

100 YEARS OF CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE ON THE ROUTT NATIONAL FOREST

“The Tale of Teller City”
by Mary Peterson, Forest Supervisor

I'd like to share a bit of Routt National Forest "pre-history" this month. A couple weeks ago I accompanied the Parks District Ranger, Anne Kiser, and some Parks RD employees out to historic Teller City, located on the Routt NF near Gould, CO. Teller City isn't really a ghost town, as there isn't much left of this 1870's town site except for the remnants of some foundations, log cabins, and streets. Nature has reclaimed much of this site as lodgepole pine and aspen have sprouted up in and around the decaying log walls of a few structures. Campers probably carried away the log cabin remnants over time for use as firewood.

This 360-acre town site was situated in Grand County when it was founded, but it now lies in Jackson County. Teller City was named for Senator Henry M. Teller. It was by far the largest of the towns in the Grand Lake region at the time, with the population numbering 1200 to 1300 people when the mining boom was at its height. It was settled in 1879 and by 1882 it contained two steam sawmills, the 40-room Yates Hotel, 27 saloons, and hundreds of log cabins.

The Yates Hotel building was 36' by 36', was two stories in height, and had a full basement. The walls and foundations were of hand-hewn logs. It was said to have contained a mahogany bar and Persian rugs. Some of the other larger buildings were the office of the Vandalia and North Park Mining Company (owners of the Endomile Mine), the blacksmith shop, and stores and offices of various kinds. The town had a newspaper, *The North Park Miner*, which was the first newspaper in North Park.

The residents even started to construct a series of streets for wagons and buggies. The streets running east and west bore numbers, while those running north and south were lettered. C Street was the main street of the town and is still very evident today. The Yates Hotel was located along C Street, as was the office of the Endomile Mine, the post office, Springer's Furniture and China, Hildron's Meat Market, Bock and Roberts Grocery, the office of the *North Park Miner*, the assay office, and one saloon.

The Endomile Mine, located three miles above Teller City, was the most promising of the mines. The Endomile had its own large blacksmith shop and ore house, together with several cabins for the miners. The mine produced gold and silver, but not in paying quantities for the costly transportation charges. Other promising mines were the "Lizzie" and the "Little Nellie" both of which produced some good ore. In these mines were rich veins, knife-blade thick up to one-quarter inch thick, which in most localities would eventually come together in one good-sized vein, but in that region they never did.

Like a lot of mining towns, Teller City was short-lived. In 1884, the price of silver dropped so quickly that the residents abandoned the town almost overnight. Dirty dishes

were left on tables and clothes were left hanging in the closets. By 1887 only 300 people remained. It appears that the possibility of a huge strike was oversold to those coming to Teller City. The ***Grand Lake Prospector***, in its "Teller Tips" had this to say of the Endomile on August 23, 1883: "There is ore enough in these hills to support thousands for years to come. All that is needed is the means to reduce the ore to bullion, for in the Endomile Mile it lies there fully exposed in almost inexhaustible quantities." And on February 14, 1884: "The Endomile, belonging to the North Park and Vandalia Mining Co., is another bonanza...The vein is over forty feet wide, all paying ore, with a ruby streak of about six feet, from which millruns are made of over \$100 to the ton."

The town site was wholly abandoned by the time the Medicine Bow Forest Reserve was established in 1902. It is now contained within the Routt National Forest. In the 1997 Routt Land and Resource Management Plan, the Teller City Historic Site was allocated as a Special Interest Area, to protect the special history of the site. In the mid 1990's a Forest Service Passport in Time project was conducted to map and document the Teller City remains. A replica of a log cabin was also built on the foundation of one of the original cabins. Today, an interpretive walking loop winds through the remnants of this historic town site, with interpretive signs to tell of its past.

Recently a windstorm blew down lots of timber in the Teller City area and mountain pine beetles are attacking standing lodgepole pine in the site. The Parks Ranger District is planning a horse-logging sale within the areas of heavy blowdown and beetle mortality to further protect this historic Special Interest Area from catastrophic loss. Camping in the area is prohibited.

To get to the Teller City site, head south of Walden on Hwy 125 approx. 25 miles to the town of Rand then another two miles to the Old Homestead turnoff. Turn left and follow county road 21 along the Illinois River for approx. 12 miles and follow the signs to Teller City.

Sources:

Saturday Evening Post, October 31, 1925, as printed in Mary Lyons Cairn's book ***Grand Lake in the Olden Days***, World Press, Inc., Denver CO, c1971, pages 153-161.

<http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/co/tellercity.html>

<http://www.northpark.org/np/tellercity.htm>

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