

# Park County Local History Archives

ISSUE I

NEWSLETTER

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## Open House at Bailey Library

May 6, 2011 10AM to 2PM

Send comments, requests and suggestions to  
parkcoarchives@yahoo.com

*The Park County Local History Archives is dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of material primarily deriving from and relevant to the cultural and natural history of Park County. This includes but is not limited to: photographs, newspapers, manuscripts, business records, maps, minutes, books and personal papers. Materials are available for education and research purposes, except where restrictions apply.*

### About the Archives –

The Archives began as a committee of the Park County Historical Society, whose headquarters are at McGraw Park in Bailey. Historic material began to accumulate and the first official location of the Archives was in the Research Library at the South Park City Museum in Fairplay.

The space there was soon outgrown and the old issues of the Fairplay Flume, historical books and papers, and collection of photos were moved to the basement of the old Court House, now used as the Fairplay Library. When it was discovered that the structure of the building was not entirely stable due to a fire that happened in the 1880s, the Archives moved again, this time to the McNamara Building on Castello Street. The structure there was declared unsafe due to fire inspection findings, which forced another move.

The Archives is currently located in the lower level of the Bailey Library.

Plans to build a new Park County Library in Fairplay are in progress and the Archives will be a part of that project. A site has been selected and purchased and the quest for funding is underway.

The Archives continues to collect historic material and assist the public in research projects.

## **GOOD MAN, GUS**

When the roads are slick and it's a little breezy, winter travel in South Park can sometimes make one a trifle growly. Road rage wells up within, tempered only a little by the underappreciated snowplow jockeys, all-wheel drive, a good heater, and maybe some tunes on the stereo.

Yep, sometimes life is sure hard. Consider the case of one Augustine "Gus" Fromm. Gus was a rancher from down on West Fourmile Creek, in the southeast corner of Park County. His old place is the ranch with Park County's one & only silo, still standing tall on the north side of West Fourmile. In the winter of 1914, Gus was County Commissioner Fromm. Duty called, as the Commissioners were scheduled to go into session in Fairplay. So Gus (then age 55) set forth on this commute, as recounted (syntax & spelling intact) in the Fairplay Flume of Jan. 9, 1914.

"Commissioner Fromm had quite an experience and some trouble coming to his official duties at this session owing to the deep snow. For the first fourteen miles he used snowshoes, the snow was crusted in spots and soft between making travelling very difficult and stood him on his head frequently. He helped the train crew shovel for the train between Howbert (now beneath Elevenmile Reservoir, ed.) and Hartsel and walked (about 8 miles, ed.) from the latter place to Garo, and finished the journey to Fairplay with a sled. At the Court house a big snow bank of bills against the County awaited him, but with his customary perseverance and native economy, he is scanning them closely."

There are mornings when it sure would feel good to just stay warm at home. But when duty calls to offer up a hard day at the office, and/or a hard time getting there, we might do well to ponder this: What would Gus do?

*Submitted by Jerry Davis*

## **THAT HORRIBLE WINTER**

Stories were passed down for generations about the terrible winter of 1898-99, when the [railroad] tracks were closed for three months. It started to snow at the end of November and didn't let up. Thirty and forty foot drifts covered the tops of buildings and entrances were reached through elaborately shoveled tunnels through the snow.

The small mining communities, including Boreas and Breckenridge, were isolated and ran low on supplies.

One man, Jess Oakley, offered to fetch the mail and bring it back to Breckenridge. He set off on snowshoes heading towards Como. When he got to the top of Boreas Pass, he was craving a hot cup of coffee, but couldn't find a sign of any buildings, let alone the railroad station house. Finally he noticed a wisp of smoke trickling out of a chimney six inches below the snow. A further search revealed steps dug into the snow leading to a house twenty feet below. Jess had his coffee, then made it to Como and back with the mail and several newspapers, which he promptly sold for \$1 each.

Another man, whose wife was ill, set off from Boreas Pass towards Como to get medical help. He wasn't found until the following summer. The case he was carrying was found open and papers scattered around. It was presumed that he was trying to start a fire and was overcome with the cold.

Low on supplies and desperate for contact with the rest of the world, a number of Breckenridge men began to shovel out the road, so at least freight wagons could get through. They began the job on March 1 and broke through in Como about ten days later. Imagine the chagrin of some and delight of others when the first freight wagon to return over the shoveled road turned out to be a wagonload of whiskey! The trains remained stuck until May.

*from "Over Boreas Pass"  
Submitted by Linda Bjorklund*

## **MOUNT LINCOLN – COLORADO'S MONUMENT TO THE DEAD.**

*Denver Gazette, 1864, by W. F. Stone*

Movements have been set on foot in various parts of the Union to erect suitable monuments to the late President of the United States. Columns of granite and obelisks of marble will soon be scattered over the land by the gratitude and munificence of the American people, making their mute appeals to the memory of the nation, throughout the generations to come, until these works of art shall crumble to dust in the far-off time. While these praiseworthy efforts are exciting the interest and admiration of all true lovers of the good and great dead, it may not be generally known that here in Colorado we have a monument to the memory of Abraham Lincoln already erected by Nature's great Architect, outstripping in grandeur, endurance and beauty, all the works of art the skill and wealth of the world can conceive and adorn.

At the elevated north-west corner of the South Park, at the very head of the three great rivers—the Platte, the Arkansas, and the Colorado, where these mighty streams flowing to the two oceans begin their journey in the eternal snows of the dividing range, a corner stone in the three great counties of Park, Lake and Summit, the two latter as large each as the state of Massachusetts, the focus of the gold mines of the territory, and overshadowing the picturesque little village of Montgomery, as the pyramids overshadow the tents of the Arab,—stands Mount Lincoln, this mighty monument of the Almighty's handiwork.

One warm day in August, three summers ago, the writer of this, in company with a gentleman from Omaha, made an ascent of this peak for the purpose of taking its altitude. Starting early in the morning, we slowly wound our way from the village up through the dense pine forests, until we reached the limit of timber where the pines

dwindle into dwarfs a foot in height, twisted into fantastic contortions by the storm blasts of winter. Then came the carpeting of grasses and flowers, of vegetation which terminated at the snow-line in moss and lichens. Stopping every few minutes to rest the lungs, tired of their expansion inhaling the rarified air, and clambering over blocks of granite and porphyry, fragments of quartz, lava and scoria, and beds of ice and snow, all mingled in wild confusion, we reached the top; and about the middle of the afternoon sat down upon the very apex of this lord of the mountains. The sky was clear; the temperature 50 degrees Fahrenheit, and adjusting our instruments we took the measurement of altitude. We made the height to be over 15,000 feet above the level of the sea. The summit is a conical peak, which rests on the base of the mountain like "Pelion on Ossa piled"—the apex terminating in about a square rod of level rocks and ice. In the center of this area stones have been piled up by prospectors climbing up at different times, until a monument-like pile has been formed, ten or twelve feet in diameter and about fifteen feet high, but which is altogether invisible from the foot of the mountain. A long slope reaches from the summit eastwardly to the valley of the Platte. The other sides are precipitous, and rent with yawning chasms hundreds of feet deep, into which the light of the sun never penetrates.

At the end of an hour after our arrival, a storm approached from the west and swept over the mountain. In less than ten minutes from the time the clouds struck us, the mercury fell from fifty degrees to zero. Fierce blasts of wind roared and shrieked among the crags and snow darkened the air. In the midst of this, we commenced our slippery descent. We soon became charged with electricity so that the hair of our heads stood on end, sparks flew from the ends of our fingers and cracked at every step with a hissing sound that could be heard a distance of a

hundred feet. Forked lightnings leaped from rock to rock and played about our heads, almost blinding the sight, but as our bodies were charged equally with the clouds and mountain, there was of course no danger. Black clouds rolled and tumbled over each other a mile below us like the uncouth gambols of terrible monsters in this upper ocean.

Descending through the strata of clouds, we at last reached sunlight and entered the village at dark—the whole distance along the slope, from the valley to the summit, being about ten miles. Our report was made to a meeting of the citizens of Montgomery, and in honor to the President under whose administration this Territory had been organized and settled, the peak was named 'Mount Lincoln.'

Such is Mount Lincoln. Few ever die having beheld so magnificent a prospect as is seen from its summit. Colorado is spread at your feet. The South Park—sixty miles long and thirty wide—with its undulating hills, green meadows, and a thousand glittering lakes and brooks, dwindles to a pleasure garden. You look over Long's Peak, north, almost into Dakota. You look over the plains of Utah, to the west, stretching towards the golden shores of the Pacific. You look over the Spanish Peaks, south into New Mexico; and turning to the east, your vision wanders over Pike's Peak where the great plains seem to rise up like an emerald ocean.

And such is Colorado's monument to our dead but immortal President. From its side, the great rivers suck the nutriment which feeds both oceans, and upon which ride the nation's navies and the commerce of the world. A thousand storms sweep over it, but in vain to level it. A thousand cataracts dash around its feet, but from its summit you hear not their murmurs. A score of quartz mills stamp their iron feet in thunders beneath its shadow, but their sound dies half way up its sides. Lightnings and thunders glance harmlessly from its crest. Tunnels may pierce its ribs, and the mineral wealth of future centu-

ries be poured out into the lap of the world, but its foundations will remain unshaken. Its base is clothed in evergreens—sublime wreaths, such as never hung on the tombstone of emperors. Its top reaches so near the heavens as to attain the spotless purity of eternal white—bright emblem of immortality.

Let, then, other States and other people raise their monuments of patriotism and of art to guild the time of the great dead; but Colorado can point in all time to this proud monumental mountain, which rears itself as the gigantic spine of this continental vertebrae—she can point it out hundreds of miles away to the traveler as he travels from ocean to ocean on the future international railway and exclaim with the old Latin poet Ovid "*Exegi monumentum aere percrenrior, atque altior Pyramides.*" I have erected a monument more enduring than brass, and loftier than the Pyramids.



Wilbur Fisk Stone is probably best known as the author of the "*History of Colorado*," a four-volume chronicle of early Colorado. Stone was also a journalist, attorney and respected jurist. He came to Colorado in 1860 and spent five years at the 'Tarryall Diggings' in South Park, prospecting, mining and practicing law. Stone, then the temporary editor of the *Denver Gazette*, wrote the 'Mt. Lincoln' article to commemorate the President who had just been assassinated.