

San Juan Courier

Summer 2025

Silverton, San Juan County, Colorado

2024 Season Capped with 60th Anniversary Celebration

On Saturday, September 7, 2024, Silverton came together to celebrate the San Juan County Historical Society's 60th year of preserving the region's rich heritage. Held at the Mining Heritage Center and the 1902 County Jail, the evening was a heartfelt tribute to the people, places, and projects that have shaped Silverton's past—and continue to guide its future.

The celebration was a true community affair, with partners including KSJC: Silverton Community Radio, Silverton Public School, and the Silverton Creative District. Guests enjoyed live music from the Silverton Brass Band, a youth art exhibition celebrating Silverton's unique architecture, and a spirited auction of artwork by the late local artist Vern Parker. Visitors explored the museum and honored the Society's decades of preservation work across San Juan County.

A special highlight of the even-

ing was the dedication of commemorative plaques to Zeke Zaroni and Freda Peterson, honoring their lasting impact as longtime contributors to the Society's mission.

These dedications served as a powerful reminder of the individuals whose passion and commitment have helped preserve Silverton's story for future generations.

Adding to the historic ambiance, members of the Durango Victorian Aid Society attended in period dress, lending a charming and authentic presence that underscored the evening's celebration of heritage.

In a program of heartfelt speeches and tributes, past donors and volunteers were also recognized for their enduring support. Light refreshments and community camaraderie rounded out the event, leaving attendees with a deepened appreciation for Silverton's legacy—and the tireless efforts of the Society that keeps it alive.

What We Do . . . and How We Do It!

The San Juan County Historical Society was established in 1964 as a Non-profit 501(c)(3) Colorado Corporation for preserving the history of San Juan County, Colorado.

Our mining heritage has been the heart of San Juan County's development. Many service industries were instrumental in the success of the mining industry including four railroads for transportation of the ores, Otto Mears toll road system, the mining of precious metals (from numerous mines, mills and smelters, and miner's boarding houses) and the support towns that followed the big strikes, which provided employment, supplies, housing, cultural opportunities, and entertainment.

The Town of Silverton, the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and the Mayflower Mill have each been designated National Historic Landmarks. The Old Hundred Boarding House, owned by Society, is on the Colorado list of Historic Places. Among other properties owned by the San Juan County Historical Society include the Mayflower Mill, the Little Nation Mill (located at Howardsville), the Silverton Northern Engine House (housing the famous 315 narrow gauge steam locomotive), the oldest caboose in the state of Colorado, the Casey Jones railcar, and the Silverton Power Station.

The Historical Society operates the Mining Heritage

Center, the 1902 County Jail Museum in Silverton, the Mayflower Mill Tour, the Allen Nossaman Memorial Archive, and the Silverton Power Station.

The Silverton Railroad Historical Park located between the Silverton Northern Engine House and the Silverton Depot is a joint project with the Durango Railroad Historical Society and displays a variety of railroad cars important to the area.

The Society collaborates with the [Hillside Cemetery](#) to preserve the stories and the dignity of those buried in Silverton's cemetery. Additionally, the Society works in partnership to stabilize and preserve buildings, such as the Old Hundred Boarding House and other historic structures.

The San Juan County Historical Society has received numerous awards from History Colorado and has received two National Honor Awards from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for its work.

Partnerships and collaborations with Colorado and national historical organizations and private foundations help to fund some of the major renovation projects. However, many projects and daily operations are funded by visitor fees, donations and San Juan County Historical Society Membership subscriptions.

Your donations, membership dues and museum store purchases make good things happen for the Museum and Silverton.



Society Chairman Beverly Rich and long-time board member and Treasurer Scott Fetchenhier dedicate a plaque to the late "Zeke" Zaroni. Zaroni served on the board for many years and spearheaded the Society's extensive efforts to preserve the local history of hard-rock mining.



Aiding and enhancing the festive appeal of the event, members of the Durango Victorian Aid Society arrived decked out in period correct-clothing as they joined the celebration.



Above: Views of the celebratory crowd at last fall's 60th Celebration.

Chairman's Comments

April 14, 2025

Dear Members,

As I write today, the sun is shining on peaks which are losing their snow very early this year. Our spring has come early with temperatures in the low 60s, making the pussy willows bud and the grass start to green up. Our snowpack is 67% of average this year, making us wish for a very wet summer. We will see. Be careful what you wish for.

This morning I looked out my windows at the museum and our whole crew is there getting ready to move shelving and boxes and bins out of the archive into containers out in the parking lot of Courthouse Square. We are to the point in the vault that we have no room to put our valuable photos, maps, diaries, and the like, and were looking for grant money to buy library style industrial space savers which would double the storage space in the vault. Never in our wildest dreams did we expect to be able to buy the space savers shelving that we had wished for for many years, but we had a bequest by a member who appreciated what we have done. But, to install these treasured shelves, we have to remove everything from the vault and then put it back in—a lot of volunteer work!

And speaking of spring and volunteers—the museum and mill will open soon. This year the Mill will open on Memorial Day weekend and the museum, the week before, so it is time to get the floors mopped and the windows clean and shiny to welcome our visitors, and, hopefully, you, dear members. You will be proud of the best mining museum in the country and we will be proud to show it off!

Fred Canfield and Mark Hall are already up at the Mill getting it cleaned up and ready as well. The Mill is our next big ticket item—it needs a new roof. A new BIG roof. It is a National Historic Landmark, one of only 23 in the State of Colorado and one of fewer than 2500 in the whole country. And it is unusual—it is an industrial

site. There are very few of them in the whole United States. The Mill is so important that the National Park Service helped pay for a HAER for the Mill—a Historic American Engineering Record. To see it, please look at: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/co0922/>

Several years ago the Mill was a study by the International Council on Monuments and Sites. ICOMOS is a professional association that works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places around the world. It offers advice to UNESCO on World Heritage Sites. The Colorado State Historical Society then funded a Historic Structure Assessment of the Mill which was conducted by member David Singer and won a Stephen H. Hart Award for its comprehensiveness. This is our next big project, which will compliment our Assay Office and coal trestle rehabilitation projects so if you know anyone with and extra buck or two, we know where to spend it.

Pretty soon we will be doing the finishing touches of the final phase (fifth) on our Engine House project. Thanks to all of our rail buffs for their support, not only with funding but working many volunteer hours to make Otto Mears' Silverton Northern Engine House a real show place, and some very useful space. It is truly amazing what Jerry Hoffer, George Niederauer and crew have done—a few winters ago we had a heavy winter and I can't believe it is still standing. It now is part of the outdoor rolling stock museum that we have done with the Durango Railroad Historical Society and partners D&SNGRR and the Town of Silverton. We are the "Narrow Gauge Capital of the World!!" and we have the artifacts that prove it. The Silverton Northern Engine House and several sections of track leading to the ghost town of Animas Forks are all that remain of this vital railroad's history.

Elsewhere in these pages you will find out more about the many preservation projects we are doing, and some that are done and some still to do. But that is why we are here: to save the fantastic history of San Juan County, Colorado. And we can't do without you. Thank you, dear members, for your support.

Beu



A group of volunteers moves a pallet of Spacesaver shelving into storage in the almost complete Silverton Northern Engine House. This is one of 12 pallets of materials of the units acquired for the Archive. They will more than double the vault storage space available. As a side note, the picture also portrays the new look of the engine house interior, a welcome contrast to the dingy, poorly lit space of former days. On the right, can be seen the tail-end of the Society's famous Casey Jones, snugly stored away from the harshness of Silverton's winter weather.

News from the Allen Nossaman Memorial Archive

By Casey Carroll,

Several families visited us over the past year inquiring about where their family members were buried at our Hillside Cemetery. We love perusing Freda's cemetery books with them and sharing their stories. Often times, they will send us copies of their family photos for our collection.

Judy Zimmerman (our Facebook guru) spends her Thursday mornings sorting through un-cataloged photos and negatives to share on Facebook; and she discovers some great ones. Ray Dileo then scans the images/negatives and Judy posts them to our Facebook page. We then have a digitized image saved.

We provided David Dibble 40 historic images of Silverton for the celebration of the town's 150th birthday party that was celebrated last September.

I heard about a fella who frequented the Museum several times a week, so one day last summer, when I heard he was there, I decided to go meet him. After chatting for a while, he expressed interest in volunteering at the Archive, and I was thrilled to say yes! I asked for his contact information, and he handed me a business card emblazoned with a paintbrush and the phrase "Have Brush Will Travel."

We had been searching for someone to paint the Archive for years without luck, so it was a stroke of fortune that Curtis Williams came out of retirement to help us. He took on the task of painting all 32 window trims at the Museum, along with the porches, trim, windows, and doors of the jail, which desperately needed attention. He even transformed the front of the Archive building, making it look brand new! He also painted the oldest caboose (next to the Archive) in Colorado for us and it looks absolutely marvelous! A huge thank you to Mr. Curtis!

Chris Stoiber (yes, that Stoiber) Fahlund has been working on a book centered around Lena Stoiber. A few years back, she explored the Archives and uncovered some fantastic images and details about the Stoiber family. A couple of months ago, Chris reached out to share that the book is nearing completion. We are anxiously await-

ing this one!

Chris Landry has done a magnificent job of working on the map scanning project and has made the upstairs of the Archive a beautiful space. We now have close to 7,000 mining maps scanned. Thank you, SO MUCH, Chris. Job well done!

Now, for the most exciting thing that happened to the Archives this year. This year brought an incredible surprise to the Archives., Nelda Cuppy and her late husband, Larry Manes of Kansas, were frequent visitors to Silverton, drawn by their passion for our mining history. Sadly, both have passed away, but Nelda left us a generous bequest of \$60,000, which was exactly what we needed for our collapsible Spacesaver shelving for the vault.

These high-density mobile storage units had to be ordered in January from Canada to avoid a potential 25% tariff if we delayed. Upon their arrival, we faced a challenging and frigid morning as we struggled to get these 12 heavy palettes into the Engine House, requiring assistance from Loren Lew and his crew, along with a borrowed loader and driver from the Town. After five LONG hours, with many cold feet, hands, and noses, we finally succeeded.

We are now seeking grants (and donations) to cover the \$12,000 installation fee, the rental of two 40-foot containers, and the labor needed to move everything back onto the new shelving. This has turned into a monumental task, but the new shelving will allow us to store 250% more items as their forever home. I have learned to be careful what I wish for!

The Archives would like to thank all that have volunteered at the Archives this past year; Darlene Bolfig, Ray Dileo, Kendra Hooper, Chris Landry, Gina Rosato, Curtis Williams, and Judy Zimmerman, and last but not least, I would also like to express my gratitude to Susan Jones from the Animas Museum for her invaluable help whenever I find myself puzzled with an archival question. If you would like to volunteer at the Archives, we could really use the help. We have a lot of cataloging to do.

"Here's to preserving the past and embracing the future."

Please consider becoming a member of the Society and doing your share to promote and save the history of San Juan County, Colorado

**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 2025.

I understand the membership entitles me and my spouse, if applicable, to a vote at the Annual Meeting in October 2025.

1. **Member: \$25.00** per year entitles an individual to one vote in meetings of the general membership, discount on books, and free museum admission.
2. **Family Membership: \$50** per year entitles a couple to one vote each 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:

Eighth Wonder of the World Displayed at Museum

No less an inventor than Thomas Edison declared Ottmar Mergenthaler's Linotype as the Eighth Wonder of the World. The San Juan County Historical Society is proud to have an example of this wondrous machine in its collection.

From the year 1450 to late in the nineteenth century, almost all printed material was produced from hand-set type. That is, each letter was a reversed image of the character, on an individual small piece of metal, which in turn would be inked and pressed against the paper or other medium to produce a character in its correct orientation for reading. These individually cast letters had to be put together by hand, one letter at a time.

Johannes Gutenberg is generally credited with the invention of this "movable type" and his edition of the bible, available in 1454 or 55, is the first significant publication using this method.

Setting type by hand is a slow and laborious process, especially when dealing with small sizes as you might find in a newspaper. However, that is the way all newspapers were composed until late in the 19th century. The task was doubled since the type had to be distributed back to its storage case after use so that it could be used again. The immense amounts of type required by the 1000s of newspapers in the United States led to the establishment of type founding companies in almost every major city.

An invention in the late 19th century however, changed all that. The Linotype machine was invented by a German immigrant to Baltimore in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Ottmar Mergenthaler came to this country 1872 at age 18, as a watchmaker and became a naturalized citizen in 1878. At the suggestion of friends and investors, he developed a means by which type could be set by machine, casting whole lines from brass matrices. By 1886 he had produced a machine capable of commercial use and one was installed in the New York Tribune. Type from it first appeared in a July 1886 issue.

Not only did this wonderful machine speed the process of typesetting, it automatically returned the used matrices to their proper place as each line was cast. The cast lines were usable for several hundred thousand impressions. In

the case of newspapers, a nightly or weekly happening was the tearing down of the pages and all of the linotype castings were melted down for the metal to be used again.

The machine was made up of over 36,000 precision parts and was not cheap to produce. However, the benefits to even a small newspaper publisher were so great that the Linotype quickly proliferated so that by early in the 20th century even small to medium sized papers were using it to produce their daily or weekly issues. In 1902, a very basic machine sold for \$3,150.

Its use was not limited to newspapers. Every kind of publication could be produced cheaper and faster with machine set type. Book publishers and other commercial printers also bought machines.

While exact figures are not available, by 1900 most major newspapers and a growing list of smaller papers were relying on the machine to replace the tedious setting and distribution of hand-set type. Such was not to be in Silverton, where by 1900 the number of local newspapers had been reduced to two from almost a dozen a few years earlier.

As Ross Beaber outlines in the related story elsewhere on the page, Silverton's first Linotype arrived in 1936. Beaber's article was announcing the arrival of a replacement, albite a 37-year-old one.

That Model Eight machine was used to produce type for the Standard from 1958 to 1973 by Beaber and his successor, Alan Nossaman. In 1973 the paper was purchased by Larry and Roz Duthie who immediately upgraded things by installing machines that replaced the hot metal of the Linotype and printing of the papers was outsourced to the Durango Herald.

The Model Eight Linotype, however, remained to be used for certain commercial printing uses. Three years later the paper was purchased by the Chapman family, Model Eight and all. While the Linotype received minimal use, George Chapman thought a new-



In May of 2017, Ken Safranski is shown with the Museum's Model 8 Linotype loaded after being rolled out from the former Silverton Standard building on Greene Street.

er better machine would be helpful. In 1979 he purchased all the letterpress equipment still owned by the Windsor (Colorado) Beacon and a newer Linotype Model Eight was included. That machine, which saw limited use in Silverton is in fact the machine currently displayed at the Historical Society Museum, along with other printing artifacts.

Chapman was not done. In the late 1980s, on the advice of Merritt McKenzie (see Beaber article) he pur-

chased the last Linotype retained by the Durango Herald. A Model 31, it was much newer and nicer than either of the other Standard's machines.

The Model Eight used all those years by Beaber and Nossaman was eventually scrapped. The Model 31 was transferred to Fritz Klinke and has been maintained and used by him, although health problems have ended his actual use of the machine. Transfer to some operational museum or printer is currently under consideration.

The second of Silverton's four Linotype machines came on the scene in 1958. Here is Silverton Standard's owner Ross Beaber's description.

October 3, 1958

Model Three Linotype Retired as Later Model Eight is Installed Here

The Standard owner still has some faith in the future of Silverton despite the fact that the present economy is at an unusually low point because of low metal prices. After using a 1903* Linotype for twenty years, the Standard this week put into operation a later Model, known as an Eight. The Model Three has been offered for sale.

The Model Eight acquired from John Dinise at Walsenburg, was hauled in by pickup from that southern Colorado town two weeks ago. Gene Luther accompanied the owner to that city and assisted with the loading and unloading of the three-ton** typesetting machine.

The later model machine carries three magazines*** of type where the old has one. The magazines are changeable on the later model where on the Model Three they were not.

The Model Three was Silverton's first single magazine Linotype and was installed by Lloyd S. Jones in 1936, soon after he acquired the plant from E. A. Hillman.**** Prior to that time [the paper had been printed from hand-set type]. The

Model Eight installed last week is the first multiple magazine machine to be brought into Silverton. While it is a thirty-seven year old machine, it compares in production to models of much more recent date.

Merritt McKenzie, master mechanic and Linotype machinist for the Durango Herald News, spent most of Saturday in Silverton tuning up the newly-acquired machine. He had the machine in good operating order when he left late Saturday night.

Notes:

* Linotype records show the Model 3 was introduced and produced in 1902. It was superseded in 1903 by the Model 2, a two-magazine machine. The cost of the Model 3 was \$3,150 in 1902. That translates to \$112,355 2024 dollars.0

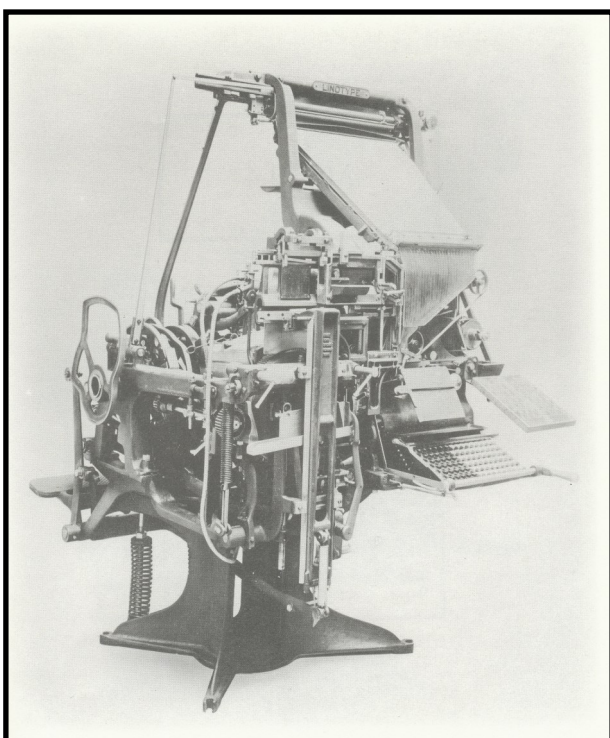
** Beaber exaggerates a little here in that the Model 8 Linotype weighed in at about 2800 pounds, not three tons.

*** The "magazine" is the large flat area seen on the top right of the machine. It contained 90 channels and stored the brass matrices (see related story) from which the type was cast.

**** Edward A. Hillman was part of a corporation that bought the Standard in 1919 and he became editor, a position held until the 1935 sale to Joyce. Hillman became the sole owner in 1921 shortly after the paper purchased the foundering Silverton Miner. Lloyd Jones leased the paper to Ross Beaber in the late thirties and Beaber purchased it in 1946. Beaber sold the paper in 1963 to the late Society archivist Allen Nossaman.

San Juan Courier

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Edited by George Chapman



The Model Three Linotype (shown here) acquired by the Standard in 1936 was a very basic machine. Although manufactured in 1902, the machine parts and operation would be familiar to any Linotype operator working on much later and newer machines.

Planning More Space for Large Mining Artifacts

The Exhibits Department

By Stephen Rich

This past season we have been working on plans to build a new building adjacent to the museum. It will house several large air compressors and other artifacts that need to be undercover. Some of the space will also be an area for working on artifacts, such as, ore cars, etc., and will also provide much needed storage space.

The structure will be a 32' x 40' pole building with open sides and it will have a loft for storage. It will match the look of the museum. One of the compressors is massive. When assembled, it is 23' long x 10' wide x 14' tall and was used at the Sunnyside Mine, two miles underground! It is so large that we have to set it in place and build a portion of the building around it. This is a project that Zeke Zanonni wanted to do for some time. It will be a real asset for our growing museum.

Some of the other projects we have been working on have been upgrading many exhibit labels and cleaning exhibit cases. In some instances, the entire exhibit has been upgraded considerably.

One of the exhibits, "The Silverton Brass Band", has some new "old" photographs and the Conductor's uniform, with batons.

We have also been helping the Archive get ready for them to install the new Space Saver shelving in the vault. As you can imagine, there are literally thousands of items, photos and documents that need be moved and stored temporarily. The photographs and negatives are being stored in the Clean Room at the museum. For more information regarding the new Space Savers storage shelving see the Archives report elsewhere in this newsletter.

Our new exhibit for this season is interpreting Silverton Veterans. We have documentation from the Civil War to the present. Several donations, which include uniforms, service ribbons, and campaign medals, along with Annapolis artifacts will make for an informative exhibit. We are compiling a list of current residents who are military veterans. Two display cases will house the artifacts: one newly constructed and the other required a complete make-over. Several photos and a new sign will complete the exhibit.

Thanks for your support for one of the finest Mining Museums in the country!



One Very Small Magical Part of The Eighth Wonder of the World

Of the many critical parts of the Linotype machine (The Eighth Wonder of the World), the matrix or mat shown above might be considered the greatest breakthrough. Each mat is a small piece of brass about 1 1/4 inches tall. Each magazine of a specific typeface and size included dozens of matrices, assortment based on the letter usage. Over the years, the Linotype Company produced many million matrices in dozens of typefaces and sizes. The jagged top of the matrix provided the means by which they were sorted back into the proper magazine channel. The precision of design and manufacture for these small pieces of brass was no less than that required of the machine that used them.

Prior to the invention of the Linotype, material to be printed had to be put together, one letter at a time by hand. Once complete, the image of the letters was inked and transferred to a sheet of paper. This was done using another machine called a press.

The Museum displays two different style presses which were used for this purpose.

After the printing process was complete, each of the individual letters had to be distributed back into the "typecase" (a flat drawer with dozens of compartments, one for each character) so it could be used again.

The Linotype however, by working with matrices and casting a complete line of metal type eliminated the tediousness of both the typesetting by using a keyboard and that of distributing the type by automatically sorting the matrices back into the appropriate magazine, usually a 90-channel flat storage device.

The entire operation of the Linotype machine is far more complicated than we can describe in the San Juan Courier. However, if you are interested, the Wikipedia entry on "Linotype machine" as a very thorough description that we recommend.

Mayflower Mill Tour Offers Much More Than an Exhibit



As built photo of the mill from 1929.

By Freddie Canfield

Welcome to the Mayflower Mill, an absolutely enchanting place where we talk story, share life and expand our horizons in our otherwise horizonless realm. Up here at 10,900 feet we share our love for living history, relentless innovation, rocks and minerals, books, and maps, all things back-country, photography and movie making, Confucius lifelong learning, sharing and caring, life and death, safety and hazards, curiosity and questioning, creativity and skill – not to mention the all-encompassing joy of being surrounded by jaw dropping natural beauty!

We are amazed by how quickly most folks, from all over the region, nation, and the four corners of the earth, wake up to the wonder and excitement of being in this last complete semi-functioning turnkey time warp of a rock breaking, fine grinding of a selective floatation mill – not to be duplicated anywhere else on our planet.

To our knowledge we have the only remaining mechanically complete tram house with buckets, cables, and tram towers intact, freeze framed since 1963! On top of that it had a cameo role in a James Stewart

western (*The Naked Spur*, 1953)

Where else can you get qualified to operate 480-volt, 3-phase electric motors?

We challenge each and every one of you to come visit and share your experience and ours – 7 days a week from May 17th until mid-October. Your appreciation of history and what it takes to make it, will never be the same. That we promise!



Mayflower Mill Tour

Monday—Saturday
10 to 4:00

Sunday, Noon—4:30

Background on the Mayflower Mill

The American West once had hundreds of precious metal mills. Now, most are in various stages of ruin. One important exception is the Mayflower Mill, (or the Shenandoah-Dives Mill) located two miles north-east of Silverton and is a National Historic Landmark. On a tour of the mill you will witness first-hand how the miners were able to extract gold, silver and base metals from the hard rock ores in this complete processing mill.

Starting in the 1860s, the rush was on, with prospectors and miners swarming in, partially fueled by adventure seeking Civil War veterans. Mining was here to stay for the next 125 years.

The Mayflower Mill was the last and the most advanced of the big mills to be built in the San Juans.

The mill took shape in the summer of 1929 as the dream of Charles A. Chase, a successful mine manager from the Liberty Bell near Telluride. A contract was issued to Stearns-Roger Manufacturing Co. of Denver for \$375,000 to erect the mill.

Construction was pushed to take advantage of the short mountain summer and it was completed in six months, and started processing ore in February of 1930. In its 61 years of operation, it was shut down only a total of 12 years.

The total amount of rock milled is estimated at 9,700,500 tons. The Mill produced 1,940,100 ounces of gold; 30,000,000 ounces of silver; and 1,000,000 tons of combined base metals—a remarkable record for hard rock mining using old techniques seldom employed today,

San Juan County Historical Society Officers and Directors, 2025

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