

San Juan Courier

Summer 2021

Silverton, San Juan County, Colorado



Crew from National Barn Company of Colorado Springs works on erection of the 40.5 by 224 foot Railcar Shed which will not only protect completed restorations but provide space for restoration work on additional cars in the future. Elevated platforms will provide both visitors and workers easier access to the cars.

Significant Progress on Railcar Shed Project Made in Covid-19 Summer

By George Niederauer

In 2019 we had a pair of tracks built to display a dozen railcars in a permanent location between the Silverton Northern engine house and the Durango & Silverton depot on railroad's land for which they granted us an easement. At the end of the construction season a little more work needed to be done: ballasting the second track, leveling the track, and adjusting the turnouts.

For 2020 we planned to complete that work and construct an open shed to shelter a dozen cars – provided we could find enough funding. We specified the shed would be 36 feet wide by 224 feet long, including a two foot overhang on all roof edges. The estimate in the spring of 2019 was about \$124,000 plus incidental expenses such as a forklift to unload trucks and trash removal. In the spring of 2020 the estimate rose to about \$140,000 because the price of wood had increased about 30%. This was due to reduced production of lumber caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

Next to operating the 315, the railcar shed was our highest priority in 2020. We had been trying to build the railcar shed for several years to help protect railcars restored from 2009 on-ward, but our finances had not allowed it, given other projects we pursued. The shed is important to help protect the freight and work cars. We learned how important the shed would be when we investigated acquiring a restored trolley car from Aspen several years ago, and found that it needed major restoration again after sitting outside with no protection for 15 years. We

wanted the shed open for public access at any time. Also, for the convenience and better access by visitors we would add a platform at car floor level sometime in the future.

For such a large project we needed a special funding campaign. We started the year with about \$70,000 in cash and donated stock that would ordinarily be spread across several projects and administrative expenses. We decided to delay and cut back other projects that would not be absolutely necessary to complete this year. The annual maintenance of the 315 was the one absolutely necessary project. Early in the year the Ryan family of New York donated a large sum towards the car shed and asked for matching funds.

We put out a request for funds from our members and the general narrow gauge community in March, and again in June. The response exceeded our expectations. In total we raised about \$164,000. John Manley, also of New York, matched the Ryan family with donated stock; together they paid for 87% of the cost of the shed. The stock, held until we needed to pay the contractor, yielded another \$13,000 in increased value. Members and other narrow gaugers contributed \$10,000.

This success, in the face of a national financial crisis caused by the COVID crisis, was a great and marvelous surprise.

At the end of March we signed a contract with the National Barn Company in Colorado Springs to construct the car shed. We made copies of the engineering drawings for the Silverton Building Inspector and for Durango & Silverton Rail-

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Message from the Chairman

Dear Members:

Lately, it occurs to me what a long, strange trip it's been, to quote the song "Truckin" by the Grateful Dead. So GLAD to be back and doing what we are supposed to do after a long year of hibernation and anxiety. We opened the museum and the Mill on Memorial Day weekend, complete with new exhibits and new workers, chomping on the bit. We are back! And, I must say, after a year of being closed, I am having to relearn our routine — getting change, making bank deposits, ordering inventory, cleaning restrooms (yes, being chairman of your august organization is quite glamorous) and the like, the everyday things we do to make our business run smoothly, I am having to relearn. But, as I have always told you: I love it when our visitors expect a nice, little small town museum and they get a world-class mining museum. They are so amazed and delighted. It makes our day — all of us.

And little Silverton seems to be busy and bustling, boding well for a very good summer. Fred Canfield had a \$300 day at the Mill yesterday! That is great for so early in June. Right now the Assay Office rehabilitation project is just getting finished, ready for another round of funding. We have instituted a new tour regimen at the Mill — on particular days Fred is going to do a guided tour earlier in the morning. I don't know which days that will be as we are still working out the details. But, he gives a great tour, dear members. And remember the Heritage Pass — gets you in to the Old 100 Mine Tour, the Mayflower Mill Tour and the museum for \$40.00, a substantial discount on all three admission prices.

Cemetery Workday was in honor of Paul Beaber this year. Paul passed away at the end of March, but before he did, he worked tirelessly at Hillside — he loved the place. He and his wife Mary, along with Freda, organized Cemetery Workday for over a decade. This year Cemetery

Workday was June 19th, and there was a great turnout to celebrate Paul's life!

I just got out of a meeting with a group of Ouray preservationists with whom we are working on the four little houses that sit at the Idarado Mine just on the other side of Red mountain Pass. The Idarado Mine had been developed from old workings on the Ouray and Telluride sides to mine base metals during WWII. The plans call for roof and foundation stabilization on all of the houses (some work got done last fall). What a history those houses have — they were trucked from Eureka through Silverton and over the pass to their present site in the 1940s over dirt roads! They were used as housing for Idarado employees and one was used as clinic for injured miners. My dad stayed in those houses occasionally when the slides ran between Silverton and the mine. This is a good and highly visible and needed project, and we thank the Forest Service and Ouray County for their participation.

Our Board of Directors has been able to meet in person the last couple of months, thanks to the miracle of science. It is so nice to see each other's faces and to remember what a good bunch of volunteers we are. I so enjoy those people and their commitment to our mission. Years ago when the great Sunnyside Mine shut down, we all wondered if we were going to become a ghost town like so many little settlements all over San Juan County. What were we going to do? What were we going to become? We had two things going for us — our spectacular scenery and our history — and that is what makes our living today. It is important work that we do.

And, as always, dear members, we thank you for your support.

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Join the San Juan County Historical Society Today!

Box 154, Silverton, Colorado 81433

I wish to enroll as a member of the San Juan County Historical Society in the class designated below (please circle desired membership) for the calendar year 2021. I understand the membership entitles me and my spouse, if applicable, to a vote at the Annual Meeting in October 2021.

1. **Member:** \$25.00 per year entitles a couple to one vote each in meetings of the general membership, discount on books, and free museum admission.
2. **Family Membership:** \$50 per year entitles an individual one vote in meetings of the general membership, discount on books, and free museum admission.
3. **Society Patron:** \$100 per year entitles an individual or couple to voting privileges, a museum pass for the season, and discount on books.
4. **Life Member:** \$1000 entitles an individual or couple to all of the privileges for life.

Name:

Mailing Address:

Email address:



Rose-Walsh Smelter Scale

On October 12 Jerry Hoffer, Joe Weigman, and George Niederauer worked at the Rose-Walsh Smelter scale track site. Jerry lettered the Fairbanks stand. Joe painted the hardware red, George lettered the boxcar.

Fritz Klinker supplied a historical photo of the Fairbanks scale stand so we could get that lettering as close to the historical typeface as practical. The boxcar lettering is a modified typeface that replicates the 1890s style shown in Sloan's book, *A Century + Ten of D&RGW Narrow Gauge Freight Cars, 1871 to 1981, 2nd ed.*



Photo used to guide the lettering of the Rose-Walsh Smelter scale. Started as a family business in the 1820s, in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, the Fairbanks firm became the world's premier scale manufacturer. The company was granted the first railroad-track platform scale patent on January 13, 1857. In the 1880s the company was producing over 70,000 scales a year in the Vermont location and had additional plants around the world. While there have been a number of ownership changes over the years, platform scales are still produced in the Vermont plant.

Railcar Shed (continued from page 1)

road management. Because the car shed and other buildings in Silverton had suffered collapse or nearly so from snow and ice loads, our specification was for a design load higher than Silverton required. The structure is essentially a pole barn with 8x8 posts spaced 8 feet on center. Each post is buried 42 inches in the ground and sits on a 24 inch diameter precast concrete footing.

Originally we intended to start work in June, but Jerry Hoffer warned that the ground would still be frozen a few feet down, so we delayed until August. In the meantime we planned to get the trackwork finished. Maisel Excavation added and spread ballast in June. The railroad was going to try to send a track crew in July; however, the Elk Creek bridge washout, COVID and other pressing trackwork prevented that from happening then and even in the fall after the shed was built. Thus, the cars will be left out for one more winter,

and none can even be stored in the engine house because of the work inside.

Materials for the shed were delivered from Colorado Springs on four truckloads during mid-August. The first truck delivered the posts and concrete pads on which the posts would sit. We rented a small forklift that could handle 5000 pounds. Trusses arrived in two truckloads. George operated a bigger forklift to move the trusses, while Jerry operated the smaller forklift to lift one end of a stack so George could get under it, then to keep the stack from sliding off. The fourth truck, with lumber, was unloaded without a forklift, so Jerry just directed placement of the load.

When the trusses were delivered, we found the overall span is 40.5 feet, not the 36 feet on George's sketch. We had not studied the details of the engineering drawings when they were

sent to us because we were so busy taking care of issues with the Town of Silverton and the Durango & Silverton.

The silver lining on this cloud was that it gave extra protection with wider overhang. The problem was that our agreement The railroad required at least 10 feet clearance between any post and a railcar on their adjacent track. To meet the specification we shifted the north end of the building one foot more away from their track and moved the northeast corner post inward one foot, adding a beam across the front wall to support the outer plates for the roof. This was where the railroad's track curved towards the shed on its path towards the depot.

The four-man work crew arrived August 22 and started work the next day. Beginning with a few reference stakes set by Jerry and George, the crew laid out construction stakes and lines. They dug the first two holes using their 30 inch diameter auger and ran into trouble with large rocks. It was too slow and troublesome, and couldn't get deep enough, so they rented a backhoe from Durango. Between the poor soil and larger holes they would not

be able to backfill solid enough to stabilize the tall poles properly. Plan A was replaced by Plan B: setting the poles inside 30-in diameter by 2-ft high tubes, then filling with pouring concrete. By the end of a week they had set more than two-thirds of the poles in place and concreted more than two dozen.

Extra costs for the forklifts, backhoe, concrete, generator, and other incidentals increased the total cost to about \$161,500, leaving almost \$3,000 for signs and any other work.

In week two the crew finished installing the poles and putting up all the plates (laminated beam, 2x14, on the inside and outside of the poles). After finishing the framing a snow storm caused little progress for a few days. They finished the roof after three and a half weeks, on September 16.

In 2021 we plan to finish the trackwork, move the cars into the shed along with their interpretive signs, and mount signs at both ends of the shed. Later, we plan to add the platform and bumpers at the ends of the track.



Working with buildings that have been around more than a century uncovers a lot of mysteries like this piping network along the east and south walls in the engine house back room. It appears to be heating pipes along east wall and spray pipes on floor along both walls. True purpose is unknown and it is too modern for the period of significance – they were removed.



The massiveness of the new Railcar Shed can perhaps be appreciated in this view of the partially completed building last fall. The railyard development is a joint project of the Durango Railroad Historical Society and the San Juan County Historical Society. For some perspective on the pole barn building picture that the vertical poles are eight feet apart.

Even Closed for Eleven Months Archive had an Interesting Year

Let us begin by saying that the Archives were “Covid-closed” from April 1, 2020 through February 2021. However, the Archives still had an interesting year.

In October of 2020, Heather Nossaman and Nick Nossaman (Allen’s daughter and brother) brought us 20 to 30 boxes of Allen’s artifacts and personal papers going back to his college days. Darlene and Casey began the arduous task of sorting through these boxes in order to see what we have and to begin cataloging them. We were amazed at all Allen had collected over the years, from cheerleader outfits, to top hats, to brand new orthopedic black men’s shoes, and letters to and from “mom”. We suspect we will also find more info for Many More Mountains Vol. 4 in all these boxes and a file cabinet full of Allen’s treasures.

We recently came to an agreement with the Town of Silverton regarding Hillside Cemetery. The Society will continue taking care of the Cemetery, as we have been doing for a few decades. The Town will take care of the roads, trash, and doggy poop station. Bev and Casey will be painting the “crypt” as soon as other maintenance issues have been addressed.

The Society received approximately 30 donations in

memory of Paul Beaber. Paul had many great friends from many places. We will use the almost \$3,000 generously donated in Paul’s memory for a startup fund to design and erect an arched entry to the Cemetery. We feel this would be a very fitting use for these donations as Paul and Mary dearly loved the Cemetery and devoted many years alongside Freda in maintaining it.

Bill Fries will be helping us photograph artifacts this fall and the LDS Church has some members interested in helping us catalog more boxes full of more treasures.

We have about two-thirds of our newspaper conversion to search-able PDF accomplished now. We hope to wrap that up over the next year or two.

We had a representative of a space saver company visit the Archives last week that will help us (hopefully) find a way to add “space-savers” to our vault. He will give us a cost breakdown in a week or so. It will be VERY expensive, but dearly needed. We have run out of room in the vault and we have so much more to make room for. The space-savers will allow the vault to house 2 to 3 times more that it currently is able to. We are hoping to find some grantors that help Archives with projects like this and maybe will help us realize this dream. We know the cost will probably be about \$200,000 (give

or take), but we would be able to use our existing shelving which will save immensely! They can actually build the moveable structures around our shelving.

I would like to thank RAY DILEO for nine years of being an amazing volunteer and Darlene Bolfig for volunteering about four years now. Darlene is a WHIZ at scanning and cataloging. We also thank Judy Zimmerman for volunteering for several years whenever we are overwhelmed with donated

collections. We would also like to thank Judy for maintaining the Historical Society’s Facebook page. She is doing a FANTASTIC job and she has generated hundreds and sometimes thousands of followers. Thank you Judy!!!!

As we close, we would like to say that we are very excited about being open to the public again and we are looking forward to a busy year at the Archive, the Mining Heritage Center and the Mayflower Mill! We hope to see you this summer!!

Archive Hours

Open Year Around, Thursdays 10 to 4 or by Appointment
970-387-5609,
archives@sanjuancountyhistoricalsociety.org

San Juan Courier

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Edited by George Chapman

San Juan County Historical Society Officers and Directors, 2021

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Upgrading, Reorganizing, Improving, Sorting of Exhibits and Artifacts kept Museum Crew busy during Covid-year

Early last spring, we spent some time reorganizing the numerous artifacts and furniture we have in storage at the Little Nation Tram Terminal in Howardsville. We have everything from movie projectors (from Silverton's movie theaters) to office machines and furniture to gambling tables and mining tools, and the like. Several small repairs were made to help keep the Little Nation Mill secure.

Because the museum was closed to the public in 2020, we were able to do some much needed fine tuning on several exhibits. Exhibit cases were opened, vacuumed and sometimes rearranged to help tell their story even better. Many new labels were produced and installed.

Last summer the Museum acquired 19th century oil fired kiln from the McNaughton home. It was used to fire the hand painted china plates, cups and saucers we have exhibited in the 1902 Jail. Zeke painstakingly wire brushed and sanded the surface rust from the kiln and painted the metal to match its original color. I was away from the Museum for several months working on projects as they came up so I did not see the restoration of this artifact. Zeke did a wonderful job on the kiln. It is displayed in the jail next to the actual china painted by Mrs. McNaughton and Mrs. Dyson that was fired in it!

I later began the cleaning, adjusting and repairing the large coffee grinder that was originally used in the Silverton Bakery located on Green Street. This grinder is capable of grinding five pounds at a time. Many restaurants would buy large quantities of coffee from the bakery and use the machine to grind the coffee they served in their businesses.

As I cleaned the cast metal, the original paint began to show through – a dark red with gold pin striping. With a little adjusting and lubrication this beautiful machine came to life! It works as good as when it was in use at the turn of the last century. When I opened the hopper the smell of fresh ground coffee still permeated the air, one hundred years later.

After all our staff received Covid vaccinations we were able to go back to work in the Museum and we took up where we left off and continued to work on upgrading some of our exhibits. Zeke has redone the Explosives Case adding several new artifacts and producing some new labels.

Another new exhibit is an ore car turnstile, which came from the Black Prince Mine located in Little Giant Basin, near Arrastra Gulch. Used in one of the earliest mines in the area, the artifact dates to around 1870. The turnstile was used in the mine to change direction of ore cars using much less space than opening a large area to make turns in a mine tunnel. The ore car was centered on the turntable and manually rotated to make the turn. The artifact was located nearly a quarter of a mile underground and was hauled out by hand. It may be viewed in the basement of the Mining Heritage Center.

Clay Custer joined us again to work

on exhibits. We began restoration of a large wooden "Carpenter's Chest", donated by Scot Jackson. I custom mixed a period paint similar to that used on typical vintage items. Clay oiled all interior drawers and bins. We knew very little of this chest as it came to us without tools.

One evening I was watching YouTube and a similar chest had been acquired by an antique dealer. It was full of vintage tools. The dealer called a friend who was an expert in vintage hand tools to come by and tell him what he had purchased. Early on, when a carpenter got his journeyman card, his "thesis" was to build his own carpenter's chest. However, in this case, the chest was factory made and due to the interior drawer configuration was a "Timber Framers'" chest. It was made about 1830! Now knowing this we searched through our hand tools in storage for timber framing tools. We found several beautiful tools with brass accents and produced a "Timber Framers'" tool chest!

That about tells how we still moved forward to make our Museum even better, despite the Covid virus! We hope that you will visit the Museum in the near future and enjoy our many wonderful exhibits.

*Stephen F. Rich,
Exhibits Preparator
San Juan County Historical Society*



A new exhibit is an ore car turnstile, from the Black Prince Mine located in Little Giant Basin. It dates to about 1870.



1830 Timber Framers Chest



Reading accounts of mining disasters in the San Juans, often the culprit is found to be improper handling or use of explosives. This upgraded exhibit in the Mining Heritage Center shows what all was used by those miners of old, and you may come away with a better understanding of the dangers they faced.

Board and staff member Zeke Zaroni, a retired miner with personal experience underground, worked on this display last year and provided new tags to enlighten you.

2021 Mining Museum and Jail Hours

May 29th until mid -October (call)

Open Daily 10 to 4

Admission: \$10

Children (5-12) \$3

970-387-5838, admin@sanjuancountyhistoricalsociety.org