Paradise Lodge Put City on the Map

By UPHS Board Member Marcia Ford

Just about everyone who has driven west on Highway 24 has noticed the long, single-story ranch building across from Safeway at the eastern end of Woodland Park. Newcomers and occasional visitors vaguely know it as Paradise Lodge and hear that at one time it was something of a big deal. But many others fondly remember it as a place that for more than three decades made summers special and even magical for vacationers seeking an “authentic” Western experience.

Now, 40 years after the one-time dude ranch went out of business, the lodge—the last remaining building on the property—has been demolished.

That’s making locals and visitors alike nostalgic for the good times they had at Paradise Ranch, which in its heyday covered 400 acres, stabled an equal number of horses, employed 100 people, and attracted 200 guests at a time. Or maybe it was more than 500 acres, 300 horses, and so forth. The numbers, of course, changed over time, but even some of the most reliable records from any given year seem to be in conflict.

No matter. It’s safe to say that the Paradise was one wildly popular dude ranch, attracting both domestic and international guests and putting Woodland Park on the map. In operation from 1943 to 1975, at one time it was the largest dude ranch in the country. It helped that its owner, Frank S. Snell Jr., was a man of grandiose style and imagination—and a man who loved his horses. That love was likely inherited from his grandfather, who claimed to have been the first stagecoach driver on the road from Leavenworth, Kansas, to Denver. Snell himself was only 14 when he drove the stagecoach for his grandfather—over Berthoud Pass west of Denver, one of the most challenging passes to navigate even today.

Given his penchant for over-the-top activities, it’s not surprising that Snell once bought a couple of chariots from the *Ben Hur* production company so he could stage chariot races on the ranch, even while insisting on an authentic Western experience in just about every other respect.

That experience included weekly Sunday afternoon rodeos that pitted local riders against the ranch wranglers. The bucking stock were no slackers; Snell made sure his guests witnessed the best, the bucking horses and bulls from the Harry Vold Rodeo Company near Pueblo. And then there were the twice-daily trail rides through the mountains and special activities such as early morning rides to a site where guests could enjoy an outdoor breakfast; weekly overnight pack trips; weekly rides for a lunchtime picnic; and of course, nightly campfires and singalongs.

Guests were matched up with a particular horse, according to the riders’ size, ability, and temperament, for their entire stay, which was a minimum of one week. Those who knew what they were doing were allowed to groom their horses and otherwise care for them. When they booked their rooms for the following year, guests could reserve “their” horse for their vacation.

Making guests happy was clearly one of Snell’s most effective ways of keeping the ranch fully booked every summer, from mid May to mid September. One way to do that was to provide the best food available, prepared to exacting standards by an executive chef who returned year after year despite the challenges of the lodge’s diverse range of dishes. Not content to just offer the expected chuck-wagon fare, Snell added

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gourmet cuisine to the lodge’s menu. Sunday brunch was a special treat, with buffet tables laden with all-you-can-eat fare for $3.95 for adults and $3 for children in 1960s currency. The lodge and rodeos were open to visitors as well as guests.

By all accounts, the interior of the Western-themed lodge was nearly as breathtaking as the mountain scenery. The high-ceilinged formal dining room sported pine beams, wagon-wheel lighting, and an enormous fireplace built of Pikes Peak granite. A bar, a lounge, and a separate children’s dining room were also housed in the lodge. Heavy pine chairs throughout the building provided much-needed resting places for worn-out guests who had had enough of riding and hiking for the day. Evenings at the lodge ended with dances every night of the week except Sundays, when movies were shown. Bunkhouses for employees and cabins for guests dotted the property behind the lodge. The cowboy bunkhouse was located near the stables.

Every Sunday morning, Snell offered stagecoach rides for those guests who wanted to attend church services. The ranch also held authentic Wild West wagon rides until an accident on Trout Creek Road west of Woodland Park resulted in a fatality and the wagon rides were discontinued. In later years, the ranch added a motel, a heated Olympic-sized swimming pool, and other recreational features including badminton, tennis, and shuffleboard courts, and a ping-pong table. At all times, counselors were on hand to take care of the little ones, keeping them occupied with games and pony rides.

In 1970, Snell sold the ranch to a group that planned to keep the resort operating in much the same way that Snell had run it. But the combination of an economic downturn, the waning of interest in dude-ranch vacations, and perhaps most importantly, the absence of its colorful former owner spelled the end of the ranch. By 1975, the new owners had filed for bankruptcy. Various efforts were made to revive the ranch or renovate the lodge, one as recently as 2004, but none was successful. Today, the lodge, a few chimneys and other ruins, and the underpass that once provided pedestrians and carriages access to the ranch land on the other side of Highway 24 are all that remain of the ranch. In 2006, the underpass was repaired and revamped for pedestrian access to the Safeway shopping center, where Paradise’s hip-roofed barn, stables, and arena once stood.

After the building underwent asbestos removal and abatement, the owner, Peter Kuyper of PK Enterprises in Divide, had the lodge demolished since the building had not proven attractive to potential buyers, according to Woodland Park Planning Director Sally Riley. Neither is it a designated historic building on local, state, or national registers. But whether or not it has historical significance, its personal significance to many residents and vacationers seems undisputed.

To renew your memories of Paradise Lodge, or to visit for the first time, take a stroll through UPHS Archives located in the Museum Center, where you are sure to find plenty of photos just right for reminiscing.
Thank you to ...
Our new and renewing Family and Associate Patrons
Esch/Speir Family * Jay Harshe
Kayle Higinbotham * Marty and Jan Wilson

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Larry Black
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And UPHS recognizes our Honorary Lifetime Patrons
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Thanks to our Amazing Volunteers!
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UPHS volunteers make history!!

Upcoming UPHS Events
Memorial Garden Dedication
Saturday, October 3rd
10:30 am, History Park
231 E. Henrietta Avenue
Woodland Park

2015 Potato Soup Supper
Friday, October 23rd
Doors open at 5:30 pm
Program at 6:30 pm
$5 for soup, salad, dessert and program
Ken Valles presents
The Mountain Men
Pikes Peak Community Club
11122 U.S. 24, Divide

Did you know ... 
The more people volunteer, the happier they are
Volunteering can improve your health
People who volunteer live longer than those who don’t
Those who volunteer have lower rates of depression than those who don’t
People who volunteer make more new friends than those who don’t

What are you waiting for?
Volunteer with UPHS today!

UPHS Patrons—Be sure to support our new Business Partner
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twitter: @TheUPSstore1374
743 Goldhill PI
Woodland Park, CO 80863
Hours:
Mon-Fri: 8:00am - 6:00pm
Sat: 9:00am - 5:00pm
Sun: Closed
UPHS Volunteers Make the Big Time!

Two of our most dedicated and generous volunteers share a moment in history, along with other community leaders and personalities, serving as models for “The Story of Us.” Artist Lois Sprague, chronicles the history of Woodland Park with paint, brushes and her tremendous talent. The mural will eventually cover the north side of Ute Pass Cultural Center.

Can you identify these two celebrities? If you’re stumped, see Page 7 of this newsletter.

When the days become shorter, temperatures begin to drop and aspen trees are decked out in their golden finest, it’s time for apples. Apple pie, apple crisp, apple cider, apple sauce, or simply a bite out of a crisp and juicy apple that dribbles down your chin.

Try this quick, easy and tasty dish for something a little out of the ordinary.

**Apple Enchilada Dessert**

**Filling:**
- Four apples, peeled and sliced
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Mix filling ingredients in a saucepan, cook over medium heat for about seven minutes or until the apples are slightly tender.

Preheat the oven to 350*.

Spoon apple evenly onto all tortillas, sprinkle with cinnamon. Roll up tortillas and place seam side down on a lightly greased 8” x 8” baking pan.

Bring butter, sugars and water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Reduce heat and simmer constantly for three minutes.

Pour sauce evenly over tortillas. Bake in preheated oven for twenty minutes. Makes six servings, or cut in half to serve twelve. Don’t forget the vanilla ice cream!!

**Crust**
- Six 8” flour tortillas
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup water

Notes: Good baking apples include Granny Smith, Honeycrisp, and Golden Delicious. Substitute one or two cans of apple pie filling if time is short. Reduce sugars to 1/3 cup of you prefer a less sweet dessert.
The front entrance of Marigreen Pines, facing south

UPHS Board Member Paul Loyd showing the DVD “The Cusack Years at Marigreen Pines 1895 to 1978” before the tour

Fireplace and chandelier in the living room

Father Don Dilg, Assistant Novice Master at Marigreen Pines

2015 Marigreen Pines Tours

What people said … Thank you for this wonderful experience! Very enjoyable! I’m going to tell all my friends! Who knew this treasure was in our backyard! Marigreen Pines is so beautiful! We’ll be back in three years! Best tour ever!

Once again, the sold out Holy Cross Novitiate at Marigreen Pines tours on July 11 and 12 delighted area residents and tourists alike. The weather could not have been better…not a cloud in the sky. Eleven of the novices were on hand to provide insights into community life in the mansion.

Coordinating the tours is no simple task. Heartfelt thanks to the over 30 volunteers who helped out with all aspects of the tours, from ticket taking, bus guides and onsite docents. The next tours are in three years, July 2018. Just a hint … mark your calendars now!

Photos by Lisa Huff and Rachel and Brian Kilman
Ute Pass Historical Society’s Pioneer Garden

Please join us on Saturday, October 3, as Ute Pass Historical Society celebrates completion of the Memorial Garden and recognizes the volunteers who made it possible. Light refreshments will be served.

Flowers and vegetation familiar to the Ute Pass pioneers are planted in the garden, including some native species. Engraved stones honor the memory of the past volunteers whose efforts helped make UPHS the dynamic organization it is today.

Memorial Garden was made possible by the donations and the dedication of UPHS volunteers.

History Park is located at 231 E. Henrietta Avenue in Woodland Park (next to the Woodland Park Library). For more information, call UPHS at 719-686-7512.

2015 Mountain Arts Festival

For well over a decade, UPHS volunteers provided “victuals and vittles” at the annual Mountain Arts Festival, one of the most popular summer events in Teller County. Not only is the event a major fundraising opportunity for UPHS, it’s loads of fun for all involved. We thank the Mountain Artists for the opportunity to be involved with this community favorite.

UPHS thanks to Sally Riley for coordinating the many volunteers who staffed the food tent. We also give a hearty shout out to our benefactor Larry Black who donated a whopping $500 to help cover the cost of food and supplies.

Volunteer Kathy Stockton serves up a bratwurst at the Mountain Arts Festival

HO HO HO !! CHRISTMAS IS COMING!!!

Check out the UPHS Gift Shop for unique gifts and books, including jewelry, DVD’s and unique Indian art.

Extra! Extra!

Now available in the Gift Shop— the 2016 Ute Pass Historical Society Calendar, hot off the press, for $12 plus tax. Remember, UPHS can ship all gift ship items and members receive 10% discount!
The UPHS 4th Annual Woodland Park Cemetery Crawl was held on Saturday, July 4th. The tour featured volunteer reenactors located near the graves of various “residents,” relating stories about these early Ute Pass pioneers. The Crawl was started on July 4, 2012 to coincide with the release of Laura Moncrief’s book “Pioneers in Woodland Park, Colorado Cemeteries”, which is available in the UPHS Gift Shop for $21.99 + tax.
Dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of Ute Pass families and communities since 1976

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UPHS is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization

THANK YOU!
The Ute Pass Historical Society’s Board of Directors is grateful to our loyal patrons and enthusiastic volunteers. Without your generous financial contributions and dedicated volunteer service, we would not exist. Thanks to all of you for supporting our mission to preserve and share the history of the families and communities of the Ute Pass area of Colorado.

It is an honor to serve you!