Historic Colorado Churches in Colorado Knowing and Sharing Our Story

Pre Annual Convention Workshop Episcopal Diocese of Colorado

October 4, 2025

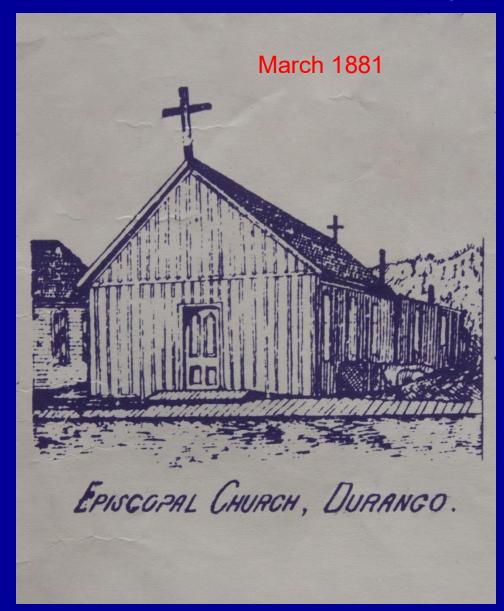


History, Identity, & Witness

- "The best arguments in the world won't change a single person's point of view. The only thing that can do that is a good story." (Ken Burns, quoting *The Overstory,* Richard Powers, 2018)
- Our history is our story. Knowing our history in the context of and in partnership with our community helps us to understand who we are – our identity.
- Our community identity as followers of Jesus develops through an understanding of our stories: our personal individual stories, the stories of Israel, the story of Jesus, the story of Christianity, and the stories of our local churches.
- Our identity precedes and informs our obligation to be a witness.
- We can't know what we ought to do unless we have some idea of who we are in relation to Jesus and to our community.
- And that requires knowledge, not only of our scriptures, but also of our history in local parishes.



An Example: Early History of St. Mark's, Durango

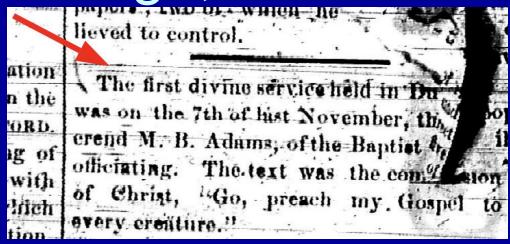


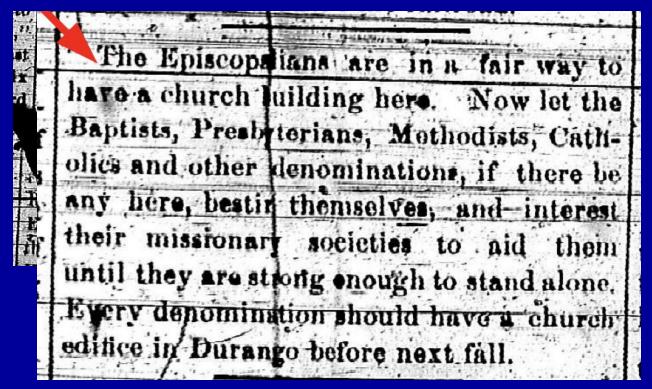


St. Mark's, Durango, 1880-1881

Durango Record, January 10, 1880 Caroline Romney, owner & editor

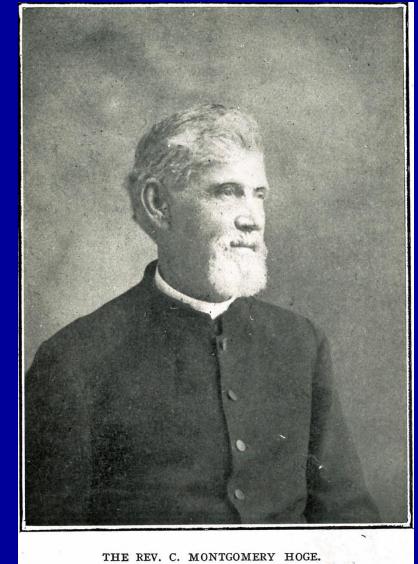
- The Baptists held the "first divine service" on November 7, 1880.
- The first Episcopal Service was held on December 20, 1880, in the Delmonico Hotel, by Rev. C.M. (Parson) Hoge.
- The Episcopalians finished
 Durango's first church building in
 February of 1881.





Funding & Building the New Church

- The \$2,000 lot was secured at no cost from the Town Company because St. Mark's was the town's first church building.
- Parson Hoge raised money for the building and its furnishings in saloons, gambling halls, and (perhaps) brothels, wearing a six-gun over his cassock.
- At least one gambling hall installed a "parson's box" at the door.
- Parson Hoge carried some of the lumber from the lumber yard on his back to the building site and used local volunteer labor to help with the construction.
- According to Hoge, J.L. Pennington, a prosperous teamster, road builder, Indian fighter, and railroad man "assumed all the responsibility and expense of putting up the building."



John Pennington, St. Mark's First Jr. Warden

A memoir by A.P. Camp recorded in 1925 in *Pioneers of the San Juan Country, Vol.,* I, notes the following:

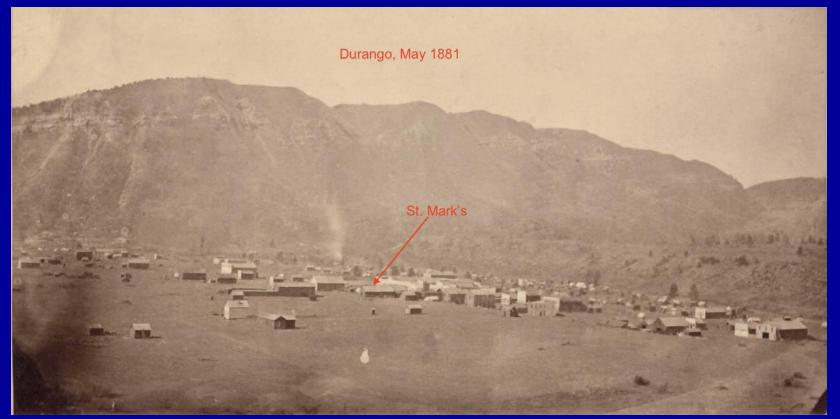
"On the occasion of Bishop Spalding's visit, he [Pennington] took up the collection at the church as usual one Sunday evening; after the service he went down on the street and into a gambling place where roulette was going on. He wanted to make a bet but had only the collection money in his pocket; he bet that money and won \$80. The next morning, he handed this to the Bishop who said, 'Why how's this, \$80! There were only a few people there – you have made a mistake.' But when he heard what had happened to the collection money, he told Mr. Pennington he might do it again!"

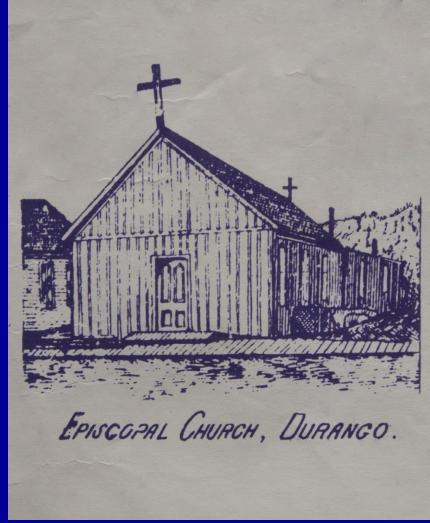
By 1882, despite his penchant for gambling, J. L. Pennington had been elected as Durango's second mayor, and he helped celebrate the completion of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad from Durango to Silverton during that year.



St. Mark's 1881 Church

- The building was essentially a 60 x 22 ft. barn with canvas windows, a sawdust floor, wooden benches, and a small raised platform at one end.
- It was, however, Durango's first school and first venue for "respectable" community entertainment.





First Service In the New Church

February 27, 1881

- Began with "the reading of the epistle for the day and a part of the evening service" which was followed by a program "consisting mainly of addresses and music."
- Music was "alternately furnished by a male quartette . . . and a part of the children of the Sunday School. . . ."
- The "worthy pastor, Rev. C.M. Hoge, invited the general public of all denominations to participate, and the world's people as well."
- Mrs. Romney, the newspaper editor, read a "little poem, entitled St. Mark's Church."
- Mr. French "emphasized religion as the foundation and mainstay of civil government."
- Mr. McCloskey thanked the church for affording the "waters of life to thirsty souls."

First Service In the New Church

February 27, 1881 continued

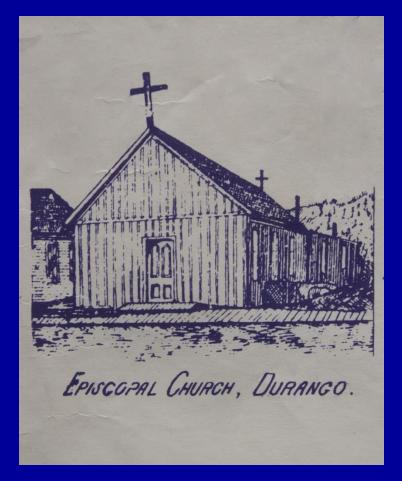
- Dr. Plumb "expressed the opinion that those churches that are devoted . . . to the service and benefit of man, that teach the most vital and aggressive humanitarianism, and grapple with the practical questions of life, will do most for the advancement of man, and the consequent glory of God."
- Mr. Sumner "predicted that the church of the future, the church of humanity, will accept truth from whatever source, whether drawn from the Bible or from the great and good men, the poets and priests of latter days."
- Col. Wilson, of Silverton (a self-proclaimed "heathen or an infidel" and friend of the parson) "affirmed his belief in the efficacy of the church and said that . . . [the church] at least in modern days has done nothing except good."
- Parson Hoge "... gave a brief address, concurring in most of the ideas advanced by the previous speakers and reviewing the history of the undertaking of building a church edifice in Durango."

Commentary on St. Mark's Upgrade

Durango Herald, September 8, 1881

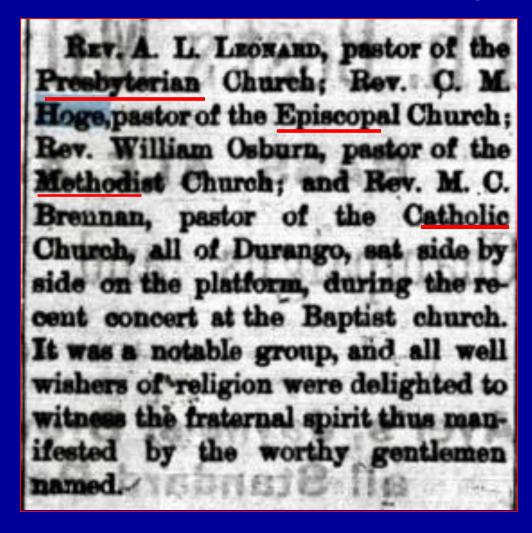
"Carpenters are busily at work on St. Mark's Church, and that edifice will soon be thoroughly repaired (construction will be completed) and ready for any kind of fall or winter weather.

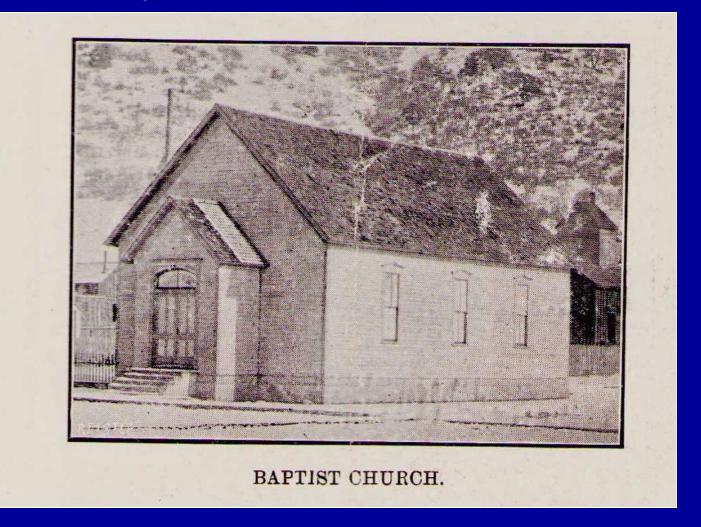
(There were rumors that gambling money was used to complete the project, but what can we expect when the congregation was 'made up of about as rough an assemblage as ever gathered to hear the Word of God?')."



Ecumenical Concert at the Baptist Church

Durango Herald, July 14, 1881





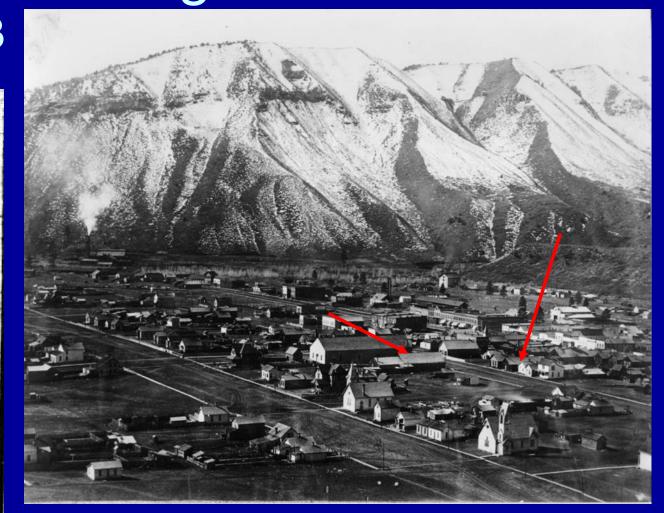
"Fashionable Colored Wedding"

The Southwest, March 31, 1883

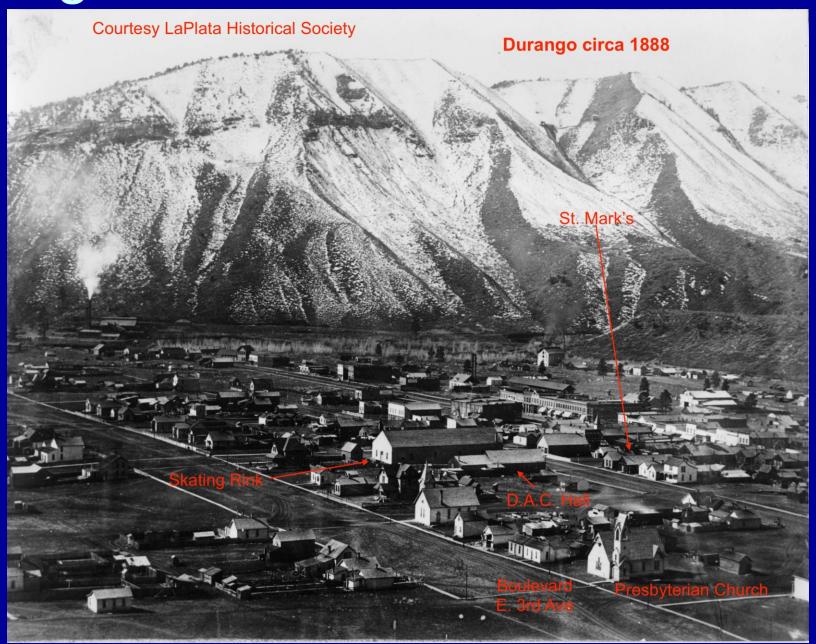
A Fashionable Colored Wedding.

On last Wednesday evening, Mr. R. C. Miner and Miss Louisa Perkins, were married by Rev. C. M. Hoge. After the ceremonies were over the party proceeded to Scott's Hall, where dancing was kept up till a late hour. Mr. Miner is the most popular porter on the Pullman palace cars between Durango and Denver.

A large number of Durango's citizens were present at the ceremony.



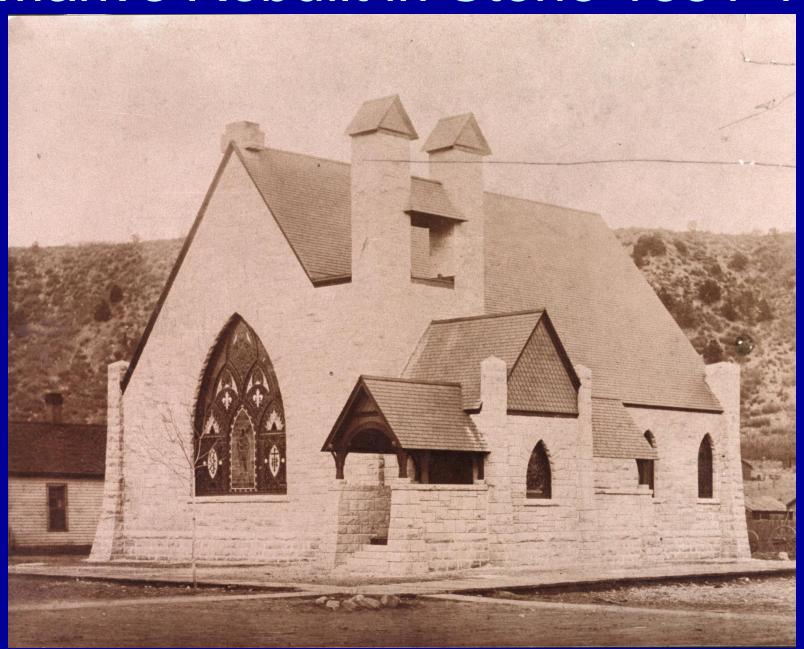
Durango Before the Great Fire of 1889



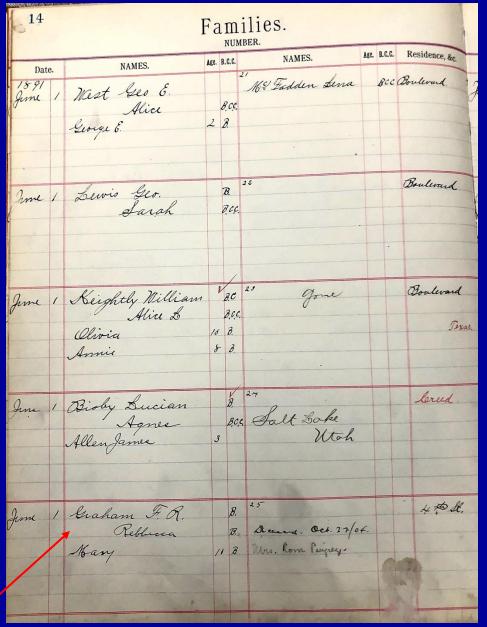
Great Durango Fire July 1, 1889

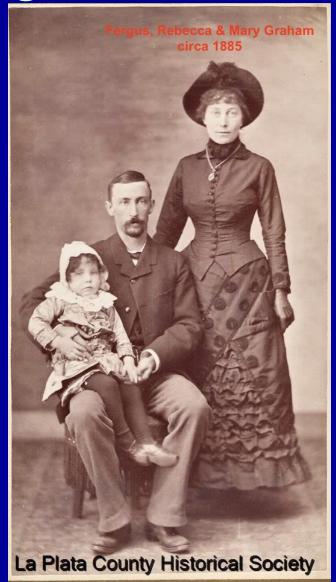


St. Mark's Rebuilt in Stone 1881-1892



St. Mark's Parish Register 1891





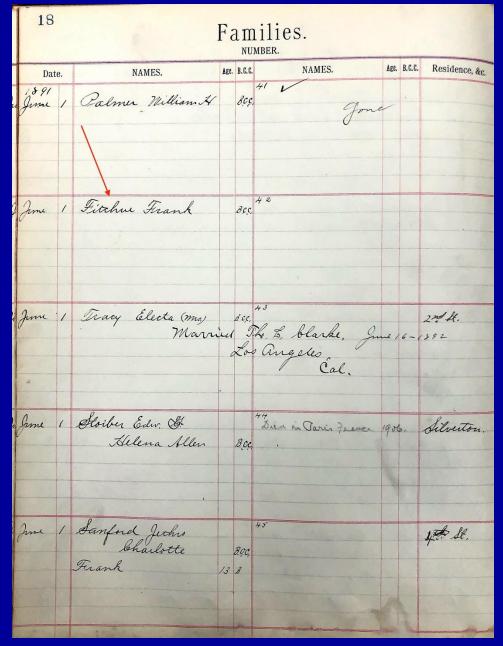
Fergus Graham's Father, George Mason Graham

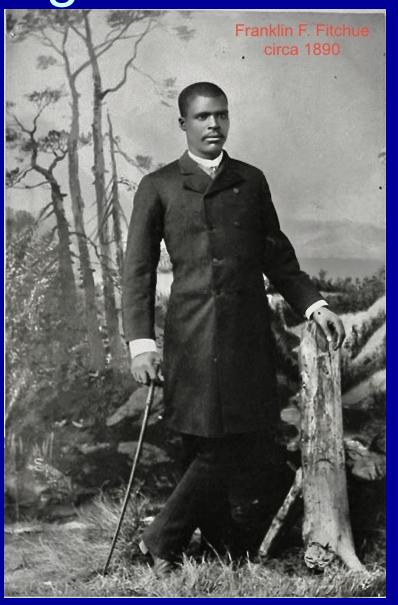
- died in the spring of 1881
- memorialized in St. Mark's
 Sower Window 1891
- never visited Durango or Colorado
- the "father of LSU" and friend of Wm. Tecumseh Sherman
- a white supremacist who owned slaves and a plantation in Rapides Parish Louisiana before and during the Civil War
- organized a militia to terrorize slaves to prevent a slave uprising





St. Mark's Parish Register 1891

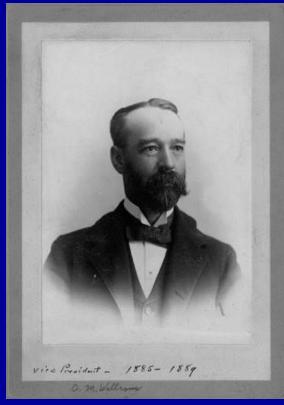




Frank Fitchue (1855-1917)

- son of freed slaves in St. Louis, MO
- family moved to Kansas after Civil War
- came to Durango in early 1880s
- worked as a porter & night watchman at First National Bank circa 1882
- helped foil a bank robbery in 1883
- First National Bank V.P. and St.
 Mark's parishioner, C.M. Williams,
 taught Frank how to read, write, and
 do arithmetic and provided him with
 paper, pencils and a desk
- worked as a porter at Strater Hotel after its construction 1887
- hired as St. Mark's church janitor in 1893





St. Mark's Vestry Minutes 1893

hered meeting vestry Present newman Me Fordden West, White Dering, Chapman Motion made by W lo Chapman that a committee he appointed to communicate with The Bishop, and welcome Min, and ismite him to locate in plurango. Anotion made by yes. West be removed, and another man

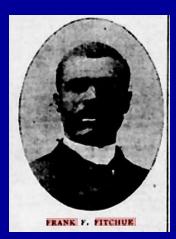
appointed in his place,
Madernay made a motion thatFrank Fitchur to tendered the place
Motion made by Mr newman that the
Pettors Ralaby to increased to
\$1200, per year, carried.

Durango African Methodist Episcopal Church

- Durango had about 100 black citizens in 1907
- the Durango A.M.E. Church, Embry Chapel, was founded circa 1904 (black citizens' choice vs. white segregation?)
- Frank Fitchue was one of its founders and probably its major financial supporter
- used the old Baptist church
- probably closed before Frank Fitchue's death in 1917



Frank Became a Successful Mine Manager 1917



FRANK F. FITCHUE

The Only Negro Copper King in Colorado.

Frank F. Fitchue, was born in the suburbs of Kansas City Mo. September 15, 1855, was raised in and near Lawrence coming to Colorado and localing at Durango 36 years ago. Thirty years ago he be came interested in mining and prospected during his spare time when off duty. He work ed for 12 years for the Durango Bank and Trust Co. as porter, from which place he went to manage the great Mis souri mine which he thinks will not only make him rich but famous. For 7 years he was employed in the First Na tional Bank of that city and enjoyed the greatest confidence of his employers. Tak ing over the active manage. ment, he soon found that this great mine would require not only his time there but him living right at the mine and he, therefore moved to his mine last November to live.

The Missouri Copper Mine.

The Missouri group is the largest known group of copper mineral in the State and is situated in Montezuema County, South of Rico Camp

on the Rio Grande Southern road, extending one It being situated among some of the ranches. at all times of the year it is of easy access, crossing the State Highway, as well as, the Do lores River. Mr. Fitchue employs 4 miners who have been and are now mining some fine bodies of ore consisting of gold, silver and copper values. The vein is too feet wide and prospects for a great milling property are evident. So flat tering are the wealthy anticipations that a local syndicate have offered to bond and lease the same for a handsome price. Ore extracted from this mine easily runs \$100 a Preparations are being made for the installing of a side track for shipping purposes, the distance from the mine to the side-track being 600 feet Frank F. Fitchue is the sole owner, a young un. married man who owns a love ly home at 769 6th Ave., Durango, Colo., a church man, being a member of the St. Marks Episcopal Church

Denver Star April 14, 1917

Frank Fitchue's Death, November 1917

Durango Semi-Weekly Herald, Nov. 1,1917

the sawdust.

ing property.

DEATH OF FRANK F. FITCHUE Frank F. Fitchue, a thrifty col- CUT THIS OUT-IT IS WORTH ored man, who had run the gamut of western experiences, died at Mercy hospital this morning after an llness of more than two months' duration. His residence in the San Juan basin dated back to the waning '70's when the Silverton mining district was in its infancy and the present site of Durango was a camping place for nomad redskins. He came to Durango in the early '80's and served is janitor for the First National bank when the institution was first started. Of recent times he was in the employ of the Durango Trust company for several years. He was industrious and saving and each year out aside a certain amount of his earnings. His estate included a sub

stantial residence property in Du-

rango and considerable valuable min-

In early summer he spent some time in the Bear Creek section where his property, the Missour Girl, is located. It is believed that overtaxing himself while getting out ore for shipment from this mine brought on the illness that caused his death, the labor proving too strennous for his sixty-odd years. During the later years of his life the Durango Trust company looked after tion \$100 and named it the executor of his estate. He further established a good precedent by making bebody was taken to the Goodman Un- Drug Company.

dertaking parlors. As yet no funeral arrangements have been made.

MONEY.

DON'T MISS THIS. Cut out this slip, enclose with 5c and mail it to Foley & Co., 2835 Sheffield Ave., Chicago, Ill., writing your name and address plainly. You will receive in return a trial package containing Foley's Honey and Tar Compound, for coughs, colds and croup; Foley Kidney Pills, for pain in sides and back, rheumatism, backache, kidney and bladder ailments; and Foley Cathartic Tablets, a wholesome and thoroly cleansing cathartic for constipation, biliousness, headache and sluggish bowels .- S. G. Wall and Durango Drug Company.

FISHERDICKS SELL STORE

The C. W. Fisherdicks have sold their mercantile establishment on the La Plata to John M. Smith and will levote their entire attention to their stock and land interests.

WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD

No man can do his best when suffering from backache, rheumatic pains, swollen joints, sore muscles or other symptoms of kidney trouble. his business affairs and as a toker B. H. Stone, 840 N. 2d St. Reading; of appreciation he left the institu- Pa., writes: "I contracted a most severe case of kidney trouble. I gradually grew worse and for months was enable to attend to business. I quests to St. Mark's church in Duran- began to use Foley Kidney Pills and go and the Warrent Street Baptist soon found the pains were gone and church at Lawrence, Kan., each re- I have had no aches since. They ceiving \$100. Several relatives are have been worth their weight in gold named beneficiaries in his will. His to me."-S. G. Wall and Durango

- The A.M.E. Church had probably closed by late 1917 because Frank's funeral was held in "Goodman's Undertaking parlors" on Nov. 3,1917.
- Rev. Rice of St. Mark's **Episcopal Church conducted** the service.
- The *Durango Democrat* reported that "Numbers of our most respected citizens, both ladies and gentle men, and all of the colored population of the city, were present"

George Barnett 1885



Blackface Minstrel Shows in Durango

THE MINSTREL SHOW.

The first night's performance Durango's Lady Minstrels was nessed last night at the opera house by a fair-sized congregation. The performance consisted of sixteen ladies whose identity is not made public. They are working in the interest of the Ladies' Guild. Their faces were blackened and each wore a black skirt reaching to the shoe tops, a dress coat and waistcoat, white shirt and collar and necktie, while the lapel of each one's coat was adorned with a huge chrysanthemum or other flower.

Durango Semi-Weekly Herald Feb. 18, 1904 Regardless of the storm last night an immense crowd greeted the Smart Set Minstrels at Rednien hall, nearly six hundred being in attendance. From artistic, social and financial standpoints the entertainment was a complete success. Every number was a hit and worthy of the unstinted applause and laughter it received.

The affair was handsomely staged. The opening scene was an Oriental court, the setting formed in part by a white background and canopy profusely decorated with yellow chrysanthemums artistically arranged. Sunflowers of dimensions that bespoke the favor of colored people shaded the footlights. Yellow and purple were the predominating colors of the costumes worn by the twenty-one entertainers. Dark red electricts at the rear heightened the coloring. Spot lights had important parts in enhancing the beauty of scene.

The cream of local talent had part, the Mesdames J. R. C. Tyler, Fred Egan, Joe Clark, George Tiffany, E. K. Chase, A. R. Mollette, Rowe Pingrey, Reese McCloskey, E. H. Burdick, Carl Coulson, George White, L. C. Jakway, Grace Bishop, Miss Mary Chapman, and the Messrs. McLaughlin, Ray Morris, George Moody and Jesse Hocker. Miss Marion Harwood, of Ignacio, and Mr. Harrish Ingraham, of New York, who calls Durango home for the present, gave the entertainment the profession touch that would win them recognition anywhere

Mrs. Fred Egan was interluctor and the Mesdames Bishop and White and the Messrs. Ingraham, Morris, Hocker and Moody were the end men.

The curtains were raised on the company seated in a semi-circle. The initial number, "Ladies of the Harem" was an excellent example of the splendid chorus work, but everybody was so busy wondering audibly "who was who" among the cork darky performers it did not receive the appreciation it deserved. The Bostonian orchestra accompaniment was excellent in this as well as every other portion of the program and their playing had a most important part in the success of the entertainment.

"Smart Set Minstrels is Success" Durango Semi-Weekly Herald May 3, 1915



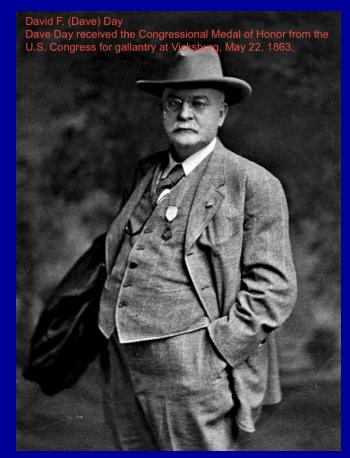
Matt. 25: 31-36

31"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

- How did St. Mark's do with regard to following Jesus as the parish and its members interacted with "strangers" (particularly black strangers) who were showing up in late 19th and early 20th Century Durango?
- In comparison to cultural perceptions and practices regarding race in the rest of the country – probably not too badly.
- In relation to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25, we had (and still have) a long way to go.
- One of our failings was that, because nearly all of us were of white northern European descent, we generally saw our black neighbors (and persons of other ethnicities, including indigenous tribal members) as burdensome strangers (especially if they were poor or uneducated).
- We seemed to understand that we had some obligation, as Christians, to help them, but we did not seem to perceive them and their differences as gifts from God.

- One very unlikely St. Mark's parishioner, however, may have understood that strangers – particularly "colored" strangers – might be gifts from God when they show up in our lives.
- Listed as the father of a family recorded in St. Mark's Parish Register in 1893, David F. (Dave) Day was a medal-of-honor recipient during the Civil War who became an irascible curmudgeon newspaper editor, one of whose publications was called "the most irreverent newspaper in the West."

Families. NUMBER.								
Date.		NAMES.	Age.	B.C.C.		A	se. B.C.C.	Residence, &c.
1893		Day David			75. Vest.			Boulevard,
		Victoria	da					
		Stanley						
		Rodney						
		Day David Victoria Stanley Rodney Vio Lerrora		13.cc				



- He was constantly at war with local politicians, community leaders, and rival newspapers, making him the target of over 40 libel suits.
- In 1903 he even fought a duel with another newspaper editor "exchanging 13 shots... at a distance of eight to fifteen feet" (miraculously, both men survived without major injury).

David F. Day and Frank Hartman of newspaper fame exchanged thirteen shots at each other about 9:30 p. m., at a distance of from eight to fifteen feet, and both still live to renew the fight at a later day. It was a street fight and reports are conflicting as to which, if either, fired first.

Trouble has been brewing in the newspaper field for some months. Last November Day had trouble with his union printers and locked them out, employing non-union men. A boycott was instituted by the unions, and the merchants to a large extent, upon demand, withdrew their patronage. The trades unions started what is known as the Trades Journal. Hariman up to last week having done the principal writing for the paper. The Trades Journal filled its columns with abuse of Day, who, in turn, rousted the men connected with it in his well-known style.

In addition to this the past week a vigorous newspaper war has been on between Editor Higgins of the Evening Telegraph and Day of the Democrat. Higgins lampeoning Day and stating that he was ready and willing to meet him at any time and any place.

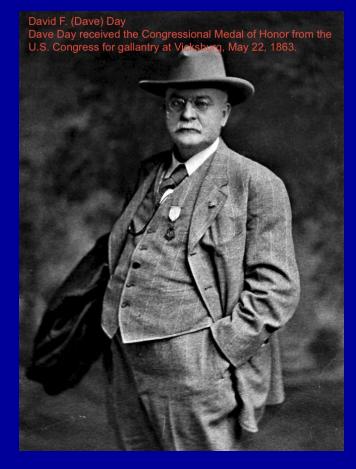
Sunday morning Day layited Higgins to a duel, to be fought in New Mexico. or outside of this judicial district, stating to his paper that a man might as well be dead as to live under the castigation of the Telegraph.

Monday afternoon Higgins replied in the Telegraph that he was willing to take pet luck with Day, but declined a duel, saying Day was too fow in thus honor, and people have been looking for a meeting between the two. At first it was supposed the shouling was be-

Day was not touched, while only one builet took effect on Flartman, causing a slight flesh wanted in the leg, possibly half an luch deep.

Days paper publishes an editorial accepting Higgins' creposal to fight the quarrol out on the street.

The city marshal declares that his will do his best to preserve the pract.



Akron, Colorado Pioneer Press, May 22, 1903

Dave Day and the A.M.E. Church

Whatever his faults, and they were many, Dave Day in 1909 published in his
 Durango Democrat paper a letter from leaders of the Durango A.M.E. Church
 (including Frank Fitchue) that acknowledged the gifts Mr. Day received from
 "colored people" during the Civil War. It reads:

"Col. Dave Day of the Durango Democrat has not charged the members of the A.M.E. church one cent for, we might say, our grievances, as a congregation. No dollar will be accepted from the colored people. When escaping from Andersonville and Florence prisons in 1864, the colored people helped and fed him, a gratitude that forty-four years won't wear off. His name will be enrolled upon our church record of membership. It will be the first church he ever had membership with, The African Methodist Church."

- They must have been unaware that he had been "enrolled" at St. Mark's in 1893, but they probably thought no church other than theirs would have claimed him.
- Hopefully, those of us who are white Christians today will, like our errant forebearer Dave Day, have epiphanies that help us to recognize that ethnic and other strangers are, like Jesus himself, truly gifts from God – and that such epiphanies will help us to follow Jesus more authentically.

Durango African Methodist Episcopal Church Gratitude

THIS IS GRATITUDE.

Col. Dave Day of the Durango Democrat has not charged the members of the A. M. E. church one cent for, we might say, our grievances, as a congregation. No dollar will be accepted from the colored people. When escaping from Andersonville and Florence prisons in 1864, the colored people helped and fed him, a gratitude that forty-four years wont wear off. His name will be enrolled upon our church record of membership. It will be the first church he ever had membership with, the African Methodist church.

(Signed)

FRANK F. FITCHUE. Trustee.

A. E. ROSE.

G. W. WOODEN.

GEO. BARNETT.

MRS. K. WILLIAMS.

CHAS. WRIGHT.

JAS. TAYLOR.

MRS. BELLE WASHINGTON.

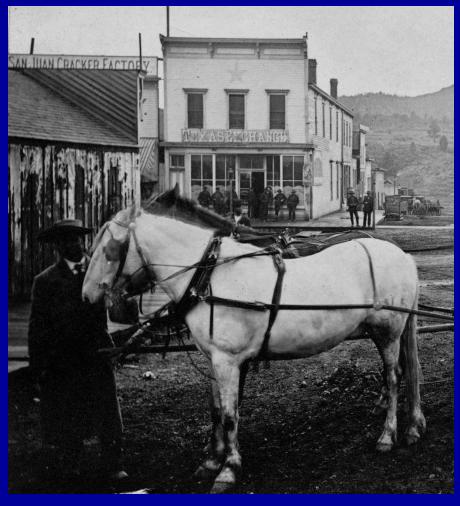
F. D. YOUNG.

JAS. EDWARDS.

GEO. LAWRENCE.

1909





Connecting Our History With Our Community

- historical sermons All Saints' Day
- funerals
- local museums Animas Museum & LaPlata County Historical Society (sharing old church registers and minutes)
- local educational institutions Fort Lewis College Center of Southwest Studies
- local service club presentations Rotary, Kiwanis
- statewide historical societies History Colorado
- history tours of our old churches buildings, bells, windows, cemeteries, columbariums, & furnishings
- private history tour businesses Horsefly History Tours

Parish History Research Sources

- parish registers
- minutes of vestry meetings, annual parish meetings, & guild meetings
- Episcopal Diocese of Utah Archives Kurt Cook, Historiographer (parishes on the Colorado western slope were part of the Missionary District of Salt Lake from 1898 to 1907
- Episcopal Diocese of Colorado Archives limited historical resources
- BYU library
- History Colorado website Colorado Historic Newspapers (Colorado Historical Society)
- Denver Library photo archives
- late 19th and early 20th century Episcopal diocesan and missionary district publications from Colorado and Utah
- The Spirit of Missions, a national Episcopal journal published from 1836 to 1939
- local colleges and universities e.g. The Fort Lewis College Center for Southwest Studies