

Way We Were  
Wednesday, March 12, 2014  
Courtney Titus, Curator of Collections and Exhibits  
Welsh, Driscoll & Buck: The End of an Era

When Welsh, Driscoll and Buck closed its doors in December of 1954, it was the end of an era. The department store was the oldest and largest in town, where Park City residents could purchase a wide-range of goods to suit their every need, including groceries, furniture, hardware and clothing. But hard times hit Park City in the 1950s, and many businesses struggled to keep their doors open in what was essentially a ghost town. Despite past success, Welsh, Driscoll and Buck could not survive the economic downturn and was forced to close its doors forever.

In its heyday, the store had employed up to 40 employees and operated nine separate departments in the grand building located at 233 Main Street, where Treasure Mountain Inn stands today (now 255 Main Street).<sup>1</sup> At the time of closing, however, the only employees left were owner Fraser Buck and long-time clerk Mary Dougherty.<sup>2</sup> Only the ground floor was open to customers; the upper floors had been closed off for years, and contained a large amount of old stock, some of it dating back to the early 1900s.<sup>3</sup> When the company shut its doors, all assets were assigned to the Intermountain Association of Credit Men, and put up for auction with proceeds going to the creditors. The National Sales Company of Salt Lake City was the highest bidder, winning the entire set of stock and fixtures for less than 33 cents on the dollar.<sup>4</sup> Soon after, they announced a liquidation sale. Everything was to be sold directly from the old store at bargain prices. On January 20, 1955, the Park Record published an advertisement announcing “The End! The Finish!” of Welsh, Driscoll and Buck after fifty long years, promising that they “will not refuse any reasonable offer on any item.”<sup>5</sup>

One witness to this moment in history was William Harrigan. He first came to Park City in 1952 to work as an underground shift boss at the Mayflower Mine, operated by the New Park Mining Company. He was promoted to General Superintendent in 1953, and served in the position until 1958. He first rented a house on Park Avenue, near the intersection with 10<sup>th</sup> Street, but later moved about two blocks north to a company house next door to Mawhinney Motor.<sup>6</sup>

In a letter to the Museum, 93-year-old Harrigan recalls the end of Welsh, Driscoll and Buck. He had heard about the store closing, and went to the liquidation sale. There were only a few items left, one of which was a black felt bowler hat. He bought it for a dollar.<sup>7</sup> The inner hatband is stamped with the words “Welsh, Driscoll & Buck, Park City, Utah.” Harrigan generously donated the hat to the Park City Museum, and we are thrilled to add it to our permanent collection.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mayes, Bea, WWW, March 21, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Park Record, “Old Establishment Closes Its Doors,” December 9, 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from William Harrigan, October 18, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Park Record, “National Sales Co. To Liquidate Stock,” January 6, 1955.

<sup>5</sup> Park Record, January 20, 1955.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from William Harrigan, January 23, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from William Harrigan, October 18, 2013.



**Digi.2.2159**

Caption: The clothing department of Welsh, Driscoll and Buck. Notice the string of hats in the upper right section.



**Welsh, Driscoll and Buck bowler hat**

Caption: Bowler hats, often called derbies in the United States, were extremely popular during the Victorian Era. In the American West, this type of hat was worn more than any other style, even the cowboy hat. Working class men like its practicality; its close-fitting nature assured it would stay on the head even in strong winds.