

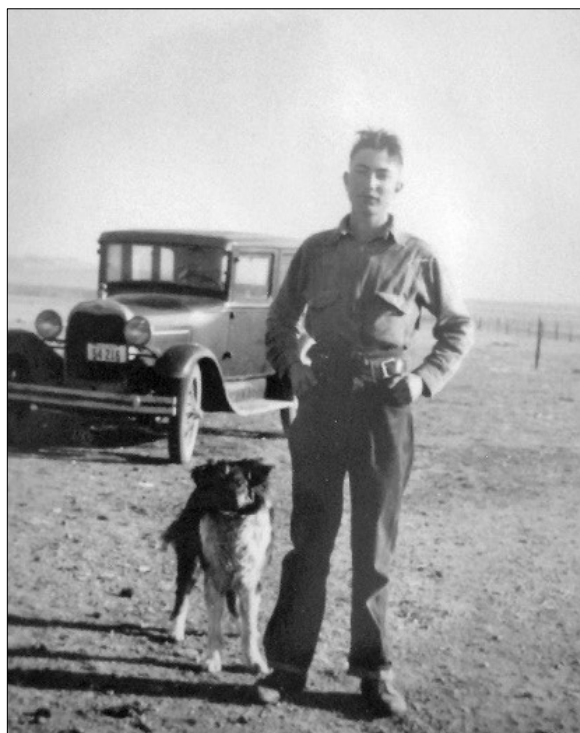
## Trump in Colorado

by Laura Van Dusen

*Originally published in the Park County Local History Archives Newsletter. Issue XIX, June 2018*

**THINK OF THE DEVASTATION FARMERS** suffered in the Dust Bowl era of the 1930s. It was also the time of the Great Depression, which started in 1929 and lasted ten years. The combination of the two made it a difficult time for the United States, but the events went virtually unnoticed in southern South Park.

In May 1932, Lew and Faye Makings loaded their trucks and, with two-year-old Bernice and ten-year-old Kenneth, set off from northwestern Kansas to a small settlement in South Park, called Trump. Long gone today, it was about 18 miles southwest of Hartsel.



Kenneth Makings and his dog Ring at Trump townsite, circa 1930s. Park County Local History Archives, Kenneth Makings collection.

Trump thrived in the 1930s and 1940s. It was a ranching community occupied by homesteaders primarily from Kansas, Texas, California and Nebraska. They were looking for a better life. Some found what they were looking for, others stayed a short time and moved on.

The name “Trump” is unusual. This town, and the current president’s surname, are the only references to the name in an internet search; and unless you knew of the Colorado town, it would be difficult to find. Area teacher in the 1930s, Vangelle Wilmot, named the town for a term that came up in neighborhood pinochle games, the “trump” suit. She’s the one who completed the post office application.

When the Makings family arrived, the thirty residents of Trump supported two stores, a post office, hotel, filling station, garage, school and bath house with water supplied by a hot spring, according to an undated manuscript written by Faye Makings and available at the Park County Local History Archives. The Trump school, with 25 students in the early 1930s, was one of four in the area. The others were Pleasant Valley to the north, Antelope Springs to the east and the Frees School south of Trump.

The Trump area of South Park was in a wide valley surrounded by mountains. The Makings were deeply impressed with the geography after living on the flat plains of Kansas. They quickly made friends with other homesteaders and worked hard raising cattle, growing potatoes both for personal use and to sell, and growing rye to feed their stock. Most of the other families also raised cattle and crops. Some of the men in town worked for the WPA (Works Progress Administration) by building

roads. A Makings family friend worked in Salida at a car dealership.

“There were times of hardship, times of sorrow, laughter, joy and fun,” said Faye Makings in the manuscript.

Residents of Trump and the surrounding area lived a long way from any city and learned how to make their own fun. According to Faye Makings, “We had card parties and dances at various times. If someone had a birthday, we’d get up a bunch and take cake and sandwiches and go in and have a party. As a rule, we’d play cards until midnight, then have lunch and then dance until daylight.”

The homesteaders also formed a monthly literary society, taking turns with meetings at each of the four schoolhouses. Those in charge of programs would put on skits or showcase neighborhood singers. Other times there would be debates. And no matter what the monthly program was, afterwards there would be a dance, a midnight lunch, and more dancing until morning. The school floors got so worn with dancing that the school board voted to put in solid oak floors. Sometimes, Makings wrote, a dancing evening would be spoiled when fights broke out.

“It was caused by someone bringing liquor to the dance, as some just couldn’t have a good time unless they brought some,” she said.

Some of the men and boys in town, including Lew and Kenneth Makings, spent time chasing the numerous wild horses that frequented South Park. They herded the horses into a corral, and that practice led to the community building a larger corral to hold rodeos. They used the wild horses in bronc riding events, and sometimes the Makings Family would donate their milk cows as bucking stock. They evidently gave a wild ride.

Faye joked that after a rodeo she didn’t know whether the cows would give milk or butter.



Rodeo at Trump, circa 1930s. Park County Local History Archives, Cooper Family collection.

Rodeos brought in the crowds to the small community of Trump. Spectators came from Buena Vista, Salida, Hartsel, Guffey and Fairplay to watch the events. Donations were collected for the contestants each time. Once in the 1930s a town celebration was held on the Fourth of July.

There were races for men, women and children, and the ladies in town sold concessions of candy, gum, cigarettes, ice cream and lemonade at the rodeo. Later in the evening a dance was held, lasting into the morning of July 5.

All told, it was a pretty good life. This quote from Faye Makings sums up the entertainment lifestyle of South Park at the time:

This all happened during the Depression years of the thirties, and I think we up there noticed it the least of anywhere, as we made our own entertainment and didn’t spend much money because we didn’t have it to spend.