

FREMONT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2016 VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1 WEBSITE: fremontheritage.com
WE ARE ON FACEBOOK, TOO: Fremont County Historical Society - Colorado



YOU ARE INVITED TO THE PROGRAM ON
SUNDAY - JANUARY 17, 2016

DAVE WALKER

Finding the Place Where Espinosa
Was Killed



Courtesy photo.

"In the spring of 1863, residents and travelers through Colorado Territory feared for their lives as account after account of vicious murders were reported and lone riders disappeared, only for their bodies to be later found in a remote gulley or hidden in the brush of the mountainsides. The murders were a mystery. No one knew who was responsible as the perpetrators left no clues. Numerous lookouts were posted throughout the regions of the killings, but they had no idea who to look for -- Indians, a gang, or a lone vagabond desperado.

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Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church,
801 Sheridan Avenue, Cañon City
2:00 p.m. - Public Welcome
Refreshments served

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*We are proud to have a new benefactor::
Dave Hankins was instrumental
in preparing the Prospect Heights jail for public
viewing this summer.
He furnished the jail with vintage furniture from the
Prospect Heights Mercantile, and spent many hours
manning the "museum".
THANK YOU, DAVE.*

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DAVE HANKINS

719.285.5922

1345 S. 4th Street - Canon City, Colo. Dave@UndoneDesigns.com

Continued from Page 1:

Dave Walker

Dave is a retired outdoor recreation manager/planner for the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Dave has lived in Cañon City since 1978, and over a span of thirty-seven years, he has spent countless hours hiking and exploring the backcountry throughout Fremont County and surrounding areas. Dave's other hobbies include history, geology, paleontology, and GPS mapping. He is a member of the Cañonland Walkers and Hikers and the Fremont County Search and Rescue.

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LOCAL LANDMARK SITES

The Fremont County Heritage Commission has recently acquired the new heritage plaques that will be placed on all the Local Landmark Sites that have been designated in the last two years. Those sites are as follows. Many of these sites are on private property and are not available for the public to actually tour - but a drive-by is possible and if you have questions, please go to the website: Fremontheritage.com.

- #1: Fremont County Administration Building, Cañon City, 6th and Macon*
- #2: Belltower Cultural Center, Florence*
- #3: Greenwood Cemetery, Cañon City*
- #4: Coaldale Charcoal Kilns, Coaldale, C.R. 6*
- #5: Howard Community Church/Museum*
- #6: Knights of Pythias Castle Hall, Florence, Main St.*
- #7: Julius Parker Homestead, Coaldale. C.R. 6*
- #8: Brookside St. Anthony Church, Brookside*
- #9: New Hope Church and Cemetery, Wetmore*
- #10: Prospect Heights Jail, Cañon city, So. 4th Street.*

FCHS BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

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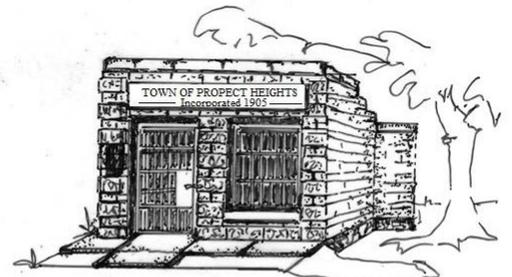
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Continued from Page 2 - THE BLOODY ESPINOSAS: Our Program for January 17, 2016

In 1863, Felipe and Vivian Espinosa, two brothers from San Rafael, New Mexico Territory, committed a series of mysterious murders that terrorized the citizens of south-central Colorado Territory. No one knew who was committing the murders until a vigilante posse encountered the brothers as they were camped in an isolated gulch, located some twenty miles north of Cañon City, and where Vivian Espinosa was killed in a surprise attack.

In his presentation, Dave Walker will relate “the rest of the story” about what would eventually happen to Felipe Espinosa who miraculously escaped from the ambush and returned to his home in San Rafael. Much of the presentation, however, will be focused on Dave’s search for the exact location of the place where Vivian was killed, and his disagreement with the location of the ambush site as described in James Perkins’s book, *Tom Tobin—Frontiersman*.

To learn more about the Espinosa brothers, suggested reading includes: *Tom Tobin—Frontiersman* and *Season of Terror—The Espinosas in Central Colorado* by Charles Price.

We will hear the rest of the story from Dave Walker as he talks about the capture and killing of one of the Espinosa brothers in Fremont County, and his ideas of the circumstances surrounding that capture. Following is a short synopsis of the “Reign of Terror”.

“The first victim was found in May, 1863, his corpse mutilated and the heart hacked out of his chest. During that summer, twenty-five more people were attacked and killed in a similar fashion. Only when a wagon was attacked along a road to Fairplay and the driver was lucky enough to get away, were the murderers finally recognized”*

*This story was written by Martin Edward Martinez (descendant of Espinosa family)

They were Felipe and Vivian Espinosa, who led a gang made up of their cousins, who soon took on the nickname of the "Bloody Espinosas." The Espinosas who came from Vera Cruz, Mexico, had witnessed the killing of six family members when their town was shelled by the U.S. Navy during the Mexican-American War.

Living near the village of San Rafael, Colorado the Espinosas were not only embittered by the earlier killing of their family members, but also because they claimed their land grant in Conejos County wasn't being honored and numerous white settlers were squatting upon their property. The Espinosa brothers had earlier been suspected of horse stealing, but now they were wanted for murder.

The accounts in the books mentioned above by Price and Perkins will tell you the entire story.

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The MINNIE HARDING STORY

Almira M. (Minnie) Lahm was born June 13, 1857, in Canton, Ohio. Her parents were Samuel Lahm and Henrietta Faber Lahm. Samuel Lahm (1812-1876) was a lawyer. His career included serving as an Ohio state senator and as a representative to the 30th U.S. Congress.

Minnie attended private schools and graduated the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Albany, New York. She traveled to Cañon City, Colorado, in 1881 to visit the Fred Reynolds family and decided to remain. She began teaching kindergarten classes in a tent at 5th and Main Streets in Cañon City. In January, 1882, she was employed as a teacher of primary grades at Washington School. During that year she met and became engaged to Theodore Marsh Harding. At the end of the school year, she and Mr. Harding traveled to Canton, Ohio, where they were married on December 4, 1882. The Hardings returned to Cañon City after their wedding and both became active in community affairs. Minnie and Theodore had two children: a son, Theodore Marsh, II, and a daughter, Gretchen.

Mrs. Harding died in May, 1937. She and her husband (who died in 1913) are buried in the Lakeside Cemetery in Cañon City.

Continued on page 5.

This story was researched and written by Barbara Hobson for the Fremont County Historical Society.

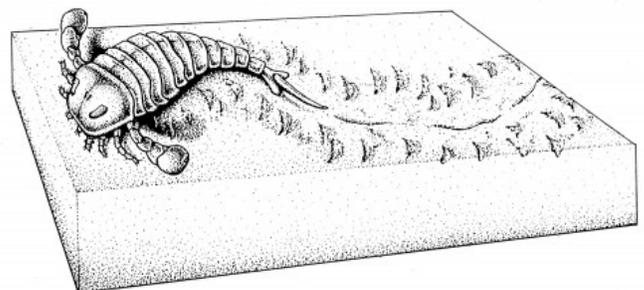
The City of Cañon City is pleased to print the Fremont County Historical Society Newsletter as a contribution to the Society. Thanks for all you do for Fremont County History!



GEOLOGY CLUB NEWS:

The Geology Club meets at the First United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall on the northwest corner of 9th St and Main, Cañon City. 6PM Business Meeting, 7PM Presentation. All are welcome.

January 11 Program - Carly Thorson presents: Indian Springs Ranch Fossil Beds - Carly was born and raised in **Cañon City**. Her dad discovered the fossil beds in sixties, and she will discuss the history and importance of the site, providing photos and specimens illustrating how ancient creatures left their tracks in the mud over 400 million years ago. This site is considered the best trace fossil locality in North America. Dr. Fischer received a Ford foundation grant to study this site and studied in the field for 5 seasons. He truly was a pioneer in trace fossils, no one really knew much about them. The site was dedicated as a Natural National Landmark in 1979 and in 1980 was designated a Colorado Natural Area, historical site, and archeological site. In 2014 the fossil floor was restudied by Dr Spencer Lucas, New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. They are still working on the papers to be published. The fossil beds have a true interaction of species. making this area globally significant.



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Cañon City Pioneer Inductee to Colorado Women's Hall of Fame
MINNIE LAHM HARDING
(1857 -1937)

Minnie L. Harding has been recognized for her many accomplishments as “A Historic Woman” and has been named one of 10 inductees into the 2016 Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame. The ceremony will be held March 16, 2016, in Denver. Since its inception in 1895, the Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame has inducted 142 women. Selections are made every two years. Nominations are submitted by the public and although many nominations are received, only 10 are chosen. The criteria are that a candidate must have strong ties to Colorado, either through birth, residence, the lasting influences of her experiences in the state, or by having made her mark here. She must have made significant and enduring contributions to her field, elevated the status of women and helped open new frontiers for women and society, and inspired others, especially women and girls, by her example.

Minnie Harding has been judged to have met all those criteria. Cañon City and Fremont County have benefited from the numerous civic improvements and projects in which she participated and provided leadership. Her commitment to the education of women has been recognized throughout Colorado. The loan fund she initiated has enabled many young women who couldn’t otherwise afford to pursue a higher education to achieve their goals. Many of them have carried on Mrs. Harding’s legacy and made their own contributions to our community and our state.

Mrs. Harding was one of the charter members of the Cañon City Ladies’ Library Association, formed in 1886, for the sole purpose of establishing a public library in the community. She was also a charter member of Friends in Council, formed in 1888. As a result of the combined efforts of those organizations, a new public library opened in Cañon City in December of 1902. Mrs. Harding was also active in the Dickens Club, formed in 1892. By 1901 the club members had read all of Charles Dickens’s published works.

Mrs. Harding’s civic contributions extended beyond Cañon City and Fremont County. She was president of the Colorado Federation of Women’s Clubs from 1900 to 1902. During her tenure, the Scholarship and Loan Fund Committee was created. The initial loan fund began with \$90: \$50 was contributed by Mr. Fred Reynolds, president of the Fremont County Bank in Cañon City; \$20 by Sarah Platt Decker of Denver; and \$20 by Mrs. Harding. Mrs. Charles A. (Sophia) Dickinson of Denver was the first chairwoman of the committee, but in 1904 Mrs. Harding became chair and served in that role until her death. Upon her death in 1937, the fund was named the Minnie L. Harding Educational Loan Fund in her honor. The fund was established to provide loans to young women to help further their educations. In 1982, it was reported that over \$1 million had been loaned. The fund is still in existence under the auspices of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. To apply, an applicant requires a personal recommendation and a connection with a local GFWC woman’s club.

In 1914, in recognition of her commitment to education, Mrs. Harding was appointed by Governor E. M. Ammons to fill a vacancy on the Colorado University Board of Regents. Governor Ammons’s successor, Governor Alva Adams, was so impressed with her work that he suggested her name be placed on the ballot for the next election and she was elected for a 6-year term. When a new girls’ dormitory was constructed on the campus of the University of Colorado-Boulder, one of the four wings was named Harding Hall.

Her other achievements included: In 1906 she founded a public “clean-up day” in Cañon City; during World War I chair of the Fremont County Division of Food Conservation and recognized for her patriotic service by Herbert Hoover, then U.S. Food Administrator; served as chair of the women’s section of the National Council for Defense, and the women’s committee in charge of the American Red Cross financial campaign for which she received a certificate for distinguished service signed by President Woodrow Wilson. She also organized the Victory Girls Brigade in Cañon City in support of the government’s Liberty Bond Drive.

Continued from Page 4

Sources: Royal Gorge Regional Museum and History Center; cogreatwomen.org; Wikipedia; Findagrave memorials; GFWC; Harding descendants



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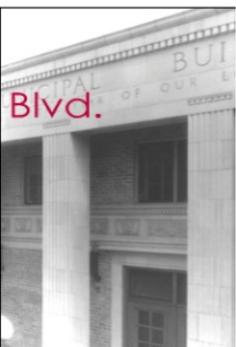
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