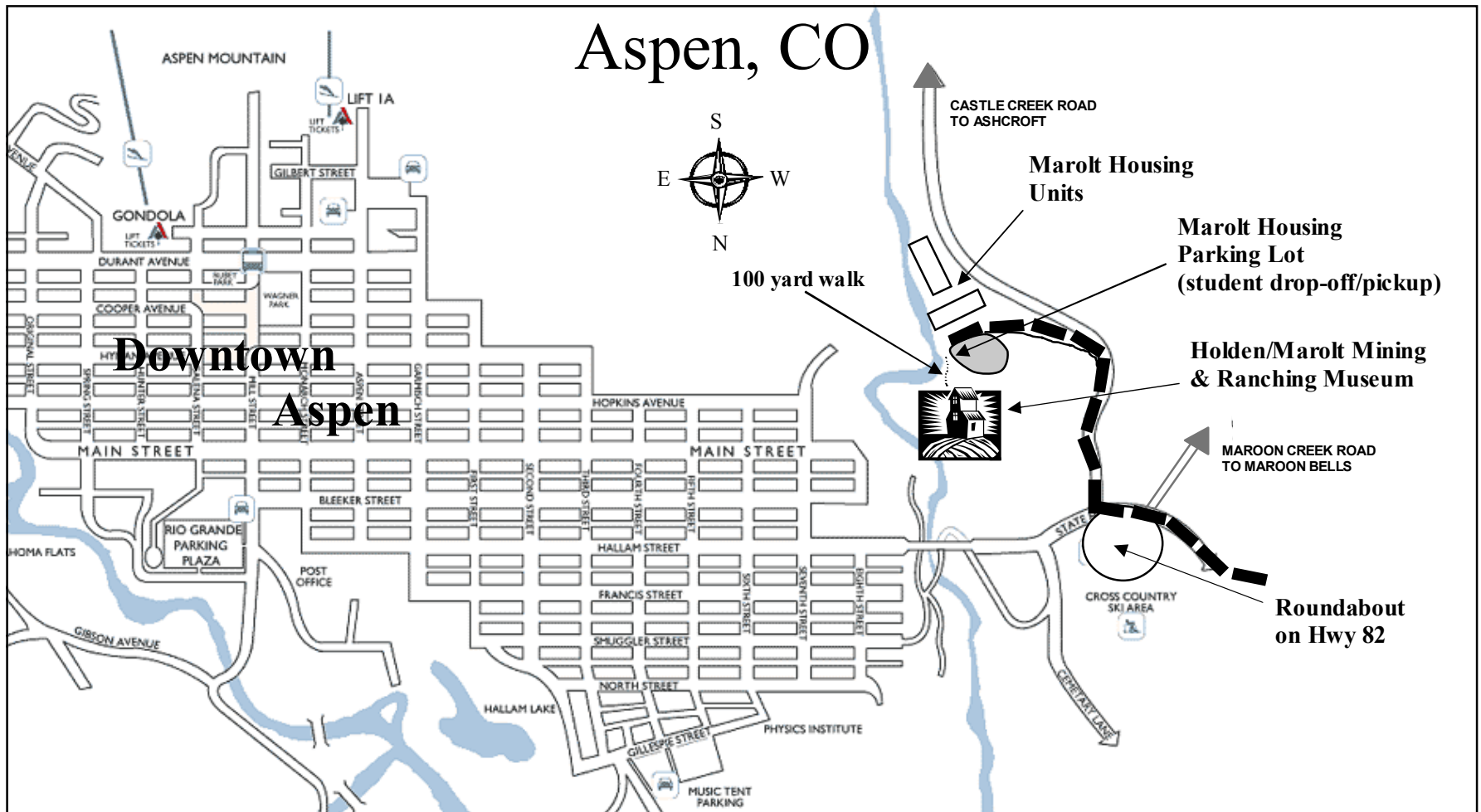


Holden/Marolt Mining & Ranching Museum



Directions: Take US Highway 82 southeast toward Aspen. At the roundabout before entering Aspen, take the second right onto Castle Creek Road. Do not take Maroon Creek Road. Watch for signs for Marolt Housing on left. Take first left into Marolt Housing and follow road around to far edge of parking lot. Drop students at walking path at edge of creek. Students walk left on path to Museum.

NOTE: Buses MAY NOT park at Marolt Housing. This area is for drop-off and pick-up of students ONLY.

For additional information or to book a tour, please contact Kip Hubbard, Director of Programming and Education, Aspen Historical Society, 620 West Bleeker Street, Aspen, CO, 81621, (970) 925-3721, ext. 105, education@aspenhistory.org.

Holden/Marolt Mining & Ranching Museum

Educational Tour Information Sheet

A Brief History of the Holden/Marolt Mining & Ranching Museum

This site is unique: It tells the stories of both Aspen's mining and ranching heritage.

In 1981, the Holden lixiviation mill sprawled across 22 acres at the edge of Aspen, boasting state-of-the-art technology and industrial design. Just fourteen months after the new plant opened, Congress demonetized silver and the mill went bankrupt. Mike Marolt purchased the property for one dollar in 1940 as a family ranch.

Founded as a silver mining camp in 1879, Aspen was the largest annual producing mining district in the US for the years 1891-1893. With a population of over 13,000, Aspen was the third largest city in Colorado. Only Denver and Leadville were larger.

Aspen's big news in 1891 was the building of the Holden Lixiviation Works on the west side of town. The newspaper declared that "the sweet daydreams of those who have longed to see Aspen a great city are about to be realized." Completed just fourteen months before congress repealed the Sherman Silver Act, the plant never cleared a profit and went bankrupt almost immediately. It was one of only eighteen plants built worldwide to utilize the experimental Russell lixiviation process to refine low grade ore.

The Russell Lixiviation process used crushing, heat and chemical salts to refine silver from ore as low grade as ten ounces per ton. (Aspen's best producing mines averaged 400 to 600 ounces per ton. Most mines had far less valuable ore bodies.) The fumes from the plant's Stetefeldt furnaces were emitted from the main smoke stack reaching some 165 feet in height, the highest stack in the state at the time it was built. Shortly thereafter, other taller ones were built.

One of the reasons that the sampling building still stands is because it was built to hold large machinery that crushed and pulverized the ore.

By 1904, after several attempts to run the Holden works as a concentrator (a process of discarding some of the worthless material to make the low grade ore cheaper to transport) the plant was closed. During the quiet years that followed, the Marolt family ranched near the mill. In 1940, they purchased the mill for one dollar. The Marolts raised sheep and cattle and planted potatoes. By the late 1950s, the Marolts started selling parcels of their land due to the decreasing forest service grazing acreage, the financial strains of the kids' college educations and Mike Marolt's deteriorating health.

The Holden site, once a symbol of Aspen's industrial might, became a symbol of a vanishing economy as skiing fueled the rebuilding of Aspen.

About Holden/Marolt Educational Tours

Scheduling tours: The Holden/Marolt Mining and Ranching Museum is part indoor and part outdoor tour, and tour bookings are welcomed throughout the year.

Be sure to call early to reserve your desired tour dates. Please be sure young participants are dressed according to the day's climate.

Capacity: Tours can accommodate up to 30 students and chaperones. If your tour is larger than 30, we suggest that you break your group into two parts and have one group schedule a tour at Smuggler Mine or at the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies while the other visits Holden/Marolt. Then have the two groups switch midway through the day.

Tour length: Ideally, our tour guides like to have about two hours with tour groups to offer as much about the museum's history as possible.

Tour times: Morning tours are best scheduled between 9:30 a.m. and Noon while afternoon tours are best scheduled between 12:30 and 2:30 p.m.

Facilities: The Holden-Marolt museum buildings include a salt shed and the Marolt "barn" or lixiviation works. New additions to the site include a steam engine and a saw mill.

Tour logistics: Groups visiting Holden-Marolt are asked to confirm their appointment no less than 48 hours prior to scheduled tour time. If you are unable to attend your tour, please call (970) 925-3721, extension 105 and speak with Kip Hubbard, Director of Education and programming at the Aspen Historical Society.

Directions: See reverse for map and directions to Holden/Marolt Mining and Ranching Museum

For further information or tour bookings, please contact Kip Hubbard at (970) 925-3721, extension 105, or email him at education@aspenhistory.org.