

Journey into Timelessness...

Discover the mystique of southern Colorado. No one who travels the Scenic Highway of Legends remains unmoved by the magic of the landscape. Whichever direction you follow, the majestic mountains draw you towards them. From Trinidad, the magnificent Sangre de Cristo Range beckons. From Walsenburg, the legendary Spanish Peaks or *Huajatolla* (an Indian word meaning "Breasts of the World") continue to welcome wanderers, as they have for centuries.

There is a certain spirit here—a sense of history in the air. Evidence shows that people have roamed this scenic area for the past 12,000 years. The Utes, Apaches, and Comanches were among the tribes that occupied the region in more recent times. Ever since the first Spanish explorers discovered the area in the sixteenth century, people have

been lured here. Many have been intrigued by stories of lost gold mines and buried treasure. The ethereal beauty of the scenery itself is the stuff of which legends are made. It's easy to imagine yourself in the place of the early explorers—or the first residents, pioneers, or immigrants—because the landmarks which guided them survive to this day.

The history of human endeavor in this region is inextricably tied to the land. From farming and ranching to coal production, it was the land that provided livelihood and purpose. The early settlers built their homes, and even their churches, from the earth itself. And, although generations of inhabitants have lived and worked in the area, the beautiful landscape remains largely unspoiled.

The Colorado Legislature has passed a joint resolution recognizing State Highway 12 as "The Scenic Highway of Legends." Come... discover it for yourself. And take a journey into timelessness.



Gordon E. Kelley

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Scenic Highway of Legends



Colorado 12

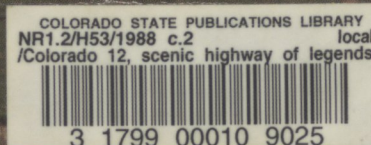
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A Guide to the Historic Beauty of Southern Colorado

State Highway 12
Trinidad-Walsenburg



Land of Legends

There are over 400 years' worth of legends about this fascinating region. Ask any resident, and he or she will relate stories that have been passed down from one generation to another. Just notice the names of the places you pass driving along the Scenic Highway of Legends. The Purgatoire River, for example—*El Rio de las Animas Perdidas en Purgatorio* ("The River of the Souls Lost in Purgatory")—is said to have been named in honor of one of the Spanish explorers, Juan de Humana, who around 1594 died with his men along the banks of the river without having received the last rites of the Catholic church. Later, the river was variously called "Las Animas," the French "Purgatoire," and the anglicized version "Picketwire."

Many local legends involve tales of lost gold. According to early Indian lore, the Aztecs had found a rich vein of pure gold on the Spanish Peaks and had taken it to Mexico to adorn the shrines of Huitzilopochtli. "But when Nezhuatcoyotl reigned in splendor at Tezuclo, the gods of the Mountain Huajatolla became envious of the magnificence of his court, and they placed demons on the double mountain and forbade all men further approach." The gods of the mountain spit fire and smoke to this purpose.

But the curse didn't stop those who came later from tempting the fates. Colorado's first Spanish treasure story stems from the Coronado expedition, dispatched from Mexico in 1540. Fray Juan de la Cruz, one of three monks left behind to convert the Indians to Christianity, supposedly managed to extract prodigious quantities of gold from the old Aztec sites. He and his followers packed up their animals with the hoard and set off for Mexico. But he was never heard from again.

Another persistent story involves the so-called "Arapaho Princess Treasure." According to legend, a party of Spaniards settled in the foothills of the Huajatolla in the early 1800s. Here they encountered the peaceful Arapaho Indians. The Spaniards found a rich lode of pure gold and hired the Indians to work with them. Many bars of gold were processed. The leader of the Spanish group fell in love with the daughter of the Arapaho chief and they were soon married and produced a daughter.

Hostilities broke out between the Arapahos and the Utes, and the Spaniards were cautioned to clear out. The gold was packed on eight burros and the Spanish leader bade his family a temporary farewell. The caravan soon encountered the Utes and were forced to bury their cargo and flee. Only the leader and two others escaped and made their way to Santa Fe and then back to Spain.

After several years, the leader longed to rejoin his Indian family and made his way back to the Huajatolla. His wife, the princess, had died in his absence. The Spaniard settled down with his daughter to a quiet life of farming. On his deathbed, he revealed the location of the gold stash.

His daughter married and had a son named Carlos. Fearing the curse of the gold, she kept the secret from her son until her own death. The gold was buried about 300 feet from an odd rock the Indians had named "Muneca"—the doll. Carlos searched the area but the bullion was never found.

Geology

The Trinidad Sandstone was deposited on the edge of a receding Cretaceous Age ocean that existed here at a time when dinosaurs roamed the

earth, about 70 million years ago. The outcrop of the Trinidad Sandstone at Prospect Point marks the eastern edge of the Raton Basin, a lopsided, saucer-shaped structural depression that contains significant energy resources, primarily coal. The Raton Basin extends westward from Trinidad and Walsenburg to the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Bedrock formations on the eastern margin of the basin gently dip downward to the west. The structural axis or deepest part of the basin lies near its western edge, close to Stonewall.



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As you proceed westward along the Scenic Highway of Legends, you encounter younger formations, such as the Vermejo and Raton formations. The coal beds that played such an important role in the history of Las Animas and Huerfano counties are contained within these formations.

The towering Sangre de Cristo ("Blood of Christ") Mountains were named by the Spanish explorers for their colorful alpen glow at sunrise and sunset. They form the longest mountain range in Colorado. A large thrust fault lies at the eastern base of the mountains, along which older Paleozoic sedimentary rocks were pushed up and over younger Cretaceous sedimentary rocks. Evidence of the tremendous forces involved in the creation of this mighty mountain range can be seen at several locations along the Scenic Highway of Legends where sedimentary formations are now deformed into nearly vertical positions.

Volcanic activity formed some of the major features visible from State Highway 12. The Spanish Peaks and the great dikes which radiate from them are eroded remnants of a 20-million-year-old volcano. Fishers Peak is capped by a series of at least eight basalt lava flows that erupted onto the land surface around 7 million years ago.

Other features of this landscape are man-made: waste piles left over from coal mining activity. Many of these waste piles have burned over the years, ignited by spontaneous combustion. Where the piles have eroded, the reddish-pink "red dog" or burnt material is visible beneath the thin veneer of black, unburnt, coal-rich waste.

Early Settlers

In order to secure possession of the land they had explored, Spain, and later Mexico, offered free land grants to potential homesteaders. The largest of these covered millions of acres. However, no permanent settlement was established in this area until 1859, when Gabriel and Juan Gutierrez of Mora County, New Mexico, came to introduce sheep grazing into the Purgatoire Valley. Trinidad proper was established in the early 1860s by Felipe Baca who camped on the site on his way from New Mexico to Denver.

Impressed by the fertility of the valley, he returned in the fall of 1860 and settled on a piece of land which he farmed the following spring.

Returning to his home in Mora County with a successful harvest, Baca convinced twelve families

to return with him to settle in the rich Purgatoire Valley. Arriving in March of 1862, the group separated and founded a series of small settlements known as *plazas* along the banks of the Purgatoire River.

About the same time, farms and cattle ranches were established in the valleys of the Huerfano and Cucharas rivers to help supply the needs of the northern Colorado gold fields. One of the earliest ranches, known as Francisco Plaza, established in 1862, was that of Col. John M. Francisco and Henry Daigre.

Initially the population of both Las Animas and Huerfano counties was predominantly Hispanic. However, during the period of Reconstruction after the Civil War, a group of about 300 Georgians settled in the lush valley of the Huerfano River. Other Anglos and, beginning in the 1870s, Europeans, too, made southern Colorado their home. Fred Walsen, for instance, a Prussian, opened a general store at the Plaza de los Leones. In 1873 the community was platted and named Walsenburg, and the following year it became the Huerfano County seat.

The early Hispanic settlers, most of whom were from New Mexico, primarily planted crops and raised sheep. Agricultural productivity in the area was the greatest in the 1870s and 1880s. The prosperity of plaza life began to decline, however, around 1900 with the development of the coal fields. Today, only remnants of the plazas can still be seen along the highway.



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The Coal Mining Era



Colorado Historical Society

The first coal mines around Trinidad began operation in 1876, when the Denver & Rio

Grande (D&RG) Railroad reached El Moro, north of Trinidad. In the 1880s southern Colorado became the largest coal-producing region in the state. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought a period of prosperity and expansion, especially for Trinidad, the region's major urban center.

In 1900, Colorado Fuel and Iron (CF&I) began opening its mines in the Purgatoire Valley. The company built the Colorado & Wyoming Railroad to connect the mines with the main line in Trinidad. Processing plants were established nearby to convert the coal into coke. Segundo became the largest coke burning camp with 800 coke ovens. Today, only the ovens at Cokedale remain.

CF&I built company towns near each mine for its workers. The camps of Primero, Segundo, Tercio, Cuarto, and Cuinto ("First," "Second," "Third," "..."), named in the order in which they were built, housed between 500 and 1000 employees each. The company owned everything—the mine, machinery, houses, stores, boardinghouses, schools, and the land.

As in Las Animas County, coal became an important industry in Huerfano County during the

1870s and 1880s. The first coal mine, the Walsen, opened in 1876. The same year, the railroad reached Walsenburg, Cucharas, and Francisco Plaza (renamed La Veta), providing a means for transporting the coal to market. As the mines prospered in the 1890s, the major producers began recruiting European miners. Many came, especially from southern and eastern Europe.

The miners were paid in company scrip to be used only for company housing, food, schooling, and medical care. Lacking English, the miners ended up being abused and mistreated. Complaints about hours, wages, working and living conditions, and freedoms not available in company towns were common. As a result, numerous strikes occurred, the most famous leading to the 1914 massacre at the Ludlow Camp.

Between 1900 and 1930, CF&I was the largest industry in the Rocky Mountain region and a principal factor in the development of the West. However, the peak of production came in 1910 and coal production began falling off in the 1920s. The depression of the 1930s brought an almost total end to the coal industry in southern Colorado.

Architecture

The architecture along State Highway 12 represents the changing periods of cultural influence from the early Hispanic to Anglo-American and European styles. The early homes were constructed in the form of adobe plazas. A plaza, initially the home of one extended family, consisted of a series of flat-roofed houses joined together to form a rectangle or L-shape. Often an enclosed compound was achieved through the addition of barns and corrals. For added protection, all the doors and windows faced the inside of the enclosure or *patio*. The best remaining example of a plaza is the Francisco Plaza in La Veta, now a museum listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Territorial style of adobe architecture is also represented in this area. It combines adobe construction with anglicized features such as gable roofs and turned porch posts. Many typical adobe homes, churches, and even a school, dating to the turn of the century, still survive along State Highway 12.

Some of the most interesting architecture in the Purgatoire Valley can be found in the religious complexes of the Penitente Brotherhood. This secret religious group had Spanish origins in the Third Order of St. Francis, believing in the literal interpretation of scripture and in performing acts of severe penance and self-flagellation. The Penitente meeting hall or *morada* was usually a single building of stone or adobe devoid of religious



Colorado Historical Society

ornamentation. To protect the privacy of the members, the *morada* generally had few, if any, windows and only one small door.

The construction of company towns brought a different type of community—one in which everything was built almost identically. The coal companies built towns that were carefully laid out and contained most of the services required by the residents. Dwellings were basically simple and inexpensive and laid out on a grid pattern. Cokedale is the only surviving company town in the area; usually the camps were dismantled after the mines closed.

Text: Vicki Rottman
Graphics: Kevin Scott

SCENIC HIGHWAY OF LEGENDS

Colorado 12



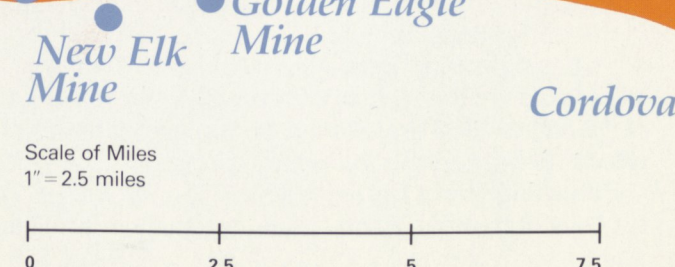
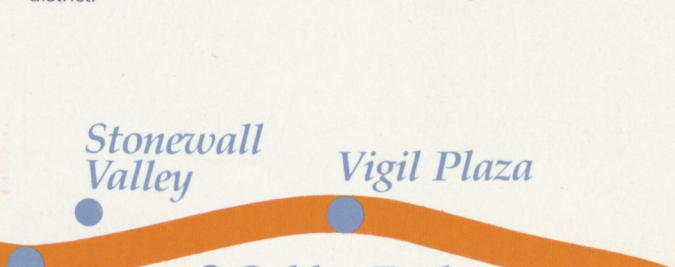
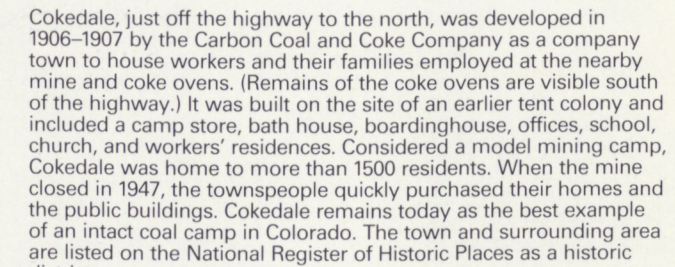
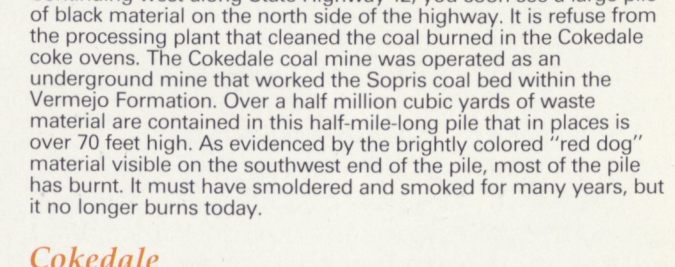
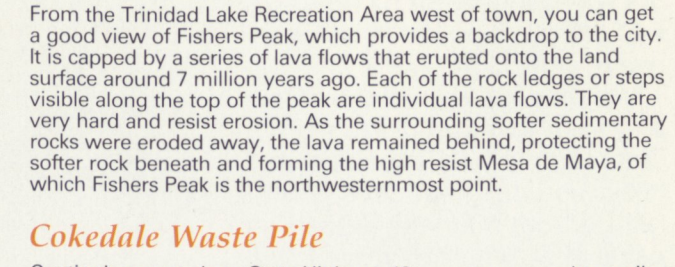
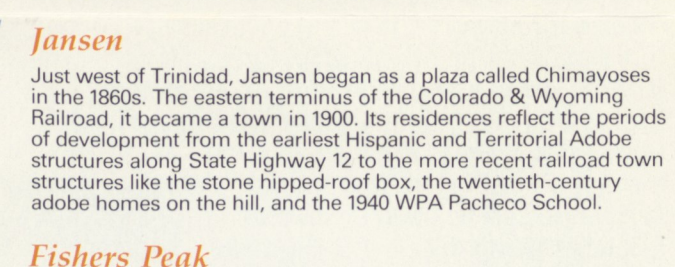
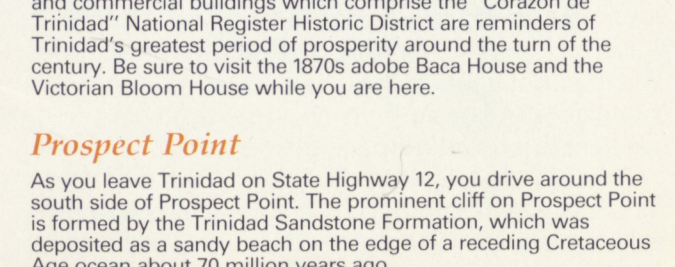
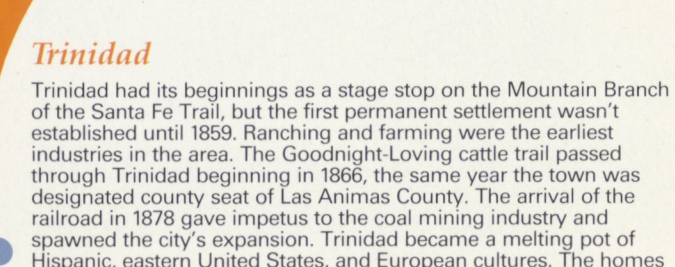
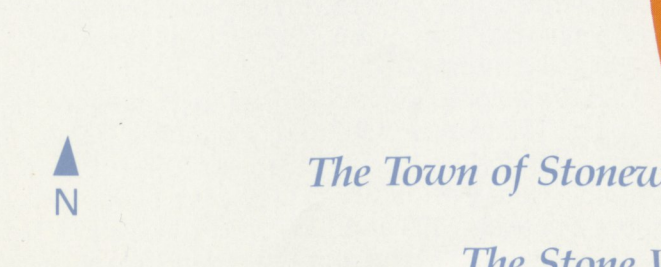
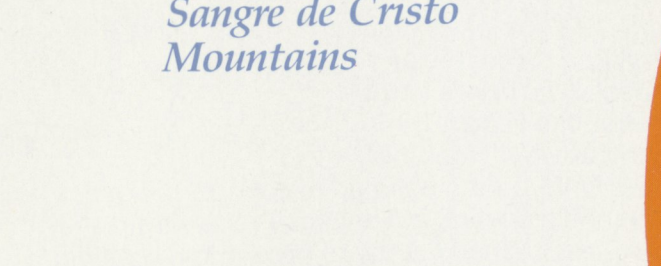
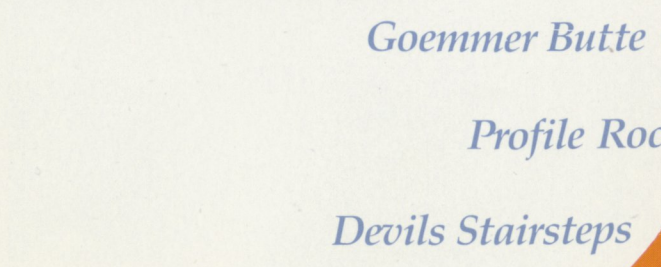
The Scenic Highway of Legends, located in southern Colorado, is easily accessible from Interstate 25 at either Trinidad or Walsenburg. From Walsenburg, it is approximately 160 miles to Denver and 220 miles to Durango. Trinidad is only 205 miles from Santa Fe.



FOR YOUR ADDED ENJOYMENT

In order to add to your enjoyment and understanding of the people and history of this region, you may wish to visit the following:

- In Trinidad:**
 - Colorado Welcome Center**
309 Nevada Avenue
(719) 846-9512
Tourist information and assistance. Open year-round.
 - Baca House, Bloom House, and Pioneer Museum**
Colorado Historical Society
300 East Main
(719) 846-7217
An authentic 1869 Territorial Adobe house, an 1880s Victorian mansion, and the Pioneer Museum illustrate the history of Trinidad from the days of the Santa Fe Trail to the turn of the century. Open summer; by appointment otherwise.
 - Louden-Henritze Archaeology Museum**
Trinidad State Junior College
Presidential Memorial Library
(719) 846-5508
The geology and archaeology of the area displayed in dioramas, fossils, and artifacts. Open summer only.
 - A. R. Mitchell Museum of Western Art**
131 West Main
(719) 846-4224
Works by Arthur Roy Mitchell and other nationally known western artists as well as a collection of early Hispanic religious folk art. Open summer only.
 - The Children's Museum/Old Firehouse No. 1**
314 North Commercial
(719) 846-2024
Housed in an old firehouse, which also was Trinidad's first city hall and jail. Exhibits include original firefighting equipment and hands-on displays for children. Open summer only.
- In La Veta:**
 - Fort Francisco Museum**
Huerfano County Historical Society
Just off State Highway 12 in center of town
The original 1862 plaza building, plus a saloon, country schoolhouse, and blacksmith shop represent life on the frontier and house various collections of artifacts. Open summer only.
- In Walsenburg:**
 - Walsenburg Mining Museum**
Huerfano County Historical Society
101 East 5th Street
Exhibits of photographs and equipment relate the history of southern Colorado's coal miners. Open year-round.
 - Visitor Information Center**
Huerfano County Chamber of Commerce
Railroad Depot
(719) 738-1065
Tourist information and assistance. Open year-round.



La Veta

Trinidad

Goemmer Butte

Profile Rock

Devils Stairsteps

Dakota Wall

Jansen

Cuchara

Cucharas Pass

Spanish Peaks

Fishers Peak

Stonewall Valley

Vigil Plaza

The Town of Stonewall

The Stone Wall

New Elk Mine

Golden Eagle Mine

Weston

Segundo

Valdez

Tijeras Plaza

Madrid Plaza

Mine Waste Piles

Cordova Plaza

Walsenburg

Madrid Plaza

Madrid Plaza was settled in 1862 by Hilario Madrid, who had come north from New Mexico with Felipe Baca. Little remains of the original plaza structure; however, a small settlement sprang up near the plaza, part of which remains today along State Highway 12. Perhaps the oldest of these structures is the adobe Madrid School, on the south side of the road, which is said to have been built around 1904. Just east of Madrid Plaza you drive over the Burro Canyon Bridge, built in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this bridge is one of three WPA bridges in Las Animas County and features the characteristic stonework of WPA masons.

Tijeras Plaza

Tijeras Plaza was also settled by members of Felipe Baca's group of settlers in 1862. The picturesque Holy Child Chapel, which has been built in 1874, stands on the south side of the highway. This church is one of the best examples of the several adobe churches along the Purgatoire. Across the highway from the chapel is the cemetery. Also on the north side of the road is the Tijeras Morada, a religious complex constructed to protect the secret rituals of the Penitente Brotherhood. It consists of the meetinghouse, the cookhouse, and the dormitory or family chapel. The morada was in use until about 1970.

Sangre de Cristo Mountains

The magnificent Sangre de Cristo Range dominates the view along State Highway 12 all the way to Stonewall. This is the longest mountain range in Colorado, with eight peaks rising to over 14,000 feet above sea level. A segment of the range north of Great Sand Dunes National Monument is the longest, highest piece of real estate in the contiguous United States. This portion of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains that you see along the Scenic Highway of Legends is called the Culebra Range. The highest peak in this section is the 14,047-foot-tall Culebra Peak, the only privately owned "fourteener" in Colorado.

Mine Waste Piles at Milepost 59.5

South of the highway east of Valdez, you can see more waste piles like those at Cokedale. The piles along this segment of the Purgatoire came from the Frederick Coal Mine near Valdez and were hauled downstream by rail to this location. Where the river has eroded the ends of the piles, the reddish-colored, burnt "red dog" is exposed from beneath a thin cap of unburnt, coal-rich waste material. Efforts to reduce erosion of several of the piles along the Purgatoire River and reduce accompanying sedimentation problems have been undertaken by the Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Division.

Valdez

Valdez was the mining camp associated with the Frederick Mine, which was in operation from 1907 until 1960. It was named for Gabriel Valdez, who settled in this area about 1900. Valdez was a typical coal mining town like Cokedale. Today, only a handful of the original structures remain, including the school, the depot, and a few residences. As was often the case, when the mines shut down, CF&I dismantled or moved all of its property, including company housing, stores, and warehouses.

Segundo

What is now called "Segundo" actually started as the community of Los Barros or Barros, one of several plazas which sprang up along the Purgatoire in the 1860s. Several early buildings still survive: the adobe church (now covered with siding), the commercial buildings along the highway, and a plaza-like structure on the east end of town. Across the river was the CF&I company town of Segundo, built in 1901. Unfortunately, all the buildings were razed when the camp closed. Once the largest and most complete coal processing plant west of Chicago, it featured 800 coke ovens that produced up to 1500 tons of coke a day. Now blackened ruins east of town are the only remnants of the Segundo plant.

Medina Plaza

This community was another of the small communities which date to the 1860s, settled by Hispanic families who came to the valley to farm and raise sheep or cattle. A short distance west of town, right next to the highway, is the Medina Plaza Church and Cemetery. The church is an adobe building with little ornamentation, typical of the churches in the Purgatoire Valley. It has not been used for a number of years.

Cordova Plaza

This small community was settled by the Cordova family, who came north with Felipe Baca from New Mexico in the 1860s. The tiny chapel on the south side of the road, although covered with wood siding, is an adobe structure dating to the late nineteenth century. More than three feet of the church's foundation is supposedly buried underground. Still owned by the Cordova family, the church contained all of its furniture and artifacts like *santos*, candles, and chandeliers until recently, when family members removed the antiques. The chapel has not been used in over 50 years.

Walsenburg

The route described here begins at Trinidad and follows State Highway 12 over Cucharas Pass. For the last 12 miles, it joins U.S. Highway 160 and continues into Walsenburg. If it's more convenient for you, you may simply reverse the order and follow the route from Walsenburg to Trinidad. The total distance is 82 miles, and average driving time is 2 hours 30 minutes. At

Weston

Weston was originally known as Los Sisneros, named for rancher Juan Sisneros, who settled in this area in the 1880s. At the east end of town is an adobe plaza-like structure with a wide overhanging porch, which may have been part of the Sisneros ranch. In back, there are also numerous outbuildings, including an adobe privy. A 1915 steel bridge carries traffic across the river to the residential area, which dates to the 1890s. The town was built by the Rocky Mountain Timber Company for its employees. It was named Weston after postmaster Bert Weston, who was also the local blacksmith.

Vigil Plaza

Vigil Plaza was settled by Juan Vigil and his family, pioneers from New Mexico, in the early 1860s. Juan Vigil served both as county assessor and as sheriff beginning in 1862. The Vigil Plaza buildings, located on the south side of the road, are still owned and maintained by the Vigil family. This complex is a typical L-shaped adobe structure with associated outbuildings of log and adobe. Across the highway to the north is the "House on the Bridge," built in the 1920s on a bridge abandoned when the road was realigned. Several other adobe residences remain on the hill above the river. Also north of the highway is the San Isidro Church, a simple adobe church built in the 1870s, which is still in use today.

Golden Eagle Mine

The Vigil Plaza and Stonewall are two coal mines, reminders of what much of the Purgatoire Valley looked like at one time. The first one you see, originally called the Maxwell Mine, was opened in 1977 by CF&I. Now known as the Golden Eagle, it is operated by the Wyoming Fuels Corporation, which also manages the neighboring New Elk (Allen) Mine.

New Elk Mine

This mine was originally opened in 1946 and called the Apache Prospect. It was taken over by CF&I in 1951 and renamed the Allen Mine. It now is owned by the Wyoming Fuels Corporation, which calls it the New Elk Mine. Using a slope or decline to descend hundreds of feet vertically, miners have access to the Allen Coal Bed in the Raton Formation. Over 15 million tons of coal have been produced from this mine's extensive workings, which continue south for several miles underground.

Stonewall Valley

Lush Stonewall Valley geologically is a "strike valley" that lies between the vertically standing Dakota Sandstone on the west and the Trinidad Sandstone on the east. Sandwiched between these two cliff-forming rock formations is the easily eroded Pierre Shale, a sequence of gray marine shale thousands of feet thick that was deposited on the floor of the Cretaceous Age seaway.

The Town of Stonewall

The Stonewall Valley was first settled about 1867 by ranchers Juan Gutierrez and James Stoner. Gutierrez and his brother Gabriel had built the first permanent cabin in Trinidad in 1859. The rock formation, which resembles a wall running along the ridge near Stoner's ranch, was originally referred to as "Stoner's Wall." In 1878 the community was officially given the name Stonewall. In the 1880s, the valley was the scene of numerous timber and cattle wars. By the turn of the century Stonewall became a popular summer resort for Trinidad residents. A number of homes were built in the Rustic Style of architecture using natural materials like stone and logs.

The Stone Wall

The "stone wall" at Stonewall is striking evidence of the tremendous mountain-building forces that have affected this area at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The geologic formation which forms the stone wall is called the Dakota Sandstone, a bed of sand that was originally deposited horizontally along the margin of an older Cretaceous Age seaway that advanced from the north out of the Arctic. Millions of years later, during the mountain-building phase that created the Sangre de Cristos, the lithified sandstone was thrust upwards, twisted and warped into its now vertical position.

Spanish Peaks

Near Monument Lake Resort, you have a beautiful glimpse of the Huerfano. Also known as the Spanish Peaks, they are eroded remnants of a 20-million-year-old volcano. Believed to be a home of the gods to the Indians, they also served as guideposts to early travelers. The drive from here to Walsenburg offers a variety of picturesque views of the region's most well known landmarks. Numerous hard, erosion-resistant igneous dikes radiate outward from this ancient volcanic neck. The most prominent of these dikes are found on the north side of the peaks, such as Devils Stairsteps, but many smaller ones can be seen throughout the Trinidad-Walsenburg area.

either Walsenburg or Trinidad, you can join Interstate 25 to continue your travels. Historic places along the interstate include the towns of Pryor and Aguilar and the site of the 1914 Ludlow Massacre. But first, slow down and enjoy the beautiful and historic Scenic Highway of Legends.

NOTE: Many of the sites listed in this brochure are on private property. Please act respectfully.

Cucharas Pass

At the top of Cucharas Pass (elevation 9941 feet), you leave Las Animas County and enter Huerfano County. As early as 1779, an Indian trail ran over this pass. In 1853 Lt. John W. Gunnison noted it in his explorations of the state for a transcontinental railroad route. It remained a path, however, until 1865, when Henry Daigne, one of the founders of La Veta, hired Hiram Vasquez, son of the famous mountain scout Louis Vasquez, to construct a road to Stonewall. By 1883 a mail route was established, and by 1885 there was a stage route traveling the rough road. However, there was not an automobile road over the pass until recently. In the mid-1960s the road was finally paved over Cucharas Pass and State Highway 12 was completed between Walsenburg and Trinidad.

Cuchara

Cuchara, now an attractive mountain resort, began as a small farming and ranching community in the 1880s. The name is a Spanish word meaning "spoon" and is taken from the river of the same name which flows into a spoonlike valley. The principal crop was potatoes. The first post office in the valley, established in a house that still stands along State Highway 12, was called *Nunda*, an Indian word meaning "potato." In 1906 George Mayer opened a summer camp for tourists and area residents. Cuchara became a resort of Rustic Style log cabins, some of which remain along the highway today among newer ones of the same type. Also remaining are some old barns and homesteads, remnants of the early farming and stock-raising industry.

Dakota Wall

This feature is not one of the igneous dikes common to this area but a portion of the Dakota Sandstone Formation, caused by layers of sand pressed into rock and millions of years later thrust into a vertical position. Part of the same formation you saw at Stonewall, it is present all along the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains, although it is not always visible. Here there is a gap in the wall, allowing the Cucharas River and State Highway 12 to pass through.

Devils Stairsteps

This is one of the most prominent of the great dikes which radiate out from the Spanish Peaks like spokes of a wheel. These unique formations are known to geologists around the world. They are made of igneous rocks which forced their way into fractures in the sedimentary material. The softer rock later eroded to reveal the hard, erosion-resistant dikes. It is easy to see how this one, shaped like giant stairs, got its name.

Profile Rock

This is another of the unique igneous dikes radiating out from the Spanish Peaks. It gets its name from the fact that many people claim to see the profiles of George and Martha Washington in its outline. Others can see the face of an Indian or a train on a trestle.

Goemmer Butte

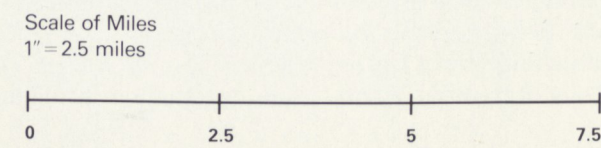
This striking landmark is a volcanic plug rising 500 feet from the Cucharas Valley floor. It is also sometimes called "Devil's Thumb."

La Veta

La Veta was first settled as Francisco Plaza by Col. John Francisco and Frenchman Henry Daigne, who purchased most of the upper Cucharas Valley and operated a large cattle ranch. Their adobe plaza, built in 1862, remains today in the center of town as the Francisco Fort Museum. The area around the plaza continued to expand with the influx of new settlers, a large number of whom came from Georgia at the end of the Civil War. In 1876, when the railroad arrived, the settlement was renamed La Veta. The original D&RG depot still stands along the tracks on the north side of town. La Veta is also noted for a number of buildings constructed by the Coleman brothers between 1890 and 1930 using locally quarried stone.

Walsenburg

Walsenburg began as La Plaza de los Leones, settled by Don Miguel Antonio Leon about 1859. Other Hispanic settlers soon arrived, followed by easterners and Europeans. Fred Walsen, a Prussian immigrant, established a trading post at the plaza in 1870. In 1873 the town was incorporated and named after him, its first mayor. Shortly after the D&RG Railroad arrived in 1876, the local coal mining industry began. By 1891 the Walsenburg area ranked fourth in the state in coal production. The old power plant remains from the Walsen-Robinson Mine, the first and largest mine in the county. It is visible north of the highway west of town. To learn more about the region's rich coal mining history, you may visit the Walsenburg Mining Museum.



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