

Special Thanks Goes Out to the Following:

History:

*Dara Kinsey
Carole Rychtarik
Kjm Zeller*

Walking Tour Information:

*Rjo Grande Southern Books, Vol. V & VI
Dell A. McCoy, Russ Collman, William Graves*

*Mary Lou Milstead
Mike Curran
Dave Fabian
Jim Baron
Marlene Hazen
David Rote
Laura Towne
Keith Lindauer
Dale Weisbrod*

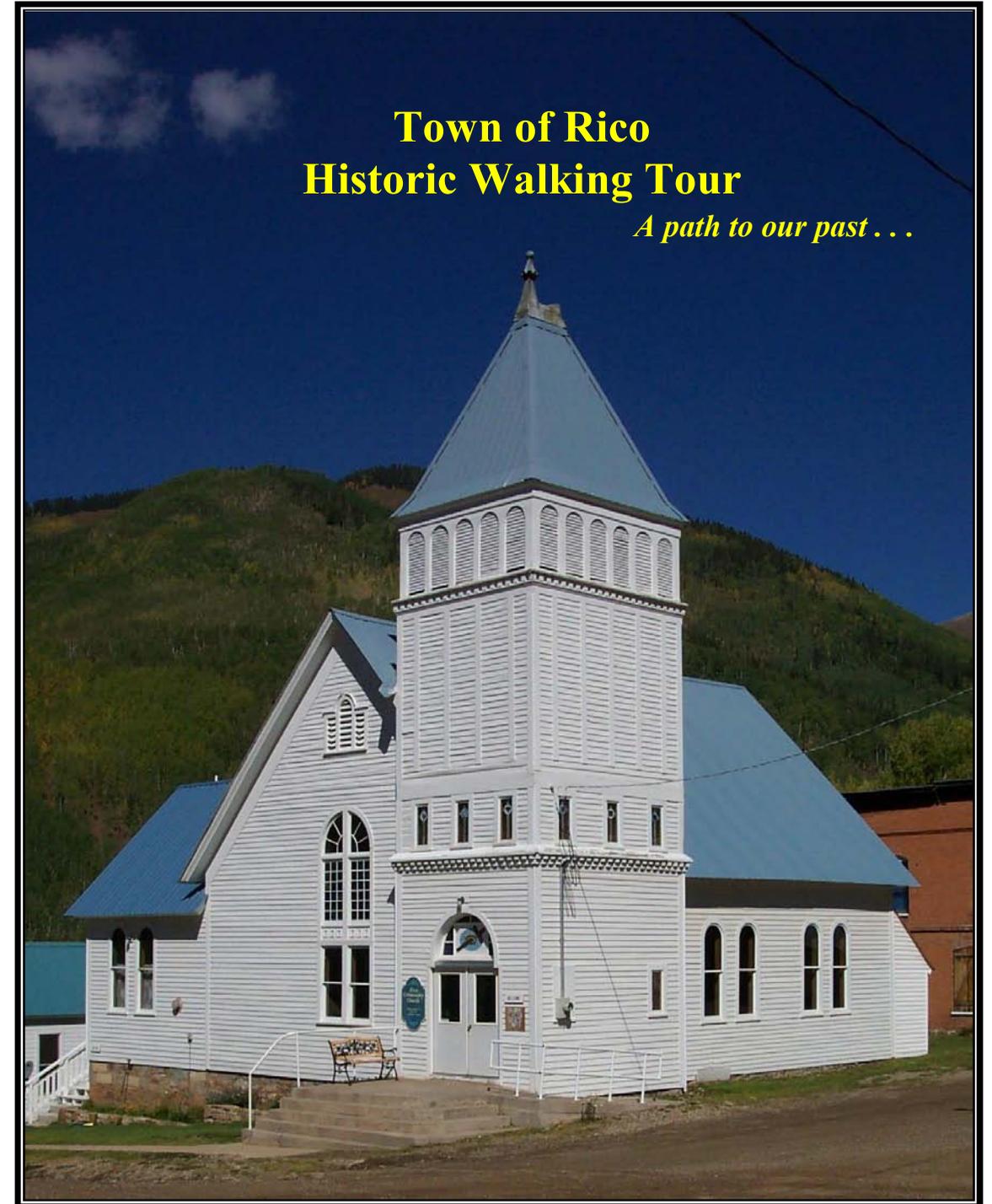
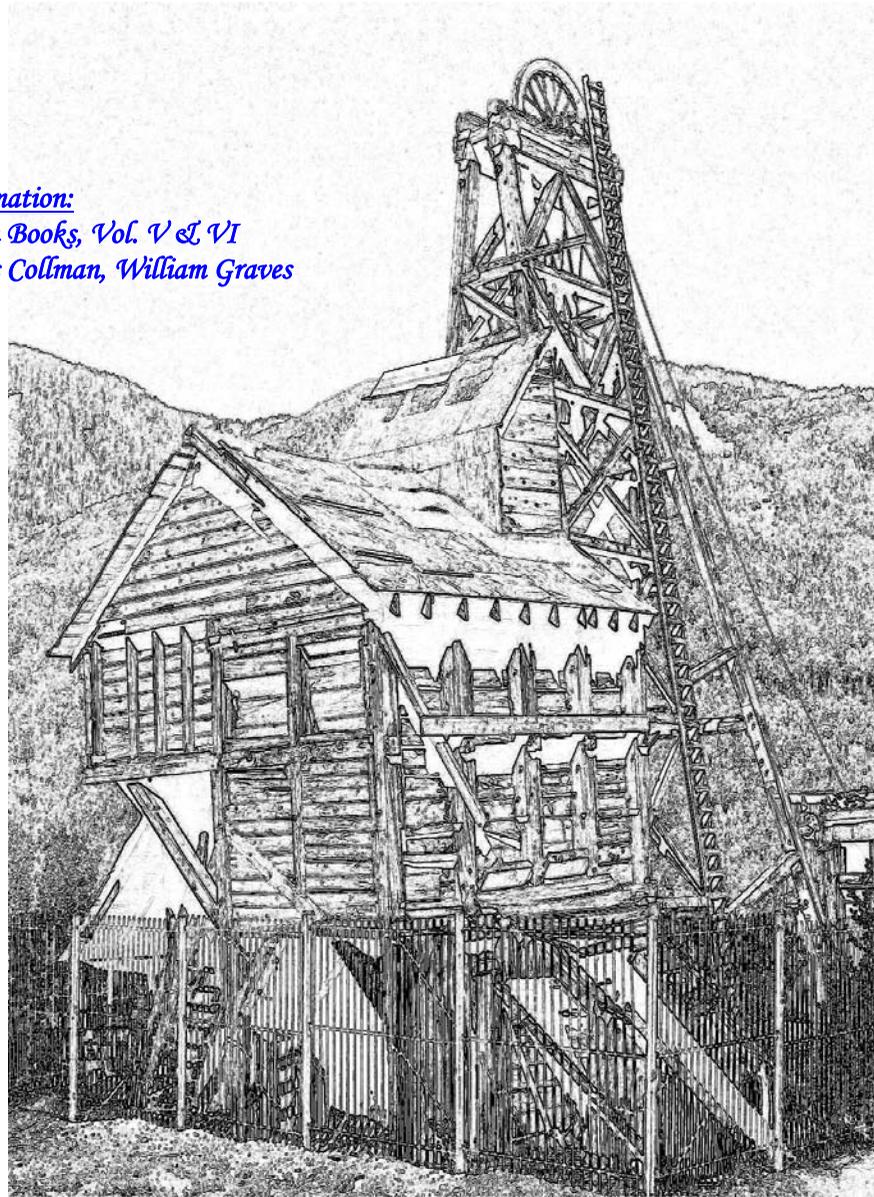
Design &

Publication:

*E.J. Heil, P.C.
Eric James Heil
Rebecca Stephens*

Sponsored by:

*The Rico
Historical
Society
&
The Town of
Rico*



RICO HISTORY

1832-1878

Besides the Native Americans, some of the earliest inhabitants of Rico were the fur trappers. They worked in this valley from 1832 to 1833, finding it rich in beaver and other fur bearing animals.

It wasn't long until the quest for fur turned to gold. In 1866 a Texan named Colonel Nash discovered the coveted metal in Rico. Nash had brought with him eighteen prospectors. Their exploration fizzled out until two men, Sheldon Shafer and Joseph Fearheiler, who had been on their way to Montana, were the lucky ones who uncovered Nash's abundant vein and his beginning in Rico.

The Ute Indians had other ideas about having white men in this valley and drove away the initial miners. It wasn't until 1878 when the Utes signed the Brunot Agreement, thus surrendering their land and claims in the San Juan Mountains, when the mining rush began in earnest.

1878-1887

In 1876 the Pioneer Mining District was established, resulting in a mining upsurge. However, it wasn't until the spring of 1879, upon the discovery of rich oxidized silver ore by Colonel J.C. Haggerty on Blackhawk and Telescope Mountains, when things in Rico began to flourish. The now famous Enterprise Mine was started in 1881 by David Swickheimer, though the profitable ore wasn't discovered until October 6, 1887. Another prosperous mine was the Black Hawk Mine, located on the north side of Dolores Mountain,

one mile east of Rico, which was discovered by John Glasgow, R.D. Darling and E.A. Robinson in 1887. The Black Hawk Mine would later become one of the more consistent shippers of ore on the Rio Grande Southern railroad.

At first, Rico went through a plethora of names - ranging from Carbon City, Carbonateville, Lead City and Dolores City - until the establishment of a post office required the residents to settle on a name. William Weston suggested the name Rico somewhere between 1878 and 1881. It stuck, and Rico became incorporated and surveyed. Soon after, cabins, saloons, a general mercantile, and the Pioneer Hotel and Restaurant sprung up on the newly platted streets. In 1881 the population of Rico was 894 people, of which 54 were women. The newly formed lots sold for \$200.00.

1891

The first rail car to reach Rico on the Rio Grand Southern Railroad arrived on September 30th, 1891, carrying building supplies for the remaining construction of the railroad. The official opening day for the RGS line through Rico was on October 15th, 1891. The first three passenger cars arrived that day bringing dignitaries from as far as Denver to the gala event. In celebration, the Rio Grand Southern Railroad held the Silver Ball Excursion at the Enterprise Hotel with music provided by the Telluride Cornet Band. In observance of this event, a commemorative silver spike was presented to Otto Mears by David Swickheimer from silver taken from the Enterprise Mine on Newman Hill. This spike resides today in the vault of the Colorado State Historical Society

in Denver. The final track between Rico and Dolores was completed on December 19, 1891, thus connecting Durango to Ridgeway. This monumental occasion happened in a field where the Red Rock spur was later built, near milepost 84.5. The first train from Durango to Rico arrived on December 26th, 1891, and the first round-trip passenger train (conducted by Charles Wigglesworth) headed from Durango to Ridgeway passed through on January 2, 1892.

1892-1900

In 1892 Rico was in its heyday. Its population had soared to 5,000 people. The community was supported by 23 saloons, 3 blocks of red-light district, 2 churches, 2 newspapers, a theater, boarding houses, 14 first class hotels, including the Hotel Enterprise which was destroyed by fire in 1903, and the Rico State Bank. At this time Rico was a county seat and retained this honor until 1946. Its booming economy attracted miners from around the State. Many of the buildings from this era still stand today, including the Dey Building which houses the Enterprise Bar and Grill.

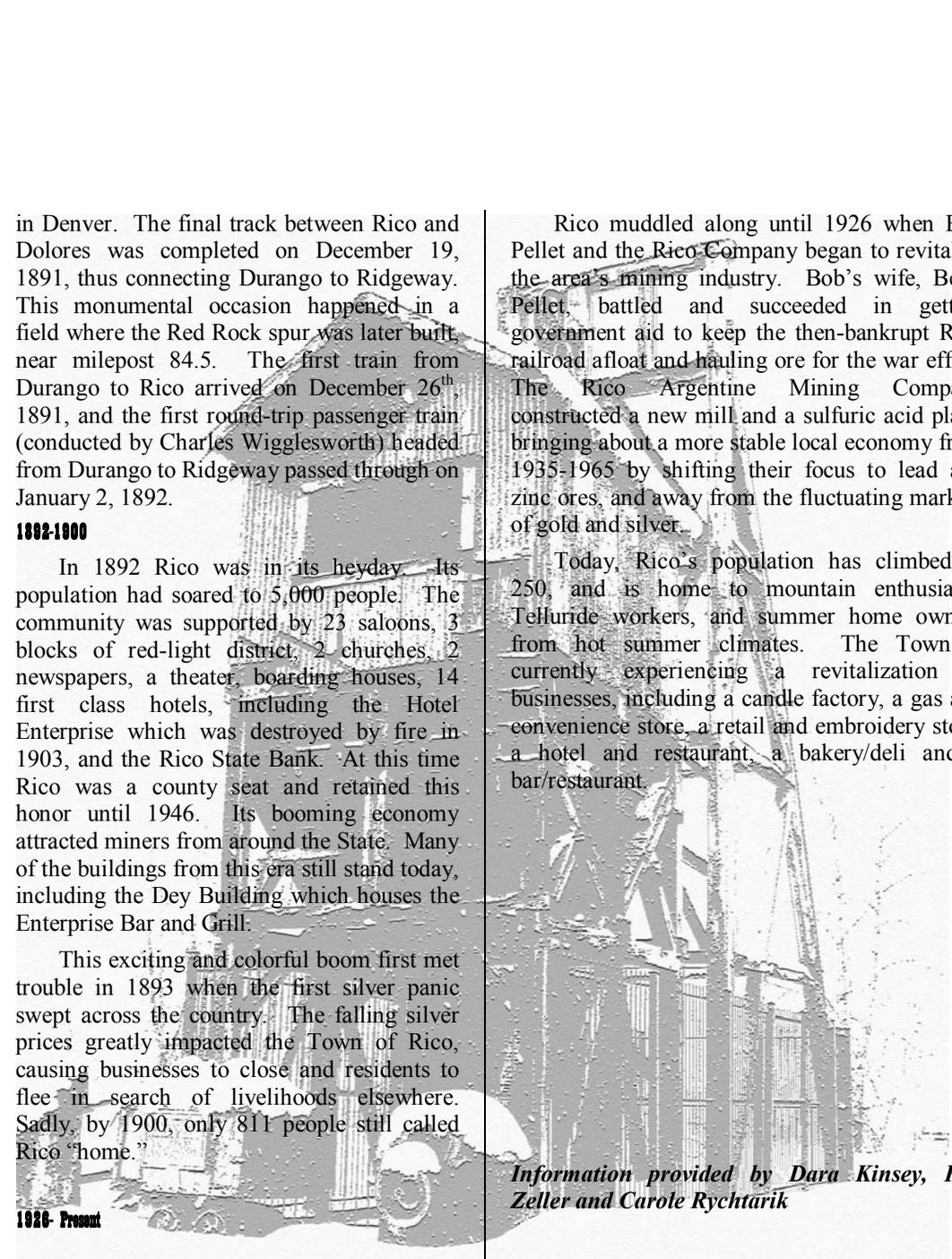
This exciting and colorful boom first met trouble in 1893 when the first silver panic swept across the country. The falling silver prices greatly impacted the Town of Rico, causing businesses to close and residents to flee in search of livelihoods elsewhere. Sadly, by 1900, only 811 people still called Rico "home."

1926- Present

Rico muddled along until 1926 when Bob Pellet and the Rico Company began to revitalize the area's mining industry. Bob's wife, Betty Pellet, battled and succeeded in getting government aid to keep the then-bankrupt RGS railroad afloat and hauling ore for the war effort. The Rico Argentine Mining Company constructed a new mill and a sulfuric acid plant, bringing about a more stable local economy from 1935-1965 by shifting their focus to lead and zinc ores, and away from the fluctuating markets of gold and silver.

Today, Rico's population has climbed to 250, and is home to mountain enthusiasts, Telluride workers, and summer home owners from hot summer climates. The Town is currently experiencing a revitalization of businesses, including a candle factory, a gas and convenience store, a retail and embroidery store, a hotel and restaurant, a bakery/deli and a bar/restaurant.

Information provided by Dara Kinsey, Kim Zeller and Carole Rychtarik



Rico Historic Walking Tour

1. On the northeast corner of Mantz Avenue and Commercial Street you will find the **Rico Town Hall, 2 N. Commercial Street.**



The first Dolores County Courthouse was an attractive structure of hand-hewn logs, its appearance added to by chinking of snow, white lime and sand. 23 x 48 feet in size, with one room 23 x 23 feet on the second floor, accessible only by an outside stairway, the building was hardly large enough to store the records of the county, acquired when Dolores County separated from Ouray County. The structure was dismantled and the logs were used as skids and for scaffolding to start construction on the new sandstone and brick courthouse that took two years to build.

The courthouse served as a county courthouse for 53 years, until the larger

population of Dove Creek was successful in having the county seat moved there in 1946. Dolores County conveyed the courthouse to the Town of Rico on April 2, 1956, and it is now used for the Town Offices, public hearings, town and community meetings and the Rico branch of the Dolores County Library. The Courthouse was constructed in 1892, and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

1. Looking west and north up Commercial Street you will see the **Chester A. Arthur House, 11 N. Commercial Street.**



It is said that the associates of Chester A. Arthur, who was to become the 21st President of the United States, had this house built for his personal use while on visits to his mining ventures around Rico. It was later the house of Bob and Betty Pellet, who arrived in Rico in 1919. Bob was a mining engineer who kept the mines open in Rico. Betty became a State legislator from our area, and was instrumental in keeping the Rio Grand Southern Railroad running, carrying ore and passengers, until it shut down in 1951. Inside, during a renovation, a penciled note was found outlining the robbery of a bank in Telluride. The Pellets added the front cobble fireplace and the dormer windows while they owned the house. In later

years they moved across the street to a house north of the courthouse. Those houses have since been destroyed by fire.

2. On the Northwest corner of Mantz Avenue and Silver Street is the **Rico Community Presbyterian Church, 118 E. Mantz.**



Built as the “People’s Church” during Rico’s most prosperous decade, this church, built in 1890, was the first church building in Rico. In February, 1891, Rico’s new church was dedicated. Reverend S.O. Dickenson was ordained as first pastor. The church has seen several protestant denominations, and is now under ownership of the Presbyterian Church in Ouray. The church has horizontal wood siding with a three story square tower. The tower stairway leads to a choir loft above the congregation.

2. Across the street, looking up Mantz on the north side is the **Albert Stampfel House, 204 E. Mantz Avenue.**

This house was built around 1888. With its cross-gabled frame, ornate features above the second story windows and stone foundation, it was the home of Albert Stampfel, old-time resident and miner in

Dunton. He owned a freight hauling company and began his business hauling general merchandise with teams of horses and wagons, later upgrading his equipment with an International dump-truck. Albert was a great storyteller; some of his tales about pioneer days in Rico were very entertaining.



2. Next door to the Stampfel house is the **Engel House, 208 E. Mantz Avenue.**

This two-story frame house with front bay window and covered front-gable entry was the home of Charles and Freda Engel in the late 1920s. Charles was born and raised in Rico, and spent his childhood with his sister Anna in the big house up on the hill. He worked for his father who came to Rico in 1897 and established the Engel Mercantile in 1909. Charles was well known for his vast knowledge of the pioneers and history of the area, particularly of Rico’s Pioneer Mining District. He documented much of Rico’s past history in photographs and writings. Charles developed the Engel Mining Claim on Expectation Mountain, west of Rico, and also became the Rico correspondent for the area newspapers.

2. Heading east on Mantz Avenue, next door to the Engel house is the **Averyt House, 212 E. Mantz Avenue.**

This charming Victorian with the covered porch with ornate trim and posts was built around 1890.

2. Returning to the corner of Mantz Avenue and Silver Street facing north, on the west side of the road is the **William Kaufman House, 9 N. Silver Street.**



Built around 1888 as an apartment building, this two story brick building was the town's only masonry residence during Rico's "boom" years. It is on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

3. Looking north from the corner of Silver Street and Soda Street, on the west side of Silver Street is a row of houses from before the turn of the 20th Century.

3. **Baron House, 104 N. Silver Street:**

This home was built in 1878. A photograph from 1882 shows the houses on this block with neat wooden fences and plantings of shrubs and trees. This is the original front-facing "L" shape with shed roof side. "Grandpop" Rob Snyder, a long-time miner in Rico lived here for many years before moving down the valley.

3. The second house in the row is the **Anderson House, 106 N. Silver Street:**

A charming Victorian side-gable frame "L" shape with ornate trim above the windows and eave, with a covered porch was documented in an 1882 photograph. G.E. Wilkins, the photographer, had come from Wisconsin to Rico shortly after the mining boom had begun.

3. The next house north is the **Belaska House, 110 N. Silver Street:**

This front-gable frame building was also documented in the 1882 photograph. The recessed outside porch is a newer feature, but this is part of the historic block on Silver Street.

3. Next, the **David Butler House, 112 N. Silver Street:**

This log cabin was once owned by Charles M. Engel. Victor Lee (David Butler's great grandfather) lived in this cabin when he first came to Colorado. It was called the "big House" by the family. This log cabin may be one of the earliest structures built in Rico. Records indicate that the cabin was deeded to two people by the names of Spurlock and Butler on August 10, 1881. This type of construction was typical of miners' cabins, and many such cabins can be seen in the early photos of Rico.

3. The last house of historic note on the east side is the **Rychtarik House, 118 N. Silver Street:** The cross-gable structure with rear shed-roof addition and original chimney was built around 1878. The addition on the south side with the stone fireplace is a more recent addition.

3. Across the street on the west side is the **Curran House, 115 N. Silver Street:**

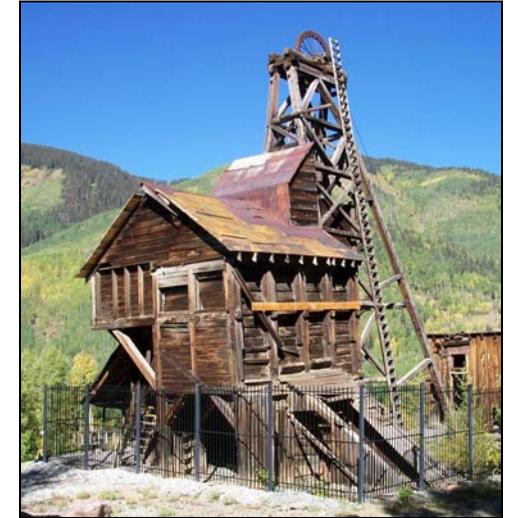
This original front-gable frame house with side-gable addition with peak was built before 1898. At one time it was the office, operating room and home to Dr. Koplowitz who had his waiting room and office in the front of the house. An antique door still separates the front area from the family's living quarters.

4. Garfield Street is one street east and parallel to Silver Street. On Garfield on the east side of the street is the **Catholic Church, 122 N. Garfield Street:**

The Catholic Church was initially Rico's first historic schoolhouse. In 1882, donations, a loan and a two-mill property tax provided the money required to construct the new schoolhouse (\$1,239.00) and hire a teacher. Mrs. Robert Darling, the wife of Robert Darling, a Rico pioneer, was hired as the new school teacher. The *Dolores News* described the new school building as "... that neat and cozy little schoolhouse, with its bright paint – its steeple and surroundings." The little building was filled to capacity, and the 1882-83 school term ran for five months. This school operated until 1893, when the larger, two-story brick building was built on North Commercial Street. Many Rico old-timers attended that school.

4. Looking southeast on the hill above the church is the **VanWinkle Headframe and Hoist Structure.** These two adjacent structures were constructed in 1940-41 and operated until 1949 by the Rico Argentine Mining Company as part of the VanWinkle mine complex, mining copper, lead and zinc.

They were important elements in the mining industry's contribution to the war effort of World War II.



5. Returning down Soda Street toward highway 145 you will pass an old mining house on the left and then a red clapboard house on the right that was the home of David Swickhimer of Enterprise Mine fame.

5. Crossing Highway 145 from Soda Street you will find the **Atlantic Cable Head-frame:**

Constructed by the Dolores Silver and Refining Company in 1898-1905, the head-frame and hoist were later modified in the early 1940s with electric lighting and corrugated metal roofing and siding. The structure serviced the Atlantic Cable Mine, considered to be one of the earliest (1878) and richest mines in the Rico Mining District. The early focus of this mine was on silver, but by 1907 this had changed to zinc. During World War II both lead and zinc were mined. Silver Creek ran beneath the bridge

that connected the hoist house (no longer standing) with the shaft house. The hoist house contained an air compressor that provided the miners with fresh air. A steam boiler powered the hoist with a cable which raised and lowered the ore bucket in the shaft below the head-frame.

6. On the southeast corner of Soda Street and Hancock Street is the **Old Assay Office, c. 1895-1900**. A special spur of the RGS rail led to the stone building that has been identified as the sampling works. It was also said to be a freight house for Rico miners. For the assay work the office contained a small smelter for determining the metal composition of ores.

7. Head south on River Street to the corner of Mantz Avenue and River Street; to the west is the **Pro Patria Mill site**. During 1902, the Pro Patria ore processing mill was constructed and an aerial tramway was built up the middle of Mantz Avenue to reach the Pro Patria mining tunnel. The Pro Patria became a landmark in the Pioneer Mining District, and this large mill shipped hundreds of carloads of ore concentrate to the Durango Smelter over the years. All remains of the mill are gone now, but the mill extended down to the base of Depot Hill from the intersection of Mantz and River Streets. This mill operated on an off-and-on basis until 1948, when it was shut down.

7. Looking north on River Street you will find many turn-of-the-century homes. On the west side of River Street, looking north is the **Bennett House, 11 N. River Street** (1882) and the **Kornbluh House, 15 N. River Street** (1900). On the east side of River Street, looking north is the **Heuertz House, 14 N. River Street**. This was constructed by the

combining of three shepherd huts around 1898. The next old home is the **Fabian House, 20 N. River Street**, constructed in 1888. Still going north, you find the **Clark House, 24 N. River Street** (1888). The final historic house is the **Lesem House, 32 N. River Street**, built around 1898.

As the stories are told, a relatively small red-light district was centered around River Street. Although bordellos were illegal, the so-called 'female boarding houses' were not harassed by local authorities.

8. Proceeding down Depot Hill from the corner of River Street and Mantz Avenue, you will see the RGS water tower, north of the town maintenance barn.

8. **Rio Grande Southern Watertower, RGS Tract North:**

The circular water tower which held 50,000 gallons of water, supported by heavy timber, was built when the RGS arrived in Rico. It is one of only three water towers and a handful of structures that remain from the Rio Grande Southern Railroad which operated from 1890-1951. South of the water tower was an attractive wooden depot; the station agent and his family lived upstairs on the second floor.

The freight yard at Rico consisted of five tracks, with one just east of the depot (the house track) and the other four just west of it. A total of 144 freight cars could be held on these tracks. A wooden engine house (later replaced by a larger brick building) was located west of the depot. After RGS ceased operations in 1951, the rail was removed, and in September, 1955, the abandoned depot and engine house were nothing but ruins.

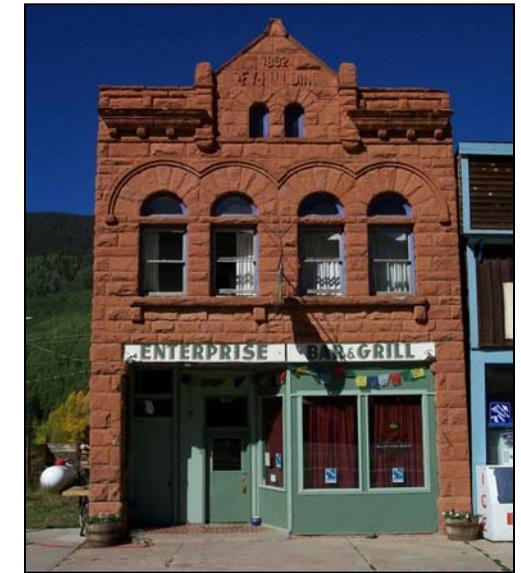
9. Crossing the Dolores River on the one-lane bridge you will find yourself in West Rico. Most of the homes on Picker Street date to the early 1900s, but looking south from the corner of Picker and Eder Streets there are the **Hicks House, 4 Picker Street** (1898) on the east side of the road, and the **Matzick House, 9 Picker Street** (1898) on the west side.

Going west on Eder Street you will see on the south side of the road the **Thornhill House, 11 W. Eder**. This two-story building originally was the nurses' quarters for the two-story Miners' Union Hospital which was located directly across the street. The hospital was destroyed by fire early in the 20th Century. The hospital, nurses' quarters and the railroad yards can be seen in a 1902 photo of West Rico. In the early days the only access to West Rico was a metal footbridge across the Dolores River, approximately in the same location as the bridge today.

10. Returning up Depot Hill to the corner of Glasgow Avenue (Highway 145) and Mantz Avenue, looking north on the west side of the street you will see the **Dey Building, 3 N. Glasgow Avenue**.

Since its construction in 1892, the first floor retail space has been utilized almost continuously as a saloon. The second floors of this commercial block were designed to house offices. Of Romanesque Revival architectural design, the ornate front façade is of worked sandstone. The four windows on the second floor have sandstone arches with an ornate cornice, a raised feature incorporating two arched windows. In 1915, the Metropole (promoted as "The Popular Resort"), the saloon located in the Dey

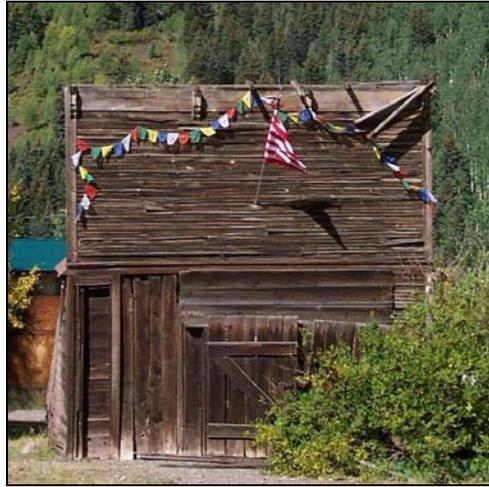
Building at the time, advertised Joel B. Frazier Whiskey. Betty Pellet is said to have given speeches to the off-shift miners at the bars in the Dey Building when she was running for office.



10. North of the Dey Building is the **Motherlode Liquor Store, 7 N. Glasgow Avenue**:

This historic gambling and pool hall was once a butcher shop. The one story wooden false-front structure also had housed a saloon before prohibition (1933). At one time it was also the card room for the Enterprise next door.

10. Passing the green maintenance buildings you will find the **Heil Building, 21 N. Glasgow Avenue.** Build in the 1880s, this building was a drugstore in 1886. Later, in 1893, it was used as a bicycle shop, the alternative mode of transportation to the horse and mule. It stands north of the vacant lots once occupied by the premier Hotel Enterprise.



11. Looking south from the corner of Mantz Avenue and Glasgow Avenue (Highway 145) on the west side of the highway is the **Real Estate Office, 1 S. Glasgow Avenue.**

Rico's first brick commercial building was reportedly erected on the southwest corner of Mantz and Glasgow Avenues in 1889. Later a Shell gas station and garage; in the early 1950s the Rico Hardware store occupied this old brick building. In 1944-45 it was the Rico Market.



11. The next building south is the **Muldoon Building, 3 S. Glasgow Avenue.** This Original 1880 Building was a drugstore in 1886, housed the Rico Post Office around 1890 and then became a restaurant named Mack's Place. In 1928 the building was occupied by the National Café. In 1944 it was a restaurant and bar run by Mary and Tim McClure. In the early 1950s this building was a market with a public telephone in front and a Conoco gasoline pump at the curb.

11. Proceeding south past the Rico Theatre and Café is the **Burley Building, 9 S. Glasgow Avenue.** Built during the height of the silver mining boom in Rico (1893), this classic Romanesque Revival style reflects the prosperity of the era. This was the third location for Burley's once-lucrative department store. Starting in 1861, J.W. Burley & Co. were leaders in dry goods, groceries, boots, shoes and gents' furnishings. In 1893, clothing was sold in the south store and the Rico Drug Company was located in the north side of the building. The 1930s found the office of the St. Louis Smelting and Refining Co. located in the north section of the Burley Building.

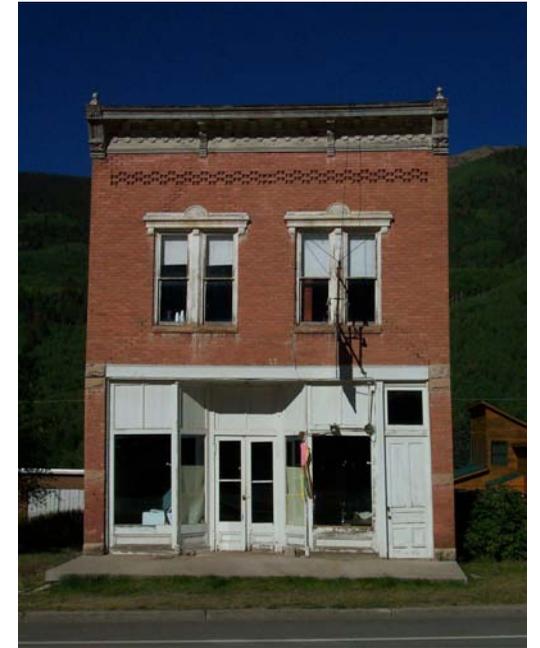
11. The next historic building is the **Historic Firehouse, 13 S. Glasgow.** This historic building was build around 1890-95. In 1917 it was the Rico Fire Department's wooden building for Hose Team #1, and originally had a bell that was suspended above the sidewalk on a two-storied wooden beamed tower. Around 1926 a fire siren replaced to old bell and the building was sheathed with corrugated metal. The large door/entryway allowed fire equipment and vehicles to park inside.



11. **Masonic Lodge, 31 S. Glasgow Avenue:**

The last historic building on the west side of Glasgow, north of Campbell, was built around in 1895. In 1899, E. Carey & Company Furniture Dealers occupied the commercial storefront structure of brick. The old furniture store became home to the Rico Masonic Lodge, and the second floor has been used as a lodge hall with public rooms

on the first floor used for dances, plays and movies.



11. Returning to the corner of Glasgow and Mantz Avenues, on the east side of Glasgow Avenue is the **Rico State Bank Building, 8 S. Glasgow,** built during the mining boom days of 1893. David Swickhimer, owner and operator of the Enterprise Mine, was president of the bank starting in 1890. David Swickhimer's Rico State Bank failed as a result of the severe "Panic of 1907." Ignoring the advice of business associates, Swickhimer used his personal money to pay back the bank's depositors, a loss that financially ruined him. He was called Colorado's "most honest man" as a result of using all his private funds to ensure that all money deposited was returned to the depositors. The original bank safe is still in the building

which housed a liquor store and is now a real estate office.

11. Next to the Rico State Bank, traveling south is the **Rico Mercantile, 14 S. Glasgow Avenue**. Built in 1890, this single story commercial front building of stone, wood and fixed windows was occupied by Charles Engel Sr.'s Engel Mercantile from 1909 until approximately 1960, which he ran with the help of his son, Charles M. Engel. The vacant lot next door housed the Engel's warehouse for many years until it was destroyed in a fire.



11. The next historic building is the **Rhode Inn, 20 S. Glasgow Avenue**. Originally, the building was listed as a grocery and meat market in 1899. It was built in 1893. The old frame building had an entrance off the front sidewalk that led to the second floor where the bay window extended out over the sidewalk. In 1925 this multi-sided bay window housed a dentist's chair – the five windows providing sunlight for the dental work. The southern portion of the building was a later addition.

11. The next building south is the **U. S. Post Office, 28 Glasgow Avenue**. The historic building housing the present post office was built around 1895. In the building in 1915, Obendorfer and Son carried canned goods and other staple items for the residents of the Rico area. This shop advertised Flexible Flyer Sleds and coaster wagons from \$1.75 to \$8.00 in the local Rico paper. The current façade has been altered from the large stationary glass windows, but the original brick facing, with six ornamental granite blocks, is still to be seen.



12. **Johnson House, 134 S. Glasgow Avenue**. From the corner of Glasgow and King, on the east side looking north, is this basic front-gable, horizontal wood clapboard historic house which was built around 1898.

12. **Rico Hotel, 124 S. Glasgow Avenue**. North of the Johnson House is the wood and stucco two story historic hotel built in 1925 to house miners. It was a 40 room boarding house, originally named the Ricato Hotel, perhaps an Italian name. It is now a charming hotel and restaurant, a long way from the rough and ready miners' boarding house.



12. **Morris House, 108 S. Glasgow Avenue**. Near the southeast corner of Glasgow and Campbell, this front-gable house with a front-gable enclosed entrance was built around 1913.

12. **Yellowman House, 137 S. Glasgow Avenue**. Standing on the corner of Glasgow Avenue and King Street, looking north on the west side of the street, you will find an historic home built in 1892. The dual-pitched hipped roof and four shed dormers make an unusual design.

12. Continuing north, on the west side is the **Hopkins House, 129 S. Glasgow Avenue**, an

historic house with a bay window built around 1898.

13. Standing on the corner of Commercial and Campbell, and looking north on the west side of the road is the **Hinton House, 37 S. Commercial Street**. This two story front-gable house with a gambrel roof was built around 1881.

13. Looking almost to the corner of Commercial and Mantz, on the west side of the road is the **Adams House, 5 S. Commercial Street**. This house was built before 1898, and was salvaged and moved to its present location after one of the many floods of Silver Creek, possibly the devastating flood of 1911. It has been beautifully restored to its present condition by Laurie Adams, present owner.

13. Residences on Commercial Street, east side. Looking north from the intersection of Campbell and Commercial streets, on the east side you will see the **Leavell House, 32 S. Commercial Street**, built in 1898. The **Blair House, 28 S. Commercial Street** next door was also built around 1898. It is a front-gable frame structure with a covered porch, horizontal channel wood siding on the second floor, and vertical wood paneling on the front porch. Traveling north on the east side of Commercial you find the **Folsom House, 16 S. Commercial Street**. Built around 1898, it has a front-gable frame with a front-gable covered porch. Its original form has been modified with additions.