

# FRESHINK

## Living History Days at the South Park City Museum in Fairplay, Colorado by Ingrid McDonald, July 14, 2011

On August 13th and 14th, 2011, South Park City Museum in Fairplay, Colorado will open its gates and doors to visitors, cowboys, saloon keepers, gunslingers, pioneer cooks, and many other vocations. Funds earned from this year's two day event will be dedicated to the restoration of the Brewery building. If you have never visited this unique ghost town with in a town, it is well worth the trip.



South Park has been a favorite vacation spot for many residents and tourists of Colorado. In the shadow of the Mosquito Range, the history of this area goes back far before the gold discoveries and the establishment of little towns to support miners and trade. Ocean fossils have been found at 13,000 feet along Mosquito Pass. The largest Indian conflict between tribes was witnessed where the town of Hartsel now sits. The Espinosa brothers committed atrocities upon claiming the Virgin Mary appeared to them and told them to kill. Gold was discovered at Tarryall, Buckskin Joe, and other small settlements. The rush was on. Many of the people who traveled to, worked, and died in Colorado came here because of its minerals, the Homestead Act, and the Civil War.

The book "Bayou Salado" chronicles the history of this unique and beautiful area where so many came and died. Cemeteries dot the area and the towns have gone the way of the gold rush. Today only Hartsel, Fairplay, and Alma remain. If you haven't had the opportunity to visit this area, it is only 1 1/2 hours away!

Fairplay, Colorado is located along US 285 and CO 9. One takes US 24 west to get there. An hour out of town is Wilkerson Pass and it is a great place to take a break before driving on. Continuing west leads you into a great valley which is a 100-year flood plain and on the other side is the small town of Hartsel. Just west of Hartsel is CO 9 and it pulls away from US 24 and leads to US 285. Turn right and you are there. Fairplay holds a treasure that many have not seen. "South Park City"

South Park City has nothing to do with the cartoon on T.V. It is a town within a town. In 1957, a man named Leon Snyder from Colorado Springs and a historian, Everett Bair from the area of Fairplay saw an urgency to save the area's history. The biggest problem was where to put it. The old towns of Balfour, Garo, Dudley, Buckskin Joe, Leavick, and many others were falling apart. A piece of land was set aside and the task began. Through many volunteer hours and donated equipment, buildings were brought, intact, from these ghost towns and set in the area now known as South Park City on permanent foundations. They have been painstakingly restored by volunteers and experts who saw the importance of the project. Residents of the area then scoured their attics, basements, barns, and outsheds for the items now displayed within the buildings. No cars travel its streets in this century.

Rev. Dyer was known as the "Snowshoe Itinerant" and preached in the area. He delivered mail over Mosquito Pass via long skis to make ends meet. His son was a judge who was murdered in Granite during the Lake County wars. Horace and Augusta Tabor ran a store in Buckskin Joe before moving over the range to Leadville, Colorado. The lynching of John Hoover for the murder of a driver named Bennett was conducted from the second floor of the court house which now houses the library for Fairplay. This area is steeped in history.

The town buildings face each other and clapboard sidewalks border the entrances. There is a saloon, railroad station, a combination furniture and coffin maker store, a drug store, a school, and a homestead. Blacksmith bellows and offices for the local dentist, doctor, washwoman, and newspaper. It is almost as good as actually stepping back in time. Words do this town no justice for it has to be experienced to be appreciated. Children love it as much as the adults. Comments like "I remember using that" are heard often. A lot of tender loving care still goes into every presentation and display. All for a sum of \$9.00 per adult. [www.southparkcity.org/](http://www.southparkcity.org/)

On Sat. and Sun., Aug. 13th and 14th, 2011 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., the volunteers at South Park City will dress up for Living History Days and share stories, demonstrations, and special exhibits. Ingrid McDonald and Dianne Hartshorn (from Colorado Springs) will be working at the Stage Stop that used to be perched near the top of Mosquito Pass. We will be churning fresh butter; making fresh lemonade and watermelonade; baking fresh bread, and making hand cranked ice cream. We encourage visitors to join in!

As history comes alive for visitors, we hope you will be one of them. Get into the spirit and dress up yourself. Pose at the saloon next to the painting of the "soiled dove", which was painted by a local artist, Charles Craig for a saloon in Colorado City. How many opportunities like this come along? You can't beat the scenery or the company.