

Way We Were

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Spooky Series Introduction

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*Yes, said the old-timer, as he refilled his well-cooked briarwood, deftly applied a match and pulled complacently. I have known times down in the "bowels of God's green earth," as the pretty writers say, when I have been mighty scared and wished with all my heart that I was better prepared to meet my maker. <sup>1</sup>*

Like most small towns across the country, Park City has those stories that rarely see the light of day, all but being swept under the rug or have just fallen by the wayside. Sometimes it's just easier not to speak about death and unusual circumstances. But, as historians, we find those stories most fascinating. They are able to tell us a great deal about what individuals living during those times may have thought about murder, suicides and mysterious deaths.

We currently live in a world enthralled by death. Every other television station has cop/crime dramas and crime scene investigations. And with a little bit of research it can be understood that Park City too found it important to highlight those rather intriguing stories. Some examples of headlines found between the 1880s and 1930s are as follows: *The Ghost in the Shaft, Young Man Meets Death While Deer Hunting, How Suicides Are Made, What Hanging is Like, Crushed by Falling Ore, Shot to Death, Arthur Holmquist Drowned in Silver Creek, Death of Young Mother Followed by Cruel Murder*, and the list goes on and on.

The introductory quote comes from *The Ghost in the Shaft*, an article published in the *Park Record* in 1901, that focuses on an experience one miner had while underground at the Ontario Mine No. 3. He explains that as he is riding the cage back up to the surface it halts somewhere in between leaving him stranded for what he believes was nearly an hour. He then pulls a rope with a bell on it, a tool used to let the man above know when to start the cage up again, and the cage makes its way to the top. After arriving he notices that the man operating the cage, a Tom, is "*in a state of considerable anxiety as to what had been the trouble in the shaft.*" Someone or something had rung the bell to stop the cage but neither man knew what the answer

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<sup>1</sup> Park Record "The Ghost in The Shaft" August 31, 1901

was. There were no other workers there beside them, so what could have caused this scary situation? Perhaps it was a ghost?

As all hallows eve fast approaches join us these next four weeks as we highlight spooky stories from Park City's past.



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Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum, Himes-Buck Digital Collection

Caption: Men at Ontario Mine cages.