

Park County Local History Archives

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NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

Archives News

Archives News	1
Archives Doings	1

Articles from the Archives

Leonard Summer's Burglar-Proof Safe. ...	2
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Park County Courthouse 1880s

Antero Reservoir Skeleton	3
Winter Stories from the Flume	4

Archives News

The Park County Local History Archives website at www.parkcoarchives.org

is in the process of being updated and improved. We are using a Past Perfect program to catalog our photos and updating the captions to be more accurate. You can also access copies of the newsletter, maps of the area, oral histories, cemetery information and many other pieces of information that might help your research of this area.

Also please check out the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PCArchives

Although we are in the digital age where

much is done on line, we are still open at the old court house in Fairplay on Tuesdays from 10 am to 2 pm, weather permitting.

Archives Doings

The Archives has most copies of the old *Park County Republican and Fairplay Flume* newspapers back to February of 1879, when they first began publication. They were, however, located in various places, as there wasn't enough storage space for them. We now have them all in one place and we are putting them in order and storing them in boxes in our vault.

If you need to do research in the newspapers, the Fairplay and Bailey libraries have them on microfilm up through 1979.

To further your research, we continue to add to our reference files with new information as we find it.

The South Park National Heritage Area is working on a new App that you can access from your smartphone, to be available in April of 2016. This App will point out historical sites along the Tarryall Road (Highway 77) and tell you a bit of their history as you drive down the road.

The Archives is working on a book to accompany the App which will go into much greater detail about the history of the area between Jefferson and the Tarryall schoolhouse and beyond.

The stories of the town of Jefferson, Bordenville and a number of the ranches along the way will be featured, as well as Tarryall Reservoir, the town of Tarryall (formerly Puma City), and much more.

Park County has enjoyed the services of Amy Unger and Erica Duvik, both of whom worked in Heritage, Tourism and Community Development, to further the historic recognition of buildings, areas and sites located in the county. Both have left to take up jobs elsewhere. We want to wish them both success in their future employment and thank them for the support they gave us in the Archives over the past few years.

Leonhard Summer's Burglar-Proof Safe

by Laura Van Dusen

In 1881 as part of a basement remodel project a large and beautifully decorated safe, once owned by Leonhard Summer of historic South Park Brewery fame, was placed inside a basement vault in the Old Park County Courthouse on Fairplay's Main Street. It isn't known what else may be in the safe, but in 2005 items from a suicide investigation were put inside and the lock froze tight. It hasn't opened since.

1881

According to the *Flume* editions of Jan. 13 and Jan. 27, 1881, the then Park County Commissioners contracted that month for a remodel of the county's seven-year old courthouse at a cost of \$1,150 (about \$27,000 in 2015 dollars). The project was to remove the jail cells from the basement and remodel the space into three offices. Windows were to be lowered and a vault was to be built in place of the central jail cell.

(Prisoners were once housed in the basement, but the cells were no longer needed because the new jail on the courthouse lawn was completed in November 1880. Without prisoners housed in the basement, the possibility of escape was no longer an issue so the windows could be lower to let in more light.)

The contract also called for the installation of heavy iron doors at the entrance of the new vault to make it fire proof. For added security the commissioners approved spending \$345 (\$8,000 in 2015 dollars) on a "large and perfectly new" burglar-proof safe to be placed in the fortified vault. The safe was bought from Leonard Summer, owner of the Summer Brewery. The first use of the vault may have been for County Treasurer John L. Gray, whose office would be in the remodeled basement.

Progress was made quickly. The January 27 edition reported that the contractor, C. Potter, had removed all the stone walls of the old jail cells with the exception of the central cell; those walls would remain as part of the vault. A new floor was laid and the safe was on the courthouse grounds ready to be placed inside. Potter had completed the lathe work, built a new storm door and was waiting for good weather before cutting out the door and window openings and finishing the plaster work.

2015

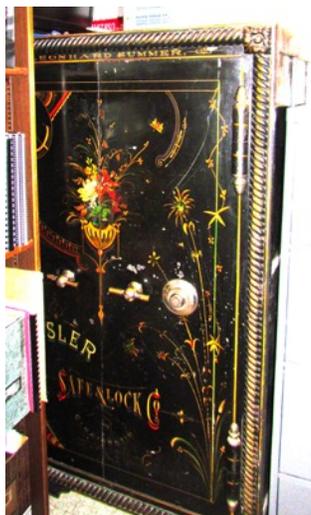
The safe has never been moved, it is still in the basement vault of the Old Park County Courthouse.

It is black, approximately six feet tall and three feet wide and probably quite heavy. It has Leonhard Summer's name written in gold across the top. A large still life of red and yellow flowers with green foliage is emblazoned on the front. It has two large silver-colored handles on the doors and a large combination dial. It's a majestic piece, reduced now for use as a shelf for an unused computer tower and boxed in by a fully packed bookcase on one side and a filing cabinet on the other.

The safe was placed in the vault before the remodel was completed, speculates Linda Balough, executive director of the South Park National Heritage Area who has an office in the basement today. That's her take because, she said, there is no way it could be moved out of the vault, it won't fit through the heavy iron doors.

And so, the safe sits, protected and secure and, it seems, still burglar proof. The last time the safe door was open was in about 2005, when Sharon Morris was coroner and had her office in the courthouse basement. She put some items belonging to a suicide victim inside for safekeeping, said current Park County Coroner, Dave Kintz, Jr. and although the lock had worked fine until then, it froze on that day and hasn't opened since.

Is the safe really burglar-proof? The South Park National Heritage Area and the board of the Park County Local History Archives, also housed in the Old Courthouse, as well as the Coroner's Office, would like it opened. They challenge those with vintage safe-cracking skills to give it a try—with supervision and witnesses, of course.



Skeleton Found at Antero Reservoir

This was the headline in the *Flume* on July 15, 1932. The article followed:

“Antero reservoir is emptier this summer than it has been in years. Much of what was its bottom is now dry. This led to the discovery, last Sunday, of the skeleton of a human being buried in the mud. Dr. Frank Dunkle, county coroner, was called to view it and take charge of it. It is now in his possession. He believes it to be that of a young or middle-aged man, as the teeth are in perfect condition.

Various stories are being woven around the find by residents of that section, but so far nothing authentic or convincing has come to the ears of Republican reporters.”

And then on July 22 a lengthy article appeared:

“Antero Reservoir’s Skeleton May Be That of an Ex-Convict

In view of the fact that his disappearance from the scene of life seems not to have prompted any noticeable search, it is quite safe to presume that the man whose bones were found in the muddy bottom of the Antero reservoir a week ago last Sunday wasn't worth a whoop. In his demise the world probably sustained no greater loss than it did when the dinosaur pictured elsewhere in this paper dropped into a rock-fissure that opened under its feet millions of years ago. But most human beings have such an exalted opinion of their value and importance in the world that when the remains of one of them are found outside of a duly designated graveyard there results much speculation, investigation and solemn process.

Who the man was who found a grave in the mud of the reservoir is not at all likely to ever be known, but George M. Teter, of the

South Park Motor Company, believes he knows at least something about the circumstances and the time of the man's death.

On the first of July six years ago, Mr. Teter informs the reporter, there came to his filling station three men in a light touring car to buy gas and inquire about a promising place to do some fishing. Mr. Teter directed them to Salt creek, a stream entering the Antero reservoir from the west and crossed by the Buena Vista road.

On the afternoon of July 4 there came to Teter's place two men and two women who reported that when they were passing the reservoir in their car they saw at a camp there two men beating a third with the evident intention of killing him. They were afraid to interfere lest the fight turn on and prove disastrous for one or more of them. Mr. Teter informed Fred Richards, then sheriff, and the latter, accompanied by his undersheriff, S. H. Law, proceeded to that section at once. They found the spot deserted where signs indicated that the camp had been.

Later on that same day Mr. Teter was called to the Hall ranch, on the Buena Vista road, where some school ma'ams' car needed tire repairs. At this ranch there was also a man who wished to be fetched to Fairplay to buy gas for his car, stalled nearby. The fellow did not look at all good to Mr. Teter, and he refused to take him. However, he arrived at Teter's place anyway, being brought in by the kindhearted school ma'ams. The fellow had a five-gallon can filled with gasoline and then hung around the filling station till 2 o'clock the next morning, evidently trying to pick up a ride back to his car, in which he must have finally succeeded. The fellow appeared very nervous and ill at ease.

Mr. Teter recognized him as one of the trio of fishermen.

A few days later the body of a man, evidently murdered, was found in sagebrush by the side of the highway near Leadville. This man was identified as an ex-convict. Sheriff Schroeder of Lake county took up the trail of the murderer of this man, but finally lost it in California.

Mr. Teter's theory is that the bones found in the reservoir belonged to the man who was seen to be slugged by his companions. The body, he thinks, was thrown in to Salt creek and floated down into the reservoir. The murderers then started for Leadville, but soon found themselves out of gas. One of them came to Fairplay to get the fuel, while the other remained with the car. When they got under way again, they fell to quarrelling, perhaps over the guilt for the murder committed, and one slew the other in order to confine guilty knowledge to one conscience. The remaining felon hurried on to California.

All three may have been ex-convicts and criminals, and by killing off each other they may have saved the taxpayers some money."

Winter Stories from the Flume

Articles submitted by Steve Plutt

Fairplay Flume, March 9, 1882

"In 1870 a scouting party of soldiers were over in the South Park, when, just at sundown on a summer evening, they came across the skeletons of six men. They lay in irregular position, with pieces of saddles, bits and bridles scattered around, with here and there a horse's bone and some cooking utensils. The soldiers put the skeletons down as the result of some Indian massacre, but in looking around found in a cleft of the

rocks a board, on which was rudely cut:
'Snowed in and dying, Jan 16 58 I am the
last. Peace. Jerry D---t---t.'

(Probably Douthitt.)

This is perhaps the only epitaph ever written by in Colorado by the hand of the man to whom it belonged. The names of the writers were never known." —From "Queer Epitaphs" in the Republican.

Fairplay Flume March 15, 1901

"Dr. Moulton of Alma, passed thro a very thrilling experience last Sunday night. He received a call from a man named McCauley on Democrat mountain and started out with Geo. Sheldon as a guide. Only a part of the distance was covered when the team was abandoned and they resorted to snow shoes. The snow being very soft and light the shoes were only a hindrance and they soon gave them up and began battling with the immense drifts on foot. Just as nature had about given out the two men reached a prospector's cabin which was well supplied with food and bedding and after breaking in the door they soon had the comforts of a home. Monday morning another start was made and at 10 o'clock the sick man was reached. He was down with pneumonia."

Fairplay Flume March 6, 1903

Charles Anderson, a Finland miner working on the No End mine, had a narrow escape from death last week. While going to work he slipped and fell on a snow bank which started a snow slide carrying him right over the cliff west of the Paris mill to the bottom of Buckskin gulch, at least 800 feet. He was riding on top of the slide and though badly bruised he managed to crawl to Dr. Lockridge's cabin, from where assistance was called from Alma. Anderson was sent to the Fairplay Hospital."

A note of encouragement: December 21 marked the winter solstice—The days now start getting longer. Wishing you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!