

Way We Were

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A Very Extensive Property Muddle

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In 1872, enterprising Mormon pioneer George Snyder and his sixth wife Rhoda began homesteading the area that today encompasses everything from Heber Avenue to Kearns Boulevard. As Park City grew, Snyder platted and sold lots to the rapidly expanding town. David C. McLaughlin and Edward P. Ferry purchased over half at a price tag of about \$2,000. They then marketed the lots, averaging about \$200 for each. The land became known as the Snyder's Addition and was in part controlled by the town's first real estate company, the "Park City Townsite Corporation," for which first Ferry then McLaughlin served as trustee, agent, and attorney.

These properties were rife with issues from the beginning. In the mid-1880s, John L. Street filed a suit petitioning for Ferry's purchase of the land to be voided. Street argued that the government had originally issued Snyder land patents based on fraudulent representation, therefore invalidating Snyder's later sale to Ferry. The courts ultimately ruled in Ferry's favor which was bad news for Street, who had refused to pay Ferry for the land he'd been squatting on for years while the suit played out.

The biggest blow, however, came in 1901 with the unexpected death of David McLaughlin. McLaughlin was exceedingly rich from shares in the Quincy and Anchor mines, real estate holdings, and other business ventures, and had a reputation for generosity. He died without a will, leaving behind a collection of titles and property purchases that had yet to be finalized. Lawyer Wilson I. Snyder (George Snyder's son by his second wife Elsie) was made trustee and took over McLaughlin's real estate holdings after his death. In 1916, a legal notice was posted publicizing a sheriff's sale at which dozens of lots were to be sold – lots Parkites had been living on for years under the assumption of legal ownership.

The surprised public protested, calling upon Snyder to explain. Snyder responded that the issue brought to light by the notice was not new but simply the exposure of "a cloud which has always been there." Shortly after McLaughlin's death, he elucidated, a suit had been filed in the 3rd District Court to settle the titles on all property held in trust by McLaughlin. A chain of appointed receivers followed, ending with Snyder. Private sales commenced in an effort to settle the matter. "It is not the disposition of those interested to harass or annoy any occupants in any way, but rather to afford an easy means of closing up the tangle and ending this muddle. The circumstances of this sale...are not of public interest," Snyder argued.

It took many years, but the muddle was eventually settled. Snyder's Addition today includes lower Park and Woodside avenues, the neighborhood featured on this year's Historic Home Tour. Join us on June 25 from 10am to 3pm to explore this unique area of Park City's history. Tickets are \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. For information call the Park City Museum at 435-649-7457 or visit our website at parkcityhistory.org.



Image ID: 1987.3.515

Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum

Caption: Wilson I. Snyder bought 1010 Woodside Avenue, pictured here, from David McLaughlin shortly before his death. The sale was finalized and properly recorded so Snyder managed to avoid title complications that other Parkites faced in the years after McLaughlin's death.