

The Ouray County Historical Society (OCHS) thanks the Ouray County Plaindealer for their assistance in printing and distributing our newsletter.

MISSION STATEMENT:
The Ouray County Historical Society (OCHS) is dedicated to preserve, protect, procure, exhibit, and interpret whatever relates to the natural, social, and cultural history of Ouray County and the adjacent San Juan Mountain Region of Colorado.

Audience Delivers the Verdict in The Last Trial of Alferd Packer

The grisly saga of Alferd Packer, western Colorado prospector and alleged cannibal, has been told in many forms – books, a musical and several plays. One of those plays, *The Last Trial of Alferd Packer*, will be performed at the Ouray Elks Lodge for two nights, July 27 and 28.

A fundraiser for the Ouray County Historical Society, the play is based on historical records of Packer's Lake City trial for murder and cannibalism. The plot includes various accounts of events that led up to the trial in which he was accused of murdering and eating his companions during a prospecting expedition in the mountains near Lake City. That winter of 1874, the party had been caught in a blizzard and ran out of food.

The play will be performed by the Ouray County Players, a resident theater company of the Wright Opera House, and directed by Nancy Nixon, former Ouray High School teacher and drama instructor.

The Elks Lodge will offer an outdoor "Mystery Meat" barbecue both Friday and Saturday, in conjunction with the play. Jim Pettengill, a member of the Ouray Elks, assures the public that the meat is from four-legged animals only: pork ribs and beef brisket. The full meal also includes beans and coleslaw. A cash bar will be available. The barbecue runs 4-7 p.m. and the play begins at 7:30 p.m. both nights. Tickets are \$25 for the play and \$15 for the barbecue. Professors Michael Brooks (now retired) and Paul Edwards, of Western State Colorado University's Communications Arts Department, co-wrote the play in 1989. Although the *Last Trial* script is based on historical research, the playwrights

used "theatrical license" to portray colorful characters such as Packer, the Denver Post reporter Polly Pry, and road and railroad builder Otto Mears, said Prof. Brooks. "Some of the characters reveal that they are outright liars with hidden agendas," he said. "Their buffoonish styles add much humor to the proceedings."

The play, which has been performed over the years in Lake City and Creede, includes audience participation. In fact, the audience, as jury, votes on the trial verdict.

"Allowing the audience to play a role in the trial's outcome shows the effects of human dynamics," Brooks said. "If the actor who portrays Alferd Packer has a very menac-

▶ Alferd Packer, western Colorado prospector and alleged cannibal.



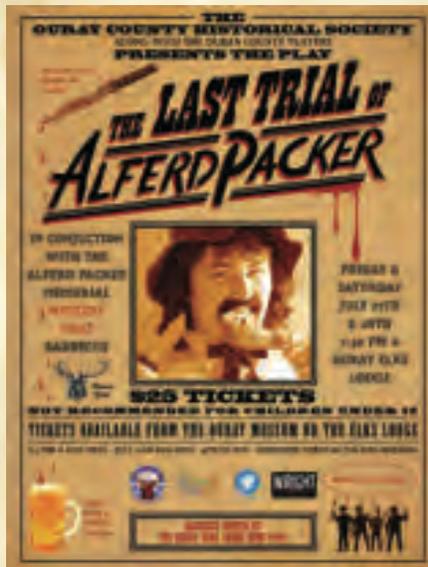
ing quality, the audience's verdict is more likely to be guilty. So personalities, not just the facts, can influence the outcome."

He added that he is glad the play will be performed at the Elks Lodge in Ouray since the historic building will add to the play's authenticity.

Nancy Nixon has been directing local theater productions for nearly 30 years and is a board member of the nonprofit Ouray County Players and chair of the Friends of the Wright Opera House. The Ouray County Players have presented *Oliver!*, *The Sound of Music*, and *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, among many other productions.

"The Alferd Packer play shows different people's perspectives of real events," Nixon said. "In this courtroom version, Polly Pry is the defense attorney and Otto Mears, the prosecutor. While much of it is historically factual with period costumes, it should also be lively and fun, an enjoyable experience for the audience."

For more information and to reserve tickets, please call the Ouray County Historical Society at 970 325-4576. Due to the subject matter, this play is not recommended for children under 12.



▲ Historic photo of the Ouray Elks Lodge on Main Street, circa 1900.



▲ Harper's Magazine illustration (date unknown) of murder scene.

Ouray County Museum Features Women's Work from the Mining Era

Women of Ouray's mining era worked nearly around the clock just to provide for the needs of their families. A new exhibit at the Ouray County Historical Museum replicates a typical miner's cabin of about 1900 and displays items women of that era used in their daily tasks.

"Life was not easy then," said Sue Hillhouse, curator of the exhibit. "It's no wonder it is said, 'Men work from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done.'"

Hillhouse has assembled a roomful of historic artifacts that illustrate the scope of a miner's wife's daily labors. The pot-bellied stove heated water for laundry and cooking as well as animal fat for soap. Women made all of their families' clothes by hand, or if they were lucky, with a treadle sewing machine such as the one in the exhibit. They were constantly

heating heavy irons, refilling kerosene lamps and trimming wicks before electricity was available in mountain locations.

Turn-of-the-century mining cabins had no indoor plumbing so emptying and cleaning chamber pots was another chore delegated to women. The exhibit includes a porcelain chamber pot from the home of Francis Carney, who built the Ouray Miner's Hospital (now the museum) in 1887.

And in the midst of gardening, canning, sewing, baking and laundry, women also had primary responsibility for care of children, including their education and treatment of illnesses. Toys and children's clothes are interspersed with housekeep-

ing implements to show how the homemakers multitasked.

The exhibit, aptly named "Women's Work is Never Done," reveals the strength and fortitude of women who braved a rugged environment to bring family and community life to historic Ouray.

The museum, located at 420 Sixth Avenue in Ouray, is open Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Summer hours begin May 15 when the museum will be open seven days a week. Hours will be the same except Sundays when the museum opens at noon.



▲ Sue Hillhouse.

For more information, call (970) 325-4576 or visit ouraycountyhistoricalsociety.com.

► Artifacts on display illustrate the scope of a miner's wife's daily labors, replicating a typical miner's cabin around 1900.



Railroad Room Exhibit Update

By Tom Hillhouse

This year you will notice the beginning of an update to the exhibits in the Railroad Room. The long term intent is to focus more on the exhibits that pertain to Ouray County and its railroads of the D&RG (w), Rio Grande Southern (RGS), and the Silverton Railroad.



This year you will see new exhibits on either side of the window on the west wall. To the left of the window is an exhibit of photographs of the Ouray D&RG (w) Depot over the years (1888-1948) including several of the 1948 fire that destroyed it.



▲ Tom Hillhouse, Vice President, Ouray County Historical Society.

To the right of the window you will see an exhibit featuring the arrival of the DR&G into Ouray in 1888 including several July, 1888 photographs of the Ouray Railroad facilities (the earliest known photos) as well as a photo montage of the last D&RG train to serve Ouray (March 21, 1953).

On the north wall, the large map of the D&RG(w) Ouray Station grounds has been highlighted with keyed photographs showing the views one would see from various locations.

Future updates will focus on Ridgway and the Silverton Railroad on Red Mountain.

New Climbing Exhibit to open soon!

Specially Curated by Pete Davis

I have lived in Ridgway for 8 years and the San Juan region for 20 years. I work as an archaeologist around the west as well as at Ouray Mountain Sports. I have been a dedicated rock and alpine climber since the age of 12 when I was first introduced in the nearby Uncompahgre wilderness. This exhibit is very exciting for me because it combines my two greatest passions; history and climbing. I hope you will find this exhibit to be as fascinating as I do!



▲ Pete Davis, curator.

Ouray County Historical Society Offers Night-time Photography Workshop In the Historic Red Mountain Mining District

- Below is list of equipment required for the workshop:
- DSLR Camera with long exposure capabilities
 - Sturdy tripod
 - Various lenses (14mm-85mm), mostly wide angle with fast aperture (f/2.8-ish)
 - An intervalometer or remote shutter. (Camera timer delay will work also.)
 - A headlamp or small flashlight
 - Memory cards and spare camera batteries
 - Post-processing computer or tablet with editing software (preferably Lightroom)
 - Proper clothing for chilly temperatures and possible wet weather.

Photographers often are challenged to capture the essence of wilderness landscapes after sundown. They will have the opportunity to learn the art and techniques of night-time photography at the Night-Time Photography Workshop in the Historic Red Mountain Mining District August 25 and 26.

The two-day workshop is a fundraiser for the OCHS. Matt Genuit, a local professional photographer known for his luminous after-dark images, will lead the workshop with Don Paulson, museum curator, mining historian and award-winning amateur photographer.

The Saturday schedule includes an afternoon seminar (2-5 p.m.) on the history of the Red Mountain Mining District as well as technical aspects of night-time photography. It will be held at the historical society's Main Street Annex in



Ouray. After a break, participants will meet at the Annex at 8 p.m. and carpool to the Red Mountain Mining District for an on-site outdoor shoot.

The Sunday afternoon session (1-4 p.m.) will offer instruction on post-processing followed by photo sharing at the Annex.

Don Paulson, of Ouray, has sold and exhibited many of his photographs of mining scenes in the San Juan Mountains and other areas of the Southwest. His photos have appeared in several tourist publications and brochures.

Matt Genuit owns the fine art gallery, Photos of Ouray, on Main Street. Last year his night photos of the Ouray area were exhibited in a one-man show at the Wright Opera House.

Genuit has lived in Ouray since 1976 and has been owner/operator of Ouray Liquors since 1999. In 2014, he discovered a renewed passion for photography and began exploring Ouray in a different light. He focused primarily on the unique beauty of late night hours - in his words, "unlearning the ability to not see, finding clarity in the darkness, vibrance in the light."

Image by Matt Genuit.

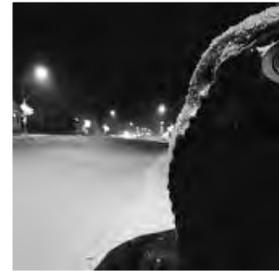


Image by Matt Genuit.

To see more of Matt Genuit's images, visit his website, <https://www.ourayatnight.com/portfolio>.

Cost of the workshop is \$350 per person, which includes water and snacks. Space is limited to 16 participants. To register, call the Ouray County Historical Museum at 970-325-4576.

Curator's Report ~ Don Paulson

This winter and spring has been quite busy as we begin the restoration of the Ouray Museum building under our \$198,000 State Historic Fund grant. In 1905 the museum added a three-story addition on the north end of the building. This included a large sub-basement below the museum basement exhibit level that contained a massive coal fired furnace that has not been functional since 1984. The grant involves remodeling that sub-basement area as a storage and workshop.

The first work involved removing

the asbestos from the 1905 furnace. Then the cast iron furnace itself needed to be cut into pieces and hauled out the sub basement area. The sub-basement contained a network of crisscrossing pipes some only 5 feet from the floor. These were all removed. The lathe and plaster ceiling was removed. Most of the support beams in the sub-basement had serious wood rot from water seepage into the area. New steel ceiling beams and steel support columns have been installed.

The next step is to lower the floor

about a foot to give the required head clearance room, followed by the pouring of a new concrete floor with a French Drain system below the concrete floor along with a sump pump. We will also add a new plasterboard ceiling and reinstall the heating system piping, new electrical outlets, etc. We will also correct the drainage situation on the east side of the building to prevent water seeping into the sub-basement followed by an upgrade of the first floor bathroom to ADA requirements along with the installation of a new ADA bathroom off the hospital kitchen. Other restoration work will also be carried out. It is anticipated that the work will be finished by the fall of 2019. During this time the museum will maintain its usual open schedule with very little inconvenience to visitors.

On July 1st an exhibit on "The History of Climbing in the San Juans" will open. This exhibit, put together by local climber Pete Davis, will focus on Colorado's largest, most remote and most rugged mountain range in the southwest part of the state. The beautiful, uniquely rugged topography has long attracted some of the most talented climbers in the world and has kept the San Juans at the forefront of climbing innovation and achievement for over a century. The adventures that these mountains provide tells a fascinating and exciting history of the intrepid men and women who climbed these mountain peaks.

OCHS Offers Sixth Annual Geology Tour

The Ouray County Historical Society offers its perennially popular fundraiser, the Geology Field Trip Wednesday, June 27, 2018. Participants will view 1.6 billion years of earth's history as seen in the rocks of the Ouray area.

Led by local geologists Larry Meckel and Robert Stoufer, the all-day trip will make nine stops along US 550 from Ridgway to Red Mountain Pass. The leaders will discuss the ores and minerals of the

mines along the route and show minerals typical of the three mining districts on the tour.

Back by popular demand, this field trip is the sixth annual geology tour offered by the OCHS.

"We look forward to having you join us to learn about the varied and fascinating geology of the northwest San Juan Mountains," said tour leader Larry Meckel. "These mountains have an exciting story to tell. Join us and be amazed!"

Tour guests will ride in open-air trucks from Colorado West Jeep Rentals. A small bus also will be available. The \$135 fee includes transportation, lunch, beverages, park admission and a guidebook. Admission fees are nonrefundable.

Participants should meet in front of Ouray City Hall on Sixth Avenue no later than 7:30 a.m. The tour vehicles will return to City Hall by late afternoon. For more information or to register for the field trip, please call (970) 325-4576 or e-mail ochs@ouraynet.com. Registration for the trip will remain open until all spaces are filled.

Geology, Mines, & Minerals
Of The Ouray Area
A Geological Field Trip

Wednesday, June 27, 2018

Leaders: Robert Stoufer & Larry Meckel
A Fundraiser for the Ouray County Historical Society

Contact the OCHS for details and sign-up forms: 970-325-4576

OCHS Summer Calendar 2018

MAY

Museum Hours: Mon-Sat 10am-4:30pm and Sunday 12pm-4:30pm thru Sept 30

JUNE

- 17 Fathers Day - Free Admission to Museum for Fathers
- 19 Evenings of History, series begins each Tuesday Night at 7:30PM
- 27 Ouray County Geology Tour led by Larry Meckel and Robert Stoufer, 8 am to 5 pm, Call the Museum 970-325-4576 for details.

JULY

- 4 Brownies and Lemonade at the Museum!
- 6 Guided tour of Ouray Museum led by Curator Don Paulson, 9:00 am, \$10 per person (\$5 for OCHS members). To preregister call 325-4576.
- 7 Guided Walk of Historic Main Street led by Irene Mattivi, \$10.00 per person, 3:00 pm. Call 970-325-4576 to preregister.
- 14 Corkscrew Railroad Bed and Turntable Hike (guided by Don Paulson, \$10 cost) - Sponsored by the Ridgway Railroad Museum and OCHS. Call 970-325-4576 to preregister. Hikers will meet at the Ouray County Museum at 9:00 am. In case of inclement weather call Don Paulson at 325-0931 before 8 am to ascertain the hike status.
- 21 Guided Cemetery Walking Tour led by Glenda Moore, \$10, meet at Cedar Hill Cemetery at 9:00 am. Preregister at 970-325-4576.
- 27-28 "The Last Trial of Alfred Packer," A play presented at the Ouray Elks Club by the Ouray County Players. Barbeque and other activities. Call the Ouray Museum at 970-325-4576 for details.

AUGUST

- 4 Guided Walking Tour of Historic Main Street led by Irene Mattivi, \$10.00 per person, 3:00 pm. Call 970-325-4576 to preregister.
- 11 Guided Cemetery Walking Tour led by Glenda Moore, \$10, meet at Cedar Hill Cemetery at 9:00 am. Preregister at 970-325-4576.
- 17 Guided tour of Ouray Museum led by Curator Don Paulson, 9:00 am, \$10 per person (\$5 for OCHS members). To preregister call 325-4576.
- 18 Corkscrew Railroad Bed and Turntable Hike (guided by Don Paulson, \$10 cost) - Sponsored by the Ridgway Railroad Museum and OCHS. Call 970-325-4576 to preregister. Hikers will meet at the Ouray County Museum at 9:00 am. In case of inclement weather call Don Paulson at 325-0931 before 8 am to ascertain the hike status.
- 25 & 26 Night-Time Photography Workshop in the Historic Red Mountain Mining District

SEPTEMBER

- 27-30 Ridgway Railroad Museum Railroad Days. See www.ridgwayrailroadmuseum.org for details.

OCTOBER 1 / NOVEMBER 10

Museum Opens Thursday thru Saturday 10am-4:30pm

Contact OCHS at (970) 325-4576 or e-mail ochs@ouraynet.com.

Ouray County Historical Society Evenings of History 2018*

Presented in Partnership with the Wright Opera House

*All talks take place at 7:30 pm at the Wright Opera House in Ouray



June 19

Kevin Chismire

Alfred Packer the Cannibal



Kevin Chismire currently serves as the OCHS Board President. He is a retired physician who specialized in Ophthalmology and is a recognized sub-specialist in the field of glaucoma. Dr. Chismire served as a Special Forces Battalion Surgeon stationed in Germany, served on the Staff of Madigan Army Medical Center, Tacoma, and taught at the University of Washington School of Medicine. Kevin and his wife Joan moved to Ridgway in 2002 with their sons Neil and Bryce. His interests include running, biking, climbing, backpacking, and

collecting western books and memorabilia.

Does anyone know the real truth about Alfred Packer, the man and the exploits? Let's start with his real name. Is it "Alfred" or "Alferd"? The sensationalistic newspapers of the 19th century turned this story into one of the most sensational, bizarre, grotesque, and intriguing narratives of the time. Kevin Chismire's lecture hopes to shed some light on the "real" Packer story, separating fact from fantasy. The talk will also delve into how modern 20th century forensic archeology is adding yet another layer of suspicion as to what really happened in the winter of 1873 near Cannibal Plateau just outside of present day Lake City, Colorado.

June 26

Larry Meckel

The Four Great Western Surveys of the 1870s



Larry is a geologist and a longtime resident of Ouray. He received a BA from Rice University and a PhD from Johns Hopkins University. Larry is an exploration consultant and retired adjunct professor from the Colorado School of Mines where he taught graduate level geology courses. He continues to teach geology courses for the OLLI winter program at the University of Denver and for various non-profit fund raisers, such as the OCHS geology field trip. He is a member of the AAPG, SEG, RMAG, and SEPM professional societies.

From 1803 to 1853 the US made several huge land acquisitions to consolidate the American West. Before the government had time to really explore and document these new lands, the Civil War disrupted those plans. Immediately after the Civil Wars, 4 surveys were commissioned (lasting for a period of 12 years) to explore and document the natural resources and possible troop movement routes in these truly new frontier lands that extended from the Front Range to California. Due to (1) the vast areas involved, (2) the quality of the leaders and key personnel, and (3) their lasting accomplishments, they became known as the "Four Great Surveys." And indeed, they were! They were the famous Hayden, King, Powell, and Wheeler Surveys.

July 3

Jim Pettengill

TROMBONES AND TUMBLEWEEDS: OURAY'S ORIGINAL COWBOY BAND



Jim Pettengill first visited the San Juan Mountains in 1961. He fell in love with the Southwest and moved to Arizona to attend graduate school at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, where he received a Master of Science degree in geology. After pursuing a career in geology with the U. S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Land Management, he retired to Ouray County in 1999. Jim has been a freelance writer and photographer for more than thirty years, with more than 180 feature articles and 700 photographs sold to national magazines. He is a regular contributor to Wild West Magazine, a member of Western Writers of America, Wild West History Association, and the American Auto Racing Writers and Broadcasters Association. He is also vice-president of the Ridgway Railroad.

No, this isn't about guitars and herding cattle - in 1902 Ouray was home to a nationally-known brass band that appeared dressed in full cowboy regalia, from hats to woolly chaps. Join Jim Pettengill as he traces the fascinating history of this unusual group from its origins in Dodge City, Kansas in the late 1870s through to the present day. "My interest in the subject was triggered by an amazing 116-year-old photograph that hangs in the Ouray Elks lodge and in the Ouray County Historical Museum," says Pettengill. "In the late 1800s, the pride of most major towns was its brass band, and this one was unique. It includes a Dodge City lawyer who was half owner of the famous Long Branch Saloon, a Presidential inauguration, stops in many Colorado towns including Ouray, a Rough Rider unit in the Spanish American War, a miniature stagecoach, and a New York opera singer. It's a wild ride, and maybe someone in the audience can help solve the Mystery of the Missing Stagecoach."

July 10

Patrick Curran

Uranium Mining in Southwestern Colorado



Pat, an industrial film maker for the Coca-Cola Company, earned his master's degrees in English literature and Organizational Design. After retiring, Pat wrote a novel on the uranium boom on the Colorado Plateau titled: *Acid Reign: And the Rise of the Eco-Outlaws*. Pat and his wife now share their time between Atlanta and Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Pat's grandfather and his brothers, the Curran

Brothers, had over seventy camolite/vanadium claims near Naturita, Co. in 1910 and worked with Madam Curie.

As the uranium boom took off in the 1950's, the Argentine Acid Plant was quickly assembled at nine thousand feet beside the Dolores River. The plant took in iron pyrite and delivered sulfuric acid to the AEC mill in Uravan, CO. There it was used to produce weapons-grade uranium. Thus, the Cold War ramped up on the Colorado Plateau. When Johnny and Roy, two roughnecks from the coal camps of West Virginia, came to

work, the Dolores River had a phosphorus glow and acid fumes blanketed the town. The plant produced a hundred tons of acid a day, a sure-fire money-maker, but well beyond its rated capacity. Safety and maintenance were ignored as pollution belched from its stacks and toxic tailing ponds drained into the river. Long before the Clean Air and Water Acts were enforced, Johnny and Roy and a hand-

ful of concerned citizens formed the Rico Coalition warning the Acid Plant, "Clean her up or we'll shut her down!" Curran's book *Acid Reign: And the Rise of the Eco-Outlaws* chronicles one of the first uprisings of Eco-Outlaws in the High Country. Could they stop the pollution? Could justice be served when the corporate outlaws had the upper hand?

July 17

Stephanie Willis

Ouray Postcards: Looking at Words and Reading Pictures



Stephanie Willis is a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas studying cultural geography and a lifetime Ouray part-timer. Her master's thesis was written about Ouray titled "Ouray, Colorado: Sense of Place in the Modern Wild West." Her current research is focusing on ways to integrate modern mapping technology with traditional cultural geographic research methods. While her focus is still on detailing the intangible aspects of this place, the goal of her dissertation

research is to add deeper meaning to her original place study with the use of modern cartography. Maps are familiar tools, but rarely are they used to depict imaginative aspects of a place. Stephanie's research uses a common type of tourist ephemera, the postcard, to investigate Ouray's "sense of place" and create an interactive map. This presentation will explore Ouray postcards through time, and a story of place will be built. The map built with her postcard collection and the collections of the Ouray County Historical Society will be shown, then there will be a discussion about the innovative interviewing process for this research.

July 24

Jennifer Hart

History of the Idarado Mine



For almost forty years from 1939 to 1978, the Idarado Mine, located on top of Red Mountain Pass along Highway 550, provided the primary economic underpinnings of the Ouray, Silverton and Telluride communities. The early history of the Idarado, the acquisition and consolidation of the claims, the mining operations at both Red Mountain and at Telluride Mines and their merger; the mining innovations that made Idarado so successful, Idarado's support of the communities, and the legacy of the Idarado are the subjects of this presentation.

John S. Wise was the General Manager of

the Idarado from 1952 to 1962. This presentation was a joint project researched and written by John's family: his children Linda, Jim, John, and Barbara Wise. The program will be presented by Jenny Hart, granddaughter of John S. Wise. Jenny has taught fourth grade at Ouray Public Schools for 23 years. As a mentor and supervising teacher, she has helped 27 students earn their teaching certificate. Jenny is passionate about Ouray's history and in her classroom, she teaches Colorado history. Her students wrote the book, *A Peak at the Past*, the story of the history of Ouray. She is also passionate about the San Juan Mountains. For 20 years, Jenny has been a member of Ouray Mountain Rescue, and she's climbed every peak and knows every nook and cranny of the mountains she loves.

July 31

Tom R. Hillhouse

Ouray Historic District



Tom grew up in the small town of Bellevue, Ohio, where four generations of his family worked for the Nickel Plate Railroad. He graduated from Bowling Green University with a BA in History/Political Science and from the Ohio State University School of Law with a Juris Doctorate. He worked for the Procter & Gamble Company in Cincinnati, Ohio retiring as Associate General Counsel for Health and Beauty Care. Tom has served on the OCHS Board as President and Vice-President since moving to Ouray in 2000. He is interested in history, architecture, travel, and hiking as well as all

things railroads. He serves on the Board of the Ridgway Railroad Museum.

The formal topic of my Evening of History program is "Ouray National Historic District." However, as I did more research in preparation for this presentation, it became obvious that the scope needed to be much broader. Principally, because if we only look at Ouray specifically, we will not get a full picture of all that is involved. So, in addition to the specifics of the historical preservation in the city and county of Ouray, we will take a broader look into historic preservation generally and will examine how, in Ouray County, it has been addressed (or not). And, we will explore what the future might hold for historic preservation in both the city and county of Ouray.

August 7

Don Paulson

Pioneering San Juan Clergy



Don Paulson lives in Ouray and is curator of the Ouray County Historical Society as well as a board member of both the Ridgway Railroad Museum and the Trust for Land Restoration. During the last two decades Don has written numerous articles and given talks on southwestern Colorado history. He has authored or co-authored three southwestern Colorado history books: *Narrow Gauge Railroad in the San Juan Triangle* (2009), *Mines, Miners, and Much More* (2015), and *Peaks of the Uncompahgre*

(2016). Previously Don was Professor of Chemistry at California State University, Los Angeles for 36 years. Don enjoys nature photography, model railroading, hiking, and jeeping in the San Juan Triangle.

During the late 19th century and early 20th century a group of remarkable clergy brought the Christian faith to the mining communities of the San Juan Triangle. Enduring unbelievable hardships they carried the word of God between the towns of Ouray, Silverton, Telluride and Lake City in both winter and summer on buggies, mules, foot and snowshoes. This is the story of these men of the cloth and of the churches that they founded.