

Ouray County Historical Society

# HISTORIAN

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2011

*"The horizon of  
the present cannot  
be formed  
without the past."*

— Hans-Georg Gadamer

PULLOUT  
SECTION

## THIS SUMMER, SPECIAL EVENTS HIGHLIGHT OURAY'S UNIQUE HERITAGE



► Joseph Gregory

Courtesy photo

### Book-signing event with Evalyn Walsh McLean's great-grandson

**JULY 4**

The OCHS July Fourth celebration brings a special guest and author to the museum.

Joseph Gregory, great-grandson of Evalyn Walsh McLean, has released a new book, "The Hope Diamond: Evalyn Walsh McLean and the Captivating Mystery of the World's Most Alluring Jewel."

He will be available to sign copies of his new book and will show home movies of his famous great-grandmother.

Evalyn Walsh McLean was the daughter of Thomas Walsh, philanthropist and discoverer/owner

of the Camp Bird Mine.

The last private owner of the legendary Hope Diamond, Evalyn was the subject of another of Gregory's books, Queen of Diamonds. Both of Gregory's books are available in the museum bookstore.

As always, brownies and lemonade will be served outside the museum immediately following the parade. Watch for the Cascade Grocery truck, the OCHS parade float.



► Evalyn Walsh McLean

OCHS Archives

**AUGUST 26**

## Dinner with Otto Mears

### Vignettes of History, 2011

The OCHS Sixth Annual Vignettes of History (August 26) features one of the most influential men in the pioneering era of Colorado.

In a one-man show, historian and retired educator Steve Lee will impersonate Otto Mears (1840-1931), known as the



► Steve Lee in character as Otto Mears.

Pathfinder of the San Juans.

Mears built the first toll road over Red Mountain pass and many other roads and railroads throughout the area. He also was a politician, newspaper founder, and mining financier.

Lee will bring Mears to life through story-telling and dramatization. "Dinner with Otto Mears" begins at 6 p.m. at the Ouray Community



► Otto Mears with Chief Ouray. OCHS Archives

Center. Tickets are available at \$50 per person.

## Catch a rare glimpse of Centennial Ranch

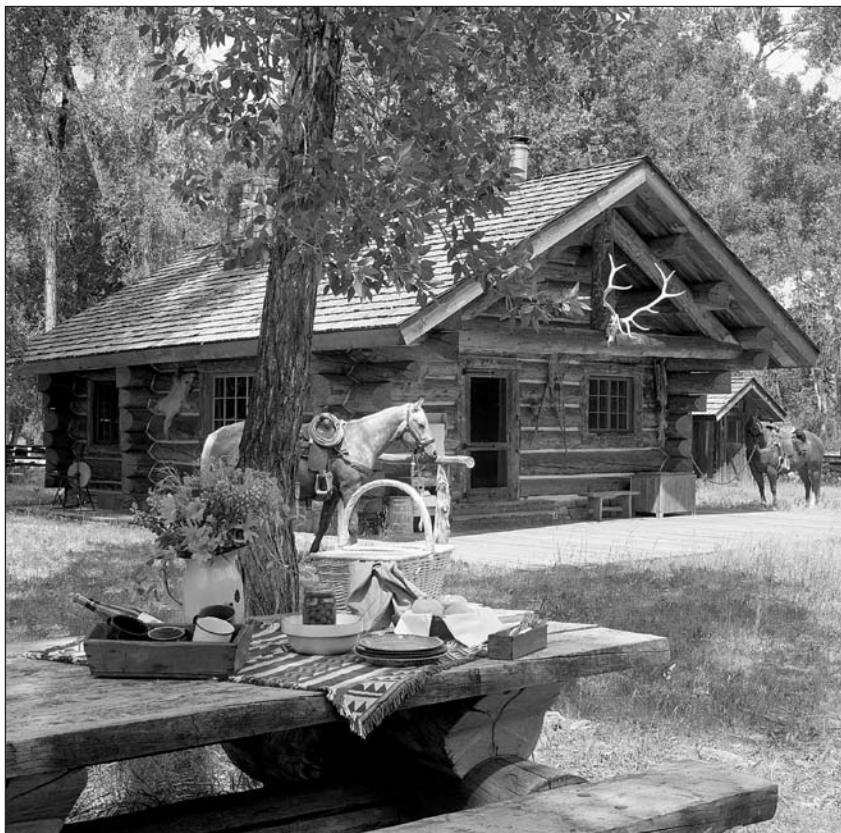
This family-oriented weekend and OCHS fundraiser will be held at the Centennial Ranch September 24 and 25. Located off Highway 550, between Ridgway and Montrose, the 400-acre ranch dates back to 1879.

This event includes tours of original and restored ranch buildings, as well as the rancher's stunning timber-frame home. All have been featured in Architectural Digest magazine. A rugged stretch of the Uncompahgre River flows through the property.

This working cattle ranch has been protected in perpetuity through a

**SEPT. 24-25**

conservation easement. A cowboy cookout of chili and biscuits will be served outside the line cabin. Visitors also will tour the calving shed and the main barn which houses draft horses and a trove of western relics and implements. All buildings were constructed with salvaged or recycled materials. Bring your camera and take advantage of this photographer's paradise. Tickets will be \$15 per adult and ages 19 and under, free.



► Scenes from historic Centennial Ranch near Colona.



### 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.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This has been an incredibly long winter with the onset of spring delayed by many late snowstorms and low temperatures.



However, despite the late arrival of spring, the OCHS is plowing forward with a great array of upcoming events and projects for the summer and fall season. In May, The Miner's Heritage Dinner was a resurrection of a lost tradition in our county and took place at Colby's Corner Bar and Grill in Ridgway. It was a huge success! One of the first endeavors now that we have a little sun and warmth will be the sodding of our new lawn and placement of new landscaping around the cabins to the west of the museum. This project is under the able direction of Gail Jossi, one of our board members. We will hold our traditional Fourth of July celebration at the Museum. This event will feature Joseph Gregory, author of the newly released book The Hope Diamond. On August 26th, our sixth annual Vignette's of History 2011: Dinner with Otto Mears will feature Steve Lee and will be held at the Community Center. Our big fundraiser of the year will be our gathering at an open ranch event at the Centennial Ranch later this season (September 24th & 25th) to celebrate our western ranching heritage. As always, the Evenings of History, under the capable direction of Don Paulson, has a strong line up. All these events and more are yours for the taking, so please, take advantage of the events, and better yet, bring a friend.

**Kevin Chismire**  
**President**  
**Ouray County Historical Society**

# OCHS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Ongoing:** "One Hundred Years of Ouray County Ranching and Farming" Museum Exhibit, runs through July 4 then re-opens Aug. 19.

## June

- 11 Corkscrew Railroad Bed and Turntable Hike \$10 per person. Meet at Museum.
- 14 Evenings of History ~ "The Old Hundred Mine." 7:30 p.m. Ouray Community Center.
- 19 Father's Day ~ All fathers get free admission to Museum.
- 21 Evenings of History ~ "On the Backs of Burros." 7:30 p.m. Ouray Community Center.
- 28 Evenings of History ~ "Ouray and Its Railroad." 7:30 p.m. Ouray Community Center.

## July

- 4 Reception at Museum following 4th of July Parade. Brownies & Lemonade -Meet author Joseph Maclean Gregory.
- 5 Evenings of History ~ "The Mines of Marshall Basin." 7:30 p.m. Ouray Community Center.
- 8 Photo exhibit opens at Museum ~ "San Juan Memories." Runs through Aug. 17.
- 12 Evenings of History ~ "Ouray – Images of America." 7:30 p.m. Ouray Community Center.
- 13 Guided Tour of Ouray Museum. 9 a.m. \$10 per person.
- 16 Guided Cemetery Walking Tour ~ Cedar Hill Cemetery ~ 9 a.m. \$10 per person.
- 19 Evenings of History ~ "Una Wheeler Whinnerah." 7:30 p.m. Ouray Community Center.
- 20 Opening of Annual Quilt Exhibit; Quilters Tea 3:00 p.m. at Venue Roscoe Fox ~ Exhibit Runs through Aug. 23.
- 23 Guided Walk of Historic Main Street. 3 p.m. \$10 per person.
- 27 Evenings of History ~ "The History of Log Hill." 7:30 p.m. Ridgway Town Hall.
- 30 Corkscrew Railroad Bed and Turntable Hike ~ 9 a.m. Meet at Museum.

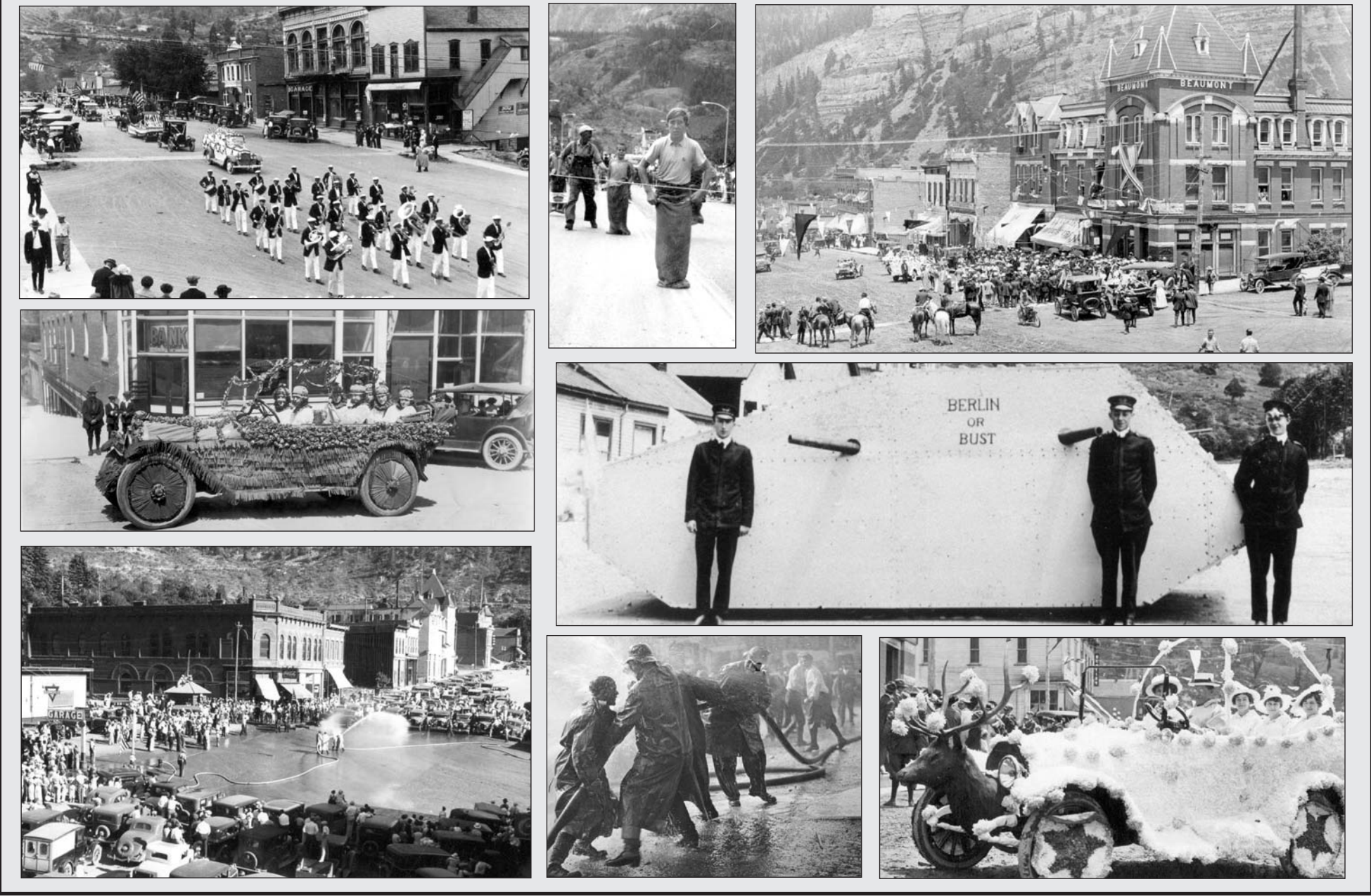
## August

- 13 Guided Cemetery Walking Tour ~ Cedar Hill Cemetery ~ 9 a.m. \$10 per person.
- 17 Guided Tour of Museum ~ 9 a.m. \$10 per person.
- 19 "One Hundred Years of Ouray County Ranching and Farming" Museum exhibit re-opens.
- 20 Guided Walk of Historic Main Street ~ 3 p.m. \$10 per person.
- 26 Vignettes of History 2011 ~ Dinner with "Otto Mears." 6 p.m. Ouray Community Center.

## September

- 18 Ouray County Railroad Days ~ see <http://ridgwayrailroadmuseum.org> for details.
- 24-25 Open Ranch Event at Centennial Ranch ~ 11 a.m.-4 p.m. ~ \$15 per person. Children under 12 free.

# OCHS REMEMBERS THE FOURTH OF JULY





# REPORT FROM THE MUSEUM CURATOR: RANCH HISTORY EXHIBIT

If you have not been to the museum in a while please plan on stopping by this summer. We have added descriptions to more than one hundred of our exhibit items. This information includes the history of the object and where it was used in Ouray. Any historic item that is saved does not have much real value until



By Don Paulson

you learn the story behind the item – who owned it, where did they use it, and who manufactured the item. Over the last three years we have been telling these stories that make the items in the museum come alive for our visitors. We just opened our new exhibit “100 Years of Ranching and Farming in Ouray County – 1875-1975.” Come and learn about this important heritage of Ouray County. This exhibit will run all year except for a 6-week break in July and August when we will have our annual photo show. We had difficulty choosing just a few of the dozens of historic Ouray County ranches to focus on in the exhibit. We first selected all of the Centennial Ranches – those ranches that have been in the same families for more than 100 years. Secondly we selected ranches with accessible historic photos. There are many more historic

ranches in Ouray County and our exhibit just scratches the surface. For information on additional ranches see the Ouray County Ranching History Project at the Ridgway Library and the Ouray County Ranch Museum online at [www.ocrhm.org](http://www.ocrhm.org).

We have need of several new volunteers who might like to work in our archives. Several of our long-time archivists are only part-time Ouray residents. Additional help is needed in the photo archives and the paper archives so that we can continue cataloging donations during the off-season. In addition we have need of more research assistants to answer the many historical information requests we receive on a monthly basis. This is a great way to learn about the history of Ouray County and help out the museum at the same time.

We have a new small exhibit on the sun porch between the main and upper floors focusing on vintage winter sports equipment with ties to long-time Ouray County families. Finally, plan on attending several of our seven Evenings of History presentations or join us this summer for one of our guided walks and hikes. And there is always the outstanding Annual Quilt Show as well as our Annual San Juan County Memories Photo Show.

For additional information and dates see our web site at [www.ouraycountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ouraycountyhistoricalsociety.org)



► One of the many captivating images on display at the OCHS Museum's current display on the history of ranching in Ouray County. OCHS photo archive

## 2011 RAFFLE QUILT



► The 2011 OCHS raffle quilt is entitled “Ouray Mining Memories. It features exquisite handi-work and 14 sepia-tone vintage photographs from the OCHS photo archive.

The 2011 raffle quilt is a beautiful tribute to historic mining in Ouray County. Entitled “Ouray Mining Memories,” the quilt features a hand-appliquéd and embroidered depiction of the Yankee Girl head frame in the center.

Fourteen sepia-tone vintage photographs of Ouray County mining days encircle the center panel. These photographs from the 1880s were selected from the OCHS photo archive.

Each photograph is titled and framed in log cabin strips. The 45 by 48-inch wall-hanging is hand-quilted in earth tones and signed by the artists.

The product of many hours of work by 15 local quilters and

craftswomen, this one-of-a-kind piece is now on display in the museum.

Raffle tickets are two for \$5 and five for \$10, available at the museum, Buckskin Booksellers, Alpine Bank in Ouray, and Citizens State Bank in Ouray. The drawing will be held Sept. 25 at 3 p.m. during the open ranch event at Centennial Ranch.

The quilt was created by the following artists: Paula Ashmead, Joan Chismire, Susan Dougherty, Charlotte Duckett, Penny Hanshaw, Linda Hanson, Sue Hillhouse, Martha Metzger, Sandy Michaud, Joan Moyer, Kathy Pettengill, Nancy Rule, Norma Shafer, Mary Stapleton and Marianne Zegers.

## ‘Keep up the good work!’ say museum visitors

By Kate Kellogg

It’s a treasure, a gem, awesome, fascinating, and cool. Those are the most frequently used adjectives in the Historical Museum’s book of visitors’ comments.

While not all visitors take the time to record their impressions of the museum, most jot something in the book on their way out. Curator Don Paulson has collected all comments written between Sept. 10, 2009 and Nov. 12, 2010. Several recurring themes emerge from Don’s unedited collection.

Many visitors commented favorably on the quality of the exhibits and their presentation:

- ♦ “Really enjoyed the way things are displayed in context.”
- ♦ “We especially liked the theme rooms, such as mine, jail and Dr.’s office.”
- ♦ “What a wealth of documentation, material, etc. so carefully put together...”
- ♦ “Wonderful signage and labels.”

Of specific exhibits, the mineral display, mine and fluorescent rocks brought the most positive comments. The hospital rooms and dental office struck a nerve with many:

“It was super cool seeing all of the doctor objects and tools; however it was a little creepy.”

One visitor, born at the museum when it was still the miner’s hospital in 1956, wrote, “It gives me the chills to see the old delivery room and instruments used back then.”

OCHS volunteers drew rave reviews: ♦ “Thanks to the wonderful ladies who were so helpful.”

♦ “The volunteer hosts were so friendly and the quilts were heavenly.”

♦ “A real credit to all of the volunteers who made it happen.”

While accolades are gratifying, the real purpose of the visitors’ book is to provide feedback for improvement. Some entries have proven instructive in that way. For example, one person wrote, “Nice facility but the lighting needs some help.” Such comments prompted the OCHS to replace outdated lighting in several exhibit areas and hallways last year.

Some of the most interesting comments described how the museum experience affected people on a personal level. One person said, “It seemed like a time machine took me back.” The museum “really brought American history alive” for a visitor from England. “Loved the museum but the mannequins crept up on me,” admitted another. One soft-hearted visitor “loved the rock part but felt bad about the bear” – apparently referring to Dr. Rowan’s pet bear, Jim, now a stuffed exhibit.

The “I Spy” treasure hunt for kids garnered praise from parents and kids alike – except for one honest youngster who wrote that the museum was “very fun but the ‘I Spy’ got boring.” Oh well ... can’t please everybody.

General comments ranged from quite satisfactory – “What a wonderful way to honor Ouray’s history” – to jaw-dropping superlatives. “Has to be the best museum I have ever seen.” “Been to the Smithsonian – equally impressive.” “I’ve traveled the world and have seen many museums. This one tops many.”

But probably the most sincere – and practical – compliment in these tough economic times came from the person who wrote, “Best five dollars I ever spent.”

## OURAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## BECOME A MEMBER!

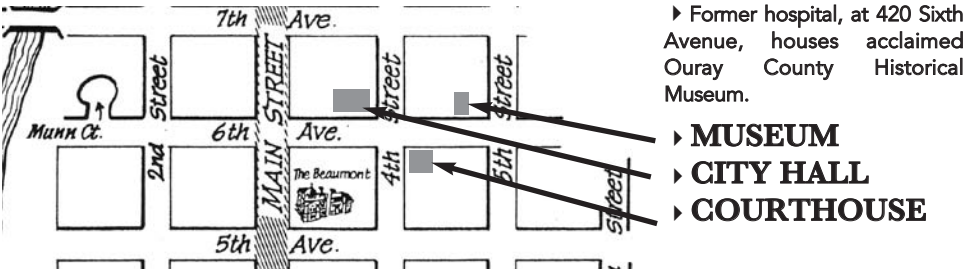
Please join us and become a member of OCHS. Your financial and volunteer support is essential to the historic preservation of Ouray County. Members receive free admission to the Museum and 10% discount on items in the OCHS bookstore.

### 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!

The Ouray County Historical Society (OCHS) thanks 550 Publishing, Inc., publisher of the Ouray County Plaindealer and The Ridgway Sun, for its assistance in designing, printing and distributing our newsletter.



## ROD MACLENNAN: FIFTY YEARS A MINER

Roderick MacLennan drove drifts, mucked tailings, and timbered shafts. He’s retired now and shares a home near Colona with his wife Ilene. Rod’s roots are dug deep into Ouray’s past. In 1884, Rod’s grandfather, Kenneth Alexander (Sandy) MacLennan emigrated from Scotland, settled in Ouray, and two years later married Annie Fraser, also a Scottish immigrant. Sandy was a tailor by trade, and he opened his shop and men’s furnishing store on the Beaumont block. He operated his business for thirty years and like many other merchants, engaged in mining as a side line. Annie and Sandy settled into a home on the corner of 3rd Avenue and 6th Street where they raised three sons. Their second born, Kenneth Sinclair MacLennan, was Rod’s father.

Marguerite Chelders, Rod’s mother, caught the eye of Kenneth Sinclair, and they married in 1930. Marguerite’s father worked at the Bachelor Mine north of Ouray, and she was born near there in 1898. Marguerite graduated from State Normal School (Western State College) in Gunnison and taught in a small school at the south end of Log Hill before working as an Assistant Ouray County Clerk and Clerk of the District Court, a job she held for forty years. Rod’s parents purchased the home next to Kenneth’s parents, and Rod remembers his early years in Ouray when his father, a fine carpenter, made his first pair of skis. “I learned to ski when I was four years old. I used a bamboo pole between my legs to maintain balance, no ski poles. My dad made my first three pairs of skis by forming them, grooving them and then steaming them over a very hot tub of water and adding pressure at the ends to get the curve. They worked very well.”

Other early day memories include his grandmother’s homemade scones, hot out of the oven and going to the Ashenfelter freight barn to help care of his father’s six horses that were used to haul supplies, winter and summer, to the Camp Bird Mine and then ore back to Ouray. Rod can still remember Main Street in the winter when “the snow was piled so high on the sides of the street it was like walking down a canyon and the adults were not tall enough to see the cars going up and down Main Street. I’d take off on my sled from our house at the top of 3rd Street and go down across Main Street almost to the river.”

Rod’s first job was at the Camp Bird. “As I look back, you might say my mining career started the summer I turned fourteen. Four of us went up to work doing odd jobs. One was creosoting the trestle that ran from the mine out over the creek to the mill. At the end of the first week, the big boss, Charles Bell, found out we weren’t of age, had to be sixteen to work inside a mine, so he had to lay us off. We worked for 50 cents an hour. After that, I went to work at the Idarado Mine, on the outside. After graduating, I stayed on, first on the tailings



► Rod MacLennan at work in a local mine in the 1970s. OCHS photo archive

ponds, then at the mill and finally as a nipper (helper) for a raise crew.”

After a stint in the Korean War and a Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service, the mines called Rod back. “I started my mining career in earnest as a contract miner, working at the Idarado, Camp Bird, the Rouville near Red Mountain, the Portland and Grizzly Bear Mines above Ouray and the Revenue and Ruby Trust above the Camp Bird. Near Silverton, we mined at Standard Metals, Dixie Lynn, the Henrietta, and the Buffalo Boy. I worked on 2 level and 3 level in the Bachelor shaft and also in the Syracuse mine, which most people around Ouray will know has a mine tour now.”

Mining is a hazardous occupation, and Rod had his share of close calls including slabs of rock nearly crushing him and having a raise climber break down leaving him and a mining partner stuck in a shaft for nearly four hours. The best part of mining, Rod recalled, was the anticipation of what the ore would look like after the next round of blasting.

Rod met his wife Ilene at the Little Chef restaurant in Ridgway. She was the cook and her country fried steaks were “the best.” Ilene, a fifth generation resident of the Uncompahgre Valley, is the great, great granddaughter of Gerhard and Wilhelmina Jutten. The couple lived first in Ouray, then moved to Ridgway in 1974. Ilene worked for Citizens State Bank and Vectra Bank in Montrose in positions that ranged from teller to Branch Manager. The abstract on the home they bought in Ouray showed that the land it was built on had at one

time belonged to Rod’s grandfather. In 1992, Rod and Ilene moved to their home north of Colona. The couple has one son, Aaron, a daughter-in-law Paula, and two grandchildren who reside in Gunnison.

Rod and Ilene were avid outdoors folks and summertime brought jeeping, hiking, hunting, riding horses, and fishing. For forty-five years, fall hunts took place on the ridge between Cow Creek and Dexter Creek. “Setting up camp meant making many trips by horseback with a pack animal carrying supplies. Many times the weather would be very mild and almost like summer only to awaken to snow, sometimes a lot of it,” Ilene recalled.

“We are talking about a tent with so much snow that the top is only inches from your face from the weight, when you are in a sleeping bag on the ground, no heat until you could get the camp stove going, and getting dressed in clothes that felt as if they had been in the freezer all night. It was fun and every fall we wish we could do it all over again.”

By the time Rod was ready to retire, he was working for the Idarado on the reclamation of the tailings ponds. Rod noted that, “a couple of them (the tailings ponds) I started 46 or 47 years before.” But the mines were “starting to fall apart about the time I turned 60 and so was I. Counting my start at 14 at the Camp Bird to my finish at the Idarado, I spent close to 50 years in and around the mines.”

*(This excerpt was adapted from a memoir written by Rod and Ilene. Their entire story is available at the Museum.)*