

THE FLUME

The Park County Republican & Fairplay Flume

Park County Historical Society visits Hartsel

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Presented a program about the town's founder, Sam Hartsel. The Park County Historical Society has sponsored a dinner and historic program in Hartsel, for the first time.

by Flip Boettcher, Correspondent

The June program about Sam Hartsel, founder of Hartsel, featured local historian and author Linda Bjorklund. At least fifty people attended the program June 18, at the Hartsel Community Center.



The Hartsel Hotel

The Hartsel Hotel was built by Sam Hartsel, the founder of the Hartsel area and owner of the hotel. It burned down in 1976 and the only remaining portion of the hotel is now the Bayou Salado store and reminder of the property now houses the gas station. (Photo submitted by Flip Boettcher)

Sam Hartsel, born in 1834, left his Pennsylvania home at the age of fifteen years in 1849, the year gold was discovered in California.

The first Hartsels had arrived in the American colonies from Switzerland in

1735. Sam's parents Jacob and Catherine were natives of Pennsylvania and knew William Penn.

Sam's first job was helping to walk a herd of cattle 400 miles from Ohio to New York City, for which he was paid \$6.00 per month.

In 1860, Sam arrived by oxen team along the Platte River Trail in Denver to seek his fortune in the newly discovered gold fields around Tarryall, Hamilton and Fairplay.

When Sam's money ran out six weeks later, he realized he wasn't going to strike it rich in the gold fields, so he looked for other sources of income.

Sam, who was self-taught and had had no formal education, realized servicing the mines and miners was where the gold really was.

Sam started buying up, very cheaply, the skinny cattle and oxen that had pulled wagons west.

Sam then fattened them up and sold them for very high prices. His first ranch was just south of Tarryall called the Pennsylvania Ranch.

When the Homestead Act of 1862 was passed, Sam started searching for a place to homestead his 160 acres and settled on where the Middle and the South Forks of the South Platte River joined.

Sam later developed the town of Hartsel, the famous Hartsel Hot Springs and the Hartsel Hotel.

Since the Ute Indians had been using the hot springs, Sam continued to let them use the springs and it was said he got along pretty well with the Utes.

Sam did have a hair raising experience once when approaching some distant Indians and realizing they were Cheyenne, not Ute.

The Cheyennes and Utes were enemies. The Cheyenne kidnapped Sam for a few days and forced him to help them escape the area, but later let him go unscathed.

Sam's ranch, which was located on the main route from Colorado Springs to the gold mining camps, continued to grow.

Eventually there was a sawmill, a wagon shop which turned out some of the best wagons in the area, a school, a general store and a blacksmith shop.

One of the few projects which Sam attempted that failed was trying to bring hot springs water to his ranch house, some two miles east of the town.

After spending time boring holes through the middle of small logs and connecting them together from the hot springs to his house, he found that the water was cold when it arrived. Sam had wanted a hot bath at his house.

In 1865, Sam went to Kansas to bring back some short-horn cattle, a trip which took two years.

Sam wanted to have purebred cattle because the meat was better and brought a higher price at market. Sam fenced five miles of his property to keep the short-horn cattle in.

In 1877, at 42 years old, Sam married a 31-year old widow named Nancy Boone, a distant relative of Daniel Boone.

The couple had two daughters, Henrietta and Myrtle Louise. They also had a son, Sam Jr., who died early of a fever.

On the hill above the hot springs bathhouse is a cemetery where Sam Jr. was interred. Sam's mother Catherine came out in 1872 and died in 1873 and she was interred in that same cemetery.

Sam's brother Joseph also came out and being more of a hermit, he had a ranch farther south near Currant Creek Pass, north of Guffey.

One day after picking up his mail in Hartsel and returning home, Joseph disappeared.

In spite of a \$500 reward, nothing was heard of Joseph until two years later in 1903, when a prospector found a headless cadaver with boots on.

Sam identified his brother Joseph by those boots. Joseph was also interred in the cemetery on the hill. It was thought that perhaps Joseph was struck by lightning, but his horse did survive.

In 1891, Sam was appointed County Commissioner after then newly elected Commissioner Chubb Newett was shot to death.

In 1907, finding it was hard to get water rights, Sam sold the 7,000-acre ranch.

In 1908, he sold the town of Hartsel and moved to Denver. Before leaving, Sam disinterred all the family members from

the hilltop cemetery and moved them to Fairmont Cemetery in Denver.

In 1910, Nancy took sick and died. In 1918, at 84 years old, while running up some stairs, Sam died of an apparent heart attack.

For a self-taught man, Sam accomplished quite a lot in his life. In 1976, the old Hartsel Hotel burned down leaving the one-story handicapped west section which now houses the Bayou Salado shop.