

Way We Were
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It's all in the name

Most of Park City's streets, paths, hiking trails, ski runs and chair lifts have been named based on historical influences from the town's past. Here at the Hal Compton Research Library, in the basement of the Park City Museum, I receive a great deal of questions about how certain things were named. Was it an important person or a mining company that influenced the name? Sometimes the answers are simple and easy to track down while other times it becomes quite the task to research. Two of the most popular inquiries are the origins of the names of Marsac Avenue and Rossie Hill. Both have very straight forward answers while at the same time hold a great deal of meaning in the root of their names.

The fascinating story behind Marsac Avenue is one that entices curiosity and can lead the researcher to daydream of the possibilities. In the early 1870s, a group of men from Grand Haven, Michigan came to Park City to join the mining industry. They were affectionately known as the Michigan Bunch and they formed the Marsac Silver Mining Company. Interestingly enough, the name Marsac belonged to a close friend from Grand Haven, Sophie de Marsac. But the curious question is why did they choose her to be the namesake for their entire company? I always like to imagine she was the childhood love of one of the Michigan Bunch and this was his way of keeping her around him always. Isn't it a wonderful thought?

For Rossie Hill, it all leads back to New York, where there was a small iron mining town aptly named Rossie. When the iron industry collapsed, several individuals from Rossie made their way west. In the early 1880s, they settled in Park City and, like most communities, all lived in one specific area in town. A common practice for easterners who settled out west was to name their town or settlement affectionately after the location they had moved from. And this was exactly the case for Rossie Hill.

A great example is that of William and Alma Austin who lived at 251 Ontario Avenue. They purchased the property and with the construction supplies and lumber coming from Kidder Brothers they were able to complete the house on July 22, 1890. Austin was a native of Antwerp, New York which coincidentally is only a stone's throw away from Rossi. The community of upstate New Yorkers that was created on Rossie Hill allowed individuals to feel 'at home' with a strong sense of a mobile community.

If you are interested in learning more about 251 Ontario Avenue or other homes located on Rossie Hill, please attend our annual Home Tour. Tickets for the tour are \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. Free parking is available at the China Bridge Park Garage and Sandridge parking lots. For more information, please call the Park City Museum at 435-647-7457 or visit our website at parkcityhistory.org.

The Park City Historical Society & Museum is celebrating 30 years of preserving, protecting, and promoting Park City's history and heritage.



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Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum

Caption: 251 Ontario tax photo taken circa 1940