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Como stage holdup drawing from David J. Cook autobiography

Archives News:

Another oral history book has been added to the list of available publications:

Voices From Park County's Past, edited by Gary Minke, includes excerpts from a number of interviews done with local residents who remember historical incidents from many of the areas in Park County. The descriptive photos are part of the Archives collection. The book can be purchased from the Park County Local History Archives website at a cost of \$12.95 plus shipping and handling.

A cookbook from the Deer Creek Christian Camp entitled Memories & Meals has been donated to the Archives and may soon join the Fairplay 1923 Cook Book on the list of available publications.

Check the Archives website bookstore for additional books available for sale.

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

Archives Doings Spring-Summer 2013

This Spring has been productive for the Archives. The office had several patron walk-ins in search of information on the Denver, South Park & Pacific Railroad. The Deer Valley Park Association and another individual who was interested in the Archives' holdings in general were also served.

In the photos department, we received several patron requests for images and filled a large photo order for a local author. We continue our ongoing project of rescanning all our images into a high resolution format.

Regarding research, the Archives fulfilled several genealogy requests on Park County's historical families from the Lake George and Hartsel areas.

In the maps arena, Patty Chapman, Director for Park County Public Libraries, gave us a significant donation of 15 maps that were being stored at the Fairplay Library. These include maps of: Will-O-Wisp, Platte Canyon Hospital, School Districts RE-1, -2, numerous fire districts, several commissioners' districts, several sanitation districts, the Park County Fairgrounds and maps of two special districts. These historic maps can be invaluable if research is needed to clarify boundaries, title or names during these districts' original creation and can be an invaluable county and legal resource.

We also received a plat plan of the property for the old courthouse and two map books on the court house dated 1936. The Archives also received a digital copy of the 1936 Fairplay Flume.

We are always grateful for family photo donations of historical Park County residents. Excellent family photos that were properly identified were received on two prominent South Park ranching families –

the Hammonds and the Benders. We also received two digital photo donations of Sam Hartsel and his brother. If you donate photos to the Archives, they may not immediately appear on the website. It takes us a little time to assign an accession number to each image, scan each one individually into the computer at both high and medium resolutions and then catalog them and cross-reference between the accession number and the subject category.

The Archives is in the process of updating several of the forms that we use. We are also continuing to update and catalog obituaries for genealogy and historical research.

Please stop by at our office in the lower level of the Bailey Library. We are there between 10am and 2pm on Fridays or by specific appointment with the Archivist.

Part I – Searching For My Ancestor by Jackie Powell

It was my first time back in the South for many years. My husband Gary Higgins and I were on a research trip, looking for information about my ancestor Edmund Belote, a private in the 4th Infantry, US Army, from 1814 to 1819.

I began this research because I was developing the male line of my maternal family. My father's relatives had put together a comprehensive family tree for their side, but there was nothing on my mother's side. Tradition was that they were low-class, ignorant Arkies (yes, I'm from Arkansas, even though I grew up in Georgia), and there would be no records. Amazingly, I was easily able to trace these farmers back to Edmund, who is my great-great-great grandfather. But there I hit a wall.

Census records indicated Edmund was born in Bertie County, North Carolina in the late 1700s. I also came across the record of his bounty land awarded for service in the War of 1812. There was a long line of Belotes in the vicinity dating back to the 1600s, but I couldn't make a definite link between

them and my Edmund. So, I went online to the Bertie County, North Carolina GenWeb to ask for help.

After a while, a gentleman with the most delightful North Carolina accent, Gerald Thomas, called. He was an expert on North Carolina and the War of 1812. Gerald told me he would be going to the National Archives shortly and would keep an eye out for my Edmund.

Not very long after that, a nice thick manila envelope arrived, with twenty-three pages of items Gerald had copied from Edmund's military records. His service record named sites I had never heard of, but from a deposition he gave in 1850, I learned they were associated with a number of battles and other incidents, a string of forts along the old Federal Road through Georgia and Alabama, and locations in Florida including Pensacola and nearby Fort Barrancas.

After the War of 1812, Edmund had followed Andrew Jackson through the First Seminole War and then on to take Pensacola from the Spanish in 1818. I had become interested in the commanding officer of Edmund's regiment, Col. William King. King bought land along the Alabama River, with a view toward becoming a high-classed planter as was one of his superiors, Gen. Wade Hampton (the elder). Along the way, he got cross-wise with the Army as well as deeply in debt, and ended up making a bit of a botch of his ambitions. He had all the moves; he just didn't have the brains to make everything work.

But all this together was Manifest Destiny personified, and although my ancestor was not individually named in any of the accounts, he had been carried along behind Gens. Edmund P. Gaines and Andrew Jackson in a broad sweep of events that completed the expansion of our country from coast to coast – Indian removal and Spanish expulsion. How exciting!

To be continued in next issue...

Tidbits of Historic Irony by Jerry Davis

Idaho Signal, November 15, 1873

The town of Fairplay, Colorado, so named for the fair manner in which its people play poker, was enlivened not long since by a little game, whose satisfactory result will commend it favorably to all who become entangled in like disputes: Before the "draw" Mr. Graves held a "king full," and Mr. Walker rejoiced in three aces, but after that interesting ceremony, Walker exhibited four aces, and claimed the stakes, whereupon Graves drew a six-shooter and reckoned his hand was the best. Walker immediately supplemented his aces with a bowie-knife, and the dispute was settled to the perfect satisfaction of the outsiders. There was enough in the "pot" to purchase two handsome coffins, and the next day both gentlemen took up permanent residence, side by side, in the beautiful cemetery that reflects so much credit upon Fairplay.

Arizona Weekly Miner, October 22, 1875

A DISCOURAGED EDITOR.—He was a sad-eyed, meeked-faced man, and we supposed he merely wished to give us a news item; but when he commenced telling us about a barn on his ranch 190x280 feet, seven stories high and ornamented with bay windows, we thought it was time to check him, and so we commenced:

"Well, we must admit that that is a pretty large barn for this country, but back in the States our father built a barn 325x500 feet, nine stories high and furnished with steam elevators; the---"

"Back in the States," interrupted our listener. "Why that wasn't much of a barn for the States. I remember, now, that when I was quite young my father built a chicken coop 550 x 832 feet. I don't recollect how many stories it was high, but I know there was a cupola on it for roosters."

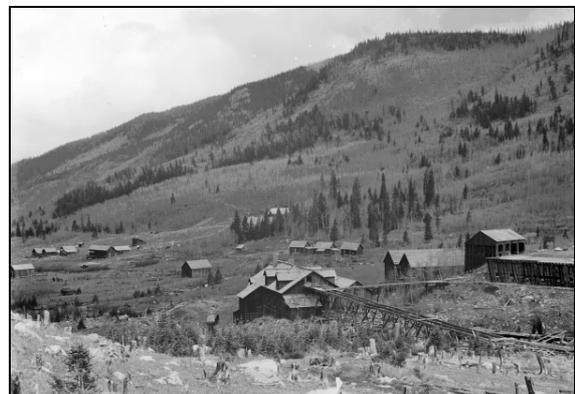
"About how high was the cupola?" we asked.

"I don't remember the exact height now, mister," was the reply, "but I know it was so high that the fourteen upper tiers of roosters died from the effects of the light atmosphere the first night."

Then he looked up towards the ceiling and commenced humming "Jesus Loves Me," and we went out and sat down on the wood pile, and wondered why somebody was always outstripping us in the race of life.

--Fairplay (Col.) Sentinel

Where in Park County is This?



These photos were taken by Dr. Clinton H Scott, a doctor for the railroad who lived in Como, circa 1898-1902. If you recognize and can pinpoint the location of either or both, please contact the Park County Local History Archives and let us know so we can get them properly referenced in our files.

Reynolds Gang

Jim and John Reynolds, natives of Texas and inveterate carousers and drinkers, became enthusiastic Confederate supporters as soon as Texas seceded from the Union. Learning that the Confederacy needed money for the cause, the Reynolds brothers looked northward to Colorado, reasoning that the gold fields would be a good source of funds for the war effort.

The brothers had been among the first miners to dig for gold along the Middle Fork of the South Platte River near what became the town of Fairplay, so had first-hand knowledge of the area.

On the morning of July 25, 1864, nine men waited at the stage stop in Como, one of McLaughlin's way stations. As the stage approached, the bandits drew their revolvers and ordered driver Ab Williamson to get down off the stage.

The gang plundered the express box, netting \$3,000 in gold and ransacked the mail for cash. The total take was later estimated to be \$7,000 for that robbery. The gang destroyed the wheel spokes on the stage and exchanged their horses for the fresher ones that had been harnessed to the coach.

They left and headed east to Kenosha House, on the other side of Kenosha Pass and celebrated their success with a good meal. They then went to Omaha House, on the other side of Slaght's Ranch (now Shawnee), to spend the night.

Meanwhile the word spread quickly of the robbery and several posses were formed to track the thieves. The gang retreated to a hideout in Handcart Gulch, about ten miles northeast of Kenosha Pass.

One of the posses happened into the area and could see a campfire flickering in the distance. They approached carefully on foot. Realizing that they had stumbled onto the bandits' hideout, the leader of the posse quietly told his men to surround the camp, but not to shoot until he signaled. One of the men started shooting anyway and the robbers ran into the darkness, jumped on their wait-

ing horses and escaped. In the morning light, the posse discovered that one of the bandits had been killed.

The rest of the gang split up and hoped to avoid capture if they all went in different directions. But the posses were relentless and followed the gang members until the last of them were caught near Canon City.

All the outlaws except John Reynolds, who managed to escape, were taken to Denver and incarcerated.

The robbers were under military escort on their way to Fort Lyon to be tried and sentenced. Two of the commanders of the escort were Colonel Chivington (later involved in the Sand Creek Massacre) and Ab Williamson, driver of the stage that had been robbed at Como.

The soldiers were under orders to shoot any of the robbers who tried to escape. In fact, they purposely goaded them to do so. Not taking the bait, the robbers remained shackled. Finally the prisoners were lined up and the troops were ordered to fire. All the shots went over their heads as the soldiers didn't want to be part of such cold-blooded murder. Cursing the soldiers for cowardice, Williamson proceeded to complete the executions himself. The bodies were left where they fell.

John Reynolds was later shot during an attempt to steal horses in his native Texas. On his death bed he drew a map of where the money from the stagecoach robbery had been hidden. He told of how he and his brother Jim had placed \$40,000 in greenbacks wrapped in silk oilcloth and three cans of gold dust in the mouth of a hole and covered it with stones. They had marked the spot by sticking a knife into a nearby tree and breaking the handle off.

Many have searched Handcart Gulch for the lost treasure, but no one has admitted finding it.

Adapted from *The Stagecoach: Connecting East and West* by Linda Bjorklund