

**The Prospect Heights Jail** was built in 1906 and was the only municipal building for the



Town of Prospect Heights, previously a Slavic enclave of mine workers near the Nonac Coal Mine. The enterprising residents incorporated in 1905 to take advantage of absence of saloons in the neighboring "dry" communities of Cañon City and South Cañon. The jail was built to incarcerate the disorderly drunks who frequented the seven or eight saloons and other establishments operating twenty-four hours a day.

Its size, setting and construction of native stone

from an outcrop of yellow ochre concretionary sandstone from nearby *Eagle Wing* make it a visual landmark in this small community.

In 1901 Cañon City had repealed the ordinances granting liquor licenses in the city, effectively closing its six saloons. The back-and-forth battle over the temperance movement went on for years, strengthened by 1905 with support from the City’s 14 churches, four hospitals, several active women’s groups including the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), two newspapers and a month-long revival by evangelist Billy Sunday. Another ordinance was enacted prohibiting the sale of alcohol in June 1905.

### A Look Back Into History



**LAST WEEK**, we ran a picture of the night shift at Nonac Mine on Prospect Heights, taken Aug. 5, 1942.

Here is the day shift in a photo taken the same day — Aug. 5, 1942 — outside the tipple. It was loaned The Record by Mr. and Mrs. William Jamieson, 1610 Chestnut St. He was with CF&I at Nonac for six years, prior to going with Utah Fuel and Kaiser Steel Corp. in Utah. Mr. Jamieson retired in 1972 after 40 years in the mines.

The man at left, with white shirt, was Mac McBryer of Pueblo, general superintendent for mines for the CF&I. The mule was named Maude and was long a favorite of the mine crews — one of a number of mules used underground in hauling coal cars.

Nonac, also named No. 5 on the CF&I listings, operated from 1889 to 1952 and during the 1942 period of this picture, its payroll was 150 men, with much of its coal going to the World War II effort. Men identified by Mr. and Mrs. Jamieson and others were, from left:

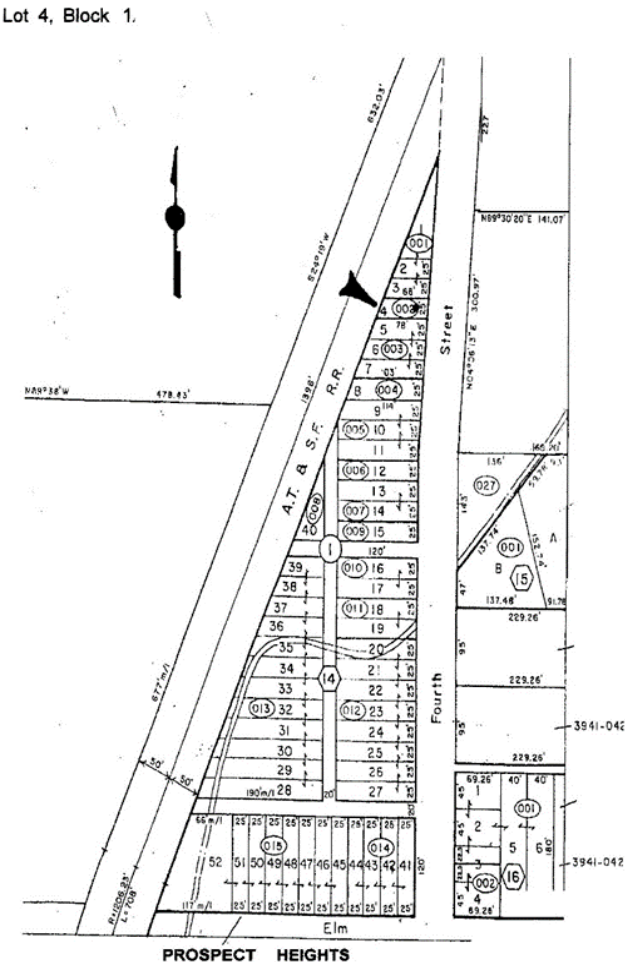
Top row—First two unknown, Mike Ross, Wade Prichard, Doug Tollis, Mike Strack, Robert Saban, Camillo Moschetti, John Arko, next two unknown, John Luckinball, Ernest Lauriski, Tony Maggino, Bess Valerio, unknown, Martin Matkovich and Bill Jamieson.

Second row—Mike Lasko, standing at far left by Maude; Paul Durand, partly hidden; Frank Lauriski Sr., Supt. McBryer, Bob Blyth, unknown, Jim Certo, unknown, Alex S. Moschetti, unknown, Frank Boben, Joseph Scrabec, Joe Costillo, Ubaldo DeNardo, Jim Wilson, Frank Konte, Louie Boben, Crawford Allingham, Thomas Boggio, Frank Stultz, John Globoker, John Skufca, Jesse Penney, George Saban.

Front row—Frank Javernick Sr., kneeling and holding pail; Allie Reynolds, unknown, Ubaldo Merlino, Bill Price, unknown, Joe Kimmick, Fred Ivey, Ernest Tollis, Joe Fauson, John Fetta, John Ross, Tony Tella, unknown, Frank Javernick Jr., George Babbitt; right on bottom, Mr. Benigar, unknown, Tom Davis, George Dell, mine Supt. Clifford Dawes, Foreman Parley Potter, partly obscured by crack in picture; and unknown.



**Brothers Anton and Florijan Adamic** and friend John Musick took action to form their own city that allowed the sale and consumption of such beverages. A town plat was filed on April 10, 1905 consisting of 52 lots on 9½ acres; followed by a May 8<sup>th</sup> election with 57 votes for incorporation and none against.



The **Town of Prospect Heights** was declared incorporated on May 10, 1905. Soon rail-car loads of beer, wine and whisky began arriving on the railroad tracks bordering the town and Anton Adamic began wholesaling them to the seven or eight saloons that sprang up almost

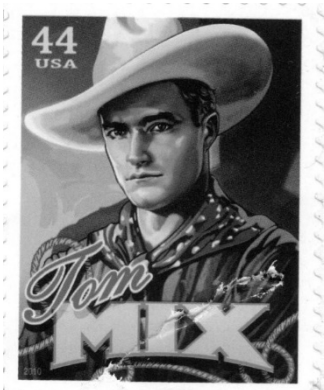


overnight. Each business flourished, along with crime and drunken debauchery. A town marshal was elected, but one thing lacked – a jail!

Ernie Sell was reportedly hired to construct the jail, and he did just that with the help of his father. They quickly completed the project and, upon being paid for his services,

Ernie Sell stepped down the road and commenced to celebrating. Within a few hours, Ernie Sell ironically became the very first occupant of the jail he just built.

**Silent-movie star Tom Mix** also reportedly graced his presence in the Prospect Heights Jail. In 1911, while in the area making one of his many western silent-movies, Tom Mix got drunk and began shooting his guns off in the middle of the street. The film's producer quickly bailed him out the following morning when he failed to appear on the set.



Prospect Heights glory days ended in 1909 when the U. S. Smelter closed down, hurting business, and the saloons were threatened with legal actions. In September 1909, supported by a Colorado Supreme Court decision upholding local option laws banning alcohol sales, the saloons in Prospect Heights were all closed. This was later reinforced when Colorado became one of the first states in the Union to enact a statewide prohibition law closing all saloons in 1916, followed in 1920 by the ratification of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, establishing prohibition in the United States until repealed by the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment in 1933.

The last time the jail was used as a detention facility was in 1914 when U.S. Army troops were called into the area to quell the violent Coal Strike of 1914.

The Prospect Heights Jail was added to the Colorado Register of Historic Places as 5FN.1803 on March 12, 2003. It is also listed as a Fremont County Landmark in 2014.

By 1990, the town's water system was failing and residents petitioned to tap into Cañon City's water system. Cañon City government passed a resolution that allowed Prospect Heights to be added to their water lines, but the town needed to disincorporate. After paying a \$250 water tap fee, the town dissolved and began receiving water service from Cañon City, even though it is not part of the City.

Today, the Jail is owned by the **Fremont County Historical Society**, which periodically opens the building to the public and conducts tours.

**The interior of the building was restored in 2008.**



**The exterior was restored in 2018.**

