This Historic Walking Tour is a venture of the Saguache Downtown Revitalization Project (SDRP) a partnership between the Town of Saguache (www.townofsaguache.org) and ScSEED (www.scseed.org). The 4th Street Business District was named to Colorado Preservation Inc.’s 2009 list of Most Endangered Places in Colorado.

We would like to thank the family of Cecil Hall for allowing us to use his wonderful historic walking tour as a guide to creating this revised document. We would also like to thank Nick Albrecht for sharing his historic document research; and finally to Front Range Associates, who compiled the Town Of Saguache and Cochetopa Corridor Historic Resources Survey, 2000.

Cecil Fraser Hall was born in Saguache on February 2, 1924 and lived there much of his life until his death in 2006. His fascination with stories of the town’s early days are captured in “A Walking Tour of Main Street,” a booklet he wrote and published that contains his wonderful stories of the people and buildings along 4th Street. You can purchase a copy of his tour from the Saguache County Museum. From 1995 to 2000, Cecil also wrote “Remember When?” - a series of more than 125 articles for the Saguache Crescent that chronicled local history. These are available online at http://www.angelfire.com/home/scpl/rememberwhen/contents.html
Our historic walking tour of Saguache begins at the County Courthouse, which celebrated its 100th year in 2010. The Courthouse was placed on the State Register of Historic Properties in August 1993. (J on Map in the center of this booklet)

The present courthouse was built in 1910 after the original courthouse (built in 1881) was destroyed by fire on March 2, 1910. The Saguache Crescent newspaper reported that almost the entire populace responded to the fire alarm, but since the courthouse was so far from the town hall where the fire apparatus was stored, the fire had time to burn unhampered before the engine and hose arrived. The courthouse was replaced in the same year by a $36,110 two-and-a-half-story brick building in the Classical Revival style designed by Denver architect John J. Huddart. The courthouse is located in the Means Addition, a few feet south of where the Otto Mears home and store stood.

The first county courthouse was a plain adobe building that had been owned by Nathaniel Russell and had only two or three rooms. The building served a variety of purposes in the early years. County meetings were held in the building, the rooms on the south were used for judicial proceedings, and rooms on the north held schoolrooms for some students during 1876.

Smith Market (P on Map) - This structure was built in 1908 for two different functions: a general store and a residence for the owner of the store. Its most famous inhabitant, Floyd Smith, bought the building in 1959, living in the dwelling and operated a grocery store. He renamed the store “Smith’s Market” and became a fixture in Saguache. The Denver Post in 1997 reported on Mr. Smith, who was mayor of Saguache for over thirty years, and how the townspeople would come to the store just to brief him on what was going on around town. In the summer of 1997 the town created a kids park in his honor, “Floyd Smith Kids Park.” This building is currently the home of the Smith Market Gallery, owned by local artist Byron Williams.

Shippey/Gotthelf Property (R on Map) - In the early 1900’s Dr. O.P. Shippey owned this property (445 San Juan) and used it as his office and home. Dr. Shippey was the main doctor for Saguache for many years as well as a local investor who aided in the construction of the Saguache Hotel. He practiced medicine in Saguache at this location for well over 20 years. There is a great display of his legacy at the Saguache County Museum that includes: office equipment, a book of many of his “babies.” 435 and 445 were purchased in 1979 by Roger and Marilyn Fenton. Roger and Marilyn are potters, and moved their pottery studio and showroom into the old phone company building at 435 San Juan Ave, and they live in the Shippey/Gotthelf house at 445 San Juan Ave.
Saguache, Colorado
Other Historic Buildings

**Saguache County Museum**
(N on Map) - The Saguache County Museum occupies a building parts of which were constructed over 125 years ago. It has functioned over the years as a school, temporary courthouse, and a residence for jailkeepers and their families. The old jail, built in 1908, is an adobe building finished with stucco. The interior has a sheriff’s office, women’s or V.I.P. cell, and a large room or bullpen with an escape-proof maximum-security cage. This jail was used until 1958. Original graffiti done by prisoners still adorns the walls. It was placed on the State Register in May 1975.

**Forest Service House** (O on Map)
- The Saguache Ranger Station was constructed in 1939 to serve as a ranger residence, office and garage. Assisted by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the USFS designed and built this Pueblo-style complex. Currently, the Ranger’s residence and garage are still in use as constructed while the office has been converted to a bunkhouse to serve seasonal US Forest Service employees.

The empty lot just south of the present Saguache Hotel is where the Otto Mears Hotel was located. It was torn down in 1910. The adobe building was originally the location of the partnership store of Isaac Gotthelf and Otto Mears, known as “Gotthelf and Mears.” A few years later Leopold Mayer bought out Mears’ interest. These partners later moved the store to another location, further north, in the Dunn Block. Their new mercantile business was said to have been the largest and most complete store in the San Luis Valley.

The population of Saguache dropped dramatically by 1900, descending from 660 to 389, a total only slightly higher than that of 1890. The principal reason for the decline was presumably the nationwide depression that started in 1893 and profoundly affected the economy of silver mining states such as Colorado. By 1910, the town had recovered sufficiently to record a population of 620 persons. The decade was a prosperous one, and the period before World War I represented a significant era of construction for Saguache.
Saguache, Colorado
West Side of 4th Street – Dallas Block

The Saguache Hotel, evaluated as potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, was built by local investors to put Saguache on the map, and was constructed in 1910. It received a ten-room addition on the north about 1920. This building, constructed on the site of an earlier hotel by local investors, including Horace Means, W.T. Ashley, Dr. O.P. Shippey, and George Curtis, is significant as the most important hostelry in the town. The hotel served as a stopping place for tourists and a gathering place for the local community. The building is also significant as a type of architecture and includes a brick composition, hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves, shingled dormers, a wrap-around porch with square columns, and segmental arch windows. (I on Map)

In 1935, Florence Means took over the operation of the Saguache Hotel, which was then in disrepair. Mrs. Means felt that the hotel was a vital component of the town. She reopened the restaurant and fixed up the rooms, turning it into a financial success with total hospitality and great warmth. When the Means family moved to Pueblo in 1938, the building was sold in exchange for $5,000 and the titles to three buildings in town.

Saguache, Colorado
Other Historic Buildings

Saguache Elementary School
(L on Map) - The architectural firm of Manning & Frewen designed this two-story H-shaped brick building that was constructed in 1915. The building is a good example of the Mediterranean style, as evidenced by its tile roof, restrained ornamentation, and round arched windows and entrance. It was placed on State Register in August 1993. Today this building is the home of the Saguache County Social Services Department.

Hazard House Museum
(M on Map) - The restored Hazard House was built in 1913. This house was a gift to the Saguache County Museum from Georgie Marie Hazard Givan in 1994. It was opened to the public as part of the museum in May 1997. The home depicts the affluent lifestyle and furnishings of the wealthier Saguache families of the 1920’s and 1930’s. Though not large, the Hazard House is graced with many fine pieces of furniture, a Steinway piano, lush oriental rugs, silver flatware, tea sets, candelabra and serving sets of all kinds, bone China dinnerware and crystal serving dishes, Fostoria glasses, and fine linen.
St. Agnes Mission Church  
(A on Map) - The 1947 building is an unusual vernacular expression of Pueblo Deco, a melding of Art Deco with Southwest Indian designs. The church possesses the distinctive characteristics of this style as evident in its angular composition, vertical emphasis, stepped parapet, corbelled cutouts, and geometric designs. The building was placed on the State Register of Historic Properties in September 2003. It is still an operational church today.

Saguache Town Hall  
(K on Map) - A new Saguache Town Hall to replace an 1874 adobe building had been proposed as early as 1908. The new Town Hall, completed in 1915, was designed by Denver architect Harry W.J. Edbrooke. The Saguache County Lumber Company served as contractor. The $4,000 building featured red brick walls twelve inches thick. In 1916, C.W. Briggs completed an addition to the north end of the building to house the town's fire engine. This site remains the Town Hall today.

In 1987, Tom and Marilyn Ross were the owners of the Saguache Hotel. The Saguache Hotel was part of an American Playhouse, PBS film, “Land of Little Rain” with Helen Hunt as Mary Austin. The film depicted what happened when the Owens Valley of California was devastated when it lost its water to Los Angeles. The Saguache Hotel became the “Independence Hotel and Saloon” for the movie.

During the filming the sidewalks were covered with boardwalks and dirt was brought in to cover the paved streets – even the power lines were taken down. What appeared on film was a small town pioneer hotel. In the empty lot south of the hotel are the remains of the boardwalk and hitching posts used in the film.

The hotel has been closed for many years. Many residents of Saguache would like to see this valuable historic resource preserved.
Across the alley, north of the Saguache Hotel, stands an old building that has served many purposes throughout the years. Today it is the home of the 4th Street Diner and Bakery, owned and operated by Greg Terrell and Esther Last, a new business that opened in July 2010.

Early photos of this building depict it as the “Stockmens Club,” which was a saloon run by Roll Means. Years later it was called “Nix Place,” an ice cream parlor and sandwich shop. In the 1930’s it was W. J. Werner’s plumbing shop; in the 1950’s it was the town’s first laundromat. More recently it was Susan Crutchfield’s Daisy’s Bookstore. (Q on Map)

The 50 x 50 foot adobe building on the south side of Christy and 4th Street was built in 1895. In the 1880’s this site was the home of a saloon called Bingel’s Beer Depot. Wm Bingel & Co. was a popular brewery out of Del Norte that during the 1880’s opened many depots in Southern Colorado.

From 1898 to 1920 the west side was used as a lumber warehouse and the east side of the building was used as a paints, oil and carpenter shop. From 1915 through 1930, C. R. Jorgensen owned this site and used it as his tailoring business and for selling clothing, dry goods, and shoes. In 1930, Mrs. G C Rominger bought “Jorgenson’s” which sold “prop, dry gds, and clothing ” until approximately 1934. (S on Map)

The current owners of the building are Dwight A. and Caroline W. Irwin, who purchased the building in February 2007.
Across the alley from the Ute Theatre stood a frame building that was originally the site of J.J. Keller’s hardware store. In the early 1940’s, R.O. Buckley had a dry cleaning shop and residence at this location.

The old building was in bad repair and was torn down. Dr. Coonan, who at one time served the community with the National Health Service, presently owns the vacant lot.

The next property to the south was originally a brick building built by Lucy Forbes. It was a bakery where meals were also served. For many years this building was used by several local doctors and dentists including Dr. Pugh in the 1920’s, Dr. Vance, Dr. S.O. Swartz and Dr. Stone.

Many years ago, Lucy Williams bought this property, had the addition built on the south side and used this as her home. The property is currently owned by Laura, Gordon and Janis Nehls of Las Animas Colorado.

The next building to the north was John Davidson’s law office back in the early days. Cecil Hall recorded that this building was also the home of the R.B. Robb’s Bakery; as a boy in the 1930’s he had a job delivering bread to the town’s four grocery stores. According to Cecil, when Robb bought a local ranch he sold out to another baker named C.C. Hartwick. After WWII, Lemar Howard turned the building into his living quarters.

The next building to the north was once a grocery and meat market owned and operated by George W. Beckley. It was in 1902 that a twelve-year old girl, Cora Tarbell, was killed in front of this store by an accidental shotgun blast. As her father returned from going into the store, a dog jumped into the buggy and hit the trigger of a shotgun located there.

Cecil Hall also reports that several dry goods stores were housed in this location, including Bess Sherman, R.R. Tarbell and Hartogs. In 1995, these buildings were bought by Rick Barandes and Leslie Griffith and turned into Antiques, Etc., a local antiques store. (#9 on Map)
Visitors often get a kick out of the next building with the sign “Ramies Drug Dealer” in the window. According to local historian Cecil Hall, the drugstore was once owned and operated by Oscar Marold. Oscar had fallen out of a swing when he was a small boy and spent the rest of his life without the use of his legs. He lived a productive life with the aid of crutches and a wheelchair and even drove his own hand-controlled car.

After Oscar died, the store was left to his longtime employee, Ramie Strader. After Ramie’s retirement, the building was vacant for several years. Rich Floss owned a bar called “Packer’s Place,” which was located in this building; Rich sold out to John Callaghan, who ran the bar for a time. The site was also home to the Healing Center in the 1990’s.

The corner building was originally the drug store of Groening and Vonheimberg in the years before 1899. Afterwards Dr. J. Tracy Melvin owned the drug store. Many years later it was the hardware store of Bill Briggs and Sid Hall. It was also a furniture store of “Bookie” Fellers in the 1930’s; and later Luther Campbell had a hardware store in this location. After WWII, this building held Forest Holten’s army surplus and second hand store for a short time. Cecil Hall recorded that Ocea Crowley started the town’s first public library in this location. Currently, both buildings are owned by John Callaghan.

Dr. Shippey built the building next to the First Southwest Bank to use for rental property; it was the site of a long-time grocery store. According to Cecil Hall, Mary Russell had a grocery there in the 1930’s. She sold her business to the Jess Malouff family. The Malouffs ran a grocery and also a dry goods store in the south portion of the building for many years. More recently, it is a yoga studio.

On this block we have the Ute Theatre. At one time this was the site of a livery stable owned by Jud Keyes. Later it was the garage and blacksmith shop of Mark Gould. It has changed hands several times throughout the years including the Russel, Ellis and De Tilla families.

In the later 1940’s Ross Labart bought the property, increased the height of the building and created the Ute Theatre. A small section of the building was used by Mr. Labart as a tire re-cap and re-grooving shop. Later, Louis Groy, who had financed the project, took over the operation of the Ute Theatre. The Groy family took over after his retirement until they sold to Rod Hines. He ran the theater for a short time before Susan Crutchfield took over in the 1990’s.

In 2009, Chris Gydesen bought the Ute Theatre and did extensive remodeling, adding new seats, and a refurbished entryway. Today the Ute Theatre is home of the SLV Theater Company. (H & #10 on Map)
The bank building on the corner was built in 1911. It was known as the Saguache County Bank for 16 years and after 1927, when it consolidated with the First National Bank of Saguache, it became the Saguache County National Bank.

According to Cecil Hall, at one time this property was the headquarters of the Gotthelf Investment Company, which owned most of the productive ranches along Saguache Creek.

It was owned by Vectra Bank of Colorado (Alamosa) at one time and is now occupied by First Southwest Bank. (H on Map)

The large, Italianate style building on the Dunn Block was built at 323-325 4th Street, reflecting the early architectural sophistication of the town. D. Herbert Dunn, who moved to the Saguache area in 1870 and established a ranch known as Willowdale, as well as acquiring other land, owned the building. The Rocky Mountain News reported in 1876 that the Odd Fellows of Saguache had dedicated new lodge rooms in the Dunn Block, which were described as "a hall, of which almost any lodge in Colorado might well feel proud. It is in the second story of Dunn’s brick block. The main hall is richly carpeted, the windows are draped with beautiful curtains, a chandelier and side lamps will furnish abundant light, and altogether it is one of the finest rooms in southwestern Colorado."

The building subsequently housed one of the most prominent businesses, the Means and Ashley Mercantile, known for its huge selection of goods. (F on Map)

This building, one of the oldest in Saguache, is notable for its association with early businesses and fraternal organizations. The first story housed the Means and Ashley Mercantile, one of the most successful businesses in Saguache, while the meeting hall on the second story served groups such as the Odd Fellows. The building is extremely significant for its architecture, which reflects the Italianate style in its vertical emphasis, quoins, and tall windows and entrances with arched hoodmolds.
The boarded entry on the north end of the building was once the entrance to a café and bar known as “Smokey’s Lunch.” After Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Milo Means had a liquor store in this part of the building.

At one time part of this building was used by the First National Bank to house its vault on the south side. This vault is still in place today. Years later this part of the building became the town’s post office.

Today the only part of this large building being used is the Masonic and Eastern Star dining room and lodge rooms on the lower level. In August 2006, the building was placed on the State Register of Historic Properties. (F on Map)

Next door to the Saguache Crescent office is a small building which for many years was a café. According to Cecil Hall, in the early days a portrait painter named Larry Dye started a café here.

When Cecil was a boy in the 1930’s, Bill Kimberlin ran “Willis Chile Parlor” at this location. He sold hamburgers and pop for five cents each. Around the time of WW II, Pearl Nehls operated a café from this building.

On the corner is a building that has also served many purposes. At one time it was a saloon, a barber shop, the post office, a novelty shop, a second hand store, the “Pilgrim’s Holiness Church,” a dress shop and a beauty shop. After WWII, Bill Vahrenkamp operated a café called the “Coffee Shoppe” here. This was a site of several other coffee shops through the years.

Today Dean Coombs, publisher of the Saguache Crescent, owns both of these buildings. (G on Map)
Next to the vacant lot stands the home of the Saguache Crescent, the only weekly newspaper in Colorado still printed on a hot metal press.

The Saguache Crescent structure is one of the oldest buildings in Saguache. This frame, brick, and adobe building is associated with the town’s commercial and business history, and most notably for its association with the history of journalism here. The building has housed a newspaper since at least 1890, and is the long-time home of the Crescent, which has been operating here since 1917. The building is also representative of the false front design and displays remarkable historic integrity.

The Ogdens acquired the Saguache Crescent in 1917, and their descendants continue to operate the paper today. Following the death of Charles in 1935, daughter Marie became the editor, assisted by her mother and sister, Irene. Marie's husband, Robert Coombs, became publisher. Following his death in 1979, their son, Dean, became publisher and, in 1992, owner. Dean is still providing Saguache with a weekly paper today. (G on Map)

This next building, with its beautiful stained glass, was Johnnie O’Neil’s “Bon Ton Saloon.” The Bon Ton Saloon (built pre-1868) is associated with the history of commerce and trade in Saguache, especially for its function as an early saloon. The building is also notable for its architecture, which, although somewhat altered, represents the Twentieth Century Commercial style through its brick composition with flat roof topped by decorative urns, contrasting brickwork and brick panels, cornice, and large display windows.

Years later it became a grocery store operated by Jack Belmard. In the late 1930’s K.D. Saliba also had a grocery store in this location. Milo Means bought this property and after some remodeling rented the building to American Legion Garcia Post #110. The Legion Club sold memberships to townspeople for use of their bar, card room, slot machines, punch boards and bowling alley. After the Legion Club closed in the 1950’s, Milo Means moved his liquor store to this location. After Milo’s retirement he sold the building to Richard Lovato, who rented the building to two lawyers, Bruce McMillian and Laura Frances Riley.

In 1993, two artists from Taos, Doug Pederson and Kelsey Hauck, bought the property and made it into their art studio and residence. Doug has since died, and Kelsey continues to live and work on her art here in Saguache. (E on Map)
The prosperity of the town was also evident in the new facade completed for the Saguache County Bank. The bank started as a private enterprise in the back of the Gotthelf and Mayer Mercantile and moved to a modest one-story brick building at 311 4th Street before 1886. In 1913, the bank board of directors solicited bids for a $7,500 remodeling of the building. Denver architect John J. Huddart was selected to design the new façade, and contractor M.J. Kenney, also of Denver, completed the construction. The Denver Terra Cotta Company produced the new front, which included cast stone, limestone, and marble. The American Sash and Door Company of Denver fabricated the glass for the new façade, including stained glass ornamentation. The Classical Revival frontispiece included columns supporting a pediment and made the small building one of the most distinguished in town.

According to Cecil Hall, after the bank closed in the 1930’s it was empty until Art Creger opened Saguache’s first liquor store in 1933. Jack Glatz started a cold storage locker plant in the late 1940’s. Later Fred Curtis and then Elmer Keck ran the business until Keck closed the plant and started Keck’s Café.

The property was sold to Laura Frances Riley, a lawyer. Shortly after her death Chuck Lilly purchased the property, where he lived until his death in 2005. His son and daughter-in-law, Joe & Cindy Lilly, inherited the property, and in May 2010 they opened a gallery and gift shop at this location. (D on Map)

This structure is often referred to as the “tin” building, and it too has served many different purposes including both business and residential. According to Cecil Hall, the south doorway led to a pool hall in the front of the building. A room in the rear was a card hall that was known to have poker games that lasted for several days. Jack Kent managed this pool hall in the 1930’s and 1940’s. In later years, this was the site of Floyd Fister’s Café and beer joint. In the late 1940’s, Roscoe Strader and then John Henry both ran barbershops from this building.

The north doorway was the entrance to “Win” Palmer’s liquor store, which operated from 1934 until Mr. Palmer sold it to Bob and Muriel Fennell in the early 1950’s. The Fennells sold the store to Milo and Verna Means, and after their retirement it became the residence of the Manzanares family.

Today this building is owned by Jane and Duncan Martin, community artists, who have plans to renovate the building.
This same building later became the Gotthelf and Tarbell Mercantile Company (successor to Gotthelf and Mayer) it was one of the largest mercantiles in the San Luis Valley during the early twentieth century. This larger building was used as the warehouse (C on Map) and the mercantile (B on Map) was located in the corner building located on the north side of the false front.

According to Cecil Hall, in 1918, this partnership sold to F. Ridgeway and Son. The son, Walton Ridgeway, had a dry goods and grocery store in the northernmost part of the building. This building was also home to Ray Nixon’s hardware store, the Hazard Electric and then Cochetopa Gallery (until the 1990s). Most recently it is owned by Michael Cassidy who runs an antiques business.

In 1949, Eddie Hazard bought the old F. Ridgeway and Son dry goods and grocery store (B on Map) and remodeled the building for a street front pharmacy and a medical clinic in the rear.

According to Cecil Hall, the first doctor to use the facility was Dr. Walter S. Keating. The pharmacist was Arvel Sides. After a few years, Mr. Sides passed away, and in 1955 Dr. Keating moved to Denver. Following Dr. Keating’s departure, the National Health Service provided Saguache with recently graduated doctors.

The County now owns the property, however, there is a stipulation on the building that requires the County to maintain health services in this building or it reverts back to the family.

According to Cecil Hall, the next property to the north was one of our early post offices. After electricity became available, the Public Service Company of Colorado had their offices in this location for many years.

In the late 1950’s Pete and Merle Burnham remodeled the building and started the Abstract Company at this location. Joyce and Dick Bodley and then Scott Bodley owned the property. Currently it houses the Saguache County Abstract and Title Insurance, owned by Paul and Jeff Motz.

This next building to the north was known in the early days as the “big store.” Isaac Gotthelf was born in Germany in 1844 and settled in Santa Fe in 1859, where he worked in a general store. He moved to Costilla in 1866 and to Saguache three years later. With funds he had amassed in his previous ventures, Gotthelf ordered a supply of goods from Marshall Field in Chicago and with partner Otto Mears opened the first store in Saguache. In 1878, he and Leopold Mayer founded the Gotthelf and Mayer Mercantile Company, which was one of the most successful businesses in Saguache during the nineteenth century. The partners also established the Saguache County Bank in a section of their store, later erecting a separate building. (C on Map).