

Gunnison County Register of Historic Landmarks

The members of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), along with the Gunnison County Commissioners, are very excited about the Register of Historic Landmarks. The Gunnison Country is rich in history and now with the register, we can recognize those important properties within our county.

The register serves as a means to educate the public about our interesting past and to preserve that history for future generations.

If you own an old house, ranch, or other historic property in The Gunnison Country, and are interested in discovering more about your local history, you may be interested in listing your property on the Gunnison County Register of Historic Landmarks.



Photo courtesy of the Pioneer Museum

Individuals may nominate a property to be listed on the Gunnison County Register of Historic Properties in one of the following two categories:

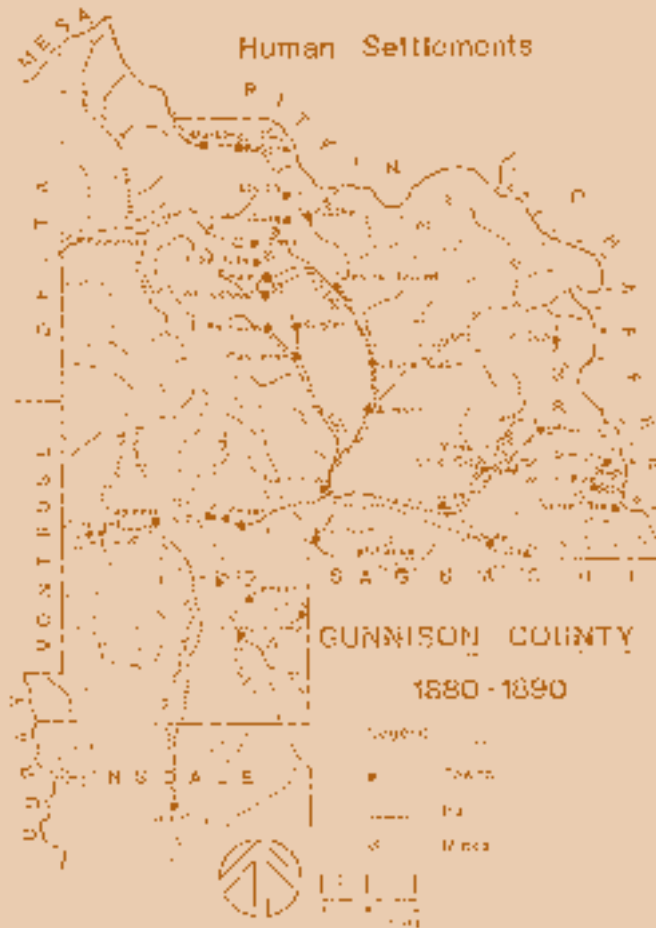
Landmark: A landmark is an individual structure, object, feature, site or area.

District: A district is a related group of historic structures, objects, features, sites or areas.

We are interested in hearing from you. As a Commission, we are able to provide assistance as necessary to help with the research.

Benefits to being a local Historic Landmark

- Protecting a physical link with our past.
- Serving as a source of area pride and identity.
- Distinction signified by a bronze plaque at the property.
- Possible financial or technical assistance to property owners through state or federal agencies.
- Adaptive re-use of properties.



About the Gunnison County Historic Preservation Commission

In 1993 The Gunnison County Commissioners formed the Gunnison County Historic Preservation Commission. It consists of a five member volunteer board. The HPC is charged with the identification and nomination of historic landmarks to be placed on Gunnison County's Register of Historic Landmarks.

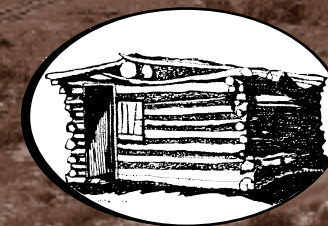
For more information on how to be a part of this exciting local program, please contact the Gunnison County Historic Preservation Commission. Phone: (970) 641-0495, e-mail: gchpc@co.gunnison.co.us, website at: www.ci.gunnison.co.us/hpc.htm, or 200 E. Virginia, Gunnison, CO 81230.



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Preserving our past...

...railroads of Gunnison County



Gunnison County Historic Preservation Commission



Palisades near the Alpine Tunnel, 1880.
William Henry Jackson, Denver Public Library.

In the late 1870's, Gunnison County was booming with mining activity. Two railroads sought to be the first to serve the area – the Denver, South Park & Pacific (DSP&P) and the Denver & Rio Grande (D&RG). The DSP&P route to Gunnison required the construction of the highest railroad tunnel in the world. Located about 15 miles above Pitkin at an altitude of 11,523', the Alpine Tunnel is an interesting site to visit today.

The Denver & Rio Grande chose to cross the continental divide at Marshall Pass, reaching Gunnison in August of 1881. Due to delays in building the Alpine Tunnel, the Denver, South Park, & Pacific arrived in Gunnison a year later.

Railroad construction was challenging in the rugged Gunnison Country. On the west side of the Alpine tunnel, the DSP&P built across a cliff face at the famous Palisades. The D&RG experienced similar challenges in construction of their railroad through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River; workers had to be lowered by ropes to build portions of the rail bed.

Both railroads built major railroad facilities in Gunnison. Shown below is the DSP&P roundhouse and an unusual water tank with a stone base, located where the Ford dealership is today. The D&RG had a similar facility on the south edge of town.



DSP&P Roundhouse, ca. 1883.
Denver, South Park, and Pacific Historical Society.

Soon after arriving in Gunnison, both railroads expanded to the north. The D&RG extended their line to Crested Butte, and later to the towns of Ruby, Irwin, and Floresta. The DSP&P extended their line to the coal fields up Ohio Creek. Although the DSP&P had grand plans to build over Ohio Pass, and eventually reach the Pacific Ocean, construction of the railroad on the pass stopped abruptly in 1882.

The grade on Ohio Pass still looks much as it did when work on it was interrupted. Today, one can see a huge rock wall under construction high on the mountainside and rock culverts that were to be covered by the rail bed. Both of these sites are on the Gunnison County Historic Register.



Last run near Cebolla, D&RG # 268, 1954.
L.R. (Mac) McGraw.

The two railroads had quite different passenger facilities in Gunnison. The D&RG began with a simple station constructed of wood. In 1884, when the plush La Veta hotel was completed, the D&RG built a spur to the hotel and used the southeast corner of the first floor for ticket sales and as a passenger depot. In 1930, a new depot was built. This building is still standing at the northeast corner of Wisconsin Street and Rio Grande Avenue.



La Veta Hotel, 1884.
Frank Dean, Denver Public Library.

The Denver, South Park, and Pacific used native stone to construct their depot. This building, pictured below in 1947, was located on the southwest corner of 9th and New York, near the present A&W restaurant.



DSP&P Depot, 1947.
The John Maxwell Collection, 775-575-6104.

On July 24th, 1955, the last train pulled out of Gunnison. You may see #268, a D&RG steam engine that ran for many years in the Gunnison Country, at the Pioneer Museum.

