

Way We Were  
Wednesday, February 19, 2014  
Sarah Hill, Research Librarian  
The Chicken Predicament

From the beginning the *Park Record* was a newspaper based on highlighting events and activities occurring in Park City—a town that may not have always had ‘exciting’ stories to be told. But you could always count on the journalists to find unique and surprising stories to fill their pages. While doing research at the museum we have found ourselves continuously stumbling upon articles that are related specifically to livestock, predominately chickens. Two of the most fascinating articles are highlighted below.

The first article from May 1932 focuses on the arrest of three young men, Neil Gordon, Ralph Garbett and Keith Kummer. The three boys snuck onto Raymond’s Ranch in Snyderville and broke into the chicken coop to steal as many chickens as they could carry. Joseph Raymond caught the boys in the midst of their burglary and, “discharged a rifle in the air several times. The boys fearing that they would be shot, gave themselves up to the poultry raiser.” They were tried in precinct court and admitted they were guilty. They were taken to the State Industrial School in Ogden and held there until they were given over to the juvenile court in Park City. What were the boys going to do with the animals if they had escaped freely? Were they going to keep them? Eat them? Or were they simply bored and rambunctious?

My favorite chicken tale of all is about a pet hen and a local man’s diamond pin. In February 1882 the *Park Record* reported that a young man, known for wearing an expensive diamond lapel pin, had an eventful experience. One night he arrived home late and hurriedly undressed, leaving his clothing on the floor of the room. The next morning he dressed and realized that his prized pin had gone missing. After searching the entire house and being unable to find it, he looked towards his pet hen. She was allowed to stay in the house during the winter because she would continue to lay eggs if kept warm. It was surmised that she must have seen the pin sparkling and eaten it. The young man waited for days, watching to see if she would pass the pin. Unfortunately “no pin was found...it was decided to kill the hen, when, sure enough, in the gizzard was found the missing pin. The gold setting was bent and scratched and one of the smaller diamonds was missing, but four of the diamonds were all right.” A sad ending indeed, but I’m sure the young man kept a close eye on his pin from then on!

These quirky pieces, while entertaining reading for early Parkites, are a reflection of the society that Park City was becoming. Livestock, such as chickens, shows us that it was becoming more of a family oriented community rather than a rough miners camp. Farm animals were being integrated into their everyday lives, both to provide sustenance but also companionship.



Image#: 2007.11.520

Caption: A family caring for their chickens, in what seems to be the back yard, date unknown.  
Credit: Park City Museum & Historical Society, Thomas F. Hansen Collection, made possible by a gift from Peter and Gail Ochs.