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Tourism and Preservation in Gateway Communities: A Case Study of the Towns Surrounding Mesa Verde National Park

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Advisor: Randall F. Mason

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Disciplines

Historic Preservation and Conservation

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TOURISM AND PRESERVATION IN GATEWAY COMMUNITIES: A CASE
STUDY OF THE TOWNS SURROUNDING MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK

Valerie Laura Gomez

in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Table of Contents

1. Acknowledgements	ii
2. Table of Contents	iii
3. List of Maps, Charts and Figures	iv
4. Introduction	1
5. Chapter One-Gateway Communities and Cultural Tourism	3
6. Chapter Two- Mesa Verde National Park, CO: A History through Tourism	18
7. Chapter Three-Case Study: Durango, CO	27
8. Chapter Four-Case Study: Mancos, CO	40
9. Chapter Five-Case Study: Cortez, CO	51
10. Chapter Six-Conclusions	58
11. Appendix of Figures	63
12. Bibliography	91
13. Index	98

List of Maps, Charts and Figures

Figure 1-Map of Southwestern Colorado (Source: Mapquest)

Figure 2-Map of Mesa Verde National Park (Source: Mesa Verde National Park)

Figure 3-Cliff Dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park

Figure 4-The Wetherill Ranch c. 1890 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 5-Trail Outside Mancos c. 1890 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 6-Denver & Rio Grande Map of Mesa Verde c. 1910 (Source: Library of Congress)

Figure 7-Knife Edge Trail c.1915-1930 (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)

Figure 8-Road Repair c. 1923 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 9-New Road to Mesa Verde c. 1975 (Source: Library of Congress)

Figure 10-Visitors at Mesa Verde, 2005

Figure 11-Forest Fire, Mesa Verde as Seen from Cortez c. 1907 (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)

Figure 12-View of Durango c. 1880's (Source: Library of Congress)

Figure 13-Main Avenue, Durango c. 1881 (Source: Library of Congress)

Figure 14-Map of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway c. 1881 (Source: Library of Congress)

Figure 15-Diamond Belle Saloon c. 1960's (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)

Figure 16-View of Durango from Fort Lewis College looking West, 2004

Figure 17-View of Durango from Fort Lewis College looking South toward Grand View Area, 2004

Figure 18-Postcard of Downtown Durango c. 1980's (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)

Figure 19-Main Avenue looking South, Durango, 2005

Figure 20-Postcard of Main Avenue, Durango c. 1990's (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)

Figure 21-Third Avenue, Durango c. 1912 (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)

Figure 22-Large Victorian House on Third Avenue, Durango, 2005

Figure 23-Smaller House on Third Avenue, Durango, 2005

Figure 24-Strater Hotel c. 1901 (Source: Library of Congress)

Figure 25-Strater Hotel, Durango, 2004

Figure 26-General Palmer Hotel c. 1960's (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)

Figure 27-General Palmer Hotel, Durango, 2004

Figure 28-Third Avenue looking North, Durango, 2005

Figure 29-View of Mancos c. 1893 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 30-Hotel in Mancos c. 1893 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 31-Main Street, Mancos c. 1910 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 32-Grand Avenue, Mancos c. 1910 (Source: Library of Congress)

Figure 33-Pioneer Museum and Visitor's Center, Mancos, 2005

Figure 34-Main Street looking South, Mancos, 2005

Figure 35-Grand Avenue looking West, Mancos c. 1990 (Source: www.ghostdepot.com)

Figure 36-Bauer House Bed and Breakfast, Mancos, 2005

Figure 37-Bauer Bank Building, Currently Artists' Studio/Gallery and Bakery, Mancos, 2005

Figure 38-Preserved Residence on Grand Avenue, Mancos, 2005

Figure 39-Mancos Jail Reconstruction, Mancos, 2005

Figure 40-Mancos High School, Mancos, 2005

Figure 41-Mancos Opera House, Mancos, 2005

Figure 42-Buildings and Vacant Lot along Grand Avenue, Mancos, 2005

Figure 43-Small Wooden Structure in Disrepair, Mancos, 2005

Figure 44-Wooden Structures in Alley, Mancos, 2005

Figure 45-Map of Montezuma County c. 1895 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 46-Stables in Cortez c. 1890 (Source: Library of Congress)

Figure 47-Main Street, Cortez c. 1910-1915 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 48-Main Street, Cortez c. 1950's (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 49-Main Street looking East, Cortez, 2005

Figure 50-Popular Tourist Restaurants and Shops along Main Street, Cortez, 2005

Figure 51-Montezuma Valley National Bank, Cortez, 2005

Figure 52-Wooden Architecture in Cortez c. 1910-1915 (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 53-Cortez Cultural Center, Cortez, 2005

Figure 54-Residence on Montezuma Avenue, Cortez, 2005

Introduction

The small towns that surround public land, particularly in the west, have been experiencing significant changes within recent years. These gateway communities differ from other historic towns largely because of their relationship with the parks and recreation areas they surround. These towns have had a long history of tourism, but as national parks became more popular and travel became a national pastime within the twentieth century, the towns have evolved into both pit-stops and travel destinations. The visitors who frequent these towns vary greatly, from family vacationers to a new breed of cultural tourists who travel to experience art and culture. It is this conflict in tourism which has determined the fate of preservation within many gateway communities.

Gateway communities are becoming destinations in their own right. Both visitors and new residents are attracted to these towns. Tourists are staying longer to see the national parks as well as the towns themselves. This tourism development is putting pressure on the communities and their sense of place. Preservation is a key element to understanding and maintaining the gateway community's sense of place. By preserving the historic fabric within a gateway community, the residents are able to manage and monitor change by owning their history. While some communities have embraced their town's history and preservation, others seek to solely profit from tourism, allowing the visitor to decide what history is presented. There are many implications due to tourism within these communities for that very reason.

This thesis explores many of the issues concerning these towns. The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter discusses general trends in gateway communities, heritage tourism and tourism in the west to give background to some of the

issues prevalent today. The second chapter focuses on the history of tourism to Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. As the first cultural park in the United States, it experienced a different type of visitation from other natural national parks. By understanding the changing patterns of tourism, one can better understand the visitors' relationship with the nearby gateway communities to this particular park. Each of the next three chapters are case studies, which explore the history as well as contemporary issues each gateway community is facing. These three towns--Durango, Cortez and Mancos--surround Mesa Verde National Park and are each distinctive, largely due to their different reactions to tourists visiting the park and the towns. In each case, the responses to the changes in tourism have effected preservation within the communities. Present and possible future preservation policies and actions are also explored. The final chapter summarizes and contrasts current preservation conditions in each of the towns in order to give insight on methods to preserve gateway communities.

Chapter One-Gateway Communities and Cultural Tourism

Gateway Communities

Since the development of national parks, the towns that surround these public lands have been significantly affected by those who enter the park. However it has been within the past twenty years that these Gateway Communities have received specific attention. Gateway communities are described as “towns and cities that border America’s magnificent national and state parks, wildlife refuges, forests, historic sites, wilderness areas and other public lands.”¹ These areas are often small towns surrounding national parks and recreation areas, and are seeing significant changes in all aspects of their community. With the trend of more and more people leaving the suburbs, there has been a growing tendency to relocate to communities which border these public lands. This rapid growth has affected the long time residents of the communities as well as the new residents who moved for a particular environment.

While the contemporary role of the gateway community has altered from its historical role, it still serves the tourist community. What has changed is the traveler visiting the national parks. It is this change in tourism that has caused growing attention for many of the gateway communities within the United States. Historically, the gateway community served as a comfort station for those adventurous to enter the newly formed national parks. Often these towns are located in the western states with a tradition of agriculture or mining of the land. Many of these gateway communities were small in scale and founded in the late nineteenth century. One of the most common aspects of the

¹ Participant’s Guide for Gateway Communities: Keys to Success. Interactive Television Workshop. The Conservation Fund, 2004; p. 4

towns is the Main Street. Many of the towns shared a small town center which served as a focal point for the community. The towns tend to form a grid pattern with Main Street being the center commercial area, and residential properties on the smaller side streets and avenues. Since many of these towns were built at the turn of the twentieth century, they share a popular Victorian architectural style can be seen in many of the town centers. While some sought refuge in these towns, the general trend was to stay one-night in the town and then move on to another destination. Today, many tourists are not satisfied with a pit stop and want to experience more of the atmosphere and culture within these small western towns. It is this change that has brought the gateway community to the attention of many in various fields of study.

Issues Facing Gateway Communities

For the gateway community today, there have been significant changes to the traditional mining and agricultural livelihoods the town once knew. With these industries no longer being profitable, most mining has stopped and only a small percentage of the community continues to farm. Fearing economic hardships, the towns realize that the one constant and now growing industry in the communities is tourism. There are different ways of encouraging tourism within a community, but for gateway communities which already had the tourism base due to the proximity to the national parks, realizing how to accommodate the already present tourist is a task many of the towns are dealing with. Therefore the increase in tourism seemed to be a natural progression. However, tourism, like many economic development strategies, comes with both advantages and disadvantages.

Another impact facing gateway communities stems from tourism but has significantly changed the population of the towns. There has been a rising trend of visiting these communities and then relocating. This shift in the population has caused rapid growth, as well as some friction between older and newer residents. Many new residents are stating “quality of life” as their prime reason for moving to a gateway community.

“Quality of life is a catchall term used to describe the non-economic amenities a community has to offer, including clean air and water, safe streets, open space, cultural events, recreational opportunities, un-congested roads, good schools, and scenic views. Although the definition of quality of life may vary from person to person, people in every ethnic and economic background place a high value on it.”²

Being less dependent on location in metropolitan areas, given the advances of communication, less people are finding it necessary to live close to large cities, as they once did. There is currently a migration out of the suburbs to these smaller isolated towns. A recent study by the Brookings Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy shows that many white suburbanites are moving further away from the suburban areas close to the city.³ People are seeking the close-knit communities no longer apparent in the suburbs. In addition to the small town feel, the vast natural resources available to those who live in gateway communities make them all the more desirable place to live and raise a family.

However, not everyone who enjoys the natural beauty and small town feel are moving to the gateway community permanently. Another recent phenomenon is the number of Americans who own second homes. Those Americans who are doing well

² Howe, Jim, Ed McMahon and Luther Propst. *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities*. Island Press, Washington, DC; 1997. p. 9

³ Frey, William H. *Melting Pot Suburbs: A Census 2000 Study of Suburban Diversity*. Brookings Institute: Census 2000 Series; June 2001

financially, are looking for a vacation spot away from the traditional places, such as those near beaches and amusements. Many newcomers to the gateway communities are just as captivated as others, but are purchasing seasonal homes in the area. “Most second-home buyers today are high-income, high-asset, middle-age or older couples, who have children nearing adulthood or have no children living at home.”⁴ While this in itself is not a serious problem, it becomes apparent when many homes remain vacant during nine months out of the year. This is a fear that many local residents in gateway communities are expressing. While the town appears to be bustling in the high season, with tourism and other activities, the off-season could have the appearance of a ghost town, particularly when the homes purchased as second homes are the largest and most prominent within the community.

With the rising costs of real estate and the relatively low wages earned by many within the community, a division between the modest local longtime residents and the wealthier visitors is becoming apparent. Each town studied is having a problem with affordable housing for its residents. Some longtime residents have found the escalating rents too high and are moving to the outskirts of the town into mobile home parks and other inexpensive housing far from the town center. This causes additional resentments and division within the community. There has also been a significant influx in new construction within the towns and outlying areas. Not much of this new construction is affordable housing, but rather “trophy homes” and multi-division townhouses and complexes for middle and upper incomes. It is the “trophy home” that has been causing the most resentment from the longtime residents. These large scale second homes are

⁴ Francese, Peter. *The Second-Home Boom*. American Demographics; June 1, 2003

vacant a large amount of the time and have changed the landscape around the community. As noted by western writer Jim Robbins, "Tourists don't always go home. They stay and buy a house. A ranchette. A ranch. A trout stream. Or a whole mountain."⁵ The multi-division complexes are not regarded any better. They are being built at an extremely rapid rate and tend to be generic in their design causing the once distinctive town to lose much of its character from new construction. There is a fear that with the rapid growth and need for housing, these small towns could have the same fate as many homogenous parts of suburban America. The key to this problem is community planning, however the problem is these small towns don't always have the resources and government employees to accommodate this need for planning and development.

There have also been implications for the natural environment due to this rapid growth. With more development and new construction in the outskirts of the town, the landscape has changed significantly within the past twenty years. Also with the growth, more people have been frequenting the parks and surrounding natural resources. The growing popularity of recreational activities such as off-roading, 4-wheeling and rafting, is having an adverse effect on the natural areas surrounding the communities. "From the coastal dunes of Cape Hatteras and Cape Cod national seashores to the interior of Yellowstone, from salmon spawning streams in Alaska to the stark canyon country of southern Utah, parks are confronting a noisy and growing army of people who enjoy motorized recreation."⁶ This type of visitation has caused air and noise pollution as well as destruction of the trails and vegetation within the parks. Another concern is the

⁵ Robbins, Jim. "Tourism Trap: The Californication of the American West" in Norris, Scott. *Discovered Country: travel and survival in the American West*. Stone Ladder Press: Albuquerque, NM; 1994 p. 143

⁶ Wilkinson, Todd. "Off the Beaten Path" *National Parks Conservation Association Magazine*; March/April 2001

amount of litter found along many of the trails. These physical impacts from increased visitation are becoming more and more apparent as more people frequent public lands.

Despite the issues and concerns currently facing the surrounding areas, these gateway communities are providing Americans with a quality of life they desire. The most important aspect of these communities is their sense of place. The small towns provide the residents and visitors with a close-knit community, walk-able downtown area, natural resources to enjoy and a good place to live and raise a family. What the gateway communities must prepare for is change. It is evident that more people are moving to the community and more changes will occur. It is necessary for these towns to manage their growth wisely. “The challenge is to retain a high quality of life in the face of mounting pressures for growth, homogeneity, and change. Without well-designed and publicly supported strategies to preserve their character and surroundings, gateway communities risk undermining the very assets responsible for their economic vitality and future potential.”⁷ Change is inevitable, but how the gateway community deals with change is completely within their control.

Tourism in Gateway Communities

For gateway communities, tourism has been a part of life since the discovery or creation of the natural resource or park which it surrounds. However it has only been recently, with the decrease in industry in the west, that tourism has become a necessity to their livelihood. Towns that used to rely on agriculture, lumber and mining, have found these industries less lucrative due to changes in demand and modern technologies and dependency on foreign resources. There have also been different ways in which the

⁷ Howe, Jim. p. 15

community has dealt with this new type of tourism. There are those who embrace the tourism economy and allow themselves to become tourist-hubs that cater to servicing the tourist population who frequent the parks, and there are those who have maintained much of their historic character and are only recently seeing the significant interest in tourism in their town. The case studies in this thesis represent three towns which surround Mesa Verde National Park. Each town has reacted to tourism differently and therefore each town is quite distinctive in appearance, economics and overall sense of place. Of the three case studies, Cortez exemplifies the gateway community which services the tourist population, Durango shows evidence of the more recent interest of tourism due to its historic downtown and Mancos is a combination of the two, trying to attract a tourist population from Mesa Verde while attempting to preserve the town's character defining features.

There are many cases where a gateway community sees the profits that can be made by tourism and tries to take advantage of the benefits. Often what happens is the town tries to accommodate the tourists and builds a significant amount of motels and diners. This is the case with Cortez, Colorado. This development occurred in the 1960's and continues today. Much of the historic fabric of the community has not been retained and the community appears to be solely for the purpose of serving tourists. The other way in which the gateway community has evolved has been through an early indifference to tourism. This has allowed the town to remain largely intact while the next wave of tourism is discovered in the later half of the twentieth century. Many towns did not actively seek tourists, but tourists began to discover the largely untouched historic community which still survives. It is this second example that has been reaping the

benefits of the new wave of Cultural Tourists within the past twenty years in the United States.

This brings forth another issue concerning gateway communities; the economics of tourism and who is benefiting. While there is no question that revenue is entering the community, the problem lies with who is benefiting from this revenue. Many large chains and big box retail have been coming into communities and have been benefiting from the tourism. Many feel that this economic prosperity is robbing the communities of their distinctive character. And that growth and prosperity should not be at expense of unique identity of the community.

It is often noted that tourism should be one element of a town's economy, not the sole source. A diverse economy is necessary for economic development.⁸ Therefore, solely relying on any one source of income, such as tourism, can have an adverse effect on the community.

One of the most significant problems with the tourism industry is the low-paying seasonal employment. Often the wages earned by tourism are not enough to support a family. The jobs at many of the national parks are seasonal. For many of the national parks, the high season is the summer months, leaving the towns surrounding the parks without a tourist income for many months out of the year. Another negative aspect of a tourism based economy is the investment in significant infrastructure needed to accommodate visitors. These accommodations can result in higher taxes and property values, while only being utilized for a short portion in the year. And lastly, these higher taxes and property values create a situation which longtime residents can no longer afford

⁸ Kinsley, Michael. *Paying for Growth, Prospering from Development*. Rocky Mountain Institute: Snowmass, CO.; 1995

to live in.⁹ With the visitation to national parks steadily increasing, more tourists will be frequenting these gateway communities and decisions on how to deal with tourism will become an growing factor in their future.

Heritage and Cultural Tourism

To better understand the roles of tourism and preservation within Gateway Communities, it is necessary to understand tourism trends and the growing industry of cultural tourism. Travel is the third largest retail industry in the United States. In 2003, the travel industry received \$554.5 billion from travelers and 7.2 million jobs serviced this industry.¹⁰ A growing percentage of the travelers are frequenting cultural resources. Cultural tourism is described as “travel directed toward experiencing the arts, heritage, and special character of a place”.¹¹ In a recent survey on “The Historic/Cultural Traveler”, 81% of U.S. adults included at least one cultural, arts, historic or heritage activity in their travels in 2002. In addition cultural tourists spend more time and subsequently more money in a particular destination than any other type of tourist.¹² Noting this increasing trend and potential profit, many communities have been promoting their histories for prospective tourists.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation began its Heritage Tourism Program in 1989, with a goal to utilize preservation as a method of attracting tourism to smaller communities throughout the United States. “The National Trust defines cultural heritage tourism as traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically

⁹ Howe, Jim. p. 24-25

¹⁰ Travel Industry Association of America, www.tia.org

¹¹ Cultural Tourism Fact Sheet, www.nea.gov/about/Facts/Cultourism.html

¹² “The Historic/Cultural Traveler”, The Travel Industry Association of America and Smithsonian Magazine; 2003

represent the stories and people of the past and present.”¹³ This broader definition which emphasizes place is significant to the program at the trust. It is a “how-to” program for communities to develop and implement their own heritage program based on what is significant within the community and subsequently “attract visitors and generate revenue while protecting the historic fabric and the community's character”.¹⁴ The program has become quite successful with many small towns, particularly in rural areas benefiting financially from cultural tourism. While the program does emphasize sustainable tourism, it provides consulting services, rather than an objective view of all negative and positive issues surrounding cultural tourism.

Often the terms cultural tourism and heritage tourism are used interchangeably. Yet according to Amy Jordan Webb, the Heritage Tourism Program Director at the National Trust, there is a difference. While heritage and cultural tourists are often one and the same and overlap in many ways, “heritage programs are more often found outside metropolitan areas while cultural programs are more often found in urban settings.”¹⁵ The main difference tends to be that heritage tourism is “place” based, while cultural tourism could be an exhibit or display that is cultural but not necessarily significant to the place exhibited. “The content is the same while the context is different.”¹⁶ It is for this reason that many preservationists are concerned with heritage tourism, where the importance of place is emphasized, and culture and heritage is found in its most authentic state.

¹³ National Trust for Historic Preservation, www.nationaltrust.org

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Webb, Amy Jordan. “A Decade of Heritage Tourism” *Forum Journal*, vol. 13: no. 4; summer 1999

¹⁶ Ibid.

A key component of what makes a heritage tourism site successful is authenticity. It is this authenticity that not only draws tourists to the site, but enables future tourism. It is a critical component in maintaining a sense of place. It is also a very effective marketing tool. “The term “authentic” lends credibility to the resource, and provides the most direct connection to a special time or place.”¹⁷ Authenticity is not solely the built environment around us, but the people and their activities. To have sustainable tourism, the “real” histories and stories of the people must be evident. Often when trying to market to tourists, some lose sight of this necessity and create tourist-traps which are frowned upon within the local community as well as by cultural tourists. There will still be authenticity whether or not there are tourists.

Tourists have been visiting cultural and historic places for centuries. What some are considering a new phenomenon is the way heritage tourists choose to travel. Those who seek out heritage tourism are generally not interested in visiting only one historic site. They are interested in seeking history through many sites and places to create a better understanding of the past and its development into society today. This can be seen in the increase in the number of heritage travel routes, series and corridors which have only recently been created. They vary in scale and scope, but all link several different destinations to a continuous history. Most notably National Heritage Areas which work in collaboration with the National Park Service, seek to recognize a particular destination, “designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape

¹⁷ Hargrove, Cheryl. “Authenticity: The Essential Ingredient for Heritage Tourist” *Forum Journal*, summer 1999.

arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.”¹⁸ This definition is quite similar to the goals of many gateway communities. And while the majority of heritage areas are located east of the Mississippi River, it is quite likely that more heritage areas will be established in the western states which would include gateway communities and the natural resources which surround them.

While many towns realize the benefits of cultural tourism, it is not without faults. Cultural tourism is being sold as the solution to a small community’s financial problems. Often towns that see a great wave in tourism and the people try to capitalize on it, do little to protect the cultural resources which made the town a desirable place to visit. This balance between economics and culture has been a recurring story in the history of tourism, particularly in the United States, where car culture has been turning places into “anywhere, USA” over the past 60 years. The desire to accommodate the tourist can often leave a community to lose its sense of place and resent the tourist for the current conditions in the community.

Tourism in the American West

The romanticized notion of the American West is a significant aspect of tourism in these gateway communities. Since the western frontier was settled, the west has become characterized as a place where the true American spirit lives. It is a strange phenomenon, but no other area within the United States has the same mythological notions as does the “old west”. Tourism in the West began soon after the development of towns and communities, particularly with the expansion of the railroad in the West. The American West was viewed as a place of adventure and excitement which one could

¹⁸ National Park Service Heritage Area Program, www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas

experience vicariously through tourism. However, the authenticity of the West does not align with the current perception of tourism in idealizing the past. “The West’s ‘frontier heritage’-that is, the multitudinous mythologized versions of its past-constitutes, a sanitized, simplified version of a messier, more ambiguous history. It is that sanitized mode of representation that provides the stock symbols of western tourism-the quaint false-front buildings of old western towns, or the ubiquitous cowboy and Indian and pioneer iconography. It is not essential that the symbols bear any definite connection to the historical realities of an actually western locale for the promotion of place to be successful.”¹⁹

The issue of authenticity comes into play when looking at tourism in the West. Since most of the tourist trade is based on this symbolic version of the past, is it possible that any western town which promotes its western roots can be authentic? It is not solely authenticity that tourists in the West are seeking, but a connection to the American dream that is best represented by the frontier past of the American West. While the towns visited have changed significantly, the tourists’ version of the past prevails. It is difficult to compete with a romanticized past particularly when “the replica is more seductive than the original”.²⁰

Travel in the West cannot be explored without discussing the car. Before the automobile, the primary way tourists viewed the West was by train. Tourist destinations were largely dependent on where the cargo was coming and going by train. However with the invention of the famed Model-T and inexpensive subsequent cars, automobiles

¹⁹ Wrobel, David M. and Patrick T. Long. *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*. Published for the Center of the American West University of Colorado at Boulder by the University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS; 2001.

²⁰ Rothman, Hal. *Devil's bargains : tourism in the twentieth-century American West*. University Press of Kansas: Lawrence, KS; 1998 p. 13

became the principal form of transportation in America, but particularly in the West. Tourism became an independent industry; individual families could plan their vacation without the constraints of timetables and schedules of trains and airplanes. This new form of transportation created new types of architecture and brought significant changes to the landscape of the American West.

“Once the roads were full of cars, there had to be a physical infrastructure to service them. Thus we get the creation of the strip: gas stations, roadside motels and drive-ins, coffee shops, muffler franchises. These came with their own logic. Highway businesses had to design their buildings and advertising to attract motorists. Recognition from the road became paramount, and this led to the spread of franchise business and use of standardized images and eventually logos in advertising, both on and off the site... The car imposed a horizontal quality on the landscape (as well as architecture).”²¹

This significant change to the landscape, dotting it with horizontal one-story structures and large billboards along long stretches of asphalt, created a completely different vista compared with the natural settings in the West. This new type of architecture, built for the sole intention of attracting motorists, has had a significant effect on some of the gateway communities in the West. Many towns embraced the new car culture and eroded the traditional architecture and farming landscape of the area.

While some critics believe the American West and its people “sold the riches in their land or their identity,”²² one must look at the current economic conditions in the west and the lack of traditional industries in contemporary society. What other option do they have? Tourism has become a necessity for many communities throughout the world and particularly the West. While authenticity provides a sense of credibility to places we visit, the “authentic” West no longer exists as tourists wish to see it. This creates a problem

²¹ Wilson, Alexander. “The View from the Road: Recreation and Tourism” in Norris, Scott. *Discovered Country: travel and survival in the American West*. Stone Ladder Press: Albuquerque, NM; 1994 p. 12

²² Rothman, Hal. p. 370

with tourism in the American West where the marketing of tourism products and experiences are dictating what the west represents. The power has shifted, where control no longer lies in the hands of the residents in the community. “Locals must be what visitors want them to be in order to feed and clothe themselves and their families, but they also must guard themselves, their souls, and their places from people who less appreciate its special traits. They negotiate these boundaries, creating a series of boxes between themselves and visitors, rooms where the locals encourage visitors to feel that they have become of the place but where the locals also subtly guide visitors away from the essence of being local.”²³

Gateway communities have a balancing act on their hands. They must learn to hold on to their identity and authenticity while allowing tourism and other economic industries into their communities. The American West has changed significantly within the past 75 years. The rural societies where agriculture and mining were the main industries no longer remain. The West is in need of economic growth to help smaller towns continue to flourish. Tourism is an economic development option, but it does come with a price. The sense of balance must be from within the community. They must own their histories and heritage before tourists and outsiders decide what they want the history to be.

²³ Rothman, Hal. p. 12

Chapter Two-Mesa Verde National Park, CO: A History through Tourism

To better understand the concerns facing the gateway communities surrounding Mesa Verde National Park, it is also necessary to understand the history and contemporary issues of the park and its relationship to its surrounding communities as well as those who frequent the park. This is not a comprehensive history of Mesa Verde National Park such as Duane Smith's *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows and the Centuries*²⁴, but rather a basis for understanding the gateway communities which surround it.

Ancestral Puebloans

Located in Southwestern Colorado, Mesa Verde National Park contains some of the most significant and extensive Ancestral Puebloan sites in the United States. Previously known as the Anasazi, the Ancestral Puebloans are thought to be the ancestors of the Puebloan Native Americans who currently reside in New Mexico. The Ancestral Puebloans were thought to have migrated south after several years of drought in the Southwestern area of Colorado, leaving behind many belongings within the cliff dwellings in which they lived. Mesa Verde National Park contains over “4,000 known archaeological sites, 600 of which are cliff dwellings” dating from 100 AD to the 13th century.²⁵ The Ancestral Puebloans' habitats developed through the years from agricultural nomadic to pithouses to the famed cliff dwellings. The cliff dwellings are a work of nature and man. The sides of the canyons, which have been hollowed out from

²⁴ Smith, Duane A. *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows and the Centuries*. University Press of Kansas: Lawrence, KS; 1988

²⁵ Mesa Verde National Park, http://www.nps.gov/meve/park_info/park_history.htm

years of natural forces, created shelter from the elements. In the late 12th century, the Ancestral Puebloans began to construct their homes within these cliffs, already having the roof and one wall created. They used local limestone blocks with wood and mortar to create an elaborate series of rooms and meeting areas within the cliffs. The masonry structures were often coated with a decorative plaster finish. After the migration south, these archaeological sites remained largely untouched for six centuries.

The Wetherill Discovery of the Ruins and the Years of “Pothunting”

The land surrounding Mesa Verde remained largely unsettled for hundreds of years. There are records of the Spanish exploring the area, but nothing that proves they found Native American sites as large or significant as Mesa Verde. The Animas Valley, just northeast of what is today Mesa Verde, was developed in the 1870's as agricultural and mining settlements. Within a few years, the small town of Mancos was settled by a few families who made their living off the land farming. This would become and remain the closest town to the ruins of the Ancestral Puebloans.

The contemporary history of Mesa Verde began with the romanticized story of the two local cowboys from Mancos losing their cattle and stumbling upon the magnificent cliff dwellings of the Ancestral Puebloans. And from that day in 1888, the land of southwestern Colorado would never be the same. The Wetherill family of Mancos found the cliff dwellings and in the true American spirit of the west, claimed it as their own. At this time, Mancos was a small mining and farming town with a very small population. The few families who lived in the area were the only people who could find the ruins, making it a very lucrative find for the Wetherills. And so became the popular pastime of

“pothunting”. This consisted of people being led up the mesa by the Wetherills, on a three day journey with pack animals. It was a very arduous journey up the mesa, yet the reward was a day collecting whatever pre-historic remains found while exploring the cliff dwellings. This would be considered looting by today’s standards, but was a main incentive for attracting visitors to Mesa Verde.

Mesa Verde as a National Park

Shortly after its discovery in 1888 to the turn of the century, Mesa Verde was gaining popularity. News about the cliff dwelling spread quickly and soon several different groups and individuals in all three local towns were organizing trips to the famed cliff dwellings. However, the majority of tourism continued to come through Mancos. Looking for souvenirs or marking their territory, people began to show their wear on the ruins. Litter and graffiti were not uncommon. With the help of Virginia McClurg and Lucy Peabody, two very persistent local women who developed a great affection for their local attraction, steps were made in making the ancient ruins a national park. There was little opposition to creating the park. “Mesa Verde National Park displaced few people, threatened no potential private interests, and promised ongoing benefits for the region.”²⁶ In 1906, legislation was passed and Mesa Verde became the country’s first cultural national park.

There were not many changes within the park over the first few years. The isolated location which protected it for so many years, was now causing difficulty in management. The Antiquities Act of 1906 set a precedent for the preservation and care

²⁶ Smith, Duane A. *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows and the Centuries*. p. 62

of America's cultural heritage. However, without regulation and enforcement, the cliff dwellings were still at risk and vandalism would continue. During these early years of the park, the headquarters were located in Mancos, giving further opportunity for vandalism and private profiteers. Yet as the years progressed, the park received more funding and was able to hire local guides and rangers to survey the park as well as guide visitors to the ancient ruins, which reduced vandalism dramatically.

During this time, successive superintendents each contributed to the development of Mesa Verde. With extensive archaeological surveys and inventories as well as the formation of the Chapin Mesa Museum, the park was establishing itself as one of the premier places in the United States for archaeological research.

Bringing People to the Park

From the creation of the park in 1906 to well into the 1950's, the main concern facing the park was insufficient roads and amenities. To the surprise of many, Mesa Verde was one of the least visited national parks. There are two main reasons for this; the nature of the park and poor roads. When most Americans in the early half of the twentieth century thought of the national parks, Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain were the first to come to mind. The general public wanted to explore nature while visiting the parks, not see uninhabited ruins of yesteryear. To this day, the park would always lag behind in visitation compared with the other natural park in the state, Rocky Mountain National Park.

However, this did not stop the park's efforts to educate visitors about the Native Americans who once inhabited the cliff dwellings. Mesa Verde National Park was at the

forefront of the parks with their archaeological methods and protocol. Today, the park staffs more archaeologists than any other national park.

While Mesa Verde National Park could not change what visitors wanted to see, they could help those visitors who wanted to see the ruins get up the mesa. In 1910, the carriage road to Mesa Verde ended at the foot of the mesa, with only horse roads throughout the rest of the park. With the rise of the automobile in the early twentieth century, more visitors began to visit the park by car. By 1914 the first automobiles entered the park. Generally the visitors were coming from the east, where the new Wolf Creek Pass, which stretched over the Continental Divide was created. However, little improvement had been made to the park's infamous Knife Edge Trail, the cliff-hugging, single-lane dirt road, since its creation. Many wrote about their trip up the Mesa on this road, initially on horseback, but now by automobile, as an arduous journey with rock slides and many deterrents causing them to wonder if the famed ruins were worth it. In 1923, the park rebuilt Knife Edge Road, creating ditches alongside the road so as stop automobiles from falling off the cliff. Little by little, improvements were made to encourage more access to the park. During these years, "more money has probably been spent on roads and road maintenance in Mesa Verde than on any other single item, including archaeology".²⁷

In 1957 major changes came to the park with the Mission 66 program. The Mission 66 project was designated by the National Park Service and designed to "overcome years of neglect and to revitalize deteriorating park facilities".²⁸ A new shorter and safer road was created by a long tunnel through one of the mesas. With better

²⁷ Smith, Duane A. *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows and the Centuries*. p. 155

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 155

roads and facilities, Mesa Verde National Park was on its way to becoming the premier tourist attraction in southwestern Colorado.

Contemporary Issues with the park

With the improvement of the roads and other amenities within the park, Mesa Verde has shifted its focus to interpretation of the Ancestral Puebloan ruins throughout the park. The later half of the twentieth century has seen a significant increase in visitation to Mesa Verde as well as other parks in the United States.²⁹ What has set Mesa Verde apart from the other parks is its location and amenities within the park. It is a 21 mile drive from the park entrance to the visitor center atop Chapin Mesa. This distance has had a significant impact on the way the park was and is visited. Many visitors choose to stay overnight in the park, since the travel time from any of the towns would be a least an hour away. Four miles from the entrance sits the Morefield Campground situated in the Morefield Valley as a pit stop for campers and those with recreational vehicles who want to stay in the park. Located 11 miles further in the park is the Far View Lodge and Visitor Center. The lodge was originally located atop Chapin Mesa, but was moved in 1965 to protect and give distance from the ruins. What the Campground and Lodge have in common is ownership. They are not run by the National Park Service, but rather a private catering company, Aramark. This private interest has caused some controversy within the park, where the park claims that Aramark is motivated by profit and does not give full regard to the park's mission and intention. The locations relatively separate from the ruins have allowed the campground to expand greatly to accommodate the ever popular recreational vehicle in national parks.

²⁹ National Park Service, Public Use Statistics Office. <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/>

An interesting statistic shows a significant drop in the number of people staying within the park facilities during their visit to Mesa Verde. Use of the campgrounds has dropped by 40% over the past ten years.³⁰ This drop does coincide with the price increase for individuals and recreational vehicles to use the campground. According to Supervisor of Visitor Services Linda Martin, people are choosing to stay outside the park in the many campgrounds suitable for large vehicles that dot Highway 160 both to the east and west. Also, for about the same price, a motel room on the outskirts of Cortez is comparable to an individual plot on the park's campground. However, the Far View Lodge continues to have high occupancy throughout the summer season. Aramark is finding that the view, amenities and proximity to the ruins of the Far View Lodge are quite profitable, as they are in the plans of expanding the lodge to accommodate more visitors.

Currently visitation trends are similar to other national parks. The park's high season is summer and during this time, the majority of visitation takes place. During the winter months, the park is still open to visitors, but only some of the cliff dwellings are accessible to tourists. However it is during this period that a different type of visitor comes. Many park rangers and staff noticed a distinct change in the type of visitor who comes to the park in the winter months from that of the summer tourist. The winter visitor is the classic definition of a "Cultural Tourist". Supervisor of Visitor Services Linda Martin describes the visitors as "older or retired, or younger without families who spend more time in the park and visit the other cultural and natural resources within the area" or as one ranger called them "the good visitors". There is a common mentality with the Park Rangers that the typical traveler to Mesa Verde is "not well-informed", to put it

³⁰ *Monthly Use Reports for Mesa Verde National Park: 1991-2004*. National Park Service, 2005

politely. After a discussion with several rangers in the park, it became apparent that from their perspective, the visitor comes to the park as part of a much larger family trip to visit the many national parks out west. Ms. Martin states that Mesa Verde is not a “destination park” like Yellowstone or Yosemite, and therefore many visitors do not know what to expect when visiting a cultural park. There is not much knowledge of the Native American past and many rangers find it a difficult task to educate a group of visitors with a fifteen minute synopsis of the history and contemporary issues surrounding the Ancestral Puebloans and their descendents.

The general visitation statistics of the park follow a consistent pattern of many of the parks out west. In times of national security, such as World War II and after September 11, 2001, visitation decreased. During the early and mid-1990’s park visitation was at an all time high with over 700,000 visiting the park in 1992.³¹ However, Mesa Verde has had some unfortunate luck, mainly due to its location in a mountainous desert climate. The park is quite susceptible to fire. The majority of these fires were caused by lightning which ignites the dry brush throughout the park. Given the large area of unexplored areas in the park, fighting fires has been difficult. With the exception of 2004, the park has had to close temporarily due to fire every year for the past five years. These fires have adversely effected visitation to the park and the surrounding towns of Cortez and Mancos.

Despite the many obstacles that Mesa Verde National Park has faced, it has persevered. Next year, Mesa Verde will be celebrating its 100th year as a national park. As part of the celebration, the park is planning several educational events focusing both

³¹ *Monthly Use Reports for Mesa Verde National Park: 1991-2004*. National Park Service, 2005

on the Native Americans who once lived there, but also on the history of Mesa Verde as a cultural park. The park is also choosing to involve the local communities with their celebration, giving all who visit the park a greater understanding of how the park was created and how the towns surrounding the park have preserved its history for years to come.

The area of southwestern Colorado has been shaped largely by the development and tourism to Mesa Verde National Park. The park's three gateway communities have benefited from having the national park nearby, but have also been constrained by the constant flow of tourism to the area. The next three chapters will look at each town and Mesa Verde's impact on the towns' physical environment and attitudes toward tourism and preservation within the community.

Chapter Three-Case Study: Durango, CO

History and Development of Durango

The story of Durango is not one of pioneers creating their own town to support their livelihood, but rather the quarrel between a small mining town and a large railroad company looking to make a profit in the unsettled regions of the southwest. In 1879, the Denver & Rio Grande railroad wanted to build a line that would run from Denver through the Colorado Mountains and eventually to California. The natural stop along the route would have been in Animas City located northeast of Mancos. However, after the town did not want to compromise and accept the terms of the railroad, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Company decided that they would build its own town two miles south of Animas City, and that town would be called Durango. In 1880 work began on what would be D&RG's railroad hub in southwestern Colorado. One year later, the track was laid in Durango. Durango began to thrive, mostly due to the railroad's ability to pay for extensive infrastructure in and to the community. The railroad improved the ability for goods and services to enter the town, making it a more desirable place to live. Within five years, the town's population outgrew that of Animas City as the mining community made Durango their home.³²

After the discovery of the cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde, Durango became a rival to Mancos for the "Gateway to Mesa Verde." While it was over 30 miles further away from the ruins, Durango did have more hotels, saloons and shops to accommodate the tourists to Mesa Verde. Durango, with help from the D&RG Railroad, began an

³² Smith, Duane A. *Rocky Mountain Boom Town: A History of Durango, Colorado*. University Press of Colorado: Niwot, CO; 1992 p. 32

extensive marketing campaign to the ancient cliff dwellings, while Mancos relied on its proximity and initial discovery of the area.

What changed the playing field for Durango, and eventually achieved its goal to be the gateway to Mesa Verde, was the automobile. By 1918, Durango had decent roads to Denver and the broader based economy of a larger town to provide tourists with the necessities the more sophisticated traveler is accustomed to. For the first half of the twentieth century, Durango would maintain the status of gateway until superior roads were later built in the 1950's to Cortez in all directions. With the rise of the automobile, came the decline of the railroad. Fewer passengers began to ride the railroad, as the freedom of the automobile as well as the novelty of air travel began. By the time the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad ended their passenger service to southwestern Colorado in 1951, a new phenomenon was occurring with the train line from Durango to Silverton. Tourists began to come to ride the scenic route to Silverton and capture that nostalgic feeling of the early days of railroad travel in the west. The popularity of the railroad tied in with the tourism and the romanticized notion of travel in the west. People came to ride the railroad in hopes of reliving the idealized past of the American frontier. However, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad did not want the responsibility of a tourist attraction even if it could be extremely profitable. A private investor bought the railroad and its popularity increased significantly with additional advertising. The local government of Durango soon found out that it did not need to rely on Mesa Verde for tourism. Located right in the center of town, the railroad itself would prove to be quite a lucrative tourist attraction for the community.

In addition to the rise of tourism from the railroad, in 1956, Fort Lewis College moved to Durango and further change the population of this once small town. The college sits upon a small mesa just northeast of the town, close enough to the center, but also able to maintain a small campus for its students. The public college has had a profound impact on the community. Not only has it kept the town young and vibrant, it has also given the town a liberal constituency which is actively involved in the community.

Soon after the tourists began to visit the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, it became apparent that the reason behind its popularity, the nostalgic feeling evoked from the trip into the past, could be found within the town as well. It didn't take long before Durango realized it also had a potentially profitable historic downtown. "After years of trying to eradicate the traces of the frontier years-suddenly the Old West heritage was salable. The change was evident in advertising, parade floats, mounting interest in the train and by the reincarnation of the maligned saloon, best typified by the Diamond Belle in the Strater. Tourists ate it up. After several generations of the "gunsmoke and gallop" frontier, Americans came to believe that the fictional Hollywood West was the real thing. They expected to see it, and businessmen and the Chamber showed no hesitancy to oblige them."³³ In 1969, Purgatory ski area was established 20 miles north of the town. Many came to Durango to escape the crowded ski slopes of Aspen and Vail. With the ski resort in place, Durango managed to become a tourist attraction in both the summer as well as the winter ski season. Through the 1960's and into the 1970's more tourists came to Durango as well as more nationally recognized

³³ Smith, Duane A. *Rocky Mountain Boom Town: A History of Durango, Colorado*. University Press of Colorado: Niwot, CO; 1992

commercial developments. Chain hotels began to pop up along route 160 leading into town. While never becoming as popular as other ski resorts in northern Colorado, it began to outshine Cortez and Mancos as a destination in itself.

In 1974, a fire broke out in the center of town destroying many of the structures along the 800 block of Main Avenue. While the fire claimed the lives of two people, it did also create an awareness of the historic structures downtown. Later that year, the Heritage for Tomorrow Committee was formed by concerned residents who “examined ideas to preserve the architectural style and business nature of the area.”³⁴ This early effort at preservation has helped to create local legislation and policies to protect the historic downtown despite the encroaching development that would take place on the outskirts of town.

Contemporary Issues in Durango

Durango’s evolution is quite typical of trends occurring in gateway communities. The concerns currently facing Durango are quite similar to gateway communities of other parks. With progressive increases in tourism, there has also been an increase in population. People are moving to Durango and La Plata County at a rapid rate. Both the full-time and seasonal population is increasing. This is causing concern for government officials and longtime residents who are afraid of what rapid development may mean for the community. It is estimated that the population of Durango will increase by one-third by the next census in 2010, according to Vicki Vandegrift, Senior City Planner, who is also in charge of preservation.³⁵ There have been many studies and community surveys

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Interview with Senior City Planner of Durango, Vicki Vandegrift, March 9, 2005

completed to try to accommodate the new growth intelligently. The strongest tool Durango has at this point is their ability to plan for the future. While many changes have already occurred as new development and housing creeps into the center of town, the planning department has taken an active role in how to deal with it, through zoning and local preservation policies.

The biggest concern now is not the preservation of the historic district, but the preservation of the natural environment surrounding the town which is threatened by the rapid new development. In January of 2004, the town adopted an additional element to their comprehensive plan. *The Grandview Area Plan* is a set of policies which regulates the areas north and south of the town center which have experienced significant growth within the past ten years.³⁶ After surveying the community, the biggest fear from residents is losing the natural resources and scenery so intertwined with the community. In the 1997 survey, 62.8% of those surveyed believed that it was the responsibility of the City to manage growth in the surrounding areas. And 64.3% believed that design guidelines should be enforced in the surrounding areas as well as within the City limits.³⁷

Durango, like many other gateway communities, is facing a shortage of affordable housing. While the median household income is higher than those found in Cortez and Mancos, the cost of real estate is significantly higher than the other two towns, but also the nation as a whole. The median price of owner occupied homes in Durango is \$185,200, compared with the national median of \$119,600.³⁸ There is a need for affordable housing in the community especially since Durango, in addition to being a gateway community is also a college town. A large portion of property in Durango is

³⁶ Grandview Area Plan: an element of the Durango Comprehensive Plan. City of Durango; 2004

³⁷ *Durango Comprehensive Plan*. City of Durango, Colorado; 2004

³⁸ Census 2000 Demographic Profile for Durango, Colorado. <http://factfinder.census.gov>

rental, yet the prices of these rental properties are priced disproportionately higher than in the rest of the county and southwestern Colorado. Many students find it difficult to find housing near the college.

Durango's high tourist season is summer. During the summer, hoards of tourists enter the downtown, to ride the train, go whitewater rafting or experience "the West" at the Diamond Belle Saloon. Many students from Fort Lewis College stay over the summer months to work for tourist related businesses while classes are not in session. Students are actively involved in the tourism industry in Durango. One can speculate that having a college base, where students work for the relatively low wages associated with the tourism industry, is quite beneficial for the town. There is a constant supply of students attending Fort Lewis College who are willing to work during the summer months. Because of this factor, Durango does not have the same divide between tourists and residents, since students are a bridge between the two.

Another concern is the type of businesses in the historic downtown area. There are many stores which cater to tourists, not residents. There are many t-shirt, souvenir, leather and cowboy boot shops which dot Main Avenue, as well as Old West Photos Shop where visitors can dress up in Victorian clothing and have their photos taken with a sepia hue. However, many of the shops are also geared to students, particularly the outdoor clothing and recreation shops. It is not common for students to go skiing or snowboarding after class. Yet, the reason that the downtown works and attracts both visitors and residents is the restaurants and coffee shops. The places to eat in Durango are plentiful, from Mexican to Thai to Burgers, and one can find an array of choices, not solely geared for tourists. There are also many coffee shops along Main Avenue and

some of the smaller street as well. Many residents have their favorite local coffee shop and tourists enjoy the small town feel where residents bring mugs from home to get a refill. Yet these local coffee shops will be receiving some competition when Starbucks Coffee Company opens on Main Avenue just up the block from the railroad station for the summer of 2005. Many residents feel that this chain coming into the heart of the downtown historic district will start a trend, that many of the locally owned businesses will be out-priced by national chains. This is a trend which can be seen in the outskirts of town, where the local motels along the roads are going out of business and new chains are moving into the area. With the local zoning ordinances, it seems unlikely that many more chains will move into the historic district, yet time will tell if a chain like Starbucks proves to be more successful than local coffee shops.

The tourism industry is doing very well in Durango. The number one tourist destination in Durango is the Narrow-Gauge Railroad. Last year over 100,000 people rode the train from Durango to Silverton. 68% of all travelers to Durango ride the train.³⁹ While this percentage seems low, I was reminded by Kimberly Cobb, Durango Tourism Director that there is a very active ski season in the winter months which accounts for a large percentage of visitors as well. This historic locomotive has become a symbol of Durango and the western frontier. The scenic ride has attracted people from all over. According to marketing reports, currently only one third of tourists to Durango go to Mesa Verde. It is clearly no longer the gateway to the national park, but a tourist destination in itself. What has allowed Durango to prevail as a destination, while the other two towns still rely heavily on tourism from the park, is preservation.

³⁹ Durango Area Tourism Office. 2005 Marketing and Operations Plan; September 29, 2004

Preservation in Durango

Due to the fire on Main Avenue which threatened the historic structures of downtown, and perhaps the early financial incentives from tourism, Durango has been well organized in regards to preservation. The first preservation plan for the community was adopted in 1980, and revisions have been made when changes occur in the community. Durango is a Certified Local Government, which can and does regulate and enforce preservation policies within the town proper.

In 2003, the Historic Preservation Board implemented its new set of design guidelines, which regulates all rehabilitations, renovations and new construction. Currently Durango has a Historic Preservation Board which oversees preservation in Durango. According to the Historic Preservation Ordinance for the City of Durango, the purpose of the board is “to promote the public health, safety and welfare through:

- (a) The protection and preservation of the city’s historic and cultural heritage, as embodied in designated historic landmarks and districts, by appropriate regulations;
- (b) The enhancement of property values, and the stabilization of historic neighborhoods;
- (c) The increase of economic and financial benefits through the city’s attractions to tourists and visitors; and
- (d) The provision of educational opportunities to increase public appreciation of Durango’s unique heritage.”⁴⁰

The Historic Preservation Board has the power to nominate properties or neighborhoods, review and make decisions on all nominations. Any alterations to designated properties must be approved by the board. There is also a list of Recognition of Structures of Merit.

⁴⁰ Code of Ordinances, City of Durango, Colorado, Chapter 27-Land Use and Development Code, Sec. 5-4 Historic Preservation; 1992

These are structures that are not considered landmarks, but have architectural or historic value. The board encourages their protection, but no policy regulates their preservation.⁴¹

There are currently two historic districts in Durango, the Main Avenue Historic District and the 3rd Avenue Boulevard Historic District. There are several individual properties designated as landmarks, primarily Victorian buildings in the downtown area, but also mining structures and a few buildings from the mid-twentieth century.

Durango is a member of the Colorado Community Revitalization Association. CCRA focuses on the economic growth of traditional downtown areas within Colorado. The organization was founded in 1980, shortly after the National Trust for Historic Preservation developed their Main Street Program. The CCRA uses the Main Street approach of economic restructuring, design, organization and promotion to revitalize downtown communities.⁴² Durango itself does not offer any financial incentives, but there are awards of merit often for preservation projects. “Development Awards Program was instituted in 1983. The intent of the program was to emphasize how good development helped to increase City revenues, added units to the housing stock, or added to community image and enhancement of the quality of life.”⁴³

The recently revised Downtown Design Overlay Zone standards were intended to “provide for change and new development in Durango while preserving and protecting the special character and identity of our downtown.”⁴⁴ This ordinance gives an extensive set of guidelines for all alterations to historic structures and new construction within the downtown area.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Colorado Community Revitalization Association, www.ccrionline.org

⁴³ City of Durango, www.durangogov.org

⁴⁴ Code of Ordinances, City of Durango, Colorado, Chapter 27-Land Use and Development Code, Sec. 5-2. Downtown Design Overlay Zone standards; 2004

Located just north of the town's center, the La Plata Historical Society and Animas Museum provides Durango with its only historical museum. The museum is located within an old schoolhouse for the former Animas City which was incorporated into Durango. The museum has an array of artifacts and literature regarding the development of the county and other parts of southwestern Colorado. Unfortunately, not many visitors make it up to the Animas Museum. Much of what once was Animas City has become suburban housing with only a few historic structures remaining. Its unfortunate location outside the downtown area means that only the true history buffs and local residents seek it out.

Within the downtown historic district are two historic hotels, one of which is recognized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Historic Hotels of America Program. The Strater Hotel was built during Durango's period of significant growth in 1888 by the pharmacist Henry Strater who saw the tourism potential of Durango, both as a gateway to Mesa Verde National Park, but also as a gold and silver boomtown. It has maintained its status as a hotel throughout the years and has remained in the same family for over 70 years. This hotel sits on Main Avenue and is always the first hotel to be sold out in the summer.⁴⁵ Just one block away the General Palmer Hotel is the other historic hotel on Main Avenue. It is one of the oldest buildings in the neighborhood, but was originally a general store and did not become a hotel until its renovation in the 1980's. The two hotels are very popular with tourists because of their location within the center of town, but also the nostalgic Victorian décor and western Diamond Belle Saloon located in the Strater Hotel. Bellmen and bartenders all dress up in period clothing as they try to recreate what the west once was.

⁴⁵ Interview with Tourism Director Kimberly Cobb, March 8, 2005

While individual structures are designated as local historic buildings throughout the town, there are two local historic districts within Durango: the area along Main Avenue where the majority of retail resides, and Third Avenue, also called the Boulevard District where the majority of Victorian residential structures are. Each district has a recently published walking tour which gives a brief history of each “significant” building on the block. The walking tours were published by the Animas Museum and are available at the visitor center.

Many of the residences on Third Avenue are Victorian. Some are grandly scaled and are typical of the time period. But interestingly, there are a large amount of small, less ornate wooden structures dating from about the same time. These smaller houses are not described in the walking tour. During the turn of the 20th century, Third Avenue was divided into 25 foot lots. Many built their modest homes within these perimeters, but some who had acquired more wealth used 2 or even 3 lots to build their homes. It is an interesting occurrence that such a variety of economic households lived on the same block. It is this juxtaposition of large and small scale housing that makes this district significant, yet the walking tour only indicates the larger grandiose buildings on the block.

This block is also considered the most desirable place to live. According to a recent study on the economics of preservation in Colorado, the Boulevard District in Durango tended to have significantly higher selling prices than comparable houses outside the district.⁴⁶ While the entire district is protected by the Historic Preservation Board’s designation, the exclusion of certain historic structures shows the interest in a particular aspect of history, the rich successful period of Durango’s past. While at the

⁴⁶ *The Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation in Colorado*. Prepared for the Colorado Historical Foundation and funded by a State Historical Fund grant from the Colorado Historical Society; January 2002

same time, the working and middle class history is being forgotten in favor of a more tourist-friendly wealthy downtown with stately homes.

A significant portion of the preservation in Durango has been privately funded. While Colorado is one of the leaders in preservation tax incentives, many have found preservation to be quite profitable, particularly since much of the historic downtown has been preserved for over 30 years. According to Senior Planner Vicki Vandegrift, there is little opposition to preservation and design regulations within the downtown area. There is almost a “self imposed” preservation, she says. However outside of the downtown area, the design guidelines are not as well received. The Grand View area north and south of Durango has seen an increase in big box stores, and other chains and shopping centers are a common sight. There is more of a risk of losing the natural surrounding and vistas that complement the historic downtown and define this gateway community.

Potential for Additional Preservation

Durango clearly has a large portion of its community actively involved in preservation. The town is not at risk of losing historic structures. But, while those who sit on the Historic Preservation Board have designated several structures from Victorian to a 50’s burger joint, only one history is being told. Visitors don’t roam far from the Victorian safety of Main Avenue and local tourism officials have not done much to promote the evolution of the town and its more recent history. With the constant changing of the student population and increase in new residents, it is vital to have more involvement in the continuous history of Durango.

The current concern in Durango is preserving the town's sense of place. With the rapid growth in population and increase in new development Durango is becoming larger than it ever anticipated. Preservation planning is a necessary tool for a gateway community like Durango. Preservation regulations to retain historic fabric as well as scope and scale are necessary for the town center, but regulating what until recently was open land is a more difficult decision. The preservation of a vista is quite controversial when the price of land in a small town is so expensive. However, it is possible to achieve harmony between preserving natural resources, historic structures, sense of place as well as quality of life, while allowing for growth.

Chapter Four-Case Study: Mancos, CO

History and Development of Mancos

The history of Mancos is largely related to Mesa Verde. Without the Wetherills and their discovery of the cliff dwellings, who knows if Mancos would exist today? It started off as many small towns out west did, with farming. When the Wetherill family discovered Mesa Verde, there were only a few families within the community. Ranching and agriculture were the main economic forces in the community. With the discovery of Mesa Verde, Mancos became the first gateway to cliff dwellings. In the beginning, all activities surrounding the Ancestral Puebloan ruins went through the Wetherill family. Inquisitive travelers would arrive in Mancos, where a member of the Wetherill family would greet them and take them to the Wetherill farm located just outside the town center. Travelers would spend the first night at the farm and the following day be led up to the ruins on horseback. The traveler would stay on the Mesa overnight due to the long exhausting trip up to the cliff dwellings. The following day the traveler would return to the Wetherill farm and stay another night on the farm. This profitable arrangement the Wetherills had would not last long. Within a few years of its discovery in 1891, the railroad came into Mancos and other residents of the town began to see the potential profits of tourism to the ruins. Soon there was a selection of different locals who, for a fee, would guide interested tourists up the Mesa. The locals' knowledge of the area gave further confirmation of its gateway status.

With the rising interest in the cliff dwellings between 1890 and 1910, more people began to come to Mancos. Slowly the infrastructure of the town was built. Buildings were constructed, sidewalks paved, and additional amenities from the railroad were built

during this period. The turn of the century was the big boom period for development in Mancos. Riding on the prospect of tourism, development in the small settlement occurred at a rapid pace. After Mesa Verde became a national park in 1906, the town prospered even more. Since the park was still quite difficult to reach and without many amenities, the superintendent's office was located in downtown Mancos. The only road leading to Mesa Verde left from Mancos. This road would continue to be the road used to reach Mesa Verde until the mid twentieth century. Yet Mancos soon discovered that it takes more than a road and ownership claims to maintain its status as the gateway to Mesa Verde.

Mancos did not retain its title as gateway to Mesa Verde for long. Its population and infrastructure were quite small compared to Durango. The town also did not have the revenue to advertise as Durango did. Due to Durango's larger mining economy and location as the hub for the D&RG Railroad, it was better equipped to manage the large amounts of tourists that the cliff dwellings attracted. And with the rise of the automobile and improvements to national roads in the 1920's, Mancos returned to being a small agricultural community.

Current Trends in Tourism and Population

Even though Mancos did not maintain the status of the primary gateway community to Mesa Verde, it never lost a tourist population. Every summer Mancos would still see visitors to Mesa Verde frequent their town. While the number of visitors would never be anywhere near the amount of visitors to Cortez, Mancos would still generate much of their revenues from tourism. Since the early period of growth at the

turn of the twentieth century, Mancos has maintained its small population at just over 800 residents.

While the community of Mancos still remains small, there has been a significant rise in the population within the past 10 years, the first time reaching over 1,000 people. Some feel that the increasing cost of living in nearby Durango is pushing people to move to this sleepy town. Others feel it is the small town community which people are beginning to value and appreciate. Mancos has long since been the gateway to Mesa Verde, but it still has retained a tourist market for those who want to see “where the west still lives”. This has been their marketing slogan since the 1980’s; however some don’t consider it a marketing tool, but rather a way of life.

The heritage tourism trend is apparent to those who reside in Mancos. There has been a growing interest in the west and traditional communities in western Colorado. Mancos tourists generally come to see Mesa Verde. 92% of all tourists to Montezuma County visit Mesa Verde National Park.⁴⁷ But the difference is the length of time and additional activities the visitors are coming to see. Tourists who stay in Mancos tend to participate in one of the town’s other activities. The horse-drawn stagecoach ride has become the biggest draw after Mesa Verde for tourists coming to Mancos. This reenactment of the days of the old west on unpaved dirt backcountry roads, has proven successful, with over half of Mancos Visitors participating in this activity.⁴⁸ Another new attraction to Mancos is the visitor center and Pioneer Museum developed by the chamber of commerce. Right off Highway 160, this new center, built in the same style as the original railroad station of Mancos, houses the new Pioneer Museum which has

⁴⁷ Interview with Tourism Director for Mesa Verde Country Lynn Dyer, March 10, 2005

⁴⁸ Interview with Editor in Chief of the Mancos Times Tom Vaughn, March 10, 2005

artifacts and photographs of the town's early history. These recent additions to the community have helped to draw additional tourists who want to experience more from their visit to the park.

Part of the problem with tourists exploring more of Mancos and some of the other smaller towns within Montezuma County is that the tourism office within the Colorado Welcome Center is in Cortez. The marketing is done for Mesa Verde Country, not for each specific town. The organization does not recommend one town over another and claims to be unbiased. However, the majority of tourism seems to be directed to Cortez simply because it has the infrastructure to handle large amounts of tourists due to its rapid growth in the 1950's and 1960's. This leaves the smaller towns in the county on their own to attract tourists who visit Mesa Verde National Park.

What is evident from the community is the attitude about its neighboring towns. When talking with town residents, there was clear resentment over Cortez' large tourist population and of Durango's praised bustling historic downtown. This is quite understandable given the town's misfortune of missing out of the profitable tourist industry in much of the twentieth century. Yet Mancos still won't give up, in its determination to once again be the gateway to Mesa Verde, the town had the slogan "Gateway to Mesa Verde" as its registered trademark. Whether or not it is true, no other town can now officially be "the gateway" to the famed park. However, this new trademark has not had a significant effect on tourism to the park. People have not stopped staying in Cortez because the town can no longer legally call itself a gateway. But a sense of pride and satisfaction has overcome the Chamber of Commerce who has been in the shadow of Cortez for over fifty years. And while no one says anything nice

about their neighbor to the west, Cortez still is a necessary aspect to Mancos vitality. The town does not have all the amenities necessary to survive on its own. There is no supermarket or other such stores within the town. Many travel to Cortez or Durango to shop for necessities. There are a handful of restaurants in the town, one video store and the business district consists of an intersection with government offices, an art gallery, cafe, store with western wares, a bar and some recently vacant buildings.

Despite its small scale there has been a significant increase in population. And for this reason, town officials are in the beginnings of creating a “visioning” process. What this process hopes to accomplish is to involve all community members in the town’s future development. While many didn’t like the term “visioning,” most of the community think it is not only a good idea, but necessary for preserving the quality of life that Mancos residents pride themselves on. This process is planned for later in 2005 and will attempt to revise the now ten year old comprehensive plan to accommodate the town’s growing population. Some are skeptical of the whole process, some of working with outsiders on their town’s issues, but hope that this will improve conditions in the area.

Preservation in Mancos

There are no specific local preservation policies in Mancos. That does not mean that preservation has not played an important role in the community. There have been many preservation efforts in Mancos despite its lack of a preservation board. Several years ago, a plan was set to form a preservation board for Montezuma County, which would designate and protect the large number of smaller Native American archaeological

sites, as well as preserve the structures from the more recent agricultural past. The board's headquarters was to be in Mancos, and would be overseen by locals within the community. However, due to a recent change in mayor, creation of the historical commission was placed on a back burner.⁴⁹

Despite the lack of a formal organization, several privately funded preservation projects have taken place in Mancos over the past few years. Several private homes as well as commercial buildings have been preserved using Colorado's preservation tax credit. The program funded by the Colorado Historical Society allows a 20% tax credit for preservation work done on locally or nationally recognized historic structures. The most recent preservation project has been the work done on the Bauer Bank building located at the intersection of Main Street and Grand Avenue. Built in 1905 as the first bank in Mancos, it today is an art gallery and studio and very popular bakery. The bakery serves as a morning gathering place for many in the community, and the gallery space and studio allows local artists to work and display their artwork publicly.

Many feel that it is the small-town feel, including its historic Main Street and Grand Avenue, which has attracted the many newcomers to Mancos. An interesting feature of the historic downtown is the many non-historic structures there. There are several buildings which have been constructed to resemble architecture from the "old west." These buildings are different than the original structures which were located in the center of town. These newer buildings are one story and have wooden canopies which overhang to shade the sidewalk. This aspect is not part of the structure of the original buildings on the block, which were two story brick Victorian structures with large storefront windows and decorative cornices. The decision to construct these

⁴⁹ Interview with Editor in Chief of the Mancos Times, Tom Vaughn, March 10, 2005

buildings on Main Street gives further evidence that the people of Mancos value the history of their town, even if the history is not always the most accurate.

Another example of reconstructing history is the new addition of an old wooden prison structure which now resides in a parking lot within the town center. The original jail was located miles away from downtown Mancos in a secluded area. The reconstructed jail uses the same woodworking techniques as the no longer present original prison. This recent addition to the town's assortment of architecture clearly demonstrates the town's interest in history and realizing the value that historic structures have for tourism as well as within the community. The parking lot in which the prison sits has imprints of horseshoes along the sidewalk clearly trying to maintain their identity of "where the west still lives".

Despite the newer constructed versions of western architecture, Mancos does have several genuine historic structures within the center of town. Realizing the draw of historic preservation, the locally produced tourist publication *Mancos Guide* included a historic walking tour of the town with descriptions of many of the larger historic structures close to the downtown area. The historic walking tour is also available at the Visitor's Center during the summer months and has been one of more popular attractions for tourists staying in Mancos.

Many of the historic structures listed on the tour are large residences and older commercial buildings. One of the buildings listed is the Mancos High School. Most residents in Mancos are very proud of their high school. The building was built in 1909 and is the oldest continuously operated high school within Colorado. The school was recently restored by a grant from the Colorado Historical Society. The project included

conservation of the masonry and repointing, new roof, a new HVAC system tinted energy efficient windows and an addition with a new gymnasium.

The Colorado Historical Society was also a funding source for a more controversial project, the Mancos Opera House. The only theater in Mancos, the Opera House is currently owned by the Veteran's Association, which uses only the ground floor for their meeting space. The upper two stories which contain the theater and office space, are currently unused and in a state of disrepair. The Veteran's Association has no money to preserve the building. A group of local residents concerned about the deterioration of the building formed a non-profit organization and wants to purchase the property and restore it as a theater since the town currently does not have a place for entertainment. The organization wrote a National Register nomination form for the building and applied for a grant to conserve the exterior of the building which had lost much of its mortar and was at risk of harming pedestrians from falling bricks. The grant was approved and the exterior was preserved, but issues of ownership of the building still remain. The debate over the building has caused a divide in the community. After the restoration of the exterior, a private investor from Durango has put an offer on the building for far more than the local organization can afford. There is a fear by some residents that the outsider would not develop the building in a manner sympathetic to the community. However others feel that only an outside source with enough revenue can rehabilitate the town's white elephant. The future of the Mancos Opera House is still unclear, but the exterior preservation may have given more potential opportunities for the complete rehabilitation and restoration of the building.

Along Grand Avenue sits a series of early twentieth century single story storefronts which have been adapted to serve the needs of the community. There is the office of the local newspaper *The Mancos Times*, a bar and a few businesses located in these buildings. However there is currently a vacant lot which has been there for over 20 years. There is a plan in place to finally build on this property and create a large government building complex. The smaller 1950's structure which currently houses the official offices has outgrown the town's growing government. No architectural plans are completed yet, but Tom Vaughn, the editor of *The Mancos Times*, believes the new structures will be in scale and complement the older buildings which will be adjacent the new building.

While many residential structures are occupied and well preserved, there are many small wooden barns or sheds left in a state of disrepair. These wooden structures are located on the same lots as the residential buildings, leaving a bizarre juxtaposition of the preserved and ruinous side by side. While the residents of Mancos take great pride in their homes, the surrounding structures are not as well cared for. Many of the wooden structures are located along the alleys between lots and perhaps served as storage of harvests for individual properties. Part of the history of Mancos is its agricultural past which is represented by these small wooden structures. While their preservation may not be cost effective, it is important for residents to learn more about these wooden structures on their properties to gain a greater understanding of Mancos' agricultural past and how it shaped the architecture within the town.

Potential for Additional Preservation

Mancos has great potential for additional preservation. The town already has knowledge of its history and sense of community. As seen by the many private preservation projects, preservation is already seen as a way to enhance the community. However with no formal organization, preservation has occurred in a haphazard way. Preservation initiatives have been largely individually based without a consensus from the community as a whole. By creating a Local Certified Government and Historic Preservation Board, the town would be able to have a more complete inventory of their historic structures, a process for designation as well as design guidelines for the town to help maintain its distinctive character. A part of their visioning process, the importance of preservation planning should be addressed so all stakeholders can benefit from preservation efforts.

Another organizational tool that would aid Mancos in preservation is creating a Main Street program. The center of Mancos has many historic structures, some of which are vacant, others not in the greatest condition. By creating an association that focuses on the businesses as well as the architecture, Mancos could benefit financially and not risk compromising its architectural heritage. The downtown is quite small in comparison to the other two towns, making vacancies and empty lots more detrimental for the economics as well as sense of place of the community. The historic vacant buildings along Grand Avenue are in relatively good condition and have the potential for becoming an economic benefit for Mancos. In comparison, the town of Cortez, which has fewer historic buildings along its Main Street, has a Main Street Association which has encouraged economic growth in the downtown area.

A primary issue concerning preservation in Mancos is authenticity. Many of the buildings along Main Street are not historic, but reconstructions of building that never existed in the area. The typical Victorian architecture has been replaced with rustic wooden structures to evoke a feeling of nostalgia for the “old west”. Although the buildings may not all be historic, the town has maintained its agricultural roots and sense of place. While preservation of the physical is a critical part to preserving history and community, Mancos has been able to preserve its small town characteristics without relying solely on their built environment. Perhaps the buildings are not all authentic, but Mancos has maintained a strong sense of community and place, which makes it a desirable place to live and visit.

Chapter Five-Case Study: Cortez, CO

History and Development of Cortez

The town that would become the primary gateway to Mesa Verde National Park for the later half of the twentieth century had rather humble beginnings. The earliest evidence of the town of Cortez was in an 1886 Sanborn map of southwestern Colorado, which showed only two intersecting roads in the hamlet. The development of Cortez would resemble much of the other small towns in the southwest. Ranching, farming and mining were the main sources of livelihood for the community. However, what sets Cortez apart from towns such as Mancos and Durango was its proximity to the Ute Native American Reservation. While Mancos also bordered the Ute Reservation, the mountains divided the two communities, limiting contact between them. Located in a valley, Cortez would have many interactions with the Native Americans in the area. Before its twentieth century development, the small town of Cortez was primarily known as an Indian trading post for southwestern Colorado. In addition to the agriculture and mining economies, Cortez would survive as a community because of its relationship and commerce with the Ute Native Americans.

Around the turn of the century, the residents of Cortez saw the prosperity of Mancos and Durango due to the recently found cliff dwellings and wanted to take advantage as well. Unfortunately, in all of Cortez' attempts at profiting from the cliff dwellings, it always took third place, due to its size and out of the way location. Those who did travel from Cortez to the ancient ruins were often disappointed by the long, rugged route by horseback. Even though Cortez was as close to the cliff dwellings as its neighbor Mancos, there was no designated route or roads to the ruins, making the trip

longer and more arduous than those who went through Mancos. It would be another forty years before their fate would change.

Cars began making their way into Mesa Verde by the 1920's and 1930's, but it was not until the 1950's that Cortez would begin to see the impact of the automobile in their town. In the 1950's, the Atomic Energy Commission became interested in improving roads in the western states to transport uranium and other resources across the country. While Cortez was not involved in uranium production, its location due north of Los Alamos made it a natural location for the highway. It was at this time that Cortez began to flourish. New paved roads were built from north, east, south and eventually west of Cortez, giving it access to New Mexico, Utah and California. Also with the elimination of the infamous Knife Edge Trail, the new road to the park was established between Mancos and Cortez, making it the first time access did not require a trip through Mancos.

With these new roads being built throughout the country, more and more cars began to appear in the west. Also with a change in the workforce, people began to take longer vacations, now commonly with their own automobile. The National Parks were the number one destination for family vacations, particularly in the west where so many of the parks reside. Cortez finally saw its opportunity to profit from tourism to Mesa Verde. To accommodate this new type of transportation, new construction was a priority. Cortez began to rapidly develop its downtown with motels and diners for the new growth of tourism within the region. Most of the new construction was at the edge of town closer to the park, but with the ever-growing need for accommodations in the summer, motels began to encroach on the small downtown area. Durango and Mancos did not

attempt to build at the same pace as Cortez. Cortez saw the profits from the new construction almost immediately. From the 1950's to the present, Cortez would finally get the recognition as the "gateway" to Mesa Verde National Park. Yet that title would come at a price.

Contemporary Issues in Cortez

Today Cortez has many of the qualities of a tourist driven type of gateway community. It was not the historic gateway community, and for that reason, it does not have some of the problems facing Durango and Mancos such as rapid growth and population increase. Due to its determination to increase tourism traffic and revenue as such a rapid pace, Cortez has lost its sense of history and community. Even though only one-third of the town's revenue is from tourism, it is clear that tourism infrastructure has taken precedence in the community. Driving along the Main Street, most of the commercial area is geared for the tourist. The Main Street, which is actually Highway 160, is a broad street, clearly designed for the car. There are only a few pedestrian crosswalks and crossing the six-lane highway can be a bit daunting for new comers. However it is a rare sight to see people walking. Everything you could need or want is easier to access by car. From motels to drive-thrus to large parking lots, Cortez' Main Street is not intended for the pedestrian.

Cortez was and continues to be marketed as a pit-stop for Mesa Verde. The average length of stay in Cortez is 1.3 nights, compared with Durango's 2.5 nights. 92% of all tourists frequent Mesa Verde, a statistic that Lynn Dyer, Tourism Director of Mesa

Verde County says is probably higher.⁵⁰ While many tourists only spend a little more than one night in Cortez, they do frequent many of the shops and restaurants that cater to them. Many of the shops sell Native American crafts, but also western wear, such as cowboy hats and boots. This shows that people are interested in the recent past of Cortez if only for the false sense of nostalgia while shopping for souvenirs.

Another significant difference between Cortez and its two neighbors to the east is that people are not moving to Cortez. The population has remained virtually the same according to the past three census reports.⁵¹ The other two industries within Cortez are agriculture and “light industry”, but there are not many other job prospects within the community. More than 15% of people live below the poverty level in Cortez, that is compared with the national average for the year 2000 of 9.2%.⁵² While this paints a rather dreary picture of the town, it is not a hopeless situation. Like many gateway communities who tried to adapt drastically to car culture and the new wave of tourism, they are only recently beginning to realize the importance of place for the community.

Preservation in Cortez

The development of Cortez as a tourist pit-stop has had a considerable impact on preservation in the town. The time of significant growth and the majority of current infrastructure is the later half of the twentieth century. A large part of Cortez resembles as strip mall. The difficulty in preservation in gateway communities such as Cortez is the lack of historic fabric. Yet it is the evolution and desire to change from small town to tourist hub that makes Cortez so significant. It tells an interesting story of the American

⁵⁰ Interview with Tourism Director of Mesa Verde Country, Lynn Dyer, March 10, 2005

⁵¹ Census 2000 Demographic Profile for Cortez, Colorado, <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

⁵² Ibid.

west, which we don't normally hear about except in negative situations. However, Cortez has many positive attributes that if used effectively could allow the town to become more than just a pit-stop.

Since the town was so small and relied mostly on agriculture, it did not have the significant amount or type of architecture that Durango had in its downtown. Perhaps because of this reason, Cortez was more inclined to embrace the roadside architecture sprouting up across the United States. However, the constant need for additional tourist amenities has led to new construction of motels and eating establishments, leaving few remnants of the 1960's roadside architecture as well.

However, some historic structures remain. The town has a local Historic Preservation Board which meets once a month to discuss designations and alterations. While it is not a Certified Local Government, it is a sign that the community is interested in preserving its history. There is a short list of buildings designated by the community, but only two are on the National Register for Historic Places.

The Montezuma Valley National Bank is one of the two buildings. The bank sits right on corner of Main Street and Market Street at what was once the center of town. The building was built in 1908 out of sandstone and served the community as a bank until 1957. The current purpose of the building now is somewhat perplexing. There is a historical marker stating the building's history, but the building is empty. When looking inside the glass windows, the bank's interior is pristinely preserved. It seems a pity that the most revered building within the community does not service the community in anyway. The other building on the National Register is Ertel Funeral Home. It is a later

structure from 1936 and built in the mission style with a tiled roof and a stucco finish. It is still operating as a funeral home and appears in very good condition.

Not all of the historic structures in Cortez were torn down. Some simply did not survive. Most of the earlier architecture was wood construction. Small one-story wooden houses were laid out on small plots of land, much like Durango.

Across the street from the Montezuma Valley National Bank is the Cortez Cultural Center. This building dates from the turn of the century and has been adapted to be a Native American museum and community center. Cortez values its long standing relationship with the Native Americans in the area. Within the area surrounding Cortez, there are numerous Native American archaeological sites. While the architecture in the center of town remains, the story behind it does not. This is one of the few remaining historic structures from this particular period, yet there is no sense of history of the people who have built it. The recent past and the story of the white settlers to the region are not being told.

When asked about other possible places to visit in Cortez, I was informed that other than the other archaeological sites in the Four Corners area, there was nothing nearby to see. One of the women who volunteered at the Colorado Welcome Center located just east of the town center, informed me of the *Crossroads Culture Walk*. This pamphlet, produced by the Cortez Main Street Association, is the one tourism document that attempts to incorporate the Native American and recent European histories in Cortez, by guiding visitors along the various shops and buildings within the downtown area.

Possible Preservation Efforts

Clearly Cortez' rapid growth and development as a tourist hub has effected preservation in the town. Most of the recent past has been erased. There are not many historic structures within the community. However, there are some which need to be recognized. What is necessary for Cortez and similar communities where development has come at such a rapid pace is an interest in their local history. Luckily Cortez has a rich Native American population and an active part of the community celebrating it. Yet the recent history has been forgotten or is considered less important than the Native American past.

Cortez does have an active Main Street Association which is a member of the Colorado Community Revitalization Association and a sub-committee of the Chamber of Commerce. The Cortez Main Street Association primary focus is "the promotion of downtown Cortez as the hub of the community."⁵³ Unlike many other Main Street Programs, it does not focus on preservation or design as a potential for economic enhancement. The most lucrative Main Street businesses are those that cater to the community as well as the tourists. Many of the restaurants are popular with tourists and locals, more involvement with these businesses could create a more cohesive Main Street program which could become a powerful tool in preservation.

What could follow is engaging the tourists to spend time in Cortez. While Cortez may never be a destination in itself, it does not have to be a pit-stop either. Encouraging tourists to get out of their cars and walk around is a good start.

⁵³ Cortez Chamber of Commerce, www.cortezchamber.org

Chapter Six-Conclusions

The stories of Durango, Mancos and Cortez give insight to the current situation facing gateway communities throughout the United States. Travelers to gateway communities are changing. Tourists are currently seeking out these towns for their unique historic characteristics and distinctive sense of place. The visitors who come to see solely the park and make the gateway community a pit-stop still exist, but there is an influx of cultural tourists to these towns, who are attracted to the history and heritage of gateway communities. It is this recent increase in travel to the gateway communities that is cause for concern.

Currently, the biggest concern facing gateway communities is losing their sense of place. Ironically, the very thing that attracted many newcomers to the community is what is at risk of being lost. It is the rapid growth and rate of this change that is causing the potential for problems. With growth comes several issues concerning sprawl, new development, changes in population, as well as changes in the types of establishments moving into the downtown historic areas, all of which are contributing to the alteration of physical environment and the quality of life within the community.

There is also the potential of preserving a false or limited version of the past. Tourists and new residents are in search of the town's western roots and a nostalgic version of the past. However, many gateway communities have a distinctive history that is a dynamic evolution through time, not solely the story of the "old west." There is a risk of losing part of the community's history when only part of the town's past is being promoted to tourists and potential residents; or when the community does not value it themselves.

The visitors to Mesa Verde National Park have significantly shaped the history of Durango, Mancos and Cortez and will continue to do so in the future. These communities are changing as gateway communities are becoming destinations in their own right. What initially was a tourist influx due to the national park is now a new resident and tourist inundation, changing the overall dynamic in the towns. Each town has reacted to this tourism in a different way; those reactions have defined the physical fabric of the community. Although these three towns vary in scale, population, architecture and perception, they do all have a common goal to make their town a desirable and livable environment. Preservation has been a useful and necessary tool used in all three communities to benefit them economically as well as socially. However, there are many more benefits enabled through preservation which could additionally enhance these communities.

Durango has shown the symptoms typical of many gateway communities today. The historic downtown area is a tourist destination in its own right, for this reason the town is experience growth at a very rapid pace. The biggest issue facing Durango currently is the potential loss of sense of place. While the town has well developed preservation policies to ensure the preservation of the built environment and regulate new construction through a series of design guidelines, there is currently no legislation to ensure the preservation of the natural environment surrounding the town and the vistas from the town. It is important to realize that the mountains which surround Durango are just as significant to its history and development as the railroad and the historic Victorian buildings along Main Avenue. By educating the residents and visiting population on the importance of the natural environment in relation to the built environment, there can be a

greater opportunity for saving the historic landscape through community input and future potential regulation.

The other significant issue facing Durango in regards to preservation is the tourist driven view of history. There is a risk of not telling the entire history of the town in favor of a more attractive and sanitized version of the past. While the period of significant growth in Durango was during the turn of the twentieth century and many of the larger Victorian buildings along Main Avenue and Third Avenue represent this period, there is also the story of the people of more modest means whose structures remain and are preserved, but whose story is not being told. It would be beneficial for the historic preservation board, planning department and tourism office to work together in creating a more comprehensive history of the town to ensure the preservation of history in the community.

Similarly Mancos has experienced a significant rise in population in recent years. This too could cause considerable change to both the built and natural environment of Mancos. The desire to once again become “the gateway to Mesa Verde” could be detrimental in regards to preservation in the community. Mancos has a strong sense of community, but has created a false physical history through the “western” architecture constructed downtown. In the attempt to attract more tourists, Mancos has relied on a past that never was. Understanding the community and its history in relation to the Park is crucial to preservation in this small town.

Currently there are no local preservation policies in the town. While many historic structures have been preserved, a formal government entity would enable a more comprehensive approach to preservation. In addition, creating a Main Street Program

would help the small town develop an economically stable commercial center which would accommodate the needs of both the community and tourist population.

The current position of Cortez as a pit-stop type of gateway community has not helped it attract people to the town. Visitors come to Cortez to visit Mesa Verde, but leave shortly after. With all the accommodations and amenities for a passing tourist population, Cortez is left with little sense of community. The history and evolution of Cortez is different than the other two towns. Currently Cortez is dealing with an infrastructure geared largely for a tourist population. The desire to accommodate tourists has left Cortez to lose much of its historic architecture as well as sense of community and history. These characteristics are vital for enhancing the community's quality of life. Cortez does have a preservation board and a Main Street Association. They currently do not work together. Communication between the two organizations could create a more commercially viable and visually appealing downtown area. There also is a large portion of the town's history not being told. The town focuses on the Native American past due to the many archaeological sites in the surrounding area. Yet, the story of the recent settlement and founding of the town is not highlighted. Incorporating the more recent history with the pre-historic would benefit the community in understanding of the town in which they live.

Tourism in gateway communities has shaped the towns' image and physical environment. The recent increase in tourism to these communities has a significant impact on the physical, but also the non-tangible elements of the community. Sense of place is the most important quality of these communities. Through preservation efforts, the towns can maintain that particular quality which the community and tourists find so

appealing. The balance of community and tourism is vital to ensure the future of these gateway communities. While not all gateway communities will be destinations, they do all have an interesting history of tourism and travel in the United States and help paint the picture of the evolution of the American west to the present day.

Appendix



Figure 1-Map of Southwestern Colorado (Source: Mapquest)

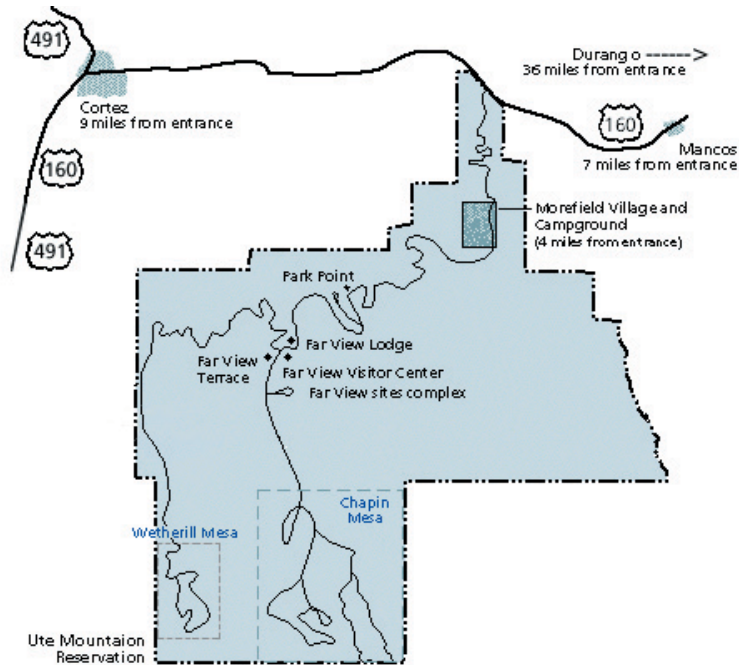


Figure 2-Map of Mesa Verde National Park (Source: Mesa Verde National Park)



Figure 3-Cliff Dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park



Figure 4-The Wetherill Ranch c. 1890 (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 5-Trail Outside Mancos c. 1890 (Source: Denver Public Library)

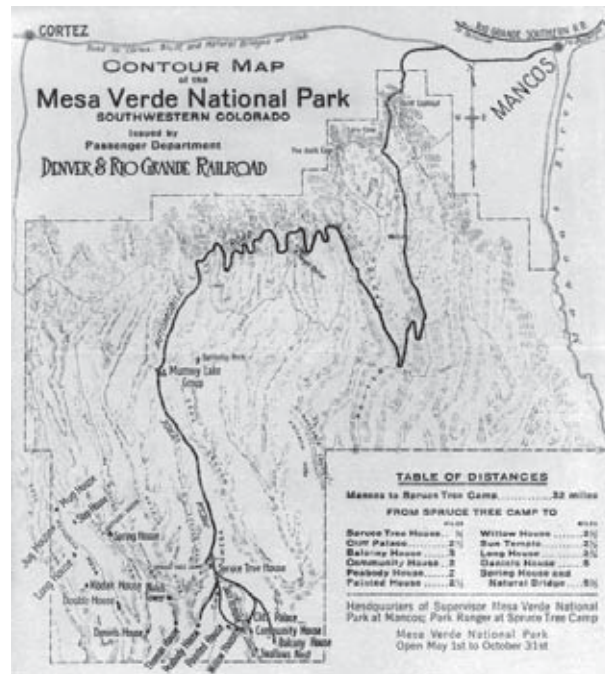


Figure 6-Denver & Rio Grande Map of Mesa Verde c. 1910 (Source: Library of Congress)



Figure 7-Knife Edge Trail c.1915-1930 (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)



Figure 8-Road Repair c. 1923 (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 9-New Road to Mesa Verde c. 1975 (Source: Library of Congress)

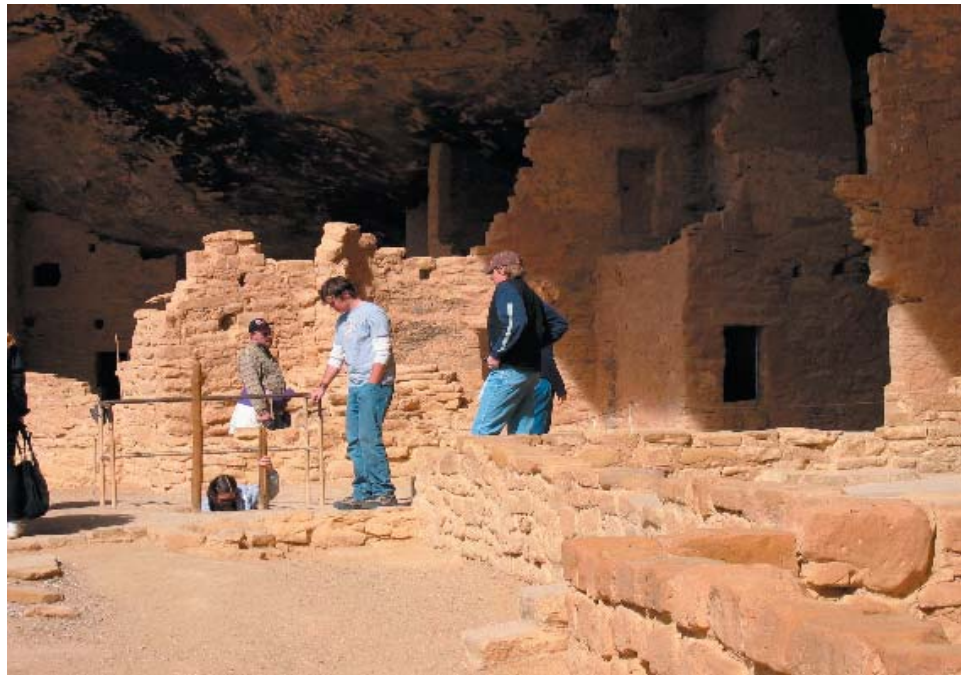


Figure 10-Visitors at Mesa Verde, 2005



Figure 11-Forest Fire, Mesa Verde as Seen from Cortez c. 1907 (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)



Figure 12-View of Durango c. 1880's (Source: Library of Congress)



Figure 13-Main Avenue, Durango c. 1881 (Source: Library of Congress)



Figure 14-Map of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway c. 1881 (Source: Library of Congress)



Figure 15-Diamond Belle Saloon c. 1960's (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)



Figure 16-View of Durango from Fort Lewis College looking West, 2004



Figure 17-View of Durango from Fort Lewis College looking South toward Grand View Area, 2004



Figure 18-Postcard of Downtown Durango c. 1980's (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)



Figure 19-Main Avenue looking South, Durango, 2005



Figure 20-Postcard of Main Avenue, Durango c. 1990's (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)



Figure 21-Third Avenue, Durango c. 1912 (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)



Figure 22-Large Victorian House on Third Avenue, Durango, 2005



Figure 23-Smaller House on Third Avenue, Durango, 2005

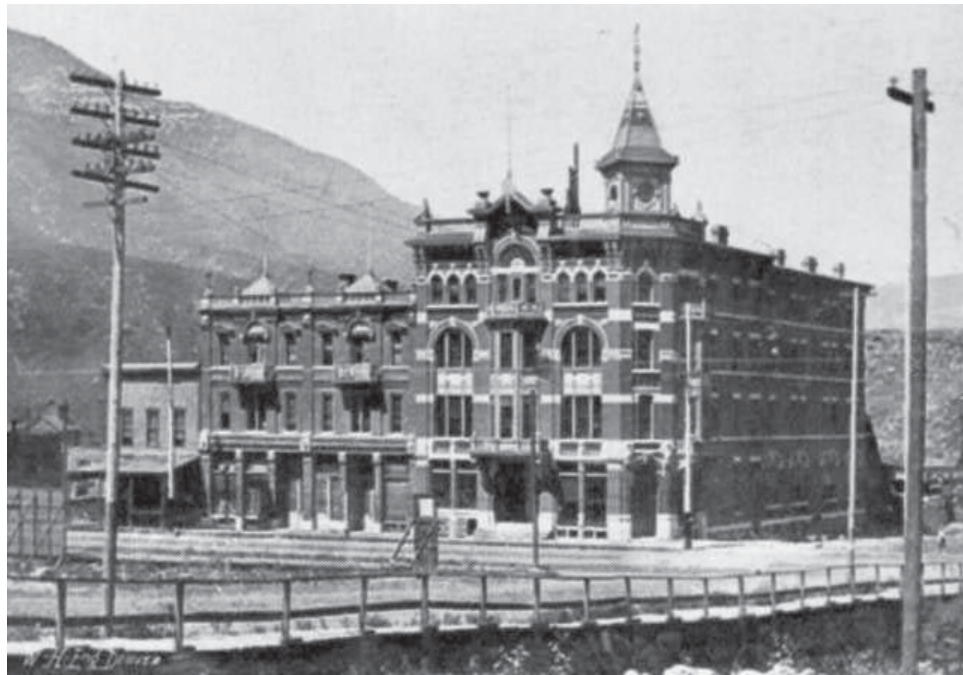


Figure 24-Strater Hotel c. 1901 (Source: Library of Congress)



Figure 25-Strater Hotel, Durango, 2004

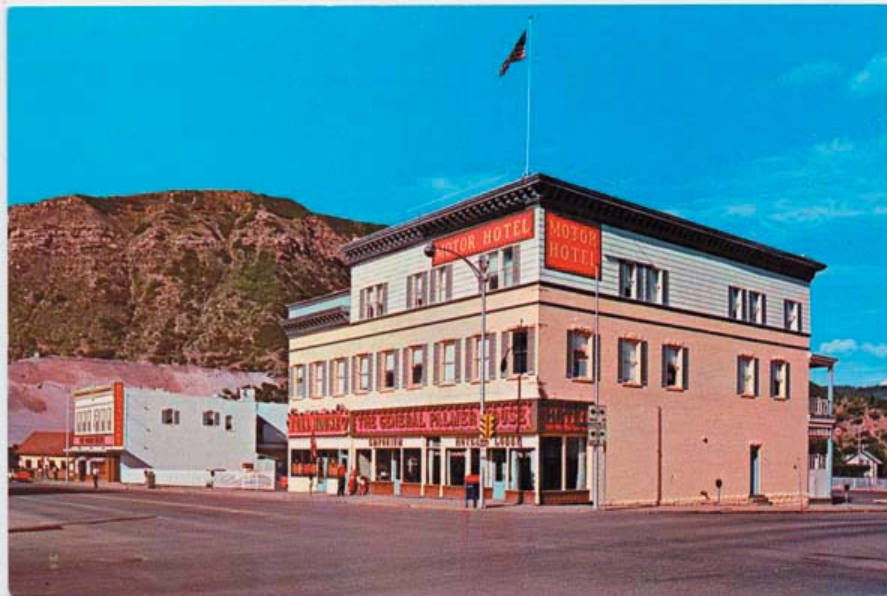


Figure 26-General Palmer Hotel c. 1960's (Source: Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College)



Figure 27-General Palmer Hotel, Durango, 2004



Figure 28-Third Avenue looking North, Durango, 2005



Figure 29-View of Mancos c. 1893 (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 30-Hotel in Mancos c. 1893 (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 31-Main Street, Mancos c. 1910 (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 32-Grand Avenue, Mancos c. 1910 (Source: Library of Congress)



Figure 33-Pioneer Museum and Visitor's Center, Mancos, 2005



Figure 34-Main Street looking South, Mancos, 2005



Figure 35-Grand Avenue looking West, Mancos c. 1990 (Source: www.ghostdepot.com)



Figure 36-Bauer House Bed and Breakfast, Mancos, 2005



Figure 37-Bauer Bank Building, Currently Artists' Studio/Gallery and Bakery, Mancos, 2005



Figure 38-Preserved Residence on Grand Avenue, Mancos, 2005



Figure 39-Mancos Jail Reconstruction, Mancos, 2005



Figure 40-Mancos High School, Mancos, 2005



Figure 41-Mancos Opera House, Mancos, 2005



Figure 42-Buildings and Vacant Lot along Grand Avenue, Mancos, 2005



Figure 43-Small Wooden Structure in Disrepair, Mancos, 2005

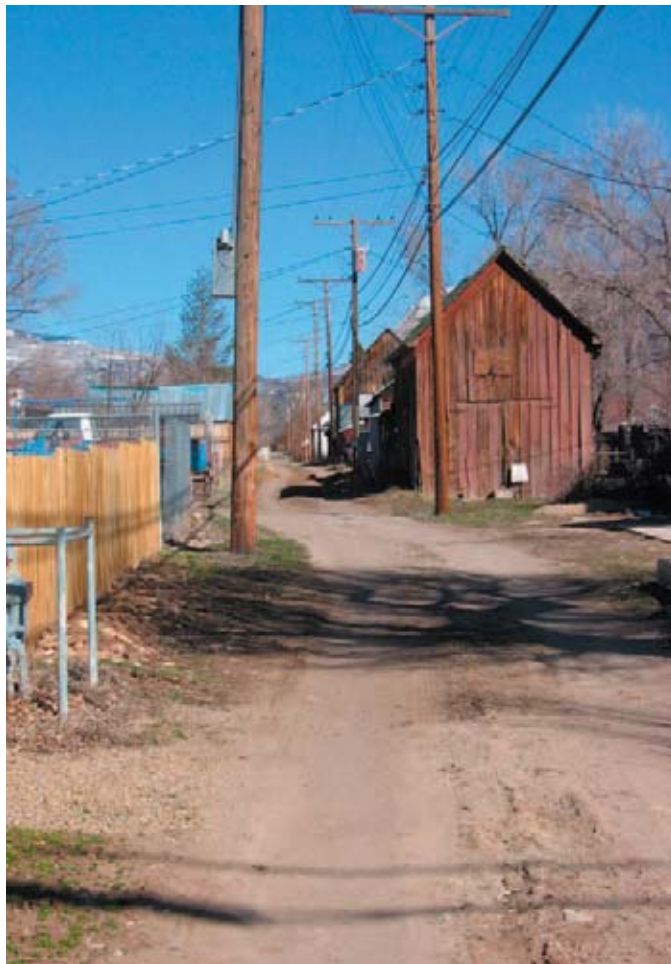


Figure 44-Wooden Structures in Alley, Mancos, 2005

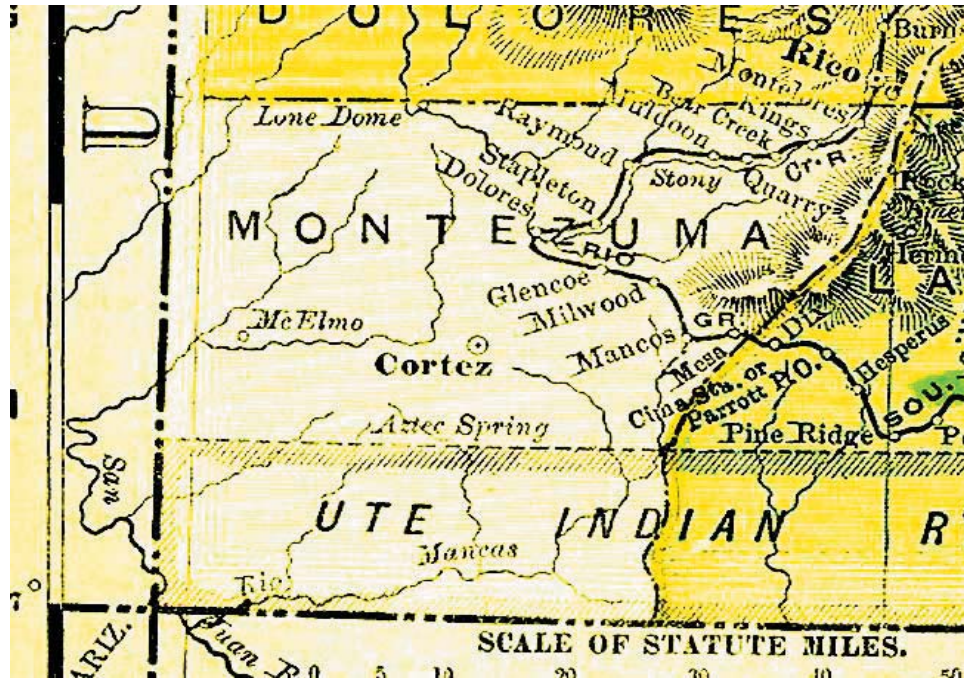


Figure 45-Map of Montezuma County c. 1895 (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 46-Stables in Cortez c. 1890 (Source: Library of Congress)



Figure 47-Main Street, Cortez c. 1910-1915 (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 48-Main Street, Cortez c. 1950's (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 49-Main Street looking East, Cortez, 2005



Figure 50-Tourist Restaurants and Shops along Main Street, Cortez, 2005



Figure 51-Montezuma Valley National Bank, Cortez, 2005



Figure 52-Wooden Architecture in Cortez c. 1910-1915 (Source: Denver Public Library)



Figure 53-Cortez Cultural Center, Cortez, 2005



Figure 54-Residence on Montezuma Avenue, Cortez, 2005

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Index

- American west, 14, 15, 16, 17, 58, 66
- Ancestral Puebloans, 19, 20, 21, 26
- authenticity, 13, 15, 17, 53
- automobiles, 16, 23
- cliff dwellings, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 29, 43, 44, 54
- Colorado, 2, 9, 15, 19, 21, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 40, 45, 46, 50, 54, 57, 60
- Cortez, 2, 9, 25, 27, 30, 32, 33, 45, 46, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65
- Denver & Rio Grande railroad, 29
- Durango, 2, 9, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 50, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, 63, 64
- Fort Lewis College, 31, 34
- Gateway communities, 1, 3, 17
- gateway community, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 34, 41, 44, 56, 62, 63
- Knife Edge Trail, 23, 55
- Mancos, 2, 9, 20, 21, 22, 27, 29, 32, 33, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 62, 63, 64, 65
- Mesa Verde National Park, 2, 9, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 39, 45, 46, 54, 56, 62
- Native American, 20, 26, 48, 54, 57, 59, 60, 64, 65
- old west, 15, 45, 48, 53
- Preservation, 1, 12, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 48, 52, 57, 58, 60, 63
- Railroad, 29, 30, 31, 35, 44
- tourism, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 27, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 39, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 55, 56, 57, 60, 62, 65, 66
- Tourists, 1, 7, 10, 13, 30, 31, 45, 62, 63
- walking tour, 39, 49
- Wetherill, 20, 21, 43