



Park County Local History Archives

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Tarryall School

Archives News:

Several of the oral histories that were available on the Archives website have been converted into books that can be purchased. Interviews of Andy Anderson, Barbara Tripp, James Lamping and Bill and Sadie Hand are now in print—check out the Archives Store.

Two of the Archives board members are writing histories that will soon be published: Christie Wright is working on her book, “South Park Perils: Short Ropes and True Tales,” which details over thirty true murder and outlaw tales from Park County’s Wild West Era from the mid-to-late 1800s.

Linda Bjorklund will soon offer “A Brief History of Fairplay,” which begins with the formation of nearby mountains and covers stories of Fairplay up through the 1950s.

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

Archives Launches Membership Program

From a modest beginning in 2002, the Park County Local History Archives has been dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of historical material relevant to the cultural and natural history of Park County. In 2007 the Archives was incorporated as a non-profit charitable organization. Our mission has not changed over the past decade and we continue to focus on preserving Park County’s rich heritage and making our library and historical documents available to those who wish to explore that heritage through photographs, manuscripts, documents, oral histories, and countless other invaluable records.

Over the past decade the Archives has outgrown its facilities and resources. We have been located in several facilities only to be required to move again. Our current location in the Bailey Library is adequate but hardly meets our needs. We are forced to put some of our files in storage, making them inaccessible. We are looking forward to our next location in the new Park County Library in Fairplay and the opportunity to provide even greater services to our consumers.

Over the past many months the Archives Board of Directors has discussed several ways to augment our sources of funding. We have successfully applied for grants for specific projects, developed and participated in several fundraisers, and while not directly financial aid, the Archives Board of Directors and volunteers have donated countless hours and resources to our operations.

The Archives Board of Directors has decided to establish a membership program in order to help maintain our current operations and to prepare for planned growth in services, such as additional computer workstations, improved research areas, and access to

documents currently in storage. The initial membership program provides for a \$25 individual membership. With your support and suggestions, the membership program will expand in the future to allow for additional levels of participation and greater benefits to our members.

If you would like to support the Archives by becoming a member, simply fill out and return the membership application attached to this newsletter. Or, if you prefer, you may join on-line by visiting our website www.parkcoarchives.org and clicking on the "Membership" button.

Current subscribers to the Archives Newsletter will continue to receive it as before. Our hope is that many of the current subscribers will recognize the importance of the Archives and favorably decide to support our mission by becoming a member.

We look forward to your participation in the membership program. Together, we will preserve Park County's rich heritage for generations to come.

Archives Doings Winter 2013 *by Christie Wright*

The winter months of December through February have provided a good time to begin one of our main projects, the rescan of all our historic photos in a higher resolution.

Research requested included information on Rowland and Insmont, the 1885 King Coal Mine explosion, Fairplay Hospital history, the Paris Mill and the Guiraud family.

Linda Balough, executive director of the South Park National Heritage Area, Erica Duvic, project and grants Manager of the Heritage Area, and Amy Unger, county preservation planner, organized and presented a program at the Paris Mill near Alma on January 26.

The Archives was recently awarded a grant from the Heritage Area to digitize early issues of the Alma Bulletin that have been available only on microfilm. The grant is subject to congressional approval of funding for the Heritage Area.

Excerpt from the Fairplay Flume, January 1, 1937

Desperate Criminal Killed in Battle with Officers in Bailey

During his eight years' service as sheriff of Park county, Neal W. Brown has been called on to cope with many tough hombres, and he always did so with remarkable tact, so that he came to within a few weeks of the end of his fourth term without having been "marked" in battle with any of them. But last Saturday evening he was wounded in the right hand by a desperate fellow who he and a couple of deputies tried to capture in a second-story hotel in Bailey. Fortunately the bullet from the fellow's gun passed through the fleshy part of the hand between the thumb and index finger, and no permanent injury will result.

Three days before this shooting a stranger had taken a room at the small hotel, which is new and operated by Albert Williams. The man had no baggage and did not register. He said he was ill and wanted to rest. When he failed to emerge from his room during more than a day, the landlord or his wife went to the room and inquired if they could do anything for him. Each time they did so they met with a gruff "No." When the man failed to leave his room Saturday, Williams called the Deputy Sheriff E. B. (Doc) Bell, of Bailey, to investigate. The two men went to the room.

"We're from the sheriff's office and want to talk to you," Bell said when the man opened the door.

With a quick jump to the side, the man slammed the door and then fired through it, narrowly missing the officer and Williams.

[Bell] then summoned Sheriff Brown, who proceeded to the scene, taking along his deputy Mike Minowitz. These officers knocked on the door and called on the occupant to surrender, but were met with a dead silence. It was then decided to use tear gas bombs to force him out. Minowitz climbed on a porch, tore the screen from a window, broke a pane and threw in a bomb. A fit of

coughing and then silence caused the officers to believe that the gas had put the fellow out. They forced the door, and looked in. The man was lying on the floor, with his arms stretched out. Sheriff Brown moved toward him, to take his gun away and drag him out, but found the gas too much. He had to retreat. As he started to do so, the man rose sufficiently to fire a shot, and the bullet struck the sheriff's hand, causing him to drop his own weapon.

This was the signal for a battle royal. Police officers from Denver were called, and eight of them were sent to the scene with machine guns and other weapons, including gas bombs and explosive hand grenades. A couple of miners from Alma who happened along joined the skirmish, as did many residents of the town.

When finally the stranger was taken from the room, dead and with nine bullet holes in his body, the hotel room presented a sad picture. About 300 bullets had pierced its floors and walls, and battering rams had made large holes in door and wall.

Sheriff Brown had by this time been taken to Mercy hospital in Denver to have his hand attended to.

The body of the dead stranger was brought to the morgue in Fairplay. It was soon identified as being that of red-headed Ben B. Blair, alias Edward Johnson, 35, of Bakersfield, Calif., ex-convict and suspected Denver holdup.

The first identification was made Wednesday afternoon, when there arrived at the Humphrey mortuary here one George Tarrantino, of Denver, and, after viewing the corpse, said that it was that of a man at whom he had taken five shots on the afternoon of the day before Christmas when the fellow robbed his filling station at 2002 Champa Street. He said that he believed the bullet-hole found in the man's right arm was made by his revolver (the other eight wounds in the body were made by machine-gun slugs).

The Two Tarryalls

The earliest town named Tarryall was started as a result of the gold discoveries along the Tarryall Creek near Como. The story is in the book "Over Boreas Pass" in the chapter called "Tarryall and Hamilton."

Gold was discovered in Colorado in 1859...In that year a group of prospectors came over Kenosha Pass,...continued north on Tarryall Creek...and found some old trappers' cabins near the confluence of Tarryall Creek and Deadman's Gulch about four miles north of Como and tried their luck there, with good results.

Among the first to arrive was William Holman, who is credited with founding the town of Tarryall a mile or so downstream from the diggings. The story is told that, upon finding gold in chunks "as big as watermelon seeds" the prospectors generously declared, "let us tarry all and share the wealth of the area." Newcomers found little of the generosity as most of the good claims were already taken up. Those rebuffed left in disgust, renaming the camp amongst themselves to "Grab all," which is what they felt had happened.

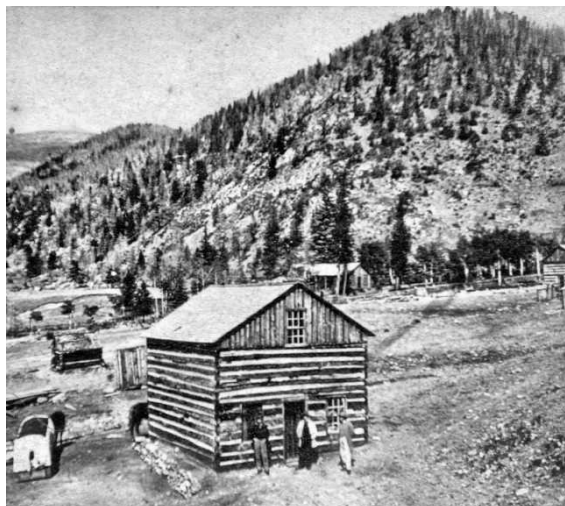
Meanwhile, one of the dissenters, Earl Hamilton, spurned the town of Tarryall and went just across the creek to establish his own town giving it his name. Although Tarryall was active at first, even temporarily being named the county seat, Hamilton had the greater population and more commercial activity. Despite the close proximity—separated by only a ten foot span of the creek—no bridge was ever constructed to connect the towns.

In spite of Tarryall's reputation of being stingy to newcomers, a placer, set aside by some 150 miners, was named "Whiskey Hole," and the rule was known that any miner down on his luck could pan enough gold at the hole to pay for a drink at the local bar.

Hamilton was on the side of the creek with the main road, therefore the center of much of the business activity. Daniel Witter, a schoolteacher from Indiana who had also studied law, came west to Colorado. He purchased a mining claim in the Tarryall Diggings and became the first postmaster of Hamilton in 1861. Clara Witter wrote several letters in which she described the primitive conditions and hard work, as well as the thieving nature of the local Indians.

During that same year Dr. John Parsons, who had also bought a mining claim early on, began to mint gold coins to be used as local currency in lieu of the gold dust that miners brought in as payment for their purchases. He minted only \$500 worth of the coins before his source of gold played out. Then in 1864 the federal government passed a law prohibiting private minting, so the minting operation ceased.

Between 1859 and 1872 nearly two million dollars in gold was panned from the Tarryall Creek. By that time the water, so essential for placer mining, was in short supply, as those upstream diverted it first.



Hamilton 1867 – Wakely photo from Ed and Nancy Bathke collection

As dwellings in Hamilton were abandoned, the Chinese, who came to mine gold and switched to mining coal, took up residence there until the first years of the 1900s.

Gold mining was revived when the Cooley Sand & Gravel Company brought in a dredge and worked the creek, leaving huge piles of rocks in its wake. All that remains of the twin towns of Tarryall and Hamilton is buried under piles of rocks churned out from the dredge as it worked the creek for the remainder of the gold. Ruins of a few buildings lie along the opposite side of the road, but these are not on the original town site, merely structures that were moved for temporary use...

The Other Tarryall

As gold was discovered, towns sprang up quickly and died just as quickly. One of those towns was located about ten miles from Lake George along what is now Highway 77. The town was originally named Puma City, platted by Denver developer Charles W. Gilman in 1896. When the post office was established it was discovered that the name Puma City was already taken, so the name Tarryall was appropriated, as that post office no longer existed.

By 1897 the population of Tarryall was more than 1000. There were five mines shipping ore by freight wagon to the Midland Railroad in Lake George.

There was a livery stable, a blacksmith, a general store and a store that sold tobacco and cigars. There were at least two saloons and the story of a shootout between saloon owners Peter Cox and James Gregg in 1897 made headline news. (This is covered in Archives Newsletter Issues Four and Five.)

Sidney Derby had the grocery and meat market and purchased much of the town site as others left. He later sold his holdings to Otto Groening, who had fought Sitting Bull in the Indian wars in South Dakota and became the harness maker in Tarryall.

The Tarryall School and teacherage have been restored as has the Derby Cabin.



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Park County Local History Archives

Newsletter

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Please offer any suggestions you may have for improvement in the services we provide.
