

# SAN JUAN COURIER

*An Annual Publication of the San Juan County Historical Society*

Summer 2009

Silverton, San Juan County, Colorado

## Groups cooperate, plan to develop railpark/museum in Silverton yard area

By George Niederauer, President,  
Durango Railroad Historical Society

The Durango Railroad Historical Society, a nonprofit corporation, was formed in 2000 for the purpose of preserving railroad history in southwest Colorado by restoring narrow gauge railroad equipment and providing information on the historical importance of railroads in the area.

In 2007 we completed our first project: restoring the Denver & Rio Grande Western (D&RGW) narrow gauge locomotive 315, which ran under its own steam in August 2007—for the first time in 58 years! The project took over six years, more than \$400,000, much labor, and a lot of support, in kind services, and materials. A vision of the society was to create a Railroad Historical Park as a living museum with operating historic railroad equipment and interpretative signs for the benefit of the general public.

Work on the railroad historical park was tabled a couple of years ago because the final stages of restoring the 315 required much more time and effort than anticipated.

For the park we needed a place to put the 315 and at least eight rail cars, that is located with a spur connecting to the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad track, and is accessible to the public. We wanted a pavilion for the 315 and a combination engine house and car shop that had a pit. The building would have space for storing spare parts and supplies, for some machine tools, and for a small wood shop. We would need space for off-street parking and paths with interpretative signs alongside the restored equipment.

We had looked at many places over the years, and had a handful of possible sites along the Durango & Silverton track between the Durango depot and Hermosa. Railroad owner Al Harper showed us several sites that might be available in the valley north of Durango. Because the 315 is owned by the city of Durango and one of these sites was accessible by both a street and a future bike and foot trail, it became our preferred site two years ago when the park project was tabled.

As the process of gaining approval from the City of Durango, obtaining the site, and negotiating the donation of rail from the Galloping Goose Historical Society of Dolores, and fund raising

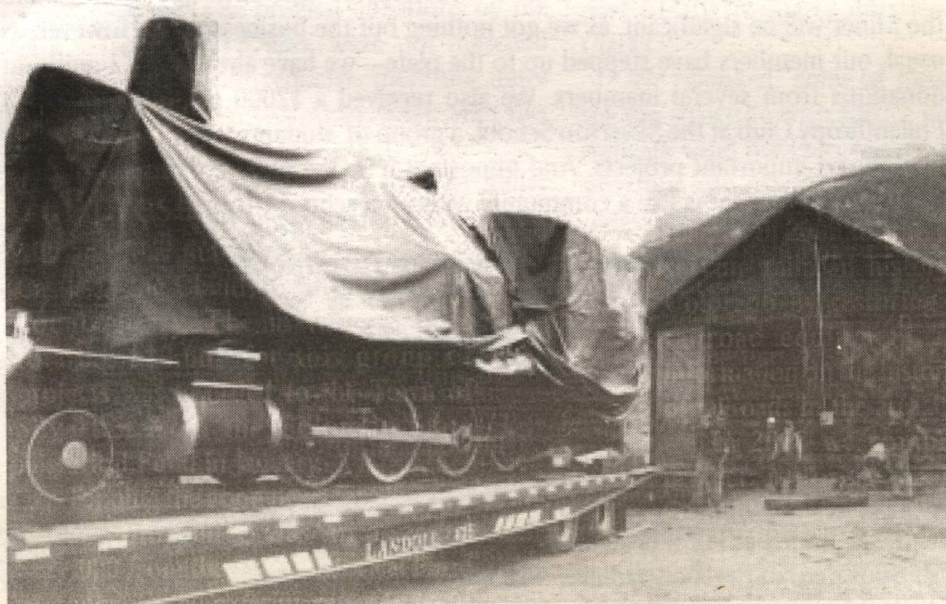
dragged on, we realized that we needed to plan what to do with the 315 in the meantime. One option was to take the 315 back to Santa Rita Park and put it under the pavilion there. Ultimately, the decision was made to find inside storage to protect the restoration work that had been done.

With the possibility of locating our railroad historical park in the county, storing the 315 in Silverton, and possibly putting something else in the new pavilion or converting it to a people pavilion, it was time for me to take these considerations to the city parks department and the city manager. The city was open to all of these ideas, but still would like some piece of railroad equipment on display in the pavilion. With all these complexities we formed an advisory board for the railroad park. We obtained a cross section of community leaders to help guide us.

It would be months and could be years before we had a piece of land and the necessary funding, so we needed to find an expedient solution soon. That lead us to the San Juan County Historical Society and their Silverton Northern engine house. They were open to the idea of storing the 315, but the engine house was being used as storage for many of their artifacts. Also, the track in the engine house and to the old D&RGW yard in Silverton had been pulled up back in 1942. Dennis D'Allesandro (society vice president and chief mechanical officer) and I went to Silverton in July and met with Beverly Rich, chairman of the San Juan County Historical Society, and board member Jerry Hoffer. They were enthusiastic about the possibility of having the 315 in Silverton for one or more winters, and their board quickly approved the idea.

The San Juan County Historical Society owns the motorcar, Casey Jones, and a handful of rail cars from Otto Mears' small railroads, the Silverton Railroad and the Silverton Northern. They have dreamed for some time about putting some track between the Silverton Northern engine house and the Durango & Silverton and of restoring the engine house and using one of its two bays as a car shop for restoring their rail cars. They would use this initiative to store the 315 there to start the development of the area near the rail yard. They would also like to restore and/or reconstruct other

*Continued on next page*



Members of the Durango Railroad Historical Society, the San Juan County Historical Society, and workers from Brian Fullmer Construction, as well as the Durango & Silverton Railroad prepare for the breathtaking descent of locomotive 315 to the level of the track into the Silverton Northern Engine House last September. Mark Esper Photo

## Society becomes owner of the historic Silverton newspaper; published since 1875

On May 1 of 2009, something unusual and perhaps unprecedented in newspaper history occurred when the San Juan County Historical Society acquired the assets of The Silverton Standard and the Miner. Under federal law, a newspaper cannot be a 501(c)3 corporation so it will be operated as a for-profit enterprise by the society.

Society Chairman Beverly Rich, citing the importance of having a newspaper in the small town of Silverton, said that the group will act as a trustee of the operation, with the long-term desire for it to become profitable enough to induce a for-profit owner to purchase the paper.

The paper came as a donation from Randy Miller, owner of Thirteenth Street Media, Inc. of Boulder, Colorado. Miller had purchased the Standard as part of a package that included the Norwood Post and the Telluride Daily Planet in July of last year. Had he not donated the paper, lack of a buyer would have probably lead to a shutdown of the historic publication.

The Standard (as it called locally) has long touted as being the oldest continuously published newspaper and probably the longest continuously operated business on Colorado's western slope.

The Silverton Standard and the Miner is a combination of two papers that date back to the early settlement of Silverton and has been continuously published since that time despite nearly twenty challengers to its position as "Silverton's paper."

The LaPlata Miner was founded and first published by John R. Curry on July 10,

1875. In 1893 the name was changed to the Silverton Weekly Miner. The Silverton Standard was founded and first published on November 2, 1889 by Charles S. Snowden.

On December 11, 1920, the two papers merged although "The Miner" was not included on the flag of the merged publication until several years later.

Miller was the third consecutive non-resident owner and the non-local aspects of the paper had contributed to a steady decline in advertising revenue and paid subscriptions

Award winning Editor Mark Esper agreed to continue in his position for at least two years. During his tenure over the past two years, the paper has received 20 awards in the annual contests sponsored by the Colorado press Association.

To bolster advertising sales, handle bookkeeping, and act as office manager, the society and Esper have hired local designer Gina Carmack as a part-time employee.

While small weekly newspapers have, in the past, included other related activities in their business plan, there is no idea that The Standard will offer job printing or any retail sales at this time.

In the first action taken by the new owners, subscription rates have been reduced and special advertising promotions introduced. Rich says that it will take about \$10,000 in start-up cash for transition costs. Grants and donations are being actively solicited to assist with this project.



# Chairman's Report

Dear Members,

As I write today, the sun is shining, it is breezy and the wind will gust later in the day—typical spring weather. We had a very early spring, resulting in an extended mud season—I'm glad that is over! This has been a momentous year for us, one in which we have made history. We have been given The Silverton Standard and the Miner, one of the oldest newspapers in Colorado and the oldest business on the Western Slope. It was first published in 1875 and has been published weekly ever since.

It was a locally owned newspaper until 2004 when it was bought by Liberty Media, an Illinois company, who also bought the Telluride Daily Planet and the Norwood Post, two other regional newspapers. The business suffered under this absentee ownership, changing editors and other personnel several times. However, the Standard was fortunate to hire Mark Esper as editor in 2007. Esper has since won 17 awards from the Colorado Press Association. In 2008, The Standard, the Post and the Daily Planet were sold to Telluride Newspapers. Mr. Miller cut the Daily Planet publication to three days a week and was going to shut the other papers down. Esper proposed that he donate the business to the San Juan County Historical Society. The Society did due diligence by looking at the business's books, etc. and decided that the paper is viable. The Society assumed ownership on May 1, 2009. Startup costs for the Society to assume ownership of The Silverton Standard and the Miner will be significant, as we got nothing but the business as is. However, as usual, our members have stepped up to the plate—we have already had significant donations from several members. We also received a \$2000 grant from the T3 Philanthropy Club at the Silverton School, a group of students who raise money for worthy and important projects. And important it is. We believe that a community without a newspaper is like a community without a school—it is not a community.

We are proud to announce the selection of Archivist Freda Peterson and her husband Brison Gooch as Citizen's of the Year by the Silverton Chamber of Commerce. Both have long and distinguished careers of volunteer service to our community—Brison as a Town Board member and our representative on the Area Agency on Aging (among others) and Freda in her work for the cemetery and as archivist for the Society. We are fortunate that they chose Silverton as their avocation. Freda reports that business stays brisk at the archive and notes some new acquisitions: a wedding dress made by in 1860 by Martha Farrow and worn by Rachel Farrow, who was buried at Hillside Cemetery. Also donated was the Genealogy of Francis M. Snowden and related families—1630 to present by Gary and Janet Snowden Watts. Member Fran Schilt made a new outfit for our antique doll.

We also gratefully acknowledge the loan by Steve Lappin of a 22" wye level or "Railroad" level built between 1885 and 1907. It has its own carrying case and antique wood tripod. Also a light mountain transit built between 1885 and 1907, with carrying case and antique wood tripod. Mr. Lappin said with these additions, our surveying exhibit is one of the best anywhere.

This year we will open the museum on May 30th and the Mill on June 20th. Everyone is wondering how this season will be. I guess we will find out. We are glad and grateful to have Duane and Frank back at the museum and Jimmy and Bob at the Mill. Because of extensive construction work at the jail, it will be closed to the public this summer. You will read elsewhere in these pages about that project, as you will about the wonderful progress on exhibits in the Mining Heritage Center. The Heritage Pass promotion was very successful last summer, so we will make that a focus of our marketing again. For \$25.00, the Heritage Pass gets you into the Old 100 Mine tour, the Mayflower Gold Mill Tour, the Museum and Mining Heritage Center, which amounts to 20% off the regular ticket prices.

One of the more interesting projects that we are working on this summer is the hydro-plant at the Mill. We got funding from the Colorado Water and Power Development Authority to do a feasibility study and some engineering for putting a micro-hydro electric generating plant using our water from the pipeline from Arrastra Creek. The feasibility study has come back positive, and we are now doing the engineering. We have had a turbine and a generator donated to us by Eric Jacobson, who redeveloped the hydro-plants at Ouray and Telluride. The existing head gate and pipeline was originally constructed in 1929 and is in danger of failure. The current head gate does not adequately prevent debris from entering the pipeline, and the pipeline has numerous leaks and failure points from constrictions due to accumulated internal debris. We have applied for funding to do repairs to the pipeline, but as of May 15th, haven't heard anything. In the fall of 2008, we replaced the bridge that carries the pipeline across the Animas River. One support had collapsed and we nearly lost the line in the river! Thanks to a lot of innovation, good contractors and San Juan County, who closed the road, we were able to make emergency repairs. There were hydro-electric plants all over these mountains once, running mills and lighting up boardinghouses. We are returning to our roots!

I just got off the phone with David Singer who is running our jail project. He has me making phone calls, ordering and paying for stuff. As David said, that is what it is all about—preservation funding flowing down through us into the local economy. I have made that point before—historic preservation makes jobs, buys locally, and helps our heritage tourism efforts. And fixes up some dandy artifacts, as well!

Bev

**Railroad Museum—continued**  
buildings in that area and use them for a railroad museum complex.

Although the 315 might only be stored for a few winters, and with the possibility that the railroad park idea would never work in the Animas Valley, Silverton could become a combined railroad park for both societies. Our two societies decided to write a joint proposal to the Colorado Historical Fund to reconstruct about 2000 feet of Silverton Northern trackage and to restore the doorways and track supporting structure in the engine house. The Silverton group will write a separate proposal for funds to assess the engine house for a complete restoration.

The concept was taken to Al Harper and he liked the idea. It fit with his plans to develop the Silverton yard further, especially as an open-air freight car museum. The railroad already has several pieces of equipment displayed there. They were also in the midst of concluding an agreement with the Silverton trails group to allow an interpretative trail to be built from the visitor center at the south end of town, along the Durango & Silverton track, and through the middle of their rail yard. The City of Durango understood the need to protect the 315 and the difficulties in establishing a railroad historical park. Our society would work with railroad and the city about where and when to display the 315 in Durango. The City was open to the idea of having a historical park outside the city limits and in having the 315 stored in the Silverton Northern engine house.

The concept quickly escalated into the Silverton yard as the choice of our society for its historical site. Land, a building, and track were available; there was room for expansion; and the area had the backing and benefit of three organizations working on it. At its September meeting of our society board,

the directors voted to establish its railroad historical park in Silverton in partnership with the San Juan County Historical Society and in cooperation with the Durango & Silverton narrow Gauge Railroad.

Although the winter home for the 315 would be the Silverton Northern engine house, our intent is still to have on display in Durango in the summer. But where? We have discussed the possibility of the railroad's Museum at some location alongside the D&S track or back at Santa Rita Park. No decision has yet been made.

A grant request to the Colorado State Historical Fund was made and in February, the fund announced the award of \$179,655 for the project with co-sponsorship by our society, the San Juan County Historical Society, the Town of Silverton, The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, the Gallop & Goose Historical Society, and the City of Durango. The grant is 75 percent of the estimated total cost of \$239,540. Coalition members must come up with the remainder—about \$60,000.

A central portion of the old Silverton Northern Railroad track will be built from inside the engine house along Cement Street and will be connected to side track of the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. A spur will be constructed to display restored railcars.

Although our goal is to complete the project before the coming winter, the short construction season in Silverton may be a problem.

The restoration of the engine house itself will not be completed as part of the current project. The work will be done later by the San Juan County Historical Society. When restored, the engine house will serve as a museum to display railroad artifacts as well as a workshop in which to restore historic railcars owned by the society.

## For Sale: Powerhouse Lots

All lots come with water, sewer and telephone hook-ups to the lot line.

#2 Mears Avenue	12,891 sq. feet	\$77,500
#9 Mears Avenue	15,015 sq. feet	\$125,000

**Zoned for industrial use**

Please call 970-387-5488 for more information.

## Now's the time to help the Society: Join Today!

San Juan County Historical Society • Post Office Box 154  
Silverton, Colorado 81433

I wish to enroll as a member of the San Juan County Historical Society in the class designated below for the calendar year 2009. I understand that this membership entitles me (and my spouse, if applicable) to a vote at the annual meeting in October 2009.

1. Member—\$15 per year, entitling an individual to one vote in meeting of the general membership, discounts on books, and free museum admission.
2. Family membership—\$25 per year entitling each couple to one vote each in meetings of the general membership, discounts on books, and free museum admission.
3. Society Patron—\$60 per year, entitling an individual or couple to voting privileges, a museum pass for the season, discounts on books, and a listing in the Society's publications.
4. Lifetime Society Patron—\$500, entitling an individual or couple to all of the above privileges for life.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



# The Sixteenth Annual Silverton Hillside Cemetery Volunteer Work Day

Come help us maintain, restore and preserve its wonderful heritage! Saturday, June 20, 2009 10:00 to noon. Suggested tools to bring: *(Be sure to put your name on them)* limb loppers, hand-held clippers, shovels, rakes, pruning saws, soft brushes, rags, plastic or wooden tools for scraping tombstones (no metal), plastic bags. Wear sunscreen, work gloves, hat, tough shoes, and don't forget your picnic lunch!

When parking, be sure to leave room for vehicles to drive through. Jobs waiting include gathering and dragging branches to the road, picking up trash and broken glass, placing 21 donated tombstones, leveling and straightening tombstones, filling in sunken areas. There are always lots of small aspens to be thinned out and low-growing tree branches to "lop".

We always need "supervisors" for help in registering our volunteers, and if you like, just watching the others work!! Everyone is more than welcome—we'll find something for you to do. Bring a lawn chair to sit in while supervising, and it will also come in handy for our picnic lunch. Following the work session, we'll adjourn to the Beabers' back yard to eat

the lunch you didn't forget. If you have any "cemetery stories" or if you have relatives or friends buried at Hillside, please share your thoughts and memories of those loved ones with the rest of the group. If you can't join us, but would like to make a tax deductible donation, send to: Hillside Cemetery Fund, Box 115, Silverton, Colorado 81433.

If you like, you can designate that your donation is applied to the purchase of tombstones for unmarked graves. Because of the generosity of Family Craft Memorials of Durango, the present cost of each tombstone is \$120. Over the course of several years, more than 200 tombstones have been donated and placed at Hillside by individual donors or by the Hillside Cemetery Fund. If you would like to be notified of future workdays by e-mail, please send your e-mail address to: freda28@aol.com. Using your e-mail saves us postage and allows more dollars for tombstones. If you prefer to be notified by mail, be sure to send any change of address to the above address. For additional information contact: Freda Peterson, 387-5734 or Mary Beaber, 387-5360

## Howardsville's Little Nation Mill and Tramway Building Preserved

By John D. Sites

Last summer and fall my crew and I were fortunate to do preservation work on the Little Nation Mill and Tram building in Howardsville. The Historical Society received the building and mill site, as well as \$25,000 for preservation work from members Fred and Nancy Clark. Bill and Julie Ogle also donated \$5,000.

The road side landmark of the upper Animas valley has been deteriorating gradually since it was last operated during the Second World War. Fred Clark acquired the property and reroofed the building in the 1990s. This required some courage given the condition of the dilapidated plank siding and exterior wall framing. The primary timber frame however, was still in excellent shape, and probably would not be today if not for the roof work undertaken by Mr. Clark at that time.

The mill was built in 1921 by the Little Nation Mining Company to service the mine of the same name. The mine is located at 10,000 feet on King Solomon Mountain, roughly 500 feet above the valley floor. Ore was transported from mine to mill via a 2,900 foot aerial tramway. The two bucket "jig-back" tram is suspended on a 1-1/8 inch cable and driven by one 7-1/2 horsepower General Electric motor installed at the mine. The

ore reduction mill, one of two of its kind left in the San Juans, was designed to handle fifty tons of ore per day with one operator and one helper.

The Little Nation Mine was receiving almost \$25 a ton for her ore in those days. Unfortunately, the managers "robbed the right hand to pay the left" while building the mill and neglected development of the mine. When the mill was ready for service, the mine was far behind in ore production. As a result of this mismanagement, the mill itself only ran briefly before shutting down for good.

By the 1940s, the mill was obsolete, but the tram was still used to transport ore to the mill site, where it was loaded and trucked to the nearby Shenandoah-Dives Custom Mill. In 1953 the mine ceased operations due to falling metals prices after the war. More recent history places the mill in motion pictures such as *Night Passage* with Jimmy Stewart. The towering structure is also a popular subject of photography and art. The Little Nation Mill was placed on the San Juan County Historic Register in 2007.

After reviewing the initial scope of work from the Historical Society and available photos, Fred Clark and I went through the building and prioritized items such as roof repair, floor repair and exterior wall repair. Our main goals



The Little Nation building in Howardsville prior to last year's stabilization and preservation project.

were to get the building and grounds cleaned up, dried in and secured for general historic preservation as well as storage. The original donations by the Clarks and Ogles, were not matched despite grant requests, therefore more extensive restoration work was not possible.

Despite our initial fears of under funding, we made quick headway with the grounds clean up and walls appeared where they had not been in years.

Roofing has been screwed down and repaired where needed. The exterior walls have been framed in with doors and windows and secured from the weather with felt paper and battens, all of which withstood the winter well.

Loose siding throughout the structure was secured and replaced, often with workers dangling from rope and harness. Four windows have been installed on the south aspect to let in natural light. Floors were patched and cleared for storage. The walls and roof of the sorting bin area were replaced. The tram cables and their attachments to the structure and anchor were inspected and appear to be very secure and left alone.

After this work had been done, there was some money left to patch up the old cabin adjacent to the mill site which was part of the property donated by the Clarks.

We "chinked" some of the cracks in the log structure with spruce wedges to mitigate wind driven moisture and keep possibly one of the oldest, if not the oldest structure on the western slope of Colorado around a few more years...but that's another story.

Our goals of preservation and the creation of a secure storage space for the Historical Society have been met. The Little Nation Mill and Tram building will be around for future generations to study and photograph by all, from history buffs to Jeepers.

Thank you to Fred Clark, for his leadership on this project and in historical preservation in general. Thanks also to Bev, Fetch, Zeke, and Jerry for their guidance and support and the entire San Juan County Historical Society, a group of which I am proud to be a part. I look forward to working with them in the future to preserve our historical resources.

## Two new grants for this summer

The San Juan County Historical Society is pleased to announce that we are the recipients of two grants this summer.

The first is a grant from the State Historical Fund matched by the Department of Local Affairs for Phase 2 of the Jail Restoration Project. Phase 1 was for work on the foundation, both inside and out. A trench was dug around the building, the stone wall re-pointed, a moisture barrier was installed, and a French drain added to keep water away from the building. The excellent crew who did the work is presently completing a similar project on the foundation of the County Courthouse. Phase 2 of the Jail Project calls for re-pointing the brick exterior, replacing the roof and repairing the windows, many of which have not been painted or glazed since 1902, because of the bars.

The second is a grant from the Colorado Scenic Byways Program for work along the Alpine Loop. The application was made by the Society and the Bureau of Land Management. Work slated for this summer and fall is stabilization and visitor safety enhancements on the Tobasco cabin on the Hinsdale County side of the Loop, stabilization and visitor safety enhancements on the Pacific Mine

Boardinghouse in Placer Gulch, west of Animas Forks, and the installation of interpretive signs at these sites.

The grant funds will also purchase a set of audioguides for the Mayflower Mill, enabling visitors to hear the story of the Mill as they tour. An interpretive sign for the Caledonian Boardinghouse at the Mining Heritage Center will also be funded.

This grant paid for half of the handicapped lift in the Mining Heritage Center. Thanks to member Julie Singer, the grant has been leveraged with State Historical Funds and Preserve America Funds to also include a Preservation Plan for Animas Forks. The Colorado Scenic Byways Program is funded by federal highway funds which are passed down to the states and administered through the State Departments of Transportation. The funds are used for interpretation, safety and visitor amenities.

Be sure to take the time to visit the updated exhibits in the Mining Heritage Museum this summer.

## SAN JUAN COURIER

George Chapman, Editor

Contributors: Beverly Rich, Jerry Hoffer, Mary Beaber,

David Singer, John Sites, George Niederauer

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San Juan County, Colorado.

San Juan County Historical Society

Officers and Directors, 2009

Beverly Rich, Chairman

Freda Peterson, Vice Chairman

Scott Fetchenhier, Secretary

Brian Fullmer, Jerry Hoffer, George Chapman, George Darnall Zanoni, Directors



# Museum experience continues to grow because of a hard working crew

The big effort prior to opening for the 2008 summer season was the annual museum clean up where many volunteers come to dust exhibits and clean the floor of both buildings. Also around this time more lighting was added to the first floor of the Caladonian for an art exhibit, and Scott Fetchenhier was busy filling about half of the mineral cases with specimens. (These cases had been built earlier and mounted to the rock walls in the basement of the Jail by contractor John Richardson.)

After the museum opened our focus shifted to getting the Mayflower Mill open for the season. It was then discovered that the suspension bridge that carries the water pipeline to the mill was failing. One suspension cable was broken, the other was badly corroded, and the wooden piers were collapsing. An attempt to reinforce the one broken cable caused the other to break. Only luck kept the pipeline from going into the river. The replacement bridge structure, which uses steel piers, cost us about \$38,000. Thanks to Brian Fullmer, Bill Alsup, and Mark Mackie for their expertise as well as John Richardson and crew who performed the major construction of the bridge. Except for Zeke Zanoni running the bridge project and making molds for casting fake rock, not too much else was underway until late August.

At this time it was becoming clear that D&RGW Locomotive 315, restored by the Durango Railroad Historical Society over the last five years, would be using the Silverton Northern Engine House for its winter home. This triggered a month long effort to clean out the left hand stall of the engine house. This is the first time much of this stuff had been looked at in years. Some items were taken to our museum, some duplicate items and modern electrical items were traded, sold, or given away. Many items were taken to the Little Nation Mill for storage, and several loads of trash went to the dump. We made sure that no unique, rare or irreplaceable items got away from us. We owe Fred Clark a great "Thank You" for his help with this task.

In this same time frame, Fetchenhier and Will Meyeriecks were able to label most of the mineral specimens. With the help of Meyeriecks and Raymond Affeldt, the ore wagon, delivery wagon, and pole wagon were moved into the wagon shed attached to the Reese street side of the Mining Heritage Center. Also, with help of Bill Alsup and Ludie Girodo, we managed to move a 2 ft. gauge mucking machine and a three ton ore car to the back of the museum. The "mucker" was then sand blasted and lowered down the basement ramp on the track. (This 4 ton machine is stored in our work area and not yet on display.)

With cold weather upon us, our attention turned back to the museum. A closet was constructed in the space between the basement stairs and the entrance to the electrical/mechanical room. This allowed us to clean up the mess of stuff stacked by the stair railing and on the shelf above the old soapstone laundry sink. It also provides a place for bathroom supplies and many of the office items stacked around the Caladonian end of the museum. One of the closet doors was made like an old sliding barn door using hardware we

salvaged from a load of barn wood we received a couple of years ago. Not much donated material goes to waste here.

With winter here progress continued thanks to Dave Andrews clearing snow so we could get into the museum. A core drill display was set up in the basement of the Jail in front of the mineral room, and, another mineral case was constructed for this room to house typical ore samples (not mineral specimens). Since the center of the mineral room seemed empty, an eight foot long double-sided mineral case was made for this space and mounted from the ceiling (Thanks to Larry Raab for welding the mounting brackets). It may be some time before all this new display space is filled.

Now, while Zeke made fake rock and installed it in the basement between the raise and the ore chute, Fetchenhier, Jerry Hoffer, and Sandy Blades were busy putting in a floor and building a walkway over the open holes on the main floor in front of the raise and the ore chute. This was no easy task, the walkway had to be wide enough for a wheelchair. To accomplish this we had to cut a 4 1/2 inch wide by 3 inch deep notch for 24 feet along two existing 8 x 8 timbers.

With spring now upon us, we had a special volunteer work day to remove or protect displays in the Jail in preparation for the large jail project to replace the roof and repair the windows and brickwork (This project is paid for by a grant from the Colorado State Historical Fund, Department of Local Affairs, and San Juan County.) After this our attention was given to cleaning up remaining construction debris, improving displays, labeling artifacts, improving lighting and re-displaying many items from the Jail.

The new acquisition of a small "belly dump" wagon that for years was stored in a garage (now gone) in Chattanooga and possibly used to construct the Mears Toll Road or the Silverton Railroad was just recently placed in the museum. (Thanks to Dave Claussen for the wagon donation, Brian Fullmer for the transportation from Grand Junction, and Larry Raab for moving it into the museum.)

Now it is again time for the annual museum cleaning, and the cycle starts again.

Zeke, Jerry, & Fetch

## Brown Bear Fund Raiser

Join us for an elegant evening at the museum sponsored by

The Brown Bear Cafe

June 27<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Tour the Mining Heritage Center and see the new exhibits.

Fancy hors d'oeuvres & desserts will be served.

A special screening of "Castle in the Clouds—the Saving of the Old 100 Boardinghouse" will be held at 7:30 pm

Tickets: \$15.00, Children \$5.00 Show only \$10.00

## Phil Dodd Ore Collection Added

When asked why he donated his world class ore collection to the Mining Heritage Center instead of the Smithsonian Institution, Silverton resident Phil Dodd said that it belonged in a mining museum! A retired geologist, Dodd spent most of his career in the uranium industry and through the years amassed a collection that chronicles the history of the uranium mining industry.

His career took him around the world, from Africa, to Canada, to Australia. Pieces in the collection include specimens from some of the famous mines in history, including pitchblende from Shinkolobwe in the Belgian Congo which was used in the Manhattan Project for the first atomic bombs. Many of the specimens in the collection raise questions of interest to geologists, not just mineralogists, such as why is gold found in carbonaceous rock found in the Rand of South Africa. There are also rare samples of ores such as mercury from the oldest mercury mine in the world—Almaden, in Santa Clara County,

California. Phil later landed on the Colorado Plateau, amongst the famous uranium mining areas of Grants, New Mexico, Uravan, Colorado, and Blanding, Utah. Phil likes to tell of the "Silverton connection" with the uranium industry—in 1952, in the Lisbon Valley southeast of Moab, Utah.

In Utah, Charlie Steen staked the "Mi Vida" claim, which proved to be the biggest deposit of uranium in the United States at the time. Right next to it, he staked the "Standard", which he gave to a local store owner who had grubstaked him during some very lean times. That led to a company being formed—Standard Uranium—which came to Silverton in 1959 and bought the old Sunnyside workings and drilled the American Tunnel. Standard Uranium later became Standard Metals Corporation, which ran the Sunnyside until the mid-1980s.

This major collection is on display in the new mineral exhibit vault in the basement of the museum.

## Local groups recognized for preservation efforts

By David Singer

The Town of Silverton and the San Juan County Historical Society brought home some Gold from the annual Colorado Preservation Inc. conference held in February in Denver. This year's conference theme centered around the 150th anniversary celebration of the discovery of placer gold deposits in Denver's Cherry Creek, and Colorado's mining history in general. The successful saving of the Yankee Girl, the pride of the Red Mountain mining district, was the figure that graced the poster and brochure for this year's event.

The conference was excited with the success stories from Silverton's small-in-numbers preservation efforts. Representing Silverton and San Juan County was Bev Rich, Chairman of the society, David Singer, Principal at Silverton Restoration Consulting and Julie Coleman-Singer, Heritage Team Lead Archaeologist for the San Juan Public Lands. Topping the festivities for our small contingent was the presentation of the Stephen Hart award from the Colorado Historical Society at the opening reception and awards ceremony. The award was given for the Historic Structures Assessment and the Historic American Engineering Recordation of the Mayflower Mill that was coordinated with the National Park Service. Our team presented a seminar at the conference giving details on the documentation of the Mayflower and the professional training workshops we have hosted in Silverton over the past few years.

The conference was sponsored in-part by Preserve America, the Federal historic preservation grants program that designated Silverton a "Preserve America City" in 2006. Taking advantage of our Town's status and recognition, Coleman had prepared a grant to Preserve America whose award was announced at the closing ceremony. This award, given directly to the Town of Silverton, totals \$27,838 and consists of three mining history and preservation components including; an Historic Structures Assessment of the eight standing buildings at Animas Forks, the development of a self-guided hand-held audio tour for the Shenandoah-Dives

Mill and final development of the film Castle-in-the-Clouds into a full length documentary. The matching funds totaling \$30,601 for this group of projects was awarded to the Town of Silverton from the Colorado State Historical Fund in January.

Topping the good news for Silverton at the conference was an awarded \$227,000 from the State Historical Fund to complete the exterior restoration of the jail museum. More than 3.3 million dollars have been awarded to projects in San Juan County since the inception of the State Historical Fund in 1990!

The sesquicentennial celebration of Charles Baker's infamous 1860 expedition to his namesake Baker's Park, the Town site of Silverton, is only a year away. The exterior restoration of the museum couldn't be happening at a better time, offering a fitting tribute to the men and women who settled this mining town we call home.

## Important documents available

San Juan County history buffs should take note of several projects recently completed by the county Assessor's office. The 913 page Works Progress Administration mining claim project, originally done in 1936, has been scanned and is available on CD.

An original copy of the hand typed compilation of local newspaper articles documenting mining claims in the county from the 1890s thru the 1930s was found in the Assessor's vault.

Another long awaited project involved the scanning of all of the current plat maps of the county. Both projects are PDF files and can be viewed by anyone with a home computer.

In addition, the office also has a data base of all mining claims in the county. This data requires EXCEL software to be viewed. The data base includes the claim name, survey and patent numbers, township, section and range location, acreage, mining district and other miscellaneous information.

The CD's can be purchased from the Assessor's office for \$12.00 each, plus postage. For more information or to purchase copies contact the Assessor's office at 970-387-5632.