



## Meeker Site Visit Report: June 5, 2013

Comments and Recommendations compiled by:  
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HISTORY *Colorado*  
OFFICE of ARCHAEOLOGY  
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## INTRODUCTION

History Colorado houses the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP), also known as the State Historic Preservation Office and overseen by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Every state has a comparable office. In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 [as amended through 1992] mandate and in accordance with National Park Service guidance, the SHPO undertakes survey and inventory to locate, identify, and evaluate historic and archaeological resources statewide, maintaining this data as a state archive. Survey efforts follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification so as to: facilitate decision-making; specify research design, objectives, and methods; result in survey reports; encourage National Register of Historic Places nomination; and inform statewide preservation planning, among other preservation goals. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Evaluation provide the baseline National Register criteria for evaluation and call for development of historic context and detailing of sufficient information on which to base preservation decisions.

OAHP staff members, Astrid Liverman (National and State Register Coordinator), Elizabeth Blackwell (Historical and Architectural Survey Coordinator), Heather Peterson (National and State Register Historian), and Patrick Eidman (Preservation Planner) visited the Town of Meeker on June 5, 2013 to conduct survey work. Staff's goal was to complete a new reconnaissance survey and re-survey some previously recorded resources in an effort to assist the Town in determining if there might be a historic district and to update individual eligibility recommendations. Staff spent the morning photographing buildings and taking notes on both building and landscape features.

This report reflects staff recommendations based on field observations during this visit. This report should not be considered a comprehensive examination of historic resources in Meeker, nor of National and State register potential for the Town of Meeker, as there is additional research and evaluation potential. The site visit combined with this summary report should serve as a starting place for Meeker's citizens, advocates, and local officials to consider ways to expand historic preservation in the community.

## **BACKGROUND**

Prior to this effort, Meeker had one planned survey and some piecemeal survey completed for a variety of reasons over the years. The planned survey was completed in 2009, when select resources in the Town of Meeker were intensively surveyed under the Small Town Initiative, funded in part by a State Historical Fund grant. Suzannah Reid of Reid Architects, Inc. prepared the final survey report and survey forms. This survey included intensive-level documentation of thirty-eight scattered historic buildings in Meeker. The study resulted in thorough documentation of some of Meeker's most significant historic buildings, but did not look comprehensively at commercial or residential areas as a whole. OAHP staff initiated this more recent effort to comprehensively examine a larger area.

Staff reviewed the 2009 survey report as well as the town's comprehensive plan (last updated in 2006) to identify areas most dense in historic resources. Staff determined that their time in Meeker would best be spent looking comprehensively at the area bordered by Main, 1<sup>st</sup>, Garfield, and 10th streets. Residences, commercial properties, and outbuildings on both sides of each street were examined, and staff noted landscape features and street patterns.

## **EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF MEEKER**

Prefigured by the Ute and some early ranchers, the first established Euro-American settlers in the area of modern day Meeker were United States military troops who moved in after the 1879 Meeker Massacre and Battle of Milk Creek. The troops arrived to provide a military presence to stem the violence that had occurred earlier in the year. Troops, led by Colonel Wesley Merritt, ultimately established the Camp on the White River just four miles east of the White River Indian Agency, site of the Meeker Massacre. Nearly one thousand soldiers were housed at the Camp on the White River. Colonel Merritt laid the camp out with a central parade ground surrounded by buildings. A flagpole stood at the center of the grounds. The buildings were a mix of adobe barracks and log buildings for officers and their families. Only one store, the J. W. Hugus & Company mercantile, existed as early as 1877 and it provided groceries, hardware, and agricultural supplies along with a post office and banking services to both the soldiers and settlers who began moving to the area. Colonel Merritt departed Meeker in 1882, but the soldiers remained until 1883. By this time the area's Utes had largely been removed to the Uintah and Ouray reservation in Utah, and thus the tension between white settlers and native people had greatly reduced.

With the military moving on to other efforts they began a sale of the now-unused army buildings in August of 1883. White settlers in the area were eager to purchase the buildings to further establish businesses and grow the community. Newton Major, manager for the Hugus Company, purchased the first mud brick (adobe) building for \$100, which became the new home for the Meeker store. Susan C. Wright purchased the second building and Charles Dunbar bought the third. Wright and Dunbar merged their newly acquired realty and opened the Meeker Hotel in 1884. George S. Allsebrook (also spelled Allesbrook) purchased the fourth building, auctioned for \$30. It was located at what is now 400 Main Street, the location of the 1896 IOOF building. The officers' quarters were purchased by Samuel Fairfield for \$100 by that Samuel Fairfield. These five residents, along with fifteen others, comprised the original Town Company. The group arrived at the name "Meeker" as an acknowledgment to White River Indian Agent Nathaniel Meeker, who was famously killed in the Meeker Massacre.

In 1885 Meeker became the only incorporated town in northwestern Colorado, a status it held for more than twenty years. It became the center for business, banking, and commerce for the area, including a profitable

Native American trade business. The original 56 blocks of Meeker were laid out by William H. Clark, the town's first mayor. Clark used the original army parade grounds as the starting point for his town grid. Main Street runs along the south of the original parade grounds, while Park Street represents the north. 5<sup>th</sup> Street bisects the original grounds. The original town core began with this arrangement and Clark expanded three identically sized blocks to the north, south, east, and west. This plat was filed with Garfield County on September 11, 1885.

After the departure of the military, early residents of Meeker and the surrounding areas were, for the most part, either directly or indirectly engaged in ranching. Ranchers managed herds on the rich lands surrounding Meeker, but the town operated as their supply headquarters. In many cases the ranchers faced a day of travel to get to Meeker for supplies, so they did not make the trip often. Businesses in town thrived on activity from the ranchers, and ranchers depended on supplies available in town. With the larger population of the town as well as the ranchers in surrounding areas, the commercial area quickly grew to include two large general stores, a lumber yard, two blacksmith and wagon shops, a saddlery and harness shop, shoe shop, carpenter, book and stationery supplier, bank, post office, barber, two delivery stables, an express office, *The Meeker Herald* newspaper, and a school. In 1889 the Hugus mercantile constructed a two-story brick building at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Main Street, which was designed by Denver architectural firm Fisher & Fisher. This was the first brick building and signaled the turn of Meeker as a small frame-building settlement to Meeker as a thriving modern town and supply center for northwestern Colorado.

Residential growth naturally mirrored that of the commercial growth. The first frame house was built at 4<sup>th</sup> and Main in Meeker in 1883, coinciding with the opening of Meeker's first sawmill. Though now demolished, that house symbolized movement away from log and mud brick construction and was a sign of permanence among Meeker residents. As the residential area continued to develop an interesting pattern emerged in the blocks closest to the commercial center. The original platted blocks were left largely open. This was due to the many ranchers who lived in cabins on their ranch part of the time, and also had town houses in Meeker that would serve as a secondary residence. The town houses often required large lots to facilitate storage of horses or other livestock for the owners when they spent time in town. As this lifestyle shifted over time, some of these larger lots were divided and newer homes began to fill in the gaps. This has resulted in a span of original construction dates, sizes and styles of residential buildings within the historic core of Meeker. This infill development pattern is significant in how it tells the story of early Meeker.

Meeker continued to serve as a supply center for ranchers well into the twentieth century, but never gained the traction of the other nearby supply centers of Rifle, Glenwood Springs, and Grand Junction. Despite never experiencing business and population growth like their neighbors to the south, Meeker has remained stable with an agricultural economy and as a strong tourist destination for hunters and sportsmen.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Comparably, the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties (commonly referred to as the “State Register”) is a listing of the state’s significant cultural resources worthy of preservation for the future education and enjoyment of Colorado’s residents and visitors. Properties listed in the National Register are automatically placed in the Colorado State Register. They may also be nominated separately to the Colorado State Register without inclusion in the National Register. Listing in either register offers limited protection from federal and state agency actions that would affect the property.

History Colorado’s Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation assists property owners in listing Colorado’s most significant buildings, structures, objects, districts, and sites in the National Register of Historic Places and the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties.

- Formal recognition of the history of the community, the state, and the nation.
- A body of information for community planning, heritage tourism, and neighborhood revitalization.
- Eligibility to apply for state tax credits for restoration, rehabilitation, or preservation.
- Eligibility to obtain federal rehabilitation tax credits for income-producing properties that meet specific standards for work.
- Eligibility to compete for grants from History Colorado’s State Historical Fund. These grants may be used for acquisition and development, education, and survey and planning projects.
- Ability to purchase and display a plaque to commemorate designation.
- Nationwide studies demonstrate that designated historic districts outpace undesignated neighborhoods in market value.
- Limited protection from federal agency actions that would affect the property. Agencies must solicit the comments of History Colorado to assure that National Register listed or eligible properties are given consideration in federal planning processes. See Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 for more information.
- Federal tax deductions are available for charitable contributions of partial interests (easements) for conservation purposes.

### **National Register Listed and Potentially Eligible Properties**

The following staff comments and recommendations are based on a reconnaissance survey conducted in the commercial and residential center of Meeker. Staff had limited time to spend in the town. Please note that additional historic research and review of established historic contexts is warranted if properties or a district moves forward for nomination to the National or State Registers. Staff opinions on eligibility do not guarantee that those properties will be listed in or excluded from listing on the National or State Registers, which is done based on nominations submitted to the Colorado Historic Preservation Review Board and in turn the Keeper of the National Register or History Colorado Board of Directors. For additional information on how to nominate properties to the National or State Registers, visit:

<http://www.historycolorado.org/oahp/national-state-registers>

Please note that private property owner consent is required for individual National or State Register Nominations to be processed. While anyone may prepare a nomination, private property owners are given the opportunity to object. If the majority of property owners within a potential National Register Historic District object to the nomination, the district cannot be listed. All property owners within the boundaries of a potential State Register district must actively consent to the nomination to list the district.

Under federal law, owners of private property listed in the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose provided that there is no Federal involvement. Owners have no obligation to open their properties to the public, to restore them, or even to maintain them if they choose not to do so. There are no restrictions imposed by History Colorado as to what private property owners may or may not do with their property. Private property owners may alter or demolish a National Register property subject only to applicable local government regulations and permitting procedures.

### **National Register Listed Properties**

To date, two properties in Meeker have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Hotel Meeker (5RB.985) at 560 Main Street on May 7, 1980 and the St. James Episcopal Church (5RB.983) at 368 4<sup>th</sup> Street on March 30, 1978.

### **Colorado State Register of Historic Properties**

To date, two properties have been listed in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, the J.W. Hugus Co. Building (5RB.2242), also known as A. Oldland and Co. Building or the Oldland Block, at 594 Main Street on December 11, 1991 and the Rio Blanco High School (5RB.2667) (Meeker Intermediate or Junior High School) at 555 Garfield Street on March 10, 1993. All of the above-named properties are in Meeker's historic commercial center and remain vital parts of the community.

### **Previously Determined Eligible Properties**

Other properties are recorded in the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation database as officially eligible, including: Meeker Elementary School (5RB.2243) at 455 Main Street; the three buildings historically comprising the garrison Army officers' quarters from the Camp on the White River (5RB.2247, 5RB.2248, and 5RB.2249) in the 500 block of Park Avenue; the Rio Blanco County Courthouse (5RB.2243) at 565 Main Street; and the Dikeman or Cowling House, also known as the Joy Inn (5RB.2305) at 687 Garfield Street.

## **Potential Districts and Individually Eligible Properties:**

### ***Garrison Buildings, 500 Block, Park Avenue***

These three buildings constituting the former officers' quarters of the Camp on White River are located adjacent to the lot occupied by the Rio Blanco County Courthouse, which, along with the lot occupied by the Meeker Elementary School, comprise the original parade grounds (now bisected by 5<sup>th</sup> Street). These properties, dating to circa 1879, constitute a significant grouping related to early Colorado military history and community planning and development. Built as the result of the incident known as the Meeker Massacre at the White River Agency, coupled with the Battle of Milk Creek--which resulted in the removal of the northern Ute people from Colorado amongst the larger story of American westward expansion and Bureau of Indian Affairs policy in the nineteenth century--the extant garrison buildings embody a significant episode in that narrative. Further, these buildings predate the founding of the Town of Meeker itself, which subsequently developed in response to the garrison location.

Character-defining features include original windows, log post-and-beam construction, and the relative intactness of the original officers' quarters floor plans. Additional research is needed relative to a 1977 survey notation indicating these buildings' relocation, which likely occurred circa 1883 subsequent to the closure of the Army installation (see above historic context) and the auctioning off of its buildings. One of the three buildings is privately owned as a residence and part-time rental, while the other two comprise the Rio Blanco Historical Society Museum. All of the buildings have undergone some alterations, including additions, exterior stabilization, and removal of some historic landscape features. Some of these alterations are historic, however, and the grouping retains sufficient integrity to communicate their significance as rare and evocative resources under National Register Criteria A and potentially C.

### ***Potential Meeker Historic District, Park, Main, 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>***

Staff felt that the area bounded by 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, Park Street to the north, 8<sup>th</sup> Street to the east, and Main Street to the south had the potential to represent a National Register Historic District. This area represents the early residential, commercial, and governmental establishment and growth of the Town of Meeker and is significant under National Register Criteria A and C. Historic buildings in this area maintain sufficient significance and integrity to convey Meeker's early history. This area currently contains the densest concentration of historic resources in Meeker and would be the best area to focus on if the town wanted to pursue nomination of a historic district representing its early development.

Commercial buildings in this potential district include the 1889 Hugus Building, which marked the first brick commercial construction in town and other early masonry buildings such as the Neal Block, the Meeker Café building, and the Meeker Drug building, which is unique in Meeker for featuring a 1920s/30s Carrara glass façade. Residential buildings include stylistically simple examples from the earliest years of Meeker residency such as the 1889 James Lyttle House (715 Park Ave, 5RB.2666), as well as buildings that mirrored national stylistic trends of their time such as the 1918 John Neal House (613 Park Ave, 5RB.4397), with its Craftsman detailing. Government and education are represented in the inclusion of the 1935 Rio Blanco County Courthouse, and 1939 Meeker Elementary School. Finally, this district would include the garrison buildings with their distinct significance described above.





Suggested boundary of potential Meeker historic district (aerial map courtesy of Google Earth)

**Potential Park Street Historic District, 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Blocks of Park**

Should the owners of commercial properties not wish to pursue designation, a second possibility is to pursue nomination under National Register Criterion C of a smaller residential historic district along the north side of Park Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> streets. Residential properties on the south side of Park Street between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> could also be considered for inclusion. This area is proposed for inclusion in the larger district described above, but this second option would eliminate the civic and commercial buildings to the south. The residential properties along this stretch of Park Street represent an intact sampling of early architectural expression in Meeker.



Suggested boundary of potential Park Street historic district (aerial map courtesy of Google Earth)



### Additional Eligibility Determinations

While in Meeker, OAHP staff took updated photos of some properties that had been previously surveyed. Staff updated the eligibility recommendations for several of these properties based on current conditions. The following list includes properties that are considered eligible for either the National or State Register on their own, or that would be considered contributing to a potential National or State Register District. In some cases properties have been classified as “Needs Data” this indicates that staff felt there was potential that the property could be National or State Register eligible, but that there were lingering questions at the time of review. This table has been included because the findings vary from those in the 2009 survey, and OAHP staff wanted the Town of Meeker to be aware of the updates.

Site #	Property Name	Address	NR	SR	NRD	SRD	Needs Data
5RB.2244	Meeker Elementary	455 Main Street	X	X			
5RB.4379	Oldland House	487 Park Avenue	X	X	X	X	
5RB.4380	N/A	449 Park Avenue			X	X	
5RB.4381	H.A. Wildhack House	425 Park Avenue			X	X	
5RB.4382	N/A	785 Park Avenue			X	X	
5RB.4383	J.J. Donnelly House	907 Park Avenue		X			X
5RB.4384	Isaac Baer House	835 Garfield Street					X (for SR)
5RB.4385	N/A	865 Main Street		X			
5RB.4386	N/A	625 Garfield Street	X	X			
5RB.4392	Simms House	657 Cleveland Street	X	X			
5RB.4397	Joseph Neal House	613 Park Avenue		X	X	X	
5RB.4405	N/A	511 Cleveland Street	X	X			
5RB.6511	N/A	540 5 <sup>th</sup> Street		X			
5RB.6512	N/A	677 8 <sup>th</sup> Street			X	X	
5RB.6513	N/A	490 9 <sup>th</sup> Street					X
5RB.6514	W. Simms House	615 Cleveland Street		X			
5RB.6516	N/A	1191 Garfield Street		X			X
5RB.6520	N/A	1085 Main Street					X
5RB.6524	N/A	683 Park Avenue			X	X	
5RB.6527	N/A	1240 Park Avenue	X	X			
5RB.6528	N/A	614 Water Street					X
5RB.6529	N/A	780 Water Street		X			

## RESEARCH NEEDS

As noted above, staff's visit to Meeker was largely observational, and the historic context summary above heavily draws from the narrative developed for the 2009 survey and common online sources. There are some additional research needs in Meeker that would assist in better understanding the Town's historic resources.

1. As previously noted, more information is needed as to the date of any past relocation of the garrison buildings.
2. The survey report completed by Suzannah Reid referenced an auction where many of the garrison buildings were sold. Additional research should be completed to determine the locations of any extant garrison buildings from the Camp on the White River.
3. The previous survey focused on residential buildings constructed up to 1920. Further understanding the development pattern in Meeker would require additional research on the infill properties to determine when they were built, and what local economic factors were influencing the desire/need for infill.
4. Similar to the above, the previous survey has good information and history of Meeker up to 1920, but the economic and commercial climate of the community after that date is not well documented. The Carrara glass façade on the Meeker Drug building likely dates to the 1920s or 1930s, and the Courthouse and Elementary school also date to that decade. Additional research as to what was happening in Meeker beyond 1920 would help to better understand some of the Town's more recent, yet historic, buildings.
5. Further information relative to the work of any local or regional architects or craftsman and the influence of the lumber mill on local architectural development would be helpful in the development of district nomination.
6. Finally, additional documentation of the evolution of the town plat and streetscape is warranted to account for those small-scale and landscape features.

## **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES / FINANCIAL INCENTIVES / RESOURCES**

### **State Historical Fund**

The State Historical Fund was created by the 1990 constitutional amendment allowing limited gaming in the towns of Cripple Creek, Central City, and Black Hawk. The amendment directs that a portion of the gaming tax revenues be used for historic preservation throughout the state. Funds are distributed through a competitive process and all projects must demonstrate strong public benefit and community support. Grants vary in size, from a few hundred dollars to amounts in excess of \$200,000. The State Historical Fund assists in a wide variety of preservation projects including restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings, architectural assessments, archaeological excavations, nomination and interpretation of historic places, preservation planning studies, and education and training programs.

Contact: (303) 866-2825

More information can be found at: <http://www.historycolorado.org/oahp/state-historical-fund>

### **Colorado Historical Foundation Revolving Loan Fund**

The Colorado Historical Foundation (CHF) created the CHF Revolving Loan Fund (Loan Fund) to leverage resources available for preservation of Colorado's historic buildings. The Loan Fund partners with the State Historical Fund to provide low interest rate loans as an additional source of funding for historic preservation. This permanent and self-sufficient source of capital funds is managed by CHF. Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) acts as the fiscal agent responsible for evaluating risk and closing and servicing the loans.

Contact: (303) 894-2503

More information: <http://www.cohf.org/revolvingloanfund.html>

### **Colorado Main Street Program**

The Colorado Main Street® Program is a program to revitalize traditional downtown districts within the context of historic preservation. The program uses an approach that advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of central business districts based on their traditional assets of unique architecture, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community.

The Colorado Main Street Program is designed to assist communities in revitalizing their traditional downtown or neighborhood commercial districts. The Main Street Program works throughout Colorado to help local governments and downtown organizations create an economically diverse business environment while preserving local character and historic resources.

Contact: (303) 866-2639

More information: <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/DOLA-Main/CBON/1251594477385>

## Preservation Tax Credits

Federal and state tax laws provide tax incentives for historic preservation projects that follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The federal government offers a 20% investment tax credit for the approved rehabilitation of certified historic buildings used for income-producing purposes as well as a 10% credit for other types of older buildings. The state offers a similar 20% state income tax credit for approved preservation projects on historic properties, including owner-occupied residential. Applicants are urged to contact the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) as early as possible to ensure all requirements are met when applying for either federal or state tax credits. Staff provides advice to property owners, developers, and architects concerning appropriate preservation and rehabilitation measures. Staff will review applications for tax incentives and make recommendations for approval.

	Federal 20%	Federal 10%	State 20%
Building must be:	Listed individually in the National Register; OR considered eligible for listing; OR a contributing building in a historic district listed in the National Register	Built before 1936; not individually eligible for listing in the National Register; AND not contributing to a historic district	More than 50 years old; listed in the State Register OR landmarked by a Certified Local Government (CLG), State Register district, or local landmark district
Eligible buildings:	Income- producing properties, including commercial, industrial, agricultural, or rental residential	Income- producing (non- residential)	All buildings meeting the requirements listed above
Minimum costs of rehabilitation:	More than \$5,000 OR the adjusted basis of the property, whichever is greater	More than \$5,000 OR the adjusted basis of the property, whichever is greater	More than \$5,000
Maximum credit:	Unlimited	Unlimited	\$50,000
Time limit:	24 months; if in phases, 60 months total	24 months	24 months

Contact: 303-866-3741

More information: <http://www.historycolorado.org/grants/preservation-tax-credits>

## USDA Rural Development

### *Community and Economic Development*

Includes programs that assist communities realize their long-term goals through provision of technical assistance and grants that supports strategic planning and community visioning in order to provide a foundation for economic development.

### *Regional Development*

Assists regions in creating self-sustaining, long-term economic development in rural areas through visioning and strategic planning. Provides communities seeking information on USDA Rural Development and other federal community and economic development programs. Promotes partnerships at the local and state levels to assist communities in advancing their strategic or economic development plans. Promotes coordinated planning among Rural Development programs to address specific projects in a community or regional strategic plan.

### *Community Facilities Grant and Loan Programs*

Community Facilities - To fund the development of essential community facilities for public use in rural areas and may include hospitals, fire protection, safety, as well as many other community-based initiatives

Rural Community Development Initiative - provides technical assistance and training funds to qualified intermediary organizations to develop their capacity to undertake housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects in rural areas.

Contact: (720) 544-2903

More information: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ProgramsAndOpportunities.html>



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