

# COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES NOMINATION FORM

**SECTION I**

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**Name of Property**

Historic Name Aldrich House

Other Names The Big House

**Address of Property**

address not for publication

Street Address 901 Acequia Drive

City Monte Vista County Rio Grande Zip 81144

**Present Owner of Property**

(for multiple ownership, list the names and addresses of each owner on one or more continuation sheets)

Name Donald Shank

Address 1474 Main Avenue, Suite 223 Phone 970-259-9498

City Durango State Colorado Zip 81301-5182

**Owner Consent for Nomination**

(attach signed consent from each owner of property - see attached form)

**Preparer of Nomination**

Name Donald Shank (additional material by OAHP staff) Date February 2003

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address 1474 Main Avenue, Suite 223 Phone 970-259-9498

City Durango State Colorado Zip 81301-5182

**FOR OFFICIAL USE:**

Site Number 5RN.823

\_\_\_\_\_ Nomination Received

Senate # 5 House # 60

5/16/2003 Review Board Recommendation  
 Approval  Denial

6/11/2003 CHS Board State Register Listing  
 Approved  Denied

**Certification of Listing:** President, Colorado Historical Society

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

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**SECTION II**

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**Local Historic Designation**

Has the property received local historic designation?

no

yes ---  individually designated  designated as part of a historic district

Date designated \_\_\_\_\_

Designated by \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of municipality or county)

**Use of Property**

Historic Domestic/single dwelling

Current Vacant/Not In Use

**Original Owner** Chauncey & Euphemia Aldrich

Source of Information The San Luis Valley Graphic, 10 January 1885 [cited in The Colorado Prospector Vol.17, No. 3 (May 1986), p. 4]

**Year of Construction** 1885

Source of Information The San Luis Valley Graphic, 10 January 1885 [cited in The Colorado Prospector Vol.17, No. 3 (May 1986), p. 4]

**Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer** unknown

Source of Information \_\_\_\_\_

**Locational Status**

Original location of structure(s)

Structure(s) moved to current location

Date of move \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION III**

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**Description and Alterations**

(describe the current and original appearance of the property and any alterations on one or more continuation sheets)

**COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

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**SECTION IV**

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**Significance of Property**

**Nomination Criteria**

- A** - property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history
- B** - property is connected with persons significant in history
- C** - property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan
- D** - property is of geographic importance
- E** - property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history

**Areas of Significance**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Education                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Law                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – historic             | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/ Recreation          | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Heritage                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Military             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exploration/ Settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Geography/ Community Identity      | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Medicine                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Social History       |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       |

**Significance Statement**

(explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**Bibliography**

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**SECTION V**

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**Locational Information**

Lot(s) 11 Block 313 Addition Aldrich Addition

USGS Topographic Quad Map Monte Vista

**Verbal Boundary Description of Nominated Property**

(describe the boundaries of the nominated property on a continuation sheet)

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**SECTION VI**

**Photograph Log for Black and White Photographs**

(prepare a photograph log on one or more continuation sheets)

**SECTION VII**

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION**

**Owner Consent Form**

**Black and White Photographs**

**Color Slides**

**Sketch Map(s)**

**Photocopy of USGS Map Section**

**Optional Materials**

**For Office Use Only**

Property Type:  building(s)  district  site  structure  object  area

Architectural Style/Engineering Type: Late Victorian: Stick

Period of Significance: 1885-1903

Level of Significance:  Local  State  National

Acreage less than one

P.M. NM Township 39N Range 8E Section 31 Quarter Sections SE SW NW

UTM Reference: Zone 13 Easting 398850 Northing 4159840

Site Elevation: 7660 feet

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## DESCRIPTION and ALTERATIONS

The Aldrich House sits at the north edge of Monte Vista. A little distance south of the house is the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad tracks, which historically formed the town's northern boundary. The house is located at the termination of Adams Street (a north-south street) and fronts Acequia Drive (which parallels the railroad tracks before heading east). When construction began on the house in 1885, it was the only building among an expanse of undeveloped acreage. Today the house sits on a small (.69-acre) parcel of land with a commercial/light industrial complex immediately to the west and a mobile home park to the east. The house shares this narrow lot with overgrown native grasses and several large, mature deciduous trees. A four-foot high chain link fence partially encloses the front yard; the back yard quickly slopes down to a plethora of brush, weeds, trees and refuse. The house has been vacant; several windows are broken and some are boarded over. Despite the loss of setting, alterations, and years of neglect, the house retains enough integrity to convey its historical significance.

Designed in the Stick style, the Aldrich House has an asymmetrical composition, an irregular plan, tall proportions, and a steeply pitched cross-gabled roof with decorative trusses in each apex. The 2-1/2 story wood frame house has several small one-story projections (mostly off the rear elevation). A square tower-like section topped with a mansard roof occupies the southwest corner with small gabled roof dormers piercing all four slopes of the mansard roof. Green asphalt shingles cover the multiple roofs, and a brick chimney pierces the south slope. The exterior walls are sheathed in drop siding trimmed with cornerboards. Above the second story windows of the tower and the south and east gables is a wide band of vertically positioned boards framed in horizontal trim. A closer inspection reveals that this decorative band was created by turning the drop siding vertically. Reflecting the various additions and alterations, the foundation is comprised of several different kinds of materials. There is quarry-faced rhyolite ashlar under the main portion of the house and the original kitchen extension, rock-faced ornamental concrete block under the enclosed front porch and its addition at the southwest corner, and a poured concrete foundation wall under the northwest corner addition. There is no visible foundation wall under the addition at the northeast corner. A concrete stucco covers some of the stone and concrete block foundation.

The original windows are tall, narrow, wood frame, double-hung sash with one/one lights. With the exception of the upper story tower windows and those on the rear elevation, the rest of these windows are coupled—closely spaced sharing the same surround. The majority of these windows are topped with a pedimented window head; two exceptions are found on the east elevation where a second story and entrance bay windows are finished with a cornice window head. Nearly three quarters of the glazing is original, and the windows still retain their cast-iron counterweights. The majority of the windows that punctuate the walls of the several additions are small horizontal sliders. There is a small attic window behind the trusswork at the apex of the south and east gables; its surround includes a raking cornice that mimics the steep pitch of the roof.

The house faces south and this façade is comprised of three parts, each with its own distinctive roofline. The gable end with its decorative trusswork contains a coupled window on each of the two floors with a smaller window in the attic. The tower section with its mansard roof has a single window on the upper level and a small gabled roof dormer window punctuating the slope of the mansard roof. A single-story truncated roof section (an enclosed porch) projects out from the wall of the tower with a smaller shed roof extension off the west. There is a narrow horizontal band of three windows on the south and east walls of the hipped roof section.

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The west side of the house also presents a similar irregular profile. A very small rectangular window pierces the west wall of the shed roof extension of the enclosed porch. The tower section has a coupled window on the main floor, a single tall narrow window on the upper floor (double hung with a transom), and a small gabled roof dormer window within the mansard roof. The gabled roof portion with its decorative trusswork has two coupled windows on each floor. The upper-story coupled windows are double hung with a transom (like the one on the tower). Projecting outward from the northwest corner is a single story addition with windows piercing the south and west sides.

The north side (rear) of the house is comprised of the original, offset, single-story, polygonal roofed kitchen with two flat roof additions extending east and west. There is a small horizontal slider window positioned high on the wall of the northwest addition. One original double hung window pierces the beveled wall of the kitchen. (Its counterpart on the west side is obscured by the addition.) Located beneath the original polygonal-shaped kitchen is a root cellar accessed by two wooden bulkhead doors. Stone steps descend into the hand-dug cellar with its dirt floors and crudely built shelves for food storage. A stuccoed chimney pierces the polygonal roof of the kitchen, while a tall metal stove pipe (ventilation for the water heaters below the house) rises up from the ground. There is a square 6-light window on the northeast "mudroom" addition. Above the multiple roofed construction, the second story has a tall narrow window (double-hung with transom) and a door. A wooden staircase accesses the roof of the mudroom and a wooden walkway where another smaller flight of stairs leads to the landing and the door. Unlike the northwest corner addition, the mudroom (northeast) addition does not extend beyond the east wall of the original house. Several wooden steps lead to a wooden stoop and a solid wooden door. Two 6-light windows are positioned next to the door. On the wall of the main house next to this entrance is an unusual diamond-shaped window with a wide board surround that originally illuminated the landing for the interior staircase.

The east side contains a prominent secondary entrance marked by a small truncated hipped roof projection. A concrete stoop and stairs with a wrought iron railing leads to the paneled door that faces south. A triangular knee brace with a pendant supports the roof that extends over the doorway. A coupled window sharing a cornice window head fills the east wall of the projecting entry bay. Coupled windows prevail on this elevation, with two in the upper story and one set on the main floor. Like the south façade, a small attic window is visible behind the trusswork in the apex of the gable.

The interior of the house has ten-foot high ceilings with lathe and plaster walls. All doorways and windows are trimmed with 1x4 pine surrounds with chamfered edges. Most of the ornate brass hardware remains in the form of doorknobs, hinges, striker plates and window locks. There are four inter-connecting rooms on the main floor—a parlor, dining room, living room, and a game room. There was a swinging door between the parlor and the dining room. The door is gone, but the pivot pins remain. The parlor also leads to the living room, where a heavy ornate fabric curtain once separated the two rooms. The opening between these two rooms was enlarged by removing most of the dividing wall; the outline of the original wall is still visible on the oak floor. Moving through the living room towards the rear of the house through two pocket doors is the game room. The pocket doors have ornate brass hardware and are trimmed with a raked cornice molding. The upstairs contained four bedrooms, one of which was a nursery entered through a doorway off the master bedroom.

A circa 1900 photograph indicates that the house has undergone several alterations over the years. The photograph shows the mansard tower roof with wrought iron cresting above, a bracketed cornice below; and sheathed in square wood shingles with a wide band of saw-tooth shingles. Asphalt shingles were installed on the tower roof in the 1990s, and it is not known when the cresting and brackets were removed. (A small portion of the cresting was discovered in the attic.) The original wood shingle roof on

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the house lies underneath an old layer of asphalt shingles. Much of the elaborate corbelled brick chimney is missing. The south face of the house had a truncated hipped roof porch with an elaborate matching frieze and balustrade. This was enclosed and enlarged with a small shed roof extension (resting on an ornamental concrete block foundation) on the west side. The entrance on the east side lost its original stoop and stairs framed by an elaborate balustrade with a large square newel post; a simple concrete stoop and wrought iron railing serve as a replacement.

The rear elevation has undergone substantial alterations with two additions to the kitchen and an interior wall bisecting the original kitchen space. (See floor plans). The window on the northwest side of the kitchen was covered over when the west corner addition was constructed. Conversion of the home into apartments in the early 1950s caused more alterations to the building. The "grand" staircase that accessed the upper floor was removed; the stairwell ceiling was filled in and a kitchen built into the space. The outside set of stairs and the elevated walkway on the roof of the mudroom addition at the northeast corner became the only access to the upper floor.

The house was originally built with an unusual eight-fireplace configuration that provided the only source of heat. Four were located on the main floor (in the living room, dining room, parlor and game room) and four directly above on the second floor (at the top of the stairs, the nursery and two bedrooms). Each fireplace backs up to the others on that floor, forming a square turned 45 degrees. Today, only three fireplaces remain intact (living room, game room, and master bedroom), although a roof inspection confirms that the eight separate flues are still present within the massive chimney. Local residents and historians have not seen another fireplace arrangement such as this in Monte Vista or the San Luis Valley. It is uncertain whether this was a common construction practice in the Midwest as C. S. Aldrich patterned this house after his home in Bloomington, Illinois.

The home was constructed without indoor plumbing. An outhouse was located down the slope of the backyard, hidden except for the roof. The family called it "cheops" for the Egyptian pyramid (Barr 2003). Nothing remains of it today, was down the slope far back of the house and hidden except for the roof. During the 1950s conversion to apartments, two full bathrooms were created in the house, one on each floor.

Four-Sided Fireplace Layout  
Main Floor

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Footprint of Original House

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Footprint of House -- 1905

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Footprint of House -- 1950 to present

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Floorplan of Upper Level -- 1885 to 1950

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Floorplan of Upper Level -- 1950 to present

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## SIGNIFICANCE

The Aldrich House is eligible under criterion A for its association with the settlement of Monte Vista. The 1885 two-story frame house was one of the earliest residences constructed in the Monte Vista area. The house is also eligible under criterion B for its association with Chauncey S. Aldrich (1833-1909), one of the founders of the town of Henry, which would soon be renamed Monte Vista. As manager of the Henry Town and Land Company and founder/publisher of the second newspaper, Aldrich set the "temperate" tone for the early settlement of the town.

Monte Vista began as a railroad siding called Lariat, established in 1881 by the Denver & Rio Grande Railway as it extended its railhead westward from Alamosa to Del Norte. Early settlers to the area who established farms between the two towns petitioned the Denver & Rio Grande to construct a siding at the halfway point. Henry Taylor paid \$200.55 for the southwest quarter of section 31 (which would later become Monte Vista's original town site) from the United States Land Office in July 1882. Taylor sold this parcel to Maurice Pelton in November of that same year for \$1,000. Pelton had the land surveyed and platted and planned to use the name Lariat, already the name for the siding and post office. However, Pelton's wife became homesick and he decided to sell out. One source states that he gave a warranty deed for the land to H. J. Aldrich; while another source claims that he sold the Lariat town site to the Colorado Loan and Trust Company of which T. C. Henry was president. The first mention of Lariat in the *Colorado Business Directory* appears in 1884 [based on information gathered the previous year] with an entry describing it as a post office in Rio Grande County, 16 miles west of Alamosa. The only business listed is L. L. (Lillian) Fassett, postmaster and general merchant.

Theodore C. (T.C.) Henry organized the Colorado Loan and Trust Company, and by April of 1884 the company was building "a large hotel to be ready for the spring travel." A land promoter, Henry arrived on the scene looking for a likely spot for a new canal venture. T. C. brought potential investors from the Midwest, "mainly Illinois people," on train excursions. In May 1884, the certificate of incorporation for the Henry Town & Land Company was filed. The new town was named Henry, honoring the promoter. Directors of the Company were: T. C. Henry, Henry J. Aldrich and Chauncey S. Aldrich. C. S. Aldrich was vice president and manager of the Henry Town & Land Company.

Chauncey S. Aldrich was born in Plymouth, New York on November 18, 1833. He was admitted to the bar just at the beginning of the Civil War, but abandoned the practice of law to serve in the war. He was captured, spent time in various prisons, including Andersonville, before finally escaping. Believing himself too old at the end of the conflict to go into the practice of law again, he entered the mercantile business. He and his wife Euphemia settled in Bloomington, Illinois where Chauncey and his brother Henry owned and managed "The Aldrich Brothers" for over fifteen years. In 1883, the brothers dissolved their mercantile business and went to Colorado for other opportunities. Henry and his family would eventually settle in Denver, while Chauncey headed to the San Luis Valley.

As manager of the Henry Town & Land Company, Chauncey S. Aldrich, campaigned to make the area conducive to raising a family. He promoted everything from the abolition of saloons with a no-liquor clause in each town deed to the absence of business transactions on the Sabbath. The 1885 directory has an entry for Henry, noting that it was formerly called Lariat. Several more businesses are listed including the Henry Mercantile Co., the *San Luis Valley Graphic* with A. J. [possibly a typo?] Aldrich as editor, a drug store and two blacksmiths. Aldrich started up the newspaper in October 1884, only three months after the town's first paper appeared. Aldrich used the *San Luis Valley Graphic* to promote his

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ideas for the new community and encourage the development of a town with good schools and churches, and no gambling or saloons. Aldrich wanted "to attract the better class of citizens seeking homes in the Rocky Mountains and make Henry like Colorado Springs, a delightful residence place." The *San Luis Valley Graphic* reported that "inquiries came daily from those seeking new land, particularly the area watered by ditches." That year the town boasted 245 residents.

Aldrich's wife, Euphemia and their four children arrived in the fall of 1884. There was no house for them; so they stayed in the Mountain View House, a crude rooming house next to the Henry Mercantile Store which C. S. managed. The January 10, 1885 edition of The *San Luis Valley Graphic* noted that "Capt. Aldrich is getting out the material for a model dwelling house of two stories. He hopes in this house to show how much comfort and convenience can be secured at a moderate cost." The frame house with "a very large complex fireplace and a beautiful staircase" was erected at the north end of Adam Street. It is believed that the house was a duplicate of the home the family had in Bloomington.

The town's promoter, T. C. Henry, had borrowed huge sums of money from the Travelers' Insurance Company of Hartford, Connecticut to build a network of canals that took water from the Rio Grande to irrigate farm land north of the river. When Henry incorporated the town, the town became involved in his canal debts. Whatever his faults, T. C. Henry must be given credit for his vision in building the canal system which opened up farming in the area. In July 1885 the Travelers' Insurance Company foreclosed on Henry's interests. The insurance company asked C. S. Aldrich and their representative, Judge Julius White, to rename the town. They decided on Montevista, which was promptly changed to Monte Vista, meaning "mountain view." The plat of Henry was vacated and a new plat for the town of Monte Vista was created with incorporation papers filed on January 29, 1886. When the Travelers Insurance Company took over the town, they donated one acre of ground for a permanent public school site and named new streets for the officers of the company. The 1887 Colorado Business Directory has an entry for Monte Vista noting that it was formerly called Henry. It is described as a growing town 15 miles southeast of Del Norte with a population of 400.

Aldrich was involved in other projects. He was one of the incorporators of the San Luis Valley Railroad Company, and was on the original board of trustees for the First Methodist Episcopal Church. The church would be built on lots acquired from Aldrich through the Town Company and the Travelers' Insurance Company. The first Methodist minister served as editor for Aldrich's newspaper, the *San Luis Valley Graphic*. Local newspapers reported numerous stories on the wet and dry fight. Aldrich, a dry advocate, was hung in effigy in front of his newspaper office. Aldrich remained editor and publisher of the *Graphic* for many years, eventually selling the paper in 1899. Aldrich was also involved in the beginning of what was to become the Commercial Club, a group of influential businessmen who helped shape Monte Vista's early history and promote its growth. The first San Luis Valley Fair was held in 1886, and although the committee for the first fair seemed to be most of the town, Aldrich was the secretary. He shunned public office, but on several occasions was chosen as a judge for town elections.

In 1903, Aldrich was persuaded to accept the position of commander of Colorado's Soldier's and Sailor's Home. He had been active in the location and establishment of the home, which is located in Homelake three miles east of town. Aldrich sold the home and relocated his family to Homelake. Aldrich served as the fifth commander of the home. He had been in command of the home for six years and was planning on retiring June 1, 1909 and moving with his wife to a small brick home at 531 Second Avenue in Monte Vista, but he died suddenly on May 21, 1909.

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Aldrich sold the house to Frank and Sina Goff in 1903, when he became the commander. The Goffs lived there until 1951 at which time the house was sold to the Reinhardt family. The Reinhardts sold it to Walt and Dorothy Firkins in 1976. Donald Shank purchased the home in 2002.

**1904 Sanborn Map**

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

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Monte Vista Zoning Map

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**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
Monte Vista Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series

**Property Name** Aldrich House

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**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name of Property: Aldrich House  
Location: Monte Vista, Rio Grande County  
Photographer: Donald Shank  
Date of Photographs: 12 January 2003  
Negatives: in possession of Donald Shank

Photo No.                      Photographic Information

- 1            South face and portion of east side (southeast corner); facing NW
- 2            South east corner; facing NW
- 3            South façade; facing N
- 4            South face and west side (southwest corner); facing NE
- 5            West side and rear addition; facing SE
- 6            West side ; facing SE
- 7            Rear addition at northeast corner; facing SW
- 8            East side entry porch; facing W
- 9            West side of rear addition at northwest corner; facing E
- 10          North (rear) with original polygonal kitchen & additions; facing SW
- 11          West side gable trim; facing E
- 12          South face upper story detailing ; facing NW