

# Town of Prospect Heights Fremont County, Colorado



Fremont County Historical Society, Inc.

# **The story of Prospect Heights is the story of mining and smelting, Prohibition and the lifestyle of the people who lived there.**

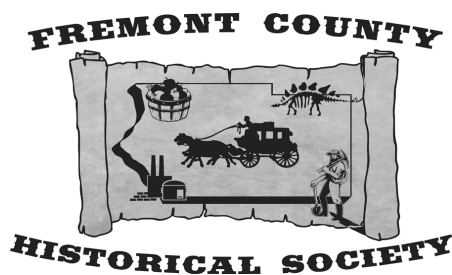
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Royal Gorge Regional Museum & History Center

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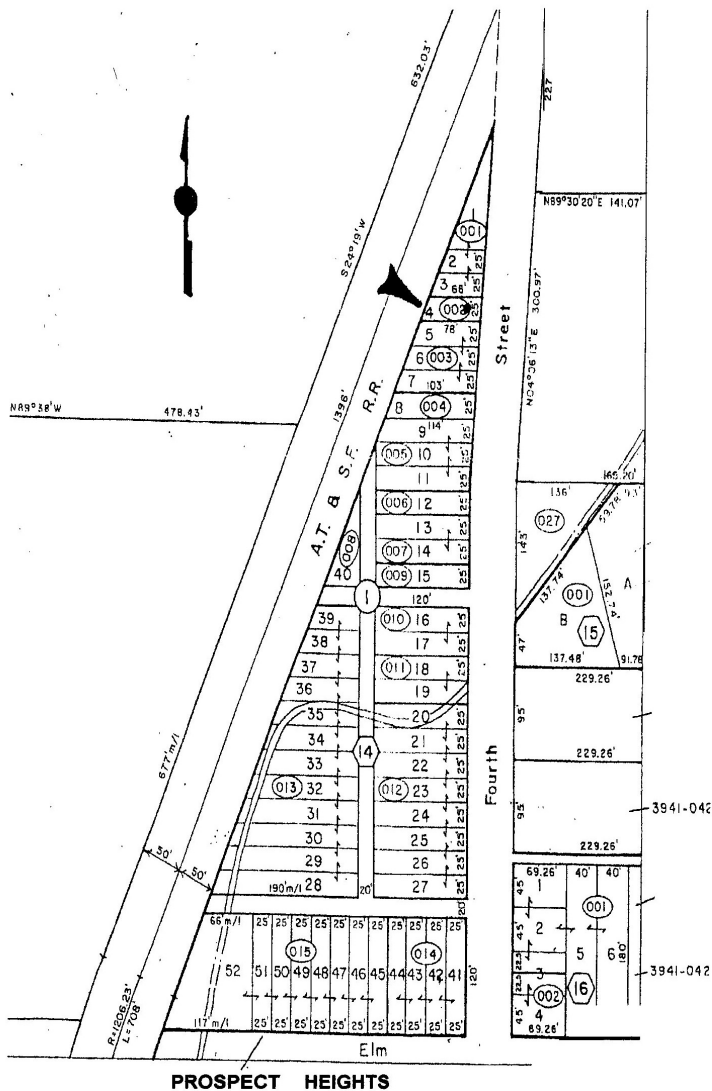
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## **PROSPECT HEIGHTS, COLORADO**

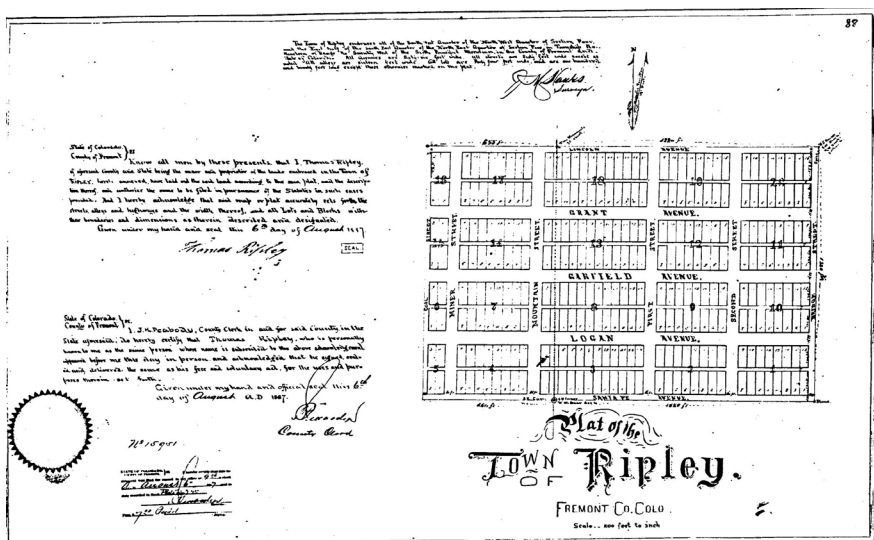
The Historical Society of Fremont County is deeply involved in the colorful history of the South Cañon region. The economic importance and immigration of the Slovenian people influenced the cultural development of Prospect Heights and the adjoining coal camps. The Slovenian community was industrious, with a strong Catholic faith. They came to the United States to work in the mines and grow a future for their families. As they began settling in Prospect Heights, they were struck by the likeness of this new home to the one they had left in Slovenia. Men immigrated first. After they saved enough money, they arranged for wives, sweethearts and family to follow. The history of coal mining and ore smelting affected the founding of Prospect Heights. There were many opportunities for jobs in mining and smelting.

Homestead land was available in Fremont County in 1862 with the passage of the Homestead Act. William Catlin homesteaded all of South Cañon from Bennett Avenue to Fourth Street. This homestead proved up in 1866 and 1870. Catlin buried a hired hand in 1865 in what is now Greenwood Cemetery. He sold this land to Mt. Moriah AF&AM (Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons) for \$30 in 1875. In 1876 Catlin sold additional land in South Cañon for what became Greenwood Cemetery for \$100. His heirs sold an additional acreage for \$600 to make the property square in 1903. Greenwood Cemetery is now the resting place for many hard-working miners and pioneers from the surrounding communities of Fremont County.

### **Proposed Town of Ripley**

Thomas Ripley and his family came to Cañon City, Colorado, in 1869. In 1887, Ripley plotted the town of Ripley in what is now Capitol Hill. His vision of developing the town of Ripley never came to be. Harriet Ripley, wife of Thomas,

sold the town area to Anton Adamic in 1898. Anton paid \$100 for the whole area.



When Ripley plotted the streets of the town of Ripley, he named the streets after presidents and national leaders. John Arthur replotted the town in 1905. He changed street names from Lincoln, Garfield, Grant and Logan to Cobalt, Cyanide and Barium. Anton Adamic incorporated the area of what is now Prospect Heights in 1905. Prospect Heights was also known as Capitol Heights.

Present day South 4<sup>th</sup> Street through South Cañon was previously named Prospect Street. It is believed that the name of the incorporated Town of Prospect Heights was derived from Prospect Street as it wound around Smelter Hill and climbed south through the present day location of Prospect Heights.

## Industrialization of Prospect Heights

The Cañon City Embayment was a treasure box of coal, oil and other minerals in the middle 19th century. The Industrial revolution was just getting started after the Civil War, and fuel for the hungry mouths of the Iron Horses of the transportation systems was needed, as well as for the

furnaces for the smelters and mill works of the gold, silver, lead and zinc extraction. One of the large mine holders was the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) in Pueblo, who manufactured the rails for the trains to run on, as well as other wire, fencing, etc.

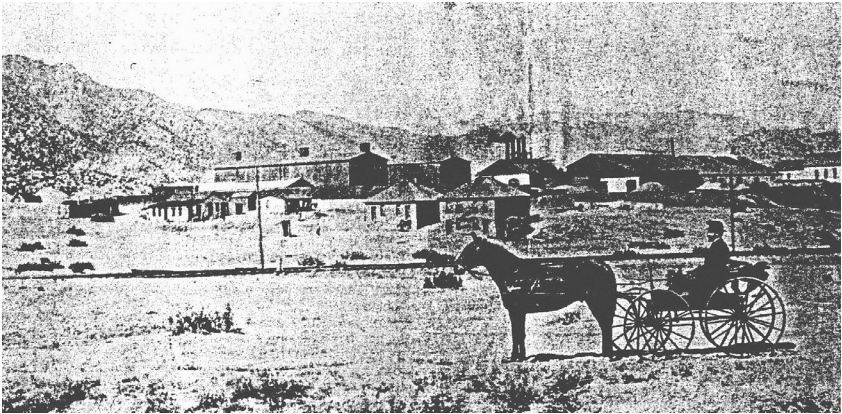
The Prospect Heights area was a perfect place to find the land available, the water and the workers. The Colorado Fuel and Iron (CF&I) NONAC No. 5, Wolf Park, Royal Gorge, and Prentiss coal mines and United States Smelting Co. (formerly American Zinc-Lead Smelting Co.) and Empire Zinc Co. (New Jersey Zinc Co.) smelters were all within walking distance of the small incorporated town. The Chandler, Brookside, and other smaller coalmines were just down the way a few miles. Over 3,000 miners went underground in Fremont County during the course of a day, and a quarter of that number were located in the immediate area of Prospect Heights. The economic impact to the entire county was enormous.

The American Zinc-Lead Smelting Company operated in 1891. In 1902, the smelter became the United States Smelting Company. This smelter would remain in production until 1912; at one time it was reported to be the largest lead and zinc smelter in the world and produced zinc oxide pigment for paint. The smelter was located at the end of Fourth Street (Prospect Street) in Prospect Heights and South Cañon City, Colorado. Some smelter buildings were located in Prospect Heights itself.

On March 25, 1903, at 10:45 at night the United States Smelting Company smelter burned. It was said with the light of the fire you could read a newspaper on Main Street in Cañon City, Colorado. The damage to the smelter was over \$100,000. The fire damage was repaired, and smelting production began again.

On March 3, 1922, the former area of United States Smelting Company was sold to Standard Metal and Chemical Company. This consisted of 22 and one-half acres. The company planned to re-work the smelter dump for a profit. A

subsequent owner eventually rehabilitated the site in the 1960s.



**United States Smelting Company**

## **The Labor Force**

The workers in the mines and mills mostly lived nearby in company boarding houses, squatter camps, nearby farms, or scattered shacks or tents. Many workers also lived in homes in the South Cañon area as well as in Cañon City (North Cañon). A small “squatter’s” town known as “South Chicago” existed just southwest of the United States Smelting Co. smelter and west of Prospect Heights. It was in existence concurrent with the incorporation of Prospect Heights. South Chicago was a mostly Hispanic enclave.

The Arkansas River had been a barrier on several levels. Historically, it had been the territorial boundary between United States and Mexico. For many years later the Arkansas River remained a physical and psychological barrier between the more established, conservative and rooted genteel community on the north and those less refined and more rural folks living south of the river.

The establishment and growth of the mining and mineral processing industries in the region especially on the south side of the river brought with it the need for large numbers of unskilled laborers. In the late 1800s there was considerable immigration of southern and eastern Europeans seeking work in America's unskilled labor market. "Agents" in the "old country" often would solicit and direct emigrants to places in America needing workers. Many of these immigrants came to America to avoid certain entrapment in economic, social, and political quagmires impending in their homelands at that time. In other words they came here for a better life and future.

Most of these people were from vastly different cultural and religious backgrounds than those of the established citizens already present. As such these new immigrants often initially settled in enclaves of people of similar backgrounds and gradually assimilated into American society and culture.

The smelters and mines around Prospect Heights happened to draw a concentration of Slavic immigrants. Prospect Heights proper and the surrounding area became an ethnic enclave of predominantly Slovenian people.

#### **Common Surnames in the Community:**

Adamic, Achion, Alarcon, Arko, Benigar, Blatnick, Boben, Budy, Butrac, Dremel, Erjavec, Evango, Ferkel, Globokar, Grehak (Grahek), Horvat, Hribchek (Ribchik), Javernick (Javornik), Jerjavek, Jermance, Jurjovec, Kimmick (Kimik), Kochan, Koncilija, Konte, Kopic, Krstaj, Kuretich, Lasko, Lauriski (Lauriha), Legan, Lenarsic, Levstek, Martinez, Medina, Moreno, Moronski, Musik, Nusek, Opaskar, Papish, Parko, Pavelski, Perhay, Pierce (Pirc), Pokas, Popish, Potochnick, Potter, Prah, Ricchiutti, Rosandich, Saban, Sajovec, Skerjanic, Slanovich, Starika, Stefanic, Stilnovich, Strack, Strainer (Strajnar), Strubel, Trella, Valent, Yankovich, Yekovich, Zabruski, Zakrajsek ("Smith"), Zaverla, Zgaynor and Zupan.

Some of these folks came here from other mining areas including the mines and mills in the Denver, Colorado Springs, Cripple Creek, Gunnison, Leadville, Walsenburg, and Trinidad regions as well as Utah, Wyoming, Montana,



Minnesota, Illinois, Arkansas, and other Slovenian immigrant concentrations throughout the U.S. These new or recent immigrants worked at the United States Smelting Co. (formerly American Zinc-Lead Smelting Co.) smelter on the hill above the end of Prospect Avenue in South Cañon or at the New Jersey Zinc (Empire Zinc) Smelter about a mile south, in the area coal mines - Royal Gorge, Wolf Park, Prentiss, NONAC No.5, Chandler and other smaller coalmines, hard rock or metal mines and mills. Many either purchased property or homesteaded as soon as circumstances allowed them to do so. As in many booming mining areas there were a lot of single men of other surnames who moved from mining locale to mining locale, did not marry or settle and left the area in search of "greener pastures." Friends, relatives of acquaintances in one area would communicate opportunities so workers or families would often move from a specific ethnic enclave in one area to a similar ethnic enclave in another area.

### **The Adamic Family**

Although individuals with other surnames were also involved with the establishment and incorporation of Prospect Heights; members of the Adamic Family had been consistently prominent in its early history and protracted operation.

The Adamic ("Adamič") family had lived for generations in the Dolenjska (Lower Carniola) region of modern-day Slovenia. Near the end of the 19th century, primogeniture (the eldest son would inherit the entire family estate) was the norm. In the local peasant society, conscription into the Austrian Military began at age 17, opportunities for higher education, professional training and economic advancement were very rare, poverty was common and political unrest was growing. These conditions were common throughout southern and Eastern Europe at that time.

Anton (also known as “Tony” or “Stope”) Adamic was the third of 6 sons and the ninth of 15 children in the Janez Adamič – Frančiška Levstek family living in the rural peasant village of Ponikve, Dobropolje. The large family was considered well-to-do since they lived on a 5-acre farm with a water driven gristmill.

Anton immigrated to “America” in 1896 and arrived at the Port of New Orleans. From there he traveled by train to Pueblo where his train ticket and money ran out. He walked the railroad tracks from Pueblo to Cañon City to meet with his eldest brother Jozef (Joseph). Jozef was preparing to return to Ponikve to claim his inheritance. Anton initially found work at the American Zinc-Lead Smelting Co.

Once Jozef returned to Slovenia, Anton was then followed to America and Fremont County by his brothers - Janez or “John” (the second son), Florijan or “Florian” (the fourth son), Frank (the fifth son) - a cousin - Anton (“Tonchik” or “Little Tony”) Adamic, and friend John Musik (Nusek). As new immigrants, most first worked at the American Zinc-Lead Smelting Co. / United States Smelting Co. smelter on the hill above the end of Prospect Avenue in South Cañon and later in the area coal mines (Royal Gorge, Wolf Park, Fawn Hollow, NONAC No.5, and other smaller mines). The Adamics came with their own dreams of opportunities and land ownership and were committed to their new lives in America. They all acquired property as soon as their economic conditions and personal situations allowed.

In the 1906 Cañon City directory, Florijan Adamic was listed as a laborer, John Adamic as an employee at the United States Smelter, and Anton Adamic as a saloon owner.



***Adamic Men (John, Anton, Frank and Florijan) 1907***

Anton Adamic married Martha Baumgartel in about 1898 or 99. Martha was the daughter of Ben Baumgartel. Ben was a German immigrant who had earlier homesteaded south of Alkali Gap, was also a coalminer, and later became the Mine Superintendent of the Royal Gorge Mine.

John Adamic married Rozalia ("Rose") Popish (Papež). Florijan married Johana ("Hannah") Sajovic. Frank Adamic and Frances Perhay were wed in an arranged marriage. Cousin Anton ("Tonchik") married Mary Achion.



***Adamic Ladies (Johana, Frances, Martha, Rozalia) 1907***

Johana Sajovic's story is interesting but shares similarities with those of many single young immigrant women. Another young woman was supposed to immigrate to America from Slovenia but changed her mind at the last minute after all arrangements had been finalized. Johana had 24 hours to make her decision to take the other woman's place, to leave her home in Slovenia, immigrate to America, and work one year to pay her passage. Johana began her trip on March 10, 1904 at the age of 20. She traveled by train to a French seaport, and then boarded a steamer to New York City, New York. From New York City she traveled by train to Cañon City, Colorado. In 1904 this was a brave undertaking for a woman traveling alone in a foreign land and unable to speak English. Johana had been trained as a cook. She worked for Anton Adamic in the Prospect Heights Mercantile as a cook and housekeeper for one year and then married Florijan Adamic in 1905. Johana became a midwife for many of the women in the community.

All of these Adamic couples had children so the surname eventually became somewhat common in the area. Anton ("Tony") and Martha had four children: Anton, Jr.; Frank; Frances; and Mildred. There will be more said about Mildred later on.

## **Prospect Heights Incorporates**

On May 31, 1905, a board of trustees incorporated the Town of Prospect Heights. The incorporated town was a 9½-acre triangular shaped piece of land with 52 subdivided lots. Members of the board were elected to various offices: B. L. Davis, mayor; H. C. Catlin, treasurer; L. S. Bailey, recorder; and Peter Geisler, marshal. Other board members were Anton Adamic, John Adamic, Florijan Adamic, John Kimmick and John Musik.

Workers from the United States Smelter Company, Empire Zinc Smelter and miners from NONAC Mine, Royal Gorge Mine, Wolf Park Mine and other coal camps near

Prospect Heights wanted to be able to wet their whistles after a 12-hour shift doing back-breaking work underground. The Town of Prospect Heights incorporated to provide a place to serve the miners, smelter workers and “others.” Whether or not this was the intent, Prospect Heights became a busy place, with saloons operating 24 hours a day.

The Adamics carried out most of the necessary business of the town. Anton Adamic was usually the person appointed to fix streets, build or repair bridges and provide street lighting, according to the minutes of the Town Board.

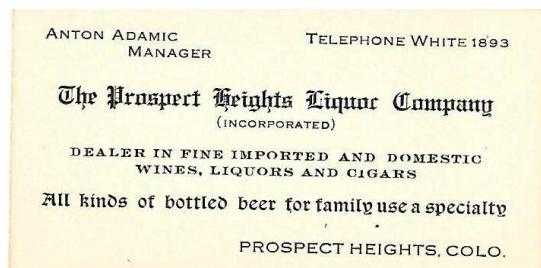
In the beginning, it was difficult to find a marshal who all the board members agreed was doing a good job. One of their jobs was to control the stray dogs in the town. There were many candidates, but none lasted very long. On June 26, 1905, Louis Pierce was elected as marshal.

On January 8, 1906, John Adamic sold one-half interest of his lots numbered 12 to 15 and 19 to 52 in Prospect Heights to the Prospect Heights Liquor Company, Inc. The price for all the lots was one dollar. Anton Adamic also sold one-half interest of his lots 4 to 9 to the Prospect Heights Liquor Company, Inc. All these lots were bought back by the Adamics for one dollar on December 22, 1917, when prohibition was nationalized.

Prospect Heights licensed 8 bars or saloons:

Prospect Saloon	Pierce's Hall
Dew Drop Inn	Hurst's Saloon
John Adamic's Saloon	Jo Javornik's Place
Kimmick's Saloon (this saloon was said to open in 1880)	Anton Adamic's Saloon.

Beer was five cents per mug and a shot of whiskey was ten cents. Wine was also served. Some of these liquor establishments also issued tokens good for redemption of a drink.



A saloon license was issued to Anton Adamic. Additional saloon licenses were issued as requested from the Board of Trustees. They adopted eight ordinances approving liquor licenses. One ordinance banned dance halls and games of chance, but it was later amended to allow those entertainments. Women were to be arrested if found in any saloon in Prospect Heights. There are no records of arrests of any women.

Jimmy Merino and his wife, Katie (nee Richiutti), owned the Dew Drop Inn. Jimmy was nicknamed “Jimmy the Jew.” He was killed by the “Black Handers” (loosely organized society for extortion) during the bootlegging days. Other nearby bars – Starika’s Hilltop Inn (Bernie’s Place), The Miner’s Club (Cub’s Inn), The Mellow Moon, The Silver Dollar/White Horse Inn (Sali’s Paradise), and Kimmick’s/Lauriski’s Bar and Pool Hall were outside of Prospect Heights proper and not under its licensing jurisdiction.

Railroad cars filled with beer kegs, wine and whiskey arrived on the Pueblo and Arkansas Valley Railway (later the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad). The railroad track right of way was just west of the boundary of Prospect Heights. At one meeting of the Board of Trustees, the number of empty beer kegs in the street was addressed. There was

concern the empty kegs might make the town liable for a damage suit. It was a real danger to move up and down the street.



*John Adamic's  
Saloon - Later the  
John Adamic Family  
Home*

A story in the *Cañon City Times* newspaper of August 23, 1906, recounted the death of one man and injuries to several others as the result of a drunken brawl in "saloon town" Prospect Heights. There was a free-for-all among several men and Marshal Pilmore tried to break it up. An Indian and two more men were throwing rocks at the marshal and the men refused to halt. After receiving a knife wound, Marshal Pilmore shot the Indian, who died early Sunday morning in a Cañon City hospital. Another man was hospitalized with a badly shattered arm. Medicine at the time could not repair it so the arm had to be amputated. This incident was a county matter, so an inquest was held. A jury found Marshal Pilmore justified in the shooting.

### **Prohibition Arrives**

The United States Congress had approved an amendment to the Hepburn-Dolliver Bill in 1903 that gave a territory, state or city the power to enact laws regulating

fermentation, distilling, transporting and sale of alcohol. Cañon City had adopted an ordinance in 1901 limiting the sale, giving away or use of alcohol. This meant Cañon City was “dry,” an option the citizens of Cañon City favored.

By 1905, Cañon City, located on the north side of the Arkansas River, had become a stronghold for temperance. The American Temperance Union was formed nationally as a front against alcohol. A local Temperance member was Carrie Adams, the wife of Reverend B.M. Adams. Her "Hatchet Women" were kept busy destroying any alcohol they could find.



***Original Carry Nation Hatchet Stickpin***

Big changes came to Prospect Heights in 1909. An early April election announced a great triumph for prohibition. The *Cañon City Times* newspaper July 15, 1909, read "Prospect Heights will be put out of business." The previous year Prospect Heights voted to stay “wet.” However, Prospect Heights was in a district that voted to be a “dry” territory. The court decided a “wet” ward did not have the right to exist in a “dry” precinct. Despite the court's decision, things in Prospect Heights did not change overnight. As of July 29, 1909, Prospect Heights' saloons were still open.

The *Cañon City Times* newspaper claimed that the rights of Prospect Heights were forfeited as there were not enough inhabitants to maintain a town government. On September 20, 1909, the town of Prospect Heights hired a lawyer to defend the town's right to be “wet.” It is uncertain how this lawsuit went but in 1916 the State of Colorado prohibition law closed all the saloons in Prospect Heights. Prohibition had come to Prospect Heights.



## Prospect Heights Mercantile Store



**Prospect Heights Mercantile, 1905**

In 1906, Anton Adamic bought the Prospect Heights Mercantile. Prior to that, it was the Colorado Fuel and Iron (CF&I) company store. The building contained eight rooms for boarders, two apartments for married couples, a general mercantile store and a saloon. Anton Adamic ran it in the early years, then he taught his daughter, Mildred Adamic - Pierce, to manage the whole building. It is believed that in about 1935 the first Coca Cola sold in Fremont County was sold at the Prospect Heights Mercantile. Today the Mercantile is an antique, collector, and used items store where one can get a sense of times past.





Mildred Adamic began working at the Mercantile at the age of 15. She continued to operate the store for 53 years. Mildred married Louis A. Pierce. Louis was a miner and his uncle was a blacksmith at the NONAC No. 5 Mine. Mildred became an excellent businesswoman. Mildred butchered meat for the store, was a house painter, owned and managed rental homes, and managed

the water system. Children who lived in the neighborhood traded pop bottles for cash and then bought penny candy at the store. Mildred also passed out lots of candy to children on Halloween. She often extended credit to miners in need. She was postmistress for Prospect Heights and never received pay for the position.



*Mildred Pierce.*



Frank Adamic said Mildred cooked almost everything in a pressure cooker on her kerosene stove in the back of the store. But she had lost the weight for the top of the cooker, so she would drive a pencil in the cooker vent hole. She knew how long to heat it to get the pressure up. Occasionally she would get busy in the store and forget about her stove and pressure cooker. The ceiling had a huge grease splatter from all the times the pencil had shot out and food blew onto the ceiling. Mildred was a pioneer

businesswoman, and progressive at the time in her business practices and planning for the future of Prospect Heights. She was also a devout Catholic. Mildred organized the annual Daughters of Isabella pilgrimage to the Mother Cabrini Shrine

near Golden, Colorado. She was known to be the life of the party on bus trips up and back.

In the Prospect Heights Mercantile, just beyond the huge pot belly stove, was the bread case. Max and Mary Vezzetti had a bakery on 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Barium. They sold their bread to the Mercantile each day to be resold to the people of Prospect Heights. The Vezzetti's Bakery was first started in Williamsburg, Colorado, in 1896. It was one of the oldest businesses in Fremont County. The dough mixer for the bread is still in Prospect Heights on Barium Street. It has not been moved as it weighs 2,500 pounds. The Vezzettis made 200 loaves of bread each day. It was Italian-style bread, crusty on the outside and light and fluffy inside. The bread was sold throughout Fremont County for 15 cents per loaf. Charles Vezzetti had a bakery and grocery store in Rockvale, Colorado, in 1915.

### **Life in the Prospect Heights Community**

The saloon and bar businesses were a small part of a bigger turn-of-the-century immigrant community. There were blacksmiths, carpenters, butchers, teamsters, farmers, ranchers and cowboys. Boardinghouses, a bakery, mercantile, a shoe shop, a slaughterhouse and many other businesses were established.

In the very early 1900s the De Weese-Dye Ditch was constructed through the center of Prospect Heights. The introduction of seasonal irrigation water helped stabilize the town and community. For many it was the end of wells or hauling water year-round. Aside from orchard and crop irrigation the ditch supplied water to residential and business cisterns along the ditch. Previously, water was only available from shallow hand-dug wells and was used sparingly. A cistern and pipe system from a windmill pump brought water into the Prospect Heights Mercantile and some nearby

homes. Eventually Anton Adamic constructed a water system that brought treated water to Prospect Heights from the end of the Cañon City Water System water line on Smelter Hill.

Eventually former saloons were converted to homes and new homes were built. A typical family home had a vegetable and flower garden if water allowed, one or two hogs, a milk cow, chickens and or rabbits. Some had a smokehouse, outdoor oven, grapes, fruit trees, and a horse or mule. Families were as self-sufficient as possible.

Recreational and family activities were a big part of life in Prospect Heights. Children's recreational activities included swimming in the De Weese Ditch, riding bicycles, sledding and games like hide and seek, kick the can, fox and geese, jacks and marbles. Slingshots, tops and button spinners were popular. Older boys and young men were serious baseball players. Outdoor activities including picnicking, horseshoes, hunting and fishing were popular. Neighborhood card game get-togethers were common. Many residents played musical instruments such as the accordion and would sing traditional songs. Slovenians were known for their love of singing. Some played in a band. Dances were an important form of entertainment. The polka was a favorite. Dancing the Slovenian-style polka was a fast tempo and usually featured an accordion.

Family members and often neighbors worked together when butchering, smoking meat, canning food, and baking for special occasions and the holidays. Women organized a sewing club and met at members' houses monthly. Families would gather routinely at parents or grandparents' residences. As transportation improved, family Sunday drives were common. Wedding celebrations and wakes usually drew much of the community. Some wedding celebrations went on for two days. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July was usually celebrated with picnics and fireworks.

Most of the folks living in the Prospect Heights area were Catholic. Since the Saint Michael's Catholic Church was originally in the 900 block of Macon Avenue in Cañon City, many churchgoers who could not afford better transportation would walk the railroad track to 9<sup>th</sup> and Sell Avenue then north to the church on Macon. The Prospect Heights Slovenian community had two fraternal lodges: the American Slovenian Catholic Union (Kranjsko Slovenska Katoliska Jednota or KSKJ) and the Western Slavonic Association (Zapadna Slovanska Zveza). Like many other ethnic lodges in America the primary intent of these lodges was to provide some type of financial insurance to a family in case of disability or death of a family member. They also functioned as social organizations sponsoring many community activities, such as dances and annual parties, award recognition dinners, outdoor activities, contests for children, picnics and Christmas parties. In later years scholarships for colleges and technical schools were also awarded. Both of these lodges are still active in some form.

Many of the coalmines did not operate through the summer months. This allowed many families in the Prospect Heights community the opportunity to file and prove a homestead. Unfortunately, much of the land available for homesteading was several miles west or south of Prospect Heights. When work became available the men would return to work in the mines during the workweek. They left their wives and young families out on the remote homestead through the workweek until the required length of annual occupancy was met. This did not set very well with many of these young foreign born women who were convinced that Indians, outlaws, and wild beasts were still roaming nearby.



***Joe Javernick Homestead – S. Webster Park 1914***

It was common for folks to be known more by their nickname than their given name. Even younger family members were often not aware of some of the older folks' real names. Ted Adamic was a good example of this. Ted's given name was Frank J. Adamic, but most people knew him as "Ted" and commonly referred to him as "Grizz" or "Bear." He was born in 1908 at the Royal Gorge Coal Camp and grew up in Prospect Heights, Colorado. Ted (Frank) did not have an easy life. He lost his father in 1918 during the great flu epidemic. Ted quit school at the age of 12 to work the night shift in the Royal Gorge Mine when his stepfather was crippled in a mine accident. Throughout his later mining career he worked at the Wolf Park, NONAC No. 5, Crested Butte Big Mine, Cañon Liberty and other coal mines. With seven younger siblings Ted was often responsible for putting meat on the table. He loved to hunt and fish. He shot three bucks in one day when he was 14 years old, using a 30/30 Winchester lever action rifle. Incidentally that rifle was said to have been involved in an earlier confrontation between the militia and striking coal miners. This would have been years earlier during the coalmine strikes (1913 – 1914) in Colorado.



Ted also cut firewood for the family and others. Legend has it that people stole a lot of his firewood. To put a stop to this he placed blasting caps in some chunks of his cut wood. One evening this solution almost backfired for him. While visiting a girlfriend he saw a piece of his firewood with a blasting cap imbedded in it being placed in the stove. Frank immediately excused himself and ran for home. This brought an end to

stoves and stovepipes that had to be replaced due to a big bang.

There is another wonderful story about a family in Prospect Heights. It is said that between their own children and adopted orphans, there were 18 mouths to feed in the house. The kitchen was small, and the table did not have that many seats. The children were fed in shifts.

Alfred Kimmick, at the age of 83, related some memories while visiting the Prospect Heights Jail. His grandfather, John Kimmick, owned Kimmick's Saloon (the building with the green metal roof) across the street from the jail. He remembered the steam train engine going down the railroad tracks in back of the jail. Alfred said he bought penny candy from the Mercantile and went to South Cañon's first school when the school was called Garfield School. He lived all his life in Prospect Heights. All his working years he did many odd jobs. Alfred said, "I always had money in my pocket."

The wild raucous heydays of the Prospect Heights saloons were short-lived and ended in the early 1919s. However, the community lived on into the mid-20th century, as did the stigma of the Prospect Heights proper locale. That, coupled with the Prospect Heights enclaves' residents' obvious cultural and religious differences, made for a convenient target as the local Ku Klux Klan later emerged. The Klan convoyed through Prospect Heights, burned crosses on "First Hill" (south of the present day Rodeo Grounds) and elsewhere and occasionally harassed residents. Clementine Stilnovich, her three daughters and her husband, lived in the Prospect Heights area. One night her husband was terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan. He ended up in the State Mental Hospital for the remainder of his life. (As an aside, it should be noted that burning crosses in early western European history was not considered antireligious but rather was used as a call to battle.)



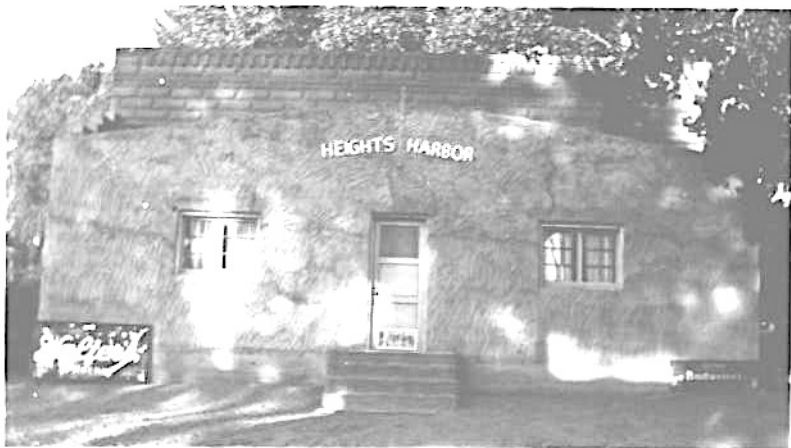
***Building to the South of the Jail***

The building south of the Prospect Heights Jail was one of the original eight saloons. In the 1920s it was the family home of Catholic priest, Father Steven Stefanic. He became a science and math teacher at Holy Cross Abbey and in the 1940s he was also the minister at the Saint Thomas More Hospital; both located in Cañon City. At one time the building was home of the Alex Shoe Shop. In the 1950s an enterprising resident tried raising hogs in the backyard. The obnoxious odors emanating from his enterprise lead to a local ordinance



banning the raising of hogs in Prospect Heights. Ergo, the Prospect Heights Mayor, Tony Strainer, would later boast, "Prospect Heights has no taxes and no pigs."

In the 1930s, Gus Salardino bought the Silver Dollar Saloon and renamed it the Paradise Restaurant and Bar. Italian food was served there. The end of World War II and growth in the region saw a revival of night clubs and bars in the Prospect Heights area. Bill Adamic operated the Heights Harbor in the old Pierce's Hall building. Joe Starika Sr. built and operated the Mellow Moon. The Miner's Club (later Cub's Inn) and Bernie's Place were also busy. Only Bernie's Place is still operating today (2019).



***The Heights Harbor 1947***

In the late 1980s, the Town of Prospect Heights' water system began to deteriorate, and money was needed to restore it. In 1990, the water to Prospect Heights and southern Capitol Hill Subdivision was provided by a private water company. It was known as the Mildred Pierce Water System then owned by Mildred's sister-in-law, Anna Adamic. A grant agreement for the new water system required that the Town of Prospect Heights dissolve. Some members of the town did not want to be annexed to the City of Cañon City. As a result,

Prospect Heights was forced to become an unincorporated community in Fremont County. Until then, Prospect Heights was reported to have been the second smallest incorporated town in the State of Colorado. The new water system was installed in accordance with the terms of the grant agreement.

Upon personal observation, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad spur through Prospect Heights is still open but used primarily for railroad car storage. The U.S. Highway 50 interchange to Pueblo, Colorado, was completed in 1947. This then became the main route to Pueblo instead of Highway 115, which had gone around the east edge of Prospect Heights, through Florence and on to Pueblo. As coal mines closed and mining in the area slowed down, miners left the area or moved on to other means of employment. The boomtown of Prospect Heights did not last long. Now residents of Prospect Heights enjoy a quiet lifestyle with many memories of the town's interesting past.

Today, native Edward Adamic, the "Artist of Prospect Heights," is well-known for his various media landscape and subject paintings drawn from the world around him. His works are found in various venues throughout Colorado, the U.S., Europe and Japan. His series of Abbey Wine Bottle labels won a number of medals at the 2002-3 International Wine and Labeling Exposition. Edward has been active in a number of art and lifestyle issues ranging from graphic illustration to theater, herbal medicine to the Over The River Project.

## **The Jail**

Despite enactment of the Hepburn-Dolliver Bill mentioned earlier; nearby communities opposed allowing Prospect Heights to be a "wet" town. Therefore, to be allowed to issue liquor licenses, the Town of Prospect Heights was required to build a gaol (jail) to accommodate the drunk and disorderly. As expected some patrons overdid their time at the saloons and needed a place to sober up safely, and then get

back to work. At the Board of Trustees meeting on June 2, 1906, a motion was made approving the building of a gaol (see below). The jail was constructed a year from the date the town was incorporated. The delay in building a jail caused many problems for a marshal trying to enforce peace in the community.

*With regard to a gaol for the town, it was decided on the motion of Wm. Dougherty, seconded by Gennaro Picchini that two cells be built according to the following specifications: Each cell to 10 feet long by 8 feet wide, and to be built of trimmed rock. The thickness of the wall dividing them to be 18 inches, and each cell to possess severally a door and window. Also that each door be covered with sheet iron to prevent any possibility of its being set on fire. The height of the building to be 10 feet and whole not to cost more than 300 dollars.*

**Motion to build Jail from June 2, 1906 Board of Trustees Meeting**

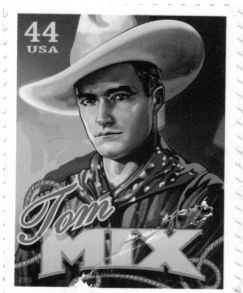
The plan for the jail was two cells, 10 feet by 8 feet, with trimmed rock dividing the cells. The wall was to be 18 inches thick. Doors on each of the cells were to have sheet iron in order to prevent any possibility of a fire. (Instead of sheet iron doors, doors with bars were installed.) The height of the building was to be 10 feet and the total cost of the project not more than \$300. An office was built in front of the cells. The Prospect Heights Jail was the only municipal structure ever built by the town. Ernest Sell was the skilled stonemason and bricklayer who built the jail. Sell was the same stonemason who built numerous buildings in Cañon City, including the old Fremont County Courthouse and many churches.

The cut stones for the jail probably came from a large outcrop of yellow rock in an area known as Eagle Wing. Sell built the ceilings of both cells out of bricks in a vaulted, or barrel, shape. This design was to prevent the ceiling from collapsing because a flat ceiling of bricks would never work. The beams in the front room were "rough sawed" with a steel blade. The jail is the only stone building in Prospect Heights.

The jail was furnished with a chamber pot, water bucket, a cot and a blanket in each cell. The jail never had running water or electricity. A wood or coal stove provided heat. There is also an entry in the town minutes of a lock bought for 25 cents. Another bill paid to Anton Adamic was \$31.60 for furniture in the jail office. The cost for washing a blanket was 50 cents.

There is sporadic mention in the town minutes of charging a jail inmate one dollar for the first time in jail and two dollars for any additional time in jail. Inmates were not sentenced to the jail by a judge, so there are no written records of who spent time in the jail. The money must have gone to the marshal.

One well-known person who spent a night in the jail was Bob Wills. His grandson, Scotty, visited the jail in 2018, and related this fact. Legend has it that Sell, builder of the jail, was the first person to spend time in it. After completion of the building, he celebrated too much at one of the local saloons.



Tom Mix, a western movie star from 1909 to 1935, made many movies with the Colorado Motion Picture Company in Fremont County. All but nine of those movies were silent films. Mix was known as a heavy drinking man. Mix would cross the Arkansas River from Cañon City to Prospect Heights or Hells Half Acre in Brookside where he could have a drink. On more than one night he began shooting his

pistol in one of the saloons after he had too much to drink. We have good authority from Woody Higgins, a longtime rancher and an extra in the Tom Mix movies, that Tom Mix spent several nights in the Prospect Heights Jail. Legend has it that on at least one occasion Mix was brought intoxicated from the Fremont Saloon in Hells Half Acre to Prospect Heights Jail since it was the closest facility.

The coal strike of 1913-1914 was brought about because of the poor working and living conditions of the miners. During the strike a non-union miner was arrested and tossed into the Prospect Heights Jail. The miner had been threatened with death. Anton "Tony" Strainer, Sr., who was president of the local miners' union, turned the prisoner loose at 2:00 in the morning. Tony told the miner to leave town fast. Tony probably saved the miner's life. This was the last recorded use of the Prospect Heights Jail.

The closing of the United States Smelting Company smelter in 1912 eliminated a large portion of the customer base for the saloons in Prospect Heights. After prohibition, Prospect Heights became a quiet, little town managed mostly by the Adamic family. The jail has stood for years as a reminder of the town's past.



## Historic Designation 2003

After 1914 the Prospect Heights Jail fell on hard times and the structure began to deteriorate. The Adamic family gave the Prospect Heights Jail to the Fremont/Custer Historical Society in June 1988, but the paperwork wasn't completed. A statutory quitclaim deed was recorded in April 2000. The jail was placed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties on March 12, 2003. The Fremont County Historical Society (previously the Fremont/Custer Historical Society) assumed ownership of the jail with the plan to restore it to its former condition. The jail was renovated with grant money and opened for public viewing on August 14, 2015.



***Linda Carlson, Ph.D. representing Isabella Lucy Bird at the Jail***

In 2018, additional renovations were done on the jail building. Joint repair on the outside walls and joint repair on the foundation were completed. "The entire jail is a jewel of historical importance to the community. It is a real taste of the 1900s in an area where the economy was mines and smelters," said Carol McNew, president of the Fremont County Historical Society.



713197 04/17/2000 11:48A 310 NORMA HOFFFIELD  
1 of 1 R 9.00 0 8.00 FREMONT CTY OLKREC CO

# STATUTORY QUIT CLAIM DEED

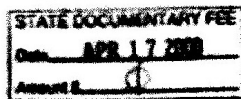
TED ADAMIC, as the last surviving member of the Board of Trustees of the Town of Prospect Heights, whose address is City of Canon City, County of Fremont, and State of Colorado, for the consideration of TEN DOLLARS, in hand paid, hereby sells and quit claims to FREMONT-CUSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY, a nonprofit corporation, whose address is P.O. Box 965, City of Canon City, County of Fremont, and State of Colorado \$1215, the following real property in the County of Fremont and State of Colorado, to-wit:

Lot 4, Block 1, Town of Prospect Heights

Address: Prospect Heights Jail

with all its appurtenances

Date: 4-14, 2000



*Ted Adamic*

TED ADAMIC, as the last surviving member of the Board of Trustees of the Town of Prospect Heights,

STATE OF COLORADO )  
 ) ss.  
County of Fremont )

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 14<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2000, by TED ADAMIC, as the last surviving member of the Board of Trustees of the Town of Prospect Heights, Colorado

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

My commission expires: November 5, 2000

*Darlene C. Holberg*  
Notary Public



My Commission Expires 11-5-2000



***Damage to walls before FCHS restoration. Historic Designation Plaque***



***Renovation work on outside in 2018***





*The Prospect Heights Jail after exterior renovation*

The Historical Society invited "All Things Paranormal" to come to the Prospect Heights Jail to see if there were any spirits in the building. The team from "All Things Paranormal", a volunteer Pueblo ghost chaser group, has five years of experience in investigating spirit activity. They saw orbs floating in the air which are thought to be spirits moving around. They also discovered a ghost, named Logan. It seems Logan, the ghost, does not like women.

A geocache has been located at the jail since November 2008, attracting geocache enthusiasts to Prospect Heights and Cañon City. Many make their visit when the jail is open Saturday afternoons during the summer or plan a return trip to view the interior of the jail and learn more about Prospect Heights.

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Prospect Heights Jail information handout sheet

### **Maps:**

Cañon City, CO. map 1896, Royal Gorge Regional Museum and History  
Center  
*Plat map of Prospect Heights, CO.*  
*Plat map of Town of Ripley*

Special Thanks for sharing knowledge of the Town of Prospect Heights  
to:

Florence Pioneer Museum and Research Center	
Edward Adamic	Alfred Kimmick
Janet Cook, Mercantile	Carol McNew
James Gillis	Scotty Wills
Susan Williams	Frank Adamic



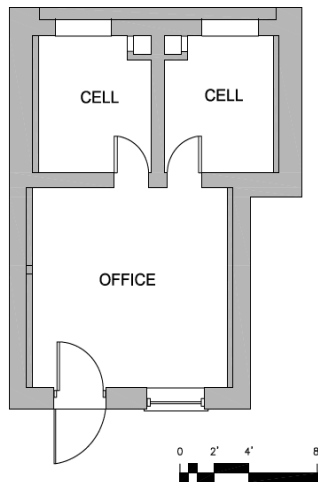
**Mountain Masonry repairing the foundation**



**History Colorado Agent approving restoration in 2018.**



Iconic picture of Tom Mix and Tony



FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"







*Open House each Saturday from 1:00 to 4:00 pm  
From Blossom Days til it's too cold to sit.*

**1315 S. 4<sup>th</sup> St.  
Prospect Heights, 81212**

**Published by the  
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With the blessings of the  
Prospect Heights community**