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South Park City Opens May 15

By Laura Van Dusen, Contributor



South Park City Museum opens May 15 and stays open for the season until Oct. 15.

Visitors to South Park City can wander through 49 structures salvaged from the gold and silver mining craze of the 1860s-1890s. They can touch the furnishings, sit in the chairs or even lie in the beds once occupied by frontier Colorado miners and railroad tycoons.

Sites to visit include a frontier Masonic lodge, a drugstore full of pre-1900s remedies, settlers homes, and a narrow-gauge train engine and caboose. The old-time saloon is complete with a wall-sized oil painting of the lovely unclad "Rachel" that once graced the walls of the historic Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs (since replaced by the Antlers Hilton).

Most of the buildings were moved from abandoned ghost towns in the South Park area of Park County, but seven are still sitting on their original foundations. In silent testimony, they demonstrate the lifestyle of the early settlers who lived the history of the Old West.

Park County is fortunate to have this historical treasure in their own back yard, or at least that's the opinion of international travelers that find their way to Fairplay to tour the museum.

They leave guest-book comments – including "excellent," "awesome," "love it!" and "amazing" – relaying their enjoyment of time well spent.

Fans of the animated television show with the same name stop at the gate merely to photograph the "South Park" sign. But many, after looking onto the museum's main street, are hooked by the history and tour the museum, impressed by the real South Park.

In one recent month, guests from Australia, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Hawaii, Samoa, Germany, Italy, Spain, several mainland U.S. states, many Colorado cities and towns, and locals from Fairplay, Jefferson, Bailey and Pine signed the guest book.

If you've only seen South Park City by looking over the fence on Front Street, step inside this summer to find out what all the fuss is about.

Living History Days, Aug. 11 and 12, brings South Park City alive with costumed actors and museum employees populating the streets and buildings, living for two days as representatives from the past.

Visit South Park City the second weekend in August for planned food demonstrations and samples, historic skits, gunfights, gambling lessons, gold panning, church services at the Father Dyer chapel on Sunday, lessons in the historic school and more, all for the regular admission price.

Just like frontier towns of the past, construction is ongoing at South Park City.

During the summer of 2017, the historic South Park Dredge office was moved to the museum from the corner of U.S. Highway 285 and Colorado Highway 9 in Fairplay.

The diorama building, torn down two summers ago to correct a foundation problem, is being rebuilt using the same lumber, and returning guests will see other, more subtle changes as well. There's always something new to see in the old town.

South Park City is open every day from May 15 to Oct. 15 at 100 Fourth Street in Fairplay. Contact the museum at 719-836-2387 or visit online at www.facebook.com/southparkcitymuseum and www.southparkcity.org.