

Way We Were

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By Jenette Purdy, Director of Education

Death in the Dungeon

In the season of haunted houses and ghosts, we are accustomed to the created experience—people in costume, fake blood, and recorded sounds. But what about real places without that created experience—can you still feel the hair on the back of your neck tingle? In Park City’s “Dungeon,” many feel that tingle.

Park City’s City Hall was completed in 1885 and housed the mayor, the police and fire departments, as well as the town jail. Locally known as “the Dungeon,” this Territorial Jail was in operation from 1885-1966, and during those years, 11 men died in the Dungeon. It is easy to imagine that these men found death at the hand of a vigilante mob or some equally dramatic event, but research in the *Record* accounts shows that many of the men died from prior wounds or acute alcohol poisoning.

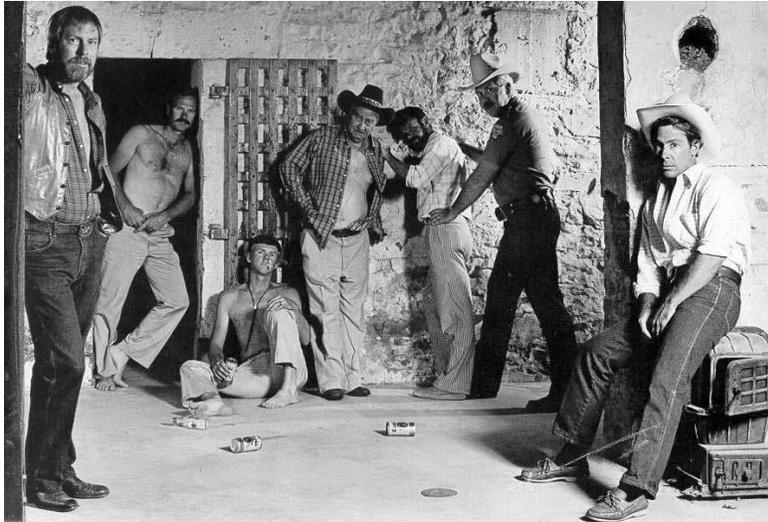
There is Harry Scott, who died from an overdose of morphine while in jail in November 1901. And Paddy Daly, “a roaming miner”, who after having too much to drink was taken to the jail in 1913. When Daly was too sick to see the judge, a physician was called, but while waiting for him to arrive, Daly passed away. In Aug 1901, Frank Anderson was taken to the City Hall to “straighten him up” from his drinking. The doctor was called after he had two “fits,” but by the time the doctor arrived, Frank was dead. And in December 1902 an officer was called to the Swede Saloon where Daniel Donaldson was suffering from pneumonia. He was taken to City Hall and expired a short time later.

The *Park Record* in those early days sometimes reads like a novel in its descriptions of what happened to these men. In January 1905, Peter Favero died in the Jail. He had been found one night in Empire canyon where he was wandering from house to house apparently lost. He was taken to the Jail where he fell into a fit. The *Park Record* reported that when the Sheriff and the Marshal came to check on him, “The door of the cell was then opened and the body of the man fell out lifeless, he having been sitting with his back against the door.”

When Mickey McFreel was found wandering aimlessly about the streets in what appeared to be a semi-demented condition, the *Park Record* reported on April 3, 1897 that “He was taken into custody...and lodged in the city jail. This morning he was found lying upon his face, rigid in death.”

Today, you can visit the Territorial Jail without being in trouble with the law. But many people still feel a chill and a tingle from the history that has occurred in the Dungeon. Do the ghosts of those 11 deaths haunt the scene? Come by the Dungeon and see what you think!

The Park City Museum, 528 Main Street, will be operating on off-season hours until early December. Monday-Saturday 11:00-6:00 and Sunday 12:00-6:00.



'Justified' Bill Coleman, Bruce Bennett, Bob Walls, Mayor John Green, Tom Skellenger, Jim Doolley, Al Harrigan

Caption: The romance of our visions of the past may sometimes cloud out the reality of what life was actually like. Who were the men who found themselves in the “Dungeon”? [Image: 2003.00.1—Photo taken 1986, there is no credit line in the PastPerfect description]