

Ouray County Historical Society  
**HISTORIAN**  
NEWSLETTER  
WINTER 2010/11

**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 Historical Society (OCHS) thanks 550 Publishing, Inc., publisher of the Plaindealer and Ridgway Sun, for their assistance in printing and distributing our newsletter.

**NEWS IS BACK!**

After a 25 year absence, OCHS is resurrecting the "Historian" its tabloid newsletter. This biannual newsletter will report on past OCHS events and plans for the future as well as feature historical articles and reviews.

In the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past."

**PRESIDENT'S  
MESSAGE**

Greetings to all the loyal members of the Ouray County Historical Society.

Our summer season has ended with a flourish having had a successful Vignettes 2010 and Quilt Raffle. Moreover, our museum grounds have taken on a new look with the construction of new and widened sidewalks leading to the viewing platforms outside the Marie Scott Barn. The wider sidewalks meet A.D.A. standards and should allow wheelchair visitors to the museum an easier time navigating our grounds.

By Kevin Chismire

Our thanks goes out to Father Nathanael Foshage, his work crew, and the St. Daniels Parish for their labor and materials assistance in laying the new concrete.

Our curator, Don Paulson, continues to impress with his new exhibits and displays throughout the museum. For those patrons who haven't visited our museum this past summer, please come in soon and see for yourself—the new and ever expanding array of local Colorado history!

Kevin Chismire  
President  
Ouray County Historical Society

**BACK TO SCHOOL, BACK IN TIME**



**Ouray's Red Brick School**

Francis Carney, the stone mason who would later become Lieutenant Governor of Colorado, erected the first half (north side) of this school building in 1883. Two hundred and six students first occupied the red brick building. By 1893 the student population had grown to around 400 students, and the school district enlarged the school by adding a mirror image second addition (south side). The building stood where the present day school playground is located. This structure was torn down in the mid 1930's, and the school district, partly with W. P. A. funds, built a new school which is still in use today.



**Portland School**

In 1878, one year after the town of Portland was founded, thirty-five par-

ents rearing 58 children petitioned the Ouray County School District to open a school in their new community. Portland was located about five miles north of Ouray where the valley widens out and where agriculture was possible. The town faded into obscurity when the railroad passed it by in 1887. Enos Hotchkiss, one of the original school petitioners, founded Portland. Today, the school building has been remodeled into a private residence located on "Old School Road" off of Highway 550.



**Ironton School**

The town of Ironton boomed after rich pockets of gold and silver were discovered in the Red Mountain area. The main street of Ironton, named Ouray, stretched for almost one mile. Ironton had a post office, twelve saloons, and four restaurants. Here, Miss Nellie Steven's pupils posed in front of their one room framed building. She placed a map of the world on one wall; geography was an important subject as these isolated students had no other way to learn of the world outside.



**Ridgway School**

First grade through high school attended this five-room school built in 1892 located on Moffat between Laura and Mary Street. The bell tower on the roof called the children to class. In 1913, an earthquake damaged the second story of the building, and then in 1930, a fire completely destroyed it. The Park Hotel served as a temporary school until a new elementary school building was completed in 1932, and then in 1936, high school was added. This building, at the edge of town going towards Dallas Divide, now houses the Old School Emporium.



Don Paulson is spending his winter months researching the rural schools of Ouray County. Join him next summer for his Evenings of History presentation. Learn the story of this abandoned school near Piedmont, a small community located south of Orvis.

**MUSEUM PARTNERS WITH DRIFTERS TO SELL HISTORIC MINIATURES**

Looking for some great stocking stuffers for this Christmas? The OCHS is now selling hand-crafted miniature models of the Beaumont Hotel, the Elk's Lodge, and four other historic Ouray buildings. The beautifully detailed replicas are for sale at the museum, thanks to Roger and Carol Brower, owners of the former Drifters Gift Shop.

When the Browsers closed their longtime gift shop on Main Street this August, they offered the OCHS the opportunity to sell the miniatures, produced by the Cat's Meow, from the museum. Half

of the proceeds from the sale of each little building goes to the OCHS. In addition, the Browsers generously donated a large glass, electrically lit display case, now in the museum's Mineral Room.

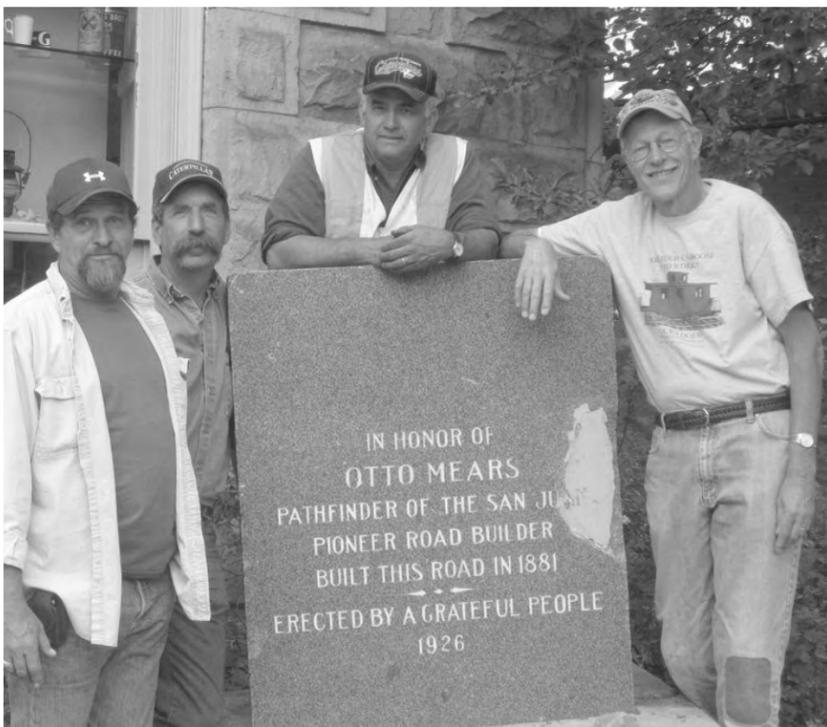
The colorful collectables include the Beaumont, the Elks Lodge, the Ashley House, Reynold's/Kullerstrand House (a Queen Anne Victorian), St. Elmo's Hotel, and the First National Bank (now Alpine Bank). The models are in the display case on the bookstore side of the museum's General Store. Purchase orders may be placed by

phoning the museum at (970) 325-4576. (Leave a message if you get the answering machine.)

The Cat's Meow Village, based in Wooster, Ohio, produces custom designed miniatures of historical buildings as well as residential homes, schools, and other structures. The models are based on photographs of the actual buildings. Prices range from \$13.00 to \$22.00.

Models of the Western Hotel, the Ouray County Courthouse, and several other historic buildings may be available in 2011.

## MEARS MONUMENT FINDS TEMPORARY HOME AT MUSEUM



*Above, Dan Fossey, Ed Witherspoon, Ed Dillon (ACC Superintendent) and Don Paulson. Right, Otto Mears poses with the monument to him in 1929, two years prior to his death.*

The “pathfinder of the San Juans” monument honoring Otto Mears has found a temporary home at the Historical Museum.

In September, the granite and concrete monument was moved from its original site at the Bear Creek Falls Bridge on Highway 550. It will reside in front of the museum for about a year or until bridge construction is completed.

Don Paulson, museum curator, coordinated the moving project along with Curtis Gemaehlich, project director for American Civil Constructors, the firm that is doing the bridge enlargement for the Colorado Department of Transportation. Relocation of the massive marker could not have been accomplished without the help of city employee Ed Witherspoon and Dan Fossey, Ouray City



Public Works Director. Witherspoon operated the city backhoe that secured the nearly 1,400-pound monolith next to the sidewalk that runs in front of the museum.

Otto Mears (1844-1931) built or completed more than a dozen toll roads in the San Juan Mountains, including the Ouray to Silverton Toll Road over Red Mountain Pass. He also built three railroads

in the San Juans, was active in mining ventures and politics, and founded the Ouray Plaindealer in 1888.

The Mears monument was originally placed at Bear Creek Falls in 1926 and remained there until 1961 when the bridge was replaced.

It sat in storage for nearly a decade until Joyce Jorgenson, former editor of the Ouray Plaindealer, lead the effort to return it to the falls.

## VOLUNTEERS BRING TALENTS AND ENERGY TO MUSEUM



*Jane Haefner, a regular volunteer who does everything from cleaning our closets to assembling museum tour booklets, with her adorable sidekick, Queenie.*



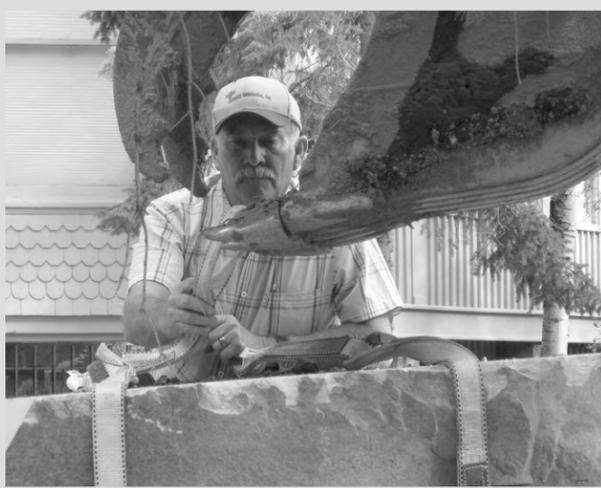
*Gaynelle Tellman faithfully assisted at special events such as the Quilter's Tea through the summer.*



*Father Nat Foshage always in action.*



*Sandra Swensen spent many hours accessioning and cleaning donations, such as this vintage display box donated by Roger Duckett.*



*Joe Saunders appears to narrowly escape the jaws of a crane as he helps install the stone base for the Chief Ouray bust.*



*Glenda Moore exuberantly rips open the box containing the museum's new Macintosh desktop computer that arrived this summer. "I've been waiting 30 years for this technology," she said of the replacement for the decade-old Mac. The new one will be used to record accession records, books and other archival materials.*

## KAREN RISCH DONATES VINTAGE BUTTONS

These buttons are just a few samples from a diverse assortment of vintage buttons that belonged to Mary Furze Risch, mother of Ouray Mayor Bob Risch. The collection was donated by her daughter-in-law, Karen Risch. Many of these buttons are from Cornwall, England, the birthplace of Mary's parents and date back to the 19th Century.

Mary Furze Risch was born into a mining

family in Nevadaville, Colorado in 1901. After attending the University of Denver, she traveled around the state teaching. She eventually came to Ouray, where she met Gustave Risch, a widowed gold miner. They were married in Ouray in 1935. Bob Risch is their only surviving son.

Mary Furze is the child pictured in the vintage photo next to her mother, Mary Elizabeth Clemens, Bob Risch's grandmother.



## REPORT FROM THE MUSEUM CURATOR: VALUABLE DONATIONS

2010 has been an exciting year for the Ouray County Historical Society with many new exhibits, exciting donations and improvements to the museum. An unusually large number of mining documents have been donated to the



By Don Paulson

museum this summer by Elwood Gregory, Roger Duckett, Karl Thees and others. These include the personal and legal papers of Otto Beselock manager of the San Bernardo Mine from 1914 to 1953; 48 early 20th century documents from the Torpedo Eclipse Mine; and 100 late 19th century documents from the Caroline Mining Company. These documents provide an important glimpse of Ouray County mining 100 years ago including the names of the employees, what the men ate, the type of equipment purchased by the mine, the assay value of the ore, etc.

We also received from Bob Larson a CD containing scans of all of the mining plats recorded in the Ouray County Court House as well as the historic

maps stored in the Ouray County Assessors Office. These were very valuable in, among other things, locating the original route of the Silverton Railroad on the north side of Red Mountain as well as locating the original route of the 1883 Mears Toll Road from Ouray to Red Mountain Pass.

Other important donations include Keith Kelley's gift of a large trunk given to the Hotchkiss brothers by Chipeta, John Uhles donation of a photo of Smokey Joe Wood autographed by Joe, and a 36' x 48' photo of the Sutton Mill which for many years hung in the CDOT office in Durango. The owners of the Drifters Shop in Ouray donated a large lighted mineral case which is now displayed in the museum's mineral room. Liza and John Ortman donated a wedding dress and coat belonging to Liza's grandmother, Bess Walther, daughter of Amos Walther one of the founders of Ridgway. Elwood Gregory donated the personal papers of Grant Marcy, an early 20th century Ouray jeweler and mining investor.

Noted railroad historian Mallory Hope Ferrell donated dozens of Ouray County railroad photos. Gerard Scott donated a date stamp from the

Portland post office. We received a set of photos taken in 1907 by Marie Wilson, the first principal of Ridgway High School. John King, grandson of the Ouray Blind Poet Alfred Castner King, donated a set of first editions of his grandfather's books. There are dozens more donations that I don't have room to describe. Please come to the museum and see the many new exhibit pieces that have been put up in the past year. We continue to add signs describing the many items in the museum.

We have continued our special exhibits with the Ouray County Sawmill exhibit last spring, our annual San Juan Memories photo contest this past summer as well this fall's exhibit of Late 19th and Early 20th Century Hotels. Next year, in addition to the annual photo show, we will have exhibits on Agriculture in Ouray County, 1875 to 1940 and Rural Schools of Ouray County.

Finally, I want to mention our recent publication of Volume 4 of The Ouray County Historical Society Journal, which has 11 articles on historic aspects of Ouray County history.

It is available at the museum or through our web site at \$14.95.

## '10 RAFFLE QUILT



Sue Hillhouse and Marianne Zegers inspect the raffle quilt.

The old saying, "the early bird catches the worm" could apply to Linda McGurer, of Aiken South Carolina, the lucky winner of this year's raffle quilt. Linda was the very first person to purchase raffle tickets early this year. Her winning raffle ticket number, 11, was the tenth of all the tickets sold for the "Garden Bouquet" quilt. (The first ticket always goes to the state raffle commission.)

Linda, a college friend of Sue Hillhouse, actually purchased her ten tickets last February while the quilt was still in progress. While visiting Linda in South Carolina, Sue told her about the beautiful vintage quilt that she and 14 other Ouray County women had just begun.

Linda, who collects Americana, was intrigued by the quilt's history. The "Garden Bouquet" quilt was sewn from a pattern owned by the late Hazel Duckett, of the family that now owns Duckett's Market in Ouray. The quilt pattern was among those published by Nancy Page, a syndicated quilt designer, during the Depression years. Hazel had clipped the pattern from the Denver Post in 1933 but never completed the project.

Linda McGurer purchased her raffle tickets before she had even seen the quilt. Having tried for the 2009 OCHS raffle quilt, she was determined to win this time around.

The winning ticket was drawn during the Ouray Oktoberfest. Despite the late hour (Eastern Time), the Hillhouses rushed to call Linda and convey the good news. They report she was thrilled to be the proud owner of "Garden Bouquet."

## LEGENDARY LADIES ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE AUDIENCE

The Legendary Ladies, a Colorado acting troupe, last August transformed the venerable Wright Opera House into a historically accurate, Victorian-era bordello.

Their play, "Velvet Secrets," was the highlight of the Ouray County Historical Society's annual Vignettes of History fundraiser. The end-of-summer event drew a large crowd of both locals and visitors to the Wright.

The Legendary Ladies is a nonprofit, educational performance organization which travels throughout the state sharing stories of unconventional women who made their mark on the West.

Wearing sumptuous period costumes, nine women of the troupe portrayed the employees of a typical Denver parlor house, once the highest echelon of a city's red light district. Singer Kim Hartman set the mood with a medley of authentic songs mourning the plight of "soiled doves." Then, through effective ensemble acting, the characters engaged the audience with personal stories ranging from humorous to tragic.

Artistic Director Kyle Neidt portrayed Victoria Sweet, the house's hard-bitten madam. She explained how her industry played out in the American West, how it both conflicted and co-existed with codes of Victorian propriety.

Miss Sweet introduced her employees as if showcasing her fine establishment. However, several of their monologues (offered in confidence to the audience) revealed the despair hidden beneath the velvet veneer of their trade. Judy Winnick's spunky hurdy-gurdy girl and other characters added elements of humor and irony to the evening.

The Legendary Ladies' intent was to entertain as well as acknowledge this often neglected part of western history. The performance in no way glamorized the lives of women who were generally forced into prostitution by circumstance and lack of alternative opportunities.

"I thought the play was very tastefully done and informative," said Diann Correll, of Ouray. "The subject matter was handled very well."

"Velvet Secrets" was the Legendary Ladies' second performance for Vignettes of History. Last year, they portrayed trailblazing western women such as rancher Marie Scott and Harriet Fish Backus, author of "Tomboy Bride."

### OCHS and Vignettes

#### Bring Researcher to Ouray

The Legendary Ladies could not have presented "Velvet Secrets" at a more opportune time for Larry Beidle, a graduate student in anthropology at Colorado State University,

Beidle, who specializes in the historical archaeology of the American West, had visited the museum earlier this summer to conduct research on his Master's thesis.

"My thesis project is the creation of a public archaeology project featuring a video exhibit on the role of prostitution and other red light district activities in Rocky Mountain mining camps and towns such as Ouray," he explained.



Although the Gold Belt Theater on Second Street is long gone, it was once the center of bawdy activity in Ouray's Red Light District.

The exhibit will draw upon evidence obtained from artifacts that were excavated from Ouray's own historic red light district. Steven Baker and his firm, Centuries Research, Inc., excavated the Vanoli Block in the 1970s and 1980s. Baker has since loaned the artifact assemblage to CSU's Anthropology Department for research and analysis.

The Vanoli Block (located between Main and Second Streets and Eighth and Ninth Avenues) thrived between 1880 and 1916. The block is named for John Vanoli, a saloon and dance hall baron who owned the town's most prominent sporting establishments during that period.

Beidle will use a number of photographs from the OCHS archives as illustrations in the video and in supporting documentation. He plans to make the exhibit publicly accessible on the Internet through links on the OCHS website.

In late August, Beidle returned to Ouray specifically to see "Velvet Secrets." He came away impressed by the Legendary Ladies' "well-researched and sympathetic presentation of the sensitive topic of prostitution in Western mining camps."

He noted that the play didn't advance the "white slavery" theory of Victorian-era prostitution but correctly showed that most women who became prostitutes did so because of economic necessity.

Beidle's only "quibble" with the presentation is that it left the impression that prostitutes couldn't expect to marry any men other than the unsavory characters who co-inhabited the red-light district.

"My research to date and some oral histories of western mining camps indicate that some of the working-class men, who were the majority of their customers, would occasionally marry prostitutes," he said. Beidle also noted "...the couple usually left the community to start a new life in a new locale where no one knew them."

Overall, he found the Vignettes production "an enjoyable evening of accurate historical reenactment."

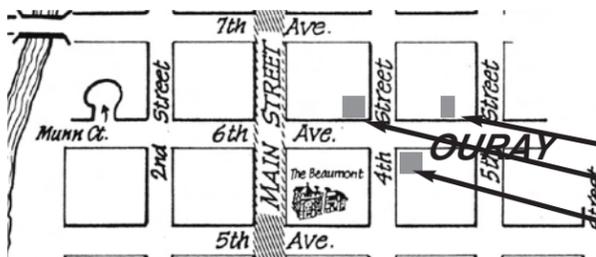
Larry Beidle welcomes input and comments on his research topic. He can be reached at lrbeidle@lamar.colostate.edu.

## BECOME A MEMBER!

Please join us and become a member of OCHS. Your financial and volunteer support is essential to the historic preservation of Ouray County. Members receive free admission to the Museum and 10% discount on items in the OCHS bookstore.

Membership dues are as follows:  
**\$25:** Silver King Level (Individual only)  
**\$40:** Guston Level (Family – in home)  
**\$50-\$99:** Revenue Level  
**\$100-\$249:** Grizzly bear Level  
**\$250-\$499:** National Belle Level  
**\$500-\$999:** Yankee Girl Level  
**\$1000 and above:** Camp Bird Level  
**\$50 and above:** Business Membership

Send checks to OCHS, PO Box 151,  
 Ouray, CO 81427 or call 325-4576.  
 Thank you!



Former hospital, at  
 420 Sixth Ave., houses  
 acclaimed Ouray  
 County Museum  
**MUSEUM**  
**CITY HALL**  
**COURTHOUSE**

## OURAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kevin Chismire, President  
 Tom Hillhouse, Vice-President  
 Joey Huddleston, Secretary  
 Bud Zanett, Treasurer  
 Phil Icke

Gail Jossi  
 George Moore  
 Don Paulson  
 Walt Rule  
 Gail Saunders  
 Robert Stoufer  
 Ted Zegers

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE: Maria Jones, Kate Kellogg and Gail Saunders.

## OURAY HIGH SCHOOL PALS SHARE TALES OF WILDER TIMES

Last August, four longtime lady friends revisited their school days in Ouray during a visit to the museum. Three of the women were members of Ouray High School's graduating class of 1949. They shared memories of mid-20th Century life in Ouray as it transitioned from mining town to tourist destination.

Dorothy Davis Smith, Dorothy Phillips Ferguson, and Pat Caldwell noted that their graduating class of 15 was the largest in the school's history up to that time. Joan Porter Strahm graduated from Montrose High School, also in '49. They have kept in touch through the years and now and then gather for a visit to Ouray.

Dorothy Davis Smith's father, William "Buddy" Davis, was the first owner of the Wiesbaden Lodging and Spa. He purchased the facility from Dr. Carl Bates, who had built a sanitarium around the natural hot springs. Then the owner of St. Joseph's Hospital (now the museum), Bates had operated the nearby sanitarium as the Radium Vapor Institute. He sold the sanitarium to Buddy Davis in the mid-1940s and the hospital to the Idarado Mining Company.

Dorothy's father converted the sanitarium to a motel, one of the first spas of its kind in the area. With just seven cinder block units, the early Wiesbaden was not quite the luxurious spa it is today. Yet it was among the city's biggest tourist draws at the time.

"My father charged \$4 per night plus extra for massage and use of the hot springs," said Dorothy. "People came up from the valley with jugs to get the spring water. The radium hot springs were supposed to cure arthritis and other ailments."

Buddy Davis also founded Ouray's first jeep touring company, Buddy Davis Scenic Tours. In the 1950s, he started out with three World War II army jeeps and hired Marvin Gregory as a driver and tour guide. Their trips over Engineer Pass and other mining roads in the high country established jeeping as another popular tourist activity. Buddy was instrumental in the construction of the famously treacherous Black Bear Pass from Ouray to Telluride.

He expertly negotiated such roads, only to have his life tragically cut short in 1959 during a hunting accident near Montrose.

His gravestone in Cedar Hill Cemetery honors the beloved jeeping pioneer with an engraving of a jeep motoring through the mountains.

Pat Bean Caldwell's story of her stepfather's origins could have been a scene out of "Velvet Secrets." Charlie Jones and his



(Clockwise, left to right) Pat Caldwell, Joan Porter Strahm, Dorothy Phillips Ferguson and Dorothy Davis Smith.

brother, Louis, were adopted and raised by a kind soul—one of Ouray's enterprising madams.

"My stepfather and his brother were born in Leon France, where their mother was an opera singer," says Pat. "She died when the boys were very young; their father couldn't care for them so he sent them abroad to an orphanage in Philadelphia."

No one remembers exactly how Louise Maurell found out about the boys. Pat believes the madam may have corresponded with people at various orphanages, expressing her interest in adopting a child. She made arrangements for the boys to come to Ouray and live with her in the heart of the city's Red Light District.

Property records, researched by historian Doris Gregory, show that Louise had owned several lots on Second Street between 1912 and 1924. As a landowner, she must have had the means to take in charity cases. Apparently she cared for Charlie and Louis well—and derived a few benefits for herself.

"My stepfather told us Louise would send him and his brother uptown to buy shoes for her girls," says Pat. "At that time, 'working girls' weren't allowed on the main streets of town."

The French-born orphan not only survived life in a brothel but grew up to become a successful businessman. By the time Charlie Jones met and married Pat's mother Marion, he had learned the restaurant business from Ouray café owner David Stone. Charlie and Marion rented the Western

Hotel in 1947-48, renovated it, and charged miners \$50 a month room and board. "My mother and stepfather would feed 60 miners at a time there," says Pat.

In 1951, Charlie and Marion opened Jones Café in the Jeffers Building on the east side of Main St., where Columbine Mineral Shop is today. The advertisement, "Eat with the Jones's," is painted on the side of the brick building and still clearly legible.

After graduating from high school, Pat secured one of the best clerical positions available at the time: secretary to John Wise, General Manager of the Idarado Mine. She worked there until her marriage to Harry Caldwell in 1955. Now a widow, she lives in Grand Junction but still owns a house in Ouray at the corner of Main and 8th Avenue.

Dorothy Phillips Ferguson has understandably mixed memories of Ouray. Her parents moved to Ouray from Montrose in 1946 to open the Ouray Café and Bar. The popular gathering spot was located next to the current Duckett's Market on Main Street.

Her mother eventually divorced Dorothy's father and continued to run the café by herself. The establishment was the setting for her untimely death. Iva Phillips was murdered there in 1962, perhaps a victim of her own generosity.

"She was always going out of her way to help someone in need," says Dorothy. "We never knew the murderer's motive but assumed she had been helping the young man who did it. She may have loaned him money."

Dorothy chose her own career path after graduation. Rather than work in the family business, she attended cosmetology school in Grand Junction. She then returned to Ouray and opened her own beauty shop above Citizen's State Bank. A few years later, she married, moved to Olathe, and opened another shop in Delta.

Joan Strahm met Dorothy Ferguson during the two years Dorothy attended Montrose High School. The two have remained fast friends. Joan lived in Ouray for a few years in the 1950s while married to Jim Porter, son of Glenn Porter, a former Ouray County Commissioner.

The ladies' visit to Ouray and the museum this September triggered these bittersweet memories of high school days and early adulthood. "Many of the names I saw with museum exhibits were familiar," Dorothy Ferguson says. "But the town, with all its tourists, is very different from the mining community I remember from over 50 years ago."