



UTE PASS HISTORICAL SOCIETY & Pikes Peak Museum

P. O. Box 6875 / 231 East Henrietta Avenue

Woodland Park, CO 80866

(719) 686-7512 • uphs@peakinter.net



The Ouray Inn

from *Discovering Ute Pass, Volume II*

Along with bootlegging during Prohibition, gambling was a thriving business in Teller County in the late 1940s and into the 50s. Slot machines were pervasive. People even had them in their homes for fun. More than just a few people believed poker games were continuous in the smoke filled back room of Harkins' Bar in Divide.

There were three notorious casinos in Woodland Park: The Ouray, the El Dorado and Thunderhead Inn. The Thunderhead engaged topless dancers from Las Vegas and offered options for gambling: roulette, blackjack, craps and slot machines. Food and drink were free to those gambling. The restaurant was also quite popular at the Thunderhead, although some were not sure that was simply because the food was good.

One of the three most popular gambling houses in Woodland Park was owned and operated by LeRoy and Mickey McManaman from Texas. The Ouray and a five bedroom house just west of it were built in 1948. The State of Colorado licensed the home as a private club. The Inn, located on Lafayette Avenue, later became the town library and in now two independent commercial businesses.



OURAY INN

At WOODLAND PARK IN THE UTE PASS

The Pikes Peak Region's
finest Dining Room and Cocktail Lounge

Featuring

CHOICE CUT STEAKS FROM SELECT BEEF
REAL SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN
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Entertainment

throughout the 1951 season presented
by Nationally Known Entertainers

OURAY INN at WOODLAND PARK

West in the Ute Pass... Less than a
thirty-minute drive from Colorado Springs

An article in the **January 11, 1990 Sentinel** by Jan Pettit states: *Sets of dice stamped 'Ouray Club' were found with only even numbers...some dice contained only twos, fours and sixes. The crooked dice and cards were confiscated by authorities as well as heavier gambling equipment found at the club.*

The **Denver Post** waged a rigorous campaign exposing gambling in the State, specifically in Woodland Park, Teller County and Pueblo. Charges of possession of gambling equipment were made against eight people from the Woodland Park area.

An article in the **Denver Post, May 10, 1951**, had the following headline: *Gambling Issue a Hot Potato in Colorado's Tiny Woodland Park.*

The article stated that the anti-gambling group had charged that *syndicate gamblers are boasting they will turn this tiny village into a 'Little Las Vegas' at the foot of Pikes Peak.* The anti-gambling group said, *Wichita and Kansas City racketeers already have bought off most of the county and scared off the rest.* They charged that children were putting their lunch money into slot machines and teenagers were showing up drunk at school.

Photo courtesy of Steve Plutt

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The Legendary Ladies (left)
 provided the entertainment for the Annual UPHS Patron's Luncheon on January 29th.
 The ladies portrayed many notable figures in Colorado history, including "Doc" Susie Anderson, Frontier Physician; Captain Jack, Miner; Maud Nelson, Baseball Player; Silverheels, Dancer; and Bertha Spears, "Harvey Girl".

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*Life is not about
 how fast you run,
 or how high you climb,
 but how well you bounce.
 Old West Wisdom*

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There were also rumors of drug sales. The mayor asked for help to clean up the town. He said, *We haven't the police or the money in this town of four hundred people to buck the syndicate.* The article said that three members of the council have been threatened to keep out of gambling matters.

In May, 1951, *Denver Post* reporters posing as vacationing tourists from New York visited the Ouray Inn to confirm gambling reports. They were welcomed, shown slot machines, the dice tables, given drinks "on the house", stayed long enough to lose \$35, and left. They also visited two gambling clubs in Pueblo, with similar results.

As a result of the *Denver Post* articles, the Colorado Attorney General, Duke W. Dunbar, opened a State investigation of gambling. Charges of possession of gambling equipment were brought against nine people: two in Divide, two in Crystola and five in Woodland Park.

Internal Revenue agents, as a "routine procedure", seized the Ute Inn to enforce tax liens. Back taxes of \$36,000 were owed for the years 1946, '47 and '48. Nearly \$4,000 in penalties and the back taxes were paid and the Ute Inn reopened within a day and a half.

The Ouray Inn was seized for taxes in 1953.

Thunderhead Inn was closed in 1954. It remained closed until it was purchased 12 years later. In the loft of the barn, slot machines still full of coins were found that had been buried under the hay.

The current Colorado law provides for legalized gambling in two ways: Native American tribes operating under tribal sovereignty may operate casinos, and state law may authorize casino gambling in specific cities or towns. Three such localities-Black Hawk, Central City and Cripple Creek-have been so authorized.



Photo Courtesy of Steve Plutt

Thunderhead Inn

The small cage-like building (see arrow) was the "jail", where drunks and troublemakers were temporarily incarcerated.

McTighe Collection





Have you checked out the **Old Curiosity Gift Shop** lately? The Gift Shop is located in the Museum Center building, 231 E. Henrietta Avenue, Woodland Park. The shop offers an extensive selection of books and unique gift items. Most jewelry and art are handmade locally. All patrons receive a 10% discount in the Gift Shop, including reprint orders from our collection of over 4,000 photos of the Ute Pass area and beyond. The Gift Shop is open year-round, Wednesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thanks to our Amazing Volunteers!

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Maple Syrup Pie

It was the Native Americans who taught the American colonists how to tap maple trees, how to boil down the sap, how to sweeten beans, potatoes, cakes, pies...The following recipe in its simpler, earlier form came from Eastern Woodland tribes such as the Pequots who lived in what is today Connecticut, or the Abanakis who lived in Maine.

Recipe is from one of UPHS' Gift Shop cookbooks, *Native American Recipes*, Bear Wallow Books.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 9" unbaked pie crust | 2 Tbs. flour |
| 1 cup pure maple syrup | 1 Tbs. vanilla |
| 1/2 cup brown sugar | 1/8 tsp. salt |
| 2 Tbs. butter, melted | 1/2 cup chopped nuts |
| 3 eggs, beaten | |

Combine ingredients in a mixing bowl in order given. Beat till smooth. Pour into pie crust and bake in preheated 350 degree oven 35-45 minutes.

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Woodland Park, CO 80866-6875



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Email: uphs@peakinter.net
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UPHS is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization

UPCOMING EVENTS

Free tours begin June 3rd, every Saturday through September 2nd (except August 5th).

The walking tour of historic downtown Woodland Park begins at 10:30 a.m. at the Museum Center in History Park and lasts about 90 minutes.

Tour the historic buildings of History Park from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m.

The Museum Center and History Park are located at 231 E. Henrietta Avenue, Woodland Park.

All tours are weather permitting.

Annual Cemetery Crawl Tuesday, July 4th at the Woodland Park Cemetery, 1 p.m. until 3 p.m.