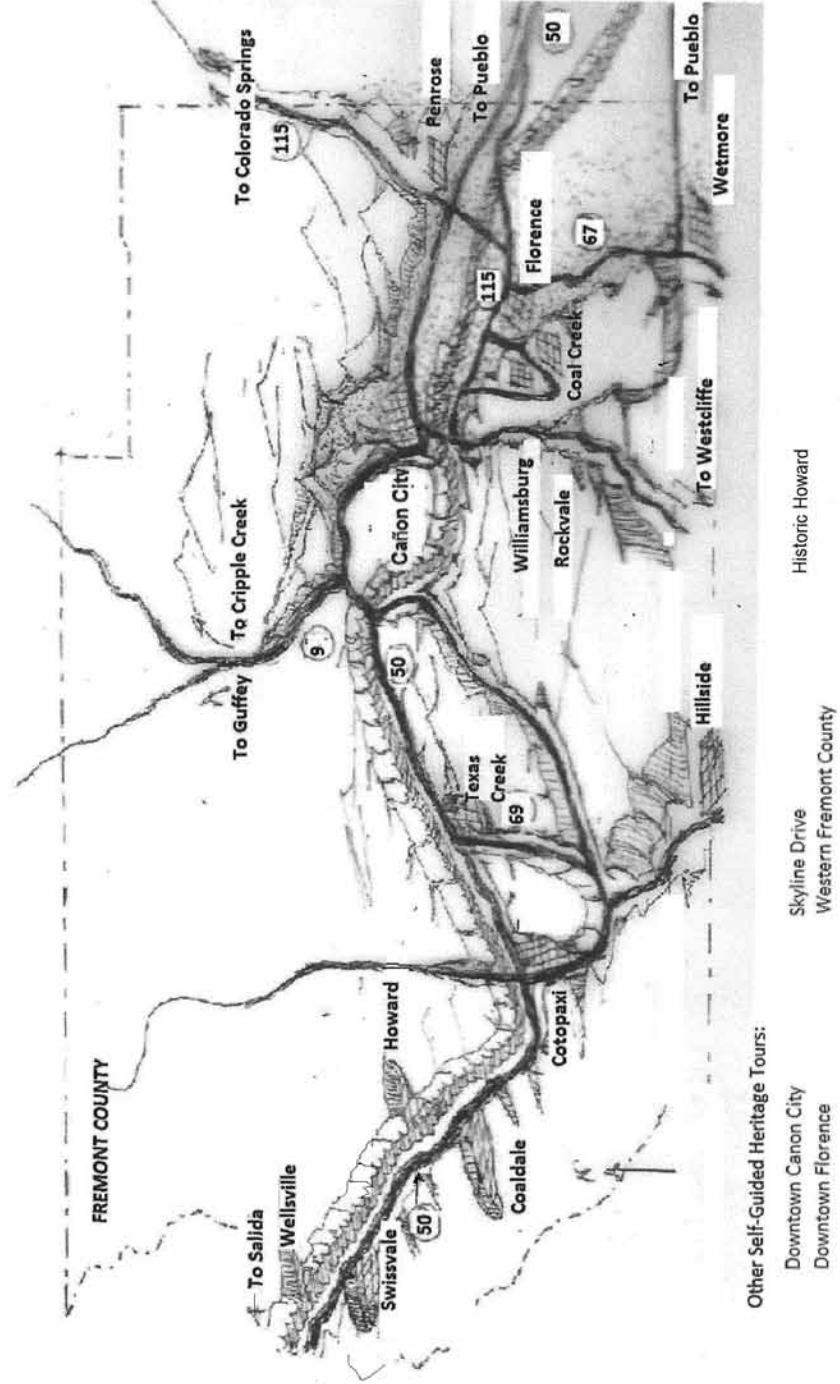


Self-Guided Tour

Florence, Colorado



**FREMONT COUNTY
HERITAGE TOURS**

Allow about two hours for the *Florence, Colorado Self-Guided Heritage Tour*. This is one of a series of free Self-Guided Heritage Tours developed by the Fremont County Heritage Commission and Fremont County Tourism Council, with the support of a grant from the Colorado Tourism Office, to encourage heritage tourism in our area. The Fremont County Historical Society, a 501(c)3 non-profit educational organization, is a partner in this effort.

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

These and other tours being developed may be downloaded for free at 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 also be found at these locations along with other tours and information.

Acknowledgements: This all volunteer booklet was researched, compiled and written by Mildred Wintz drawing on Downtown Florence Historic Buildings Survey 2007-08 by Front Range Research Associates and other sources. Editing by Jim Nelson, illustrations by Mildred Wintz, layout by Larry Hill for the Fremont County Heritage Commission. Dedicated to Carol Fox and her magic boxes. MW, 2015
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- Cover, West Main Street
- Table of contents
- Walking Tour Map

1.	Lill's Garden	2013	127-31 E. Main
2.	Lobach Building	1896	125 E. Main
3.	Fremont Hotel	1897	127-31 E. Front
4.	Adobe Post Office	1873	120, 122 E. Main
5.	Union Block	1895	104-110 E. Main
6.	Braden-Griffith Block	1894	100 E. Front
7.	D. & R.G. RR Station	1920	100 Railroad
8.	Orrechio Block	1913	200 S. Pikes Peak
9.	Trulove Block	1890	120 S. Piles Peak
10.	K. of P. Block	1888	105 W. Main
11.	Town Hall	1892	119 W. Main
12.	Oil Wells	1910	S. Santa Fe & R.R.
13.	Round House Café	1898	218 W. Main
14.	Dr. Paxton House	1890	113 N. Santa Fe
15.	First Presbyterian	1896	201 W. 2nd
16.	Florence Post Office	1936	121 N. Pikes Peak
17.	Carnegie Library	1919	100 W. Second
18.	McCandless Mansion	1889	120 N. Pikes Peak
19.	Fox and White House	1897	115 E. Second
20.	McCandless Cabin	1869	209 N. Petroleum
21.	First Baptist Church	1897	201 E. Second

This booklet can be found at the Bell Tower, 201 E. Second Street and the Florence Chamber of Commerce.

Lill's Garden, the beginning and end of the tour, is located one block south at the corner of Petroleum and Main.

Cover Photo: Florence Pioneer Day Parade. Since 1927 Florence Pioneer Day has honored early settlers. This photo from the early 1940s is courtesy of the Donnie James family.



FL-01 Lill's Garden 2013, 127-31 E. Main

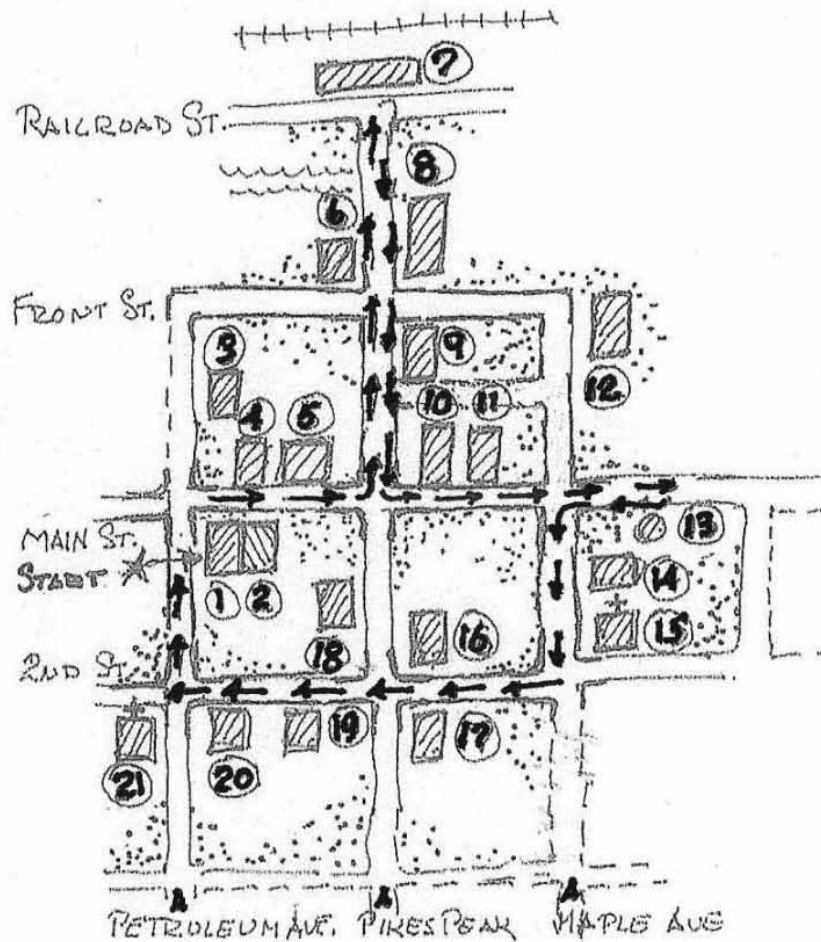
Lill's Garden at the corner of Petroleum and E. Main Street is a beautifully landscaped plot maintained by volunteers on land leased by the City of Florence. The garden recognizes a past Florence benefactor with an unusual background.

Florence's booming 1920's economy included 25 oil companies, three refineries, seven gold ore mills, three railroads and more than two dozen coal mines. One of the more unusual businesses drawn to the growing community was the "Parlor House" of Lillian Powers. Lill had worked for Salida's famous madam, Laura Evans, and came downriver in 1920 to open her own establishment in growing Florence. The 1920 U.S. census showed her operating a boarding house with two female "lodgers" at 311 S. Union St. The brothel operated until 1950, when Chaffee and Fremont Counties shut down all such houses. Although Lillian lived on in Florence in seclusion, it was said that no child in Florence ever went without a winter coat if she knew of the need. Lill passed away in 1960 in a hospital that today hosts the Florence Rose Bed and Breakfast.

An undocumented anecdote states that establishments such as Lill's earned the description "Red Light" for the railroad man's red lantern left outside the door or by a window so he could be found quickly in a railroad emergency and to indicate those within were occupied.

FL-02 Lobach Building 1897, 125 E. Main Street

In 1897 Edwin Lobach built a two-story double-bricked building at 125 East Main Street. The building had stone trim, cast iron columns, a parapet with decorative brickwork and a stone name and date plaque as well as highly decorative panels with fleur-de-lis and anthemion ornament. Originally the building housed a clothing store and a combination confectionary



Walking Tour of Florence, Colorado
Begin and return to the Bell Tower Community Center.

and cigar store on the first floor and an Elks Lodge on the second. In 1899 Lobach erected a one-story, three storefront building to the east that notably housed *The Florence Tribune* newspaper; now the site of “Lill’s Garden.” Edwin Lobach had been a miner, opened a mercantile, hauled freight and worked on the railroad. After developing one of the finest ranches in the county he organized a company that drilled an oil well in 1880, which began the Florence oil boom.



FL-03 Fremont Hotel 1897, 127 E. Front Street



The Fremont Hotel, built in 1897, was a state-of-the-art, 70-room luxury hotel owned by H.L. Rice and his wife on three Front Street lots near the railroad station. The large dining room included the finest linen and silver. The hotel was described as one of the finest in the state with ‘rooms en suite’, baths, steam heat, electric bells and all modern conveniences. Service and cuisine were unexcelled.

The current owners (2015), Elks Lodge 611, bought the building in 1914 for \$5,000 and spent another \$10,000 to remodel. During the Royal Gorge Railroad Wars between the Denver & Rio Grande (D&RG) and the Santa Fe, a posse stayed at the Lodge. This posse was used to fight for the right of way for one of the railroads to build first through the Gorge. The war was settled in the courts, not the Gorge. However the Santa Fe lost too much money in the “war” and had to lease

its track to the D&RG to recoup its losses. One of the dispensations for its losses awarded by the court was a right of way from Pueblo to the coal camps with a station in northern Florence near the river. That building was moved and still exists as a private home on E. Main Street.

FL-04 Adobe Post Office Site 1897, 120 E. Main Street

Among the first buildings after Florence was platted by James McCandless in 1872, the adobe occupying this site on the south side of Main Street included Florence’s first Post Office on lot 27 with McCandless as Post Master. Today lot 27 straddles 120 and 122 E. Main. The adobe burned before 1888 as the P.O. was listed in the Knights of Pythias Building at 105 W. Main at that time. In 1897 the P.O. moved back into a new building at 120 E. Main that was built on the site of the old adobe. It remained there until 1902 when it moved to 122 E. Main and then to the Blunt Block at 100 W. Main. 1936 saw the current Post Office building constructed at 121 N. Pikes Peak, where it has stayed ever since.



After the Post Office moved out of 120 E. Main, the National Club Saloon, 1906, and later the Antler Bar, 1912, became occupants. Later tenants included a meat market, a photographer, a ladies bath, and several automotive (Bundy and Doyle) supply dealers. The building was restored and is now occupied by an art gallery.

FL-05 Union Block 1890, 104-10 E. Main Street



Florence's largest commercial building of the 1890s was the Union Block that replaced several older and smaller stores. Built by James Hall, the Union Block contained two upstairs halls. One was used as the Florence Opera House which became a popular venue for touring productions. In its heyday Florence was one of the foremost entertainment towns between St. Louis and San Francisco. Today the autographs of old vaudeville troopers can be found on the back wall of the stage area.

Although containing four separate stores, the building appears as one due to the single row of huge double-hung windows with transoms that run the length of the entire front facade. 1890 saw the I.O.O.F. Hall above Hawkes Meat Mart and a saloon; then followed the Palace Bar, Hadley's Mercantile, a grocery in 1901, and one of Florence's five newspapers, *The Tribune and Weekly*. 1912 saw a movie theater and another newspaper, *The Democrat*. 1955 saw the Capri Café & Bar occupy the ground floor until 1991. A restaurant now occupies the site.

FL-06 Braden-Griffiths Block 1894, 101 E. Front Street

Saloon keepers Syl Braden and Phillip Griffith erected the Braden-Griffith Block in 1894 as a liquor store. At the time it was the only stone building in town. Front Street was the main commercial center of Florence. The building's first floor operated as a saloon, while the second floor was known to have been a "boarding house", or bordello, with gambling in the basement. By 1906 it was a hay and grain barn.



From 1906 to 1926 it was called Eagle Hall with the first floor rented to the Hamblett Rubber Co. During World War I it served as the Draft Board's headquarters. In 1964 the building became the Pioneer Museum, now the Florence Pioneer Museum. Among the museum's artifacts is the original 1875 town jail, now housed in the back yard near the deep, open Miquon Ditch on the east side of Pikes Peak Avenue. Amazingly, this large irrigation structure passes under the full block of buildings on the west side of Pikes Peak Avenue parallel to Front Street.

FL-07 Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Station 1918, 100 Railroad Street

Florence had long clamored for an up to date 'more fitting' Denver & Rio Grande Railroad depot. In 1918 the railroad complied. A new combined passenger and freight building was opened at 100 Railroad Street not too far from the original old frame structure along the tracks to the east. The track side of the new one-story hipped roof, brick building displayed the name Florence in "gold bronze" while the street side showed the name of the railroad. The new station contained separate waiting rooms for men (to the west) and women (to the east) each with its own toilet facilities, steam heat and drop lights. At the July 1918 dedication speeches were made, a band played, ice cream was served. A dance in support of the Red Cross marked the event. World War I was very much in the mind of the attendees.



FL-08 The Orrechio Block 1913, 200 S. Pikes Peak Ave.



In 1913 local businessman Thomas Orecchio erected a substantial two-story brick building at 200 S. Pikes Peak. The building was moved brick by brick from the then-defunct town of Cyanide and rebuilt, somewhat surprisingly, directly over the

Miquon Ditch on south Pikes Peak Avenue. It was named the Depot Hotel. Many years later a relative of Karl Leason, the music teacher at Florence High School, wanted the brass sign on the building. He was willing to buy the whole building just to have that sign. The current owner told the man that if he could come up with a replacement he would give him the sign. The relative went to Walt Disney in California and had the current star sign designed. The signs were then traded.

Orecchio was one of a sizable group of people who arrived in Florence from Italy in the 1890s to work in the coal mines. In 1907 he took over the Walter Brewing Company distributorship in Florence, becoming the longest active distributor for the Pueblo Brewing Company. Orecchio continued to invest in area coal mines and operated a macaroni factory and an ice company on South Front Street. He financed many automobile-related facilities in Florence.

FL-09 The Trulove Block 1895, 120 S. Pikes Peak Ave.

Civil War Veteran J.A. Trulove, a pioneer businessman and real estate investor, built this large two-story brick building at 120-124 South Pikes Peak Avenue in 1895. Trulove, who came to Colorado for his health, lived upstairs where his family offered furnished rooms. A clothing store and cigar maker also were located in the building. Later tenants included

the Florence Chamber of Commerce, a newspaper, a sign painter and an art gallery. The cast corner sidewalk block from the Trulove corner, containing the name Orrechio, can now be found diagonally across the street behind the museum.



FL-10 Knights of Pythias Building, 1888, 105 W. Main St.

The Knights of Pythias erected their Castle Hall at 105 W. Main Street in 1888. The first brick commercial building on Main Street, it incorporated several architectural elements that would become common for the city's 19th century commercial buildings. These included space for storefronts, an entrance to the upstairs on the first floor, a large hall on the second floor, a composition of red brick with stone trim, columns flanking the store front area, tall one over one light segmented arched windows, a name and date plaque and a cornice ornamented with corbeling and bands of brick. Early photographs of the Florence Post Office, then housed at 105, show that the basement level was open for entry from the street. The basement was used as a theater and the first floor was reached by a

run of steps. Severe flooding in 1921 caused Main Street to be raised many feet to the first-floor level of buildings and the basement was sealed.



Among the many social events such as balls, weddings, meetings, one of the more interesting social notes was its use by the Ku Klux

Klan ladies as a place in which to change into their robes for a parade. The men changed into their robes in Morgan Hall, the next building to the west and connected by a common stairway. Except for a disastrous fire in 1950 that wiped out the neighboring Blunt Block and singed the K. of P., the building has never been empty. It is listed as a Fremont County



Landmark by the Fremont County Heritage Commission.

FL-11 Florence City Hall 1892, 119 W. Main Street

The town hall and fire department constructed at 119 W. Main Street in 1892 provided a source of community pride and demonstrated the town's stability. The two-story red brick building with stone trim featured a large arched window on the second story and was crowned by a belfry at the west end and a corbelled cornice at the east end. Sloped ramps from the alley to this building and several of its neighbors provided access for horses from the basement to ground level. This site was vacated by the fire company when a newly-purchased fire engine proved to be too large for the structure. When the bell was taken down, the whistle from the steam laundry on Front Street was used to alert people of a fire. In 1920 when the new High School was built, City Hall itself moved to the vacated Central School site. The City of Florence received title to its present building on West 3rd Street on February 10, 2005.



FL-12 Oil Derricks 1907, Santa Fe Ave at the Railroad

Three wooden oil derricks on this lot at Santa Fe and the railroad already were in operation when Thomas Orrechio came to Florence. He took over the Walter Brewing Company distributorship, moved the Depot Hotel from Cyanide and built the ice house on Pikes Peak. There were several more derricks in the immediate vicinity, strung out along the base of the bluffs across the tracks.



Florence had so many operating oil derricks within the city proper that it was known as "Derrick City." The Florence oil field, second oldest in the United States, covered 14 square miles and included over 500 wells producing 3,000 barrels per day. John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil of Ohio was here along with the Continental Oil Company. Oil production in Florence began in 1862, three years after the discovery oil at Titusville, Pennsylvania. Peak production was 824,000 barrels in 1892 and continues today, recently peaking at 250,000 barrels in 2011.

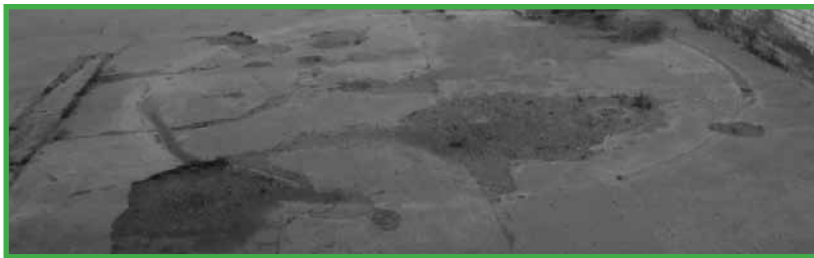
An original operating oil well remains in Florence, west of City Hall. A sculpture and plaque on the City Hall lawn attests to this well's location and history. Another active oil well is located off Union Avenue on the south side of the railroad tracks near the McCandless Veterans Home.

FL-13 Round House Ice Cream Shop 1900, 210 W. Main

The Florence & Cripple Creek Railroad constructed a round house in Florence and connected with the Denver & Rio Grande tracks there. The railroad was important in carrying freight to and from Cripple Creek and Victor area goldfields.

As a result seven mills were erected in and around Florence adding greatly to the hustle and bustle along the Main Street of the thriving town. Just to the east of the railroad roundhouse on Main Street was a circular ice cream shop which proved to be very popular. It was appropriately named “The Round House.” Even though the F & CC railroad was later wiped out in 1912 by floods and rockslides, the ice cream shop remained in business for many years to follow.

Although no longer in existence, the ice cream shop’s approximate site at about 210 W. Main can still be seen. The circle of its foundation can be found in the concrete sidewalk just west of 208 W. Main. 208 W. Main was built by N. Saleh as a garage in 1922 in response to the town’s automobile boom. The building was occupied by Liberty Motors and later Vendetti Chevrolet.



FL-14 Dr. Paxton Home and Office 1890, 113 N. Santa Fe

The two-story brick and stone building at 113 N. Santa Fe was erected around 1890-95 and served as an office and home of the owner, Dr. R.H. Paxton. It featured an angled corner on the north east, flat and hipped roofs with a variety of window designs. A Virginia transplant, Dr. Paxton lived here with his wife. Later the building became the Albion Hospital with doctor’s offices also occupying the site. In 1906 the building was purchased by the neighboring First Presbyterian Church as its Manse, which it used until 1961.



Dr. Paxton served as the doctor for the mining camp of Radiant in 1920. A Company Town for the Victor American Fuel Company’s 1903 Radiant Coal Mine, it had about 80 houses, several boarding houses and everything from a company store to a doctor. During the depression in 1929 the mine closed. The U.S. government converted the houses into a Federal Emergency Relief Administration camp as housing for the large number of transients in the country. In 1937, its task completed, the camp closed and the buildings were auctioned off and moved to other area communities. The company store was donated to the American Legion and is now the Eagles’ Hall of Florence on South Petroleum.

FL-15 First Presbyterian Church 1896, 201 W. Second St.

The cornerstone for the first Presbyterian Church was laid Tuesday February 11, 1896. The original congregation was comprised of 42 Florence residents. They originally met in the school building at the corner of Front and Petroleum across from the Fremont Hotel. From there they moved to a Tabernacle Tent and finally into the old Opera House in Houston Hall, now the bank parking lot. They moved again into the Knights of Pythias Castle Hall.



In January, 1897 the Gothic Revival style red brick building was completed for just short of \$6,000. The pews are the same seats secured from the old Opera House. The windows were donated throughout the history of the church. A crack has silenced the 1898 bell in the belfry. The magnificent pipe organ was presented in 1919. Events were held across the street in the “Parlor Building.” The church functioned until 2003 when it ceased due to lack of members.

The building was used briefly by another small congregation then converted into a private residence in 2014.

FL-16 Florence Post Office 1936 121 N. Pikes Peak

The federal government's decision to construct a Post Office in the depths of the Great Depression provided both work and income for local residents. The efforts were begun in 1929 by Post Master N.R. Usher. They reached fruition in 1937 with the opening of the one-story tan brick building on North Pikes Peak Avenue. Designed by the Office of Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury Department, it represents the Starved Classicism style common during the period in its restrained appearance.



The WPA era "Antelope Watering Hole" mural that graces the lobby wall was cited when the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Sites. Painted by Santa Fe artist Olive Rush (1873-1966), the tempera mural was funded by the Treasury Section of Fine Arts and installed in 1939.



FL-17 Carnegie Library 1920, 100 W. 2nd Street

The first Florence library replaced an adobe building which had housed the first Florence school at 201 S. Front Street. This building was across the street from what is now the Riviera Motel. This may have been the brick school house later used as the American Legion Hall. It was torn down in the 1950s.



The Carnegie Library was built on a lot donated by the widow of Fremont County businessman A. R. Gumaer. The Carnegie Foundation provided \$10,000

to build the library if the site was provided. The Florence Library was the last of 35 library grants made by the Carnegie Foundation in Colorado.

The library was designed by the Pueblo architect George Roe. In addition to the first-floor reading rooms, the six foot above grade basement was used as a public assembly hall capable of seating 200 people. The building is now privately owned. The current public library, the John Fremont Public Library, is located at 130 Church Avenue.

FL-18 McCandless Mansion 1889, 120 N. Pikes Peak

Senator James A. McCandless built this three-story brick mansion for Katherine, his second wife and mother of Minnie Florence, namesake of the town.



Courtesy of the Royal Gorge Regional Museum & History Center

The noted Denver architectural firm of Balcomb and Rice designed this 1889 dwelling in a high Queen Anne style. The residence featured a brick design heavily ornamented with stone, multiple gables, decorative shingles, porches, balconies, fireplaces, panels of colorful tile and stained glass. Boasting of Florence-made bricks, elegant lawns and flower beds; the house was a show piece.

In 1931 Cecil C. Holt purchased the mansion and converted it into the Holt Funeral Home which continues today.

FL-19 The Fox – White House, 1897, 115 E. Second St.

Although William D. White lived in this house in 1897, it was originally built by H.M. Fox, a contractor who specialized in heavy railroad and structural work. Fox designed and built many of the area's bridges.

White's wife was Mary Jane McCandless, daughter of James A. McCandless' first marriage to Sarah Franklin, who resided with the Whites. White's father was William Bainbridge. White built the Cañon City Toll Road to the Cripple Creek gold fields, now called Shelf Road. White also laid out the Phantom Canyon Road to Cripple Creek for James McCandless and others, which in 1894 became the right of way for the Florence & Cripple Creek Railroad.



William D. White also was the contractor involved in a failed attempt to build the Florence Electric Railroad; intended to make Florence a commuters' hub. That project never was completed. Its 1900s failure forced the Whites to leave this house to a McCandless and move to Hardscrabble.

FL-20 The McCandless Cabin 1864, 209 N. Petroleum St.

In 1887 James McCandless, his first wife Sarah Franklin and their family of four lived in a log cabin on the Main Street of what was to later become Florence. When his family outgrew the cabin, it was moved to its present site and later augmented by a second cabin to accommodate his children by Katherine, then to be his second wife.

When James completed his new mansion on Pikes Peak, which he built for Katherine, he presented the double log home and its grounds to his son James Victor McCandless for his birthday. James Victor and his wife spent their final years in this home. She was a very talented musician and highly educated. This house is said to be the oldest continually occupied house in Florence.



FL-21 The First Baptist Church 1898, 201 E. Second St.

The laying of the cornerstone of the First Baptist Church of Florence was held in April of 1899. In 1927, needing more Sunday School space, a basement was dug under the sanctuary. Heavy rains caused the basement walls to cave in, damaging the upper structure, but the roof remained intact. In 1939 a Pagosa Springs Church donated a bell which was installed in the belfry.

In 1955 the church was again in need of more Sunday School space. This time a frame building with brick facing to match the rest of the church was proposed. The addition was completed in 1956 with a gable roof to match the existing roof.

In June of 2013, the congregation donated the church property to the Florence Arts Council. The building was then renamed the Bell Tower Cultural Center to begin a whole new chapter of life as an art center. The building was designated a Fremont County Landmark in 2014.



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