

srma

# The Rocky Mountain **Archivist**

Vol. 40 Iss. 2

July 2023



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Cover Image: 1896 map of the Aspen Townsite by W. C. Willits, civil engineer from Denver, CO. Image courtesy Aspen Historical Society.

## 2023 Election results

The SRMA membership elected the following individuals to the board in May. They began their terms on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Vice President: Cecily North-Rudrow**

Librarian-Archivist  
Pueblo City-County Library District

**Treasurer: Clarissa Trapp**

Digital and Archives Specialist  
Colorado State University Libraries

**Member-at-Large: Lauren Conrad**

Denver Museum of Nature and Science

**Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator: Aaron Ramirez**

Pueblo City-County Library District

In addition, Jesse de la Cruz, as prior Vice President, is now SRMA President. Jay Trask has moved into the position of Past President.

We welcome our new board members and thank the SRMA membership for voting.

## Repository Profile: Aspen Historical Society

Anna Scott

**Could you tell us a little about yourself? What got you interested in the profession and what do you most enjoy about it?**

My background is in archaeology. I worked for the Bureau of Land Management as well as private consulting companies for many years before making my way here. I did an internship in an archives doing similar work to what I did now. In my work with the BLM, I did a lot of the historical research ahead of going out to the field. I love maps -- that's one of my passions. With BLM, you have access to GLO records. I loved looking through these and journals finding out, for instance, how many chains and links there are to a certain spot and then marking that place on the map.

Working for BLM was seasonal and I spent my winters in Aspen teaching snowboarding and skiing. I hit a point where I wanted to settle down and stop doing seasonal work. That's how I got involved with the historical society and became the archivist.

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### What do you find yourself doing on day-to-day?

We work with somewhere between 750 and 900 requests a year for research or photo requests. I oversee our tech including our software programs and our file backups. I manage our grants, help with training of the interns, and oversee our emergency and disaster planning.

### How do your archival records fit into the wider mission and activities of your institution?

Our department works on creating and installing exhibits. We also work with the

programming team, helping them with their research for walking tours and the four sites we manage in the summertime. We just reworked an exhibit at the Holden/Marolt Mining and Ranching museum. We're always looking for the historical provenance of things in our museum. We have a brand in our collection that one of our staff found in our photo records. We feature items like this in our collection in something we call "From the vault."

### On a related note, what kinds of archival collections do you have and what do they document?



Left: A group tours the archives at the Aspen Historical Society.

The archives has letters, branding books, oral histories, and photographs, which are especially used in exhibits, including tin types, glass plates, and slides.

**What are you currently collecting?**

We are getting a lot of photographers' collections which are especially nice because they cover the 1990s which is a time without a lot of photos because of the transition to the digital age. Local photographers have seen what we have been doing and how we provide access through tours of the archives that we offer. They have agreed to give us the parts of their collections that have to do with our local area.

**That's interesting. Did you expect to see new donations as a result of those tours or did it just happen that way?**

We started the tours as fundraising for our building to get people interested in what we're doing and we're trying to do. After the remodel, we gave tours to show people what we've done with the money they've donated. It made these donors feel much more comfortable seeing that there were professional staff and quality space for their collections to go into and then a way for people to see it and continue on. I don't know that we were expecting all these collections, but I will say that we were happy to receive them.

**Who are your primary user groups?**

We get a lot of requests from people who live here and are interested in purchasing homes here as well as real estate agents. People want images to decorate their homes and we also work with hotels doing the same. We work with people doing family genealogy and have students who are doing research here, too. Recently I worked with a man from Australia doing research into cars and car racing -- we've worked with people from all over the world. I don't necessarily see all the people using our collections because so much of our collections are available online and we recently became part of DPLA.

**It sounds like you have a lot of historic homes in Aspen and people wanting to do research about those.**

Yes. Sometimes people will already know who lived in their home but want to know more about their lives. I help them put a story to it.

Is there an item or collection that you'd like to highlight?

One of my favorite items is of course the Willits map -- there's a copy behind my desk. It was done in 1896. That map has not only the streets labeled but who owned what homes at the time and shows the sewer system from the late 1880s



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when the Wheeler Opera House and the Hotel Jerome were constructed. They wanted indoor plumbing and there's a sewer line going all the way down Mill Street and to the river where it came out. You can find information in the historic newspapers about the cost of connecting to the sewer line. I have a glass plate negative in the collection which was really confusing. It has a feature that looks almost like a dam but not quite. I struggled and struggled with identifying it until I finally found the location on the Willits map, a place that was a drop in

the river where they pulled water from some of the mining operations.

**Mystery solved.**

Mystery solved!

**What are the challenges you're facing right now?**

We've had long retention of staff here and now that somebody is retiring we're thinking, 'what are we going to do?' We do have stabilized funding which is helpful



Above: Photograph of a feature on the Roaring Fork River which Anna Scott was able to locate using the 1896 Willits map.

though I write grants for bigger projects. We used to struggle with what we were going to do each year until we were better funded in return for providing education to schools up and down the valley.

We're so busy and are understaffed and can't add more people in our department. Space is the biggest challenge in Aspen because land here is so expensive. The amount of money we have to raise for expansion is huge. People think, 'It's Aspen! You must have lots of money.' But history isn't sexy in the same way music is, for example, so fundraising is always a hurdle.

**Do you have any projects in the works?**

I'm hoping to write a grant for Bob Krieger's collection who was a prolific photographer with beautiful work including images of Hunter S. Thompson, political campaigns, ski races, and music concerts. So I need to write a grant to help process that collection. It's exciting but it's going to be a lot of work.

We just processed the Aspen Illustrated News which was a paper that was here from 1964 to 1970. We have all the negatives from that paper totaling 5,500 images.



The *Journal of Western Archives* is a peer-reviewed, open access journal sponsored by Western regional archival organizations. The journal focuses on contemporary issues and developments in the archival and curatorial fields, particularly as they affect Western archives and manuscript repositories.

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<http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives/>

**Do you have a favorite tool that you can't live without?**

We have a lot of ski maps and other large format maps. Every once in a while we have access to a large format scanner but in between we have to photograph sections of maps one at a time and stitch them together. There is a stitching tool in Photoshop that stitches images together for you. My coworker and I say it's our new favorite tool and we keep thinking of things in our collection and saying, 'oh! we'll have to go back and scan that!'



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