

Way We Were

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A Farewell to Swarms

“They have caused thousands of deaths in Utah, and will continue their work of destruction until the public awakens to the fact and inauguates a warfare that will result in their extermination.”
- The Park Record, 1910.ⁱ

In the early twentieth century, unattended food, garbage, and manure throughout the city became fine resorts for Park City’s original seasonal tourist: the fly. As more was learned about diseases and sanitation, public health boards called citizens to arms to reduce the risk flies posed. Attempts to educate the public ranged from intellectual to sensational. Some articles used math and science to explain the rapid breeding rates of flies and the diseases they carry. “One fly killed in March is equal to killing millions [in] September or August.”ⁱⁱ Others used fear to play on the public’s emotions. “Clean up and save the babies lives...you will be aiding in a great, grand cause.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Designs for killing flies began to spread like Pinterest recipes: poisons, sugar baits, sticky paper, chemicals, and burning fumes were touted as the latest weapons in ridding the town of the animal that was “anything but a desirable house pet.”^{iv} D.H. Redden and J.F. Cunningham received a patent for their fly trap, which permitted flies to enter the trap, but never to check out.^v

During this period, a general movement to clean up towns spread across the state of Utah. By removing filth, flies would have nowhere to feed or breed. Organized clean up weeks and clean town contests were set up to promote proactive lifestyles among citizens.^{vi} The contest had a variety of categories for town sanitation and appearance.^{vii} The Park Record reported the score with the headline “Park City’s Good Rating” of fifty three out of one hundred points. While the sanitation and appearance of homes and markets left considerable room for improvement, Parkites had at least taken the pestering about killing the pest seriously. The score for the presence of flies was a four out of five, one of their top scores in any category.^{viii} Thus the buzz around town of *eshooing* the fly season was an early step in fortifying the public health of Park City.

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

ⁱ Park Record, “The Deadly Fly”, May 28, 1910.

ⁱⁱ Park Record, “Work For The Flyless Town”, June 12, 1915.

ⁱⁱⁱ Park Record, “A Timely Warning”, June 12, 1915.

^{iv} Park Record, “Most Fearsome Thing Is A Fly”, June 12, 1915.

^v Park Record, “A Patent Fly Trap”, November 19, 1910.

^{vi} Park Record, Clean-up Week”, April 28, 1916.

^{vii} Park Record, “A Clean Town Contest”, April 25, 1914.

^{viii} Park Record, “Park City’s Good Rating”, July 25, 1914.



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Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum, Kendall Webb Collection

Caption: The Smith & Brim store, 1913. The dirty floors and the meat and produce lying out unprotected from the air and pests likely had an impact on Park City's score of 2 out of 5 for "Sanitary Marketing of Foods" in the 1914 Clean Town Contest.