



OURAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Spring Newsletter 2008

Dear Members and Friends of OCHS,

Reflecting on the events of 2007 and early 2008, I continue to be amazed at the number of pursuits our society is involved with both as a primary agent or in a supporting role.

As always, we remain active in the identification, preservation and in many cases the restoration of a number of historic sites both within our town as well as the local mining district. Books, which have helped to chronicle the above pursuits, include Doris Gregory's "History of Ouray" Volume I, as well as George Moore's "Mines, Mountain Roads, and Rocks". I am pleased to announce that the updated and revised edition of George's book is now complete and that the much requested reprint of Doris's "out-of-print" Volume I has now been delivered just in time for the busy summer season.

Signage around town seems to have been another OCHS pursuit that really reached a peak this past year. There is a new "Fellin Park" and "Smokey Joe Field" interpretive sign on the SE corner of the Hot Springs Park. In addition, with cooperation from the USFS, a new Powder House sign is in the making, similar in construction to the interpretive signs along Main Street in Ouray.



Another interpretive sign that will soon grace the streets of Ouray will be the Chief Ouray Mountain House sign to be placed on the Wiesbaden site near the foundation of the Ute chief's lodge. For those of you who may have missed it, one of this past summer's celebrated Evenings of History presentations was given by Steven Baker, the archaeologist who did the field work and wrote the report (see picture) on the Chief Ouray Mountain House. This work was commissioned in part by the OCHS, the State Historic Fund and the Colorado Historical Society. The presentation and report were a fascinating glimpse into the life and times of this great Indian chief. Speaking of this great man, a number of conversations, letters to the editor, and discussions this past year concerned the surprising absence of any

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recognition of this man for whom the city of Ouray was named. It is with a great sense of satisfaction that we, the members of the OCHS, have helped to contribute to this great chief's legacy through the signage that will be erected near his mountain house as well as the placement of a bronze bust (still in the making) of Ouray on the Museum grounds.



Much is happening with the OCHS and we could not accomplish half of what we do without our member's continued support and help. Please continue with your generous patronage and tell your friends to come visit the "Best Little Museum in the West."

Respectfully,
Kevin J. Chismire
President OCHS, M.D.

GREGORY REPRINTS *HISTORY OF OURAY VOLUME 1* *A HERITAGE OF MINING & EVERLASTING BEAUTY*

The Ouray County Historical Society announces the reprinting of Dr. Doris Gregory's *History of Ouray Vol. 1, A Heritage of Mining & Everlasting Beauty*. It was originally published in 1995 and has been out of print for more than five years. The book covers the chronological history of Ouray from its founding in 1875 through 1990 including a chapter on each decade.

It also contains a chapter on Ouray's Landmark Buildings such as the Beaumont Hotel and the Elks Club as well as a chapter on Ouray's Early Pioneers such as Dr. Paul Rowan and the Carney brothers. The reader of this well-documented book will relive the exciting frontier mining years of the past and the years to come aided by 400 photographs and many illustrations and maps through which history comes alive. As depressions, wars, social and industrial changes impinge upon the nation, the story of their impact on Ouray is revealed. It traces the sequence of history as it unfolds and gives a broad and deep perspective on the changing life of Ouray.

Dr. Gregory, former resident of Ouray and now living in Montrose, has been researching the history of Ouray for over 40 years and has written eleven other books that focus on specific historical topics as well as the *History of Ouray, Vol. II, Historic Homes, Buildings, & People*. A wide selection of Dr. Gregory's books are available at the Ouray County Museum or via mail through the Museum's web site: www.ouraycountyhistoricalsociety.org.

by Don Paulson





IDARADO HOUSES

BY DON PAULSON

In the early 1950's the Idarado Mining Company modernized their mill on top of Red Mountain Pass. They moved seven houses from Eureka, east of Silverton, to Red Mountain Pass and used them for employee housing. Four of the 100-year old historic houses are still perched across from the Idarado Mine site. In the late fall of 2007, the Ouray County Historical Society, in cooperation with the US Forest Service who now owns the buildings, began a cosmetic restoration of the exterior of these houses. In Phase One of the project, 13 of the 17 windows in the first house were replaced with half-inch plywood painted to look like windows. In order not to further damage the buildings, no nails or screws were used in the installation. The plywood windows were attached with wire to two-by-fours placed across the inside of the windows as shown in the first photo. The remaining windows and doors will be replaced early this summer when the snow recedes from around the houses. We also plan to replace the windows in the second house this summer as well.

staff



news

New summer assistants are Sandi MacLeod, right and Britta vanDijk, left.

POSTAL EXHIBIT

APRIL 17 THRU JULY 19

A SPECIAL RECOGNITION RECEPTION WAS HELD ON THE EVENING OF MAY 13 TO HONOR PAST AND PRESENT OURAY COUNTY POSTAL EMPLOYEES. THE RECEPTION FEATURED GUESTS BILL BOWER AND JIM OZMENT AUTHORS OF COLORADO POST OFFICES, 1859-1989.



DON SHARMAN, FORMER POSTMASTER OF RIDGWAY AND HIS WIFE SUE ATTENDED THE RECEPTION



PATRONS ATTENDING THE OPENING RECEPTION OF THE EXHIBIT HAD A CHANCE TO SINK THEIR TEETH INTO THE RECEPTION, LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY, EDIBLE POSTAGE STAMP COOKIES WERE MADE BY JOAN CHISMIRE

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT OUR US MAIL SERVICE TODAY, ITS SIGNIFICANCE CANNOT COMPARE WITH THAT IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES IN THE COLORADO FRONTIER. TODAY WE HAVE NEARLY INSTANTANEOUS INTERNET COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND BUSINESSES. LONG DISTANCE PHONE SERVICE OR FAX TO ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD IS AFFORDABLE, BUT THINK BACK TO THE LIVES OF SOME OF THE EARLY PIONEERS AND MINERS AND TO THEIR YOUNG WIVES WHO MIGHT HAVE LEFT THEIR FAMILIES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES OR EUROPE. THEY CAME TO THIS RUGGED AND HARSH TERRITORY OF COLORADO IN THE HOPES OF MAKING A LIFE AND FORTUNE. WE CANNOT IMAGINE WHAT A LETTER FROM FAMILY OR FRIENDS MIGHT HAVE MEANT TO THEM. LETTERS WERE SUCH AN IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION.

THE 38 POST OFFICES IN OURAY COUNTY INCLUDED THE MINING TOWN OF VIRGINIUS, THE HIGHEST POST OFFICE IN THE US. MAIL CAME TO OURAY COUNTY POST OFFICES VIA A CARRIER ON SNOWSHOES OR SKIS, OR PACKETS ON PACK MULE, STAGE COACH, OR RAILROAD TRAIN. A LETTER WITH NEWS FROM "HOME." POST CARDS CAME INTO VOGUE AFTER THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION IN 1892 AND BROUGHT PHOTOGRAPHS TO FRIENDS OPENING THEIR EYES TO THE NEW SIGHTS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE WEST.

SUE HILLHOUSE

INCLUDED IN THIS COMPREHENSIVE DISPLAY ARE ARTIFACTS AND INFORMATION REGARDING THE HISTORY OF THE POSTAL SYSTEM IN OURAY COUNTY INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVE COVERS FROM MANY NO LONGER EXISTENT POST OFFICES IN THE COUNTY. THIS SPECIAL EXHIBIT WAS RESEARCHED AND PRESENTED BY TOM HILLHOUSE OCHS VICE-PRESIDENT.

"PARLOR MEMORIES"



This year's raffle quilt will be a recreation of a vintage quilt hanging in our own museum. The quilted wall hanging, entitled "Parlor Memories -- 1894," is patterned after one made by Emma Lou Wilder's mother in 1884. It is a log cabin pattern but is made in the Victorian style of a crazy quilt with pieces of satins, silks, velvets, and other elegant fabric. It is embellished with intricate stitches in silk ribbon, pearl cotton, embroidery, and velveteen. Nine OCHS members have been working on the piece: Susie Opdahl, Carol Harper, Mary Stapleton, Marianne Zegers, Joan Chismire, Joan Moyer, Sue Hillhouse, Nancy Rule, and Martha Metzger. The quilt's estimated finish date is June 1st. Tickets may be purchased at the Museum.

RAFFLE NEWS

2008 RAFFLE TICKETS

2 FOR \$5 5 FOR \$10

DRAWING HELD OCTOBER 4

AT OURAY COMMUNITY CENTER AT 8:00 PM

WINNER NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN



"MOUNTAIN TOP MEMORIES" LINE ART DRAWING BY ARTIST JOHN HAYES

OCHS will be also raffling a line art drawing (valued at \$1750.00) by former Ouray artist John Hayes. This beautiful drawing is titled "Mountain Top Experience" and depicts the Mountain Top Mine Boarding House above Ouray in Governor Basin. The Society first raffled this art piece in 2005. We are very lucky to have it back for a second time. The original 2005 winners, valued OCHS members Pam Ferman and Nick Sustana, have generously donated it for the 2008 raffle.

"VIGNETTES 2008"

**"An Evening with Tom Walsh,
Evalyn, and Friends"**

John Stewart, author of the newly published book *Thomas F. Walsh*, will portray this Ouray mining tycoon in a production at the historic Wright Opera House on the evening of August 29th. He'll be joined by his charming socialite daughter, Evalyn, played by Sue Hillhouse and a cast of locals. Experience life at the Camp Bird Mine as tales of excitement are recreated.

This fund raising event begins with appetizers at historic Ouray homes then moves to the Opera House for a vintage-themed dinner before the performance.

Tickets will be available
June 15th.

Mark your calendar and join
the OCHS for this
entertaining event.

**"Evenings of History"
2008**

For twenty-five years, OCHS has presented its summer lecture series. This popular line up of historic talks has a new producer as Don Paulson takes over the reigns from Bob and Sue McCulloch. This year's programs are as follows:

June 17-"Ouray Hiking Trails" by Kelvin Kent.

June 24- "David Day" by Jim Pettengill.

July 1 - "Mines of Ouray County" by Don Paulson.

July 8-"The Red Mountain Project" by Bob Risch.

July 15 - "Wildflowers of Ouray County" by Bob McCulloch.

July 22 - "Marie Scott, Ranching Matriarch of the San Juans" by Ginny Harrington.

July 29 - "Ouray's Wright Brothers" by Kevin Chismire.

All programs begin at 7:30 PM at the Massard Room of the Ouray Community Center except for the July 29th lecture which will take place at the Wright Opera House. Donations are appreciated

**"GUIDED HISTORIC
WALKING TOURS"**

May 24 - "Historic Main Street" with Sandra Swenson. \$10 Meet at the museum at 3:00 PM.

May 31 - "Cemetery Walking Tour" with Roger Henn. \$10. Meet at Cedar Hill Cemetery at 9:00 AM.

June 14 - "Historic Main Street" with Don Paulson. \$10. Meet at the museum at 3:00 PM.

June 21 - "Cemetery Walking Tour" with Roger Henn. \$10 Meet at Cedar Hill Cemetery at 9:00 AM.

June 28 - "Corkscrew RR Bed Hike" with Don Paulson. \$10. Hikers meet at the museum at 9:00 am. Call 325-0931 before 8:00 AM in case of inclement weather.

July 5-"Main Street Stroll Featuring Costumed Docents" with Sue Hillhouse. \$10. Meet at the museum at 6:00PM.

July 19 -"Cemetery Walking Tour" with Roger Henn. \$10. Meet at Cedar Hill Cemetery at 9:00 AM.

August 2- "Corkscrew RR Bed Hike" with Don Paulson. \$10. Hikers meet at the museum at 9:00 am. Call 325-0931 before 8:00 AM in case of inclement weather.

August 9th - "Cemetery Walking Tour" with Roger Henn. \$10. Meet at Cedar Hill Cemetery at 9:00 AM.

August 16 - "Family Evening Main Street Stroll" with Enda Junkins. \$15 per family. Meet at the Museum at 4:00PM.

Call 325-4576 for reservations and more information.

IN MEMORY OF VIRGINIA HILANDER

Ouray "Old Timer" and OCHS volunteer

by Sally K. Hilander

As Virginia Mulvey was growing up in Chicago in the 1920's, little did she know that one day she would find herself selling ice cream in a tiny Colorado town on the Fourth of July to help fund a museum.

The events that led to this big city girl's unlikely migration from Chicago to Ouray began early in her life.

Virginia Louise was born April 9, 1915, to Thomas and Aloyse Mulvey. Virginia soon met Arthur C. "Bob" Hilander, destined to be her husband. Bob and Virginia were childhood friends because their parents met in an apartment building for newlyweds. They remained forever close.

After college in the Chicago suburb of Elmhurst, Bob struck off for Fairbanks with a friend who shared his passion for geology and adventure. Bob emerged two years later with a mining engineering degree from the University of Alaska. He set his sights on the West. Meanwhile, Virginia continued Saturday trips to art museums and concerts with her daddy. She attended the American Conservatory of Music and became an accomplished pianist.

Absence really does make the heart grow fonder. When Bob returned from Alaska, his friendship with Virginia bloomed into a romance and marriage plans.

"How long have you known each other?" the priest asked.

"About 25 years," was their reply.

"When do you want to get married?" the priest continued.

"Next week."

They were married December 26, 1942.

Bob enlisted with the U.S. Ninth Air Force and left for England. When world War II ended, he returned home in time to receive job offers in Nome, Alaska and Telluride. Colorado won. Bob migrated first, in 1946, to start work at Telluride Mines. He found housing for Virginia and two year old Ann Louise (Nancy).

City girl Virginia found herself in Telluride. A waning population, broken sidewalks, snow, the Galloping Goose, and towering mountains greeted her. She cried daily until the San Juans earned a place in her heart. Virginia played piano and Bob took acting roles with the Rocky Mountain Players. These talented locals scrubbed down the Telluride Opera House and performed light operas and minstrel shows. Virginia was the organist at St. Patrick's Catholic Church for many years.

Daughter Eileen arrived in 1948 and Sally in 1949. Telluride Mines became Idarado Mining Company and Bob's promotion to general manager in 1962 required a move to Ouray. Virginia had a yen for history, and she became involved with the Ouray County Historical Society.

Bob died in April of 1971 at the age of 54. OCHS opened its Museum in the old hospital building the same year. As a memorial to Bob, Virginia donated money to buy display cases.

Virginia used \$27,000 of Bob's life insurance money to purchase the Ed Hellstern house at 420 Sixth Street, built for \$4000 in 1905 by Gustave E. Kullerstand. (See *History of Ouray Volume II* by Doris H. Gregory). She went to work as a receptionist at Citizen's State Bank in 1973 and remained an active member of the Historical Society. Virginia continued playing the organ at St. Daniel's. She scheduled lessons and recitals for her piano students until macular degeneration forced her to retire.

When Virginia fell down the winding stairs in her Victorian home in 2003, she realized it was time for assisted living. She left her piano behind and moved to the Homestead in Montrose. Her apartment was a microcosm of her Ouray home with family pictures and artwork. She welcomed old friends and new until her death on March 23, 2008.

THANK YOU TO THE
HILANDER FAMILY FOR
THE MEMORIAL FUND
ESTABLISHED IN HONOR OF
VIRGINIA

SUMMER HOURS
MONDAY - SATURDAY 10-4
SUNDAY 12 - 4



Kaleb Sackman, left

Blake Zimmerman, right

Mapping the Museum Building: Ouray High School Architecture Project

It all started when ninth grade students Kaleb Sackman and Blake Zimmerman came to the Ouray County Museum for a field trip. As members of Mark Miller's architecture class at Ouray High School, they listened to an history lesson on the varied building styles of Ouray County given by Walt Rule, OCHS Board member. Blake and Kaleb became interested in the Museum building. Built in 1887 as a hospital, it served the community until 1964 when it closed. Tom Hillhouse, former OCHS Board president, is currently working on an application to list the Museum on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places. A floor plan of the museum is needed for the application, and Blake and Kaleb are preparing the blueprints.

Blake and Kaleb have been measuring each wall, floor, and door of the building. They are working at the Museum during class time and on weekends. Kaleb estimates that their project will take about a month to finish. After their detailed preliminary drawings are completed, they will enter their numbers on a computer architectural program, and a blueprint will be made.

Kaleb and Blake are both interested in architecture as a career.

PHOTO EXHIBIT OPENS: SAN JUAN MEMORIES

THIS EXHIBIT RUNS FROM MAY 26TH THROUGH JULY 19TH. RIBBON WINNERS FROM THE PAST MAY NOT SUBMIT THE SAME IMAGE THIS YEAR. WELL-KNOWN LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHER, DOUG RICHARDS, WILL JURY THE SHOW. JURIED FIRST PLACE PRIZE IS \$75. JURIED SECOND PLACE PRIZE IS \$50, AND JURIED THIRD PLACE PRIZE IS \$25. THE CHOICE AWARD IS \$25. THERE IS A \$5 PER PHOTO ENTRY FEE.

MARIE SCOTT'S WAGON DONATED TO MUSEUM

An 1896 Studebaker two-horse wagon used by the legendary Marie Scott of Ridgway recently joined the Museum's collection. Michael J. Bowen donated the wagon to the OCHS. The wagon sat in a loafing shed on the Marie Scott ranch for a number of years. In 1981, the Bowen's bought the wagon from Mr. Mario Zadra of Norwood, one of Marie Scott's heirs. The Bowen's moved the wagon to Lyons, Colorado in 1982 where it was restored by the Lyons Coach Works. The Bowen's moved the wagon back to their ranch in Ridgway. Then, it was moved to Boulder in 1985.

Marie Scott ranched in Ridgway. An authentic cowgirl, she rode the range, branded cows, pitched hay, calved, and fed her livestock. A shrewd business woman, she acquired over 110,000 acres of land.

The wagon has been moved from its storage place in Longmont and awaits in a covered shed until a permanent enclosed exhibit area behind the cabins on the Museum's grounds can be built.

This important buckboard will become a valuable part of the Museum's exhibits. The OCHS gives their thanks to the Bowen's for their donation.



Got Mesker?

By Sue Hillhouse



Ouray has Meskers in spades! All one has to do is walk down Ouray's Main Street and look up at the facades of the old commercial buildings, and one will see one of the greatest concentrations of Mesker commercial fronts in the United States!

While not the first to manufacture sheet-metal fronts or utilize mail order sales, the Mesker companies did both on an unprecedented scale. Through their products, they infused architectural ornaments into towns while it was scarce or did not previously exist. In many cases, a building with a Mesker front was and remains among the most ornamental and identifiable structures in a community. In fact the Mesker Companies sold fronts in every state, Hawaii, Mexico, Canada and Bermuda. In some 23 years more than 5,200 fronts were sold and shipped. Ouray recently lost part of one of its ornamental Mesker fronts when the cornice of the Witherspoon Building (Moose's Chocolates and Back Street Bagels) (photo) fell to the ground and was sold for scrap.

OCHS is pleased to announce a special Mesker exhibit on loan from the Evansville Indiana Museum to open in August and a talk by a well known Mesker expert, Darius Bryjka of the Illinois Historical Society scheduled for 7:30 August 28th at the Mesker fronted Wright Opera House. Learn about some of the gems that make Ouray "Gem of the Mountains."

(For more information regarding Mesker fronts, check out Darius' website www.gotmesker.com)

Sue Hillhouse

2008 QUILT SHOW

The Annual Ouray County Historical Society Quilt Show will again be held at the Museum beginning on July 23 and hanging until August 25th. In the past as many as 35 historic and contemporary quilts have been loaned to us to display along with those in the Museum's permanent collection. Additionally, all of the Museum's quilts have now been documented by the Colorado Quilt Council and that information is stored in their statewide database.

On the last day of the show, August 24th, we will hold the second annual Quilter's Tea at the Museum. This was a great success last year as we honored the art of quilting and the quilter in poetry and story. Admission for this event will be \$5.00.

If you have a quilt - a family heirloom or one you've made - we'd be delighted to have it in our show. Please call the Museum and request an entry form. As before, there will be a Viewer's Choice Award of a ribbon and \$50 for the quilt receiving the most votes from our audience. The award will be presented at the Tea.

Ouray County Historical Society **ANNUAL MEETING**

2:00 - 4:00 PM

June 8, 2008

Held at the Museum

All members of the Historical Society are invited to attend.

MEMBERSHIP FOR 2008

There has never been a more exciting time to join or renew your membership.

Membership levels are as follows:

Silver King Level - \$25 Individual Only

Guston Level - \$40 Family

Revenue Level - \$50-\$99

Grizzly Bear Level - \$100-\$249

National Belle Level - \$250 - \$499

Yankee Girl Level - \$4500 - \$999

Camp Bird Level - \$1000 and up

Business Member - \$50 and up

Please send your check, along with updated address, phone, and email information to OCHS, PO Box 151, Ouray, CO 81427. Also, encourage your friends and neighbors to join.

Thank you so much!

Ouray County Historical Society

P O Box 151

Ouray, CO 81427

970-325-4576

Want to receive your
newsletter by email?

Let us know at

<OCHS@ouraynet.com>