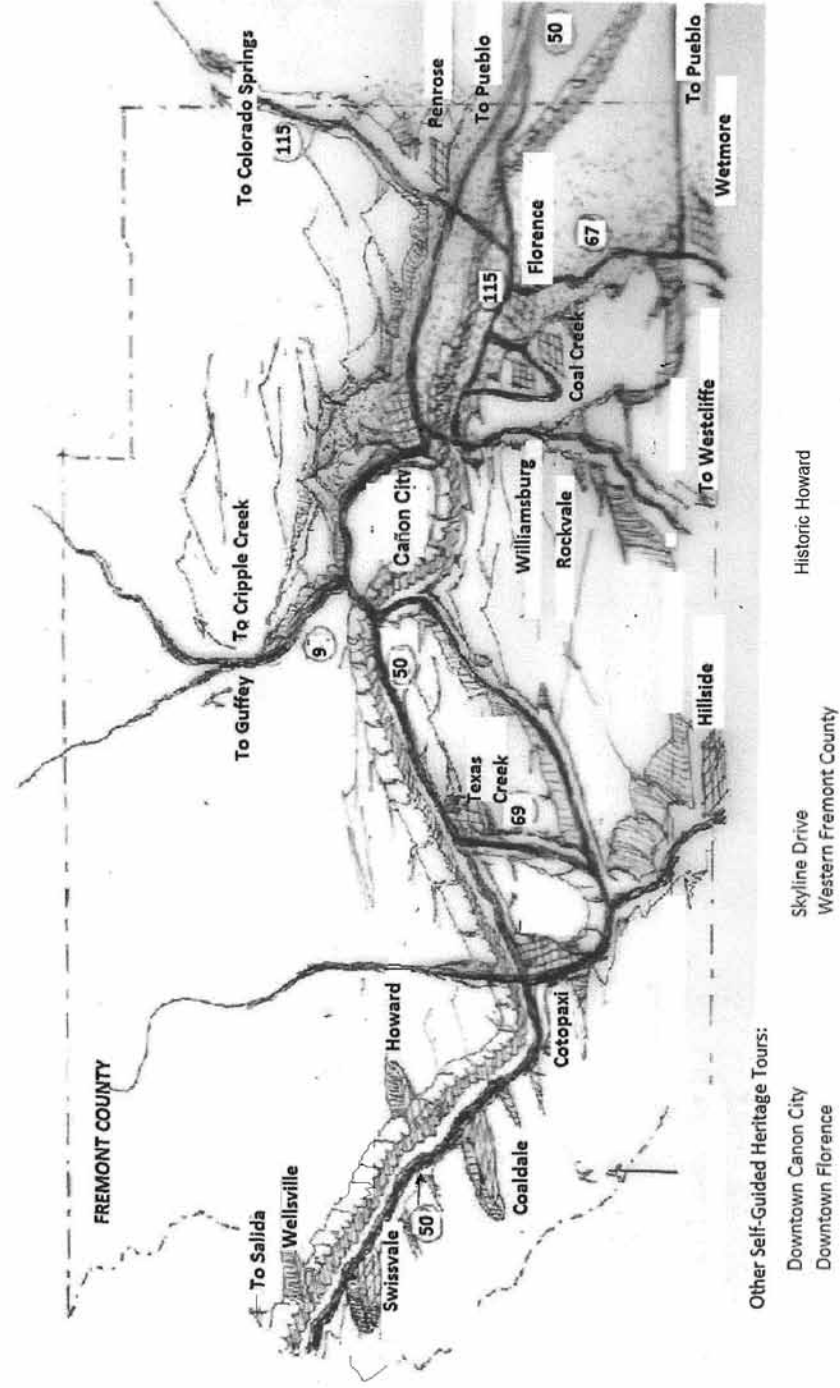


# Self-Guided Tour

## Western Fremont County



**FREMONT COUNTY  
HERITAGE TOURS**



## WESTERN FREMONT County Self-Guided Heritage Tour History from Parkdale to Wellsville as seen from US-50

About this Booklet – This Self-Guided Heritage Tour was developed as part of a series by the Fremont County Heritage Commission and Fremont County Tourism Council, with support of a grant from the Colorado Tourism Office, for free distribution to convey the County's rich history and encourage heritage tourism. The Fremont County Historical Society, a 501(c)3 non-profit educational organization, is also a partner in this effort.

Questions, comments and suggestions are welcome and may be conveyed to [info@fremontheritage.com](mailto:info@fremontheritage.com) or sent to Fremont County Heritage Commission, 615 Macon Ave, Cañon City, Colorado, 81212.

Tours that are part of this series include:

- Skyline Drive in Cañon City
- Downtown Cañon City, Colorado
- Downtown Florence, Colorado

These and other tours to be developed may be downloaded for free at [www.fremontheritage.com](http://www.fremontheritage.com) or found in racks at Chambers of Commerce and Museums throughout Fremont County. Additional information beyond the scope of this booklet may be found at these locations as well as other tours and information.

### Acknowledgements

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**Historic Focus:** The 50-mile stretch of US-50 from Cañon City west through Fremont County follows the Arkansas River from Parkdale to Wellsville, at the western edge of the County approaching Salida. While there are magnificent views, incredible geology, Gold Medal Trout fishing, world class rafting and rarely seen wildlife viewing opportunities along the drive; this guide will make every effort to keep its focus on late 1800s to early 1900s history as seen from the road.

**Drive Carefully:** In addition to being an interesting drive, this 3,000 mile long coast-to-coast highway is one of only four major east-west corridors across Colorado and it is used by travelers pursuing a destination, drivers in a hurry, truckers and others who may care more about getting where they are going than what they are seeing along the road. Accordingly, please drive safely and pull off the road when possible to enjoy the views.

### Wildlife and Mountain Vistas:

Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep live in the steep canyons along the Arkansas River and Bald Eagles fly above the river looking for Trout. Deer may be seen, especially along CO-69. The dramatic, and often snow covered, mountain peaks you see to south (left heading west) are in the Sangre de Cristo range that form the boundary between Fremont and Saguache Counties.



### Restrooms and Picnic Tables:

As you travel along this stretch of US-50 you will notice facilities operated by the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, a Colorado State Park managed in cooperation with BLM and the Forest Service. The park stretches from Leadville to Florence and provides river access, interpretive signs, Watchable Wildlife displays, restrooms, picnic areas and campgrounds at several sites along the road.



**Roadway History:** In the 1860s, the route from Cañon City to mining camps along the upper Arkansas River followed Indian trails. At the time, Cañon City was as far as wagon loads of freight traveling to the mining camps could reach. Then hardy, adventuresome, entrepreneurial individuals such as Joseph Lamb would pack burros in order to complete the journey. The Fremont County Commissioners agreed to improve the trail in 1872 and by 1874 stagecoaches and freight wagons traveled the road between Cañon City and the growing mining towns on the upper Arkansas. The new wagon road followed a circuitous route from

Cañon City crossing the river at Parkdale, traveling up what is now Copper Gulch Road, along Road Gulch, CO-69, County Road 1A, cross country through the hills and into Pleasant Valley at Coaldale.



Bicycles and automobiles began to supplant the horse and buggy, freight wagon and stagecoach as means of travel during the early 1900s and a new, more direct route was needed. The growing "Good Roads" movement came to Colorado in 1905 and by 1911 there was political support to improve key roads. July, 1913 saw construction start on a shorter route up the river going through what was then called the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas (officially renamed Bighorn Sheep Canyon in 1990). By September, 1915 the 21-mile cut-off was complete, taking 11 miles off the Copper Gulch route. Even though some of the work was performed by prison labor, the project cost Fremont County \$50,000 and the state \$100,000. Originally designated the Rainbow Route, the road was renamed by the Colorado Highway Department as U.S. Highway 50 in 1927, after the Federal Government requested all interstate roads be identified as numbered U.S. highways.

**WF-01: Parkdale: MM 267.** Since the early 1870s, this has been a place to ford the river for freight heading to the Gold and Silver fields in Leadville and Silver Cliff. Later there was a WPA camp established on the flats about ½ mile west of the current bridge crossing the Arkansas River. (MM = Mile Marker)

**WF-02: DeRemer Forts: MM 264-265** A series of stone forts built by Denver & Rio Grande Railroad to hold off the Santa Fe Railroad in the battle of "forts and courts" to build a railroad west along the Arkansas River. The Santa Fe "Army" was led by Bat Masterson of Dodge City, Kansas, assisted by J.H. "Doc" Holliday and their hired guns. D&RG Assistant Engineer James R. DeRemer had his men roll boulders over the edge of the gorge onto Santa Fe work crews and armed his men with rifles and shotguns (but no bullets) to prevent the Santa Fe crews from passing the end of their disputed right of way. There were no killings in the Royal Gorge War. Some of the stone forts are still visible north of the river at a pullout near MM 264.25.



**WF-03: Old Road:** As you travel west look above the highway to see the remains of the old road with rock retaining wall supports. These were built by prison labor.

**WF-04: Prison Road Camp: MM 261-262.** Prison labor was used to build the route west up the Arkansas River. The foundations of several buildings used to house and support the prisoners are located just east of the present day Five Points Recreational Campground on the south side of the highway.

**WF-05: Five Points: MM 260.** Turn-in to the Right. North of the highway are the remains of a bridge used to cross the river to deposit ore samples at the railroad. Part of the bridge is now an observation deck at the east end of the AHRA Park. On the south side



in the open areas now used as a campground was the home and office of *The Assayer*. Mine samples from the area were brought here for evaluation.

**WF-06: Pinnacle:** Named after the rock outcropping near the road, local lore is that this is not an original fort used during the Royal Gorge War. Once reportedly called Old Woman Rock or Witch Rock, do you see a woman's head wearing a bonnet?



**WF-07: Echo: MM 257.** As the highway makes a turn opening into a small park, Devil's Hole lies to the north. A large, flat area surrounded by ridges, ranchers brought cattle to the river here from the north to drink. There are remains of a line shack and corrals visible from the highway. Just west of these structures in a dry gulch is the foundation of a boarding house that was used to house miners who were mining granite for the railroad to use as riprap in erosion control along railroad beds. Granite was mined here and loaded onto trains that were sent west.

**WF-08: Texas Creek: MM 252.5** (Pull off to the right). Established in 1875 and named by Joseph Lamb and a companion moving Texas Longhorn cattle north to Leadville. A night visitor (mountain lion or bear) spooked the cattle here, scattering them and taking two days to round up. The railroad's arrival in 1880 ensured the success of this community. Texas Creek was one of the only post offices in the area. Letters have been found with a Texas Creek address dated 1876. Cattle, other agriculture products, minerals and charcoal were shipped from the Texas Creek siding, an integral part of the community.

**WF-09: Street McCoy's Bordello:**

The building you see just across the river on the east side of County Road 27 was once used by Street McCoy, one of the notorious McCoy outlaw bunch, and several ladies that lived and worked at Texas Creek. The area was frequented by local cowboys as well as drifters of questionable character.



**WF-10: Texas Creek:** On the south side of US-50, east of Highway 69 are the remains of the railroad spur that traveled south up Texas Creek to Westcliffe. The railroad bed is visible in several locations on the east side of the highway. As in other areas, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad did what they could to hold costs down, so instead of building the railroad to the mines of Silver Cliff,



Rosita and Querida they formed the new town of Westcliffe, one mile west of Silver Cliff and lower in elevation. This spur was built after the original spur up Grape Creek from Cañon City flooded two years in a row.

**WF-11: Texas Creek Charcoal Kilns:** The remains of the charcoal kilns lie between the railroad and the river ½ mile west of Texas Creek along the track. There were seven kilns used to make charcoal to be shipped to the CF&I steel mills in Pueblo. Charcoal was made from the pinion trees along the hills of the area. The making of charcoal was a major industry in the area having kilns at Texas Creek, Cotopaxi, Coaldale, Howard and Wellsville.

**WF-12: Fernleaf Gulch & McCoy Corrals: MM 248-249.**

Cattle grazed these hills along the river and became a source of "a starting herd" as well as easy money through rustling from larger ranchers in the area. This area of Fremont County was difficult to access and was known as an area where outlaws could travel fair

ly easily. The Dalton Gang was rumored to visit the area and the group that hung around the McCoy ranch were known to some as the Wet Mountain Gang. North of US-50 is the site where the body of a detective investigating rustling activities was left at the corrals. Noted range detective and Pinkerton agent Tom Horn was called in when a D&RG train was robbed in August, 1891 to get money needed for the defense of “Old Dick” McCoy and a son on trial for the murder of the range detective. This led to a man hunt through southern Colorado and into Utah resulting in the capture and conviction in January, 1892 of the robbers – several of the McCoy’s and some of their associates.

**WF-13: Cotopaxi: MM 245.4 (Turn right or north).** Established in 1870 and named after a volcano in Ecuador. Much of the community is north of the river. Cotopaxi was a community that was settled with some residents of questionable character due to the fact that it was more isolated. Two early settlers to the area were “Gold Tom” (Henry Thomas) and Emmanuel Saltiel. Thomas was the first owner of the Cotopaxi Mine and the person naming Cotopaxi. Saltiel was a Jewish prospector and entrepreneur that brought in 70 Jewish Colonists escaping Tsarist Russia in 1881. It was estimated in the 1890s that more than 500 residents made their home in Cotopaxi. There were at least two boarding houses, two stores and two saloons in town. “Gold Tom” was killed in a June 1884 old west shoot-out at one of the boarding houses.



**WF-14: Plum Street, Cotopaxi:** Cotopaxi has one street, Plum Street, named because it runs “plum” through town. Some of present homes were said to have been built by the Russian Jewish immigrants in 1881-82. They were home to miners, railroad workers and cowboys and today are rarely vacant.

The D&RG Western Railroad, built as narrow gage in 1881 and expanded to standard gage in 1890, had workers here along with a passenger depot, freight station and siding. As many as 20 trains per day rumbled through as recently as 1996, prior to the Tennessee Pass route being mothballed by Union Pacific in 1997.”



**WF-15: Cotopaxi School:** There was a school here as early as 1881. The location of the original building is thought to be close to the current school, which was constructed after an earlier building burned to the ground in March 1939. The original gymnasium (completed in 1938) and the foundation were all that was saved. The cafeteria was built on the old foundation and the school was added onto the gym. Students were only out of school about three weeks until another school building from Nesterville (north of Cotopaxi) could be brought down. Today, there have been several additions and remodels, but the 1939 building is still being used. Students as far as Copper Gulch to the east and Howard to the west attend school here. The school is proud of their accomplishments as a “School of Distinction” from the State of Colorado.

**WF-16: Cotopaxi Cemetery:** Established in 1882 and located ¼ mile off County Road 12 west of Cotopaxi School. The first to be buried were four Russian Jewish children who died from typhoid or pneumonia. The land was donated by Emmanuel Saltiel. The cemetery still serves the community and former residents. Other infamous characters have also taken up permanent residence in the cemetery, among them members of Quantrill’s Raiders.

**WF-17: San Isabel View Cemetery (Hillside): (Side trip off US-50 on County Road via 1A and CO-69) MM 74.** Established in 1874 and located off County Road 32 approximately 2 miles east of CO-69. The cemetery is on the south side of the road facing west overlooking the Wet Mountain Valley and the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range. The cemetery still serves the current and former area residents.

**WF-18: Hillside Grange Building: MM 71.5.**



Built in 1926-27 along the Fremont/Custer county line, approximately 10 miles south of US-50 on CO-69, is the town of Hillside. On the north side of town and in Fremont County is the Hillside Grange Building. The land and build-

ing was donated as a meeting place for the Grange, a farmer's organization formed to meet the social, political, and economic interests of its members. Grange meetings were held here until 2012. In addition to the Grange meetings other community activities occurred here such as dances, weddings, funerals, potluck dinners and fund raisers. The park around the building is home to the oldest and largest Black Willow Grove in the western United States. This grove has served the area for over 150 years. (Return to US-50 via CO-69 or take County Road 1A at MM 74.8 to Cotopaxi; continue west on US-50)

**WF-19: Coaldale: MM 241-242(Turn left (south) on the Hayden Creek Road, CR-6).** Established in 1871 with the Hayden family the first to settle here. Other early settlers were the Muehlbach, Poulson and Gilray families. Descendants still reside in the area. The community had several names before settling on Coaldale, including Palmer, Hendricks and the railroad's name of Pleasanton. Agriculture and mining were important to the settlement of the Pleasant Valley of which Coaldale is a part. These two industries are still evident today. Coaldale once boasted the third largest school district in the county with seventy-two students, a post office, hotel and store.

**WF-20: Coaldale Community Building:** Built in 1923 and located on Hayden Creek Road, CR-6 at the intersection with CR-45, this was the last school building in Coaldale before the school consolidated with Cotopaxi in 1956. The Coaldale Grange also used this building as a meeting place. Today the building is the center of the community; home to morning coffee, farmers market and community meetings.

**WF-21: Coaldale Charcoal Kilns:** Of all the kilns along the Upper Arkansas route, these are located furthest from the railroad. There were at least five and, while on private property, they can be observed driving south on County Road 6. The kilns were in operation from the late 1880s into the 1900s. The Coaldale Charcoal Kilns are Fremont County Heritage Sites dedicated in 2014.

Charles Bushnell (on the left in the photo) prospected in the Sangre De Cristo mountains above Coaldale in the early 1900s. He discovered several ledges of colored marble at timber line and both Bushnell Peak (the highest point in Fremont County) and Bushnell Lake are named after him.



**WF-22: Coaldale Cemetery:** Established in 1879, located ¾ mile up County Road 6. The first burial was Joseph Toupain, six years old. Joseph's father owned the store in Coaldale with O.B. Carroll. County Road 6 was the main road traveling over Hayden Pass and into the San Luis Valley near present day Villa Grove. This road was completed by Toupain and Carroll. The cemetery still serves the community and former residents.

**WF-23: Barnes City:** Three miles south on County Road 6, near Cutty's Camping Resort is the site of Barnes City. The area was first promoted as a mining area in the early 1900s but became more of a resort boasting a dance hall,





fine dining and liquor as well as horse racing and gambling. More money was made with the resort than by mining. At one time there were over three hundred buildings in the area. This same area was the site of a tuberculosis camp for TB victims seeking a dryer climate; many are buried at the local cemetery. (Turn around and return down CR-6 and turn left at CR-45 or return to US-50)

**WF-24: County Road 45:** This road is part of the old stagecoach road that connected east and west Fremont County. The stage road crossed the river at Parkdale, traveled up what is now Copper Gulch Road, Road Gulch, Highway 69, County Road 1A, cross country through the hills and into the east end of Coaldale to CR-45. This road crosses Highway 50 and then the river at Vallie. The stage road (CR-45) travels on the north side of the river to Wellsville where it again crosses the river and travels on to Salida. Although this section of the road is open to the public, the area west of Howard requires 4-wheel drive.



**WF-25: Vallie: MM 239-240 on US-50.**

This was a railroad siding with a depot, boarding house, and several buildings for workers. The only thing remaining is a small apple orchard. Several orchards like this are scattered throughout the area, a reminder of old homesteads. The homesteaders often planted orchards when first settling, sometimes before building their permanent homes.

**WF-26: Pathways to History:** Notice the Pathways to History interpretive signs. This is a separate tour with many interpretive signs on pullouts accessible from CR-45.

**WF-27: Howard Cemetery:** Established in 1874 and located at MM 8-9 on CR-45. The first burial was E. Foster Stout, five year old son of William and Elvira Stout, one of the first families to settle in the area. The cemetery continues to provide the community with a picturesque view of the Sangre de Cristo range and the Pleasant Valley.

**WF-28: Old Howard School:** The first school building in the area is located at MM 6-7 on CR-45. This was the original Howard School until a 1908 move to a larger building on CR-4.

**WF-29: Howard:** Established in 1871. The area had fertile soil and good range for cattle. Some of the original settlers to the area were Jonah Peregrine, William Stout and family, and eventually John Howard, after whom the community is named. Howard was the railroad center of the area shipping ore from neighboring Calcite, charcoal, and cattle. Howard is built in a square that had a post office, hotel, church and parsonage. CR-4 loops around historic Howard and a self-guided tour of the original buildings is available. (Turn left at Howard Hall and follow CR-4 across the river back to US-50. To continue the Howard area tour, cross US-50 and continue on CR-4).



**WF-30: Howard School:** Located on County Road 4 (Howard Creek Road) ½ mile south of US-50 on the hill. This property was donated by Louis Freeman and was built of brick in 1908 for those in the western part of the valley. There were two rooms, one room for grades 1-4 and the other for grades 5-8. The building is now a private residence.

**WF-31: Calcite:** Located on County Road 4 about 3-miles from US-50. This was a town started by Colorado Fuel & Iron Company in 1902 for the sole purpose of mining the limestone and dolomite for the CF&I mill in Pueblo. Calcite continued to operate until 1929 when a slump in economy caused the shutdown. During this time period the town, consisting of three camps, had a railroad spur, post office, company store, club house, school and houses for the miners. The miners were of mixed nationalities emigrating from Europe, mostly Italy. At the peak it was estimated to have between 500 and 1,000 people in Calcite, which existed for 23 years. Some of the houses were later moved to Howard and Salida. D&RG took out the tracks in 1936, but the old railroad bed can still be seen. Today the area is private residences. (Return to US-50 and turn right on to continue Howard area tour)

**WF-32: Stout School: MM 235.6 (Turn right on Cherry Creek Road, the school is on the left just up the road).**

The Stout School, on Cherry Creek Road, was built in 1908 on the land donated by William Stout. The Stout Creek School District was organized in 1873 but the first school building was located east on Hamilton Creek. The older Stout girls boarded in the area to attend school, which was only three months long. This school on Stout Creek had grades 1-8 in the one room building. High school students were sent to Salida, where they boarded during school sessions. (Turn around at the school to return to US-50, turn right to continue the Howard area tour)

**WF-33: Stout Stone House: MM 236 (pullout to the right).**

Located south of US-50 is the Stout House. William and Elvira Stout were among the original settlers of the area. Their family moved from Tennessee in 1869 and arrived in the Pleasant Valley in 1872. The land was fertile and water along the creeks kept their herd of cattle. This house was completed in 1885 and was the Stout's second house here. It was built from native stone quarried along the banks of the Arkansas River on the Stout's homestead. Jonah Peregrine, another settler in the area, helped build the house. Several landmarks were named by or after Stout. William named the Twin Sisters (two mountain peaks viewed from the valley) and Stout Creek. Stout Street in Denver is named for a cousin (Richard) who also traveled west with William.



**WF-34: Stout Log Cabin: MM 236** (Just ¼ mile east turn right on Zabriski Lane and follow the street around to the right to the cabin, located on private property but visible from the road and marked). This log cabin was built in 1872 shortly after the Stouts settled in the area. The

first white child (Cora) born in Western Fremont County was born to Mr. & Mrs. Stout in January 1875 in this cabin. (Return to US-50 and turn right)

**WF-35: Kerr Gulch Quarry: MM 237.46** (Turn right on Kerr Gulch road and go about ½ mile on the dirt road). One of several quarries in the area, started in 1888. Stone was cut and hauled across the river to be loaded on railroad cars. There is still evidence of the bridge where it crossed the river. The stones were used for the Denver Mint, the Stout School on Cherry Creek, several prominent homes in Denver and many buildings in Cañon City. There is no activity here at present. (Return to US-50, this concludes the Howard area portion of this tour. Turn left on US 50 to continue toward Swissvale and Wellsville).

**WF-36: Swissvale: MM 229.** Established in 1881 by Max Zeise, a Swiss dairy man who supplied dairy products for the valley. There was a huge railroad tie hack yard here. Swissvale was almost a ghost town until 1960 when a café and gas station started (now closed). Today the area is mainly residential.

**WF-37: Wellsville: MM 227.** Established in 1881 by George Wells as a pleasure resort with guests coming to enjoy the mineral hot springs. Lime was evident in the water of the springs. Old masses of tufa built up around the springs and were mined. Wellsville had a post office, a hotel, a dance hall and a baseball diamond. Travertine marble was quarried here. Today a soil amendment plant and an aerial adventure park operate on CR-7.

