

Park County Historical Society visits Dyersville Como, Boreas Pass and Selkirk Tank site also on itinerary

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Remains of Dyersville

This building may be the assay office at Dyersville on Boreas Pass. On July 12, the Park County Historical Society visited this site and others along Boreas Pass. (Photo courtesy Craig Christenson, Park County Historical Society)

Saturday, July 12, the Park County Historical Society visited the site of Dyersville, a mining camp founded by Father John Dyer, the Snowshoe Itinerant. The trip had special meaning to leader Pat Mauro.

“My recently deceased mother first took me to this site. This trip was a memorial to her,” said Mauro in a phone interview with *The Flume*.

“My mother Dolores ‘Dee’ Mauro recently passed, and I made a tribute to her as the inspiration of the trip to Dyersville, as we first visited the site with my family in 1975,” he said.

In a written account of the trip Mauro told of the founding of Dyersville.

“Father Dyer made the mining camp in the 1880 era, after retiring to Breckenridge. He had two roommates (Candell and Thompson) that he started the mining camp with,” Mauro said.

Mauro’s account tells of the group of approximately 20 attendees touring the circa 1879 Como Roundhouse. Our first stop past Como, was at the former site of Peabody’s (originally called Hamilton). There, we could see the cut for the Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad grade, as it started the climb up Boreas Pass.

Around a curve, the group saw the site where locomotive #7 crashed on March 6, 1928, killing engineer Joseph Nichols.

As we ascended Boreas Pass, we stopped at what was first thought as the site of the Selkirk Tank. West of the Selkirk Tank was another train wreck site. After we left the supposed site of the Selkirk Tank, we discovered at the next curve, the actual Selkirk Tank site with both sites looking similar.

We continued up the pass, noting the site of the 1936 wreck of Locomotive #73. We arrived at the summit of Boreas Pass, enjoying the spectacular view, and the historic relics around the once bustling summit. We enjoyed our sack lunches at this site.

Fairplay's Marie Chisholm tells of Model T Rail Runner

After lunch the group gathered at the site of the old DSP&PRR engine house, next to the Colorado and Southern boxcar, moved to the summit as an example of the train cars regularly used on the route.

Park County Historical Society member Marie Chisholm told a story of friends she knew from Fairplay, who converted a Ford Model T to run on the rail. They would travel the line in the modified car, after trains stopped running regularly on the track in 1937.

Marie told the story of one trip in the Model T, where they came around the corner, and a boxcar similar to the one at the summit, was parked on the track. They ended up hitting the boxcar, and punctured the radiator in the Model T. They had to nurse the car back to Fairplay, adding water on the way.

Arriving at Dyersville

The group arrived at the town site crossing Indiana Creek and started researching the area, comparing present day Dyersville to pictures from the 1970s taken by PCHS member Ed Everhart, compliments of Park County Archives.

At the main town site, are remnants of two buildings. The historical society believes that the larger building was the assay office as it was mentioned in Dyersville history. We could see where water was pumped in from the creek to the building. Also found on site were the trusses from the roof, lying on the ground.

Father Dyer reenactor speaks

Mauro wrote that John Redmond, who does reenactments of Father John Dyer, was along for the ride. Redmond enlightened us with some facts about Dyersville. "It was very nice to have John attend," said Mauro.

Evidence of mining remains

The group looked for the Warrior's Mark mine. Remnants of the structure appeared as if the mine was actually enclosed in a building during its heyday. Another two story building above the town is still standing. Many prospect holes, and possibly more mines were seen in the surrounding hills.

Across the road from Dyersville, was the site of Farnham, another large mining enterprise. From one of the other 1970s-era picture from Ed Everhart, the group saw a huge two story wood frame structure, still standing at that time. We found the structure, which we matched up to picture, laying on the ground. The large structure housed the tram system, for hauling ore from the mine above timberline, down to the DSP&PR for transport at the base.

Returning down the east side of Boreas Pass the group again stopped at the Selkirk tank site where large timbers from the tank were found. The tour also stopped at the site of the 1928 wreck site of Engine #7, to see if any remnants could be found.

Mauro concluded his account saying, "The trip was a fantastic time, with all the attendees enjoying the great weather, and some of the hidden treasures along Boreas Pass and at Dyersville."

U.S. Forest Service Railroad Day is Aug. 16 in Como, Boreas Pass and Breckenridge. For more information on upcoming trips or to join the society, visit www.parkcountyhistory.com.