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Since those early days, the Friends have partnered with numerous organizations to protect their original concern, the hogback at Alameda Parkway, officially renamed Dinosaur Ridge in 1994. That same year, the Ridge received recognition on the State Register of Historic Places. In 1973, the quarries on the Ridge had been designated a National Natural Landmark (NNL), but this honor was not officially celebrated until 2004, when a plaque was placed at the bone quarry site on the west side of the Ridge. In 2011, with the submission of a second evaluation, the NNL was expanded from 60 to 84 acres, and now includes three tracks sites near Golden in addition to the two original quarry sites. The Morrison-Golden Fossil Area is the only NNL in Jefferson County and one of 14 statewide.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Joe Tempel, who has been involved since the early days, and dedicated volunteers on the Board of Directors, the Friends of Dinosaur Ridge have published dozens of books, guidebooks, and reports, as well as regular annual reports and newsletters. Many of these reportresearch by Dr. Lockley that provides new scientific insights. This collection constitutes a substantial contribution to the historic record of the fossil sites and of the organization’s development.

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Spectators with Joe Tempel, Dinosaur Ridge Executive Director, and Rick Frost, National Park Service Regional Office, at the dedication of the Morrison Fossil Area National Natural Landmark, May 2004.


Preserving Prehistory: Friends of Dinosaur Ridge Meyer Award for Historic Preservation

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In 1994, Jefferson County had acquired the Wagner Ranch, near Rooney Ranch, which became the Friends’ headquarters for offices, gift shop, events, and interpretive exhibits. Alameda Parkway over the hogback was closed to motor vehicles in 2008, improving the safety of visitors to the track sites on the east side, as well as to the historic bone quarries on the west. In 2011, the Friends expanded their umbrella to encompass the historic Parfet clay pits (now known as Tricerapit) to the track sites on the east side, as well as to the historic bone quarries on the west. In 2011, the Friends expanded their event site to encompass the historic Parfet clay pits (now known as Tricerapit).

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Throughout the organization’s 25-year history, the Friends of Dinosaur Ridge have mastered the art of engagement. Many of their volunteers and board members are practicing or retired geologists and other professionals, giving them a sound basis for scientific interpretation. They have attracted major funding from the Adolph Coors, Boettcher, Harvey Family, and Gates Family foundations, as well as organizations like the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and are regularly supported by the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, the Greater Denver Area Gem and Mineral Council, and Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists. More than 50 corporations and foundations and 100 individuals stepped forward to support the purchase and development of the new Discovery Center. For their impressive accomplishments in protecting Jeffco’s earliest history and their stewardship of these nationally recognized sites, we are pleased to present to present the 2014 Meyer Award to the Friends of Dinosaur Ridge.

Sources:

Rediscovered Dinosaur Quarry is New Landmark

In 1877, when the Rev. Arthur Lakes began finding dinosaur bones along the Hogback now known as Dinosaur Ridge, he opened 13 quarries between Morrison and present-day I-70. His diggings, under the auspices of Yale’s Peabody Museum, gave us some of the West’s first significant dinosaur discoveries. Thereafter, several quarries faded into history and their locations grew obscure.

Recently researchers from Dinosaur Ridge relocated Lakes (or Yale) Quarry #1, the northernmost of the set. Because its exact location was “lost,” the site was not included in National Register (1975) or National Natural Landmark (1973) designations in the area. In May 2014, Dr. Beth Simmons submitted a landmark application to JCHC for the site. According to the nomination:

The site is significant because it is the first place that dinosaur bones were found in the American West... The discoveries made during 1877 at Quarry #1 changed the course of paleontological history. They also intensified what have been called “the bone wars” between Edwin C. Cope and Othniel C. Marsh. Marsh intended to keep the Morrison site secret, thinking it was secluded in the mountains of the West. However, numerous visitors came not only to see the easily accessible quarries and sit on the bones, but also to help with the digging...

...The Rooney family would have known about the site because Otis, son of the original homesteader, helped Arthur Lakes and George Cannon during the dinosaur digs when he was a teenager. However, the site was “lost” in the 1960s through a paleontological blunder:...

Quarry #1 is the site of discovery of the first large dinosaur, Atlantosaurus, and first Jurassic crocodile, Diplodusaurus (both described in 1877). The landmarked site lies on the west side of the Hogback about one-quarter mile north of the inter-...