

SAN JUAN COURIER

Summer 2013Silverton, San Juan County, Colorado

Alpine Loop National Back Country Byway is Busy this Summer

by David Singer
The official name is *Alpine Loop National Back Country Byway*. It's a long name and this summer visitors will find much activity at several historic mining sites. Projects along The Loop include the on-going historic preservation of the Shenandoah-Dives Mill (Mayflower Mill), and the stabilization of five historic structures in the ghost town of Animas Forks. On the east side of Engineer Pass in Hinsdale County, an impressive stabilization and reconstruction project is taking place at the Golconda Mine site, which is located approximately two miles up Shaffer Gulch, on Hinsdale County road 21, which begins about 15 miles from Lake City, toward Engineer Pass.

Shenandoah-Dives Mill
At the Shenandoah-Dives Mill site, located along County Road 2, just north of Silverton. Phase One of the project was completed in 2012, and focused on the restoration of the tram terminal, the ore conveyor and its trestle sub-structure and the custom ore bins. Phase one addressed the most critical structural stabilization work needed at the site. It was funded through a Congressional Appropriation and a grant from the State Historical Fund (SHF) totaling \$375,000.

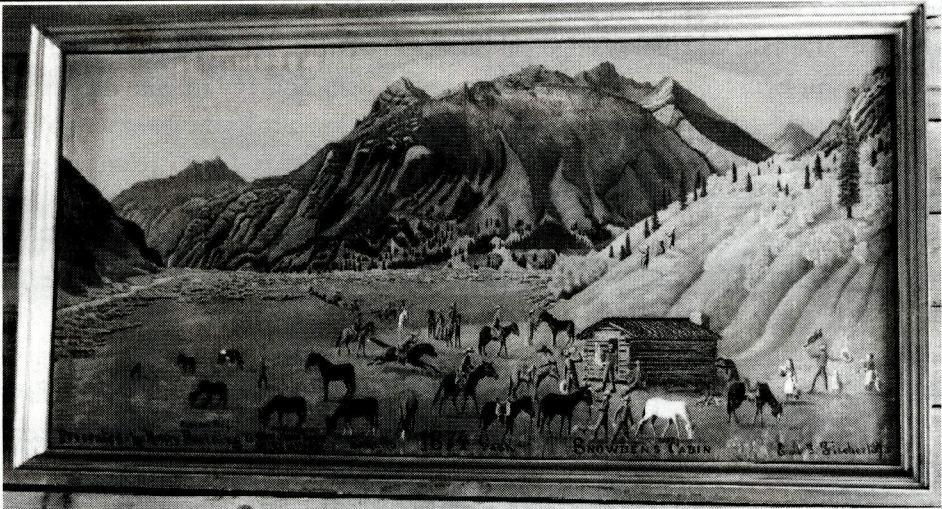
Phase Two of the project, now underway, is focused on the assay office building. This second phase will restore the exterior of the building, and stabilize the foundation. The budget for phase two is \$224,000, and has been funded through grants from the SHF, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Gates Family Foundation. Drawings and specifications were developed by Silverton Restoration Consulting (SRC) and Reynolds and Associates of Durango, Colorado. Scott Craig, the project foreman, is directing the work of the Historical Society's preservation crew on a day-to-day basis. The crew consists of a team of locals, including

Cody Bradford, Don Curnow, Dee Jaramillo, John Girodo and Nick Houston. About one-third of the original siding had to be replaced because of decay. New siding and trim to match the historic profiles was milled on-site. Structural repairs were made to the roof and a new roof membrane and flashings were installed. New windows were crafted to replicate windows in openings that had been abandoned and covered over. Structural repairs were also made to the suspended porches and several heavy timber sill beams were replaced or reinforced. Most significantly, a new concrete block foundation, hidden from view behind replica skirting, now anchors the historic concrete piers. The talus slope had partially crushed the exterior walls, racking the timber frame, and causing erosion along two sides resulting in dangerous settling of the foundation.

The building was the heart of the Shenandoah-Dives Mine Company's operation. The Historical Society anticipates it to continue to serve as a source of revenue with rental apartments on the upper level, an operational water quality laboratory on the main level, and a caretaker's residence for the mill on the lower level. The infrastructure and interior rehabilitation is part of a package being considered for phase three of the project. Each structure within the National Landmark boundary of the Mill complex will be rehabilitated in successive phases, and the preservation of the site will significantly complement the other heritage treasures along the Alpine Loop.

Animas Forks stabilization and historic preservation

The ghost town of Animas Forks is further along County Road 2, about 12 miles north of Silverton.



Society Acquires Historic Painting

In the summer of 1895, Emil Fischer, map maker and artist, was in Silverton and painted this scene depicting Snowden's Cabin and a rowdy party in 1874. Snowden's cabin was the first built in Silverton and stood where the Miners Union Hospital now stands. In the distance a pack train can be seen descending the trail down Sultan Mountain. The July 6, 1895 edition of the Silverton Standard noted that this painting was on display at the Germania Beer Hall operated by Henry Breining, on what is now the vacant lot north of the Teller House. The inscription on the painting indicates it was presented by Breining to the San Juan County Masonic Lodge. It has resided ever since at the Masonic building at 13th and Reese streets. However it has now been acquired by the San Juan County Historical Society and will be on display in the museum.

Durango and Silverton Working Together to Construct Railroad Historical Park

by Jerry Hoffer & George Niederauer
In 2009 the San Juan County and Durango Railroad historical societies (SJCHS and DRHS) entered into a joint project (a) to restore enough of the Silverton Northern engine house to make the two pits usable for use in restoring SJCHS rail cars and for storing locomotive D&RGW 315 and (b) to add track to connect with the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and to provide room to display restored rail cars. We also produced three copies of an interpretive sign about Silverton's four historic railroads and placed them in appropriate places around Silverton.

Both societies now see a need to expand to meet their long-term goals of restoring and reconstructing several aspects of historic railroad facilities in the railroad district of Silverton, to restore and display examples of several kinds of historic equipment, to collect and display railroad artifacts, and to inform the public about the importance of narrow gauge railroads to southwest Colorado. Thus, the two societies have entered into an agreement defining a vision for the creation of a Silverton Railroad Historical Park.

The general concept is to focus the park on the engine house and reconstructed track. The engine house would be used for storing, restoring, and maintaining railroad equipment and as a museum for displaying

railroad artifacts. The track over the car pit would be extended to the extreme rear of the building to provide more space for restoring cars. The engine house would be completely restored, well insulated and heated and have full utilities. SJCHS performed a structural assessment (funded by History Colorado) of the engine house and the adjacent small shed and plans to seek future funding for their restoration. The shed might be used as office space, conference room, storeroom, or museum store.

The track along Cement Street between 7th and 10th Streets generally would be kept open for operational use. Restored cars would be displayed under a pavilion covering two new tracks with a raised platform between them and walkways along the outside of both tracks. After considering several options for the display track, a location was chosen along the north side of Durango & Silverton Shenandoah Loop in a direct line between the engine house and the depot. The track and pavilion would be located on Durango & Silverton property.

By the way, our effort to create the Silverton Railroad Park is independent of the proposed short, tourist railroad between the northern end of Silverton, along County Road 22, to just short of Howardsville. The track in our park forms a private rail yard where no commercial operation is permitted,

Chairman's Report

Dear members,

As I write today the sky is blue with big fluffy clouds swiftly blowing over. Yesterday was one of "Springtime in the Rockies" kind of day with sun, rain, sleet and snow, all in the period of five minutes, and I suspect today will be the same. Well, as hard as it is to believe, we open the museum this coming weekend. Saturday was cleanup day, with all hands plus some good volunteers on deck. It is incredible how we came from a construction site to a display building in the space of hours. If you haven't been to see us lately, you need to come and see what Zeke, Jerry, Scott and Steve have accomplished this winter—more of their magic.

We have several new exhibits, among them being a painting of Baker's Park and the first cabin in what is now Silverton—Snowden's cabin. Also new, a governor from a Pelton wheel, likely used at Silver Lake, courtesy of Phil Antonelli and Lewis Dahm and a major collection of artifacts from the early pioneer Dyson and McNaughton families. We just keep getting better and better. With all of this to see, we invite you all to our grand reopening of the jail and the Mining Heritage Center on Friday, June 7th from 5:30 to 7:00—light refreshments will be served. Lynn Hutson, our lead person at the museum has packed herself off to be closer to her children, so it is with regret that we lose her and her vast knowledge of Silverton history and railroads. Best of luck to you, Lynn! We are lucky to have Judy, Casey and Ivy to take the reins.

We also say goodbye and thanks to Bob Boeder, our lead man at the Mill. He is retiring after many years of service. We are lucky to have Melanie again this year and Adam Andrade to help. The Mill opens on June 8th this year with the newly restored exterior of the assay office building. This building used to be what Zeke called "our sore thumb", it was in such bad shape. It looks really sharp now.

We also invite you to help with our twentieth annual Cemetery Workday on June 15th—please see the flyer elsewhere in these pages. On this fun day we clean, clip and generally patch up the cemetery and we will also set a dozen stones on unmarked graves as part of our marking program. Among those stones will be one for pioneer and legendary packer Louis Wyman. Be sure to bring a lunch and a story for the picnic in Mary and Paul Beaver's yard afterward.

Freda (Peterson), I don't know what I thought you were doing at the Archive all those years. I knew you had a rudimentary photo scanning program going, but I had no idea how extensive it really was. What an incredible amount of work you did! And what a gift to all of us to be able to look at the photos on a computer screen and not to have to handle the originals. I also want to thank Casey Carroll, Ray Dileo, and Harry McGavran for helping at the Archive, now that Freda can't be here. A big thank you needs to go Richard Gibbons who donated an almost brand new scanner and computer to the cause, along with many vintage books on railroading. It was funny—this all happened right around Christmas—we thought he must be Santa!

We have had an anonymous donation in the amount of \$30,000 to go towards the desperately needed addition on the Mining Heritage Center. The guys have worked themselves into a corner and need more room. I know, that building seems awfully big, but we are already out of space! If any of you have an extra buck or two, send it along for the cause. We need to take advantage of the knowledge, experience and talent of our crew while we can.

We are proud to announce that the 2013 Silverton Citizen of the Year is our very own Scott Fetchenhier! Do you know, dear members, that almost every one of your board members has had that honor. We must be doing something right! We are working hard for you and our little town. Thanks, as always, for your support.



Railroad Historical Park

Continued from Page 1

per our agreement with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission.

The San Juan County Historical Society is currently restoring the Silverton Northern caboose and plans future restorations of a Silverton Railroad baggage car and box car. Durango Railroad Historical Society completed a D&RGW drop bottom gondola last summer and will complete a high side gondola this May. Following them will be a flat car, single and double deck stock cars, boxcar, and a tank car. The Durango group

would also like to restore a refrigerator car and caboose – if they could be made available.

A short track, not connected to any other, would be placed on the east side of the engine house for up to four other railcars, perhaps boxcars for storage of supplies and materials.

Some even dream of including a turntable, like the 50 foot Armstrong turntable that was in Ouray. The easement agreement will include that possibility.

Silverton Northern May Roll Again if Society Plans Work Out

by Fritz Klinke

We have started one of the more ambitious projects undertaken by the San Juan County Historical Society. Discussion and idle chit chat of many years standing about rebuilding the Silverton Northern

Railroad finally gained substance when the Society approached the San Juan County Commissioners last fall for use of part of the abandoned railroad right-of-way.

The initial effort involves use of what is presently County Road 22 running alongside the Animas River from the Powerhouse Industrial Park site to Howardsville. This 2.5 mile long stretch of road, known locally as the River Road, was chosen because of its proximity to Silverton and for its scenic value. The road is the former route of the Silverton Northern that was abandoned in 1942 when the rails were removed from Silverton to Eureka.

The Society made a formal request to San Juan County for a 99-year lease that was granted by the commissioners at the rate of \$1.00 per year. That lease has been paid in full from the initial donations made towards this project. The Society has started a 99-Year Lease fund raiser that seeks donations of at least \$100 to pay for each year of the lease. These funds will provide for the start-up expenses of getting this project underway. So far, the lease expenditure has been the only expense recorded with everything else donated...

A Silverton Northern web site is under development. A fund raising program beyond the 99-year program is underway working with local attorney Anthony Edwards who is developing a "Main Street Crowd Funding" effort. The initial project to be funded will be the building of a stretch of the former mainline at the powerhouse site as a demonstration piece of track work. The Society has been acquiring a substantial amount of donated fill material since 2012 as the area dedicated for the rail yard that will provide for shop space, parking, and a station is below the Animas River flood plain level.

The San Juan County Master Plan adopted two years ago outlines the concept of Heritage Tourism as being a critical element for economic development for both the town and county. The rebuilding of the Silverton Northern as a tourist orientated

railroad is one of the specific projects outlined in the Master Plan. This concept brings together the main attractions of the area that include the Mayflower Mill Tour, Old 100 Mine Tour, and the greatly expanded heritage museum the Society operates in Silverton. As envisioned by the Society, the Silverton Northern is to complement the well established Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and will not be marketed or promoted as direct competition. The concept is to make Silverton a destination for several day visits focusing on our heritage assets as well as the mountains and existing outdoor activities.

Negotiations are underway with several sources for material needed for construction, with rail being a prime example. There are several possibilities for equipment that will run on the completed railroad from steam engines to recreated historic equipment. Local talent is being used for such things as survey work and engineering services. As the potential for economic development, the railroad will also provide additional employment opportunities for our area.

The Silverton Northern rebuilding project is operationally separate from the restoration efforts taking place at the Society owned engine house. That project, in conjunction with the Durango Railroad Historical Society, will not be connected physically with the rebuilding effort and serves primarily as a static exhibit of restored equipment with occasional operational days. It has a limitation of no public rides on the equipment when it may be operated at the engine house facility.

Donations are welcome in any amount and may be made to the Silverton Northern Railroad, P.O. Box 154, Silverton, Colorado 81433. Donations may be tax exempt and should be discussed with your tax advisor. Full details on the various levels of participation will be available on our web page when that becomes active. This project is not utilizing any existing Society financial resources and as required by the board of directors, is completely self-funding. Any questions may be directed to Fritz Klinke, phone 970-387-0212, or by email at nagraph@ekiva.net.

SAN JUAN COURIER

George Chapman, Editor

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San Juan County Historical Society

Officers and Directors, 2013

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Scott Fetchenhier, Secretary/Treasurer; Jerry Hoffer, George Darnall Zanoni, David Zanoni, Patty Dailey, Stephen Rich, Bill Alsop, Directors

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The assay office building at the Shenandoah Mill site will serve the Society in a number of ways once the restoration is completed. Here Donny Curnow is operating the backhoe, improving the drainage around the building.

In the Loop

Continued from Page 1

The last four miles require a high clearance vehicle, preferably 4-wheel drive, especially if you want to continue over any of the passes accessible from this central point in the Animas Mining district. Animas Forks was founded in 1875. It is arguably the most important historic site on the Alpine Loop, and an icon of Colorado ghost towns. The townsite was strategically situated at the confluence of the East and West Forks of the Animas River, in the center of a region extensively prospected for hard-rock silver and gold mining. Although remote, it quickly became a business and residential center for the area and was incorporated as a municipality in 1881. After the initial boom in the early and middle 1880s, the town declined in prosperity and suffered a devastating fire in 1891 that resulted in it becoming a virtual ghost town. The establishment of the Gold Prince Mill on the eastern edge of the town in 1905 resulted in a resurgence that lasted till 1910 when the mill closed its doors. Another massive fire in 1913, drove Animas Forks into obscurity. Animas Forks was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.

Over 400,000 visitors come annually to Animas Forks to wander through its buildings and learn about a long-lost era in Colorado's mining history. Given that most of these buildings were abandoned over a century ago, the extreme climate at 11,000 feet, and the heavy visitation they receive, it is remarkable that they are still standing.

In 1998, the Bureau of Land Management partnered with the San Juan County Historical Society to stabilize the site. The BLM recently concluded a land exchange with the Sunnyside Gold Corporation, and as a result, consolidated its ownership of the entire site. In 2011, the BLM in partnership with San Juan County, contracted with Silverton Restoration Consulting (SRC) to complete an Historic Structure Assessment of the nine standing buildings. SRC is now managing the implementation of the

preservation treatments that were determined in the assessment.

Working in partnership with the BLM, Mountain Studies Institute (MSI) obtained a grant from the SHF for \$120,180 to stabilize and preserve five of the buildings. MSI is a non-profit research and education organization with a high-altitude field station based in Silverton. MSI has embraced Heritage Tourism as a key component of the Silverton economy, and their assistance will contribute to enhancing Silverton's economic base and preserving its heritage. The BLM has provided an additional \$65,000 to implement the work for a total project cost of \$185,180.

Two of the most notable structures to be worked on this summer include the Gustavson House and the much-photographed Duncan House. Charles Gustavson, a Swedish immigrant, and his wife Alma Ingi of Finnish decent, built their home in Animas Forks in 1906. This wood-frame building will have its roof restored, the exterior walls, porch, windows, doors and trim repaired, and the interior floors made safer for visitors. The William Duncan House, a two-story, gable-front, wood-frame residence was constructed in 1879. The Duncan House has many decorative elements that will be preserved and replicated where missing. The temporary log cribbing that has been in place for decades will be removed, the foundation stabilized and the roof restored. An unobtrusive access ramp will be installed to address the long-missing entry into the original entrance foyer.

Klinke & Lew Construction will be working on the buildings at Animas Forks through September. Visitors should take care when touring the site and respect the on-going efforts of the contractor. The restoration and stabilization of the buildings at Animas Forks is intended to honor the grit and determination of the miners and families who settled the San Juans. The BLM has dedicated \$30,000 toward the completion of the last four

buildings, and the balance of the funding needed is actively being sought to complete the work. You can join us in support of the project through your respectful stewardship of this site and others you encounter on the Alpine Loop.

The Golconda Boarding House and Compressor House

The Golconda mine site is an inspiring place to visit. It is accessed from the base of Engineer Pass, on the east side in Hinsdale County. The site is entirely above tree line and is subject to extreme weather conditions. The mine complex includes a main adit, a powder house excavated into the mountainside, a compressor house and blacksmith shop still containing much of the original machinery and equipment, a collapsed power house, two unidentifiable collapsed log structures, and a large boarding house.



The Duncan House in Animas Forks, formerly erroneously called the Walsh House, is one of the most photographed buildings in Colorado. For a picture of the Gustavson House in Animas Forks, see Page 4.

Mineral surveys for the Golconda were filed in 1902 for several claims in Hurricane Basin and mining continued off and on until 1920 when the mine complex was fully operational. In 1928 the mine closed and reopened in the 1940s. The Golconda Mine is significant in the history of mining in the San Juans because it illustrates the extreme conditions of altitude, climate, and isolation which miners were willing to endure in their efforts to "strike it rich." The Golconda Mine Complex was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

This project involves the stabilization of the boarding house and compressor house. The boarding house is a large two-story log structure, nearly 100 feet long and 18 feet wide. There are no other similar structures in the San Juans.

Due to the remote location of the site, the compressor house still contains much of its original equipment. The roof has exposing the machinery to the harsh elements and has become a safety hazard to visitors entering the building. The building will be completely disassembled and reconstructed using as much of the original material as possible. Great care should be taken by visitors to this site.

Silverton Restoration Consulting is managing this project. Reynolds and Associates of Durango, worked them to complete a Historic Structures Assessment for the buildings in 2011, and the team is developing the construction documents for the preservation effort. Hinsdale County Historical Society recieved a grant from the State Historic Fund for \$134,800 with an additional \$57,000 from the BLM to complete the necessary work. HistoriCorps, a volunteer based preservation non-profit construction group from Denver, will be performing the construction work this summer.

The Alpine Loop Scenic Byway has many treasures to discover. Please enjoy them, stay safe, be a good steward, and support the mining heritage that we all find irresistible to explore!

IT'S THAT TIME!!

*The Twentieth Annual
Silverton Hillside Cemetery
Volunteer Work Day*

**Come help us maintain, restore
and preserve its wonderful
heritage!**

Saturday, June 15, 2013

10:00 - Noon

**For additional information
contact:**

Mary Beaber (970) 387-5360

or

Bev Rich (970) 387-5781



The Gustavson House in Animas Forks is one of the several structures being stabilized under a program described on page three. The house was built in 1906, not many years before the end of the town's busiest era.

Improvements and New Exhibits Continue at Jail Museum and Mining Heritage Center

by Stephen F. Rich

Several new exhibits have been designed, constructed and installed by museum staff this past winter for the 2013 season.

A beautiful collection of 19th and early 20th century door knobs and their escutcheon plates were donated to the museum by Silverton resident, Jodi Sutton. He has restored this intricately filigreed brass door hardware to its original splendor. Several vintage doors were donated by Lynn Hutson, on which the collection was mounted by Dean Cox. This new exhibit is installed on the second floor of the museum in the growing Domestic Exhibits section.

Timbered entry portals were added to the scam and stope levels of our underground tunnels to help define the exhibit entrance. Several new mining artifacts were assembled: an ore car with large chunks of ore from the Sunnyside mine, a panel displaying hand tools and hardware, a pneumatic drill mounted on a jack leg and four large backlit color photo panels interpreting what takes place in the scam and stope in a typical mine in the San Juans.

Zeke Zanoni has designed and constructed an exhibit of a typical assay lab as found at numerous successful small mines. The exhibit contains an assay furnace, a large balance for weighing samples and many other related artifacts. As a completed exhibit, the visitors feel they are actually standing in a real assay lab. Many of the items were donated by Frank Montonati.

We have been revamping the display of unusual artifacts and tools. We have created more cubical like spaces for these unusual period items to make better use of space and to show how an earlier technology dealt with the jobs at hand. Some of the unusual tools in the exhibit are: a huge two man chainsaw with a bar that rotates for both vertical and horizontal cuts, a floor sanding block, a hand operated rope braider, and many other tools of the trades.

Scott Fetchenhier has spent much of his time cleaning and oiling the

wooden artifacts for the above exhibits and the growing collection of domestic artifacts. We are expanding an area on the top floor of the museum to interpret daily life in Silverton. The exhibits will include fraternal organizations, sporting activities, photography and movies, and domestic tools of the trade.

Many hours were also spent preparing the basement level of our mine tunnel exhibit for the spraying of mortar to construct this haulage tunnel. This was an exhausting labor of love as Scott was working overhead most of the time, but it is completed and this fall when the museum closes, we will begin spraying concrete over the wire form.

The interpretive labels and photographs for the San Juan County Jail Restoration Project have been completed and submitted to the State Historical Fund, for review and approval. They will shortly be installed as per our contract, finishing the jail project. In the past the jail was our primary museum space and housed the collection. With the completion of the restoration project we will now interpret the facility in its original use: the county jail. Each room in the jail had a special use and we are telling that story with interpretation, photographs and artifacts. We are keeping the main cell block as spartan as possible to make patrons really feel that they are in jail. Bev Rich is setting up the family spaces in the jail to appear similar to the original use.

Jerry Hoffer is presently upgrading our exhibits regarding the railroads in and around Silverton. He and Steve Rich are working on a new exhibit case telling the Otto Mears story and will display artifacts belonging to him.

Throughout the museum we are installing numerous large historic photographs to support the many facets of the museum exhibits. This is a work in progress and Rich is continuously searching for images that are special to the San Juans and Silverton. The images will include mining, people, the town of Silverton, transportation, etc.



Restored gondola 871 sits outside the Silverton Northern Engine House after transfer to Silverton.

Durango Group Busy on Restorations for Silverton Railroad Historical Park

by Dennis D'Alessandro and George Niederauer

In May 2012 the Durango Railroad Historical Society (DRHS) finished the complicated project of restoring the drop bottom gondola, Denver & Rio Grande Western 871, and moved it to the Silverton Northern track in Silverton. Last September DRHS finished the design of a large interpretive sign about the history and restoration of the car. The sign is mounted on a portable stand for placing wherever the gondola is on display.

In late October, to protect 871 from winter weather, the DRHS designed and built parts for a roof frame and assembled it on the gondola, then covered it with two commercial-grade tarps. The frame sits on the side boards with under the center beam. The end posts are clamped

to the end walls; there are no fasteners into the gondola.

In June 2012 DRHS finished disassembling the high side gondola D&RGW 1400 frame and trucks in Silverton. In the summer and fall a new frame was constructed at a work site on the grounds of San Juan Timberwrights in Arboles, Colorado. The trucks were restored in the garages of Dennis D'Alessandro and Jay Scherer in Durango. The trucks and frame were put together in Arboles and transported to Doug Lashley's hanger at La Plata County Airport in December.

As of mid-April 2013 the posts are bolted and the floor planks are nailed to the frame. Most of the brake rigging and air brake components and piping are in place. DRHS expects to complete the high side gondola in May and transport it to Silverton as soon as ground conditions allow the move.



Silverton Northern Engine House, center piece of planned Railroad Historical Park

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

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

I/we wish to enroll as a member(s) of the San Juan County Historical Society in the class designated below for the calendar year 2013. I understand that this membership entitles me (and my spouse, if applicable) to a vote at the annual meeting in October, 2013.

1. **Member**—\$25 per year, entitling an individual to one vote in meetings of the general membership, discounts on books, and free museum admission.
2. **Family membership**—\$50 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**—\$100 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. **Business**—\$125 per year, same benefits as Society Patron
5. **Lifetime Society Patron**—\$1000, entitling an individual or couple to all of the above privileges for life.

Name: _____

Address: _____