

# ASPEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Sites and Information

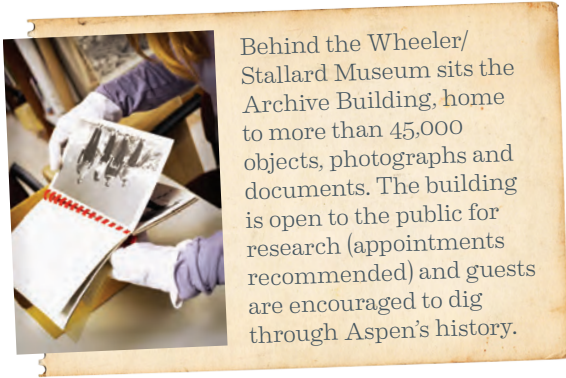


Aspen  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## WHEELER/STALLARD

The Wheeler/Stallard Museum is a Queen Anne-style, Victorian mansion built around 1888 by Jerome B. Wheeler, located in Aspen's charming West End, and home to the Aspen Historical Society. While the main floor is the re-creation of a late 1800s parlor – where people are encouraged to gather and sit – the second floor hosts rotating exhibits. In the summer, the surrounding park and gardens are used for public programs and special events.



Wheeler, a New York City businessman who owned 45 percent of Macy's Department Store, came to Colorado on a trip in search of fresh air for his wife, Harriet, who suffered from bronchitis. He was introduced to Aspen in early 1883. He saw opportunity and invested in several silver mines, completed Aspen's only smelter, purchased this property (620 W. Bleeker St.) in 1886, partnered in the Colorado Midland Railroad, opened the J.B. Wheeler Bank and Company, donated the Wheeler Opera House to Aspen, and financed the building of the Hotel Jerome. His intention was to move to Aspen full-time with his wife and daughters; however, it is said Mrs. Wheeler never spent a night in this house.

During the 1890s, the house had a few occupants and owners and at times was empty until 1905, when Edgar and Mary Ella Stallard moved in. Edgar was an Aspen real estate agent and manager of the Wheeler Opera House and Ella had a dressmaking shop. They rented the house until 1917. James Light then purchased the house for \$2.48 plus back taxes of \$147.52 and

## MUSEUM

promptly sold it to the Stallards at the same price. As Aspen fortunes waned, Ella remained in the house, closing off fireplaces



Wheeler/Stallard House in 1890-92

and most of the rooms except the kitchen, dining room and parlor (used as her bedroom) to conserve heat and save money. In 1945, she sold the home to W.C. Tagert who immediately sold it to Walter Paepcke, widely considered the driver of Aspen's emergence as a resort.

The house served as overflow guest quarters for the Hotel Jerome, then employee housing for the hotel. By the early 1960s, Elizabeth Paepcke remodeled the house and Alvin Eurich, the president of the Aspen Institute, and his family moved in. The Aspen Historical Society first rented the Wheeler/Stallard house in 1968, eventually purchasing the property in 1969.

**ADMISSION:** \$10/adults, \$8/seniors, children 12 and under free; fee also includes admission to the Holden/Marolt Mining & Ranching Museum

**LOCATION:** 620 W. Bleeker Street

**HOURS:** Tuesday - Saturday, hours vary by season

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**ARCHIVE BUILDING HOURS:**  
9 am - 4:30 pm, Monday - Friday;  
Research by appointment



Photo by Ross Daniels

## HOLDEN/MAROLT MINING &

Once a mineral processing site and then a ranch, the Holden/Marolt Mining and Ranching Museum is operated by the Aspen Historical Society on city-owned land. The museum is open during the summer and is also used for public programs and special events.



The area's mining boom started in the early 1880s and Aspen quickly became one of the largest producers of silver in the country as well as the third largest city in Colorado. By the time construction finished in 1891 on the Holden Lixiviation Works, the town's silver boom lasted only a short while longer.

Originally sprawling over 22 acres, the Holden Works boasted state-of-the-art technology used to extract silver from low-grade ore. It was one of only 18 plants in the world to utilize the experimental Russell Lixiviation process. In addition to using heat to crush and extract the silver from the ore, the process also used a combination of chemical salts and water – extra steps that required a larger plant.

The plant's Stetefeldt furnaces produced fumes released through the 165-foot-high smoke stack, reputed to be the tallest in the state at the time. The stoutly built "sampling" building held large, heavy machinery that pulverized the ore; that building now houses the

**ADMISSION:** \$10/adults, \$8/seniors, children 12 and under free; fee also includes admission to the Wheeler/Stallard Museum

**LOCATION:** 40180 Highway 82: From Highway 82 turn south on the dirt road between Cemetery Lane and the Castle Creek Bridge.

**HOURS:** Open in the summer, by appointment fall, winter and spring

## RANCHING MUSEUM

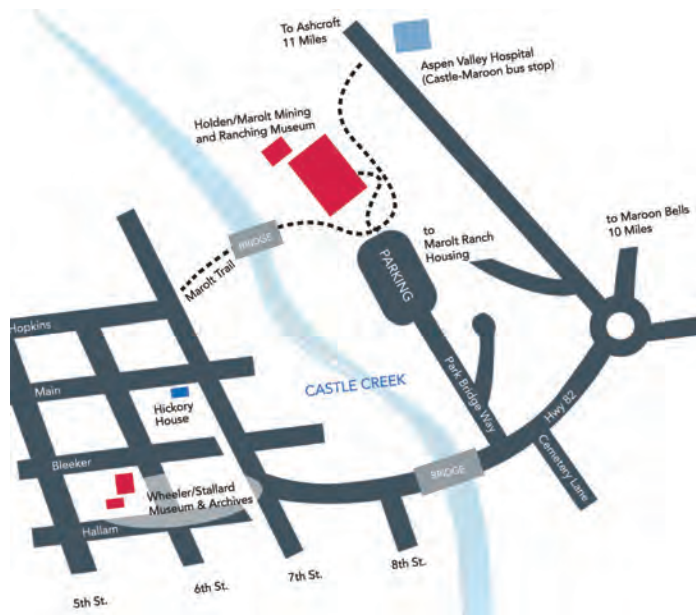
museum. Unfortunately, in the fall of 1893 – just 14 months after the new plant opened – the U.S. Congress repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act and ultimately demonetized silver, causing the price to plummet and sending the Holden Works into bankruptcy.

By 1904, after several unsuccessful attempts to reopen the Holden Works as a concentrator (a process of discarding easily separated, worthless material to make the ore cheaper to transport), the plant closed for good.

The plant fell into disrepair as residents cannibalized the building for materials during Aspen's leaner years. Mike Marolt purchased the property for \$1 in 1940. The Marolts combined it with the Midland Ranch to form the Marolt Ranch on which they raised sheep and cattle and planted potatoes. By the late 1950s, the family started to sell off parcels.



Today Holden/Marolt is enjoyed by the public, including hundreds of school children that tour the museum to see first-hand how Aspen was built.





# INDEPENDENCE GHOST TOWN

Today Independence is a ghost town featuring remnants of a once-bustling city. Legend has it that prospectors discovered gold in the area on Independence Day, July 4, 1879. A tent city sprang up almost immediately and by 1880 there were 300 people living in the camp. In its brief history it had many names, including Chipeta City, Sparkhill, Mammoth City, Mount Hope, Farwell, and Hunter's Pass, but only one name stuck: Independence.

By 1881, the Farwell Consolidated Mining Company had acquired most of the producing mines as well as a large sawmill. That summer the town's population grew to 500 and was served by seven restaurants, 24 retail and grocery stores, a newspaper called the Miner, five saloons and two boarding houses—a miner could get room and board for \$2 a day.

Eventually the town had up to 47 businesses as well as three area post offices and an estimated population of 1,500. Despite what turned out to be the short-lived boom at Independence, over \$190,000 worth of gold was produced between 1881 and 1882, somewhat unusual for this silver-rich region. Typical of mining towns, however, the bust soon followed and by 1883 production dropped to \$2,000. By 1888, only 100 citizens remained in the high mountain town. The abundant work, good pay and milder climate of Aspen lured miners away from Independence as daily life at 10,920 feet was not easy.

Finally, in February of 1899, a series of severe snow storms cut off the supply routes to Independence. The few remaining miners and their families, who were running out of food, dismantled



their homes, made 75 pairs of skis out of the wood and skied down the pass en masse to Aspen.

Time and weather have erased much of Independence since that historic winter.

High winds, crushing snowfalls and careless treasure hunters have destroyed many of the buildings and countless artifacts. In 1974, to help protect the town, Independence was added to the National Register of Historic Sites. By the mid-1980s, thanks to the efforts of Aspenite Ramona Markalunas and many volunteer groups, several cabins were restored. Today the ghost town of Independence is a shadow of its former mining glory, but still provides a fascinating glimpse of history.



**ELEVATION:** 10,920 feet

**SUGGESTED DONATION:** \$5/person to maintain site

**LOCATION:** Travel 16 miles east of Aspen on Highway 82 toward Independence Pass. The ghost town is located on the right at mile marker 58.

**HOURS:** Guided tours in summer only



# ASHCROFT GHOST TOWN

Ashcroft may be home to nine restored buildings now, but it was once a town with a population that rivaled Aspen's.

In the spring of 1880, prospectors Charles B. Culver and W.F. Coxhead left the boomtown of Leadville to search for silver in the Castle Creek Valley. After vigorously promoting their findings back in Leadville, Coxhead returned to find 23 more prospectors had joined "Crazy Culver" in the camp they named Castle Forks City.



They formed a Miner's Protective Association, built a court house and laid out streets all in just two weeks. Each of the Association's 97 members paid \$5 — or one day's work — to enter a lottery for building lots. By 1883 the camp, now called Ashcroft, had a population of about 2,000 and boasted two newspapers, a school, sawmills, a small smelter, and 20 saloons — bigger than Aspen and closer to the railroad in Crested Butte.

As quickly as it boomed, however, Ashcroft went bust. The mines, initially producing 14,000 ounces of silver to the ton, turned out to be just shallow deposits. Promised rail links to Crested Butte never materialized while major strikes in Aspen, already the county seat, lured away investors and workers.

By 1885 there were only 100 summer residents and \$5.60 in the town's coffers. Only a handful of aging, single men made Ashcroft their home by the turn of the century. They owned mining claims but spent their time hunting, fishing, reading and drinking in Dan McArthur's bar.



In the 1930s there was a new flurry of interest in Ashcroft, this time by international sportsman Ted Ryan and his partner Billy Fiske, captain of America's 1928 gold medal Olympic bobsled team. They built the Highland Bavarian Lodge (5 miles north of Ashcroft on Castle Creek

Rd.) and planned a European-style ski resort with an aerial tramway to nearby Mt. Hayden. World War II ultimately put an end to their plans and, sadly, Billy Fiske died in combat. Ryan then leased Ashcroft to the 10th Mountain Division, America's soldiers on skis, for \$1 a year for mountaineering training in the summer of 1942. After the war, ski area development, much like the silver mining, moved to Aspen and Ryan later deeded the site to the United States Forest Service.

In 1948 Stuart Mace, a veteran of WWII and commander of the 10th Mountain canine division, at Ted Ryan's request brought his family and dog sled operation to Ashcroft, acting as the town steward. Eventually Mace and his famous Toklat huskies were featured in the popular 1950s TV series "Sgt. Preston of the Yukon," for which the ghost town was fitted with false fronts to create a "Canadian" set. Given use of five acres by Ryan in exchange for caretaking the Highland Bavarian's remaining holdings, Mace devoted the rest of his life to protecting the area from development and restoring the ecology. In 1974 he was joined in that effort by longtime Aspenite Ramona Markalunas and the Aspen Historical Society.

Ashcroft soon became a National Historical Site and AHS received the first USFS permit ever granted to a historical society to preserve and interpret a ghost town.

Today, Ashcroft Ghost Town features three restored buildings and six buildings still in their original condition.

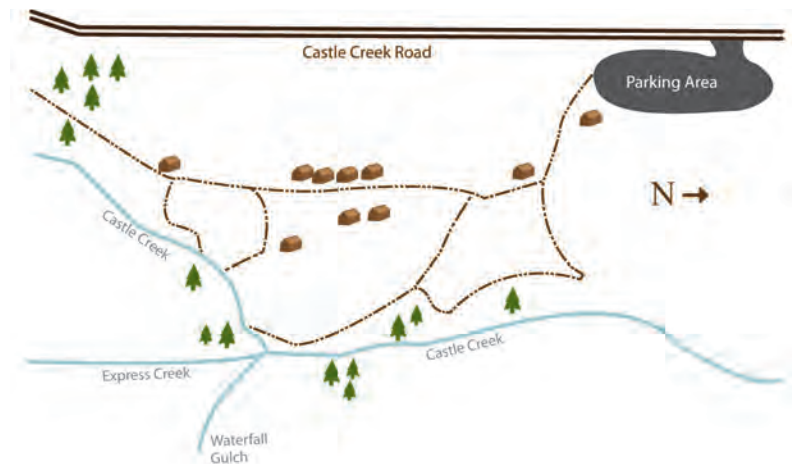


**ELEVATION:** 9,521 feet

**ADMISSION:** \$5/person to maintain site

**LOCATION:** From the roundabout on Highway 82, take the Castle Creek Rd. turnoff and travel 11 miles up the road.

**HOURS:** Guided tours in summer only





# MENU OF TOURS

## HISTORY COACH

A guided tour of historic downtown Aspen and both AHS museums in our electric history coach.



## VICTORIAN WEST END WALKING TOUR

A beautiful stroll through Aspen's historic Victorian West End neighborhood.

## ARCHIVE TOURS

Go into the Historical Society's vault for hands-on history with thousands of artifacts.



## HOTEL JEROME TOUR

Aspen's iconic Hotel Jerome has been at the center of Aspen life ever since it opened in 1889.

## ON-MOUNTAIN SKI HISTORY TOURS

Explore the history of these tremendous mountains: Aspen Mountain and Aspen Highlands.



## HISTORIC PUB CRAWL

Learn about the town's historic watering holes and the characters who frequented them.

## CEMETERY TOUR

Stroll through the town's Red Butte Cemetery and hear about the lives of its most notable residents.



*Most tours are seasonal or available upon request. Please check our website for current offerings, as they do change.*

# MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION



The Society provides a safe haven for the artifacts, documents and historic photographs that tell Aspen's story. Support for the Society helps us manage and maintain two museums and two ghost towns, provide research space and continue to offer a year-long calendar of events, programs and exhibits.

Please consider joining the Society at one of these levels:

PROSPECTORS	\$50 - \$99
LIXIVIATORS	\$100 - \$1,499
SILVER CIRCLE	\$1500 - \$9,999
BULLION ROW	\$10,000+

To join or for more information on membership please contact us at (970) 925-3721 or go to our website at [aspenhistory.org](http://aspenhistory.org) and click on the "Join" button.

## GROUNDS RENTALS

Three unique sites with numerous possibilities.

Don't just celebrate history, make your own!

From elegant Aspen charm to rustic barn party, our museums and Ashcroft ghost town make for a memorable Colorado wedding.

Call for inquiries.  
(970) 925-3721

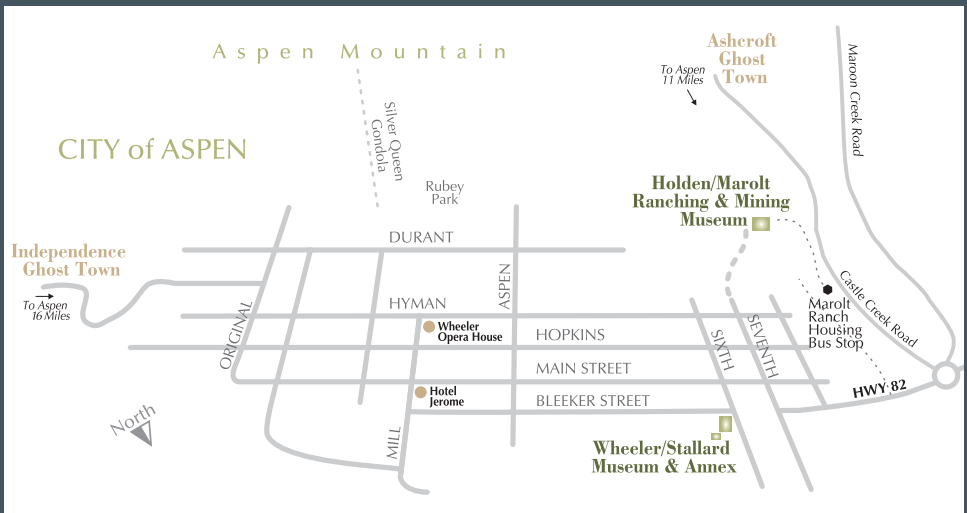


*Photo by David Lynn Photography*

*This brochure made possible in part by the generous support of the Markalunas family.*



# EXPLORE ASPEN



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