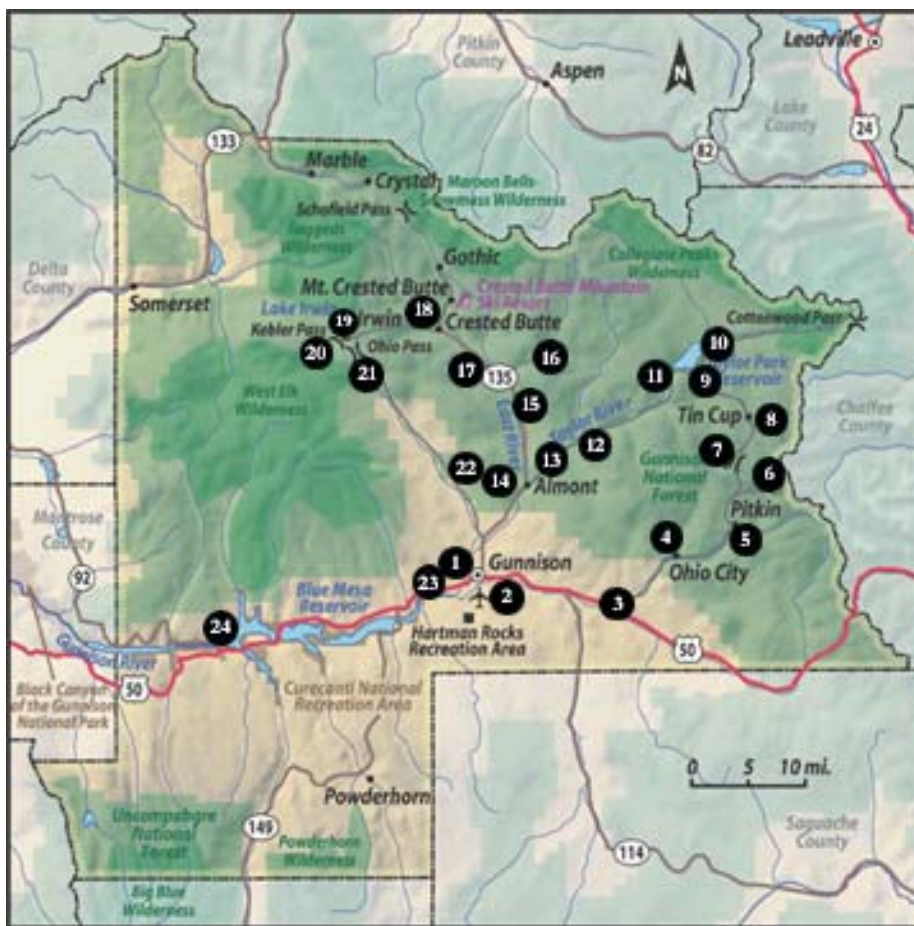


Gunnison-Crested Butte, Colorado ~ Self Guided Driving Tour



We invite you to enjoy our heritage driving tour! Along the way you will experience incredible vistas, meet friendly locals and see that our county is steeped in rich Western and Victorian mining era history. The tour self guides you to interesting sites throughout the county. Most of the sites are accessible by passenger vehicle and some are only accessible in the non-winter months. Some of the sites are located on private property and we ask that you please respect this by observing them from the roadway. Remember to take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but footprints so that future generations can continue to enjoy our heritage, too.

NEWS FLASH: Crested Butte Lands Spot on National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2008 [Dozen Distinctive Destinations](#) List!

1: City of Gunnison (Junction of US Highway 50 and CO Highway 135)

It is believed the Ute Indians summered in the [Gunnison](#) area in the 1500s. The first few non- Native American individuals arrived in the early 1840s in search of good trapping and mining, though none set up permanent settlements. In 1853, the U.S. Army Topographical Engineers led by Captain John Gunnison arrived looking for a suitable path for the transcontinental railroad route. The settlers came in the 1870s drawn by the promise of success through mining gold, silver and other metals. While the ore deposits for precious metals did not pan out, the nearby land proved good for ranching and on May 22, 1877, the City of Gunnison became the official seat of the county and the center for local commerce. The railroad arrived in Gunnison in 1880 allowing for further growth of the region.

To learn more about the history of Gunnison and its historic buildings, please pick up a copy of the "Walking Tour of Historic Gunnison" brochure provided by the City Of Gunnison at the Gunnison Visitor Center located at 500 E. Tomichi Avenue.

2: Gunnison Pioneer Museum (East of town on Highway 50)

In the 1930s the Pioneer Society formalized and incorporated as a non-profit organization, and in 1964 they opened the doors to the Gunnison Pioneer Museum. On display at the 5-acre museum is an extensive collection of memorabilia and artifacts from throughout Gunnison County, the No. 268 Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Engine and a collection of 11 historic buildings including Gunnison's first post office from 1876, a school house built in 1905 and a depot from the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. It also includes the Mallett Antique Car Collection, one of the largest historic vehicle collections in Colorado with 62 vehicles. The Museum is open daily from Memorial Day Weekend through end of September; Monday through Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. An entrance fee is charged to visit the Museum.

3: Twin Bridges over the Gunnison River (West of town on Highway 50)

Located on a U.S. Highway 50 service road on the west edge of town, these bridges are on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1910, the State Highway Commission set a goal to establish a statewide road system to link all of the county seats and populous towns. During their initial investigation of roads in the state, the commission found them in such poor shape it took the investigating team close to a month to travel around the Western Slope. The Colorado Department of Highways received federal aid to assist with the building of the section of road from Montrose to Gunnison, a section of road that would become part of U.S. Highway 50. The bridges were designed in 1926 to cross the Gunnison River by the Colorado Department of Highways. The American Bridge Company fabricated the 125-foot-long steel bridge. The Lambie-Bate Construction Company completed the bridges in 1927, and they have been altered very little. The bridges survive as one of the last remaining examples of what was once a common bridge type.

4: Blue Mesa Reservoir and Dam (West of Gunnison on Highway 50)

The Blue Mesa Reservoir is the largest body of water in the state of Colorado at more than 20 miles long and with approximately 91 miles of shoreline. The reservoir formed when the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation finished the Blue Mesa Dam in 1965. The reservoir provides water for irrigation, municipal and industrial uses. The dam is one of three, including the Morrow Point Dam and the Crystal Dam that make up the Wayne N. Aspinall Unit in the Colorado River Storage Project approved by Congress in 1956. The water from the project feeds into the Gunnison Tunnel completed in 1909; today it is recognized as a National Civil Engineering Landmark.

Prior to the construction of the dams, the land under the reservoir was used first by Native Americans as far back as 10,000 years ago. In the 1880s, new settlers used the land for agricultural purposes. The reservoir covered the area where the towns of Iola and Sapinero once stood and where the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad operated its trains regularly through the area from 1882 until 1949, with the last train coming through in 1954. When the water in the reservoir is very low, a few of the foundations from Iola can still be seen and the water covers over 79 manmade structures.

The National Park Service offers tours by boat through Morrow Point, the eastern end of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The Visitor Center is open from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., its winter hours are Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

5: Western State College (East of Gunnison on Highway 50)

In 1901, Gunnison's Colorado State Normal School was chartered. It held its first classes in 1911 and in 1923 changed its name to Western State College. Many of the historic buildings on campus are built in the Spanish Colonial Revival including Crawford Hall, Ute Hall and the President's House. The Leslie J. Savage Library is listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places and ranks as the oldest building on campus; Taylor Hall greeted its first class in 1911. The building, constructed of locally-made brick and stone is Classical Revival Style.

6: "W" on Tenderfoot Mountain (Seen from Highway 50 in town, looking south)

Western State College's "W" is the largest collegiate symbol in the world at 320 feet by 420 feet. In 1923, students and faculty carried hundreds of heavy flat rocks from the side of Tenderfoot Mountain. The rocks are whitewashed annually and each year at Homecoming, the "W" is set aflame (the "Lighting of the W".) creating an incredible sight from the Gunnison Valley floor.

7: Town of Parlin (East of Gunnison at County Rd. 76/Quartz Creek Rd.)

Parlin is named for John T. Parlin who started a dairy farm and stage stop there in 1877, becoming a busy spot as prospectors and settlers streamed into the area. In 1881, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) arrived at the town, making an agreement that Mr. Parlin would trade them land for right of way; in exchange, D&RG would build a depot and make a five-minute stop each time the train came through. In 1882, the Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad also reached Parlin from the Quartz Creek Valley. With the D&RG pulling the station in 1891 and the Silver Crash of 1893, most of the business in town dried up. The general store and post office remained in business for the local ranchers.

8: Parlin QT General Store, Cabins and Motel (On Highway 50)

In 1904, Harvey Dice and his brother-in-law Roy S. Lobdell built and opened a general store where they sold gas, oil, general merchandise, hay, grain, feed and miners supplies. The store was called QT because it sits at the confluence of Quartz and Tomichi Creeks. Tourist cabins were later added and the store and post office remain a social gathering point for families on the Quartz Creek and travelers.

9: Town of Ohio City (East of Gunnison; turn off Highway 50 at Parlin onto County Rd. 76; Quartz Creek Road)

The area surrounding Ohio City had been explored by prospectors as early as the 1850s. In 1880 miners set up the town of Eagle City; however, they soon changed the name to Ohio City, after Ohio Creek, which was soon changed to Gold Creek. The town grew quickly to boast a population of 300 people where numerous gold and silver mines and four mills up the Gold Creek Valley kept the town in business for many years. Many of their remnants still stand. After the Silver Panic of 1893, production switched to primarily gold. By 1910, many of the mines closed and production had completely ended by the early 1940s. Today the school house, jail, town hall, general store, and a few cabins still stand.

10: Ohio City Hall (North of Parlin on County Rd. 76/Quartz Creek Rd.)

This building has changed very little since built in 1906, originally constructed as the Baer Boss Mercantile and then used for a short time as a restaurant before the people of Ohio City converted it to their City Hall in 1914. The wood-framed building is Vernacular Victorian Style characterized by the false front and store front glazing. The building is unique with its corner entrance and pressed tin siding, embossed in a stone block pattern. Gunnison County currently owns the structure.

11: Ohio General Store

While this building has undergone many additions over the years, it still retains many interesting historical features. Built in the early 1880s as a store, it still retains some of its original interior hardware including store ladders on rollers to reach the high shelves. The store reopened in 2006 selling refreshments of all kinds and Quartz Creek made-crafts on commission.

12: Town of Pitkin (North of Ohio City on County Rd. 76/Quartz Creek Rd.)

Pitkin is the oldest incorporated city on the Western Slope of Colorado. Prospectors first came to the area in 1878 and named their camp Quartzville. The town incorporated on August 11, 1879, and changed its name to Pitkin to honor Colorado Governor Fredrick Pitkin. Settlers chose the area for its mineral deposits of gold, silver, copper, lead and iron, and numerous mines boosted the economy. In 1882, over 300 houses stood in the town and 60 businesses were open with more than 1,000 people living in the hills surrounding town. However by 1883, the promise of the mines had already played out and the population dwindled to half that of 1882. Silver mining brought spikes to the population in the early 1890s and again in the early 1900s. The fish hatchery and the timber industry helped keep Pitkin populated in the 1920s and 30s. Today the town has around 80 full-time residents, and the population swells to 300 in the summer months.

13: Pitkin Fish Hatchery

Built in 1891, this is one of the oldest fish hatcheries in the State of Colorado. Today the Division of Wildlife releases fish from the hatchery around the state. Visitors are invited to view the holding ponds and raceways by foot. Please park your vehicle outside of the hatchery gate. Hours of operation are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day.

14: Bonton Hotel- Pitkin Hotel

The hotel at 329 Main St. is listed on the Colorado Register of Historic Places. A large fire in 1903 had left the town without a hotel before the Bonton was constructed in 1904. The influx of prospectors frequently stopped for the night in Pitkin, and the hotel also provided accommodation for politicians and actors with its proximity to City Hall. The vernacular masonry building features elements of the commercial style, including a recessed entrance, clerestory windows, and a transom window above the door. The hotel has undergone some exterior and interior alterations since its construction, including the addition of electricity and plumbing. In 1981, a new owner began operating under the name "Pitkin Hotel."

15: Pitkin City Hall

City hall, located at 400 4th St., is listed on the Colorado Register of Historic Places. The City of Pitkin contracted the construction of this building in 1900. It stands on an elevated location above the town and represents turn-of-the-century vernacular architecture and design typical of Colorado's small mountain towns. The building has much of its original hardware still intact and the ornate door handles are good examples from the period. The original bell cast in 1881 still hangs in the bell tower. The town records dating back to the 1800s are located in a safe in the building. The building is heated by the original wood stove. The community has continuously utilized the building since its construction as a theater, meeting hall, community center and gathering place.

16: Pitkin School

Home to the Pitkin Museum located at 800 Main Street, the school is listed on the Colorado Register of Historic Places. From 1924 until 1962, the wood frame building was the only school serving Pitkin and the surrounding area. The school accommodated more than 100 students during the late 1920s and early 1930s. By the 1950s, the school's attendance suffered a steady drop as many people left the rural areas of the country. The school closed its doors to students in 1962 with the formation of the REJ1 Gunnison Watershed School District. Throughout the years, the school has remained in use as a gathering place for the community hosting club events, potlucks and dances. The building currently houses the Pitkin Museum, run by volunteers. The museum is operated by volunteers and is open during fair weather at various times.

17: Pitkin Church

Located at 521 Main Street, this wood frame building with Victorian Gothic style windows the new congregation of 17 members saw the construction begin on the building in November of 1901 and held their first service there in March of 1902. Reverend S. I. Ward came from Gunnison to serve as their pastor and the church cost \$1,623.75 to build.

18: Pitkin Depot

Located at the corner of Sixth Street and State Street is a wood-framed building constructed in the Stick Style. The Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad constructed it in 1881 next to the railroad tracks, which once ran up the length of Sixth Street en route to the Alpine Tunnel. The building is now a private home.

19: Alpine Tunnel Historic District (National Register), SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (Access by going north out of Pitkin)

There is an existing online auto tour for this area. For more detail, the Gunnison Country Chamber of Commerce located at 500 E. Tomichi Avenue in Gunnison has brochures about the district. Generally, the Alpine Tunnel Historical District is open from July to September. The auto tour begins northeast of Pitkin at the junction of the Cumberland Pass Road (Forest Service Road 765) and the Alpine Tunnel Road (Forest Service Road 839). Visitors should use caution as they drive on this narrow dirt road. The Alpine Tunnel Historic District includes close to 13 miles of the former Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad rail bed across the Continental Divide from Hancock to Quartz. It also includes the Alpine Tunnel itself, which is now sealed closed. The railroad constructed the tunnel in 1880 - 1881 in a race with the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad to cross the Continental Divide and reach Gunnison. The Denver and Rio Grande won the race; however, the Alpine Tunnel district illustrates the engineering and operational challenges faced by the Colorado mountain railroads in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

20: Cumberland Pass Mining sites, SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (Continue up past Alpine Tunnel turn off to head north over the pass)

There are numerous mining sites along Cumberland Pass. The Bon Ton Mine sits on the south side of the pass. The Blistered Horn and Jimmie Mack Mines sit on the north side of the pass. The pass itself was constructed in 1882 to connect Tincup to Pitkin and the Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad. The CCC stationed in Pitkin built the Cumberland Pass road used today. The original route, a toll road, used in the 1880s from Pitkin to Tin Cup, traveled over Neapolitan Pass.

21: Tin Cup History, SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (Access by going up Taylor Canyon Rd/County Rd. 742 out of Almont or coming down Cumberland Pass from Pitkin)

Tincup's mining boom had already played out by 1882, but enough mineral wealth remained for individuals to make a living mining there through the early 1900s. Tincup once had a bustling downtown, about a block-and-a-half long, with storefronts, hotels and restaurants on either side of Washington Avenue. However a fire in 1906 destroyed down the south side of the street, and a fire in 1913 flattened the north side. Only a few buildings on either end of Main Street survived. The 1930s brought new part-time residents to the area and many buildings from the mining area were razed with new cabins built in their place. While many of the original businesses are no longer standing, Frenchy's Restaurant is named after the saloon that operated in Tincup from 1879 to 1913 by A.N. "Frenchy" Perrault. The General Store Building was probably moved to its current site from Hillerton in 1904, where it served as a land office and the current business as a general store began in 1976.

22: Tin Cup Fire Hydrants

Many mining towns suffered from devastating fires, which often burned large sections of towns to the ground. Tincup was no exception. In 1891, the town installed fire hydrants. The hydrants drew water from a small reservoir above town, however the extremely cold mountain temperatures soon proved that the gravity system could not work properly. The fire hydrants, though not functioning, still stand today and can be seen along the streets.

23: Tin Cup Town Hall and Church

The town hall survived the fires of 1906 and 1913. The wood-frame building is distinguishable with its two story belfry tower and entryway, which has a hipped lower awning and a peaked roof topped by a flagpole. The tower is an architectural feature often found in Richard Romanesque Style buildings, however the imbrications of shingles on the gabled ends are usually a feature found on Queen Anne Style buildings, also popular in the early 1900s. Town hall was constructed in 1903.

24: Tin Cup Cemetery

There are approximately 95 graves in the Tin Cup Cemetery. The first burial was T. L. Stormes on April 30, 1879. The individuals interned there were segregated by religion, with Catholics buried on one knob and Jews and Protestants on another. Individuals who were killed as the result of violent crimes were buried on Boot Hill. In 1906, the town of Tin Cup petitioned the U.S. Congress to obtain a patent to the land. The town forefathers had never secured the legal rights to the land. With the creation of the Gunnison National Forest, the land on which the cemetery sits became part of the Forest Reserve.

25: Taylor Park History (Access by going up Taylor Canyon Rd/County Rd. 742 in Almont or from the direction of Tin Cup)

Taylor Park is named for James Taylor who came into the area while prospecting for gold in 1859. Purportedly, a member of his party dipped his tin drinking cup into a stream and found gold in 1860. The party named the area Tincup, and the river and the park were given Taylor's name. The lack of huge promise for gold and the Civil War kept many early prospectors at bay. The first great strike in the area was made at the Gold Cup Mine in 1878, and the area became flooded with prospectors in 1879. The people who came renamed the Tincup Camp, Virginia City. For the first few years, this renaming led to a great deal of confusion until in 1882, when the local citizens voted to keep the name Tincup.

26: Taylor Trading Post

Adam Murdie originally homesteaded this land in the 1880s. Bill and Leona Murdie sold the land to Sherman and Edna Cranor of Gunnison in 1940. The Cranors planned on building tourist cabins on the spot; they figured if tourism didn't work out there, the land could be used for ranching. The Cranors began building their first cabins in 1942; however, Mr. Cranor was called to military duty for World War II. Having a new cabin mostly built, he asked the Army for a few more days to complete his project. Permission was granted and Mr. Cranor built his roof before heading overseas for the next three-and-a-half years. The Murdies did not request payment for the land the entire time Mr. Cranor served his country. Upon Sherman's return home, the Cranors set the goal of building a new cabin each year. Most of the cabins are built by hand of lumber harvested by the couple. The store building standing today was constructed in 1961, on the site of the original store building constructed in the 1940s. The Taylor Trading Post is still owned by the Cranor family today.

27: Taylor Dam

In 1933, the Bureau of Reclamation approved the plan presented by Western Slope Congressman Ed Taylor to install a dam at the site. Between 1935 and 1937, more than 300 men worked to construct the dam, which has a structural height of 206 feet. The dam is part of the Uncompahgre Project and keeps the water on the Western Slope for irrigation. Taylor Reservoir covers 2,030 acres of land.

28: Harmel's Dude Ranch (South of Taylor Park area on Taylor Canyon Rd/County Rd 742 and north of Almont)

Homesteaded in the mid 1880s by the Elmer family the ranch served as a stage stop for miners traveling to Gunnison and those traveling up and over the Jack's Cabin Road. The Harmel family purchased the ranch in 1958 and the business was taken over by Jody Harmel Roberts; her sons Brad and Steve run the business today. A few of the buildings built by the Elmer family are still in use today including Cabin Number 2 and the Bunk House which originally served as a tack building.

29: Almont (North of Gunnison on CO Highway 135 at junction of Taylor Canyon Rd/ County Rd 742)

Almont sits at the junction where the Taylor River and the East River meet, forming the Gunnison River. Originally the settlement was known as Fishers after Sam Fisher who began operating a toll bridge and toll road to Jack's Cabin at the spot in 1879. The bridge provided access to prospectors and freight haulers traveling back and forth from the northern mines to Gunnison. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad arrived in 1881, putting an end to the toll road. With the end of the toll road, Fisher began breeding horses. In 1881 he renamed the town Almont after a famous horse known as the leading Hambletonian stallion of the time. In 1893, the property was sold to Vernon Davis, the man responsible for transforming the ranch and way stop into a resort. Davis built cabins and a hotel named the Marston. In 1912, the Almont Sportsman Association purchased the resort and then sold it in 1918 to Mr. and Mrs. John Brittian, who operated it until 1945. The Brittians began hosting fish fries in 1927, an annual event that people came to in the thousands. The largest one was the last; it was held in 1940, and the Republican candidate for president, Wendell Wilkie, spoke in front of more than 10,000 guests.

30: Dance Hall at Almont

Built in 1921, the Dance Hall served as a popular meeting spot from the time it was constructed through the 1950s, hosting regular dances. There is an annual Fourth of July polka dance still held there today. Oftentimes the young ranchers and miners would jump the train to reach Almont for the Friday and Saturday night dances. During its heyday, the location between Gunnison and Crested Butte made it the perfect meeting spot for young people, and numerous marriages resulted. The building is constructed of log and is an octagonal shape, which provided the optimal space for dancing.

31: Almont Store

Since being built between 1924 and 1925, this wood-framed, false-fronted building has remained open as a store serving the needs of Almont and its visitors. At times, it has been the home for the U.S. Post Office. The building is constructed of logs milled at the lumberyard, which once sat above town.

32: Three Rivers Resort Cabins in Almont

Cabins number 3 and 4 were built in 1915 under the ownership of the Salisbury Family. Frank Salisbury homesteaded the Taylor River side of Almont in the early 1900s. The building sitting between current cabins 4 and 5 once served as a weigh station for ore from Doctor Park Silver Mine. The ore was weighed here before being put on the train.

33: Almont Resort

The main log building at the Almont Resort, which is currently occupied by a restaurant and fly-fishing store is the remains of the Marston Hotel built in 1899 by Vernon Davis. Davis originally had the building constructed of native rock, however it caught fire in 1948 on New Year's Eve and was rebuilt. The building has been added onto over the years.

34: Almont Resort Cabins

Davis began building cabins alongside the river for guests in the early 1890s. The simply-built vernacular log cabins served the needs of visiting fishermen and individuals seeking a healthy environment. The resort advertised that they had restorative drinking water that would help bladder and kidney troubles.

35: Roaring Judy Fish Hatchery (North of Almont on CO Highway 135)

In 1939, the Doug Spann family purchased this property from his maternal grandfather, Mr. Comstock and operated a fish hatchery, mink farm, guest cabins and ranch on the site. Spann made the addition of tourist cabins which rented for \$1.50 per day. In the 1960s, the Division of Wildlife purchased the land and the hatchery, which is the only one in the state with spawning salmon returning to it. Today, they produce close to 4 million fish a year, including rainbow trout, cutthroat trout and Kokanee salmon. It is an excellent spot to view wildlife such as bald eagles and to access the Gunnison River as well as fishing ponds. The hatchery is open every day, from dawn to dusk.

36: Jack's Cabin (North of the Fish Hatchery on CO Highway 135)

An interpretive sign placed by the Gunnison County Historic Preservation Commission is located .4 miles from the Jack's Cabin turn off on County Road 813 on the left hand side of the road. The settlement of Jack's Cabin, originally named Howesville after Jack Howe who settled there in 1875, served as a stage stop originally for travelers between the Crested Butte area and Gunnison. Jack's Cabin had a hotel, guest cabins, corrals, a post office established in 1879, a school, a dairy that opened in 1905 and a cemetery. Ranching became the major livelihood for the area. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad stopped nearby to pick up cattle and hay.

37: Pioneer Ski Area and Guest Cabins (North of Jack's Cabin; on Cement Creek Rd/County Rd 740 off of CO Highway 135)

In the mid 1930s, students from Western State College, using abandoned cable and machinery from the Blistered Horn Mine on Cumberland Pass, fashioned Colorado's first chair lift at the Pioneer Ski Area, which remained in operation from 1939 until 1951 when the Forest Service condemned the area for being unsafe. Five original buildings still stand. Constructed in 1931, eight years prior to the ski area's opening in 1939, there are four log cabins and the log base lodge. Visitors can park on Forest Service Road 740, built in 1911, and hike on Forest Service trail 560 to the top of the abandoned ski area and a cabin.

38: Glacier School House (North of County Rd. 740 on CO Highway 135)

Located at 21293 Hwy 135, Glacier began in the early 1880s as a stage stop for the mines up Cement Creek and soon became a stop for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Local ranching families built the school house that is still standing in the early 1920s to replace an earlier log structure closer to the river. The school house is an end-gabled, wood-frame structure, currently housing the showroom of a local log furniture craftsman.

39: Trampe Ranch (North of the School House/South of Crested Butte on CO Highway 135 on the east side)

Henry Fredrick Trampe was born October 12, 1870, in Metropolis, IL, the oldest of eight children. After college, he came to Colorado in the early 1890s and toured the region on his bicycle. He settled in Gunnison County and founded his family ranch and a potato farm north of Gunnison. His son Sheldon Trampe continued to run the ranch, and the Trampe family actively ranches this parcel of land today as well as other parcels in the county. The buildings visible on the ranch from the road include two hand-hewed log structures. Some of the property is part of the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.

40: The Town of Crested Butte (28 miles north of Gunnison on CO Highway 135)

The Ute Indians summered in the Crested Butte area for hundreds of years before the first settlers of European descent arrived looking for precious metals as early as 1874. The town incorporated in 1880 and quickly grew as a supply center for the mining camps. The mother lode of gold or silver never materialized, but the town survived due to the large concentration of high quality bituminous coal in the area. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) and a few smaller companies developed coal mines and coke ovens. By 1882, Crested Butte produced much of the state's coal supply. The English, American and northern European settlers and miners arrived first followed by the Croatians, Italians and Slavs in the early 1900s. The CF&I operated its mine until 1952. Many buildings from the late 1800s and early 1900s still stand. Crested Butte was designated a Registered National Historic District in 1972.

The Crested Butte Mountain Heritage Museum (The Hardware Store & Tony's Conoco Station)

This building began operating as a hardware store in 1883. It was the town's first gas station. Inside is a potbelly stove that warmed the store from its beginnings. A.J. "Tony" Mihelich operated the store from 1939 until his death in 1996. Martha Sporcich, Tony's stepdaughter, and her family helped him with the store for over 35 years. This building is now the home of the Crested Butte Mountain Heritage Museum and the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. For more information about Crested Butte's historic buildings please visit the Crested Butte Mountain Heritage Museum where you can obtain a free copy of a historic walking tour of town. Staff offers a free weekly guided walking tour. The Museum is open from mid-November through mid-April from noon to 6 p.m. and from Memorial Day Weekend through the end of September from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. There is an admission to visit the Museum's exhibits.

41: Crested Butte Cemetery

At the cemetery, there is a memorial to the miners killed in the Jokerville Mine explosion of 1884. The chapel, erected in the 1960s, is only open in the summer and includes some of interior architectural elements from St. Patrick's Church built around 1890. The Catholic congregation relocated from St. Patrick's to the newly built Queen of All Saints Church in 1961. St. Patrick's, located on Maroon Avenue, is now a residence.

42: Site of the Big Mine in Crested Butte

In 1884, after the Jokerville Mine disaster, Big Mine operated until 1952 on the bench just above town, once an industrial landscape with numerous buildings related to the operation of the mine, including a powerhouse, a repair shop, showers, a mule barn, offices, employee housing and the tippel system to get the coal to the coke ovens and the train. Big Mine produced a high quality anthracite coal and was aptly named as it employed the majority of men in Crested Butte. In the summer, a few of the foundations for the tippel can be seen at the base of the bench, and the ground is still dark from residual coal.

43: CF&I Coke Ovens in Crested Butte

Between where the Nordic Center and the Skate Park are today sat the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company ovens. There is an historical marker sign at the location, and some of the bricks that made up the ovens are present. Coke ovens serve the purpose of cooking out unstable constituents from bituminous coal, which are the end products that provide an excellent source of heat for a wide range of uses, including blacksmithing. There were 154 ovens in two long rows with tracks in front and on top of them, so that coal could easily be loaded into the ovens. The coke ovens burned constantly, resulting in dark and polluted air except on Monday's when the ovens were cleaned. This was laundry day throughout town in Crested Butte. The coke ovens went out of production in 1918; technologies had changed and coke no longer proved to be a valuable commodity.

44: Railway of Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) in Crested Butte

The D&GR first arrived in Crested Butte in November of 1881, connecting industry here to the rest of the nation by carrying out 13 boxcars full of coal. By 1893 the D&RG ran their narrow gauge north to the coal mining town of Floresta, located between Ohio and Kebler Passes, until 1918 when the Floresta Mine closed. The railway bed followed Kebler Pass Road, and the wagon road traveled to the right. The D&RG had trouble keeping the line open in the winter months due to heavy snowfall and avalanche danger. With the Big Mine closing in 1952, the D&RG made the decision to pull up the last of its track to Crested Butte by 1954.

45: Jokerville Mine

While the entrance of the mine has long been closed and all of the associated buildings are gone, the Jokerville Mine played an important part in the early history of Crested Butte. The bituminous coal mine opened in 1880 and was thought to have a dangerous gas problem. On January 24, 1884, a major gas explosion killed 59 men. The people of the town knew that disaster had struck when the work whistle blew at an unusual time. The Jokerville Mine remained closed after the explosion.

46: Kebler Pass, SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (Northwest out of Crested Butte on Whiterock Ave/County Rd. 12)

In July 1904, the state of Colorado took over the maintenance of Kebler Pass road; previously, it was private road. The road would be boon for local commerce, providing a good connection to the coal mining community of Somerset. Somerset had become the largest coal producer in the state by 1903 when the Denver Rio Grande Railroad reached it. Kebler Pass is named for Julian Kebler, who worked as a chief lieutenant for the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. Remains of the original wagon road can still be seen today on the east side of Kebler Pass. The old road bed is marked by a stone bed which sits above the current Kebler Pass Road. The road today follows the route which the railroad traveled at a four percent grade. This bed is now used as a bike trail.

47: Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Bed to Floresta, SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (along Kebler Pass Rd/County Rd. 12)

Kebler Pass road follows the rail bed to its narrow gauge terminus at the coal mining town of Floresta. The railroad first reached the Ruby-Anthracite coal camp in 1893 and then into Floresta in 1893 and ran there until 1918 when the Floresta Mine closed. In addition to the mine works and breaker, Floresta had a school, post office, saw mill, telegraph office, Colorado Fuel and Iron Company Store and numerous houses and cabins. **The Floresta town site is on private property.**

48: Irwin Cemetery, SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (At the crest of Kebler Pass)

The cemetery had its first interment in 1879, the same year silver was discovered in the area. The town of Ruby originally sat one-fourth mile south from the Ruby and the Forest Queen Mines, however the land there proved too marshy for permanent settlement. In 1880, Richard Irwin suggested moving the town to an area just west of the mines. The town's people dismantled their log buildings and relocated them. These early settlers, prospectors and miners were among the first people buried at the cemetery. Most of the major causes of deaths included diseases such as pneumonia as well as snow-slides and mining accidents. No murderers were buried at the cemetery. There are more than 50 graves, many unmarked today. The families would mark many of the graves with heavy two inch planks. They would round the tops, paint them white, and write the name of the deceased in black

paint. By 1954, all of the wood markers had deteriorated and the names could no longer be read. One of the few stone marked graves is that of Mary Bambaugh. She died of mountain fever in 1881 at the age of 17. Her father commissioned a granite marker from Pueblo. By 1885, when the train reached Floresta, the Irwin Cemetery was no longer used in favor of the Crested Butte Cemetery.

49: Ohio Pass, SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (Before crest of Kebler Pass, turn left on County Rd. 730 known as Ohio Creek Rd)

This pass served as one of the earliest roads in the county allowing access from Ruby and Irwin to Gunnison. The Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad planned on running their line to Kebler Pass by way of Ohio Pass, however never got beyond laying the railroad bed before pulling out of the project in 1882. Union Pacific briefly took over the project in 1893, but never completed the job either. The road remained in poor condition for many years. In 1954, the Crested Butte branch of Gunnison County road crew, under the direction of Anton Danni, started to make "an all vehicle road" from Kebler Pass to Ohio Creek Road. The county undertook this project with the expectation that they would have a good deal of traffic, with sightseers making the loop from Gunnison to Irwin Lake to Crested Butte.

50: The Great Wall, SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (On Ohio Creek Rd/County Rd. 730)

An interpretive sign placed by the Gunnison County Historic Preservation Commission is located just beyond the Beaver Ponds Trailhead on the south side of Ohio Pass, County Road 730. As you are heading up the pass (from Gunnison) drive 1.4 miles past the trailhead. You will see a small road exiting to the right; park your car and walk along this road for about 90 yards and you will see the sign just below the wall. The Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad (DSP&P) built this structure in 1882. While not complete, it illustrates the engineering feats necessary to undertake building railways through the mountains. A short, one-mile walk past the sign, along the railroad grade, will bring you to the "Big Balloon Loop" which enabled the railroad to turn and gain the elevation necessary to reach the rock wall. There you can see interesting rock culverts constructed to allow water to flow under the never completed railway bed.

51: Fairview Fire Lookout Tower, SUMMER ACCESS ONLY (Seen from top of Cumberland Pass to the west)

This tower is one of two standing historic fire towers in the state. In 1910 Forest Ranger, William Kreutzer commissioned the fire lookout station at the top of Fairview Peak. The station provided a watchman with clear views of both the Pitkin district and the Tincup district. However, at an elevation of 13,214 feet, the station took frequent hits from lightning and was deemed unsafe for the watchmen. After 1914, the Forest Service continued to use the structure for a remote controlled relay station for their radio communications. The building is made of stone and has a metal roof. It can be seen to the west, in the distance, from the top of Cumberland Pass.

For more information about local history, the following books are a few that provide excellent information:

- 1) **Anderson, Paul and Ken Johnson.** *Elk Mountains Odyssey: West Elk Loop Scenic/ Historic Byway.* Carbondale, CO.: Redstone Press, 1998
- 2) **Sammons, Judy Buffington.** *Tall Grass and Good Cattle: A Century of Ranching in the Gunnison Country.* Gunnison, CO.: The Western State College Foundation, Inc., 2003
- 3) **Schader, Conrad F.** *Colorado's Alluring Tin Cup: The District, its Settlements, People, Mines.* Golden, CO.: Regio Alta Publications, 1992
- 4) **Sibley, George.** *A Crested Butte Primer.* Crested Butte, CO.: Sibley and Sibley, 1972
- 5) **Vandenbusche, Duane.** *The Gunnison Country.* Gunnison, CO.: B & B Printers, Gunnison, Inc., 1980
- 6) **Wirth, Kelsey.** *Reflections on a Western Town: An Oral History of Crested Butte, Colorado.* Crested Butte, CO.: O-Be-Joyful Press, 1996

The Gunnison County Historic Preservation Commission has a number of brochures available about historically interesting sites and has designated numerous structures as being locally significant. For more information, visit the commission's web site at <http://www.gunnisonhistoricpreservation.org>.

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