



**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
Gilpin County Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HAC)**

April 21, 2015

The Gilpin County Historic Preservation Advisory Commission convened in the Gilpin County Library, 15131 Hwy 119, Black Hawk, Colorado.

Public Attending: 0

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:58 p.m.

Quorum Call:

Present: Chair Bret Johnson, Rick Newman & Deon Wolfenbarger (alternate)

Absent: Chair pro-tem Linda Jones, Secretary Barbara Thielemann (excused) & Herman Gaines (excused)

Staff Present: Historic Advisory Liaison Ray Rears

Agenda Review: No changes

Minutes: Newman moved to approve the January 20, 2015 minutes as corrected seconded by Wolfenbarger and the motion was unanimously approved.

Old Business:

Nevadaville Historical Survey – Certified Local Government Grant:

Rears informed the commission that the individual site forms have been submitted to the state for their final review. Site forms for the Hubert Mine, Dogtown, Gilpin Tramway Bridge, Nevadaville City Hall, Valentine Devinney Mansur House & Davis Duncan Cabin were presented to the commission for discussion. Discussion ensued regarding the forms information detailed in the reports. The draft full report should be out soon, which the commission will get a chance to comment on via email. Wolfenbarger (also the consultant working on the project) also commented on the project.

New Business:

Bald Mountain Cemetery -

Rears reported that the work on the six stones in need of repair will start this spring or summer. A quote was received from Norman Memorials in the amount of \$3,145. The County will purchase a plaque describing the cemetery which will cost an additional \$256.70. A copy of the copy/graphic was presented. The plan is to use the full \$3,695.10 on these two projects by the end of the year. The extra funds will be used for a contingency and for the installation of the plaque at the site.



Central City Historic Projects – Discussion –

Rears summarized recent events including the request we apply for the grant for the Roworth Building in Central City on behalf of the owner who is ineligible. Additionally Rears has been requested to assist the Masonic Lodge in Central City with obtaining grants to restore the building after the façade appears to be failing. Lastly, the City of Central has requested the County apply (as the lienholder for the property) for the Treasurers Deed for the Belvidere Theater which they have agreed. The outstanding tax bill due is approximately \$192,000. Once the County gains title to the property, it is expected to become a priority for staff to assess, preserve, market and develop in the years to come.

HAC Tour 2015 –

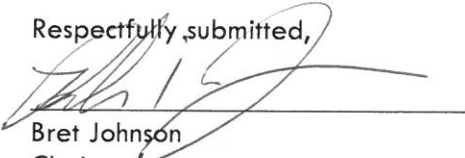
It was confirmed the tour this year will be on July 11, 2015. Johnson mentioned that he may have found the original location of the Thorn Lake School and that should be a stop on the tour. Newman suggested the tour also focus on Nevadaville since now we have an expert on the area on the Commission.

Public Comment:

Newman again stated that we are losing heritage in the County and that we need to think about preserving the stories of old timers and not just the buildings. Newman suggested using the Nederland Old Timer days as a venue to gather to old timers and record their stories. Discussion ensued and it was suggested to use the County fair instead. Rears confirmed that he would attempt to secure an ADA site indoors if possible.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before HAC, Wolfenbarger moved to adjourn, all in favor at 8:14 p.m. The next meeting will probably be on July 21, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,


Bret Johnson
Chair



Gilpin County's Negro Hill is renamed Aunt Clara Brown Hill. Finally.

By Patricia Calhoun Wednesday, May 16 2012 - Denver Westword Magazine

The controversy over "Niggerhead," the hand-painted label on a rock at the hunting camp leased by Texas governor Rick Perry's family for decades, got Roger Baker, manager of Gilpin County, thinking that it was time — long past time, actually — to change the name of "Negro Hill." Yes, in 2011 that was still the official name of a spot near the cemeteries just outside of Central City. And that itself was an improvement over the name that appears on maps made in the early twentieth century: "Nigger Hill."

"The origin of the name is somewhat murky," Baker wrote in a letter to county residents, explaining why he was going for a name change, "but it probably had to do with the lynching on the hill of a black man, George Smith, for the robbery and murder of William Hamblin in Quartz Valley, just over the hill. The crime took place in 1868, and at least a semblance of legal procedure was followed — in fact, the case was appealed to the Colorado Supreme Court. Still, the crowd at the hanging on February 18, 1870, certainly demonstrated some markedly brutal behavior according to the local paper.

"While we never want to forget even these unpleasant aspects of our common heritage, there's no doubt that while the execution can never be undone, certainly the offensive name should be rethought."



"Aunt" Clara Brown.

And last fall, while Perry's explanation of "Niggerhead" proved that there were rocks in his head as well as at the camp, Baker started doing a lot of thinking. He studied the mechanism for changing a name, which requires an appeal to the United States Board on Geographic Names, part of the U.S. Geological Survey. And he thought about what name might be a fitting replacement. Simply naming the spot Cemetery Hill might be "too morbid," he said, suggesting instead that, "as a way of partially redressing this past injustice," it be named for one of Gilpin County's most prominent African-Americans residents.



Baker didn't need to do much research to find just such a worthy person. Clara Brown had been born a slave in Virginia around 1803; she was finally given her freedom in 1857 and headed west, landing in Colorado in 1858 and moving to Gilpin County in May 1859, after gold was discovered there. While others hunted for their fortunes in the streams and mines, she built a laundry, and "Aunt" Clara Brown soon became one of Central City's most distinguished residents. Her incredible life story has already been honored with a stained-glass portrait at the Colorado State Capitol; an opera based on her life, *Gabriel's Daughter*, had its premiere at the Central City Opera in 2003. And she's the focus of a book, *Clara: An Ex-Slave in Gold Rush Colorado*, that just happens to have been written by Baker. In fact, he stumbled on the references to Negro Hill while working on that volume.

So Baker had no problem crafting a compelling argument for changing the name of Negro Hill to Aunt Clara Brown Hill (although full names are rarely used, "Brown Hill" wasn't much better), and sent off the request last fall. And for once, the feds responded with admirable speed. At its April 12 meeting, the Board on Geographic Names approved the proposal to change Negro Hill to Aunt Clara Brown Hill. Here's the official entry as it now appears on the Geographic Names Information System:

Aunt Clara Brown Hill: summit; 9,088 ft, in Arapaho National Forest, 0.75 mil NW of Central City, 6.6 mi E of Saint Mary's; the name honors "Aunt" Clara Brown (c. 1803-1885), who was born a slave, then after earning her freedom, moved to Colorado where she operated a laundry, helped found churches, grubstaked young miners, cared for the sick, and invested in real estate."

As a laundress, Aunt Clara Brown would recognize that it takes more than bleach to clear out all the stains of the past. But coming clean is a good place to start.