

# Park County Local History Archives

ISSUE IV

NEWSLETTER

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1898 Puma City – photo by John G. Jack

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*Mystery solved or new questions?*

### Archives News:

Archives president Christie Wright, a former probation officer, has done extensive research about outlaws in Park County. She recently gave a talk on behalf of the Park County Historical Society about the “bad guys” of Platte Canon. Her new book, “All That Lies Beneath,” is a collection of information about those buried in the Alma/Buckskin cemetery. Most of the proceeds from the book will be donated to the Fairplay Library Building Fund.

Send comments, requests and suggestions to [www.parkcoarchives@yahoo.com](mailto:www.parkcoarchives@yahoo.com)

### Archives Update

Our roving “crew of four” recently visited the VVN ranch that was owned and operated by the Eddy brothers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Now owned by the Forest Service, the land and buildings of the cattle operation located at the base of Black Mountain near Dick’s Peak are still a poignant reminder of days gone by. The staircase to the second floor of the house has fallen in but the carvings on the walls remain. And you can still examine the outbuildings as well as the source of water for their well.

Several descendants of Park County settlers have visited the Archives lately: the Dell family (Guffey), the Turner family (Garro store), the Smith family (Como), and the Clark family (Lake George), came in to check out our resources as well as contribute photos and documents to add to our collections.

Our partnership with the Fairplay Library has put us on two of their committees: one for fund-raising and the other for building design of the proposed new library to be located near the Rec Center in Fairplay. We are grateful to the Bailey Library folks for providing space to us so we can keep up our research operations until the new facilities become available.

A student from the University of Colorado (Denver campus) is researching the history of the Guiraud ranch, now the Buffalo Peaks Ranch, for a historical assessment for the Rocky Mountain Land Library. One article they discovered mentioned coal deposits on the ranch. The original settlers, Adolph and Marie Guiraud, came from wine-making families in France and settled in Garo in the 1870s. The name of the town, Garo, is a derivative of the family name.

**Charles L. Hall – Miner, Rancher**

*Submitted by Christie Wright*

Charles L. Hall, our last prominent Hall man from Park County, was a man of versatile means. His lineage can be traced back to two Mayflower families. Born in New York in 1835, he and his family moved to Iowa where Charles studied law as a young man, but the lure of the Pikes Peak gold fields fascinated him. This prompted him to travel to our state, first settling in California Gulch (Leadville) and then moving on to the San Juans. This trip did not go well for lack of rations and he soon deduced that his two traveling companions, Harris and O'Neill, were plotting to kill and devour him! Hall outwitted them and was rescued by other nearby miners. His weight had dropped to 48 pounds.

Charles L. Hall went on to return to Park County and located the Salt Works Ranch in 1862, where the American Indians were allowed to receive salt rations. He was elected twice to the Territorial legislature, was a county commissioner for three terms. He and his family moved to Leadville in 1878 and helped organize the Leadville Light and Power Company along with H.A.W. Tabor and others. He then partnered with Tabor again to open the posh Windsor Hotel in Denver in 1880.

United in marriage in 1862 to Mary Melissa Hill Nye of New York, the couple had three children, although their middle child, Charles Jr., died at age 39 in Park County. Of note is that his grand-daughter was Antoinette Perry, whom the Tony Awards are named after.

In 1892, Hall moved to Arizona, where he located the large Mammoth Mine and continued as a large mine owner, but failing health prevented any more direct involvement.

*This completes the Hall trilogy.*

Charles Hall's adventures in the San Juans were further described in Allen Nossaman's book, "*Many More Mountains-Volume 1: Silverton's Roots.*"

*"Charles L. Hall [was] a restless young man who was supposed to have become a Presbyterian minister but who bought a flouring mill at Maquoketa, Iowa, instead. Family disappointment over his choice compounded when the mill burned to the ground, and Hall joined the Pike's Peak travelers to satisfy debts and ambition at the same time."*

Of the episode wherein the three men went out prospecting and became lost, Nossaman writes:

*"Crossing Bear Creek proved to be a challenge, but Hall--who said he was nicknamed 'The Squirrel' in those days--later recalled that he scampered to the top of a human tower, O'Neal on the bottom and Harris on his shoulders, and caught the only accessible branch to swing across to the opposite cliff, where he could fell a tree to facilitate crossing."*

The threesome became hopelessly lost and soon exhausted their rations. *"Six days after the division of the rations, they boiled the flour sacks, and drank the remaining broth. They then ate first their buckskin breeches, then their boot tops and finally a buffalo robe they had used for a bed. They ditched everything they did not absolutely need or could not eat, taking only one pistol to start fires, which Hall carried. ...the trio wandered in a near delirious condition for days, at one time ravenously devouring some ants they found at work in a rotten log. Paranoia justifiably set in, and Hall recalled feeling that O'Neal and Harris were plotting to kill him—a feeling which was probably reciprocated since Hall had the only fire-arm..."*

Hall and Harris left O'Neal and were finally found when their pistol shot fired to start a fire was heard by nearby miners.

## The Wild Days of Puma City

*Submitted by Gary Minke*

What used to be Puma City is now only the quiet little village of Tarryall. Back in the late 1890s prospectors were finding a good showing of metals including copper, zinc, lead, molybdenum and the possibility of silver and gold. A boom town ensued with wooden buildings being slapped together quickly. Some old cabins and sheds remain in Tarryall but the vestiges of the throngs who resided there rather briefly are gone. During 1897 there were 400 prospectors and their suppliers in the noisy camp called Puma City.

One story from those roaring days could be called "Double-crossed and shot in the back in Puma City." This is how the event was reported. The new boom town was located about 10 miles from the Colorado Midland Railroad line in Lake George and the prospects for growth looked encouraging. The rosy outlook prompted Peter S. Cox (a newcomer possibly from the Carolinas) to enter a business deal with a local man, James R. Gregg and purchase his saloon. Apparently the understanding was that Gregg wanted to pull up stakes and leave. The ink was barely dry on the purchase agreement when Gregg took the Cox money and opened a dance hall/saloon across the street from the place he had just sold. Sensing a double-cross, Cox grabbed his Winchester and strode across the narrow street to get an explanation. Before anyone realized what was happening, there was a rapid succession of gunshots and Peter Cox would be dead.

This is how the affair was described in the Fairplay Flume of Friday, March 12, 1897: ***"The Shooting at Puma: Particulars hard to obtain—an evident desire to keep things quiet. On March 3, Peter S. Cox was killed in the Puma Dance Hall at Puma City. Sheriff Wilson of Fairplay, Coroner Mayne of Como, and Deputy District Attor-***

*ney White of Guffey were on the ground the next day and a coroner's inquest was held. Among the witnesses examined were: J.W. Fulton, W.W. Freeman, C.H. Lewis, W.M. Teeters, Judge Robinson and Jack Rumsey. Dr. Hayes' testimony was to the effect that two bullets penetrated the body from the front and one from the back, the latter causing death. Attorney Weymouth appeared for the defense. The jury brought in the following verdict. 'We the jury find that P.S. Cox came to his death from gunshot wounds at the hands of one James R. Gregg and the man known as the "Aspen Kid," alias Charles Harrison. We the jury are unable to decide whether this killing was done feloniously or not.' It appears that James Gregg and Peter S. Cox had had some difficulty at Jasper City in the morning about the transfer of the saloon which Cox had bought (from) Gregg. Cox claimed that Gregg had agreed not to open another place but was to leave town. Gregg had opened a place nearly across the street from the place he had previously sold to Cox and this seems to have been the prime cause of the difficulty. On the day mentioned Cox, who was a very nervous man, came from his saloon into the Puma Dance Hall with a Winchester rifle in his hands and after talking with the new proprietor for a few moments appeared to 'stand pat' before Gregg. Who fired the first shot is a mooted question. Who fired the fatal shot is still more in doubt, many more were fired than those which took effect, and the holes in Cox's body it was evident were made by different caliber revolvers. James Gregg was placed under arrest also Charles Harrison known as the "Aspen Kid." The bonds were fixed at \$500.00 which Gregg immediately secured. Harrison was unable to find bondsmen and is now in the county jail. The preliminary hearing will take place next Monday at Puma where perhaps more will be developed."*

(to be continued in next issue)

## Where was the Hoover Crime?

*Submitted by Linda Bjorklund — much research by  
Jerry Davis*

Almost anybody who has looked into Fairplay history knows the story of Hoover's hanging from the court house window and can even point out the second-story window over the main door where his body was found at the end of a noose. But, where did the crime occur?

In 1879 John J. Hoover was the proprietor of the Cabinet Billiard Saloon on Front Street. He had a back room in which he entertained his guests with samples of liquor from which he generously partook. Hoover apparently became incensed when he noticed that water from the local ditch was backing up near his property. Thomas Bennett had been hired to clean out the ditch and was taking a break from his chores by having a drink at the Fairplay House.

Hoover charged into the hotel lobby, brandishing his revolver, and summarily shot Bennett in the chest after making some cryptic remarks about 'not having his family imposed upon.'

After a year of jail time, Hoover was tried at the Fairplay court house and traveling Judge Bowen found him guilty but gave him what locals thought was an extremely light sentence—eight years in prison. That evening an angry group of vigilantes broke Hoover out of his cell in the basement of the court house and marched him upstairs to the window where they fashioned a noose to punish him more properly for his crime.

At least one hotel in town at any given time called itself the Fairplay House or Fairplay Hotel. The ditch map shows the path of the various routes the town ditch took on its path from Beaver Creek to the Middle Fork of the South Platte. The Cabinet Billiard Saloon was on Front Street next to Clark and Crook's store, also the post office. These were located near Fifth Street but not near the ditch and not near any of the buildings

that might have been called the Fairplay House.

An article published in the Fairplay Flume in August of 1939 bore the title, "Early Day History by Lou Fishel." After rambling on for several paragraphs, Fishel stated, "*Mr. McLain was running what they called the Fairplay Hotel at that time. It was also called the McLain Hotel. Johnnie Hoover lived in a house below the hotel. We used to have a ditch running through town for water supply. The ditch ran in front of the Fairplay Hotel. Mr. McLain ran a ditch across so that it would run over in back of the hotel. It got to leaking one day and overflowed and ran over into Hoover's lot.*" Fishel went on to describe the killing.

By this account, the ditch was overflowing near Hoover's house, not his billiard saloon. Examination of a number of deed records at the Park County Clerk's office finally revealed that in 1875 Hoover's wife, Euphrasia, (who incidentally was the sister of Hoover's business partner Ward Maxcy) owned property next door to Ada French's hotel, known as the Fairplay House. The legal descriptions indicated that both properties were located some 200 feet south of the "Sixth Street alley" on the south side of Front Street.

McLain did not appear to have ever owned the hotel, but, according to trial transcripts, was the manager at the time of the shooting in 1879.

The early ditch map created by surveyor W.H. Powless shows a lateral of the town ditch that flowed at an angle toward the river from Front Street near Sixth Street, which would have lined up with the legal descriptions of the hotel and the house.



MAXCY & CO.,  
Front Street,  
FAIRPLAY, COLORADO.  
1875 ad in Sentinel