

Park County Historical Society

Quarterly Newsletter - August 2013

Tour of BUCKSKIN GULCH

by Christie Wright

On Saturday, July 13, 2013, thirteen members and guests of the Park County Historical Society toured Buckskin Gulch, located west of Alma on County Road 8, also known as Buckskin Street. The trip was led by Pat Mauro, Field Trip coordinator for the Historical Society.

The Buckskin Gulch Auto Tour brochure, available at the South Park Ranger District office in Fairplay, was used as a basic guide because it highlights historical points of interest along the route. These are clearly marked by wooden wagon wheel signs, numbered to correspond with specific stops along the way.

County Road 8 ends at Kite Lake, a popular trailhead and camping site, approximately eight miles from Alma and at an elevation of 12,100 feet. The last several miles of the road are fairly steep and rough and a high clearance vehicle is often required.



Buckskin Gulch is significant to Park County's mining history. The mining camp of Buckskin Joe, originally called Laurette, was founded in the summer of 1859 after a mountain man named Joseph Higginbotham discovered gold by accident. While leading a hunting party into the gulch, he fired at a deer but the bullet missed, striking a rock instead. The impact exposed a gold vein that became the area's first mine called the Phillips Lode, named after one of the members in his party. Soon miners flocked to the area from the Pikes Peak region and the rush was on.

The first stop was at the Alma/Buckskin Cemetery, located one mile west of Alma. The cemetery is significant because it is one of the oldest in the state. Wandering among the historic headstones, with wildflowers randomly poking up among the graves, one gets a real sense of life's hardships in the 1800s and that those buried here are now at peace. The cemetery is still in use for Alma residents.

Legend has it that a mysterious dancehall girl haunts this cemetery. Named Silverheels, she mysteriously arrived in Buckskin Joe in the early 1860s and transfixed the miners with her beauty and dancing abilities. When smallpox allegedly ravaged the camp, Silverheels cared for the sick men and contracted the disfiguring disease herself. Although she recovered, her beautiful face was permanently scarred and she quietly left town one day to parts unknown. Locals swore they saw a woman dressed in mourning clothes, weeping at the miner's graves in the cemetery but she would vanish when approached. In her honor, the mountain behind Fairplay was named after her.



The group then observed the original Buckskin Joe mining camp site, not far from the turn-off for the cemetery. Nothing remains of the buildings now, making it difficult to imagine that as many as 5,000 inhabitants lived here in 1862 according to Robert L Brown's 1968 book, "Ghost Towns of the Colorado Rockies." This is where Horace Tabor and his first wife, Augusta, got their start long before they became famous in Leadville.

The Tabors ran a general

store and Post Office in Buckskin and remained up until the first "bust" in 1867, when gold first fizzled out in the area.

The Buckskin Joe mining camp is also significant because it was the second county seat, from 1862 until 1867 when Fairplay received the designation. The first county seat was located in the original town of Tarryall or Tarryall City as it was euphemistically called, adjacent to present-day Como.

Several original buildings from Buckskin Joe were moved to the South Park City Museum in the 1950s, including the court house. Tabor's general store was relocated to the popular Royal Gorge attraction called the Buckskin Joe Frontier Town, created as a popular movie set for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1957. Many famous western movies were filmed at the Frontier Town including True Grit and Cat Ballou. However, the entire attraction was sold to an individual purchaser in 2010 who moved the buildings to a private ranch on the Western Slope.

The third tour stop was at the arastra in Buckskin Creek and was an early method of crushing the ore to remove the gold. The arastra was one of sixteen used in the early 1860s according to the June 9, 1863 edition of the Tri-Weekly Miner's Register newspaper (Central City, CO).

The tour's fourth point of interest was the nearby Paris Mill, built in 1895 and recently nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The mill is a local landmark; an interpretive sign explains its history and use. It was used to process the ore from the Paris Group of mines, located directly above the mill on the steep cliff to the north. County permission is required to enter the structure and No Trespassing signs are clearly posted.

From here the group continued on towards the Sweet Home Mine site. En route, Christie Wright, volunteer with the Park County Local History Archives, pointed out the possible site of a long-forgotten settlement called Timberline Town. It is distinguished by the many trees that were chopped down years ago that have never grown back and the remains of several wood buildings. Bristlecone pines were seen on the hillside in an area called the Red Amphitheater. The weather has been kind to this stand of ancient trees, as most these stand upright compared to those on the nearby Windy Ridge Scenic Area. Many of those trees literally crawl along the ground, their bare trunks exposed to the harsh winds that swoop down from Mt. Bross.

At the Sweet Home mine location, the members and guests parked at a large turn-out. Also privately owned, this mine was first worked in the 19th century but is famous for its recent high quality rhodocrosite discovery. The stunning "Alma King" specimen, measuring 5.5 by 6.5 inches, is on display at the Coors Mineral Hall at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

After enjoying the scenery, the tour finished at 2 p.m. due to pending thunderstorms.

Contributed by The Flume, Park County Republican and Fairplay Flume

Happenings from the President

- I would like to thank the ladies, Linda Wood, Linda Henley, Jane Gilsinger Janet Burke and Marilyn Boccuzzi for all their gardening, mowing edging and watering at McGraw Park. Also Karen and Craig Christenson, Jim and Sue Glenn, Bill Kulenburg, John Rankin for moving, clearing out the Wren Cabin, and carrying glass and cases from the Shawnee School house to the artifact shed...and Jim Sapp for more mowing.
- We now have a 38 star United States flag flying at McGraw Memorial Park.
- VP Karen is fixing up a little store in the Shawnee School house.
- We encourage everyone to come help us and have fun doing it!

I am putting out a call for all history buffs and wanabees....please call me (contact information below) if you are interested in becoming a docent for the park. My vision is to have McGraw Memorial Park open every weekend through the summer as a living history museum.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August

- 10th – Farmers market at Rustic Station 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
- 11th – Chamber Mixer at McGraw Memorial Park 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM
- 16th – PCHS Board Meeting 6:30 PM at Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran Church

September

- 14th – History Presentation by Linda Bjorklund and pot luck type dinner 5:00 PM at Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran Church; \$7 donation for event
- 20th – Special Meeting; talk about preservation by Amy Unger at Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran Church 6:30 PM

October

- 12th – History Presentation by Rex Rideout and pot luck type dinner 5:00 PM at Shepherd of the Rockies Church; \$7 donation for event
- 18th – PCHS Board Meeting 6:30 PM at Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran Church

November

- 9th – History Presentation by Clyde Johnson and pot luck type dinner 5:00 PM at Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran Church \$7 donation for event
- 15th – PCHS Board Meeting 6:30 PM at Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran Church

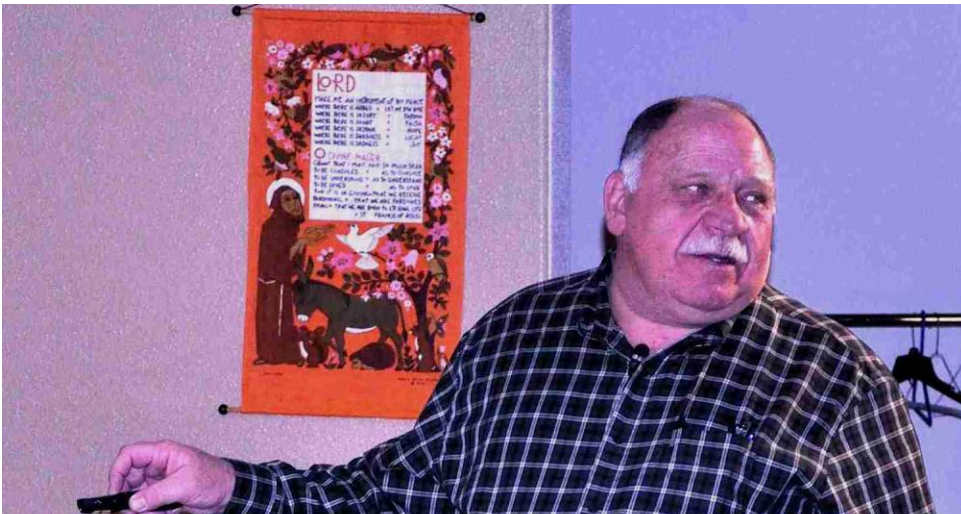
Upcoming events and activities are posted at www.parkcountyhistory.com!

Maddox Ice Company

For 90 years (1902-1992) the Maddox family battled warehouse fires, roof crushing 45 inch snow storms and even floods in order to provide ice to Denver. It all began in 1902 when William Clay Maddox traveled to Shawnee Co. in search of land to build lakes for his ice business. The land had to be where there was a supply of clean water, it had to get cold enough to freeze quickly and it also had to be served by the railroad for shipment to Denver. He found what he was looking for in Shawnee and purchased 320 acres for \$3500.

The Maddox Ice Company employed nearly 100 ice cutters, loaders, warehouse workers and delivery workers to supply Denver. Between 1902 and 1937 hundreds of thousands of tons of ice were cut into blocks measuring 24" wide, 24" thick and 60" long weighing approximately 840 pounds each from the Maddox lakes and shipped on the Colorado & Southern railroad from Shawnee down to Denver where the ice was stored in warehouses and insulated with sawdust. Each morning crews would wash the sawdust from the ice and load 21 horse-drawn Ice Wagons which would make ice deliveries throughout Denver.

Earl Clay Maddox III presented the history of his family's ice business to 68 attendees of the Park County Historical Society on Feb 16, 2013 at the Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran Church in Bailey.



Earl Clay Maddox III answering one of many questions from the crowd of 68 attendees. Photo by Arthur Hall/PCHS).

The Maddox Ice Company was established by Earl's great grandfather, William Clay Maddox in 1902. They cut winter ice from manmade lakes in Shawnee to be shipped to Denver. William's wife, Mrs. Hilda J. Maddox, served three meals a day to the ice crews throughout the winter season and the early ice wagons bore her initials, H.J. Maddox.

Before any ice could begin freezing the lakes had to be "floated" that is all leaves and floating debris had to be removed

from the water to ensure good clean and pure ice was produced. Some of the earliest photos at Shawnee show William Clay Maddox scoring the lake ice with his son, Earl Clay Maddox Sr. (who was our presenter's grandfather) using a horse-drawn saw which provided guide lines for the gas powered saws. Blocks were then cut 14 inches deep with a gasoline circular saw, called a 'Buddha' Saw. The final 10 inches had to be cut by a gasoline-powered reciprocating saw or by hand. Earl Clay Maddox III still has one of these six-foot hand ice saws used by his grandfather and great grandfather to cut ice. These cuts were across ponds that were more than several football fields in length and width. In a good year the ponds could be harvested two or three times beginning in December and ending in March or April. A warm winter would stop work halfway through the season.

By the time our presenter, Earl Clay Maddox III, came along in 1954 the Denver to Shawnee railroad had been gone for 17 years and the horse-drawn wagons had given way to gasoline trucks for ice deliveries. Without the railroad to ship ice from Shawnee ponds and upon returning from World War II, Earl Clay Maddox Jr. (our presenter's father) began managing the Beatrice Creamery's ice plant and purchasing ice from them and other competitors until their own ice plant was built in 1952. One of Earl Clay Maddox III's jobs as a young boy was to ride with the delivery truck throughout Denver. As new drivers started work, the charge of showing the drivers where to deliver as he knew where every customer was located. Earl Clay Maddox III did not seem to regret that he missed cutting ice by hand with his (family treasure) six-foot ice saw.



Earl Clay Maddox III has ice tools in their family collection. On the right of photo are horseshoes fitted with ice studs to work on the ice ponds. Photo by Laura Van Dusen/The Flume).

Article by Jim Glenn/Park County Historical Society volunteer with editing by Earl Clay Maddox IV

Article posted in The Flume, Park County Republican and Fairplay Flume

2013/2014 PCHS Board Members

**President/Curator/Events
(303) 838-6025**

**Dee Brown
wfbdjbuais@aol.com**

**Vice President/Membership
(303) 838-8241**

**Karen Christenson
karenchristenson@msn.com**

**Treasurer
(303) 838-4243**

**Bill Kulenburg
billandlyn@netzero.net**

**Secretary
(303) 816-0944**

**Jim Sapp
jimsapp7@msn.com**

**Director
(303) 838-8241**

**Craig Christenson
craigc473@gmail.com**

**Director
(303) 816-2210**

**Linda Wood
lwoodbailey@gmail.com**

**Director
(303) 838-4479**

**Roger Christenson
roger@spacecomics.com**

**Shawnee President/Director
(303) 880-8193**

**Barbara Jerome Behl
baronbehl@aol.com**

**Field Trips
(303) 838-7740**

**Pat Mauro
pkmauro@yahoo.com**

**Historian
(303)838-6190**

**Judy Jeute
judy@dblj.org**

Questions, concerns or interest in volunteering, please contact a board member.

Visit the PCHS website at www.parkcountyhistory.com

Park County Historical Society Membership Form

Student K-12 \$5 ☐ Senior Individual (60+) \$10 ☐ Individual \$15 ☐ Family \$30 ☐
Sponsor \$50 ☐ Sustaining \$75 ☐ Patron \$100 ☐ Corporate \$150 ☐ Life \$500 ☐

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

I would like to help with:

☐ Education & Research

☐ McGraw Memorial Park

_____ Host

_____ Maintain

_____ Help with collections

☐ Local History Archives

☐ Membership

☐ Historic Preservation

☐ Publicity & Public Relations

☐ Staff Support

Please join or renew your membership today!

Send check and completed form to: Park County Historical Society, P.O. Box 43, Bailey, CO 80421

Donations are fully tax-deductible – Park County Historical Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation

Your membership in the Society helps preserve the history of Park County

Park County Historical Society

P.O. Box 43

Bailey, Colorado 80421