

South Park High School U.S. history classes visit Park County Local History Archives

Students learn that history is just around the corner

By Christie Wright
Special to The Flume

Tuesday, Dec. 2016, two ninth grade U.S. History classes from South Park High School visited the Park County Local History Archives office, located in the old courthouse in Fairplay.

Teacher Jon Holmer made the arrangements for his students, who walked over from the school in the brisk afternoon air. En route, they first stopped at the Sheldon Jackson Memorial Chapel and the Edith Teter School.

A firm believer in active learning, Holmer noted that the purpose of the trip was to familiarize the students with local historical resources and to bring that history alive.

His method is to, “access local resources on field trips as frequently as possible. The community in which students live needs to be observed and appreciated,” Holmes said.

“Education is happening all the time - not just in books and classrooms. I am so thankful for the access to the community and the welcome that the community provides for our students,” he added.

“It also helps students to appreciate local citizens, volunteers and business persons who give the community life.”

Christie Wright, interim vice president of the non-profit Archives organization was on hand, along with two other familiar volunteers, local author Linda Bjorklund and archivist Jane Gilsinger, to lead the tour and provide information.

Wright first described the archive’s special collections, including documents housed

in archival boxes containing subjects such as the Paris Mill, the Hartsel family and the notorious Reynolds gang.

After perusing the bookshelf that holds the many books on local and state history, books for sale were pointed out. A very recent addition is the archives new book entitled, “The Tarryall Road Tour Guide.”

This describes various historical ranches along Tarryall Road (County Road 77); the road was recently nominated as a Rural Historic Landscape District and is pending final approval by the United States Forest Service.

In addition, a new book by Colorado Springs attorney Jim Flynn, entitled, “A Compendium of Curious Colorado Place Names,” published by Arcadia Publishing, was shown, containing a number of the Archives’ 3,600 historical images.

The Archives has an extensive collection of vintage maps, several which were displayed to the classes, including an historic ranches map, a mining claim map and a circa 1930s school map.

The latter was of particular interest to the group because it highlighted 20 school districts that no longer exist including Long Meadow, Bordenville and Alma.

The other school-related item was a photo display of one-room log or wood cabins where school was held in the nineteenth century.

Next the students entered the old vault area via a thick iron door that served as access to a large iron safe in the 1880s. The old courthouse building has several historic vault doors, all with hand-painted landscapes on the front.

Bjorklund explained how the vault area was actually the site of the original jail and that some leg irons were



TOUCHING HISTORY

Teacher Jon Holmer’s first period U.S. History Class tours the Park County Local History Archives office in the old courthouse Dec. 13. Back row (left to right), Piper Davis, Heather Flint, Chris Kuepper, Austin Nash, Aron Susic, Seth Huggins, Holmer, Jessica Myers and Luminita Robinson. Front row (left to right), Michael Kelley, Chayt Daniels, Dylan Medina, Casey Metcalf and Imani Parrish. (Photo by Christie Wright)



HISTORY SPEAKS

The second period U.S. History class from South Park High School poses after a tour of the Park County Local History Archives office. Back row (left to right), teacher Jon Holmer, John Saucedo, Preston Haley, Doug Gibbons, TJ Peter, Donta Jones, and Scarlett Caniglia. Front row (left to right), Kelly Steel, Mary Kelley, Amber Chaney and Tanique Lyons. (Photo by Christie Wright)

found, still attached to the walls, when the building was first remodeled years ago.

She recounted the dramatic true story of convicted murderer John Hoover and how a lynch mob roused him from his cell and hung him out of the courthouse window.

This vigilante lynching occurred in the early morning hours of April 30, 1880 because some community members felt his eight-year sentence was too light and wanted to send the judge a message.

Continuing on, the students then viewed the back room that holds all the original Fairplay Flume newspapers, now housed in archival boxes.

The archives obtained a grant from the South Park National Heritage Area in 2015 to purchase the acid-free boxes, helping to prolong the fragile newspapers’ condition.

Many issues are accessible online at www.colroadohistoricnewspapers.com, a free

public database. The tour was followed by a question-and-answer period plus refreshments.

The Park County Local History Archives is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, founded in the year 2000. It is dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of material primarily deriving from and relevant to the cultural and natural history of Park County.

This includes basic genealogy research, which both locals and those out of state frequently ask for help with.

Office hours are Tuesdays, weather permitting, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please call ahead at 719-836-4153 or 303-261-6000 in the wintertime to ensure that staff is on site.

Their website is www.parkcoarchives.org, where their extensive photo collection can be viewed online. The email address is info@parkcoarchives.org.

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