Way We Were
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Women's Athenaeum Club of Park City
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In recognition of Women's History Month, we've been learning about women in Park City. Today we look at the Women's Athenaeum Club, an important outlet for socializing and civic involvement for our town's women throughout its history.

The Park City Women's Athenaeum was founded on February 22, 1897, one hundred and nineteen years ago last month. The Club is the second oldest women's club in Utah and is part of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Women's clubs in the United States got their start when Jan Croly, a writer for the *New York World* newspaper, read that Charles Dickens was being honored at a banquet. She wanted to attend but was told she could not because she was a woman. Croly was angry and decided to form a club just for women in which they could socialize, build new friendships, and challenge themselves intellectually. The word "athenaeum" comes from the Greek "athenaion" and refers to the temple of Athena, the goddess of reason, intellectual activity, arts, and literature.

The Women's Athenaeum Club of Park City got its start when many of the miners' wives, who often didn't work outside the home, looked to educate themselves and socialize within their community. There were twenty-five founding members. The club met over lunch at which members would present to each other information and research on various topics. Subjects studied included history, English, drama, art, literature, the home, education, and social services. The women's philosophy was to be intellectually informed, to be part of a greater women's movement for self-development, and to make the community a better living place for all. Each year on its anniversary, the club typically organizes new officers for the upcoming year, reviews past accomplishments, and celebrates the history of the organization and its founders.

The Women's Athenaeum has been long known for their community service. Some things they have done for the public include: donating a drinking

fountain to the high school in 1911; raising money for a playground in 1915; presenting a gift to an outstanding senior graduate, a tradition that started in 1934; donating books to the local library; and donating money to organizations such as the Red Cross and the Cancer Control Program. They have also presented flower shows on Labor Day and women's safety programs. The Athenaeum continues to have mother-daughter graduate teas today. One of their latest projects is providing books to the children of McPolin and Parley's Park Elementary schools.

The Women's Athenaeum still meets today. If you are interested in learning more please see their Facebook page for updates and activities.



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Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Woman's Athenaeum Collection Caption: The Athenaeum threw a party, above, on February 28, 1957 to celebrate its 60th anniversary. Former members no longer living in Park City came from all over the West to celebrate.