

-- 2016 --



-- Annual Museum Newsletter --



Close up view of the new Colter Pass exhibit featuring the Western Smelting and Power Company's operations

Issue

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#1

Museum Director's Note

History of the Museum

New Exhibits

"The Book" update

History Article

2016 Events:

Joe's Campfires (6:00pm):

July 7 – A visit with an 1879 American Fur Company trader

July 14 – Brother can you spare a dime?
Depression Era history and music

July 21 – An ursine history of Yellowstone National Park

July 28—Open mic night, an evening of local storytelling

2 Year Anniversary:

July 19 – Exhibit reception "He Might Strike it Still" and 2 year anniversary 2:00pm

Museum Director's Note:

Kelly Hartman

September of 2015 I received two fragile, folded letters in the mail written in an elegant hand of a past life. The hand was that of Anastazie Zucker, a woman I have been intrigued by since I first began work at the Museum. As you'll see later in this newsletter, these letters are to be featured in our new revolving exhibit. It's gems like these that keep me digging and why I can't express enough how much I love my job.

This past year has been a whirlwind of activity behind the scenes of the Museum. We

have two brand new exhibits to share as well as little changes here and there throughout the museum like new labeling and a few new artifacts. "The Book," as I affectionately call it, is a continued work in progress that, when complete, will tell the history of the area from the early gold discoveries of 1870 through the tourism era of the 1940s. In conjunction with this project, each week we post a vintage newspaper article on our website, "historical notes" which can be found on the homepage. And we have some exciting events planned for this summer including our annual Joe's Campfire, now on a new day (Thursday) and at a new time (6:00) each week in July.

As we near the completion of our exhibits, the Council Board will be taking a look at what the future holds for the Museum, and I have to say the future is bright! Stay tuned for updates as well as ways that you can help us continue this journey of sharing our history. Thanks for another wonderful year as your Museum Director!



Kelly Hartman

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History of the Museum

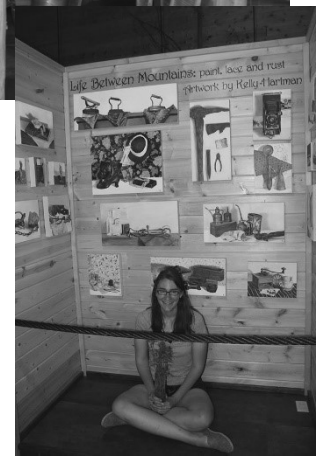
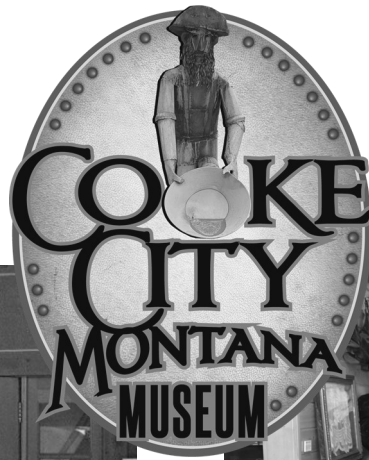
In 1865, prior to Montana's induction to statehood (1889) the Montana Historical Society was established. The history of this land had yet to be created and it would be another five years before gold would be discovered in our little corner of the wilderness. It's this kind of mindset that has kept the past from slipping away from our current world throughout the years. In the 1920s and 30s Cooke City held annual fish fry's also known as "Old Timer Picnics" where the men and women who had built this valley were celebrated. By the 50s and 60s those people were gone and a greater history was begging to be told. As early as 1950 Margaret Reeb, who had been born and raised in Cooke and had returned to live, organized a small museum with fellow residents in a small cabin. By 2003 the community was looking for a way to showcase the history of the area in a permanent location. The Community Council soon took on the Museum project. A building was constructed, exhibits were planned and artifacts were collected, many from the Reeb collection of years gone by.

Director Dee Smith along with many, many other individuals made this dream a reality and by 2010 the building was ready for the Museum.

When Dee passed away in 2013, Kelly Hartman took over the project and became the Museum Director tasked with opening a museum by the following summer. Finishing what Dee and this community had started, the Museum did indeed hold its grand opening on July 19th, 2014. Now moving steadily towards its 2 year anniversary, the Museum has become a staple in the community. Through ten interior exhibits and one backyard exhibit, the Museum tells the history of Colter Pass, Cooke City, and Silver Gate. Each exhibit features local artifacts, photographs and touch screens with additional information. With over 25,000 visitors passing through last

year, the history of the area is receiving well deserved attention.

Each year since its opening the Museum has held a summer event and/or fundraiser. Summer of 2014 was the grand opening followed by "Vines and Mines," a wine tasting event that included live and silent auctions. The following year local artist (and Museum Director) Kelly Hartman created 23 still life paintings of Museum artifacts which were exhibited throughout the month of July. On August 7th the artworks were sold in a live and silent auction event where \$4,000 was raised for Museum needs. This year the Museum will be celebrating its 2 year anniversary with an exhibit reception and silent movie showing on July 19th, 2016. Each summer the Museum is also the host of weekly Joe's Campfire talks in its backyard where visitors hear talks and discussions on topics like history and nature. This event is a continuation of Forest Ranger Joe Israel's presentations from the 1950s. The Museum is an active part of this community through its preservation of its history and promotion of its telling.



New Projects

Colter Pass Exhibit Revamp



In the early 1900s a man named Gottwerth “Doc” Tanzer saw the potential mineral wealth stored in the mountains surrounding the area as an enterprise worth taking. Tanzer had grand plans in store when he organized the Western Smelting and Power Company with a capital stock of \$5 million. The company’s main concern was the smelting business, processing the ore that came out of the thousands of mines in the New World Mining District. By the 1920s however, those plans extended to providing power and transportation to the mines in the form of a hydroelectric power plant and tramline. Such extensive operations could not be ignored as a large part of the history of the area around Colter Pass. This past winter images of the buildings and structures that comprised the company were sent to Precision Images in Seattle, WA. There nearly 20 mini replicas were constructed while the landscape was designed and built by our

museum director. Together, this new exhibit beautifully illustrates the basic working concepts of the mining industry as it relates directly to the Western Smelting and Power Company. The replicas are paired with wonderful vintage images of the operations as they were in the 1920s as well as a copy of the company newspaper *The New World City Times* and an original mining stock signed by Tanzer himself. This exhibit compliments the work that was done last year on a replica of the Silver Gate community as it stood in the 1930s.

“He Might Strike it Still”

Inspired by the letters of Mrs. Anastazie Zucker, an immigrant woman from Bohemia who lived in Cooke City in the late 1890s-1930s, this exhibit features a life lived in waiting for the big strike. In the simple reminders of her homeland, Mrs. Zucker found comfort in the wilderness, making a small cabin home for her and her husband Anton. With heartbreaking sincerity, the exhibit includes excerpts from a letter written in 1925 in which she details her life, exposes her loneliness and ultimately shows us her strength and bravery in the face of her life as a miner’s wife. An exhibit reception will be held on July 19th, when the Museum will also be celebrating it’s 2 year anniversary. The event will include a showing of a silent movie.

“The Book” Project Update

Since the Museum’s conception, the amount of research that has been done to tell the history of the area is amazing. Hours have been spent on Ancestry.com, looking through libraries, visiting local archives in Park County (and beyond) and scouring newspapers. Thanks to projects like the Montana Memory Project and Chronicling America, thousands of newspapers have been digitized and made available online as a keyword searchable database. This has allowed me to compile our own database of nearly 3,000 articles that mention Colter Pass, Cooke City and Silver Gate which have become the basis for a comprehensive history book on the area. Year one of the project was spent gathering materials and organizing research files. Year two saw the development of the story where large and small themes were fit together like a puzzle to frame how the people, economics and ultimately time changed the valley. Year three will see the narrative developed into a clear picture followed by a large editing phase. Each chapter will be an exciting retelling of the stories that shaped our community within a backdrop of historical research that will make this book a dramatic resource of information both entertaining and enlightening. Look for progress updates on this project throughout the coming year.

Your donation can help keep these great exhibits and programs going at the Museum!

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A letter of acknowledgement for your donation will be sent to you and whatever family member you specify:

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Payment instructions: For tax donation purposes please make checks payable to the Cooke City Community Council (or CCCC). Mail to: CCCC, P.O. Box 1134, Cooke City, MT 59020

History Article— “...we can’t stop now can we?”

(Excerpt from “The Book”)

By Kelly Hartman

January 1st, 1900 the *Livingston Enterprise* printed a large special edition titled “History of Park County.” The paper discussed the history of various locations in Park County and provided biographies of its prominent citizens. It was proclaimed that The New World Mining District was “among the greatest possible mining camps in the world today.” Note the word “possible.” The section on Cooke, while applauding the mining industries successes thus far, focused on the lack of economic transportation. Readers surely saw a potential in the mines of Cooke that had yet to come to fruition; the “possible” prospects. It is this hope that would carry Cooke throughout the next few decades of boom and bust. The type of ore found in the district was also an item of interest in the *Enterprise’s* article. It was characterized as predominately “silver-bearing galena ore” varying “through every gradation of class and richness,” although some free-milling quartz did abound in “a number of locations, some of it rich in gold.” This meant that while the district was “principally silver bearing” it was “by no means entirely so” allowing for speculation as to its rank in gold production, “the more precious metal.” The *Enterprise* called Cooke City the central camp “acting as the axle to a wheel-of-fortune” with spokes of rich mineral veins surrounding in every direction. A wheel-of-fortune indeed. While some left Cooke with wealth in their pockets, and some lived in peace getting by with just enough to be comfortable, there were still more that lived through each endless day of waiting for the big strike in a struggle for survival.

Those years of waiting for many were filled with the daily work of digging; the daily work of living. In 1923 the *Denver Post* would take a look at the history of Cooke City with a couple of notes about those who were still in the camp, waiting for another boom. The article, written by Cody local Caroline Lockhart, noted that “Mr. and Mrs. Anton Zukor live in a cabin in the tall timber on the side of a mountain” and that “the roof is ready to fall in about their ears, but they have little time to fix it, they’ve got to get to the ore that they feel

sure lies somewhere in the mountain.” In 1923 the couple had a 250 foot tunnel to show for their efforts, Lockhart explaining “it has taken them twenty-five years and they have made great sacrifices and endured incredible hardship, but with unswerving faith in their ultimate success they toil on, old, crippled, and not too much to eat sometimes.” It is likely the Zuckers (mis-spelled by Lockhart) had actually been located at Cooke for over 30 years, their arrival occurring sometime in the early 1890s. Maybe it was the revised year that made the math easier to compute, the tunnel would have been driven 10 feet a year; by hand. The paper quoted the couple, Anton stating “Yes, it is quite hardt” in his “broken English” while his wife “grimly” added “but we’ve got to get to the ore, Anton, we can’t stop now, can we?” Both Anton and his wife Anastazie were Bohemian immigrants who had come to America in the mid-1880s. On March 31, 1884 Anton had arrived in New York on the *Jon Breydel*, a German passenger ship that departed from Antwerp Belgium. He was 24 years old. Anastazie immigrated in 1887, at the age of about 30. While it is unclear if Anton and Anastazie met prior to their separate immigrations, by the early 1890s they were married and by 1900 they were living in Cooke City as recorded by the census. Their story was often re-told; the epitome of existing on hope and the grace and mercy they could not see the future. In 1917 Gertrude A. Zerr had written for *Sunset Magazine* a similar article, detailing life in the camp, albeit less about the truth and more about the symbolic forgotten western town. In it, Cooke City was renamed “Lost Lode,” possibly to protect the town from scrutiny, possibly because the name sounded loftier on the tongue. Without giving a name, Zerr mentioned “an old couple” who had “worked and dug for thirty years” at their mine. The similarities between this couple and the Zuckers fit, however the words Zerr places in Anastazie’s mouth sound more like her own than Mrs. Zuckers. Zerr noted that the couple “worked by hand, carrying the ore out in baskets because there was no money for machinery or cars.” To make ends meet they did “odd jobs for the other miners and their wives, to get money for dynamite and food.” According to Zerr, Anastazie had “never picked a berry to put

up for the winter.” Her reasoning, Zerr quoted: “Why should I? By the winter time we will have our fortune and I can buy all the tame berries I want.” Zerr went on to state, “She [Anastazie] expects to travel, to wear good clothes, and to go into society” and that she “corresponds with beauty editors, and keeps her complexion marvelously good.” Because of her Bohemia upbringing, Zerr notes that Anastazie “engages the ever-departing teachers to come back when the railroad is built and teach her good English.” Zerr’s carefully curated picture of the Zuckers ended with Anastazie dramatically crying out “They will take us to the poorhouse and let us die, when if we stayed we would be rich. But I will never go. If the railroad does not come in time, I will kill myself before they shall take me!” The image of stubborn resilience against what time had made of them was complete. Together they lived and died this mountain valley dream.

On August 27th, 1934 at 7:00am Anton passed away in Livingston after a bout with Bronchitis that had been followed by pulmonary edema. He was buried the next day in the Mountain View cemetery there, leaving Anastazie a widow in a rugged landscape. Within a year of his death, Anastazie was taken to the Montana State Hospital in Warm Springs, Deer Lodge County. Less than five years later in 1940, the Choteau Acantha would tell the story thus: “County charges in their last years, the old man died one day, and it was not long until his wife was taken to the state hospital, a veil of mercy enshrouding her memory in her last days.” On October 25th, 1936 Anastazie died and was buried on the 28th in Warm Springs, nearly 250 miles from where she had spent a majority of her life.

