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Way We Were  
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Ambulances in Park City

The first record of ambulances being used for emergency response was in Spain in 1487. The Spanish army put them into use in conjunction with the first military hospitals or “ambulancias”. These early ambulances were merely wagons that were used to transport injured soldiers, and they did not pick up the injured for treatment until after the battle had ended.

Ambulances changed a great deal over the following centuries. They moved from the association with the battlefield and attached themselves to hospitals. The first hospital based ambulance service in America was based out of Commercial Hospital, Cincinnati, Ohio (now Cincinnati General) in 1865; this program was followed shortly by similar services in New York City, New York.

The earliest reference in the Park Record of an ambulance in Park City was in 1882 during a fire that had started in the New York Times office. The Park Record states that “Ambulances [were] on the spot”<sup>1</sup>. However, they didn’t come from Park City but instead from Fort Thornburg, near the present site of Ouray, Utah, more than 140 miles away.<sup>2</sup>

It wasn’t until 1913 that the Park City Miner’s Hospital received its first ambulance. With a combined donation from the Silver King Coalition, Daly Judge, and Daly West Mining Companies, it was donated under the stipulations that “at no time is a charge to be made for the use of the ambulance when sent out by the hospital. The only charge being for the team.”<sup>3</sup>

Based on what the Park Record states about the team, this was not one of the newfangled motorized ambulances that existed in big cities like New York and Chicago. Those ambulances were advertized as being faster, safer, better at stopping, and a smoother ride. Instead, the Miners’ Hospital had an approximately six-hundred pound horse-drawn ambulance (look in the lower left hand corner of the image for the horses’ hooves).

As highlighted by the Park Record this addition to the community was well received, and with good reason, “This acquirement is indeed good news, for such a conveyance has long been needed, and its use will save much pain, and in some cases perhaps life, in transferring injured ones.”<sup>4</sup> With one of the most dangerous occupations, mining, it was incredibly important to the safety of the town as a whole.

The ambulance was used for twenty-four years and in 1937 Mr. George Archer, the city undertaker, purchased a new one. Archer not only furnished Park City with a new vehicle but would also become the sole driver.

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<sup>1</sup> Park Record 1882-02 -04, Big Fire

<sup>2</sup> Park Record 1882-6-10, Fort Thornburg Freight

<sup>3</sup> Park Record 1913-08-23, New Ambulance For Hospital

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, New Ambulance for Hospital

The Ambulance remained attached to the hospital until its closing in the summer of 1965. By the first of February 1969, the Fire Department had officially taken over the ambulance services. Reportedly, the new ambulance service transported 26 persons to Wasatch, Summit, and Salt Lake County Hospitals between February and April that year.

Much like the long history that ambulances have had in other cities and towns across the world, they have held great importance in the historical significance of Park City.



Image# Digi.13.1

Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum

Caption: Ambulance at Miners Hospital in the early 1900s. Helen (Nellie) Green on left and unknown nurse on right, if you know who this woman is please contact us at the Park City Museum #435-749-7457.