

7th Annual



La Plata County  
Colorado

2021

# Historic Driving Tour goes Virtual

Join us as we take our driving tour to a virtual Zoom platform this year and explore the Animas Canyon Toll Road, Electra Lake and Tacoma Power Plant.

Tuesday May 11, 2021 7- 8:30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86827485830>

## 1. Animas City to Silverton Toll Road

The Animas Canyon Toll Road was built in 1876–78 to connect the mining town of Silverton to the coal beds and agricultural produce of the Animas Valley near what is now Durango. The roughly thirty-mile wagon road operated for about five years before it was overtaken by the Denver & Rio Grande Railway line through the Animas Canyon (now the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad) in 1881–82. The road was largely destroyed by the railroad, which used the road's right-of-way, as well as by the creation of Electra Lake in the early twentieth century. In 2017 four miles of surviving road segments in the San Juan National Forest were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Jon Horn with Alpine Archaeology will discuss this important early Durango area transportation corridor. Historical archaeologist Jon Horn is adamant that, "The toll road may be the most intact example of an early wagon road in Colorado—and perhaps anywhere in the country." Horn notes, "Some wonderfully intact segments of the toll road still exist both above and below Electra Lake, and these are extremely unusual because they have retained their historical integrity and have not been modified or used by vehicles of any sort since their abandonment in 1882." He adds, "Much of the trail is in country that has not seen development and provides visitors a unique opportunity to experience a historic travel route in a setting that is virtually the same as when the toll road was in use more than 125 years ago. Such opportunities for authentic historical experiences are rare."



## 2. Searcy Cabin at Electra Lake

Sam Smith's place was one of the first way-stations along the Animas Canyon Toll Road. It was located at the top of Cascade Hill at the north end of Electra Lake. It was a story-and-a-half log house that was one of the most important stops along the Road.

After the filling of the Lake, It was dismantled and floated to the south end of the Lake, where it was reassembled and used as a cabin by Judge William Searcy. Ruth Lambert will discuss the history of the Searcy Cabin



Sam Smith's Place-an early way station  
Photo Credit: Ronald Gould  
photo from Allen Nosseman's  
Many More Mountains, Vol. 2

## 3. Historic Photos of Tacoma Power Plant

Nik Kendziorski will do a presentation on Historic photos and resources at the Center of Southwest Studies.



### Register of Historic Places

- Sixteen properties have been designated to date
- Properties include the Old Ft. Lewis Campus, Animas City to Silverton Toll Road 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

### 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.