

# SPECIAL HISTORY EDITION

# HISTORIAN

## NEWSLETTER

The Ouray County Historical Society (OCHS) thanks the Ouray County Plaindealer for their assistance in printing and distributing our newsletter.

Winter 2016

PULLOUT  
SECTION

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The Ouray County Historical Society (OCHS) is dedicated to preserve, protect, procure, exhibit, and interpret whatever relates to the natural, social, and cultural history of Ouray County and the adjacent San Juan Mountain Region of Colorado.

## The Ouray County Power Companies

By Don Paulson, Curator  
Ouray County Historical Society

### The Ouray Electric Power & Light Company

D.C. Hartwell, Thomas Gibson and William Weston founded the Ouray Electric Light and Power Company in 1885. Hartwell owned many Ouray businesses and was also one of the founders of Ridgway. Colonel Charles Nix provided the financing. The first plant was located at the south end of Oak Street with a direct current (DC) generator. However, electricity was held in such high contempt by the populace



► D.C. Hartwell co-founded the Ouray Electric Light and Power Company in 1885.

that the company had a difficult time getting customers until manager James Gillespie hit upon an ingenious idea. He provided free electricity for a week to the largest saloon in Ouray. In a short time many other businesses signed up and soon the company's full capacity was being used. The plant was expanded and moved to its present location in 1890. The Ouray Silverite-Plaindealer started a campaign for street lighting which was finally installed on Main Street in 1893. In the Silver Panic and recession of 1893 Hartwell went bankrupt. He was heavily indebted to Charles Nix who foreclosed on most of Hartwell's holdings and took over operation of the power plant.

### The Ouray Electric Power & Light Company

By the late 1890s the Ouray plant's DC generators had become obsolete and a new alternating current (AC) plant was needed. The Ouray Electric Power & Light Company was organized by Colonel Nix, Frank A. Sparks and John Doss on March 11, 1899, with a capitalization of \$200,000, and was granted a charter by the State of

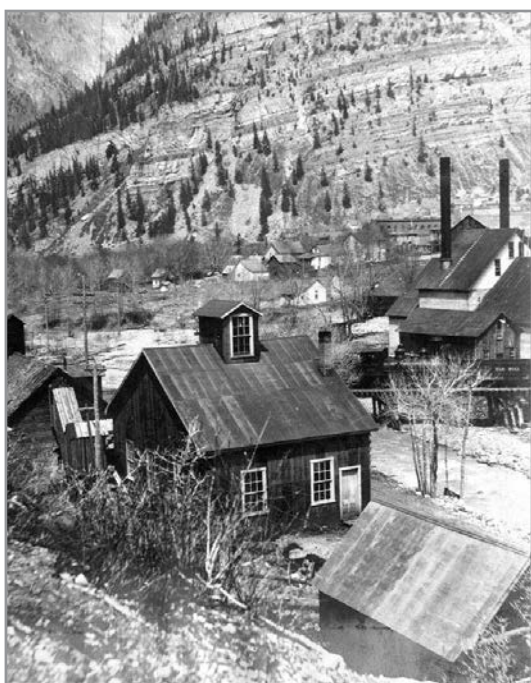
Colorado. Within a short time work was started on a new alternating current power plant, and after several construction problems it was completed in late 1903.

In 1907 after several construction problems, E. A. Phinney purchased stock in the Company and succeeded John Doss as Manager. The plant continued to operate with hydroelectric power until closing in 1974. It was reopened in the early 1980s but only for a couple of years. In 1988 Eric Jacobson of Placerville, Colorado bought it at auction for \$10! He reactivated the plant in the early 1990s and it is still producing electric power as of today. The larger Pelton wheel at the Ouray plant came from L. L. Nunn's powerhouse in Provo, Utah. The smaller wheel dates from 1898 with the housing coming from the Highland Mary Mine above Silverton and the turbine and generator from the Sunnyside Mine above Eureka.

### Ridgway Electric Company

Early in 1910, the town of Ridgway was still without electric service. E. A. Phinney and Carl T. Sigfrid, owners of the controlling interest in the Ouray Electric Power & Light Company, saw in Ridgway a market for some of the excess power of the Ouray plant.

In July 1910, the franchise to supply



► Ouray Power Company Exterior

OCHS Archive Collection

The old Miner's Hospital building which now houses our Museum, like many other historic structures in Ouray, is beginning to show its age. This summer the museum completed a \$15,000 grant from the State Historic Fund that focused on assessing the condition of the Museum building. The assessment was completed by David Singer of Silverton Restoration Consulting. The building needs major repairs. We have just



► The old Miner's Hospital building, home of the Ouray County Museum located at 420 6th Ave., in Ouray, will need stabilization work soon.

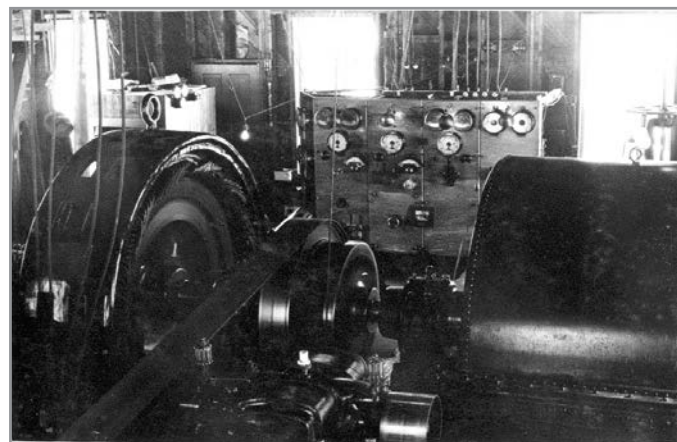
submitted a \$200,000 grant to the State Historic Fund for Phase I of the Museum building restoration. If that grant is successful, we will need to raise \$65,000 in matching funds. Our hope is that the grant will be approved and that we can meet the required match. If so, we look forward to a major project in the stabilization and restoration of our beloved structure.

~ Thank you, Kevin

Ridgway with electric power, which had been granted to A. V. Walther years before but never used, was extended and transferred to Phinney and his associates. A proposal was made to the citizens of Ridgway that if they would subscribe to \$4,000 worth of bonds, a new company would be formed and electricity would be brought to them. The plan was accepted and Phinney, Sigfrid and L. C. Stadler organized the Ridgway Electric Company. A charter was granted by the State of Colorado on September 13, 1910, which set the capitalization of the new Company at \$20,000.

By the middle of December 1910 a substation was constructed in Ridgway, and a 10,000-volt iron wire transmission line was built to Ouray. Before the transmission line was completed, fully three-fourths of the Ridgway citizens had signed up for electric lights in their homes. On December 16, 1910 the lights were turned on in Ridgway for the first time.

The new Company spent over \$10,000 on the distribution system. However, it was a wise investment as



► Ouray Power Company interior

OCHS Archive Collection

business increased approximately 70 per cent during the first year. The Company provided excellent service and, as a result, its business continued to expand. On January 17, 1913 service was extended to the Company's first farm customer, the Orvis place, two miles north of Ridgway.

In 1911 Phinney and Carl J. Sigfrid conceived the idea of consolidating the properties in the Uncompahgre Valley into one corporation. These two men already owned the Ouray and the Ridgway companies, and on December 31, 1912 they acquired all of the stock and bonds of the Montrose Electric Light & Power Company and the Delta Electric Light Company, giving them absolute ownership of the four companies. In April of 1914 they sold all of these holdings to the Western Colorado Power Company thereby placing most of the power plants on the western slope under one management. Phinney left Ouray in 1914 and organized the Jefferson County Power & Light Company in Golden, Colorado.

The information in this article came from the Doris Gregory files of the Ouray County Historical Society.



# President's Message

This past year has been notable in many ways as the OCHS continued with its tradition of sponsoring quality events and learning opportunities for our members and the public at large. Once again our Evening of History lecture series organized by Don Paulson, was met with rave reviews by all who attended. In the early season the museum had special exhibits entitled "The History of the Ouray Hot Springs Pool" and "The Dressing Room Mirror". Both exhibits were quite timely as the City of Ouray has just recently begun an extensive remodeling of our popular hot springs park. The domestic collec-

tion of the OCHS is quite extensive and after a thorough inventory and cleaning of our collection last winter, we were able to assemble a variety of many garments worn by Ouray ladies in the past. This new assemblage was on display in the new Dressing Room Mirror exhibit. As in the past, Don Paulson along with the Ridgway Railroad Museum conducted a



President's Message  
By Kevin Chismire

hike and tour of the Corkscrew Railroad Bed and Turntable. This event continues to draw a enthusiastic crowd every year. With regard to tours, our hats are off to the hard work put in by Robert Stoufer and Larry Meckel in preparing and conducting this year's Geology Tour of Ouray County. We have a lot of "rock hounds" in the region, and they all seem to show up for

these types of events. Our tours were not limited to the mountains however, as walking tours of the local cemetery and historic Main Street were also conducted by our staff and volunteers. Fundraisers this past year included a very popular tour of local vintage and remodeled Victorian Homes in Ouray and another Photography Workshop held by the famous Colorado photographer, John Fielder. This was the first year of our Victorian Home tour and was lauded by those who attended. We have had many requests to continue this type of event in the future and we will try our best to accommodate the requesters. None of these events could have been accomplished without the support of our loyal members, such as yourself. On behalf of the entire board of directors, I wish to thank you for your continued patronage and invite you again to come and visit our ever changing museum where there is always something new to see. And while you are visiting, be sure to check out the great variety of books and novelties in our museum store. This end of the season letter carries my best wishes for a happy holiday season and a prosperous upcoming New Year to all our benefactors.

Cordially,  
  
Kevin J. Chismire  
President  
Ouray County Historical Society



► A winter cross country historical hike led by Don Paulson will be held on February 18. Meet at visitor's center at 9:00 am. Tour of Yankee Girl mine area. Sponsored by OCHS and Uncompahgre Watershed Project. \$25.00 donation/Adult \$15.00 for children 14 and under.  
  
*Photo by Don Paulson*

# Curator's Report

## Banner year for donations

It's been another banner year in 2016 for donations to the museum with well over 2,000 individual items donated. These include documents, photos artifacts, etc. I want to focus on a group of donations that included some very historic pieces of furniture. The first donation comes from the Kullerstrand family. Gustave and Mary Kullerstrand settled in Ridgway in 1891 and moved to Ouray in 1900. Gustave built numerous houses in Ouray that still stand today and he was also the builder of the Ouray Elks Club. Their son Ralph was associated with Citizens State Bank from 1915 until his retirement in 1964 and had controlling interest in the bank beginning in 1937. Ralph's niece, Mary Pimm Baer, owned a large collection of documents, artifacts, photos and furniture from the Kullerstrand family. Due to the efforts of Mary's niece and Norman (Mary's husband) Baer's



By Don Paulson  
OCHS Curator

nephew the entire Kullerstrand collection was donated to the Ouray Museum including shipment of the items to Ouray. A beautiful Victorian sofa and chair that belonged to Gustave and Mary Kullerstrand now reside in the Walsh Zanett room. Ralph Kullerstrand was a very accomplished wood worker. In the General Store we now have two beautiful inlaid display cabinets that were made by Ralph.

Another furniture donation comes from Steve Dalpez whose grandparents came from Italy in the late 1890s. The family lived in various towns including Ouray but eventually settled in Norwood. In 1963 Steve's parents bought a house in Norwood which included an ornate dresser and mirror sold by The William G. Luckett Furniture Company. Luckett had stores in Lake City and in Ouray between the late 1880s and the early 1890s. The dresser has a sticker on the back indicating it was purchased from the Ouray store. Steve donated the dresser to the museum this past summer and paid to have it shipped all the way from Washington State. The dresser is also displayed in the General Store area of the Museum. Other notable donations include WWII items (44) that belonged to Donald Dougherty who was mayor of Ouray from 1976-1978; Virginius/Revenue Mine documents (369) recently found in the attic of a house that belonged to Hubbard Reed; well over one hundred additional documents from the Virginius/Revenue Mine that were recovered after a snow slide demolished an office/storage building in the late 1950s; and late 19th and early 20th century minutes and financial documents from two no longer existing Ouray fraternal organizations.



► Steve Dalpez and family, with Irene Mattivi, view donated furniture.

*If you have any photos, documents, or other historical items relating to Ouray County please consider donating them to OCHS or allowing us to scan the photos and documents. We will return the originals to you along with a copy of the scans.*

**Please consider being a member of the OCHS!**  
**Help preserve the history of Ouray County**

Your membership is vital so that the Society can maintain not only our historic Museum building but our new Research Center and Archive. All membership levels include Free admission to the Museum, a 10% discount on items for sale in the gift shop and Museum bookstore, free admission to the OCHS Evenings of History series, and receive newsletters and special announcements.

Please fill in below: (Please Print)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (If Business Member) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Amount Paid \_\_\_\_\_ by (check one) Cash \_\_\_\_\_ Check \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: OCHS P.O. Box 151 Ouray, CO 81427 Or Phone with Credit Card info to: 970-325-4576		<b>Membership Levels</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Silver King	\$30 (Individual)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Guston	\$40 (Family)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Revenue	\$50 - \$99	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grizzly Bear	\$100 - \$249	
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# A BIG THANK YOU to our 2016 Sponsors and Major Donors

To our many Volunteers, Members, Benefactors and Friends: May your giving be given back to you in unexpected and immeasurable ways!

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▶ And our anonymous donors!

## Meet the OCHS Research Team

Last year, the historical society received more than 50 research requests. To find answers to these inquiries, researchers combed the OCHS archives, studied local historical newspapers, and searched county courthouse records. Or, they might find an answer by conducting an oral interview with an “old timer.” In addition, questions from Museum visitors are answered daily. The research team members have written articles for local and regional publications, have given lectures as well as led guided tours and hikes. A love of local history and the challenge of finding a piece to a history puzzle is the common theme for these OCHS researchers.



▶ From left: Tom Hillhouse, Gail Saunders, Don Paulson, Irene Mattivi and Glenda Moore

OCHS Board member Don Paulson has served as the Museum’s curator since 2006. For 36 years, he was a chemistry professor at California State University, Los Angeles. His interest in the mining and railroad history of Ouray County started in the 1970’s when he and his wife Beth spent many years vacationing in the San Juan Mountains before retiring in Ouray permanently. Since the late 1990’s he has been an OCHS volunteer. “I enjoy field research as well as library and internet research. I have walked every mile of the abandoned railroad grades in Ouray, San Juan, and San Miguel Counties. I have also visited hundreds of mines in the surrounding areas. I particularly enjoy studying bills, receipts, ledgers, and documents pertaining to local mines and railroads.” Paulson is the author of the recently published *Mines, Miners, and Much More* and has co-authored three books including *Peaks of the Uncompahgre and Railroad in the San Juan Triangle*. He has led dozens of guided hikes in the Red Mountains as well as given numerous lectures.

Tom Hillhouse is the Vice-President and Treasurer of the OCHS Board of Directors. He obtained his BA Degree from Bowling Green University and his JD from Ohio State University. Subsequently, he joined the Procter and Gamble Company of Cincinnati Ohio and retired as an Associate General Counsel. Hillhouse grew up in Bellevue Ohio. He and his wife Sue currently live between Ouray and Ridgway having chosen the area for retirement partly because they were drawn to the county’s history. His interests include history of the county’s mines, railroading, and the postal service. Ouray has a fine collection of Mesker Brothers sheet metal storefronts

including the impressive façade of the Wright Opera House. Hillhouse’s research on these façades led him to Darius Bryjka, the leading Mesker scholar who subsequently visited Ouray to give a lecture for the historical society. Tom’s research for his Evening of History program on Judge Story, a Ouray pioneer, led Tom to the Stephen H. Hart Library at the History Colorado Center.

In addition to being a Board member, Gail Zanett Saunders also serves as the Museum’s photo archivist. Saunders is a long time student and researcher of Colorado history and has been associated with OCHS for over 20 years. She received a BA in history from Colorado State University in undergraduate and graduate course work and has taught Colorado History. She has written several articles for local publications and has presented many programs to area organizations; Saunders co-authored the Arcadia book *Images of Ouray* with Maria Jones. “Photographs really tell the story and history of our community. I have especially enjoyed assembling the photographs of local mines. Without these photographs, the visual images of Ouray’s mining era would be lost”.

Glenda Moore is an OCHS Board member and the paper archivist for the society. Moore graduated from Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi, with a Bachelor of Arts in English. At the University of Mississippi she received a Master of Arts in English, specializing in Victorian literature. After teaching high school English for several years, she completed a Master of Library science degree. Moore’s career has involved work as a technical writer in the aerospace industry, teacher, librarian, and computer tech.

Weekdays, when the Museum is open, OCHS’s newest staff member, Irene Mattivi, can be found at the front desk answering visitor’s questions. A Ouray native, Mattivi is a walking encyclopedia of information on Ouray County’s people, places, and events. Mattivi graduated from the University of Northern Colorado and taught first grade in Ridgway for 33 years. She assists Glenda Moore in the archives, and she gives historic walking tours of Ouray’s Main Street. Her current project is gathering information on the men and woman who were born in the old hospital building now the Ouray County Museum.

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 **OCHS Popular Evening of History** series seeks sponsors for 2017. \$50.00 sponsorship will provide you advertisement throughout the summer season! Please call the OCHS if interested: 970-325-4576. *Thank You!*

## Paper archives kept Moore busy

It was the usual busy season in the paper archives, receiving historical family, business, and local records as well as maps. The responsibility of the archivist is to accession and store these items in specific record groups so that researchers can retrieve needed information. Each item has a certain number assigned to it as it is received, accessioned, and stored.

This summer the archives received a great treasure: a 1907 copy of *The Ridgway Reporter*. The Reporter was published only a short time, and no copies have been available, unless in the Colorado State Library. We already house many issues of the *Ridgway Sun*. In addition, we have numerous copies of the *Ouray County Herald*, the *Plaindealer*, and bound copies of papers from the late 1890s. Early this summer a family genealogist was able to

determine when her grandfather was purchaser and publisher of the local paper by using the newspaper collection.

On the investigation side of archival responsibility, a few of the requests made involved finding the obituary of a grandmother; determining that a family was in Ouray so short a time that they left no records except the name of a boarding house business, searching tax records to determine the age of a cabin, finding the location of a mining claim, and verifying that a young woman did not teach school in Ouray County in the early 1900s, but in Wray County. It is always pleasurable to assist family genealogists in their exploration of ancestral history.



▶ Glenda Moore busy at work.

Glenda Moore,  
Senior Research Archivist



# Elks Santa Delivers

## An Eighty-nine Year Tradition

By Jim Pettengill

Imagine the look on a child's face if Santa were to knock on the door and personally deliver a bag of candy and a present on Christmas Eve! Hundreds of children in Ouray County have had that experience every year since 1928, courtesy of the Ouray Elks Santa Delivers program.

Local legend says that the program began when Elks members were on their way to the lodge on Christmas Eve and saw



a wagon parked alongside the snowy road.

Attached to the wagon was a note from a little girl informing Santa that because her family was poor and traveling, she hoped that he could still find them. When the Elks reached the lodge, they told their story, the members located a Santa suit, assembled bags of fruit, candy and nuts and delivered them to the family.

Each year since then the Ouray Elks

have assembled bags of candy and members dressed as Santa deliver them on Christmas Eve to all families in the county who contact the lodge in advance. More than 300 children receive visits each holiday season. This is one of the lodge's best-known and most-loved programs, and many elderly citizens recall receiving visits from Elks Santas when they were children.



► Christmas gift from the Elks, 1977.

Four generations of the Spencer/McCullough family celebrated Christmas with an Elks Club Santa Claus. Barbara Spencer's children, Mac Spencer, Mark Spencer, Jamie De Freval, Sue Woodley, and Mary Cockle, remember taking photos of their grandmother, Minnie McCullough who posed on Santa's lap. They remembered Santa's red nose and that he smelled like booze. The anticipation of Santa's visit was the best part and even though he came in a jeep, he announced his arrival with sleigh

bells. Gifts of popcorn balls, peanuts and walnuts in the shell, raspberry hard candy, ribbon candy, chocolate drops with cream filling, and oranges filled Santa's gift stockings. When Jamie's husband, Daniel De Freval, first came to Ridgway, he stayed in at Weber's Campground. His 80 year old mother from France was visiting. On Christmas Eve, she answered the door and was amazed to see Le Père Noël (Santa Claus). The next day she called her relatives in France and told them Le Père Noël was real!

### Christmas Story

#### Jack Mason

On Christmas morning of 1950 my brothers Bill, Robert and I were sitting with our Mom and Dad at the kitchen table in our little cabin on north Main Street in Ouray. The cabin now sits on the property of the Ouray County Museum. All of a sudden my father jumped up and ran out side



► Raab/Sly Cabin.



► Wanda Mason with two children.



► From left, Ed Mason, Jack Mason and Bill Mason.

and yelled, "Boys come outside. Santa is on the roof!" We raced outside but Dad said "You're too late. He just took off but you can see his tracks on the roof." Sure enough, there was a set of tracks

all the way across the roof. We slowly went back inside so sorry to have missed Santa but sitting at each of our places were Hopalong Cassidy pocket knives and Hopalong Cassidy rubber boots.

What a memorable Christmas! Many years later Dad told us that he had thrown the family cat up on the roof. The cat raced across the roof making the tracks that we saw.



Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from the OCHS Board of Directors and Staff