timeline... 1838–1900

The hotel maintained a “whites only” policy. Because of her race, special permission had to be sought by the studio for McDaniel to attend the awards banquet. However, she, her guest, and her talent agent, William Meiklejohn (one of the few talent agents willing to represent African Americans, and who discovered other greats such as Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, Lucille Ball, and Ronald Reagan), were seated on the perimeter of the room, at a small table of their own near the kitchen entrance.

McDaniel’s acceptance speech was reportedly written by the Selznick Studio, or Selznick’s father-in-law Louis B. Mayer’s studio, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the film’s distributor. It was Mayer’s idea, in 1927, to form the Academy. Only still photographers were present at the awards program. The winners’ speeches were filmed for the first time the following day.

### THE HAYS CODE

Will H. Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America from 1922 to 1945, created the Motion Picture Code (the Hays Code) in 1930. Censorship of film content was its main purpose, and producers were forced to adhere to Hays Office rulings.

Under the subject “Particular Applications,” the code stipulated that miscegenation, or sexual relations between the white and black races, was “forbidden.” The mandate severely limited movie plots and casting options.

Nevertheless, Hattie McDaniel’s proven talent, extraordinary work ethic, and rigorous professionalism led to her co-starring in the 1942 drama *In This Our Life*. Based on Ellen Glasgow’s 1941 Pulitzer-winning novel and directed by John Huston, it featured actresses Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland, and Hattie McDaniel as Minerva Clay, the mother of a hard-working young black man studying law and working as a law clerk who is falsely accused in the hit-and-run death of a young girl.

Due to its central theme of racial discrimination, the movie was “disapproved” for foreign release by the wartime Office of Censorship.

### WALT DISNEY

Every form of work has its top-tier practitioners. As a creative artist Walt Disney was in an elite category all his own. He still holds the record for most Academy Awards earned by an individual: fifty-nine competitive nominations, twenty-two wins.

He created Mickey Mouse in 1928 and released his first feature-length cartoon, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*—the first animated feature made in full color and

sound—in 1937. In the early 1940s Disney began production of *Song of the South*, his first dramatic movie combining live actors and animation. Oscar winner Hattie McDaniel, ever in search of roles worthy of her reservoir of theatrical talents, understood the rare opportunity to work with such a groundbreaking producer . . . even if it meant accepting a



Courtesy Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

1901

The McDaniel family returns permanently to Denver. Hattie attends school with lifelong friend Willa May. Teacher Louise Poirson lauds Hattie’s “outstanding dramatic ability, strong personality . . . and ever present sense of humor.”

1908

Hattie and Willa May remain classmates at (old) East High School. Hattie is billed as a member of J. M. Johnson’s *Mighty Modern Minstrels* during their appearance at East Turner Hall at 22nd and Arapahoe.

1910

Hattie enters the Women’s Christian Temperance Union’s oratory contest, winning the gold medal. Having only completed tenth grade, she successfully pleads with her mother to allow

her to go on the road with her father, brothers Otis and Sam, and sister Etta, in the family vaudeville troupe. They perform in Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Boulder, and on the West Coast. The *Denver Post* dubs their appearance at Denver’s *Empress Theater* a “sensation.”

1911

Willa May marries George Morrison.

1913

The dawn of feature motion pictures.

1915

Denver NAACP chapter protests local screening of D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*.

1916

African American brothers George and Noble Johnson form the *Lincoln Motion Picture Company* in Los Angeles.

Hattie’s brother Otis dies. His funeral is held at Denver’s *Campbell AME Church* and he is buried at *Riverside Cemetery*, Denver’s oldest.

1918

Denver-born Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., is Hollywood’s most popular actor and third highest paid after best friend Charlie Chaplin and highest-paid Mary Pickford.

1919

“*Red Summer*”: Hundreds killed and many more injured in nationwide urban race riots.

dreaded stereotypical role on the way to more promising ones.

The movie's star, James Baskett (in his one and only acting job), became the second actor of color to receive an Academy Award, albeit honorary. The song he sang, the now classic "Zip-A-Dee-Do-Dah," won the 1948 Oscar for Best Original Song.

The movie inspired one of Disneyland's most popular rides: Splash Mountain. But the film's portrayal of black freedmen was widely perceived as racist. Thus, to this day, it is rarely shown.

### "I Have Never Apologized"

By Hattie McDaniel,  
*The Hollywood Reporter*, September 29, 1947

I had headlined on the Pantages and Orpheum circuits, but vaudeville was as dead as last month's hit song. The stock market crash of '29 had left big business paralyzed and every town had its breadline and hobo jungle. Entertainers were a dime a dozen and, even at that cut-rate price, there were no takers.

Milwaukee was really my springboard to Hollywood. [After the national tour of *Show Boat* closed unexpectedly] I landed there broke. Somebody told me of a place as a maid in the ladies' room at Sam Pick's Suburban Inn. I rushed out there and took the job. One night, after midnight, when all the entertainers had left, the manager called for volunteer talent from among the help. I asked the boys in the orchestra to strike up "St. Louis Blues." I started to sing—"I hate to see that evening sun go down." . . . I never had to go back to my maid's job. For two years I starred in the floor show. . . .

Sam Pick's patrons were nice to me, but they kept asking me one question that disturbed me—"Why don't you go to Hollywood and get in the movies?"

The house where the McDaniel family briefly lived in Fort Collins bears a plaque commemorating their time there. Courtesy Meg Dunn, *Forgotten Fort Collins*.



Hattie poses with her Fort Collins classmates. Josephine Clements collection, courtesy Judy Jackson.

Some friends were driving to Los Angeles. They persuaded me to come with them.

People are always telling me about the "lucky break" I got in pictures. I don't take the trouble to tell them of all the years I sang in choruses, worked in mob scenes, thankful for the smallest thing. A call from Charlie Butler at Central Casting was like a letter from home, a bit part with a line of dialogue was like manna from heaven.

. . . As the years went by, I found myself working with such great stars as Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, Irene Dunne, Barbara Stanwyck, Will Rogers, Margaret Sullavan, Bette Davis and Jimmy Stewart. . . .

[After several comedy roles] David O. Selznick cast me as Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*. I was now a recognized featured player and although I had had other large roles at most of the major studios, this was my first chance at a straight dramatic role. For it, Hollywood bestowed upon me its greatest seal of approval, the Academy Award for the best supporting actress for 1939. . . .

1920

Susan McDaniel dies and is buried in Riverside Cemetery. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford marry, becoming Hollywood's first celebrity couple. American women gain the right to vote.

1922

Henry McDaniel dies and is buried in Riverside Cemetery's Civil War section.

1924

"Professor" George Morrison enlists Hattie as his orchestra's featured singer. A national tour includes white clubs on the Pantages circuit (where they must enter by the back door) and black-owned theaters of the Theatre Owners Booking Association (TOBA).

General Electric-owned KOA radio in Denver begins broadcasting.

1925

When the Melody Jazz Hounds Orchestra plays over the airwaves of KOA, Hattie McDaniel becomes the first black woman to sing on radio.

60,000 white-robed Ku Klux Klan members march down Washington, D.C.'s Pennsylvania Avenue.

In Colorado, writes historian Tom Noel, "Klan members and sponsored candidates [control] the State House and Senate, the Office of Secretary of State, a state Supreme Court judgeship, seven benches on Denver District Court, and city councils in some towns. Denver Mayor Ben Stapleton, and Colorado Governor Clarence Morley, are avowed Ku Klux Klan members."

1927

Vaudevillian Al Jolson, "The World's Greatest Entertainer," performs in blackface as star of *The Jazz Singer*, the first full-length sound picture. Jolson actively protests discrimination and promotes Broadway's first all-black cast production.

Douglas Fairbanks elected first president of the new Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

1929

Douglas Fairbanks hosts the first Academy Awards ceremony on May 16 at a banquet at the Roosevelt Hotel in Los Angeles.

Hattie McDaniel, star stage act at Sam Pick's night club in Milwaukee, joins her brother Sam and sisters Orleana and Etta in Los Angeles.

1920-29

My own people were especially happy. They felt that in honoring me, Hollywood had honored the entire race. That was the way I wanted it. I wanted this occasion to prove an inspiration to Negro youth for many years to come. . . .

I have never apologized for the roles I play. Several times I have persuaded the directors to omit dialect from modern pictures. They readily agreed to the suggestion. . . .

I have never gotten over my crush on Hollywood. At heart, I suppose I am still a tourist. . . .!



*“Audiences merely had to take one look at Hattie McDaniel to realize that here was a woman born to give, not take, orders.”*

—John Kisch and Edward Mapp,

*A Separate Cinema: Fifty Years of Black-Cast Posters, 1992*

#### For Further Reading

Henry McDaniel’s resting place, among more than 1,000 Civil War veterans buried in Riverside Cemetery, may not be traditional reading material, but the tribute carved into his headstone—CO. C, 12 U.S.C. INF.—bears witness to a significant portion of American history. The recently unveiled plaque at 317 Cherry in Fort Collins, the McDaniel family home during their brief residence in the city, also commemorates a little-known aspect of Colorado history. See also the Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame: [cogreatwomen.org/project/hattie-mcdaniel](http://cogreatwomen.org/project/hattie-mcdaniel).

The Special Collections of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, maintains the Hattie and Sam McDaniel papers, gifted by their family. A somewhat related collection, the Edward Mapp poster archive, is “one of the pre-eminent sources of information

on black films.” Mapp authored *African Americans and the Oscar: Decades of Struggle and Achievement*. For *Gone With the Wind* fans (a.k.a. “Windies”), the David O. Selznick Collection in the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin is a joy.

Of the biographies, *Hattie: The Life of Hattie McDaniel* by Carlton Jackson has its place, while Jill Watts’s *Hattie McDaniel: Black Ambition, White Hollywood* is the most extensively researched. *African American Actresses: The Struggle for Visibility, 1900–1960*, by Charlene B. Regester, is also insightful. For a more contemporary perspective see *Foxy: My Life in Three Acts* by (East High grad) Pam Grier with Andrea Cagan. An intriguing postulation about Douglas Fairbanks, who was born and raised in Denver, began his acting career at Elitch Gardens Theatre, and likewise attended East—and like McDaniel pursued a career rather than a diploma—is a motif in *The First King of Hollywood: The Life of Douglas Fairbanks* by Tracey Goessel.

**CHARLENE PORTER** is a fifth-generation Denverite, with fond memories of Washington, D.C., New York City, and Pasadena. Her debut historical novel and *Denver Post* number-one local bestseller, *Boldfaced Lies*, is being reissued and will be followed by companion World War II stories next summer. For more information, visit [myauthorwebsite.net/charlene-porter/](http://myauthorwebsite.net/charlene-porter/).



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1939

The Daughters of the American Revolution refuse Marian Anderson, African American and one of the most celebrated singers of the twentieth century, permission to sing before an integrated audience in Constitution Hall. She performs instead on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

The film of Margaret Mitchell’s Pulitzer-winning novel, *Gone With the Wind*, is produced. “Jim Crow” laws prevent Hattie McDaniel and all African American cast members from attending the Atlanta premiere. The Ebenezer Baptist Church choir that sings at the program includes ten-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr.

Douglas Fairbanks dies of a heart attack.

1940

The twelfth annual Academy Awards ceremony, hosted by Bob Hope, is held at Los Angeles’s “whites only” Ambassador Hotel. By special dispensation, Hattie McDaniel and her guest become the first African Americans to attend, but are seated at the back of the room near the kitchen. McDaniel, the first African American nominated for an Oscar, becomes the first actor of color to win.

1947

Hattie McDaniel becomes the first African American woman to star in a radio show, earning \$1,000 a week and with 20 million nightly listeners.

Jackie Robinson integrates professional baseball.

1952

Hattie McDaniel dies on October 26 of breast cancer at the hospital of the Motion Picture Country Home in Woodland Hills, California.

1955

In Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks refuses to move to the back of a public bus from the white section in the front.



1939–55

*From the Hart . . .***Raucous Days in Durango**

**George Doughty, Durango, Colorado**  
*Born in Council Bluffs, Iowa, May 25, 1858*

I came to Durango . . . and finally went to work for Tom Rockwood in the Grand Central Hotel, located on the present site of the Federal Building. I was the cook there for quite a while. There was a small bar and pool room. One day Dison Eskridge rode his horse through the door and began shooting through the ceiling. He was just having a good time and did not hurt anyone, wasn't mad, just raising hell. Tom was behind the bar and was pretty mad and scared. He did not know what might happen. Bob Dwyer stepped through the door and said, "Dice, I'll take those guns." Eskridge handed his guns over to Dwyer. After things quieted down Bob returned the guns to Dice. Bob Dwyer had plenty of nerve and was the coolest man I ever saw. . . .

The Clipper [Theatre] had all kinds of games, Faro, Bank, Poker, Chuck-luck, roulette wheel, and shell game. Bill Nutall (Nut Shell Bill) ran the shell game. He was a gambler. There are none of those fellows left that I know of, that is, men who gambled for a living just on cold nerve. The fellow who dealt games for pay wasn't considered a gambler in those days. The sucker never made any money on those games. He wasn't supposed to.

Jim Raynor was running the beehive game in the Clipper. That's a game where a ball is dropped down a slot; it hits pins and pays according to the slot in which the ball happens to fall. When the booster, a hired decoy, played the game, the ball used could enter the grand prize slots but when the sucker played a slightly larger ball was used and the sucker never

had a chance to win. One night Raynor, who was running the game, could not find his cappers, so he hired a couple of strangers. They both won fine gold watches, capital prizes, then disappeared. Raynor crabbed until Marshall told him to keep still and be satisfied that he had seen the only time a sucker had ever won on the beehive.

The Texas Kid's gang was working a little between here and Rico. Nutshell Bill and Doc Holliday were members of that outfit. They left here shortly after Bob Dwyer told them they could not pull anything in Durango.

Wyatt and Jim Earp were in here for a while in those days; most of those fellows came in from Dodge City and that country. They did not stay long. The Earp boys were gunmen but they did not bother anyone much.

I left Durango about '84.

I was working in a café in Nome, Alaska, in 1900.

One night we were in the Great Northern Saloon. John May, a former Durango man, was running it. The games had quieted down and the dealers were around a table where Wyatt Earp was dealing farobank. One of the boys said to him, "You have killed quite a few men. Doesn't your conscience bother you?" "Well," said Wyatt, "my conscience does not hurt, but you notice I always go out a door backwards. His killings were always on the level. He never murdered anyone. He was a civil, peace officer with a tough job. Always was wearing a star when he killed anyone, and was ordinarily making an arrest or protecting himself.

**A. L. Soans**  
 January 24, 1934.

*The above interview is from the CWA Pioneer Interviews Collection—hundreds of interviews compiled around the state in 1933–34. Library staff are cataloging the interviews, which are available online at [HistoryColorado.org/researchers/cwa-pioneer-interviews](http://HistoryColorado.org/researchers/cwa-pioneer-interviews).*

**For additional resources in History Colorado's collection, see our catalogs at [h-co.org/catalogs](http://h-co.org/catalogs).**

*Gamblers game in an unidentified locale. 10028029*

*Background: The interviewee's favorable opinion of gunman (and lawman) Wyatt Earp is based on personal encounters with him in Durango, Colorado, and Nome, Alaska. 10029183*



# History Colorado Endorses the Value of History Statement

History Colorado is pleased to join more than 150 other history associations and museums across the country in endorsing the History Relevance Campaign's **Value of History Statement**. The campaign is a nationwide effort launched in 2013 to promote the philosophy that history is central to our lives and should play a greater role in our communities and our nation.

## The Value of History Seven Ways It Is Essential

### To OURSELVES

**IDENTITY**—History nurtures personal identity in an intercultural world. History enables people to discover their own place in the stories of their families, communities, and nation. They learn the stories of the many individuals and groups that have come before them and shaped the world in which they live. There are stories of freedom and equality, injustice and struggle, loss and achievement, and courage and triumph. Through these varied stories, they create systems of personal values that guide their approach to life and relationships with others.

**CRITICAL SKILLS**—History teaches critical 21st century skills and independent thinking. The practice of history teaches research, judgment of the accuracy and reliability of sources, validation of facts, awareness of multiple perspectives and biases, analysis of conflicting evidence, sequencing to discern causes, synthesis to present a coherent interpretation, clear and persuasive written and oral communication, and other skills that have been identified as critical to a successful and productive life in the 21st century.

### To OUR COMMUNITIES

**VITAL PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK**—History lays the groundwork for strong, resilient communities. No place really becomes a community until it is wrapped in human memory: family stories, tribal traditions, civic commemorations. No place is a community until it has awareness of its history. Our connections and commitment to one another are strengthened when we share stories and experiences.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**—History is a catalyst for economic growth. People are drawn to communities that have preserved a strong sense of historical identity and character. Cultural heritage is a demonstrated economic asset and an essential component of any vibrant local economy, providing an infrastructure that attracts talent and enhances business development.



*El Pueblo History Museum's trading post. Courtesy Jeff Lopez Photography*

### To OUR FUTURE

**ENGAGED CITIZENS**—History helps people craft better solutions. At the heart of democracy is the practice of individuals coming together to express views and take action. By bringing history into discussions about contemporary issues, we can better understand the origins of and multiple perspectives on the challenges facing our communities and nation. This can clarify misperceptions, reveal complexities, temper volatile viewpoints, open people to new possibilities, and lead to more effective solutions for today's challenges.

**LEADERSHIP**—History inspires local and global leaders. History provides leaders with inspiration and role models for meeting the complex challenges that face our communities, nation, and the world. It may be a parent, grandparent or distant ancestor, a local or national hero, or someone famous or someone little known. Their stories reveal how they met the challenges of their day, which can give new leaders the courage and wisdom to confront the challenges of our time.

**LEGACY**—History, saved and preserved, is the foundation for future generations. History is crucial to preserving democracy for the future by explaining our shared past. Through the preservation of authentic, meaningful places, documents, artifacts, images, and stories, we leave a foundation upon which future Americans can build. Without the preservation of our histories, future citizens will have no grounding in what it means to be an American.

*For the full list of organizations that have signed the statement, go to [historyrelevance.com/endorsers](http://historyrelevance.com/endorsers).*

# Sister Tribes Review Ute Indian Museum Content

BY SACHA SMITH

In June 2017, the expanded Ute Indian Museum will re-open with redesigned exhibits and facilities, featuring treasured Ute items and new stories about Ute life today. At more than twelve consultation meetings, designated representatives of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (Colorado) and the Ute Indian Tribe of the Ouray and Uintah Reservation (Utah) have provided critical and creative input on every aspect of the project.

*The following has been adapted from a feature article that originally ran in The Southern Ute Drum (Ignacio, Colorado) on December 8, 2016.*

In December 2016, the three Ute tribes met at History Colorado in Denver for the twelfth consultation of the Ute Indian Museum expansion. The main focus of this meeting was to give tribal representatives the time to review the draft wording and visuals that will appear on panels in the museum.

History Colorado posted the draft panels and other content on the walls of an empty room, giving everyone a chance to look over the information hanging on walls—similar to how they would appear in the museum. History Colorado encouraged the tribal representatives to look over everything while thoroughly making notes on what should be edited or added.

No time was wasted as culture representatives and Tribal Council members took to the drafts, making edits to wording and spelling of names, and discussing the appropriate way to spell out words in Ute.

Next, the group got to view videos that will appear in the *Invasion* exhibit—which focuses on the Utes being removed to reservations. From the Northern Ute perspective, the videos

portray the removal of Utes to Utah well, Betsy Chappoose Northern Ute Cultural Rights and Protection Director said. Alden Naranjo, Southern Ute NAGPRA Coordinator, agreed with Chappoose, but pointed out that the videos do not tell the removal stories of the Ute bands that remained in Colorado. The group discussed how to include the removal story of all bands with visuals that would help better tell the whole story.

History Colorado also talked about donations and getting the word out to the communities so those interested could donate and be recognized on a plaque that will be placed on the patio of the museum.

Councilwoman Amy J. Barry said it would be ideal for History Colorado to host a meeting with the tribal membership explaining the museum and the donation process. The group decided a spring meeting would be best, and the group will convene in Montrose in April.

Lastly, the Ute representatives were given a chance to meet alone and discuss the museum opening in June 2017. History Colorado and the tribes have decided to host two opening days: one for the tribes and their members and one for the general public. The Ute Indian Museum opening for the Ute tribes—slated for Friday, June 9—will be held a day before the general public opening on June 10.

In the tribal caucus, the tribes discussed what an opening day would look like and discussed a draft agenda that included a sunrise ceremony, presentations from the Ute tribes, drum group performances, and a meal. At the last meeting, Southern Ute Chairman Clement J. Frost said that Southern Ute would donate bison meat to be served on the opening day for the tribes.

***On Saturday, June 10, the public is invited to tour the museum and see a performance by the three Ute tribes. The tribes decided the performance might be a brief powwow presentation and/or a Bear Dance presentation.***

*Tribal advisors from the three Ute tribes receive a tour the construction site of the expanded Ute Indian Museum in August 2016 in Montrose. Courtesy The Southern Ute Drum.*







Southern Ute NAGPRA Coordinator Alden Naranjo and Betsy Chapoose, Northern Ute Cultural Rights and Protection Director, discuss edits to informational panels that will appear in exhibits at the newly expanded Ute Indian Museum during the twelfth Ute Indian Museum Expansion Consultation on December 1 in Denver. Courtesy The Southern Ute Drum.

### Ute Tribal Advisors for the Project

- **Ute Mountain Ute Tribe**  
 Terry Knight, Sr., *Tribal Historic Preservation Officer*  
 Lynn Hartman, *Administrator*  
 Chairman Manuel Heart  
 Marissa Box, *Councilwoman*  
 Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk, *Councilwoman*  
 Juanita PlentyHoles, *Vice Chair*  
 Sophia Box  
 Tanya Amarine, *Director of Education*
- **The Ute Indian Tribe (Uintah and Ouray Reservation)**  
 Betsy Chapoose, *Cultural Rights and Protection Director*  
 Tony Small, *Tribal Council Member*  
 Sandra Black, *Business Committee*  
 Chairman Shaun Chapoose
- **Southern Ute Indian Tribe**  
 Alden Naranjo, *NAGPRA Representative*  
 Cassandra Naranjo, *NAGPRA Coordinator*  
 Chairman Clement Frost  
 Amy Barry, *Councilwoman*  
 Tyson Thompson, *Councilman*  
 Hanley Frost, *Culture Department Education Coordinator*  
 Elise Redd, *Director of Cultural Affairs*  
 LaTitia Taylor, *Director Southern Ute Education*
- **Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs**  
 Ernest House Jr., *Executive Director*  
 (Ute Mountain Ute Tribe)
- **Ute Indian Museum**  
 CJ Brafford, *Director*  
 (Oglala Lakota from Pine Ridge, South Dakota)

### About the Ute Indian Museum Expansion

- The new exhibits present Ute peoples' history of adaptation and perseverance in the face of adversity and displacement and will make connections between contemporary Ute life and cultural traditions. The Ute people are Colorado's longest continuous residents, and their history, culture, and language are important to our state's past, present, and future. The exhibits will feature treasured artifacts and iconic historic photographs as well as contemporary video, audio, and photographs that tell this story from the Ute perspective.
- Another key partner, the City of Montrose, is actively seeking cultural growth opportunities as it supports the museum's expansion. The firm of Chamberlin Architects (based in Grand Junction) designed the building, and the Seattle-based exhibit design firm EDX is designing the exhibits.

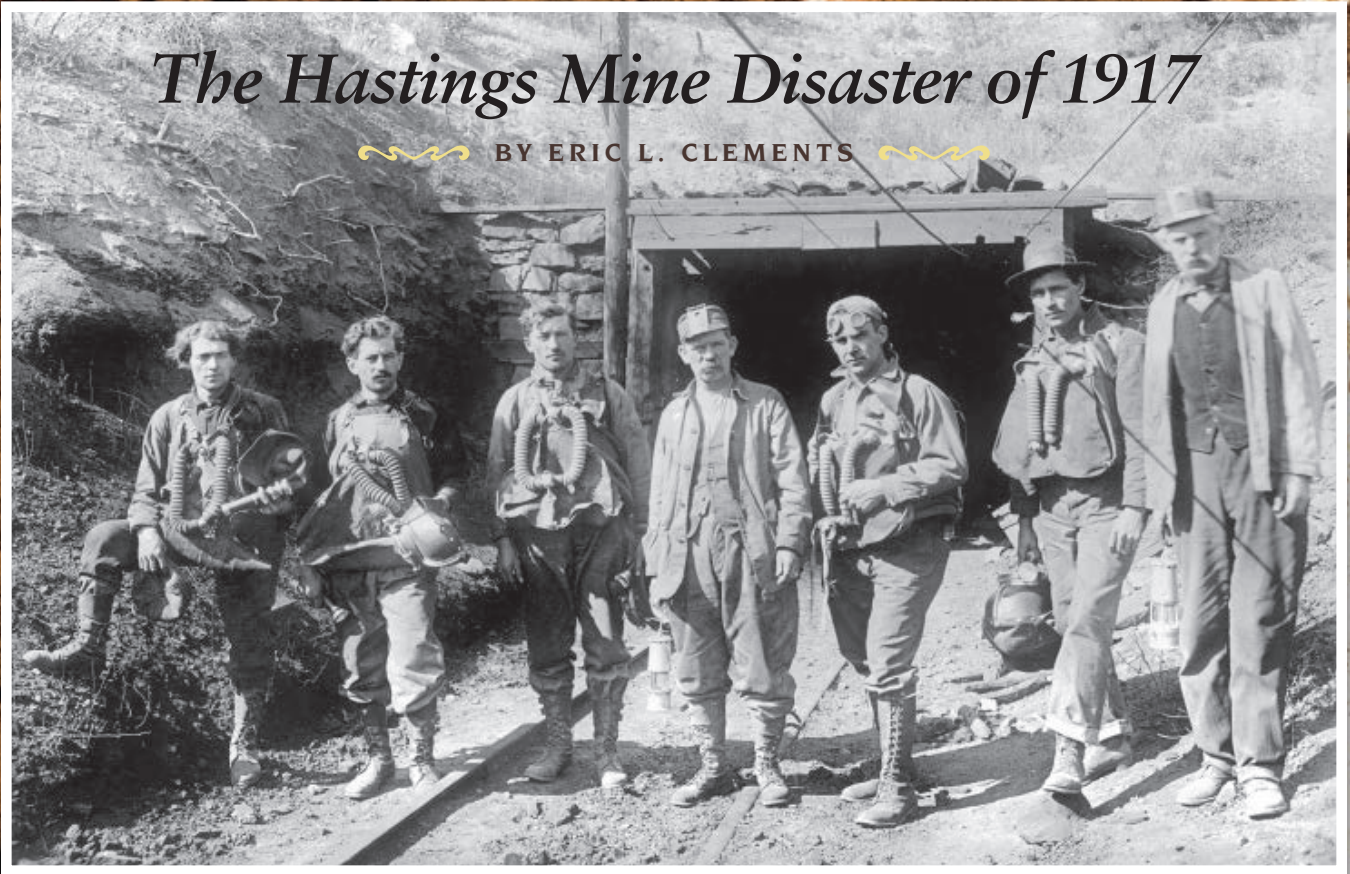
### Keep your eye on these sources to stay up-to-date with the latest on the Ute Indian Museum expansion:

- [facebook.com/uteindianmuseum](https://facebook.com/uteindianmuseum)
- The Southern Ute Drum (Ignacio): [sudrum.com](http://sudrum.com)
- Montrose Daily Press: [montrorepress.com](http://montrorepress.com)
- Montrose Mirror: [montrosemirror.com](http://montrosemirror.com)
- [Visitmontrose.com](http://Visitmontrose.com)
- *History Colorado's Explore program calendar and Colorado Heritage magazine*
- [HistoryColorado.org/museums](http://HistoryColorado.org/museums)

# THE ONE-CHANCE MEN

## *The Hastings Mine Disaster of 1917*

BY ERIC L. CLEMENTS



*Main North vomits a fearful roar,  
and seventy men are down in the hole . . .  
but probably never a living soul—  
Probably not—but there may be One—  
is there a man who will go and see?*

—Damon Runyon,  
“The One-Chance Men (Coal Mine Inspectors),” 1912

More than a hundred men went underground on the day shift that warm and windy late April morning in 1917 at the Hastings No. 2 coal mine at Hastings, Colorado. Five days earlier, some of these same men had attended the commemoration of the third anniversary of the Ludlow Massacre of April 1914, the low point of the Colorado coalfield war, held at the site of that tragedy two miles east of the mine.

Times had changed, however, at least somewhat. A month before that morning, miners had won a significant victory in their long struggle to improve their circumstances. At the end of March, 1917, the Victor-American Fuel Company, owner of the Hastings mine and previously an ardent opponent of union demands, signed a three-year operating agreement with the United Mine Workers of America. The April 22 observance at Ludlow, sponsored by some of the UMW local, was part commemoration, part exhortation, and part recreation. Three thousand assembled to hear speeches by regional union leaders, and “an impromptu baseball game and races added to the amusement.” The speeches were along patriotic lines and detailed the position of organized labor in the struggle with Germany.”

On April 6, exactly three weeks before the day shift went underground that morning, the U.S. Congress had declared war against Germany. American intervention in the European war created potential ethnic conflicts in the coal fields of southern Colorado. Part of the purpose of the Ludlow gathering had been to encourage those attending to support “their adopted colors.” The morning shift that day consisted of thirty-five men identified as Greeks, thirty-three as Austrians, twenty-seven as Americans, fourteen as Italians, and thirteen as Mexicans, along with three Poles, two Welshmen, a Spaniard, and a “Servian.” Acknowledging the complexity of its workforce, Colorado printed its coal mining laws in English, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Bulgarian, Polish, German, Croatian, and Japanese.

One Italian, Frank Moletto, worked as the rope rider at the Hastings mine. He rode the strings of coal cars, called the “trip,” in and out of the mine. Moletto began his third descent into the mine just after 9 that morning. The trip traveled about two thousand feet into the mine, then stopped. He neither heard nor felt anything unusual, but as he climbed

off of the trip to investigate the situation he saw smoke rising toward him from the works below. Moletto turned back up the slope and fled for his life.

*... Into the dismal pit he goes,  
By the light of the lamp that faintly shows  
Where the dead lie dead in mournful rows— . . .*

Although Colorado is better known for gold and silver mining, the energy required to support metal mining, its associated industries, and later steelmaking, quickly led to the development of the state’s massive coal beds. In Colorado’s first fifty years, this occurred principally in the southern fields of Las Animas and Huerfano Counties in the vicinity of Trinidad and Walsenburg, and the northern field, mostly in Boulder County. By 1916 three large corporations dominated the industry in Colorado. The Colorado Fuel & Iron Company and the Victor-American Fuel Company shared the southern field, while the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company controlled the northern field.

*Three miners pose outside a mine, possibly the Berwind mine near Hastings. They wear electric cap lamps and battery packs, and each carries an enamel lunch pail. 20004600*



*Facing: A rescue team poses near the mouth of a mine, possibly in Las Animas County. Some hold face masks with tubes connected to respirators. 20004923*



An aerial view shows the coal camp of Hastings and its tipples, washer, and screening plant. Company houses line the road that cuts east through the canyon toward Ludlow. 20004914

constructed,” read a 1917 report by a U.S. Bureau of Mines inspector, “many of the essential structures being of brick. A coal washery is located at the end of the tipples and from this washery coal is conveyed to beehive coke ovens a few hundred feet distant by electric larry cars and refuse is conveyed by an aerial tram to a large dump about one quarter mile distant. The dwelling

In 1916, Colorado’s 13,315 coal miners extracted more than 12,500,000 tons of coal. Las Animas County was the leading producer, its 4,411 miners producing a third of the state’s tonnage in 1916—more than twice as much as the second-leading Huerfano County. The Hastings and Delagua properties, in Delagua Canyon fifteen miles north of Trinidad, were two of the four Las Animas County mines owned by Victor-American. The company’s general offices and most of its officials were at Denver, with its district superintendent, D. J. Griffith, operating out of Trinidad.

At the end of 1899, the *Denver Times* described Hastings as “the seat of operations of the Victor Fuel company [sic]. The camp has a population of nearly 1,000, engaged in mining, and supplies 100 ovens with some of the best coking coal of the district.” Coke was coal baked in banks of ovens to drive off impurities and water so that it later would burn at the high temperatures required for steelmaking and smelting. “The Victor Fuel company furnishes supplies to all the railroads, smelters, mills and reduction plants,” the same newspaper reported. “The coke output is partly distributed through the state, the balance finds its way into Mexico, New Mexico and Arizona and there [is] used in the copper, gold, silver and lead smelters.”

Although the corporate limits of the town of Hastings were filed in May 1892, mining had occurred at the site since the early 1880s. By 1916 the town had a population of 1,200, with a Catholic church, a company store, saloons, a public school, and 190 coke ovens that produced three hundred tons of coke daily from coal drawn from the Hastings and Delagua mines. “Surface buildings in general are substantially

houses, some built of brick but in general of frame construction, are located in a comparatively narrow valley between the ledges forming the coal outcrop.”

*Oxygen-helmeted the experts come,  
picking their way with expert care;*

*Far ahead in the aching gloom  
they hear the inspector loudly swear;*

*Over the rock falls, into the rooms,  
where the roof still trembles so dangerously—*

Was working at Hastings or in a Victor-American mine more or less dangerous than working in another Colorado mine? Evidence derived from the first four years of annual state mine inspection reports, an admittedly brief interval, is inconclusive. Compared to CF&I and the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company and to the state as a whole, the company and the mine fare worse in fatalities per thousand employees, but better in tons produced per fatality, the two standard assessments. That said, in 1916 the Hastings mine’s fatality rates of 6.5 per thousand miners and 168,997 tons mined per fatality, and Colorado’s figures of 5.9 and 132,109, compared very poorly to the national rates of 3.03 deaths per thousand and 269,000 tons per fatality.

This leads to another question: Did Colorado’s infamous coalfield war of 1913–14 change the dynamics of

labor-management relations regarding workers' health and safety in the southern fields? Most literature on the subject concludes with the Ludlow Massacre and ensuing battles of April and May 1914, with the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's "Rockefeller Plan" as the epilogue.

Even though it did not undertake a reorientation as ambitious as CF&I's, Victor-American also worked to improve conditions in its camps. This occurred partly because mining companies as well as miners had suffered the consequences of the coalfield war. A Victor-American report from 1923 outlined the costs of the 1913–14 strike as "not only to stop production of coal but to inflict great immediate losses through destruction of property and new burdens of expense." Further, the war that began in Europe and the Atlantic in mid-1914 dried up the sources of immigrant labor employed in Colorado's coal mines. That shortage put the coal companies into competition for competent miners at a time of rising demand for coal production, circumstances that would result in a series of wage increases for Colorado's coal miners.

Another outgrowth of the coalfield war was an emphasis by both government and industry on improving working conditions for miners—one of the strikers' demands—although this effort was already underway before the strike. Partly in reaction to the coalfield war and to conditions in coal mining, Colorado's first workers' compensation law went into effect on August 1, 1915. This established a predictable schedule of payments for occupational death or injury, which the companies found agreeable, but by largely eliminating the question of fault, the act shifted more responsibility for maintaining safety onto the companies.

From the nationwide drive for workers' compensation and

the efforts of the U.S. Bureau of Mines—the federal agency created in 1910 in large part to address mine safety—emerged a concerted industrial-safety movement known as Safety First. This national campaign permeated down through state governments and the mining companies to the working face of the mine. The Trinidad *Chronicle-News* noted in April 1916 that Las Animas County's deputy state mine inspector, the companies, and the miners were "all harmoniously and effectively working together in the promotion of the 'Safety First' propaganda," while at the Hastings mine in 1917 "Safety First signs and mottoes are to be seen at various places both under and above ground."

The latest circumstance, as of April 1917, was the U.S. entry into World War I. The war had already demolished the internationalists' dream of a unified working class in Europe and would produce a similar effect in the United States, as Americans mostly chose nation, even if only recently adopted, over class. The commemoration at Ludlow had included patriotic exhortations and hundreds of American flags. Three days later, a large rally at Trinidad featured a parade, patriotic songs, and the spectacle of the former metal miners' union radical John M. O'Neill urging the crowd to unity, loyalty, and to volunteer to fight Germany.

None of this is to suggest that labor-management relations in Colorado's coal fields had become particularly cordial. In its annual report for 1916, the Colorado State Federation of Labor criticized the state industrial commission and the state's workers' compensation plan, and declared the Rockefeller Plan an "unqualified failure." It maintained that improved labor-management relations in Colorado's coal fields had come from the 1913–14 strike and the favorable publicity



This photo by the author shows the site of Hastings today from the same vantage point as the circa-1900 photo on the facing page.



A man and boy descend the mine at Hastings on a coal cart, from an era prior to the disaster. 10027988

the labor movement had gained from it. While disrupted by the strike, the United Mine Workers had begun to reorganize in Colorado. James Moran, district president of the union, asserted that every man who went underground at Hastings that morning was a union member.

*God and the state have sent a man,  
and, God, what a man is he!  
Hair singed gray by the fires of Death—  
Lungs corroded by the noisome breath  
Of a hundred mines and a thousand times  
when he earned his salary;*

Damon Runyon, author of “The One-Chance Men,” made his name in New York after 1910, but he was raised in Pueblo and spent the early years of his career reporting for newspapers around Colorado. The “Main North” with which his poem begins belonged to the Primero mine, a CF&I property west of Trinidad that exploded on January 31, 1910, killing seventy-five miners.

In one sense, however, Runyon’s focus was misplaced. A Colorado coal miner was significantly more likely to be killed by a fall of rock than by an explosion. Historian James Whiteside records that from 1884 through 1912, 588 Colorado miners died in explosions, but 814 died under piles of rock or coal. So perished the last man killed in the Hastings mine before 1917: thirty-three-year-old Clifford Rinker, crushed while loading coal in July 1915.

Rockfalls, however, killed anonymous miners singly or in pairs; well-publicized mine explosions obliterated them by the dozen. The year 1910 was an especially bad one for explosions. Following the Primero blast in January, the Starkville mine exploded on October 8, killing fifty-six; the Delagua mine, the Victor-American property three miles west of Hastings, went up a month later on November 8, killing seventy-nine; and a fire at the Leyden mine in the northern field on December 15 killed another ten. Four accidents had killed 220 miners, contributing to the highest annual death rate in Colorado’s coal-mining history.

“The four mine disasters resulting in such a terrible loss

of life aroused a great deal of public sentiment,” wrote the state’s coal mine inspector in his report for that year. This sentiment moved Governor John Shafroth to appoint a commission that included the newly appointed state coal mine inspector, James Dalrymple, to rewrite Colorado’s original coal mining law, passed in 1883 and amended in 1887, that had established the state’s office of coal mine inspection and its first underground safety laws.

The coal mine law that existed in 1910 contained twenty-three sections. “An Act to Provide for the Health and Safety of Persons Employed in and about Coal Mines . . .,” developed by the committee and adopted by the state legislature in April 1913, contained 178. To combat explosions, the 1913 law reiterated or established requirements that mines be sufficiently mechanically ventilated and air courses properly

maintained. It further required a fire boss to examine each working space for proper ventilation and the presence of gas before the beginning of a shift and at least once during the shift.

The law also tried to prevent individual miners from causing explosions. Section 109 permitted an owner or inspector to search any employee for any device used to produce fire, such as matches. Section 110 stipulated that anyone who brought into a coal mine “any device for producing fire . . . or unlocks a safety lamp . . . or willfully commits any act whereby the health and safety of the miners and other employes [*sic*] is endangered . . . shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor [subject to fine or imprisonment] and shall be reported to the Chief Inspector of Coal Mines for prosecution.” Section 133 mandated that after October 1, 1913, all coal mines would be required to use only electric lamps for illumination and safety lamps for testing, although due to a lack of certified electric lamps, this provision was not enforced until January 1917.

In the early years, coal miners illuminated their work with candles or oil-fired lamps, both of which caused explosions when they came into contact with the methane gas—which miners called “firedamp”—produced by decomposition of the organic matter in coal and liberated by mining. Various inventors responded to the inevitable catastrophes by developing the safety lamp over the course of the nineteenth century.

A safety lamp consisted of a reservoir at the bottom containing oil fuel, attached to a glass-enclosed wick that provided the light. What made the lamp safe, compared to



*An improperly used Wolf key-lock safety lamp, similar to this lamp from the History Colorado collection, led to the explosion. H.4178.1*

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an open flame, was that above the glass extended a long chimney of shielded gauze. This arrangement permitted the burning gases from the lamp to reenter the atmosphere of the mine, but only after they had cooled sufficiently to prevent an explosion. Since removing the chimney would expose the open flame and invite disaster, locking safety lamps were developed that used either a key, usually retained by the lamp's owner, or a magnet. The advantage of the latter type was that the magnet would be retained at the lamp house on the surface, preventing the lamp from being opened underground.

With the advent of electric lamps, the safety lamp was used exclusively by supervisors, less for illumination than for its ability to detect gases. Methane drawn into the lamp with the air would change the shape and color of the flame, warning a practiced user of its presence and its approximate concentration. A safety lamp could also detect the presence of deadly afterdamp, the residual carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide created by an explosion.

*Over the walls of the treacherous shale;*

*Ears sharp set for a human hail—*

*On he goes down the Death wind's trail— . . .*

In his annual report for 1913, Inspector Dalrymple lauded the advances being made under the new law. Not a man afraid to criticize the mine owners, Dalrymple noted instead that “the large companies, and many of the small ones, are showing a commendable spirit in complying with the many provisions of the law. . . . [T]he men now work under conditions of greater safety, both as to health and limb.”

The 1913 law was a significant improvement, but its enforcement was a separate issue. In his 1914 report, Dalrymple wrote that “complaints have been made that the law is not being enforced to its full extent.” The problem was that “the present law requires the Inspector to initiate all prosecutions.” Dalrymple believed it “necessary to prosecute under certain conditions, yet it is not desirable as it creates a strained relation between defendants and this department, which interferes with the co-operation so vital to obtain the best results.” He recommended amending the law, specifically Section 110, to “place the responsibility of the prosecution of all violations coming under their notice on Mine Foremen, Assistant Mine Foremen and Fire Bosses.” That, of course, would merely shift the issue of enforcement versus cooperation from the regulators onto the managers. The compromise was

a lesser grade of enforcement administered on the spot. In a 1916 letter to Dalrymple, Henry King, his deputy inspector for Las Animas County, mentioned that during a visit to the Starkville mine “we found five men with matches and gave them three days layoff.” Left to managers, enforcement could be even weaker. James Cameron, superintendent of the Hastings No. 2, testified that if mine officials found men carrying matches “we would warn them against it, and try to scare them from ever carrying them again.”

*Main North's mouth breathes the breath of Hell,*

*and its guts are rotted with afterdamp—*

*But God and the state send a man to see,*

*and he goes looking with a safety lamp; . . .*

On Friday morning, April 27, 1917, the day and night fire bosses completed their three-hour inspection of the mine and reported it clear of gas and in good order at 6:30 A.M. The area of the Hastings mine being extracted that day was the B seam, which contained coking coal five and a half to seven feet thick. Miners entered on the main slope through the worked-out A seam for about two thousand feet, then passed by tunnel through a forty-foot sandstone and shale rock stratum to the B seam below. The mine sloped down at an average of about 5 percent, with the end, or face, of the slope in B seam having reached to about eight thousand feet from the portal. Seven pairs of penetrations into the coal bed, called entries, ranging from 300 to 1,800 feet long, opened to the north and south from main slope. Miners went to work in five entries on the B seam that morning.

An eight-by-eight-foot fan provided the B seam with fifty thousand cubic feet of fresh air per minute, more than twice the amount required under the law. Mules hauled coal cars from the working faces in the entries to the main slope, from where they were hauled in strings to the tibble on the surface by wire rope. In 1917, 6 percent of the mine's coal was being extracted by an electric coal undercutting machine—somewhat like a big, slow chainsaw—being used to extend the slope. The rest was recovered by hand from the entries.

The day shift went underground at 7:30, and Frank Moletto ran into trouble on the A seam about ninety minutes after that. The 1910 blast at Primero shook the town, but the lack of sound or shock on the surface at Hastings suggested to those outside that the smoke that began to gush from the mine's portal was caused by a fire. That raised

# Extra! The Evening Picketwire Extra!

VOL. II, No. 199

TRINIDAD, COLORADO, FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 1917

PRICE FIVE CENTS

## 124 HASTINGS MINERS ARE PROBABLY DOOMED

MAIN SLOPE IN FLAMES, BARS  
EGRESS OF OVER 100 MEN;  
DETAILS LACKING; CITY OF  
FACE CLOSED

The main slope of the Hastings mine is on fire and probably one hundred men are doomed to suffocation, according to reports.

RESCUERS CHECKED BY ROCK FALL

EXPLOSION PROBABLE CAUSE OF DISASTER  
ANOTHER THEORY GAS POCKET ACCIDENTALLY  
FIRED. C. F. & I. RESCUE CARS ON SCENE

SANTA FE LEADS WITH NINETY-TWO MEMBERS;  
MANY GARDENS ALREADY PREPARED BY  
CLUB BOYS AND GIRLS UNDER DIRECTION  
OF PROF. SINCLAIR

Three hundred Trinidad school children, from the fifth grade up, have enrolled in School Garden Clubs under the direction of Prof. Sinclair, and will do their bit in the Las Animas County Food Drive this summer. The Santa Fe school leads in numbers, having ninety boys and girls enrolled in the clubs at this writing.

The Evening Picketwire (Trinidad), April 27, 1917

the possibility that some miners could survive by barricading themselves from the fire and awaiting rescue.

Forming a rescue party, Superintendent Cameron, the night fire boss, Tom Davis, and several others quickly penetrated as far as the Third North Entry, 1,200 feet into the mine, before being driven out by smoke at 2:30. Henry King, the district mine inspector, entered the mine at 2:50, and throughout the day others arrived.

First came volunteers from the Delagua mine, three miles up the canyon, led by its superintendent, Ben Snodgrass, who took charge of the operation. Others followed from CF&I's camps in Berwind Canyon five miles to the south by rail. Over the next twenty-four hours those men were joined by Inspector Dalrymple and Victor-American district super-

intendent D. J. Griffith, and later by the Victor-American, CF&I, and U.S. Bureau of Mines railroad mine rescue cars and crews. Eventually, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported, "virtually every camp in Las Animas and Huerfano counties [was] represented in the crews of volunteer first-aid men and helmet men."

It did not take long for parties examining the interior of the mine to determine that an explosion had occurred, expending its force on B seam. According to the *Rocky Mountain News*, they encountered "tons and tons of wreckage. Brattices [wood and canvas screens used to direct air flow] were torn and twisted, [and] huge slides blocked the way." The evidence offered by the dead was just as compelling. "I won't say we found three men," rescuer A. A. Uffman told

a reporter, "but we did parts of them." Tom Jolly said of the bodies that he encountered: "Some of them were crushed and some hadn't a mark on them, just died from the gas," meaning the asphyxiating afterdamp.

Once it became clear that none had survived, the operation changed from rescue to recovery. With that, the strategy changed from penetrating to all parts of the mine as quickly as possible to a more patient process of reconstructing the ventilation system, clearing the main slope, and rebuilding the haulage system. Restoring the trip would permit bodies to be assembled underground by stretcher bearers, but brought out in numbers by the cars rather than having to be carried out individually by hand for more than a mile.

The Chronicle-News (Trinidad), April 27, 1917

The circulation of the C-N is the paramount reason the paper is the best advertising medium in southern Colorado.

# THE CHR

Only Afternoon Full Leased Wire

ESTABLISHED 1877 TRINIDAD, COLO.

## 120 COAL MINERS TRAPPED BY FIRE IN HASTINGS NO. 2 MINE. RESCUE CREW WORKING TO REACH MEN

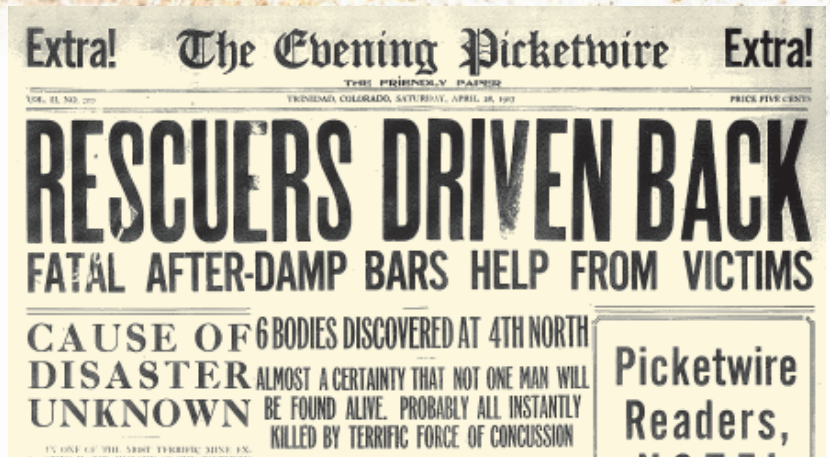
NO WORD OF SAFETY OF MEN IN MINE LATE THIS AFTERNOON. NO INDICATION OF EXPLOSION. MAY BE SERIOUS DISASTER.



The work of repair and recovery was painfully slow and laborious. “Owing to the force of the explosion below the Third North entry,” reported Trinidad’s *Evening Picketwire*, “the rescue workers were compelled to replace practically every brattice, carrying the material from the surface on their backs, and a little at a time, a distance of nearly three quarters of a mile over falls and obstructions and with the scant light of safety lamps.” Miners reported that “timbers have been blown out. Heavy falls of rock obstruct the passages. Pit cars are turned across the tracks and prove effectual barriers to entering the places where the men were at work.” On May 4, one week after the explosion, the recovery effort reached the farthest entry, Seventh North. Four days later, a helmet team from Walsenburg reached the face of the slope, and with all of the bodies recovered from the north entries the effort shifted to the south entries, where the evidence suggested that the blast had originated.

Meanwhile, on the surface, “the gloom of the catastrophe falls on all,” observed *The Denver Post*. “Everyone has a relative or a friend lying dead in the depths of the mine.” Las Animas County Coroner Thomas Bradley requisitioned the mine’s machine shop as a morgue, and onlookers stood vigils around it and the mine’s portal. “The crowds talk incessantly in half a dozen languages,” said the *Post*; “sometimes there are several hundred people and at other times there are but a handful.” Following the vigils came the funerals—sometimes ten or more a day—many held at the Catholic church and cemetery in Trinidad.

Once the ventilation and haulage systems were repaired, within a week recovery accelerated. Only nineteen bodies had been removed by the first of May, but fifty by the fourth, and 101 had been brought out and 93 identified by the middle of the month. Bodies too badly damaged to be recognized were identified by the brass identification disks they carried—“those that had clothes on.”



*Grease and grime to the roots of his hair;  
 Blear-eyed, bleeding as he tests the air;  
 Tests the roof and tests the walls  
 and notes where the dead must be;*

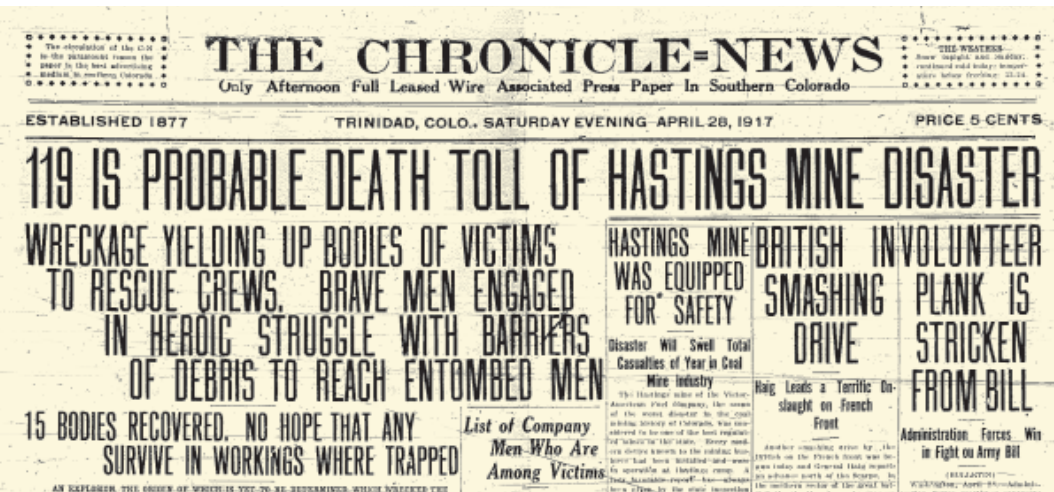
Coroner Bradley had delayed his inquest in hopes of recovering all of the victims first, but that proved impossible. With all but twenty recovered, he opened the proceeding at the Las Animas County Courthouse in Trinidad at 10 A.M. on May 16. Bradley was assisted in questioning sixteen witnesses by District Attorney Joseph W. Hawley, Colorado Attorney General Leslie B. Hubbard, Charles M. O’Donnell, a member of the Colorado State Industrial Commission, and James Dalrymple. The courtroom was crowded with spectators, including reporters, insurance representatives, and both the president and chairman of Victor-American Fuel Company.

Two theories had quickly developed in the press to explain the explosion, both unfounded. The first idea mooted in the papers, that an “Austrian” had sabotaged the mine as part of the German war effort, was dismissed within two days. The second speculation absorbed much time and interest at the inquest. This idea—that sparks from the electric cutting

machine working the face of the slope had ignited the blast—was refuted on May 8 when King, Dalrymple, Cameron, several other inspectors, and Joseph Gaymay,

Above: The Evening Picketwire (Trinidad), April 28, 1917

The Chronicle-News (Trinidad), April 28, 1917



the mine's chief electrician, reached the machine and found its electrical cable disconnected, meaning that no spark could have come from that source. Attention then shifted in the direction of the explosion, which appeared to emerge from the Seventh South Entry.

The mine's surviving fire boss, Tom Davis, accompanied by Deputy Mine Inspector J. W. Graham, found the body of the Hastings mine inspector, David Reese, in Seventh South on the morning of May 10. Around Reese's body Davis found the parts of his Wolf key-lock safety lamp. Asked if he thought the lamp had been blown apart, Davis replied that "it was not blown at all. . . . It had been taken apart." The base of the lamp unscrewed from the glass portion. All who testified to the point agreed that the lamp could not have been torn apart by the explosion. It had been disassembled by someone before the explosion, and no other body lay within a hundred feet of Reese's.

One of the effects of an explosion is that it gathers force as it travels, making its point of origin something like the eye of a storm; another is that the blast cokes the coal facing the explosion in the walls of the mine. Both features are excellent indicators of the original point of an explosion. Davis and Graham agreed that Reese's body was in good condition compared to others, being only slightly burned. The glass in his lamp was not even cracked. Having observed the pattern of coking, Davis testified that "the explosion went both ways from where we found the body. . . . The explosion started with the lamp."

An early revelation at the inquest was that Coroner Bradley had discovered matches in the clothing of four of the bodies. Although no match was found at the site of the explosion, Reese had twenty-two of them on his person. Asked what precautions his company took to prevent matches from being carried into the mine, Cameron admitted that "Mr. Reese was the Mine Inspector and also the Instructor of Safety, and we considered that he was a safe man, and we didn't search him."

After deliberating for ninety minutes that evening, the six miners who constituted the coroner's jury found that "the cause of the explosion was by the opening of a Safety lamp, by some person; the evidence shows that the lamp was found near the body of the deceased, David Reese."

*On through the Hell-rimmed hole he creeps,  
Where the mules are lying in six-team heaps;  
Dodging the falls by quick-turned leaps— . . .*

**D**ave Reese, 34, Victor-American's mine inspector and safety educator, was a highly regarded member of his profession. At the inquest, James Dalrymple, the state's inspector of coal mines, declared "that there isn't a man outside of his immediate family that thought more of Mr. Reese than I do." Superintendent Cameron testified at the

same proceeding that Reese "was considered a very competent man, by the State Officials and by our company." Trinidad's *Chronicle-News* said that he "was one of the best known men in the coal mining industry of Southern Colorado and was considered a most capable mine inspector," and Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* stated that "Mr. Reese was reckoned as a trusted and valued employee by the coal corporation. He leaves behind a widow and two children, Arthur, 11 years old, and Marion, 3."

So what was Reese thinking? Men with decades of experience in coal mining struggled to understand. At the inquest, Deputy Inspector Henry King, who had frequently inspected Hastings No. 2 and considered it "a very gaseous mine," acknowledged that Reese had the legal right to carry and use a key-lock lamp, but King also declared that

"a man properly instructed and knowing conditions as he knew them, shouldn't have done what he did." Asked by a juror why Reese would take the lamp apart and try to light it, Victor-American's district superintendent, D. J. Griffith, replied: "That is something that I can't make out, what made him to do such a thing. Of course we thought the lamp was absolutely safe in his hands, he was a good, careful man, and absolutely practical."

And Reese understood the hazards of the Hastings mine and its B seam as more than an abstraction. When the B seam exploded on June 18, 1912, killing twelve, Reese and his helmet crew assisted with the investigation.

Two days before he died, Reese submitted a company report declaring the Hastings mine "in a safe and sanitary condition . . . well ventilated, clear of standing gas."



*Mine inspector David H. Reese  
inadvertently caused the explosion.  
Rocky Mountain News,  
April 29, 1917.*

He wrote that Seventh South was “a great deal easier to keep clear of standing gas now than was [possible] before having the increase in the ventilation. In general safety conditions in all parts of the mine are looking good. . . .” Did an overconfident Reese drop his guard? Here, perhaps, enters the part that the company’s officials and the state’s inspectors played in abetting what proved to be a deadly laxity.

Certainly the company deserved credit for its efforts to promote safety. In 1915 the state mine inspector noted that “the Victor-American Fuel Company has been using electric lamps at the Hastings mine [for] four or five years”—at least six years before being required to do so. In 1910 Victor-American had also been among the first companies in the nation to create and deploy a mine rescue railroad car, only a few months after the U.S. Bureau of Mines itself. The company also employed safety inspectors, such as David Reese.

At the inquest, Deputy Inspector King said that “I believe the provisions of the law as far as I have been able to see from my investigations were complied with in every particular in the Hastings mine,” while noting that “it is almost impossible to get a mine up to the extent of the law in every respect.” Still, the inquest testimony of James Cameron, eight years Hastings’ superintendent and with thirty-nine years in coal mining, is revealing of at least the limits of management’s awareness and control. When the discussion turned to how the deadly matches got into the mine, it emerged that Cameron did not even know that taking matches underground was illegal. Asked three times if there were a state law or penalty for carrying matches underground, he finally conceded, “if it is in the state law I have overlooked it.”

The question of who exactly was responsible for defending the mine against matches got batted back and forth between company and state officials throughout the inquest. Asked whether it was the superintendent’s duty to file a complaint against a miner found with matches, Chief Inspector Dalrymple answered that “the complaint is made by the inspector . . . . It is the duty of the mine foreman to notify the inspector and he takes what action he thinks necessary.” Later asked for his interpretation, King responded: “If the Mine Foreman or any official of the company find matches on any individual in the mine, they should notify me or the Chief Inspector, and the Chief notifies me, and it is my duty to see that they are prosecuted.”

As previously noted, however, prosecutions did not necessarily follow. With punishment haphazard, so was exclusion of matches from the mine. When the attorney general reminded Cameron that four of his men had carried matches

underground on the fatal day, Cameron replied: “Four out of 121 isn’t a very big percent.” It was big enough.

This ethos seems to have infected David Reese to the extent that he took a wholly unjustifiable chance in an absolutely unforgiving environment. It proved to be the last chance for the one-chance men of the Hastings No. 2.

*It’s a hundred to one chance never a man  
has lived for a moment after the blast—  
But the mine inspector’s a One-Chance Man,  
and he follows that chance to the very last;  
And the women pray at the mouth of the pit  
as the dead file out so mournfully— . . .*

Crews recovered bodies episodically at Hastings for the rest of the year. The *Chronicle-News* reported that at the end of August miners found the remains of Fire Boss Millard under “a great mass of wreckage.” On November 22, almost seven months after the blast, a crew brought out the body of thirty-one-year-old Theros Vihos. He was the 115th victim brought to the surface and the last recovery reported by the newspapers. If so, six remained underground, including the pit boss, David Williams.

The Hastings explosion—the worst mining accident in Colorado’s history—killed 121 men and 23 mules. It left 62 widows and 141 fatherless children. Beyond the heartbreak of their suffering, the miners’ survivors constituted the first great test of the state’s new workers’ compensation law. Colorado’s coal mines self-insured up to \$300,000 through the Employers’ Mutual Insurance Company. In May the state industrial commission ruled that the accident required \$147,650 in compensation. Dependents of U.S. citizens received \$2,500, the equivalent of up to three years’ salary, while non-citizens received \$800. Deceased miners without dependents were awarded burial expenses of \$75.

Since Reese was classed a manager rather than a laborer, the annual coal mine inspector’s report categorized the Hastings explosion as “fault of owner.” That was an assessment to which Victor-American’s president, G. F. Bartlett, could not entirely subscribe. In his annual report for 1917, he wrote that “the cause of the explosion was, undoubtedly, the carelessness and violation of mine regulations on the part of one of the company’s employees.”

Inspector Dalrymple offered no direct recommendations concerning the Hastings disaster in his annual report of

1917. What exactly could he recommend to prevent a mine's inspector and safety instructor from violating state law in three different ways to detonate his own mine? Unfortunately, it would require yet another disaster, two years later, to solve at least one part of the problem.

On August 18, 1919, eighteen men died in an explosion at the Oakdale mine in Huerfano County caused either by a defective safety lamp carried by the fire boss or by a match struck by the fire boss or a nearby miner who had matches in his possession. "In any event the disaster was caused by carelessness and the Violation of the Coal Mining Laws, which prohibit the carrying of matches into a mine."

Finally, in September 1919, Dalrymple issued an order prohibiting the use of key-locked safety lamps in Colorado's underground coal mines:

After December 31, 1919, ONLY Koehler and Wolfe types of safety lamps will be allowed for testing purposes in the coal mines of Colorado. They shall be magnetically locked during working hours, and in such condition that they can be lighted by the igniter without taking the lamp apart.

*Listens and prays for a human cry;  
Feels of the dead as he passes them by—  
Feels for the tunk of a human heart,  
where the forms stretch silently;*

The final casualty of the Hastings mine explosion was the Hastings mine—and thus, indirectly at least, the town itself. In November, seven months after the explosion, the *Picketwire* reported that "the mine has been practically unworked since the disaster. It is only recently that an effort has been made to get out some coal. The production is only about 40 tons a day." In his annual report for 1917, issued at the end of the year, President Bartlett reported that "the company has already expended \$127,796.06 in clearing up and reopening the mine," but it never recovered.

The Hastings mine averaged 169,000 tons per annum from 1913 through 1916, with a peak production of 218,000 tons in 1916. Due to the explosion, the mine produced only 74,000 tons in 1917, and would never reach even that figure again. In 1920 a new development called Hastings No. 5 extracted 73,000 tons, but that would be the most the town produced after the explosion. The mere 7,000 tons extracted in 1923 would be the last recorded at Hastings, which had produced more than 1,880,000 tons of coal for

Victor-American since its incorporation in 1909.

Other factors contributed to the mine's demise besides the explosion. A company report recorded that even before the disaster, "oil production lessened the amount of coal used by the railroads, while about 1913 the use of reverberatory furnaces increased to the extent that the demand for coke materially lessened." But in contrast, Victor-American's nearby Delagua mine remained in operation until May 4, 1939.

By then Hastings was essentially a ghost. A county business directory claimed that the town still had a population of a thousand in 1925, but listed only seventy-five as miners. By 1929 the same source gave Hastings' population as three hundred, with the Victor-American's employees listed being an electrician, a mine surveyor, a tippelman, and a watchman. Hastings was still incorporated as of 1940, but a 1948 business directory lists only one inhabitant. In February 1963, *Denver Post* reporter Fred Baker wrote that "a long row of dilapidated coke ovens and the foundations of a few old buildings are all that remain at the disaster site. Not even a wooden sign marks the location on the dusty road."

*Follows a hope however slim;  
Maps a path through the chaos grim  
For the rescue gangs who must follow him—  
God! What a man a man can be!*

The absence of a marker was rectified that same year. At 11 A.M. on August 1, 1963, Colorado Day, about one hundred people gathered to unveil a granite monument commemorating the disaster. Remarks were offered by Fred Hefferly, president of District 15 of the United Mine Workers, Harry Kelsey of the Colorado Historical Society (today's History Colorado), and *Post* reporter Fred Baker. So now, two miles along the dirt road west of the Ludlow Memorial stands a monument to the miners killed that warm and windy April morning a century ago in the Hastings No. 2.

A final irony remains. A Victor-American company report issued two years after the mine closed estimated that 1,374 acres of ground had been mined at Hastings but another 1,765 acres remained to be developed. The deposit that remains may yet be tapped by a Colorado energy company—not to recover its coal, but to extract its relatively clean-burning and high-energy methane gas.

*Facing: Abandoned foundations and coke ovens remain at the Hastings site.*

### For Further Reading

This article is based primarily upon original sources located at History Colorado and in the Western History Collection of the Denver Public Library. These include the Victor-American company records at History Colorado and those bonanza mines of history and statistics, the biennial and annual reports of Colorado's coal mine inspectors. Gerald E. Sherard's *1917 Hastings Mine Disaster, Hastings, Colorado* (Lakewood: G. Sherard, 2015) contains the transcript of testimony from the coroner's inquest. The author is beholden to Las Animas County Coroner Dominic Verquer for permitting him access to the department's inquest records.

Much has been written about Colorado's southern coalfields and western coal mining generally. Central to the questions raised herein is James Whiteside's *Regulating Danger: The Struggle for Mine Safety in the Rocky Mountain Coal Industry*. Many works have been written about the coalfield war, the foremost being Thomas Andrews' *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*, while David Wolff addresses many of the same questions in *Industrializing the Rockies: Growth, Competition and Turmoil in the Coalfields of Colorado and Wyoming, 1868–1914*. For an excellent summary of energy development in Colorado see Lee Scamehorn's *High Altitude Energy: A History of Fossil Fuels in Colorado*. For more on Victor-American Fuel Company and its leader, see Darrell Munsell's *From Redstone to Ludlow: John Cleaveland Osgood's Struggle against the United Mine Workers of America*. And for a great and nuanced look at those on the ground, and under it, see Rick Clyne's *Coal People: Life in Southern Colorado's Company Towns, 1890–1930*.

Damon Runyon's poem "The One-Chance Men" appeared in *Rhymes of the Firing Line* (New York: Desmond Fitzgerald, 1912).

**COLORADO HERITAGE EXTRAS**  
To see period news coverage of the disaster and a complete list of victims—including every victim's age, ethnicity, occupation, marital status, and number of children—go to [medium.com/Colorado-Heritage-Extras](https://medium.com/Colorado-Heritage-Extras).

ERIC L. CLEMENTS, who grew up near the northern coal field in Boulder, is a professor of history at Southeast Missouri State University. Originally trained in the history of the American West, he has written on resource extraction, transportation, tourism, and historic preservation in the region. These days he enjoys researching both mining and maritime history.



A granite memorial was erected in 1963.

Photos by the author.

# In Starkville, a Small Certified Local Government with Big Hopes

BY JONATHAN RAAB,  
PRESERVATION COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

*Deep in southern Colorado, the town of Starkville is far smaller than it was in its coal-mining heyday. But the people there see the past as something worth preserving.*

**F**ounded in 1865 as San Pedro and renamed for a local mine owner, Starkville served as a coal camp for a succession of companies. In 1896, Colorado Fuel & Iron leased the mine from the Santa Fe railroad. CF&I's operations stretched across Colorado—at one time employing more Coloradans than any other company. Starkville soon became a town, and its coal fueled mills and smelters across the West.

Although coal brought economic opportunity, it also brought disaster. On October 8, 1910, the mine exploded when a spark from a short circuit ignited the ever-present coal dust in the air. Fifty-six miners lost their lives. When rescuers opened up parts of the mine that had been cut off in the blast, they found bodies surrounded by empty pails. As the miners had waited for rescue, they'd sat down to a meal. One by one, they died from the effects of "afterdamp," a deadly combination of gas and dust.

As mining operations drew down, so too did Starkville's population.

"At one point in time we had 3,000 people," says Mayor Crick Carlisle. "But now we're down to about 100." Census figures put the number even lower. "When I came into office, we had \$0 in our bank account." But after attending a preservation "roundtable" event sponsored by History Colorado, Carlisle realized that economic opportunity lay within Starkville's historic resources.

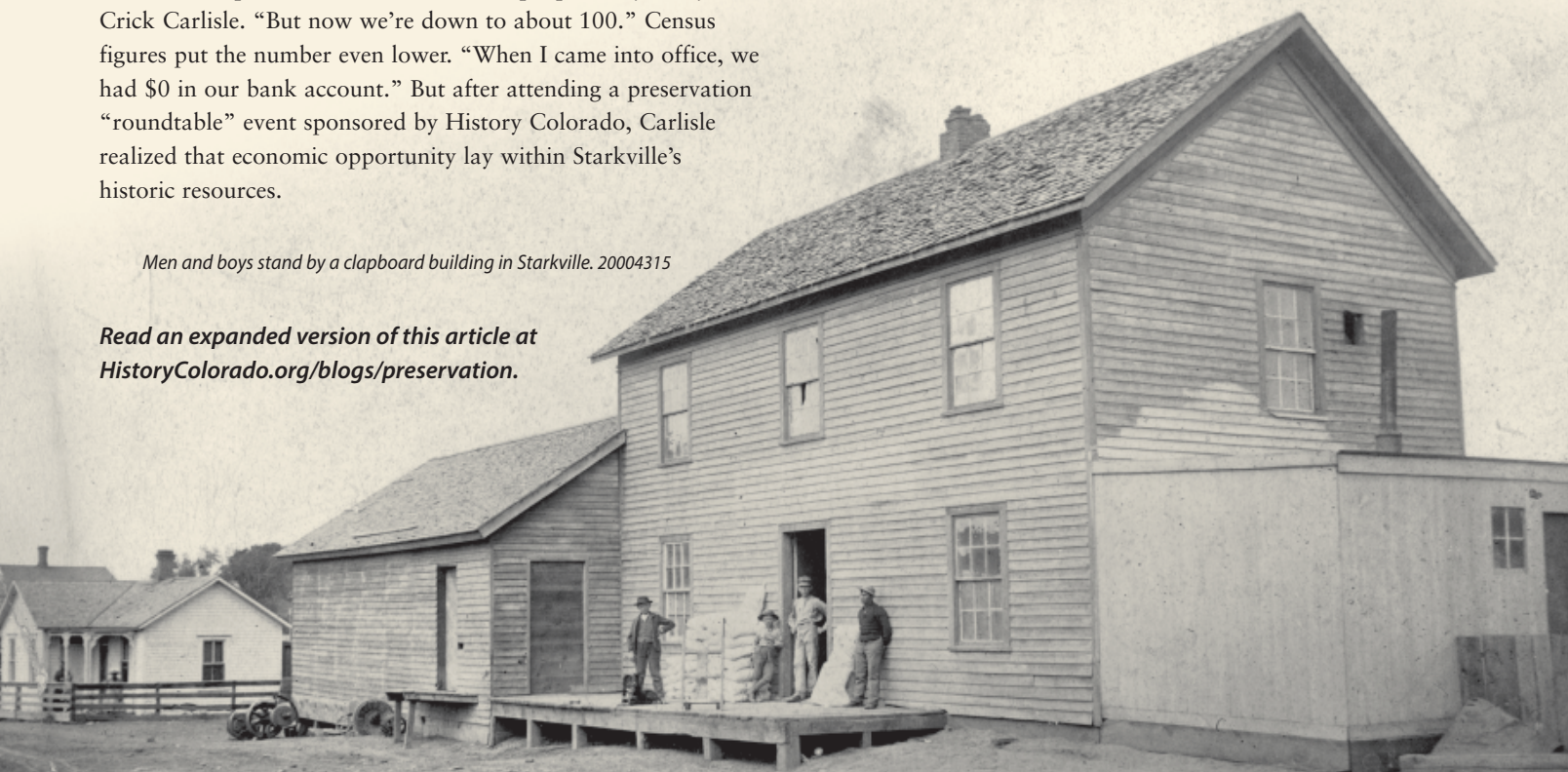
**C**rick learned about incentives for historic preservation—such as tax credits for work on historic properties, getting properties listed in the State or National Register, grants from the State Historical Fund, and more. "We were advised that a CLG was the shortest path to get more funding. We could apply for funds from more foundations." When Starkville earned its Certified Local Government status and accompanying recognition from the National Park Service, Carlisle and volunteers took steps to preserve their most prominent resource—Central Starkville School, a stone structure built in 1881.

The Starkville CLG received a grant from History Colorado's State Historical Fund for a Historic Structure Assessment of the school's physical condition. They also garnered \$40,000 from the Department of Local Affairs for a feasibility study. Now, with construction documents and technical plans in hand, the people of Starkville are one step closer to saving the building. Another treasure might be next, as the town explores a State Historical Fund acquisition grant to save the original assayer's office. Many homes more than fifty years old are eligible for historic designation as well.

Starkville has proven that even a small community can have a lot of history worth saving.

*Men and boys stand by a clapboard building in Starkville. 20004315*

*Read an expanded version of this article at [HistoryColorado.org/blogs/preservation](http://HistoryColorado.org/blogs/preservation).*



## New Listings

*In the National Register of Historic Places and Colorado State Register of Historic Properties*

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation’s historic places worthy of preservation.

### National Register of Historic Places

#### Department of Energy (DOE) Grand Junction Office Grand Junction

This 25.2-acre complex along the Gunnison River originated in 1943 as the national headquarters for acquisition of domestic uranium used in the development of the first atomic bombs under the Manhattan Project. The complex then transitioned to the principal office of the Atomic Energy Commission (DOE’s predecessor) for the exploration for and acquisition of uranium used in nuclear weapons during the Cold War (1947–70).

#### Hovenweep National Monument Cortez vicinity

The National Park Service initiated this nomination, which the Colorado and Utah State Historic Preservation Offices supported. The multi-state Monument district was administratively listed in the National Register in 1966, but this new nomination is the first comprehensive documentation justifying its national level of significance in the areas of exploration/settlement, religion, architecture, and archaeology. In addition to its role in the Archaic through Ancestral Puebloan Pueblo III periods (roughly 6,000 BP to AD 1290), it has a more recent legacy stretching from 1874, when photographer William Henry Jackson first publicly used the term “Hovenweep,” until 1962, when the current Monument boundary was established—signaling the end of the time when multiple groups used the land to raise livestock.



Photo courtesy Jacob W. Frank, National Park Service

#### Santa Fe Trail Mountain Route—Bent’s New Fort Lamar vicinity

William Bent built his Bent’s New Fort in the winter of 1852–53. The fort served as a trading post and the Upper Arkansas Indian Agency until 1859; the U.S. Army leased it from 1860 to ’66. Bent was married to Owl Woman and allied with her father,

White Buffalo, Cheyenne Keeper of the Arrows. Bent’s New Fort is important for its role in transportation, commerce, military and social history, and exploration/settlement, and is associated with the Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail Multiple Property Documentation Form. On November 28, 1864, Colonel John M. Chivington led his soldiers from the fort to the murderous Sand Creek Massacre at a peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho encampment. For more information, see [nps.gov/safe/learn/historyculture/bents-new-fort.htm](http://nps.gov/safe/learn/historyculture/bents-new-fort.htm) and [nps.gov/sand/index.htm](http://nps.gov/sand/index.htm).

#### Other National Register listings:

- E. A. Schlichter House, Fort Collins
- Fort Logan National Cemetery, Denver
- Glen Eyrie (Boundary Increase), Colorado Springs
- Graves Camp Rural Historic District, Wellington vicinity
- Head Lettuce Day–Collegiate Peaks Stampede Rodeo Grounds, Buena Vista
- Marble Jailhouse, Marble
- Pine Hall, Granite
- Samuel Dyer House, Castle Rock
- Samuel and Albina Romano Residence, Pleasant View
- Sand Creek Massacre Site (Boundary Increase), Eads vicinity
- Smith-Eslick Cottage Court, Grand Lake
- U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building, Denver

### State Register of Historic Properties

**Black Forest Community Church**  
Colorado Springs

**Dransfeldt Building**  
Englewood

**4 Bar 4 Ranch Stagecoach Stop and Hotel**  
Fraser vicinity

### Do you know this structure?

- |                 |                       |  |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Where is it? | 2. When was it built? | 3. What is it?                                   |
| a) Padroni      | a) 1886               | a) Converted water tower                         |
| b) Parlin       | b) 1900               | b) Fire watchtower                               |
| c) Pierce       | c) 1939               | c) Lighthouse                                    |
| d) Pueblo       | d) 1952               | d) Only remaining feature from Victorian mansion |

Answers on page 30



## Do you know this structure?

Continued from page 29

BY HEATHER PETERSON,  
NATIONAL AND STATE REGISTER HISTORIAN

Answers: d) Pueblo, c) 1939, c) Lighthouse

A lighthouse in Colorado? Although smaller in scale and not a typical lighthouse, this structure has provided a whimsical feeling to the Pueblo Zoo’s Monkey Moat area since 1939.

In the 1890s, Pueblo’s zoos consisted of penned indigenous animals in local parks. In 1920 these were consolidated into one thirty-acre zoo at the City Park consisting of several big pens for large animals and small iron cages for monkeys, small mammals, and lions.

During the Great Depression, the New Deal provided work for residents through such agencies as the Public Works Administration (PWA), Civil Works Administration (CWA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Projects around the country resulted from these agencies’ efforts—including the Pueblo Zoo’s building project between 1933 and 1940. The project incorporated the early-1900s ideas of Carl Hagenbeck, German zoo pioneer, who introduced the idea of placing animals in more natural settings like moats, artificial mountains, and pit enclosures instead of barred cages or pens.

The builders used red cilium uncut sandstone, quarried twenty-five miles west of Pueblo, to construct the zoo’s new features, which included a bird house, animal house, bear pits, light posts, rock wall, mountain, monkey house, monkey moat, and lighthouse. The Monkey Moat is a sandstone island surrounded by a stone moat and two-foot stone wall. Workers landscaped the island and built a miniature water wheel and the wood and sandstone lighthouse. Underwater moat lights and lights in the lighthouse illuminate the exhibit at night.

Although the bear pits are no longer used—since under modern standards they’re not considered acceptable zoo-bear habitation—the remainder of the zoo



complex continues to house various animals and is open to visitors year-round. The National Register of Historic Places added the zoo complex to its list in 1995; the zoo has since received State Historical Fund grants for restoration.

*Inset: Carl Hagenbeck.  
Courtesy Library of Congress.*

### Good to Know

National or State Register listed properties may be eligible for investment tax credits for approved rehabilitation projects. Listed properties may also be eligible to compete for Colorado State Historical Fund grants. These grants may be used for acquisition and development, education, and survey and planning projects. The next nomination submission deadline is June 3. For information, call 303/866-3392.

For more about these and all National and State Register properties in Colorado, visit [historycolorado.org/oaahp/national-state-registers](http://historycolorado.org/oaahp/national-state-registers).



# The Ute Indian Museum Expansion Project

History Colorado expresses its sincere gratitude to the following organizations, which have contributed their support for new exhibits, education programs, and the grounds at the Ute Indian Museum as part of the expansion project.

**\$50,000 and up**

Boettcher Foundation

**\$25,000 and up**

The City of Montrose  
El Pomar Foundation  
Montrose County  
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

**\$10,000 and up**

Alpine Bank  
Colorado Yurt Company  
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Alpine Lumber  
Bank of Colorado  
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Hampton Inn Montrose  
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Rocky Beach Properties  
Western Colorado Friends of the Himalayas

**\$250 and up**

Chamberlin Architects  
Grand Design  
Montrose Memorial Hospital Medical Staff  
Museum of the Mountain West  
Niko  
NuVista Federal Credit Union  
Rotary Club of Cedaredge

*For more about the Ute Indian Museum expansion, see pages 14–15 and visit [HistoryColorado.org/museums](http://HistoryColorado.org/museums).*

Exhibit renderings courtesy EDX Exhibits, Seattle



Thank you to Alpine Bank, Lead Sponsor of the June 10 Ute Indian Museum Public Re-Opening Celebration.





83.495.5.100

George Harvey, Jr. was a wholesale leather glove dealer—but his true passion lay in the Colorado mountainscape. Harvey was one of the Colorado Mountain Club's earliest and most loyal members from the organization's inception in 1912, serving on its board of directors and later as its president in 1921–22. He was also a skilled amateur photographer, and he dared to bring photography to peaks and ridgelines that had likely never before been exposed to the camera's lens. History Colorado holds seven albums of Harvey's photography of Colorado Mountain Club expeditions from 1913 to 1923, including this stunning image of climbers on a mountaintop in Pitkin County in 1917.

***To order a scan or print of this image, or to see more photographs from our collection, visit the History Colorado Online Collection at [h-co.org/collections](http://h-co.org/collections).***


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**Pike's Stockade**  
Six miles east of La Jara, near Sanford,  
just off Highway 136  
*Open:* Memorial Day to October 1, or by appointment.

**Trinidad History Museum**  
312 East Main Street, Trinidad  
719/846-7217, TrinidadHistoryMuseum.org

**Ute Indian Museum**  
17253 Chipeta Road, Montrose  
*Expanded museum reopens June 10!*  
970/249-3098, UteIndianMuseum.org

## THE COLORADO ENCYCLOPEDIA

Did you know? More than 100 *Colorado Heritage* articles have been adapted for the *Colorado Encyclopedia*—a new online resource where you can find a wealth of information about Colorado history. What's in this twenty-first-century reference work on the Centennial State? Find out at [ColoradoEncyclopedia.org](http://ColoradoEncyclopedia.org).

## THE COLORADO BOOK REVIEW

Interested in reading online reviews of new publications about Colorado? **The Colorado Book Review and New Publications List** is an online journal devoted to new Colorado nonfiction. The site is cosponsored by History Colorado and the Center for Colorado Studies and housed at the Denver Public Library. The Colorado Book Review lists new nonfiction works about Colorado and provides reviews of selected recent publications. Check out the latest! It's all at [history.denverlibrary.org/center-colorado-studies](http://history.denverlibrary.org/center-colorado-studies).

Send any new books or booklets about Colorado, for listing and possible review, to:

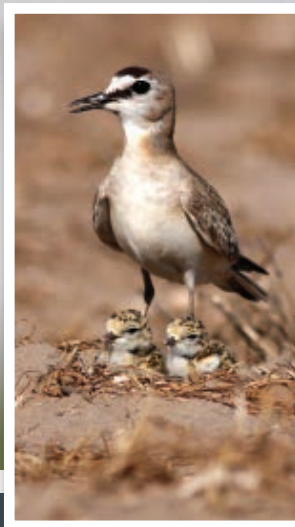
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# 28-30

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**RSVP by March 31**

Join birder Norm Lewis as we head east to the little city of Karval for the Mountain Plover Festival. This fascinating bird is just one of the beauties you'll get to enjoy as migrations bring many wings into the state. With presentations, walks, beautiful views and meals to keep us nourished, the festival is a real treat for anyone who loves the natural world. While we're heading east, we'll take the opportunity to visit some of the smaller history museums in the area. The mornings will be early, but Nature keeps her own clock. Lincoln County awaits!