

La Plata County
Historic Preservation Review Commission

Mission: To provide an application and review process for residents to receive Historic Landmark designation by the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners, to increase awareness of historic and cultural heritage as embodied in these designated historic landmarks, to provide educational opportunities to increase public appreciation of the County's unique heritage, and to increase economic and financial benefits through heritage-tourism.

6th Annual



Historic Driving Tour

Murder, Mystery and Mining: Hesperus & May Day – Saturday May 18th, 2019

La Plata County
Register of Historic Places

- Fifteen properties have been designated to date
- Properties include the Old Ft. Lewis Campus, Florida Baptist Church and the Lower Spring Creek School House
- Designation is free, voluntary, and does not include regulatory restrictions
- All properties help celebrate the County's rich history and receive a bronze plaque

9:00am to 12:30pm- Walking Tour of Hesperus

1. Hesperus Baptist Church 22972 Hwy 140

Parking. Overview of the day and introductions. Light refreshments will be available.

2. The Hesperus Mine 23119 Hwy 140

The Hesperus Mine was opened in 1892, and in 1894, the Hesperus and Porter (Wildcat Canyon) mines produced half the coal mined in La Plata County. The Hesperus Mine was also the site where Joseph Walker was killed, the first Secret Service agent killed in the line of duty. Speaker: John Peel

3. Rio Grande Southern Railroad 23278 Hwy 140

The RGS narrow gauge railroad ran from Durango to Hesperus, Mancos, Dolores, Rico, Telluride, and Ridgway where it joined with the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. The railroad was constructed by Otto Mears and operated from 1890 to 1952. In its later years the Rio Grande Southern developed the "Gallopig Goose" to serve its region using a single motorized car on the narrow gauge rails. Speaker: Lew Matis

4. Curtet House and Store 23188 Hwy 140

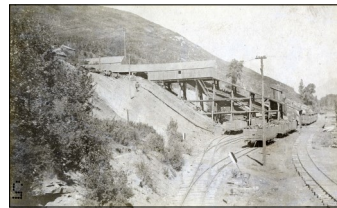
The Curtet home is all that remains of the expansive Curtet's Cash Store and storage sheds, run by George, Phil, Gabe and Charlie Curtet, enterprising brothers whose parents emigrated from France. At its zenith, the Curtet store provided merchandise for Hesperus town (population 250 at one time), surrounding ranches and mining companies. Undeterred by bad roads and extreme weather, the Curtet brothers made regular deliveries as far as the Gold King Mine in the upper end of La Plata Canyon throughout the year. Speaker: Dr. Helen Ruth Aspaas

5. Annie Peutz's Boarding House 23120 Hwy 140

Annie (Dennison) (Shea) Puetz, daughter of Irish immigrants and lifelong resident of Hesperus, was known to all as a woman with a heart of gold and unbounded generosity. Twice widowed, this hard-working woman and mother of three supported her family as a cook and later owned and operated a hotel/boarding house in Hesperus. She supplemented her income by selling liquor during prohibition, a practice that led to arrest and 366 days in federal prison, a time she always referred to as her "trip to West Virginia". Speaker: Dr. Helen Ruth Aspaas

6. St. Paul Catholic Church 22974 Hwy 140

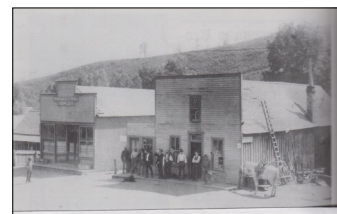
St. Paul Catholic Church was built by local coal miners and was completed in 1909. It served as a 'mission church' under St. Columba Church in Durango. This wood frame building was constructed in Gothic Revival style. With the exception of the metal roof, the exterior is original. Speaker: Julie Coleman



THE HESPERUS MINE



RIO GRANDE SOUTHERN RAILROAD DEPOT



CURTET HOUSE & STORE



ST. PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH

ITINERARY:

9:00– 12:30pm Walking Tour of Hesperus

1. Hesperus Baptist Church
2. The Hesperus Mine
3. Rio Grande Southern Railroad
4. Curtet House and Store
5. Annie Peutz's Boarding House
6. St. Paul Catholic Church
7. Hesperus School

12:30pm-2:00pm

8. Lunch at Baptist Church

2:00pm-3:00pm

9. May Day School/ Olga Little Boarding House

NOTE:

-Lunch will be provided by the Marvel Grange. **Cost is \$8.00/person. Please RSVP by May 13th to Cindy Greer 970-588-3386.**

-You will be visiting private property please be respectful.

-PLEASE DO NOT BRING YOUR DOGS.

-Car-pooling is encouraged.

Pioneers of Southwest La Plata County history books will be available for purchase \$50.00

Disclaimer: La Plata County, including its officials, employees and agents, does not warrant the condition or safety of the properties and sites on this tour. By participating in this tour, participants agree to assume all risk, responsibility and liability for all actions taken on the properties and sites subject to this tour.

7. Hesperus School

The Hesperus School (constructed in 1898) is brick with a bell tower. The school served grades 1-8, operating until 1948 when La Plata County school districts were consolidated and many country schools were closed. In the 1990s, the property was remodeled into a private home. Speaker: Julie Coleman



HESPERUS SCHOOL

8. 12:30pm-2:00pm Lunch at Baptist Church

22972 Hwy 140

Lunch will be provided by the Marvel Grange. **The cost will be \$8.00/person. Please RSVP by May 13th to Cindy Greer 970-588-3386.** Andrew Gulliford will provide a presentation on John Moss, Parrott City and Olga Little's legacy. Lew Matis will provide a presentation on the Rio Grande Southern Railroad.

9. 2:00pm-3:00pm May Day School/ Olga Little Boarding House 4317 & 4359 CR 124

1. Olga Little was a hardworking Western woman doing a man's job as a burro packer requiring her to wear men's clothing. Here she poses wearing tall boots, jodhpurs, and a cowboy hat. (Courtesy the Animas Museum of the La Plata County Historical Society)

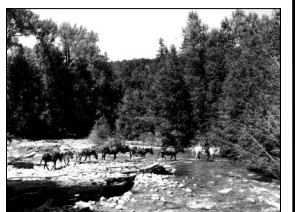


2. Olga Little lived in May Day at the mouth of La Plata Canyon where the Denver, Rio Grande, Western Railroad (D&RG) built a spur line. Routinely, she took heavy 70 lb. bags of coal off railroad cars and packed her burro string with a bag on top of each burro and one on each side. (Courtesy the Animas Museum of the La Plata County Historical Society)

3. In this classic photo, Olga Little and her pack train crosses the La Plata River probably at the ford near the Snowslide Campground in the San Juan National Forest. From there she could have accessed many mines on the east side of the range. (Courtesy the Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College)



4. A favorite among miners who shaved and dressed up when they knew she was coming, Olga Little visited almost all of the mines and miners in the La Plata Mountains. Once she broke her leg when her horse took a tumble. The miner who made a toboggan for her and took her safely into Durango became her husband. (Courtesy the Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College.)



Tracks Across Borders is a state designated scenic & historic byway that runs between Chama, NM and Durango, CO through Dulce, NM and Ignacio, CO. The route roughly follows the old narrow gauge railroad route connecting the two communities, the Old Spanish Trail and the historic route between the Jicarilla Apache & Southern Utes. Remnants of the railway are visible as the route passes through Jicarilla Apache and Southern Ute Lands, past Native American cultural attractions, ghost towns, remote & historic cemeteries, Chimney Rock, Navajo Lake and many other cultural, historic, scenic and recreational areas. Our 2020 Annual Driving Tour will focus on the La Plata County portion of the route from Durango to Arboles.

La Plata County

Historic Driving Tour 2019

- County
- State Hwy
- US Hwy
- Lakes and Rivers
- Tour Locations



Location Legend

1. Hesperus Baptist Church - Parking Area
2. The Hesperus Mine
3. Rio Grande Southern Railroad Coal Yard
4. Curtet House and Store
5. Annie Peutz's Boarding House
6. St. Paul Catholic Church
7. Hesperus School
9. Mayday School/Olga Little Boarding House

