

Park County Local History Archives

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NEWSLETTER

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Lake George Hotel about 1919 - From Dorothy Miner Ford collection – William Norton family

ARCHIVES NEWS:

"South Park Perils: Short Ropes & True Tales" is now published and for sale. Author Christie Wright tells of killers, victims and pursuit of justice, as well as locations where the incidents happened in historic Park County. Copies are available at Al-Mart in Alma, the Forest Service book store in Fairplay, or on the website www.southparkperils.com.

A new publication on the Archives website is now available: "Snowstorm Dredge and Placer Chronology" was put together by Jane Gilsinger. The Snowstorm is one of the last gold dredges used in Colorado. A historic structure assessment has been made in an effort to define what would be needed to make the dredge a museum visitor spot. Although the dredge is still not open to the public, its history is told in this informative publication.

ARCHIVES DOINGS AUTUMN 2013

In the Archives office a lot has been accomplished this fall. We continue working on our main project, that of rescanning our historic photos in a larger size format. Although time-consuming, this will enable our office to provide patrons with the best possible resolution when photos are ordered.

Genealogy requests are very popular and we have fulfilled a number of requests for information or have been the recipient of some donated images from former Park County residents. A number of homestead papers were either reviewed or ordered this fall including those on the following ranches: Pulver, Royal, Cline and AG.

Some of the Archives Board members and other day-trippers were treated to a field trip to the historic mining district of Alhambra this summer with permission and a guided tour by the property owner. This was the site of the unsuccessful Andesite mine, its 800-1000-foot tunnel dating from the latter 1890s to circa 1906.

Remains of Alhambra town buildings were inspected and the numbered rock cornerstone of a former mining claim was pointed out. Other stops along the way included locating several historic ranches in the West Fourmile/Guffey area and the Soda Springs, where there are still small basins of mineral water.

A new grant was applied for and approved by the Park County Historic Preservation Advisory Commission for the Archives to obtain from the National Archives homestead papers and other documents pertinent to Park County historic designations on properties deemed to have historic significance. PCHPAC uses the information for establishing historic significance, then the Archives holds the documents available for public research.

PART II – SEARCHING FOR MY ANCESTOR
by Jackie Powell

In my search to find out more about the end of the War of 1812 and the First Seminole War, I read John Missall's and Mary Lou Missall's *The Seminole Wars*, and it turned out they lived in Colorado Springs. Somehow this proximity emboldened me, so I contacted them via email and they graciously gave me a few names of experts on the topic, as well as other books to read. In turn, I contacted these folks, and Gary and I developed our itinerary for a research trip based on the historic sites Edmund (my great-great-great grandfather) had visited, and repositories of information about that era.

The research took us to universities, museums, libraries, and archives in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. Once we began, we seemed to be handed from one person to another as though we had been inducted into a secret archival society. Everyone was helpful, even though they didn't always have the information we needed. But they would tell us the name of someone who might have it, and on we would go, through the piney woods and across the bayous, swamps, and other backwaters of the southeast.

I have always said the South is a good place to be from, emphasis on the *from*. I left just after the Civil Rights Act was passed, and had vivid memories of separate facilities for Negroes, and limited exposure to them except as waiters, servants and laborers. They literally lived on the other side of the tracks from me. People were sure that if blacks swam in the community pool, their skin color would come off in the water and contaminate us. My mother had separate dishes for the cleaning lady to eat from – shades of *The Help*.

As we progressed along our research journey, I kept saying to Gary, "The Civil Rights Act *worked!* Look at what all these black people are doing!" They were everywhere – managers, civil servants, professors, curators, everything. How exciting that was.

Now, I'm not saying the Civil Rights Act erased bigotry. I doubt that that will ever go away. Gary and I have a game about whether his friends and family in Michigan are more or less bigoted than my friends and family in the South. It's a close game, probably a tie.

Toward the end of our journey, we were in Mobile. The museum historian had directed us to the Probate Records, where we were able to find some documents about Colonel King and his plantation upstream on the Alabama River. One of these was the manumission of a man he had bought to serve him as an officer in the Army. Manumission. I thought I knew what that meant, but I wanted to know for sure. When I went to the window in the Records Division to pay for the copies we had made, I asked the woman in charge if it meant what I thought it did. She looked me deeply in the eyes and said, "Yes, he freed this man." She was African-American. I had chills.

**WOMAN PLACER OPERATOR FINDS RELICS
OF CHINESE OCCUPATION**

Fairplay Flume, August 2, 1935

Reminders of the days, half a century and more ago, when Chinamen worked the placers hereabouts which are now being reopened by reason of the higher "price" of gold have just been found on a tract worked in a small way by a Mrs. James, on the west side of the Platte river, about half a mile above Fairplay. Mrs. James unearthed several small metal boxes and other articles bearing Chinese inscription, indicating that she is digging on a spot where once a Chinese dwelling stood.

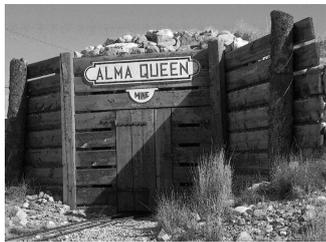
On the same spot, M. O. Deatherage and another man some time ago panned out nearly an ounce-bottleful of quicksilver, supposedly spilled there by some operator long ago.

MINE SHAFTS

Fairplay Flume, February 23, 1888

The "Uncovered Shaft" Trap

Joe Herter, of Dake, was out hunting with a companion about two miles from that place, on Kenosha hill, a week ago Monday, when he unsuspectingly dropped into a trap that had been laid there. Seeing what he took for a bank of snow in front of his path, he mounted it and immediately disappeared. The snow had covered the dump of an open abandoned shaft. Peering over the brink his comrade made out, from the lusty manner in which Herter yelled that he was killed, that no serious damage had been done, although the shaft was 45 feet deep. He then hastened off to Dake for assistance. On his return Herter was taken out with no bones broken but severely bruised all over. His gun was demolished in the tumble. There is no law which is more of a dead letter than the one that forbids prospectors leaving shafts uncovered.



South Park City mine exhibit

Fairplay Flume, September 13, 1894

Capt. J. M. Hensley, father of Mrs. Miles McDonald, who formerly lived at Alma, met death last Thursday in a mining shaft upon which he has been working for the past two or three years, located between Lake George and Florissant. The captain was over 70 years of age and took pride in the fact that he had, single-handed and alone, sunk this shaft to a depth of some 80 feet. The supposition is that part way down he was overcome by gas and fell 50 feet to the bottom, where his body was found badly bruised and crushed on Friday morning. The shaft had to be cleared of foul air before a descent could be effected. The funeral occurred on Saturday. Deceased resided in Fairplay in the early days, as we are informed.

...AND MOUNTAIN LIONS

Fairplay Flume, February 17, 1881

A lively half-hour was experienced at the Half-Way house on Mosquito gulch, one evening not long since, caused by the presence of a mountain lion of large size. Several prospectors are making their home at this point, and they had noticed the tracks of a mountain lion around for some days. One of the party, Mr. McCain, bought some cartridges when in Fairplay last, thinking to get a shot at the animal. Unfortunately the size purchased was forty-five caliber instead of forty-four, that of the gun, and, one evening, when one of the party, a German, rushed in, saying, "Get your guns, the lion is shust beside de house," there was a scramble for two Winchester and one Sharp's rifle that hung on the wall, and three ambitious sportsmen sallied forth. The lion was but four rods away, and each one hastily inserted a cartridge into his gun in order to get the first shot. But "the blamed things wouldn't fit," and three madder men were never seen than those who watched the lion trot off in perfect security.

Fairplay Flume, February 23, 1893

A young lady of Florissant, Miss Selma Quist, has earned for herself a reputation for good marksmanship that many old hunters might envy. While visiting recently at the ranch of W. C. Vermillion, near Lake George, her attention was one day attracted to a large wild cat, which was prowling around on the hill, about 100 yards from the house. Finally the animal perched upon the limb of a tree and the young lady concluded to try a shot at his catship. Obtaining a 50-110 Sharp's rifle from the house, she took an off-hand shot at the animal, sending a bullet fairly through his neck, killing him instantly. Miss Quist is but sixteen and of slight frame, and as the rifle was about all she could hold the shot is considered a remarkably good one, especially when the distance is taken into consideration.

LAKE GEORGE

The town of Lake George was originally called George's Lake, after George W. Frost, who built a dam on the South Platte River and established a man-made lake in 1891. The plan was to cut large blocks of ice from the lake for use by the Colorado Midland Railroad and area businesses.

Frost also hoped to create a summer resort and town site, as he platted some 1200 lots near his three-story mansion beside the lake. After his death in 1906 the mansion became a hotel until it burned down in 1922.

The town grew like any other community along the railroad route, with typical ranches and businesses. Occupants had their occasional quarrels, but one between rancher Thomas Mullican and mercantile store owner Henry M. Rockett became lethal in late November, 1915.

In February of that year Mullican became incensed when Rockett failed to pay his share for using the town pump and tried to keep Rockett from using it by destroying the pump and removing the pump handle. Mullican was arrested for disturbance and ordered to appear before Justice of the Peace J. B. Ryan in the District Court at Fairplay. His bond was set at \$200.

The case came up in October, but no one appeared to prosecute. The judge dismissed the charges and the newspaper made fun of "Pump Handle Tom" in its coverage.

The quarrel resumed when Mullican went into Rockett's store in Lake George the next month and again made his accusations. The November 27, 1915, *Denver Post* reported the incident according to Rockett:

"It is said that his version of the trouble is that Mullican started a disturbance in the store and Rockett ordered him to leave. Instead of leaving, Rockett contends that Mullican reached back to his hip pocket as tho to draw a gun. Rockett then pulled a .45 caliber revolver from his own pocket and shot Mullican thru the abdomen. Mullican, who is a giant in size and strength, managed to walk out of the store and down the street be-

fore he collapsed. Whether he really was armed is not known here."

The December 10, 1915, issue of the *Fairplay Flume* reported that Mr. Mullican was laid to rest.

Henry Rockett was charged with murder and his trial came up in May of 1916. After two days of deliberation a jury acquitted him of the charge.

Resentment remained, however, and six years later a band of "wild-eyed mountaineers" led by a "pretty girl" who lived in Lake George and was a local rancher, began making threats against Rockett. The band attempted to ambush him, but Rockett refused to leave town at their bequest.

Several local officials each claimed that they were running the town and issued orders indiscriminately for others to leave town or suffer the consequences. The governor finally sent Rangers to calm the locals and take charge of the situation.

It was noted that the "pretty girl" had applied for the job of postmaster that was currently held by Rockett's wife.

The situation eventually calmed down, but not before the scandal was monitored by all the telephone owners who listened in to every call to hear the latest news.

The hotel that had been George Frost's mansion was occupied by Rangers when it was destroyed by fire in December of 1922.

The Colorado Midland went out of business in 1918 and the tracks were torn up. The road through 11-Mile Canyon follows the abandoned grade of the railroad, complete with tunnels. Area farmers and ranchers began to grow potatoes for a crop in the early 1900s and continued to do so into the 1940s.

Lake George is now at the entrance of many campgrounds and fishing spots along the South Platte.

Written by Linda Bjorklund; Articles contributed by Steve Plutt

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