

GUIDE TO HISTORIC

# ASPEN

— AND THE —

# Roaring Fork Valley

Sarah J. Pearce & Roxanne Eflin

WH  
917.8  
Pea



GUIDE TO HISTORIC

# ASPEN

— AND THE —

# Roaring Fork Valley

Sarah J. Pearce & Roxanne Eflin

Gunnison County Library  
307 N. Wisconsin  
Gunnison, CO 81230



CORDILLERAPRESS, INC.

Publishers in the Rockies

W.H.  
917.8  
Pear

Copyright 1990 by The Aspen Historic Trust.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior written permission of the Publisher.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Pearce, Sarah J.

Guide to historic Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley / Sarah J. Pearce & Roxanne Eflin. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-917895-32-0

1. Aspen (Colo.) — Description — Guide-books. 2. Aspen (Colo.) — History.  
3. Historic sites — Colorado — Aspen — Guide-books. 4. Roaring Fork River Valley (Colo.) — Description and travel — Guide-books. 5. Roaring Fork River Valley (Colo.) — History, Local. 6. Historic sites — Colorado — Roaring Fork River Valley — Guide-books. I. Eflin, Roxanne. II. Title III. Title: Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley. F784.A7P43 1990 917.88'43 — dc20

90-2050  
CIP

First Edition

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

*Printed in the United States of America*

Front Cover Photograph: *Aspen and Fireworks*. R.C. Bishop.

Back Cover Photographs: *Sardy House* by Jeffrey Aaronson. *Maroon Bells* by Paul Hilts.

Cover & Interior Design/Typography by Richard M. Kohen

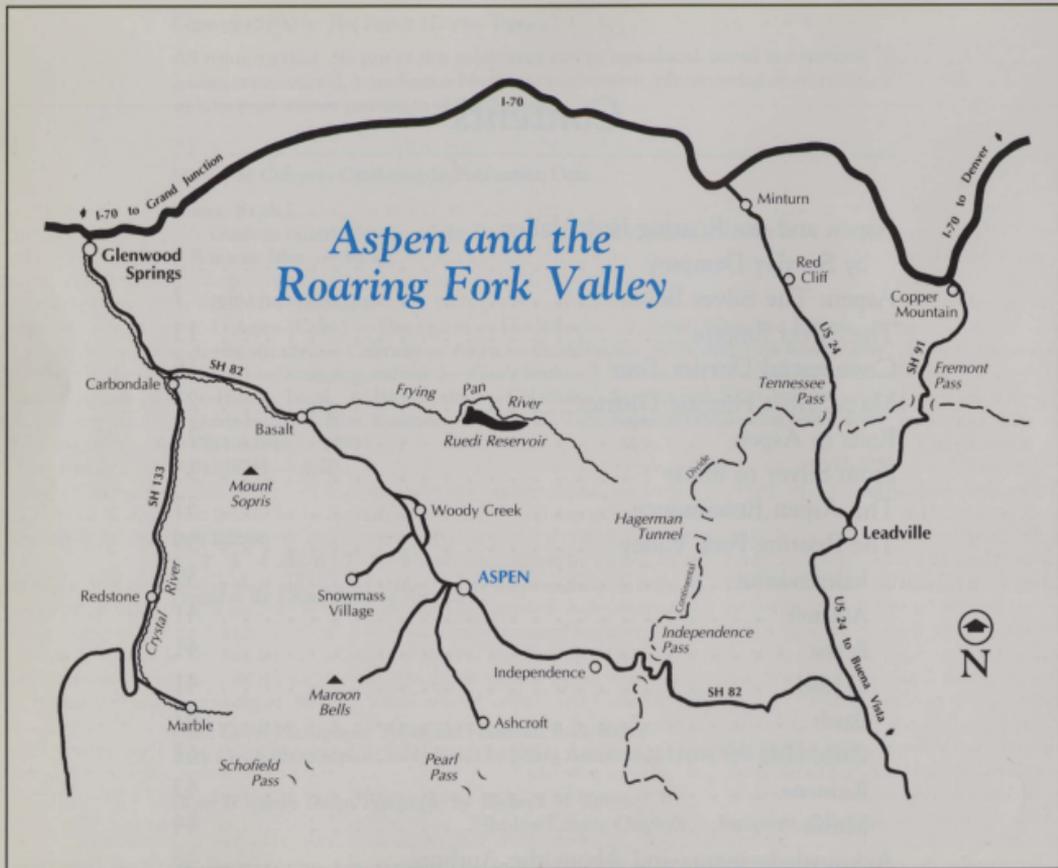
Shadow Canyon Graphics - Evergreen, Colorado

Cordillera Press, Inc., Post Office Box 3699, Evergreen, Colorado 80439 (303) 670-3010

## Contents

---

Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley	
by Stanley Dempsey . . . . .	5
Aspen: The Silver Boom . . . . .	7
The Silver Empire . . . . .	13
Commercial District Tour . . . . .	16
Main Street Historic District . . . . .	23
Rails to Aspen . . . . .	28
From Silver to Snow . . . . .	33
The Aspen Renaissance . . . . .	37
The Roaring Fork Valley . . . . .	39
Independence . . . . .	39
Ashcroft . . . . .	41
Emma . . . . .	41
El Jebel . . . . .	41
Basalt . . . . .	42
Carbondale . . . . .	42
Redstone . . . . .	43
Marble . . . . .	44
Acknowledgements and About the Authors . . . . .	48



## Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley

---

Aspen! The name connotes snow and skis, music and majestic mountains — a fabulous place to live or to spend a vacation at any time of year. But many who come here for the silver of Aspen's snows do not know of the rich mining heritage of Aspen and the other towns in the Roaring Fork Valley. Indeed, it was silver mining which gave Aspen its first boom. The historic downtown, Victorian neighborhoods, and characteristic features of the historic buildings that give the city the unique ambiance so many of us enjoy today are legacies of those mining days.

Mining at Aspen and in the Roaring Fork Valley dates back at least to the 1870s, perhaps earlier. Here, as elsewhere in Colorado, prospectors searched for gold and silver. Then, in the late 1870s, the great silver boom at Leadville lured thousands of people into the Central Rockies. It was no coincidence that the men and women who eventually discovered gold and silver at what became Independence, Ashcroft, and Aspen had come from Leadville.

Mining at Aspen developed slowly. The Roaring Fork Valley was very isolated, the weather severe, and mining difficult. Independence and Ashcroft received most of the early attention. Only gradually did Aspen emerge as the valley's leading producer. Finally, the boom was on!

What made Aspen the silver queen of the Rockies was the arrival of the railroad in 1887 — two railroads, in fact — the Denver & Rio Grande and the Colorado Midland. Once they linked Aspen with "the outside world," production surged. By the early 1890s, Aspen had surpassed Leadville to become the leading silver camp in the Rockies.

Yet, the days of Aspen's silver boom were shortlived. The silver crash of 1893 sent the price of silver plummeting and created a depression in every silver mining camp in the West. Aspen's production dropped sharply, and people moved away. The city limped on, but the mines were never the same. One by one they closed, and by the end of World War I, silver mining had come to an end for all practical purposes.

Mining elsewhere in the valley could not make up the slack. Independence flourished briefly as a gold camp again in the late 1890s. Redstone produced coke for the nearby coal mines. Marble alone, high in the Crystal River Valley, became world-famous for the white marble quarried there for the Lincoln Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

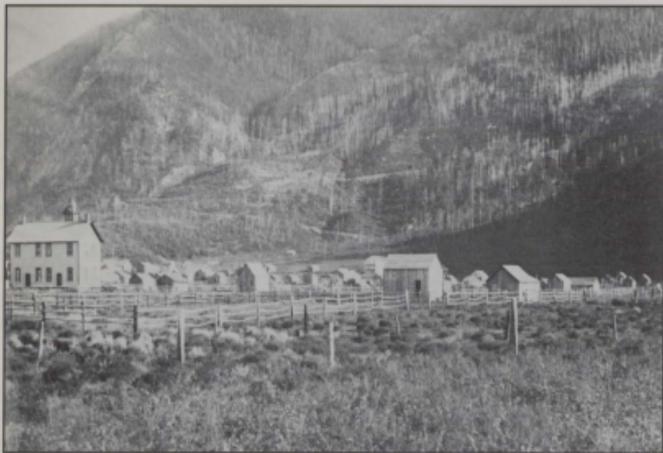
By the mid-1930s, Aspen's ski potential was being explored. Celebrated Swiss mountaineer Andre Roch laid out the famous Roch Run, and the classic Boat Tow

opened to haul skiers four at a time up Aspen Mountain. World War II interrupted ski development, but visits by 10th Mountain Division troops training at Camp Hale near Leadville planted the seeds of the modern resort. After the war, many 10th Mountain Division veterans returned to Aspen and became instrumental in building the ski areas which have made Aspen acclaimed throughout the world.

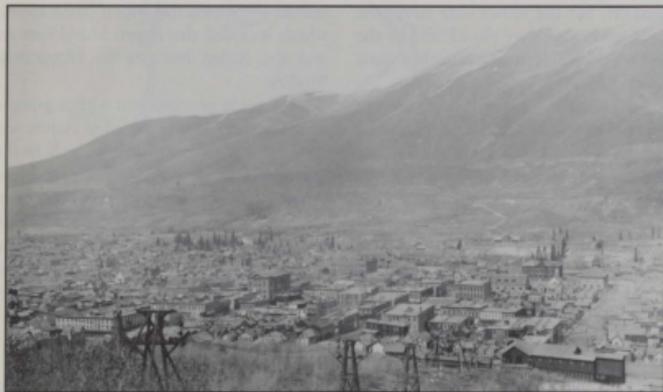
The end of World War II also marked the arrival in Aspen of Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke, who together were primarily responsible for much of Aspen's post-war era. The Paepckes' vision — and investment dollars — created the Aspen Renaissance, which included the Aspen Music Festival and the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies.

This guide provides you with a glimpse of the mining as it unfolded at Aspen and in the Roaring Fork Valley as well as the beginnings of the ski industry and the Aspen Renaissance. As you visit these communities, please remember that most of the buildings you see are privately owned. Your respect for that, as well as the natural and historic environment, will ensure the preservation of the valley for future visitors.

*Stanley Dempsey, General Editor  
Cordillera Press Historic Mining District Series*



*About 1880, Aspen consisted of a few frame structures, a church, and lots of available land. Note the abundance of trees on Aspen Mountain. Aspen Historical Society.*



*Aspen at its peak about 1892. Note the tramway towers in the foreground. These were used to haul ore down Aspen Mountain. Fifty years later these towers would be replaced by others carrying skiers. William H. Jackson. Colorado Historical Society.*

# Aspen: The Silver Boom

---

Aspen owes its origins to silver. In the summer of 1879, four prospectors from Leadville decided to search for the white metal on the west side of the 12,000-foot Continental Divide. What they hoped to find were outcroppings and formations similar to those at Leadville. They might hold a new bonanza.

Joined by another group of prospectors, the seven men descended into the Roaring Fork Valley, an area formed by the jagged peaks of the Sawatch Mountains on the east and the rugged spires of the Elk Mountains on the south and west. Here the prospectors had luck. They found several promising outcrops, and that summer they staked eight claims: two on Aspen Mountain, five on West Aspen Mountain, and one on Smuggler Mountain. They sank a shaft on each to demonstrate they had mined the land, then headed back to Leadville to file their claims.

The word spread quickly. By the end of the summer of 1879, at least thirty-five prospectors had rushed to the valley. And as the first snows set in, a few prepared to spend the harsh winter camped between Castle Creek and the Roaring Fork River at the foot of Aspen Mountain. These hardy prospectors did not intend to let anyone jump claims that might hold a vast fortune in silver.

## Movers and Shakers

Winter prevented much prospecting, but in the spring of 1880, a wave of prospectors, merchants, and town developers swept into camp. Among the first to arrive were Henry B. Gillespie and B. Clark Wheeler, the two men who would shape the area's early growth.

Gillespie came first — from Leadville. He purchased several claims and organized a small settlement which he named Ute City. Then he went east to obtain a post office (an important step toward official recognition) and organize the Roaring Fork Improvement Company to build a road from Buena Vista over Taylor Pass. He also intended to plat the town and lay out streets that summer after the snow melted.

Clark Wheeler, however, would not wait for the snow to melt. Deciding to challenge the mountains in the dead of winter, in February 1880, he strapped on snowshoes and trudged over the divide from Leadville. Some people thought he was crazy to risk his life in the cold and snow, but Wheeler was a promoter of grand schemes. And as a shrewd businessman, he wanted to get in on the ground floor of the silver boom.

Wheeler wasted no time. He had Ute City surveyed and renamed it Aspen. Then he took the lead in organizing the Aspen

Town and Land Company, which was incorporated in March 1880 with the financial support of eastern capitalists who were looking for investment opportunities. In May, the Town and Land Company laid out Aspen's first addition, which was located between the original townsite and Aspen Mountain. Some of the streets were named after company officials, notably Charles A. Hallam and David M. Hyman.

The new town took shape that summer. Wheeler and his associates laid out six streets running east-west along the Roaring Fork River and another six streets running north-south — 2.5 acres in all. Then in came the first businesses — a hotel, sawmill, restaurant, law office, assay office, an engineering and survey firm, and of course, the first of the numerous saloons to quench the miners' thirst. Aspen had a rough look, however. Business people worked out of canvas tents, crude log cabins and a few wood frame, false front buildings and lived almost literally on top of their businesses.

Once the mines began to produce, Aspen grew steadily. Two newspapers, the *Aspen Times* and the *Rocky Mountain Sun* went to press in 1881. The next year, Aspen became one of the first towns in Western Colorado to have its own telegraph line. In 1882, to beautify the community and provide shade, the residents held a tree

planting campaign. And telephone service began in 1885.

One of Aspen's early goals was to encourage families to settle in town. The pioneer women took the lead in this. Not long after the first saloon opened for business, Mrs. Henry B. Gillespie and others organized the first literary society and paper along with a sabbath school. Soon, the town had musicals and dramas, informal dances and balls, and concerts to occupy people's spare time, especially during the long winter months. Such cultural activities gave Aspen a better image than many mining towns enjoyed.

Aspen also became a seat of government. As the silver boom gathered its strength in the summer of 1880, Aspen and the two other camps nearby, Ashcroft and Independence, were part of Gunnison County. But in February 1881, the legislature created Pitkin County (named for an early governor) and designated Aspen as the temporary county seat. The same year, the town held its first municipal election, which meant that public officials replaced the town company's officers in deciding public policy.

Everyone realized that aside from the mines, transportation was critical to Aspen's development. At first, the only road to Aspen came from Buena Vista over Taylor Pass through Ashcroft. Not until November 1881 did road builders finish a route over Independence Pass from Leadville. Even so, drifting snows and deep mud made the road impassible much of the year. Until the late 1880s, Aspen's isolation and

the lack of rail transportation hindered the development of its silver mines.

### Birth of a City

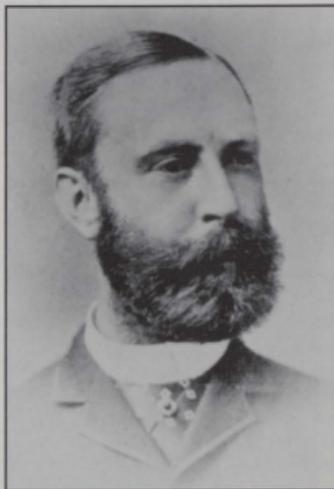
The pace of Aspen's growth changed in 1883 when Jerome B. Wheeler (no relation to Clark Wheeler) arrived in town. Jerome B. Wheeler was an eastern capitalist related by marriage to the family that owned the famous R.H. Macy department store in New York. He himself owned 45 percent of the firm, but he had little to do with its

management. His interests were in the West.

Wheeler and others recognized that Aspen and its silver mines needed two things: a smelter to process the ore and a railroad to connect the town to the outside world. He intended to help provide both. After he purchased an interest in several mines as well as a half-completed smelter, he organized the Aspen Mining and Smelting Company, which gave tremendous impetus to the town's mining industry.

Aspen grew rapidly in the mid-1880s — much of it attributable to Wheeler's willingness to invest his money in a myriad of enterprises. The population had reached about 500 people by 1883. A year later, the populace jumped to 2,500 people and in 1884 to 3,500. At times, the rutted streets and narrow board sidewalks were so crowded they made walking around town almost impossible. Miners coming off shift after dark made their way home by candlelight. Thus, every evening, Aspenites were treated to a firelight parade streaming down Aspen Mountain, much like those which would take place on the ski slopes during special events more than a century later.

Like other mining camps, Aspen had problems with fire. The first major conflagration occurred in the downtown area in July 1884. This emphasized the need for adequate fire protection and prompted David R.C. Brown and Henry P. Cowenhoven, two prominent mine owners, to organize the Aspen Water Company. It built



Jerome B. Wheeler.  
Aspen Historical Society.

a wooden flume from reservoirs near Castle and Maroon creeks, and in March 1886, the first water flowed into town. This event sparked a day-long celebration which witnessed grown men spraying each other with hoses to the glee of small children. The water party left the usually dusty streets of Aspen a muddy mess.

Aspen also profited from that new development of the 1880s — electricity. The Roaring Fork Electric Light & Power Company, organized in 1885, reportedly built the first commercially-operated hydroelectric plant in the United States. Demand for electricity was large.

### The Wild West

Because it was a mining town, men dominated Aspen's populace. In 1885, three out of every four residents were male. That definitely shaped the social scene. Single men held their own functions, which usually revolved around special clubs, saloons, and

*(Above right) Volunteer firemen. In addition to protecting Aspen from fire, the volunteer fire department also participated in races, dances, and other social events. Aspen Historical Society.*

*(Right) Music in Aspen. This 1880s band — probably a fife and drum corps — may have played at summer concerts in the park and marched in the frequent parades. Aspen Historical Society.*



billiard halls, and mixed with the married population only on holidays.

The majority of the saloons lined Cooper Street. In 1885, beer consumption was estimated at 30 barrels a day in the winter and 40 to 45 barrels a day in the summer. Eventually, Aspen required its own brewery to meet the demand. Crimes, ranging from drunkenness and disorderly behavior to assault and battery, resulted in around 100 arrests each month, with more arrests during the summer months and on weekends.

Prostitution, of course, was common in mining camps, and Aspen was no exception. So-called "sporting" women kept many a miner busy in what were known as the "jungles of Durant Street." Business was so good that the city collected \$5 a month in taxes from each girl. When the Colorado Midland Railroad built its depot a block south of Durant Street, however, the residents forced the red light district to move.

To take up their leisure time, Aspenites enjoyed a number of outlets. They fancied boxing and horse racing, and they gambled many hours away. Taxes on gambling tables ran \$25 per month, plus \$10 for the first table and \$5 for each additional one. But Aspen's favorite sport was baseball. The first baseball team, organized in 1881, enjoyed great popular support. Most weekends it challenged miners from Ashcroft and Independence to friendly games. After 1888, however, baseball became a spectator sport when the town's semi-professional team took on clubs in a league that included Leadville, Denver, Pueblo, and Grand

Junction. On a given weekend, as many as 1,500 people gathered to watch the team compete.

The principal form of cultural entertainment was opera. Touring companies from around the country stopped to perform at the magnificent Wheeler Opera House. Aspenites also looked forward to the social event of the year, the Grande Masquerade Ball, sponsored by the Aspen Dancing Club and held at the skating rink each fall.

### Boom and Bust

Once the Rio Grande and Colorado Midland railroads arrived in 1887, Aspen enjoyed an unprecedented boom. Silver production rose sharply. The population surged. And new construction transformed the community.

By 1892, Aspen was the third largest city in Colorado. It had 12,000 residents (only Denver and Leadville had more). It had surpassed Leadville to become Colorado's leading silver producer. It was home to the third largest opera house in the state and the finest luxury hotel on the Western Slope. It had six newspapers (two of them dailies), a hospital, schools and churches for all the residents, and a horse-drawn streetcar system.

In the spring of 1893, however, Aspen's world came crashing down. In June, the price of silver, responding to shocks from Europe, plunged from 80 to 64 cents an ounce in a single day. The effect was devastating. Within a month, all the mines in

Aspen had shut down. The mining force plummeted from 2,250 to 150 men. The bank closed in July, and Aspen was in economic ruin.

Some of those who had made Aspen survived the crash. Henry Gillespie had diversified his interests and died a relatively rich man in 1903. Both David R.C. Brown and Henry Cowenhoven retained some of their wealth. David Hyman, the owner of the Smuggler Mine, helped save the town after the crash through his continued investments. Jerome B. Wheeler, however, was not so fortunate — he went bankrupt in 1901.

After the crash, some of Aspen's mines reopened once the price of silver stabilized, but the industry was never the same again. Hard times prevailed, many people had lost everything, and much of the population drifted away. By 1900, Aspen's population had dropped to 3,300 people. Ten years later, it had slipped to 1,800. And by 1930, it had slumped to 700. Aspen was a city of vacant lots and empty stores. The glory days of silver were nothing more than a distant memory.



*Downtown Aspen. Frame commercial buildings lined streets in the business district until a series of devastating fires leveled a great number of structures. Aspen rebuilt in brick to help prevent fires. Aspen Historical Society.*

*(Right) D.R.C. Brown's home, originally located at the corner of Center (now Garmish) and Hallam, combined many Victorian architectural styles to create an unusual looking house. The house is now gone. Aspen Historical Society.*



*The Hyman Avenue Mall in the 1890s. Aspen Historical Society.*



*The Hyman Avenue Mall in the 1990s. Sarah J. Pearce.*



*The shafthouse at the Smuggler Mine.  
Colorado Historical Society.*



*Square-set timbering deep in the Smuggler Mine about 1893. Aspen Historical Society.*

# The Silver Empire

---

Mining at Aspen developed slowly. Although prospectors from Leadville made the initial strikes in 1879, Aspen's experience was one of limited, but steadily increasing production until the late 1880s when the railroads arrived and the boom came in.

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, mine owners concentrated on exploration. No mines emerged as big producers, and no one became an instant millionaire. The Smuggler and the Spar mines on Aspen Mountain emerged as the biggest producers, but their output was hardly spectacular.

One reason for Aspen's limited production was that the silver ore had to be smelted. The closest smelter, unfortunately, was at Leadville, and the high cost of shipping ore there, estimated at \$80 per ton, forced local miners to send only the richest mineral. And that was a slow process — the only method of transportation was mule train.

Not surprisingly, the town's early output was minuscule. In 1882, for example, the combined output of Aspen and its rival Ashcroft was a mere \$20,000 compared with \$15 million for Leadville, Colorado's leading producer. And by 1883, Aspen had fallen behind both Ashcroft and the gold camp of Independence.

What plagued the mines was the lack of a local smelter to reduce the ore. A group

of investors tried to build a plant, but their efforts failed. It was not until the arrival of Jerome B. Wheeler in 1883 that things changed. Wheeler purchased the half-completed smelter and within a year had it operating under the management of Aspen's first professional metallurgist, W.B. Devereaux.

After that, production increased to \$250,000 in 1883, but this still paled in comparison to Leadville's output of \$18.7 million that same year. Yet things were improving. The following year, Aspen's output surged to \$1.25 million.

## The Law of the Apex

During the mid-1880s, another problem emerged to slow the mines' development. This was the old issue known as the law of the apex — in other words, who owned the rights to a vein of ore? The person who discovered the vein on his particular claim or the person who owned the claim where the vein had its apex or origin?

In the lawsuit which emerged in 1884, David Hyman, one of the town's founders, contended that he was entitled to half the ore from the Aspen mine because the apex of the vein was located in his Durant mine. This lawsuit, which pitted Hyman against Jerome B. Wheeler, dragged on for four

years in federal and district court. The controversy consumed the entire community while the case was argued in the newspapers and on the street, as well as in court.

In the end, Hyman won the case — twice — as the courts upheld the apex doctrine. But ultimately, the opposing parties joined together to form a new mining company, the Compromise Mining Company, to split the proceeds from both the Durant and the Aspen mines. The Compromise Mining Company eventually produced more than \$11 million in metal.

By 1887, seven mines dominated the local industry: the Aspen, Compromise, Smuggler, Argentum-Juniata, Park-Regent, Consolidated, and Mollie Gibson. As a result, the fortunes of many people depended on the production of only a few properties.

## The Mollie Gibson

The Mollie Gibson mine, located on Smuggler Mountain east of town, was typical of Aspen's mines. It was discovered in 1880, but no one had the capital needed for development, and production lagged until the late 1880s when Henry Gillespie acquired the mine. Then he and Jerome B. Wheeler, whose imprint was everywhere, invested the money to expand underground

exploration and build a mill and concentrator to work the ore.

These efforts began to pay off in 1889. Early in the year, miners struck a deposit that assayed from 10,000 to 15,000 ounces of silver per ton. These riches created a sensation that made the Mollie Gibson the most publicized mine in Aspen, even though it was still a small producer. In May came more good news when the mine displayed a single piece of ore estimated to hold 6,000 ounces of silver worth \$4,000.

Although Gillespie advertised the mineral wealth of the Mollie Gibson, within a year, he was deeply in debt. Consolidation put James J. Hagerman in control of the mine. A year and a half later, his miners discovered some rich veins, and from March to November, 1891, the Mollie Gibson produced more than \$1.6 million worth

of silver. Thanks in part to the Mollie Gibson, Aspen finally overtook Leadville as the chief silver producer in Colorado, but that position was to be short-lived.

### The Silver Crash

In July 1890, Congress had enacted the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, which required the Treasury Department to buy specific amounts of silver each month at the market price. This resulted in a rise in silver prices, but supplies increased and overtook demand, and the price fell to 99 cents in 1891 and to 87 cents in 1892.

Silver subsidies helped undermine the nation's economy. In the spring of 1893, President Grover Cleveland announced that he would secure repeal of the Sherman Act. But before that took place, in June

1893, Great Britain announced that its mints in India would no longer coin silver rupees. Silver prices plunged. By July, virtually every silver mine in Colorado had closed.

Almost without warning, it seemed, ore in the ground, bullion at the smelters, and silver at the refineries was worth far less than ever before. The effect was devastating and plunged Colorado into depression.

Aspen was hit hard. By the end of the summer of 1893, the work force in the mines dropped from 2,250 to 150 men. Many headed for Cripple Creek where gold mining was on the rise. Things became so bad in Aspen that outsiders sent money to establish a central relief fund to help the suddenly poor residents.

In the fall of 1893, a few mines like the Smuggler and the Mollie Gibson managed



Looking northwest toward Red Mountain. Aspen Historical Society.



The Mollie Gibson Mine about 1887. Aspen Historical Society.

to reopen on a limited basis, but the few miners who were lucky enough to find work were paid lower wages.

Many mines at Aspen resumed production in 1894, but the town's output was less than half of what it had been just two years before. No longer did outside investors bring their money to Aspen; it was more profitable for them to go to booming Cripple Creek — a gold camp.

Aspen's output declined steadily throughout the rest of the 1890s and first few decades of the 20th century. After World War I, a few individuals continued to work several of the area's mines in the hope of discovering a new bonanza. But up until the 1940s, the source of the new bonanza remained elusive. Then Aspen discovered snow.



*Burro train on Aspen Mountain. Burros were the mainstay of early transportation. The sturdy animals worked hard, hauling supplies up to the mines and ore down to the freight stations. William H. Jackson. Colorado Historical Society.*



*Many years after the silver crash, the Midnight Mine slumbers quietly in the winter of 1943. Heavy snows often left mines buried deep for several months. Aspen Historical Society.*



*The Holden Lixiviation Plant about 1893. The plant operated on silver ore for only three short years before the silver crash forced it to close. Only portions of several buildings of the huge complex remain on what is now known as the Holden-Marolt site. The Aspen Historical Society is leasing the area from the city for a historic mining and ranching interpretive center. William H. Jackson. Colorado Historical Society.*

## Commercial District Tour

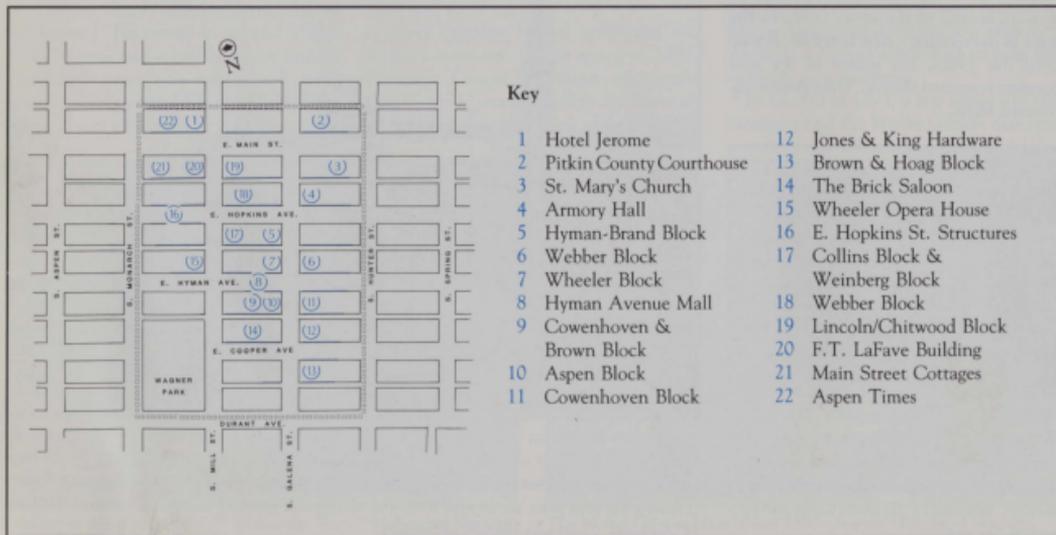
Downtown Aspen contains a rare blend of historic red brick and wood-frame commercial architecture interspersed with modern buildings and public spaces that share a certain harmony. As you tour the heart of the commercial district, you become immediately aware that this is a special place — distinctive and exciting with a strong

sense of its mining heritage.

Downtown Aspen reflects the city's evolution. The flimsy tents of the pioneers gave way to rough-hewn log cabins, and the log cabins to frame structures with false fronts, undecorated cornices, and straightforward signage that promoted goods and services. When, as in most mining towns,

the frame structures fell prey to fire or prosperity, they were replaced with more substantial brick and sandstone buildings.

Aspen's historic commercial district is still the center of the city's retailing. It retains the bold distinction of its silver mining roots. A tradition from the mining days endures — the noon whistle does blow!





**The Hotel Jerome**  
320 E. Main Street

Financed by Jerome B. Wheeler and named in his honor, the Hotel Jerome has served as the heart and soul of Aspen for more than 100 years. Its grand opening, which took place on Thanksgiving Eve in 1889, was a glittering affair attended by wealthy entrepreneurs and ordinary people alike. The Jerome had amenities such as indoor plumbing, hot and cold running water, electricity, steam heat, one of Colorado's first elevators, and a paging system, all of which helped justify room rates of \$3 and \$4 a night, the equivalent of a full day's pay for a miner.

The Jerome's fortunes, however, fluctuated with Aspen's. A mere 25 years after the gala opening, Aspen's population had plunged to between 500 and 750 people, and the Jerome served more as a boarding house than a hotel. Yet it still provided the community with a place to dine and gather. The J Bar's specialty was "Aspen Crud" — malted milk laced with a shot of bourbon

— said to help stave off winter frost!

In 1946, the Jerome was purchased by the Chicago industrialist Walter Paepcke, the father of the Aspen Renaissance. After he completed a badly needed renovation, the hotel flourished again as the premier accommodation in the year-round resort. In the mid-1980s, the Jerome underwent an extensive restoration and remodeling, and a new addition was added to the north. The Jerome's embellished interior, laden with gilded wallpapers, antiques, and candelabras, serves once again as the backdrop for many of Aspen's most elegant events.



**Pitkin County Courthouse**  
506 E. Main Street

The Pitkin County Courthouse is one of the oldest in Colorado still used for its original purpose. It was designed by the noted Denver architect William Quayle. No sooner had construction begun in July 1890, however, than the courthouse became embroiled in controversy when the

local press published reports of bond fraud and misappropriations by the county commissioners. The commissioners refused to yield to these pressures, however, and construction was completed in January 1891. The dedication ceremony consisted of speeches followed by the classic ball.

The noteworthy architectural features include the roof form, central tower, and arched detailing. These features distinguish this structure as Italianate with Richardsonian influences — important architectural styles of the late 19th century.



**St. Mary's Catholic Church and Rectory**  
533 E. Main Street and  
104 S. Galena Street

St. Mary's Catholic Church, constructed in 1891 at a cost of \$18,000, is one of two remaining 19th-century churches in Aspen. The stained glass windows on the second floor are gothic in design. The 2,000-pound bell was cast in Cincinnati. The interior was restored during the 1980s.



This work included the reconditioning of the original red oak pews shipped from Grand Rapids, Nebraska. The Rectory, which was completed in 1888, has remained in use for more than 100 years. In addition, this square block is the last remaining "historic" block in the city; all six structures are 19th-century buildings.

**Armory Hall**  
130 S. Galena Street

This industrial-style structure was completed in just under three months by Company C, First Battalion, Colorado National Guard, at a cost of \$15,000 to house the local armory on the first floor and the I.O.O.F. Lodge on the upper floor. The building was dedicated in the course of an "inaugural ball" on January 21, 1892 — the first of some 21 balls, dances, festivals, concerts, political rallies, cake walks and socials chronicled that first year alone. When silver mining was at its height, Armory Hall served a dual function — a staging area for



military drills by day and a dance floor for Aspen's most glittering social affairs by night. During Aspen's "quiet years," the Hall served the community as a roller rink, auditorium, and gymnasium. Finally, it became city hall in the mid-1950s when the original city hall, located on Durant Street, was demolished.



**Hyman-Brand Block**  
203 S. Galena Street

This sandstone building was constructed in 1891 to meet the requirements of the

First National Bank, then located in the Aspen Block. Deposits had reached the then-amazing figure of \$415,000, and the influential firm wanted to move into new, more elaborate accommodations. As a result, the mining entrepreneur David Hyman proposed the ideal new location. When construction was completed in November of that year, the bank hosted a magnificent grand opening in the form of a "sumptuous lunch."

Over the years, the Hyman-Brand Block has had its share of difficult times. Once, it was even condemned, but in 1971, it was purchased and restored for retail and, later, residential use.



**Webber Block (Elks Building)**  
210 S. Galena Street

The distinctive styling of the Webber Block distinguishes it as one of Aspen's most beloved historic landmarks. The building materials are pressed brick and Peachblow sandstone quarried in the Fryling

Pan River Valley. Particularly notable are the marvelous dome and cornice that crown the structure.

The structure was built at a cost of \$40,000 in 1891 by Mayor Henry Webber, one of Aspen's most influential and controversial figures. When completed, only the Hotel Jerome and the Wheeler Opera House exceeded the building in value. Retail shops and offices have occupied space here continuously. The Elks Club purchased the building for back taxes in 1912 and has met here ever since.



**The Hyman Avenue Mall**

The Hyman Avenue Mall, developed in the mid-1970s, is one of the most successful pedestrian malls in the West. It serves as the center of downtown activity during every season of the year.

Along the mall are a number of splendid structures: the Keene Block, built in 1887; the Kobey Block, built in 1888 and named after the Kobey Shoe and Clothing Com-

pany, one of the few retail establishments to remain open during the Great Depression of the 1930s; and Reide's City Bakery, built in 1885, one of Aspen's oldest frame and clapboard stores.

The "Paragon" building at 423 E. Hyman Avenue is one of many buildings in Aspen that was financed by business and mining magnates Henry P. Cowenhoven and D.R.C. Brown. Designed with Italianate and Romanesque features, it was completed in 1889. Two other important anchor buildings on the east end of the mall are the adjacent Aspen Block and the sandstone Cowenhoven Block across the street.



**The Aspen Block**  
303-309 S. Galena Street

The beautiful storefront and cornice of the Aspen Block, built in 1887, are often photographed as the foreground to Aspen Mountain. The Aspen Block is one of four remaining ironfront commercial buildings in the city. Its supports were made by Key-

stone Ironworks in Kansas City. The elaborate pediment is of pressed tin. The entire structure was renovated in the early 1980s.



**The Cowenhoven Block**  
(Ute City Banquet)  
501 E. Hyman Street

Henry P. Cowenhoven and his family arrived in Aspen in 1880 in two wagons after successfully navigating their way over treacherous Taylor Pass. The family's wealth and influence grew rapidly through its expertise in trade and commerce. Cowenhoven's son-in-law, D.R.C. Brown, became the vice president of the Aspen's First National Bank.

This building is a Romanesque Revival gem, constructed in 1890 of Peachblow sandstone, quarried in the Frying Pan River Valley. Note the elaborate stone carving and arch detail.

The building immediately adjacent to the south is known as the Aspen Arcades. It was also constructed by Cowenhoven.



**The Brown and Hoag Block  
Independence Building**  
501 E. Cooper Street

This building was constructed by D.R.C. Brown's younger brother, A.B. "Burt" Brown (founder of the Aspen State Bank), and partner William Hoag. The building proved to be a poor investment, however. It was too close to the red light district on Durant Street, which was one block south, adjacent to the Colorado Midland Railroad. The Post Office took space here until it moved to the Webber Block in 1924.

When the Paepckes purchased the building in the 1940s, they changed the name to the Prince Albert Hotel, which housed skiers in the winter and music students in the summer. Ultimately, it became known as the Independence Building.

The Brown and Hoag Block has a rare cast iron storefront. The corner pediment and elaborate unbroken cornice form one of the nicest architectural details in the city and help create the unique ambiance of Cooper Street.



**The Brick Saloon  
(The Red Onion)**  
420 E. Cooper Street

Long an Aspen landmark for both its architecture and social celebrity, the Brick Saloon was built in 1892 by Tom Latta, a town alderman originally from Pennsylvania. Its club rooms were heralded by the *Aspen Daily Times* as the "handsomest in the West." A separate entrance led to the madam's upstairs waiting room, while a back door provided a discreet exit.

Renamed the Red Onion in the 1940s by the new owner, Johnny Litchfield (a 10th Mountain Division veteran), it and the Hotel Jerome were the only places in the entire upper Roaring Fork Valley where you could get a bite to eat! Skiers flocked to the Red Onion after an exciting day navigating the pitches of Roch Run and the moguls of Ruthie's Run. Today, the Red Onion is the crown jewel in the center of the Cooper Avenue Mall. Nearby, you can catch a lively rugby, softball or soccer game at Wagner Park, Aspen's first park.



**Wheeler Opera House**  
328 E. Hyman Street

The Wheeler Opera House, built in 1889, reflects the confidence and cultural aspirations that were so evident in many Victorian mining communities before the Crash of 1893. The architectural style reflects the way in which the late 19th-century Victorians revived many of the architectural forms developed in Renaissance Europe.

Financed by Jerome B. Wheeler, the Opera House was heralded as the second best in the state, second only to the famous Tabor Grand in Denver. The grand opening was Aspen's social event of 1889. Due to the silver crash and the high cost of financing touring companies, however, the theatre grew dark within five years.

Over the years, the Opera House has survived two fires and many repairs as it served as the site of countless performances remembered by many generations of Aspenites. The Paepckes leased the building and in 1949 financed a vital renovation over-

seen by architectural designer Herbert Bayer. Today, the Opera House is owned, maintained, and funded in part by the City of Aspen, and is operated by the Wheeler Opera House Board; additional funds come from the Wheeler Association. The Opera House serves as a co-host location for Music Festival performances of opera, folk, jazz, and rock music as well as lectures of all varieties and special events. The Wheeler Opera House is an important part of Aspen's cultural heritage.



**300 Block**  
E. Hopkins Street

This block of East Hopkins Street contains four miners' cottages. They include the Lily Reid Cottage (309 E. Hopkins), the only remaining brick, cross-gabled cottage in the commercial district, and the A.G. Sheppard Cottage (302 E. Hopkins), a highly ornamental residence illustrating the carpenter gothic influence in Victorian architecture.



**The Collins Block**  
204 S. Mill Street

The neo-classical Collins Block, built in 1892, was renovated in 1989-1990. Many businesses have called this building home — including Tom Sardy's mortuary and the Aspen Lumber and Supply Company.



**The Weinberg Block**  
208 S. Mill Street

Immediately adjacent to the Collins Block is the Weinberg Block, known for

its lovely Italianate detailing with the arched windows and the embellished cornice and pediment at the second level. Louis Weinberg, one of Aspen's leading merchants, erected the block in 1890. The Aspen Telephone Company was located here for 50 years. In 1940, Mike Magnifico, a founder of the Aspen Skiing Company, converted the first floor into a ski shop, which it remained for more than 50 years.



**Webber Block**  
(The Isis Theatre)  
406 E. Hyman Street

The Webber Block, built in 1892, is a typical example of Victorian commercial architecture. The building housed numerous commercial ventures prior to its conversion to a movie house by the Women's Civic Improvement League, which showed silent films and held minstrel shows. The Isis Theatre, which is currently housed in the building, has hosted the Aspen Filmfest over the past decade.

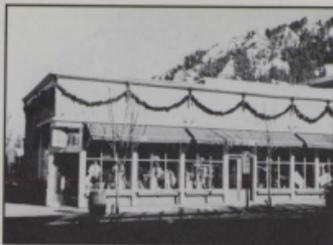


**Lincoln/Chitwood Block  
(The Cantina)**  
100 N. Mill Street

The Lincoln/Chitwood Block, built at a cost of \$8,000 in 1891-92, housed Aspen's first YMCA. For a yearly membership fee of \$6, men could use the two reading rooms that had 500 "carefully selected" books. In the early 1900s, the first floor was converted to a mechanic's shop; rooms on the second floor were rented out. In the mid-1980s, a major renovation converted the building into a restaurant and offices.

**F. T. LaFave Building (Elli's)**  
101 S. Mill Street

This clapboard and bracketed commercial structure, built in 1885, has had many uses. It's best-known occupant has been Elli's of Aspen, a clothing store established in 1954 by Elli Iselin, the wife of Fred Iselin, a champion skier and a founder of the Aspen and Aspen Highlands ski schools.



**Main Street Cottages**  
300 E. Main Street

These three miners' cottages, built around 1888, represent the ordinary, or vernacular, housing so abundant in Aspen a century ago. The typical architectural features were the cross-gable roofs, front porches of modest decoration, vertical double-hung windows and a bay window ordered through a mail catalogue and shipped west by rail. The building materials were nearly always horizontal clapboard or "weatherboard". Many such houses were

never constructed on a foundation, which over time created severe structural problems. Several thousand miners and their families lived in similar houses in the 1890s.



**The Aspen Times**  
310 E. Main Street

Housed in a typical commercial building erected in 1905, the *Aspen Times* is one of the oldest newspapers in western Colorado. It began publishing as a weekly newspaper on April 23, 1881. The first issues were printed on a six-ton press freighted over Independence Pass on sledges. Under the leadership of B. Clark Wheeler, the paper was enlarged and published as a daily from 1885 until 1926. The *Times* purchased the present building in 1905. Harold Ross, a native of Aspen, worked here before going on to be the founder and editor of the *New Yorker Magazine*. The *Aspen Times* is currently owned by William Dunaway, active editor and publisher and a 10th Mountain Division veteran.

## Main Street Historic District

One of the charms of the Main Street Historic District is that it has everything from the homes of the working class to the "mansions" of some of Aspen's first families to buildings related to early ski development. This historic district, formed in 1975, extends nine blocks from Monarch Street to 7th Street. The architectural styles range from miners cottages and elaborate Queen Anne houses to mountain chalet-style lodges. You'll discover bookstores, bakeries, antique stores, restaurants, and professional offices.



**J. W. Atkinson-Sardy House**  
128 E. Main Street

J. W. Atkinson, part owner of the profitable Little Annie mine, built this Queen Anne-style residence in the early 1890s.

Eventually, it came into the hands of Tom Sardy, the town mortician, who was a partner of Chicago industrialist Walter Paepcke in the Aspen Lumber and Supply Company. Later, Sardy became the county commissioner who actively coordinated the efforts to construct Aspen's airport, appropriately named Sardy Field.

This house is a beautiful example of Queen Anne architecture which was popular from the 1870s to the 1890s. Such homes were characteristically elaborate; they had balconies, towers, a distinctive front porch, and an irregular floor plan. Note the special detailing on the Atkinson-Sardy House, particularly the roof cresting, gingerbread shingles and brick corbeling. The walls of the house are four bricks thick.

Today, the Sardy House is the location of the magnificent spruce that holds the title as Colorado's tallest Christmas tree. It was featured in "John Denver's Christmas in Aspen" special in 1989.

### Paepcke Park

Across from the Sardy House is Paepcke Park. The gazebo in the center is a local landmark. It was built in the 1930s during the Depression by the Works Progress Administration, or WPA, and moved to "City

Park" in 1955. It is often used for weddings and other festivities and events.



**First Presbyterian Church**  
**(Aspen Community Church)**  
200 E. Bleeker Street

Traditionally, churches in nineteenth-century western communities were centers

for family worship and entertainment. The church was also a place where women could be involved and exercise leadership positions that they could not exercise elsewhere in the community because of the social customs of the day.

In 1890, the Presbyterians built this church of Peachblow sandstone quarried from the Frying Pan River Valley near Basalt. The semicircular oak pews provided seating for 350 people. In 1920, the local Presbyterians and Methodists united, and in 1934, the Aspen Community Church

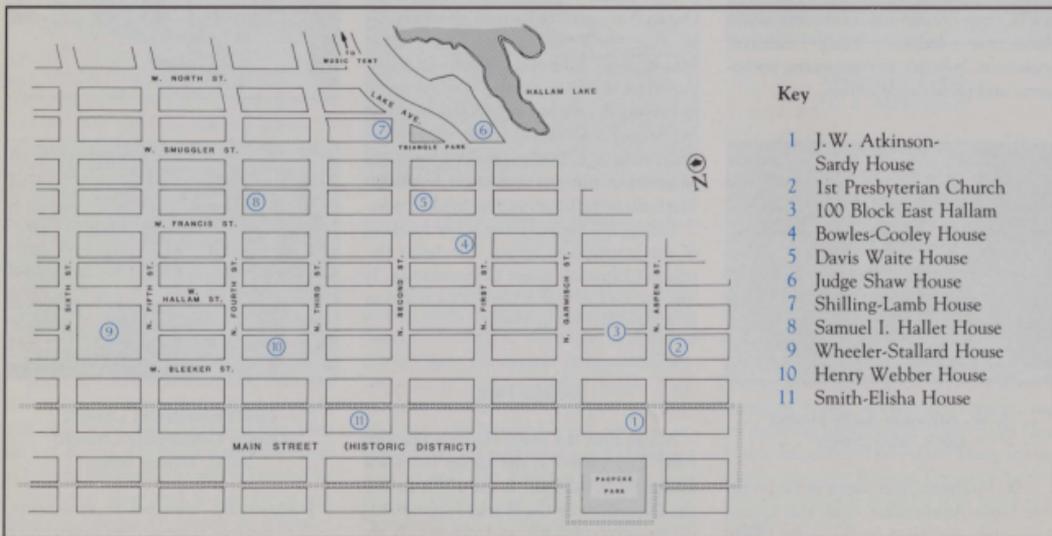
was incorporated. Of all the churches built in Aspen in the 19th century, only this and St. Mary's Catholic Church remain.

### The West End

Aspen's West End historic district has long been known for its Queen Anne houses, miners cottages, and cottonwood trees. The characteristic "village" nature of Aspen's celebrated West End features narrow, charming, irrigation ditches and

flower gardens of incomparable beauty. Sidewalks were never built and so people stroll or pedal bicycles through the quiet streets on their way to the Music Tent, the gondola, or other parts of town.

Carriage houses and other outbuildings, many now modified for residential use, create alleyscapes worth exploring. Most of Aspen's historic resources are found here in the West End, interspersed with contemporary and "Victorian Revival" residences. Many of these buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.





100 Block  
E. Hallam Street

This block contains the largest single grouping of Aspen's surviving miners cottages — nine in all, five of which are local landmarks. Each cottage is unique in its detailing; combined, they provide a gentle rhythm and harmonious streetscape. One of the West End's most beautiful historic homes is located on the diagonal corner at 100 W. Hallam Street; this is the McClure House, reported to have been constructed for an early school superintendent.

The Bowles-Cooley House  
201 W. Francis Street

This stately red brick house, built in 1889, is significant for its local interpretation of the Queen Anne style. It is one of the city's few large residential structures constructed of brick, which was rarely used for home construction in Aspen.

The home's first owners were prominent



in the community. Ryland R. Bowles began in the contracting and lumber business about 1880-81. William W. Cooley was a specialist in mining law and the legal advisor for the Mollie Gibson Consolidated Mining and Milling Company, one of Aspen's largest producers.

Eventually, the house was purchased by Pat Rowland. His son, Harold "Red" Rowland constructed many of the lifts on Aspen Mountain, held the position of Mountain Manager, and is honored in the Colorado Ski Hall of Fame.

Davis Waite House  
234 W. Francis Street

Davis Hanson Waite, born in Jamestown, New York, in 1825, went to Leadville in 1879 where he practiced law before moving to Aspen two years later. Almost immediately, he was elected Justice of the Peace and was appointed Superintendent of Schools. Waite also purchased the *Aspen Times*, which he subsequently sold to B.



Clark Wheeler, who later became his son-in-law.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, Waite became an advocate of free silver coinage (an effort to boost the faltering price of silver) and other radical reforms advocated by the new Populist Party. In 1892, he became the Party's nominee for governor, and in a major upset, was elected that fall. Unfortunately, the price of silver continued to slide, and when the price plunged in 1893, Waite found himself embroiled in labor and political unrest as well as a major recession. During his term as governor, Colorado enacted a bill for women's suffrage, making the state only the second in the nation to do so. Waite was not re-elected. He died of a heart attack in 1900 while helping his wife prepare Thanksgiving dinner.

Besides Waite, this vernacular Queen Anne-style house, built about 1888, has been home to Herbert Bayer, the noted artist/designer of the Bauhaus School, and Robert O. Anderson, founder of the Atlantic Richfield Oil Company, who served as

Chairman of the Board of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies.



**Judge Shaw House**  
206 Lake Avenue

This late Queen Anne-style house, built about 1890, is characterized by the absence of any highly ornamented details. A notable feature is the carriage house which was incorporated into the overall design. This home is located in Hallam's Addition, which includes Triangle Park and Lake Avenue, the only curvilinear drive in Aspen. Hallam Lake creates a natural northeast boundary for the West End. Socializing at the lake house (now demolished) was a popular pastime in the Victorian era and into the early twentieth century.

The law library at the Pitkin County Courthouse was named after Judge William R. Shaw following his death in 1974. Judge Shaw served some forty years as county judge. He was well respected throughout the Roaring Fork Valley.



**The Shilling-Lamb House**  
525 N. 2nd Street

This home's first owner, Arthur B. Shilling, was a prominent Aspen merchant who imported goods from Paris and New York. The second owner of importance was Albert S. Lamb, a well-known Aspen druggist, who came from Leadville about 1887. This Queen Anne house, built about 1890, is most noted for its distinctive polygonal corner tower, which is unique among Aspen's historic residences.

**The Aspen Institute  
and Music Tent**

The Aspen Institute and Music Tent are located to the north of the West End historic area. The Industrial Style architecture of the Aspen Institute and the Paepcke Auditorium were designed by Bauhaus architect Herbert Bayer, who had a significant influence on postwar architectural development in Aspen. The present Music

Tent, designed by Bayer in 1964, replaced the original tent, designed by the distinguished architect Eero Saarinen.



**Samuel I. Hallett House**  
432 W. Francis Street

To keep pace with Aspen's prosperity during the early 1890s, many residents were determined to improve their properties as evidence of their own affluence and to increase their social status within the community. The Hallett House reflects this. It began as a modest log cabin, and then was

altered over the years to the adorned clapboard cottage that you see. Thomas Anson built the log cabin about 1885-86, then sold it in 1887 to Samuel Halleter, superintendent of the Smuggler Mining Company.



**Henry Webber House "Pioneer Park"**  
442 W. Bleeker Street

Known for its distinguished mansard roof (Second Empire style), "Pioneer Park" is rare among Aspen's homes. The structure is the center of a block-long estate containing many mature cottonwoods.

Henry Webber, the original owner, was a prominent, but controversial early pioneer. Webber came to Aspen in 1880 with his wife, developed a lot at Deane and Galena streets, and sold boots, shoes, and clothing. On May 29, 1881, Mrs. Webber died of strychnine poisoning, reported as an accident, but rumored to be suicide over her husband's affair with his niece, Julia Nevitt, whom Webber married four months later. This scandal had little effect on Web-

ber's career. He became city treasurer in 1883 and mayor in 1888.

Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke purchased the house as their summer home in 1945. In 1949, the Paepckes coordinated the Goethe Bicentennial Convocation, at which the humanist Albert Schweitzer delivered the keynote address. This was Schweitzer's only visit to the United States. He stayed in the carriage house, known today as the Schweitzer Cottage.



**The Wheeler-Stallard House**  
620 W. Bleeker Street

This elegant Queen Anne house, built in 1889 by Jerome B. Wheeler, is one of the few remaining three-story brick residences in Aspen. Although he never lived here, his business manager did. Mary Stallard purchased the property in 1917, then sold it in 1945 to Walter Paepcke. In 1967, the Aspen Historical Society leased the property and then, through noble fundraising efforts, purchased the house in 1969.

The handsome hipped roof gives the house a distinct English feeling. The grounds provide an estate-like setting for weddings, receptions, and special events; interpretive tours, artifacts, and changing exhibits provide the community a major resource for historical education.

The Aspen Historical Society is a private, non-profit, volunteer organization. It conducts tours of Aspen and maintains an ongoing preservation effort at the townsites of Ashcroft and Independence. For more information, call (303) 925-3721.



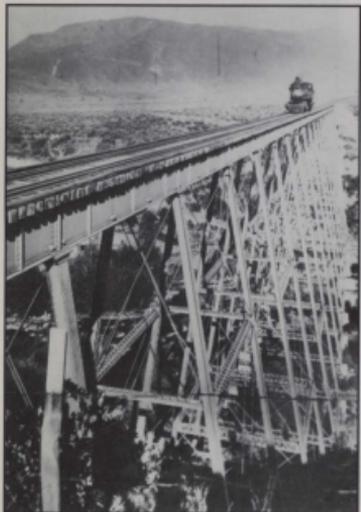
**The Smith-Elisha House**  
320 W. Main Street

Built about 1890, this house is a marvel of Queen Anne design. It has an irregular porch, a multi-gable facade, a wraparound porch and a massive two-story side bay topped by a gable roof dormer. A recent renovation included the conversion of the main house to office space and the carriage house into commercial and residential space.



(Left) Aspenites welcome the first Denver & Rio Grande train, November 2, 1887. Colorado Historical Society.

(Below left) The Maroon Creek Bridge. Maroon Creek was one of the last barriers the Colorado Midland Railroad had to surmount before entering Aspen in the late 1880s. After the railroad was abandoned in 1919, local residents used the bridge as a crossing; then in 1929, the deck was widened and paved to accommodate automobile traffic. This bridge, built in the late 1880s, is the last of the five original iron bridges erected by the Midland. Colorado Historical Society.



The railroad yards at Basalt in 1895. Aspen Historical Society.

# Rails to Aspen

From the outset, everyone knew that if Aspen was to prosper, it had to have a railroad connection with the outside world. The more isolated that a town was in the 19th century, the more important it was to have a railroad. By 1886, Aspen had two possibilities. The first was William Jackson Palmer's narrow-gauge Denver & Rio Grande Railroad; the second was the standard-gauge Colorado Midland Railroad, bankrolled by James J. Hagerman and Jerome B. Wheeler.

## The Rio Grande

The Rio Grande reached Leadville in 1880, but four years elapsed before Palmer and his associates began constructing a line to Aspen. This delay was a major factor in the slow development of the mining camp. The Rio Grande had two possible routes — one from Buena Vista over Taylor Pass, the other from Leadville by way of Hunter Creek. The line decided on the Hunter Creek route. Beginning in 1884, it built

north from Leadville to Redcliff, then turned west to go through Glenwood Canyon to Glenwood Springs, then southeast into the Roaring Fork Valley.

Aspen waited eagerly for the great day. Then on November 2, 1887, the first Rio Grande train steamed into town to a wild celebration — a parade, bonfires, speeches, a banquet with a menu that began with oysters, green turtle soup, and buffalo tongue, and ended two hours later with coffee, cognac, and cigars. Although the train was 90 minutes late to the celebration, no one seemed to care. And the party and the constantly blasting train whistle were so loud that the frightened dairy cows stopped giving milk. This created a shortage that lasted for several days.

## The Colorado Midland

Although the Rio Grande won the race to Aspen, the Colorado Midland was not far behind. It planned to build a shorter, but more difficult, route from Leadville over the Continental Divide into the valley along the Frying Pan River. It also owned the valuable right-of-way through the middle of town.

The Midland's plans called for construction of a 2,164 foot-long tunnel through Sugarloaf Mountain, 11,530 feet above sea



*The Aspen City Railway began operations in 1889 with horse-drawn cars running along tracks between the various railroad depots and businesses. The fare was 5 cents to travel anywhere on the city line. Aspen Historical Society.*



*A rotary plow emerging from a snowshed. Winter often left the Colorado Midland tracks buried under mounds of snow. Sometimes, the deep snows left trains buried for days.*  
William H. Jackson. Colorado Historical Society.

level. Workers began blasting the tunnel from both ends in late 1886 and completed the work in August 1887. The Midland then added snowsheds at both ends. The total cost was a then staggering \$2,000,000.

The Midland should have won the race to Aspen. In mid-August 1887, it had graded a line all the way to the city limits, well ahead of the Rio Grande, but delays in constructing bridges over Maroon and Castle creeks allowed the Rio Grande to arrive in Aspen first. Not until December 18, 1887, did the first Midland train arrive in town.

Once operations began, the Midland attempted to reduce the cost of providing service to Aspen. The extreme weather and the high altitude often left the approaches to the Hagerman Tunnel buried in snow. In



*A Colorado Midland train braves the big wooden trestle on the loop near Hagerman Tunnel.* Colorado Historical Society.



*The hairpin loop near the Hagerman Tunnel.* William H. Jackson. Colorado Historical Society.

1890, the Midland decided to build a new passage at a lower altitude. The new tunnel was named the Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel, located 11,000 feet above sea level. When opened to traffic in 1893, it was 15 feet wide, 21 feet high, and nearly 2.9 miles long, and it eliminated 6.9 miles from the original route.

Still, there were problems. The private company that operated the new tunnel charged 25 cents per passenger or ton of freight. The Midland thought this excessive. A short time later, it laid new track on the old route, and Midland trains went back to using the Hagerman Tunnel.

### The Crash of 1893

The silver crash in 1893 had a devastating effect on the railroads. The mining boom ended and rail traffic plunged. The Santa Fe Railroad acquired the Midland, but the crash forced the company into receivership from which it never recovered. The Hagerman Tunnel route was abandoned in 1900, and the entire line ceased operations in 1918. The track was removed by 1921, and the grade was converted into a road. Today, State Highway 82 follows the original right-of-way of the Colorado Midland Railroad.

The Rio Grande was more fortunate. As mining declined, it hauled cattle and sheep in and out of the valley. In the late 1930s and 1940s, it brought in the building materials used to start the ski boom, and its ski trains brought passengers to Aspen, now undergoing revitalization as a ski resort. Today, the track remains in place between Glenwood Springs and Woody Creek, just north of Aspen. Upstream, the railroad grade between Woody Creek and the city limits has been converted into a popular trail for biking, horseback riding, and walking. In winter, cross-country skiers delight in gliding along the abandoned grade.

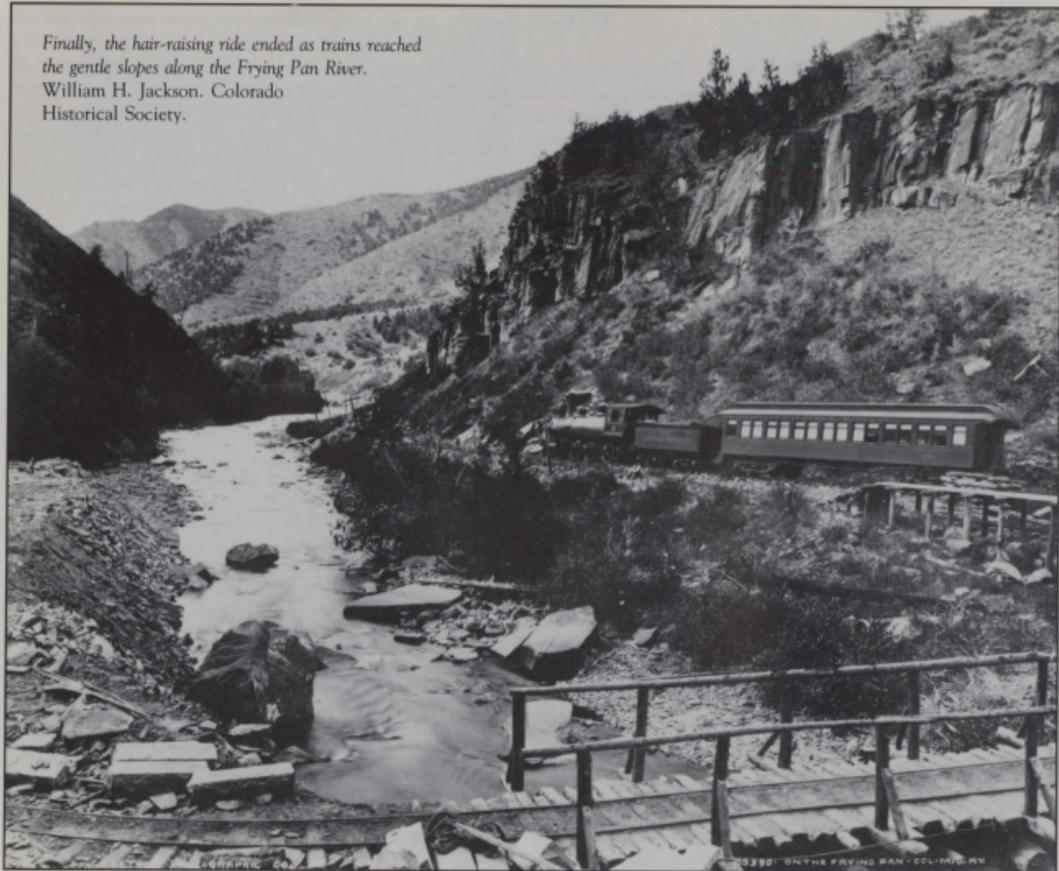


Descending from the Hagerman Tunnel, trains twisted and turned through a series of hairpin turns and snowsheds built to keep the heavy winter snows from closing the route. Colorado Historical Society.



Farther down, trains passed through Hell Gate, a narrow canyon with sheer rock cliffs and loose boulders perilously perched above the track. William H. Jackson. Colorado Historical Society.

Finally, the hair-raising ride ended as trains reached  
the gentle slopes along the Frying Pan River.  
William H. Jackson. Colorado  
Historical Society.



## From Silver to Snow

---

Aspen's ski industry has a direct tie to the mining era. People from town once hiked up the mountains "boards in hand" (often barrel staves), strapped them onto their heavy boots, and "rode" down the mountain (with varying degrees of success) using a long, sturdy pole as a brake!

Aspen's Tom Flynn, a miner's son, had those days in mind when he went to California in the spring of 1936 and chanced to meet Billy Fiske, an Olympic bobsled champion. That lucky meeting led to the creation of the Highland-Bavarian Corporation, which built a lodge at Ashcroft. The infant ski resort was born. Flynn and Fiske hoped to develop Mount Hayden, up the Castle Creek Valley from Ashcroft, into an outstanding ski area. And to that end, they helped persuade Ted Ryan, an investor, into acquiring land there.

But Aspen, not Ashcroft, was to become synonymous with unexcelled snow and outstanding terrain. Flynn enticed Andre Roch, the celebrated Swiss mountaineer and downhill champion, to design a ski run on Aspen Mountain. This became the famous Roch Run. "The Roch," as it became known, contained the Corkscrew, a section that would test the mettle of a generation of competitive skiers. The lower 600-foot portion was cut wider to serve as the slalom hill. In all, the Roch had a vertical drop

of 3,000 feet down the face of Aspen Mountain right into town.

The Roch Run was a great success. In 1938, Aspen served as the site of the Rocky Mountain Ski Association Championship and in 1941, the Aspen Ski Club played host to the U.S. World Alpine Championship, an event that promoted Aspen on an international scale.

Getting people up Aspen Mountain was a challenge. But there was help at hand. Ski lift development began about the same time as the Roch Run. Laurence Elisha, who owned the Hotel Jerome, donated a Model A Ford engine, and Frank Wilmoughby, who ran the Midnight mine, contributed some mining hoists and a cable. From that was fashioned the Boat Tow, a wooden, toboggan-like sled with four seats, which ran up the side of Aspen Mountain. It cost skiers 10 cents a ride, or 50 cents for a half day, and more than 100 people rode it on opening day, January 27, 1938.

Ironically, Flynn, Fiske, and others originally thought that Mount Hayden would be the center of ski development, but World War II interrupted Mount Hayden's development. Fiske enlisted in the Royal Air Force and in August 1940 became the first American to die in the Battle of Britain. During the war, Ryan joined the Office of Strategic Services where he met Minot

Dole, the founder of the National Ski Patrol, who was helping organize a division of ski troops. Ryan offered Ashcroft as a training site for the 87th Mountain Infantry. Training began there, but eventually, the 87th was moved to Camp Hale, near Leadville, where it became part of the 10th Mountain Division.

Nonetheless, the word spread about Aspen's Roch Run, and soon the racers among the 10th Mountain troops began spending some of their weekends testing their skills. Among them was Corporal Friedl Pfeifer, formerly director of the Sun Valley ski school in Idaho, who dreamed of returning to Aspen when the war ended.

After the war, Pfeifer did indeed come back to Aspen, and other important people entered the scene as well. Among them was Elizabeth Paepcke, who introduced Aspen to her husband, Walter Paepcke, the head of the Container Corporation of America, of Chicago. The Paepckes were well-connected, and they saw tremendous opportunity. The result was that investment capital flowed in to expand the ski industry. Among the improvements was the single-chair Lift #1, at that time the longest chairlift in the world.

Aspen the ski resort was on its way. In 1950, it hosted the FIS Alpine Events, and the Roch Run became the site of the World



*Aspen Mountain about 1937. Note the beginning development of ski runs which can be see in the left center of the photograph. Spar Gulch is on the left, and Aspen Highlands on the right. Colorado Historical Society.*

Ski Championships, which were held for the first time in the United States. Lift capacity at Aspen Mountain expanded as did the number of runs. Then came newer ski areas: Aspen Highlands, which opened in 1957; Buttermilk, which served its first skiers the next year; and Snowmass, which opened in 1967. Aspen's ski schools became famous, at least partly through the fame of their instructors, such as Olympic medalist Stein Erickson.

Ultimately, in the late 1980s, Aspen installed the world's longest, single-stage, vertical-rise gondola — the Silver Queen Gondola — to whisk skiers and summer visitors to the top of Aspen Mountain, 11,212 feet above sea level, in only 14 minutes! The Silver Queen is a far cry from the Boat Tow and the single-chair lift that helped launch the resort many years before.



*Friedl Pfeifer, a member of the 10th Mountain Division, was one of the founding fathers of skiing at Aspen. In the late 1940s, he helped convince Walter Paepcke to develop Aspen Mountain and fund construction of Lift #1. Colorado Historical Society.*

General information on Aspen Mountain, Buttermilk/Tiehack, and Snowmass may be obtained by calling (303) 925-4444. The Aspen Highlands information number is (303) 925-5300.

### Cross Country Skiing

"Aspen's Fifth Mountain" — the area's cross-country skiing — has become as well known as the downhill runs. The Aspen/Snowmass region features one of North America's most extensive networks of groomed and backcountry trails and ski touring huts. There are 48 miles of groomed trails over historic railroad beds and



*Peter Seibert of the Aspen Highlands Ski School. Colorado Historical Society.*

through meadows of remarkable beauty.

Beginning in the late 1940s, many of Aspen's well-known residents, including Fred Braun, were instrumental in establishing a system of backcountry huts, which now enable skiers to enjoy the wonders of the high valleys of the Elk Range.

Another trail system, the 80-mile 10th Mountain Division Trail, was begun in 1980 largely due to the efforts of Aspen architect and outdoor enthusiast Fritz Benedict. This hut system, inspired by the Chamonix to Zermatt trail, connects Aspen with Vail Pass and the Holy Cross Wilderness area.

For cross-country skiing information, contact the Aspen/Snowmass Nordic Council, the Aspen Cross-Country Center at (303) 925-2145, or the Snowmass Club Touring Center at (303) 923-3148.



*Lift #1, the famous single chair, in 1947. Aspen Historical Society.*



Aspen's Boat Tow, inspired by the lifts at Kitzbuhel, Austria, carried its first skiers in 1937. Both the Boat Tow and parts of Lift #1 are on permanent display in Willoughby Park, located at the corner of Aspen and Dean streets. Aspen Historical Society.

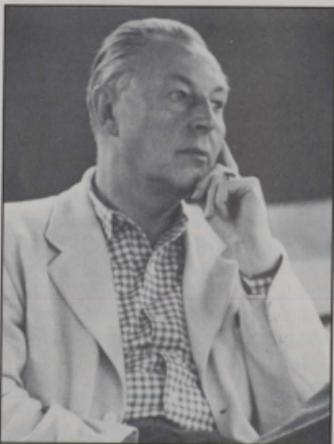


In the 1940s and 1950s, Aspen became a mecca for Hollywood stars. Here, film star Gary Cooper boards the single chair while Friedl Pfeifer (left) looks on. Aspen Historical Society.

## The Aspen Renaissance

The Aspen that Walter Paepcke saw in 1946 seemed to be the ideal environment to support his dream of "a community of peace with opportunities for a man's complete life. . . . where he can earn a living, profit by healthy, physical recreation, with facilities at hand for his enjoyment of art, music, and education."

Paepcke was a Chicago industrialist who had developed the Container Corporation



Walter Paepcke was the driving force behind the Aspen Renaissance. Photo: Berko.

of America into a major enterprise. In July 1949, at the Goethe Bicentennial Convocation, Paepcke launched his vision of the "Universal Man" by bringing 2,000 people, the entire Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, and international attention to Aspen. Among the many celebrities attending were pianist Artur Schnabel, playwright Thornton Wilder, conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos and most notably, the famous humanitarian Albert Schweitzer; this was Schweitzer's only visit to the United States.

The success of the Goethe Bicentennial and Music Festival led to the continuation of the Aspen Music Festival and the development of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, the Aspen Physics Institute, the Music Associates of Aspen, and the Aspen Music School. The present Music Tent and the "international style" architecture of the Aspen Institute were created by the noted Bauhaus designer Herbert Bayer, assisted by Aspen architect Fritz Benedict.

The celebrated Music Festival has brought some of the finest artists and performers in the world to Aspen. The list includes composer Aaron Copland, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, composer Benjamin Britten, flutist James Galway, and violinists Isaac Stern and Itzhak Perlman. Aspen is known

for its delightful Rocky Mountain summers which provide a spectacular backdrop for the Music Festival. To experience the sweet harmonies of classical, contemporary or jazz music inside the tent preceded by a picnic on the lawn, is a requisite for locals and visitors alike.

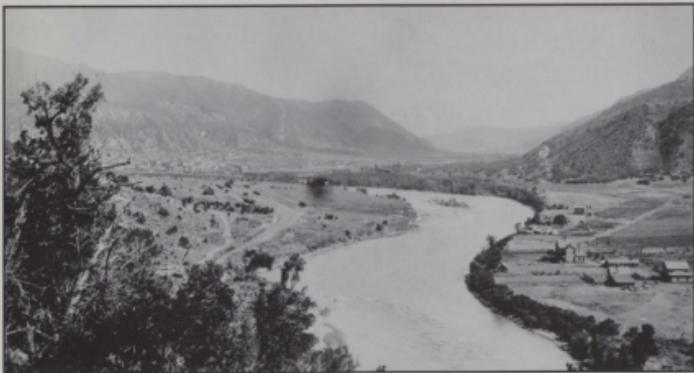
Another celebrated institution in Aspen is the International Design Conference. Since its founding in 1950, it has gained renown as the premier forum for exploring new design concepts. Held each June, the conference brings artists and architects together with business leaders to exchange design-related ideas.



Albert Schweitzer (right) at the Goethe Bicentennial Convocation in 1949. Aspen Historical Society.



Shortly after settlement of the Roaring Fork Valley began, a wagon road was built to Glenwood Springs. Here, the famous photographer William H. Jackson captures a wagon from Aspen on the road just southeast of Glenwood Springs. William H. Jackson. Colorado Historical Society.



The mouth of the Roaring Fork Valley, looking southeast toward Aspen. Mt. Sopris near Carbondale is visible in the background. William H. Jackson. Colorado Historical Society.

# The Roaring Fork Valley

---

The Roaring Fork Valley extends nearly 40 miles from Aspen northwest to Glenwood Springs. The Sawatch Range rises on the east and the Elk Mountains on the south and west. The Roaring Fork River, which cuts through wide open meadows in the valley, begins near the top of Independence Pass and flows northwesterly to meet the Colorado River near Glenwood Springs. The Frying Pan River on the east and the Crystal River on the west flow into the Roaring Fork.

People have lived in the valley for at least 5,000 years. The Ute Indians arrived here around 1400 A.D., and they controlled the entire region until the 1870s.

Trappers and traders began visiting the Roaring Fork Valley as early as the 1820s, but they were few in number and did little to disturb the Utes. This changed, however, once the Pike's Peak Gold Rush began in 1859. The next year, Richard Sopris led an expedition into the valley in search of gold. Although the explorers found little of value, they were responsible for naming Mt. Sopris, which rises west of Carbondale.

While the Sopris expedition did little to encourage development, a few intrepid prospectors continued to enter the valley in search of gold. They were usually chased out by the Utes, however, who controlled the lower half of the valley from the Frying

Pan River to the Colorado River under the 1868 Ute Reservation Settlement Act.

The only white explorers that the Utes allowed to enter the valley were the members of the Hayden Survey, which was charged with determining the economic potential of various areas in Colorado. This hardy group of geologists, botanists, and topographers described and mapped the valley in 1873 and presented evidence of gold and silver.

In 1878 and 1879, the first major influx of prospectors, many from Leadville, began arriving in the Frying Pan and Roaring Fork valleys to look for gold and silver. This ultimately led to the Ute removal and the opening of the Western Slope. In 1883 and 1884, builders completed a road parallel to the river through the heart of the valley between Aspen and Glenwood Springs. This helped stimulate coal mining near present-day Basalt. Charcoal kilns in the area also manufactured charcoal to fuel the smelters in Leadville.

The first permanent settlers in the valley tended to be ranchers lured by the cheap and plentiful land. Haying helped support Western Colorado's cattle industry. Cattle ranches were common, but the harsh climate and the high altitude required both summer and winter ranges.

Farmers also settled in the valley. They

built irrigation ditches to carry water from the river to the fields. Intense job competition led some miners to turn to ranching and farming to make a living.

After the Silver Crash in 1893, the valley's population declined as the mines closed down. Railroad towns such as Emma and Catherine became nothing more than crossroads. Other towns also suffered.

The economic decline had one positive benefit, however. The elk population, which numbered perhaps 5,000 animals in 1880, had disappeared by 1903 — slaughtered to feed the growing population during the boom. But elk were reintroduced from Wyoming, and the animals flourished once more.

Today, the Roaring Fork Valley's economy is based on sporting and tourism, recreation, and some mining. In addition to the beautiful scenery and recreational activities, the area offers hot mineral springs — Glenwood Hot Springs at Glenwood Springs, Penny Hot Springs along the Crystal River, and Conundrum Hot Springs near Aspen.

## *Independence* Gold on the Fourth of July

About 16 miles east of Aspen lie the ruins of Independence, the first mining

camp in the Roaring Fork region. The site is located in a meadow alongside State Highway 82 at an altitude of 10,880 feet.

Independence was so named because prospectors from Leadville discovered the first gold lode there on July 4, 1879. Almost immediately, a tent city sprang up. By 1880, around 300 people were living in crude log cabins.

At its peak in 1882, Independence had a population of between 1,000 and 2,000 hardy inhabitants. The local business directory listed over 40 businesses in town, including grocery stores, boarding houses, a newspaper, a bank and several hotels. A miner could find room and board for only \$2 a day at one of several prominent board-

ing houses. True to the image of the old west, Independence had a reputation as a wild camp with rowdy saloons, gambling halls, and many brothels.

Unlike Aspen, Independence depended on gold, particularly from the mines of the Farwell Mining Company. It built a stamp mill, powered by steam and water, to process the ore. Operations began in 1881, and the mill produced \$100,000 worth of gold that first year. The Farwell mines were worked on and off until about 1900.

Unfortunately for Independence, the gold boom was short-lived. Gold production had begun to decline only three years after the boom began. The Farwell mill closed in 1883, although it operated sporad-

ically for the next 40 years. By 1888, fewer than 100 people lived in the camp. Most businesses had closed or moved to Aspen. By 1900, Independence was little more than a ghost town.

Today, only a few scattered structures remain at the isolated townsite. Several have been rebuilt by the Aspen Historical Society, while others have been left to decay. Although the mill was demolished in the early 1920s, portions of the structure are still visible a short distance down the road from the townsite. Time, severe winter weather, souvenir hunters, and vandals have taken their toll on the site. But Independence still offers a glimpse of an historic gold mining camp.



*Independence. Historic photographs of Independence are rare, perhaps due to its short existence. This photograph, taken after the town was abandoned, shows many more structures than are visible today. The Independence townsite is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is recognized as part of a six-mile scenic drive designated by the Colorado Legislature. Aspen Historical Society.*



Standing in front of the Ashcroft Post Office in 1906 are (left to right) the mayor, a mine superintendent, and a typical miner. Colorado Historical Society.

*(Above left) The Farwell mill site at Independence. Sarah J. Pearce.*

*(Left) The abandoned townsite of Independence. Sarah J. Pearce.*

## Ashcroft Silver to Silver Screen

During the summer of 1879, prospectors discovered silver at the two forks of Castle Creek, and the boom was on. The first settlement, known as either Highland or Castle Forks, came a year later in June 1880. By the end of the year, Thomas E. Ashcroft had laid out a townsite called Chloride, where a small number of tenacious settlers dug in for the winter. By 1881, more than 500 people lived in the small camp, and on January 3, 1882, the town name was officially changed to Ashcroft.

Ashcroft's growth was remarkable. Even then, the bustling town had gambling houses, two brothels, and six saloons, as well as a daily stage to Aspen, Independence, and Leadville. By 1883, it had six hotels, seventeen saloons, and more than 2,500 people. Ashcroft was bigger than Aspen, and led the Roaring Fork Valley in silver production. The Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mine was the top producer. It was half-owned by the Leadville silver magnate, Horace A.W. Tabor, one of Colorado's most prominent citizens. He and his second wife Baby Doe lived in Ashcroft for a short time in the early 1880s.

Despite the great hopes and optimism of so many, the bust came early to Ashcroft. The rich silver strikes at Aspen, coupled with transportation problems and the shortage of funds needed to develop the mines, spelled doom. When the railroads finally arrived in Aspen, it was no longer necessary

to haul ore through Ashcroft and over Taylor and Pearl passes to reach the smelters at Leadville. More and more of the population drifted down to Aspen. By 1892, Ashcroft had only 50 people. In 1935, the town was abandoned.

Ashcroft sprang to life again briefly in 1942 when the 87th Mountain Infantry arrived for ski training. The troops were part of the 10th Mountain Division, which was later based at Camp Hale near Leadville and which would go on to fight in Italy during World War II. In the 1950s, the deserted town served as the backdrop for the filming of the television series *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*.

Today, Ashcroft has been partly rebuilt by the Aspen Historical Society. Four of the seven buildings in town were moved to the site from other locations around Pitkin County, and three other structures were rebuilt. The townsite is a popular destina-



*The stately mansion of Aspen mining baron Henry Gillespie dominated the surrounding landscape in the town of El Jebel. Aspen Historical Society.*

tion for mountain bikers in the summer and cross-country skiers in the winter. An extensive trail system has been laid out surrounding the town and a first-class restaurant is located nearby.

To reach Ashcroft, follow the Castle Creek Road to the left off the Maroon Creek Road. The Maroon Bells and Maroon Lake, one of the most photographed settings in Colorado, is located at the end of the Maroon Creek Road. Be sure to bring your camera!

## Emma

The town of Emma, now nothing more than several commercial buildings, a house, and a school on State Highway 82, was once a busy railroad stop. The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad built the town in 1888 at the intersection of the rails and an older stage road.

Railroad crews named the town for Emma Davis Shehi, an ardent prohibitionist who often cooked for the railroad workers. The stop itself consisted of a small station, section house, water tank, post office, and general store. In 1898, Charles Mather built the commercial structures and the house which are still standing on site today.

## El Jebel

A Colorado Midland siding, El Jebel became better known as the home of Henry B. Gillespie, one of the founders of Aspen.

Gillespie acquired land there in the early 1880s in an effort to diversify his wealth generated from investments in mining. He moved to the ranch around 1890.

About 1,200 acres in size, the ranch was famous for its prized horses and cattle as well as its massive barns and stables, orchards, and its own private reservoir and electric generating plant. The grounds were elegantly landscaped with a mile-long, tree-lined boulevard leading from a private railroad siding to the big, white three-story house.

In 1900, Gillespie went bankrupt, and the property was auctioned off piece by piece. Fires destroyed some of the buildings in the 1920s, and the orchards were cut down over the years. A mobile home park and stores have replaced the fields and railroad siding. The big white house, however, still stands overlooking the small town.

### Basalt

Basalt was originally known as Frying Pan Junction, a name attributed to the large number of trout caught in the nearby river. Numerous squatters lived there by 1880. Then in 1882, the Aspen Smelting Company built charcoal kilns at the confluence of the Frying Pan and Roaring Fork rivers. A tent city developed to house the workers. The use of the kilns declined, however, once the railroad arrived and coal was discovered at Spring Valley and Carbondale.

In 1887, the Colorado Midland Railroad built a railroad yard and station known as



*Aspen Junction, now Basalt, shortly after the Colorado Midland Railroad built the town and railroad yard. Colorado Historical Society.*

Aspen Junction near the town and convinced the residents of Frying Pan to move their homes there. Aspen Junction also served as a construction camp for railroad workers. There was a boarding house, store, several restaurants, and fifteen saloons.

In 1895, the town changed its name again, this time to Basalt, to avoid confusion with Grand Junction and Aspen. The name Basalt comes from the geological formation nearby. Basalt has always been the first substantial town down valley from Aspen. It is now a popular tourist stop for those heading up the Frying Pan River to fish or otherwise enjoy the outdoor wonders of the Roaring Fork Valley.

### Carbondale

Located about 30 miles from Aspen, Carbondale was first settled in 1881 by William Dinkel, who caught and sold game in Aspen and Leadville before turning to farming. Dinkel built the area's first irrigation ditch to carry water from the Roaring Fork River to his fields. He also operated a stage stop on the Aspen-Glenwood Springs line. After the railroad arrived in 1887, Carbondale enjoyed a building boom. In short order it had one hotel, three restaurants, a school and thirteen saloons, and seven other businesses. Its economy was based mostly on the nearby coal mines.

## Redstone

Tucked beneath its namesake red cliffs next to the Crystal River, is the tiny community of Redstone. It displays a delicate blend of tiny turn-of-the-century cottages and more substantial Queen Anne houses. Particularly notable are the Tudor-style Redstone Inn and "Cleveholm," the celebrated estate of John C. Osgood, the chairman of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) in Pueblo.

Osgood created the company town of Redstone, which became important in coke production from 1898 to 1909. The coal came from Coal Basin, 12 miles west of Redstone. The coke ovens are still visible along Highway 133.

Osgood had a frustrating time. Strikes by coal miners plus his commitment to improve the steel plant at Pueblo, drained his financial resources. In 1903, he had to turn for money to eastern capitalists John D. Rockefeller and George Gould, who gained control of the steel plant, Redstone, and the mines at Coal Basin. Before he left CF&I, Osgood completed the construction of his magnificent estate, "Cleveholm," on 450 acres of land.

In the early 20th century, the decline of the mining and smelting industries in western Colorado created a downward spiral in the demand for coke. The coke ovens began to close in 1908, and the next year, the town of Redstone was abandoned.

Today, Redstone is a thriving year-round community noted for its arts and specialty



*John C. Osgood built cottages like these for employees and their families along Redstone Boulevard. Aspen Historical Society.*



*The Redstone Inn provided housing for unmarried workers at Osgood's coke ovens. Colorado Historical Society.*



*Cleveholm was the home of John Cleveland Osgood. A gentle sloping hill, exquisitely landscaped, descended to the Crystal River, providing an elegant setting for an elegant residence. The castle still features its original furnishings. Aspen Historical Society.*

shops. Cleveholm, the "Redstone Castle," and the Redstone Inn offer turn-of-the-century lodging. They are also ideal settings for special events, weddings and romantic getaways amidst unrivaled natural beauty. Bike rides or strolls along Redstone Boulevard provide an intimate opportunity to appreciate the traditional, historic character that is uniquely Redstone.

For information about tours and Redstone's history, contact the businesses along

the boulevard or stop in at the Redstone Historical Society.

#### *Marble*

South of Redstone off State Highway 133 is the town of Marble (actually located in Gunnison County), which is world-famous for the marble mined there. Early prospectors, looking for gold and silver, discovered marble on Whitehouse Mountain about

1873, but without a commercial outlet and because of the remote location, there was little they could do.

Pioneers did come, however. The first settlement, called Yule Creek, took its name from Yule Creek, which empties into the Crystal River. The name was changed to Clarence in 1880 and to Marble City about 1882 or 1883. The town served as a supply center for prospectors.

In 1885, a Welsh marble worker opened



*The Crystal Mill. One of the most photographed buildings in Colorado, the Crystal Mill was built about 1882 to provide power for the Sheep Mountain Tunnel, one of the largest mines in Crystal City. The camp was founded in 1882 but because of its remote location south of Marble, never had more than several hundred residents and was largely abandoned by 1910. Aspen Historical Society.*

a quarry to supply stone for the Colorado State Capitol in Denver, but the remote location and the lack of adequate transportation still hampered the commercial development. For years, 40-mule packtrains carried the marble to the railroad. Around 1895, horse-drawn sleighs transported the marble. Finally, in 1905, workers completed a wagon road to help bring the marble to the railroad for shipment.

In 1906, Colonel Channing F. Meek purchased the Yule quarries and plant and organized the Colorado Yule Marble Company. He expanded the mill and quarry to create the world's largest marble finishing plant. He constructed the Crystal River and

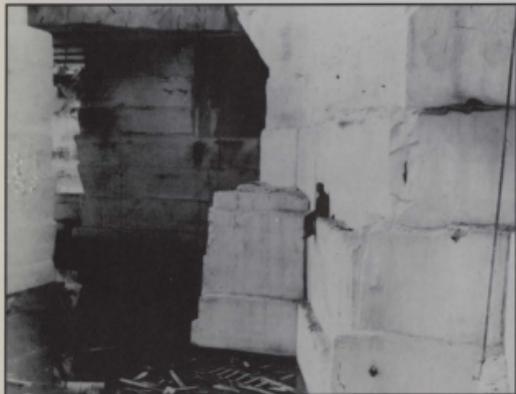
San Juan Railroad to help transport the marble to the Denver & Rio Grande track in Carbondale. He also imported expert cutters from Italy, and by 1910, the company was a multi-million dollar business.

The Colorado Yule quarries shipped marble for use in buildings in Denver, San Francisco, Chicago, and other cities. In 1914, over a million dollars worth of marble was used to build the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

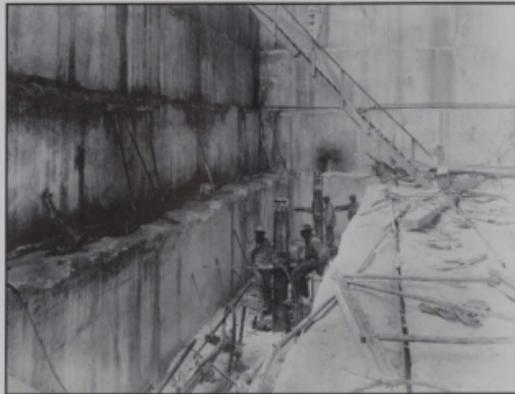
During the height of production, the company town of Marble had a population of nearly 2,000 people along with churches, schools, theater, and numerous stores, hotels, and saloons. But by 1916, the de-

mand for marble fell, forcing the company to shut down for six years. The Vermont Marble Company purchased the mill and quarry in 1927 and reopened. But as shipping costs and foreign competition increased, and the demand for marble decreased due to the rise in popularity of marble veneers and substitutes, the company's profits faded. A mud slide which nearly buried the town in 1941 forced the mill and quarry to close.

Today, a trip to Marble reveals a quiet little town. Yet there is the possibility that the quarry will reopen and that marble will once again travel along the Crystal River for building sites around the country.



Solid walls of marble and a pool of water mark a reflective moment for this worker waiting for a block of marble to be hoisted out of the quarry in 1911. Colorado Historical Society.



Hazardous working conditions often existed in the marble quarry. Cramped spaces, flying dust, and falling debris were part of the workers every-day existence. Colorado Historical Society.

*The Colorado Yule Quarry at Marble.  
Aspen Historical Society.*



In 1930, the Vermont Marble Company received the contract to supply marble for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. The quarry was the only one capable of cutting a 124-ton chunk in one piece. The marble for the tomb weighed 56 tons after being trimmed; it took 75 men more than a year to quarry the piece. Colorado Historical Society.



## Acknowledgements

---

The authors wish to thank the Aspen Historic Trust for its interest in and funding of this project. The Aspen Historic Trust is a nonprofit organization active in the protection and preservation of Aspen's historic sites and structures. Local proceeds from book sales will go to benefit the Trust's preservation efforts.

Various individuals and organizations have provided inspiration, encouragement, and help in preparing this book. Special thanks go to Mac Cunningham, Chairman of the Board of the Aspen Historic Trust, and the Trust's board of directors for their support; Ramona Markalunas and Jay Fell for their review of the manuscript; Kim Johnson for tour maps; Bill Koerner for assistance in photographing Aspen's buildings; the staffs at the Colorado Historical Society and the Aspen Historical Society for their assistance in locating photographs; R.C. Bishop of Grand Junction for his donation of the front cover photograph, the Sardy House and Jeffrey Aaronson for permission to use the Sardy House photograph on the back cover, and Paul Hilts for the Maroon Bells photograph.

## About the Authors

---

Sarah J. Pearce and Roxanne Eflin have both been active in historic preservation in Colorado since the late 1970s. Pearce has worked as an historian for both the Colorado Historical Society and the Colorado Department of Highways. She is the co-author of *A Guide to Historic Central City & Black Hawk*. Eflin has worked as the historic preservation planner for the City of Aspen/Pitkin County Planning Department and as executive director and founder of the Aspen Historic Trust. A long-time Colorado resident, she was a founding officer of Colorado Preservation, Inc.

## Other Titles in the Cordillera Press Historic Mining District Series

---

*Guide to the Georgetown - Silver Plume Historic District*  
*Guide to Historic Central City & Black Hawk*  
*Guide to Historic Durango & Silverton*  
*Guide to Historic Western Boulder County*

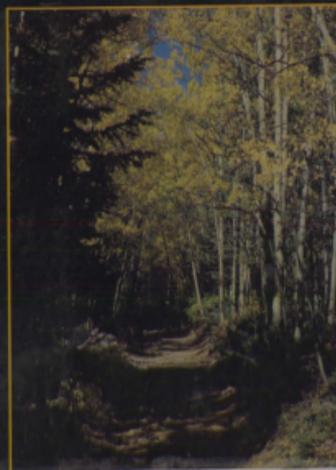
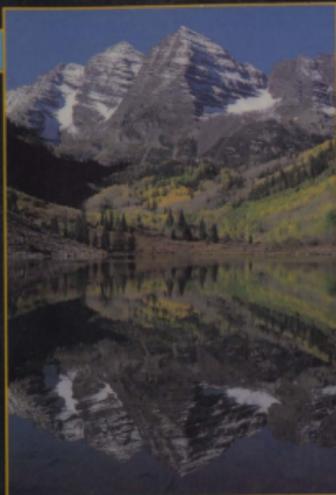
Gunnison County Library  
307 N. Wisconsin  
Gunnison, CO 81242

GUIDE TO HISTORIC

# ASPEN



*Sandy House*



\$5.95

ISBN 0-917895-32-0



CORDILLERA PRESS, INC.

Publishers in the Rockies