Celebrating our past, building our future!

From an unprotected site known mostly to a handful of geologists and academics to today’s vibrant center for education, science, and fun, Dinosaur Ridge has a history – and a future -- built on the vision and work of volunteers.

**Friends of Dinosaur Ridge celebrated 30 years** of protecting and preserving this natural treasure, enhancing the understanding of the track and bone fossils on site, and expanding the knowledge of geology and paleontology for thousands of visitors from school groups to international travelers.
To cap off the celebration a new exhibit at the Discovery Center was opened featuring photos, audio clips and video footage spanning three decades of volunteerism, friendship and fun that made it all possible.

Founder John Dolson shares stories and volunteer tips.

First Executive Director Karen Hester leads a tour of the Dinosaur Track Site utilizing some of the first casts ever created of our tracks.

Volunteer Ed Post teaches at the Bulges Site before any preservation or education construction took place. This photo was taken between 1990 and 1994.

Volunteer T. Caneer was foundational to growth efforts at Dinosaur Ridge and Triceratops Trail. In 2007 he received the 7 Everyday Hero award from our local news station, and throughout the years served as an advocate for fossil preservation at both sites.

In the mid 1990’s a path was built onto the side of the mountain along the road to accommodate viewing and safe travel between the Bighorn and Bone Site on the west side of Dinosaur Ridge.

Geologist Dr. Andy Taylor is shown here teaching about dinosaur fossils in the west side of the Dinosaur Bone Site before any preservation or education construction took place. This photo was taken between 1990 and 1994.

Construction of a ramp, viewing area, and stabilization pillars at the Dinosaur Bone Site began in 1994 in an effort to preserve and protect the site while making it more accessible to visitors.

Volunteer/Board member Norb Cygan talks to a group at the Swamp/Plant Impressions Site. Prior to the preservation efforts of the 1990’s, East Side sites were covered by a thick layer of mud (the dark gray at the bottom of the picture). This mud was removed down to the layer below before any cleaning or preservation work was done in the early 1990’s.

Volunteer/Board member Frank Adler stands in front of the main Visitor Center buildings in 1995. The back room (office area) in the mid 1990’s served as an office area while the front was used to be a gift shop.

In 1995, the barn building was exactly that! From 2009 it was reinstalled as an office area. It was then that construction took place to create an indoor exhibit area in the lower floor and office in the upper floor, and opened in 2009 named Trek Through Time.

In 1991 construction started on stabilization, viewing, and education areas of our main Track Site. Joe Tempel is seen here at the grand opening/ceremony of the main exhibit addition.

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In 1993, the main Track Site showed around 150 tracks/traces, and now half the site you can see today. Expansion started in 1999, the overburden removed down to the main layer exposing the rich bonebed to the red bed. Over 150 new tracks/traces were discovered!

Geologist Hallie K. elite the Ridge Site on Dinosaur Ridge. Betty served as a founder, volunteer, Board Member/President, and donor. This picture is from the early 1990’s.

Before acquiring our main Visitor Center buildings, from 1989 through the early 1990’s the Friends of Dinosaur Ridge shared the small building that would become the Morrison Natural History Museum. Our first Executive Director, Karen Hester, is seen here making some fossil replicas in the MNHM office area.

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Nearly a thousand friends and neighbors came to Dinosaur Ridge for a Community Carnival featuring games, food, and dinosaur-themed prizes.

Volunteer/Board member Norb Cygan talks to a group at the Swamp/Plant Impressions Site. Prior to the preservation efforts of the 1990’s, East Side sites were covered by a thick layer of mud (the dark gray at the bottom of the picture). This mud was removed down to the layer below before any cleaning or preservation work was done in the early 1990’s.

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In celebration of the 30th anniversary, experts in paleontology, geology and climatology led small group “Walking Dinosaur Ridge with a Scientist” tours. The two-hour tours provided visitors with in-depth understanding of Dinosaur Ridge along with anecdotes collected over the years.

We all know that Dinosaur bones were found on the west side of the Dakota Hogback, and that trackways were not discovered on the east side until the 1930s. We also know that Dinosaur Ridge was not named until the 1980s. So how did people refer to the Ridge before 1930? One answer comes from a fold-up poster drawn by artist Ralph Prather, and printed in Denver in 1922 (Figure 1). The original is in the Denver Public Library (DPL), and original prints, including one on display at DPL, are very rare. The year of 1922 was early in the history of the development of the Denver Mountain Parks. In fact Red Rocks Park, although marked on this pictorial map, was not purchased until 1927-1928, and not developed by the Works Progress Administration until 1935-1939.

Dinosaur Ridge visitors will be interested to see the hogback referred to, twice, as Dinosaur Mountain, with another reference to “The Hogback Road,” today’s Highway 93, as The Dinosaur Trail. Amusingly text written across the hogback states “Fossil specimens of the dinosaur have been excavated from this “Hogback Formation.” These huge reptiles inhabited the shores of this inland sea some four or five million years ago.” Times have changed. Geologists know these huge reptiles from the Jurassic world lived about 150 million years old alongside rivers, not an inland sea. Ralph Prather had probably heard nothing about tracks in this area back in 1922. In this same year Tutankhamen’s tomb was discovered, home brewing was illegal, the first radio was installed in Warren Harding’s White House and the Supreme Court still heard challenges to the 19th Amendment on a woman’s right to vote!

Contribution by Martin Lockley, University of Colorado Denver

Once upon a time on the “Dinosaur Trail” to “Dinosaur Mountain”

Joe Tempel, Dinosaur Ridge’s longest-serving executive director, received a lifetime achievement award for his vision, dedication, and leadership.

Dr. Louis Jacobs provided a “Spotlight on Science Technical Talk” shining a spotlight on his newest exhibit at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, “Sea Monsters Unearthed: Life in Angola’s Ancient Seas.”

Figure 1. Two slices of artwork from Ralph Prather’s 1922, aerial view pictorial map of Denver’s Mountain Parks include two references to the hogback as ‘Dinosaur Mountain’ and reference to highway 93 as ‘The Dinosaur Trail.’