

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **July 13, 2011**

Destination: **Follow the Trams Excursion**

Leaders: **Richard Robinson** Number of Participants: **13**

On July 13, 2011, thirteen SJBAS members met mining historian Rudy Davison at the Silverton Visitor Center, and SJBAS member, Bill Alsup, a long-time employee with a tram firm in Silverton, who added his knowledge and experiences of the area. The two experts provided a day filled with awe! We learned about the history and mechanics of aerial tram towers and then traveled to the Arrastra Gulch Interpretive Sign. There is much to learn at this spot, including the experiences of the Stoibers, who built quite an empire along the Animas, including a train stop, several mills and the first aerial tram in the San Juan Mountains.

No interpretive sign can compete with the inclusion of Rudy's view on some of the personal activities of the family and workings of the mill and tram. One mine worker jumped into an ore bucket, rather than walk down only to become trapped when the tram shut down since no one else knew he was a passenger.

Then we crossed the Animas to view where the Wilfley Table was invented and to venture up Arrastra Gulch, then drive up the Little Giant Basin Road, viewing the Contention Aerial Tram and stopping to learn about the Black Prince Mine before turning back. In addition, we took a short run up Cunningham Gulch to view the trams before going to the town site of Eureka (Greek for "I found it") to view the Sunnyside Mill, many of the parts and machinery for which came from the Animas Forks Gold Prince Mill.

We then drove up the Eureka Gulch caldera to view the remains of Lake Emma at 12,240' elevation and the Sunnyside Mine. Lake Emma flooded into the mine tunnels below on a Sunday evening, resulting in a wall of water rushing down Cement Creek. There is not space to discuss all we learned on this journey into the past.

- Prepared by Rich Robinson

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Participants: Linda and Richard Robinson, Bob Danielson, Florence and Dick Mason, George Hozier, Jim Shadell, Jim Mueller, John Viner, Letha Cagle, Gail and Marlo Schulz, Bill Alsup