

Historical Society South Park Cemetery Tour

With Erik Swanson as knowledgeable guide By Pat Mauro and John D. Rankin



Como cemetery

Como cemetery The entrance to Como Cemetery is a half mile or so out of town on Boreas Pass Road. There is no sign on the road, so you have to watch to the left. (Photo by John D. Rankin/The Flume)



Coal Miners Memorial

This memorial in Como Cemetery was placed to honor miners killed in the King Coal Mine. (Photo by Pat Mauro)

The Park County Historical Society headed out to South Park for our cemetery tour 2017. We started in Bailey, then met at Como Community Center. We made a caravan up to the Como Cemetery.

There we viewed many known and unknown former residents of the Como vicinity. Many railroad employees, such as Eshe, Ballinger, Champion, Anderson and Gibbony families, are buried there. Willard Ballinger was killed in 1901 in a train wreck on Kenosha Hill. Clint Eshe was the engineer on the last passenger train in 1937. The Anderson and Gibbony families both worked for the railroad, and there were marriages between the families.

We also viewed the memorial to Italian miners killed in the King Coal Mine, the headstone written in Italian. It is a great example of why the Como Cemetery was added to the National Historic Register this year.



ALMA-Buckskin cemetery

The Historical Society tour group enters Alma/Buckskin Cemetery, following our guide Erik Swanson. (Photo by John D. Rankin/The Flume)

From Como, we drove to Fairplay for lunch, then were given a tour of the McLaughlin Barn, the oldest wooden building in Fairplay, which now houses Old Red Barn. Former PCHS President Bob Wonder's grandfather built the barn in the 1870 era. Present owner Dale Fitting gave us a tour of the building, and talked about structural changes to transform it from a barn into an antique store.

We then crossed Front Street to Rimfrost Antiques, owned by Erik Swanson. Erik was invited on the tour as our docent for the Buckskin Joe/Alma Cemetery.

Erik greeted us all, and gave a demonstration of a music box which plays songs like an accordion.

He then took us upstairs to the second floor of the building, which is the Fairplay I.O.O.F. (International Order of Odd Fellows) lodge. As we entered the room, we were taken back to the 1870s, as the room hasn't changed much since then. With wallpaper on which columns are imprinted, and thrones for the leaders of the lodge, the room was a fantastic surprise for all attending.

We then drove up to the Buckskin Joe/Alma cemetery. With Erik as our guide, he gave us stories of many of the folks buried there. He included his family plot, with his ancestors going back to the beginnings of Alma.

The weather was better in Alma, so we were able to cover most of the cemetery.

Everyone thanked Erik, and we ended the day with a drive up Buckskin Gulch to Kite Lake, ending a great PCHS trip.

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