

RIFLE'S BLAST FROM THE PAST

RIFLE HERITAGE CENTER

P.O. Box 1882, Rifle, CO 81650
Museum Address: 337 East Avenue, Rifle

ISSUE 23

Dec. 2015
Museum Phone: 625-4862

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. December holds activities for the Board and members starting with Hometown Holidays on the evening of Saturday, December 5th. We will be serving hot chocolate and cookies starting at 4:00 PM. If you can donate 3 dozen cookies for the event we would appreciate it!

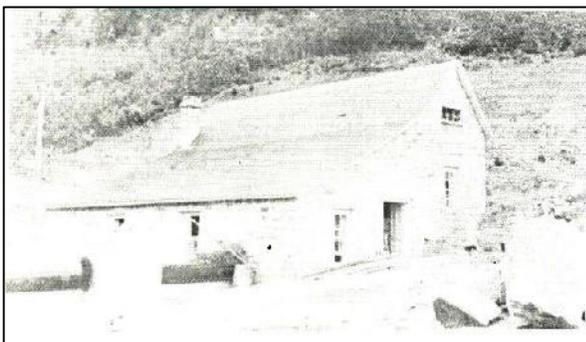
On December 12th at 2:00 PM at the Rifle library, we will have an old fashioned Christmas with the playing of Charles Dickens a Christmas Carol on the old time Victrola phonograph. The community is welcome to come and hear this story from the past. I hope you enjoy this month's history and reflect on the effort is took to make it possible to flip the switch. George Pearson, Newsletter Editor

“When the Lights Came On”

In our modern world it is hard to imagine a world without electrical power, but when Rifle was founded there was no such thing as an electrical grid, or even cross country power lines. Lighting was provided by candles or oil lamps. Most Christmas trees had no lights and those that were lit by candles were very dangerous. Our founders decided that to bring Rifle forward as a community we needed electricity and lights so they set about making that happen.

The Rifle Light, Heat & Power Company was incorporated in 1908 with the goal of bringing power to Rifle. The first officers were C. L. Todd (President), Fred Munro (Vice President), W.H. Haley (Treasurer), Dr. W.J. LeRossignol (Secretary), and E. McLearn (General Manager). Other board members were Fred Sayre and R.F. Magor. The board then set out to find the best location for a local power plant.

In 1884, James Watson had homesteaded the property on which a natural falls existed and had begun calling it Rifle Falls. The beauty of the falls attracted locals, so he began charging fifty cents per person to view the falls. In 1890, Allen Zerbe purchased the property and developed it as a resort. He built the Rifle Falls Hotel upstream from the falls in 1903. The Rifle Light, Heat, and Power Company decided that a Hydroelectric Power Station was the best solution to bring electricity to the community,



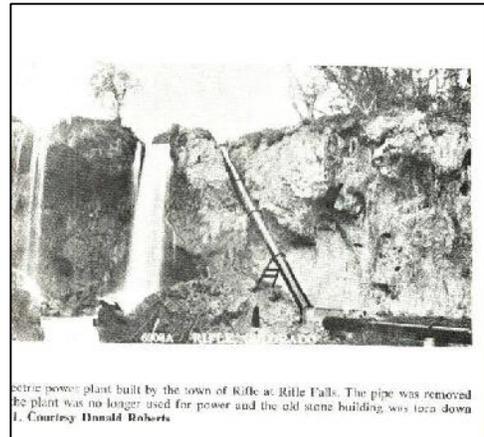
Power Plant

and that the Rifle Falls were the best source in the area for the production of electricity. The company made a deal to purchase the property from Alan Zerbe for \$4.25 per acre. Alan Zerbe continued to operate the hotel until 1922 when it burned down and was never rebuilt.

The company hired engineers and contractors to install a pipe from the top of Rifle Falls to a power plant. This is where a turbine was installed that allowed the energy produced from the fall of the water to turn the turbine and produce electrical power. The

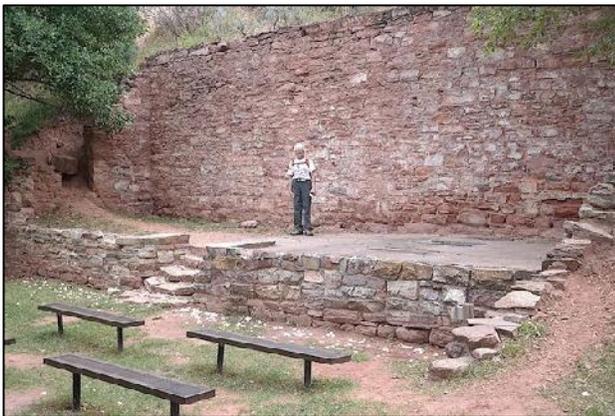
company hired Charles Fravert to install thirteen miles of transmission lines from the falls to Rifle. They hired W.L. Clough to install eight miles of distribution wire in town. He also wired twenty five street lights and provided wiring for most of the buildings in town. The company then hired Pace Munro to be the first superintendent for the power company.

Everything was completed and in place by December of 1909. The company turned on the power on December 31, 1909. One hundred and six years ago this month, Rifle saw its first electrical power. The power plant was one of the first on the Western Slope of Colorado and changed the history of Rifle. Rifle Light, Heat & Power continued to operate the plant at Rifle Falls and the job of superintendent was taken over by George Ennis after the death of Pace Munro.



Electric power plant built by the town of Rifle at Rifle Falls. The pipe was removed the plant was no longer used for power and the old stone building was torn down. Courtesy Donald Roberts

The plant was sold to Public Service Company of Colorado in 1926 and continued to operate until 1952. In 1959, the property was sold to the Colorado Fish and Game Department. The plant was torn down and removed. All that remains is the foundation and the rear wall of the power station building and part of the diversion flue at the top of the falls.



Many residents think that was the end of a power station in Rifle, but the rest of the story is we still have a power station currently operating. In 1987, the Atlas Number One power plant was constructed on county property near the Airport. This plant was the first co-generation power plant built in Colorado and was constructed to take advantage of an abundance of natural gas in the Rifle area.

The plant is both natural gas fired turbines and a steam turbine, thus the term co-generation. Many locals also remember the greenhouses that were built to use the extra heat produced to grow tomatoes and peppers. The plant is currently owned by Tri-State G&T, a Touchstone Energy Co-Operative. The power produced by the plant, approximately 108.3 Mega Watts, goes into the electrical grid and is used in Western Colorado.



NEW BOARD MEMBERS

MARY ELDER
LOIS SCRIPTER

UP COMING EVENTS

December:

HOME TOWN HOLIDAYS: December 5th from 4 to 8 PM at the 2nd Street lot downtown. The drawing for the rifle raffle will be held at this event.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Victorian Style at the Rifle Branch Library at 2:00 PM on December 12, 2015

2015 MEMBERS LIST

Businesses:

ALPINE BANK
BOWLES BOOKKEEPING
CHERYL & CO. REAL ESTATE
GRAND RIVER HOSPITAL DISTRICT
MICHAEL CHAFFEE – PHOTOGRAPHER
MILLERS DRY GOODS
NEW UTE THEATER SOCIETY
NITA SMITH - NLS BUSINESS SOLUTIONS
PEARSON INSURANCE
SOUTH BANK SECURE STORAGE
TOWN & COUNTRY VETERINARY HOSPITAL
WEISS & ASSOCIATES
JEANS PRINTING
SPORTSMANS'S BARN TAXIDERMY

Individuals/Seniors/Families:

PHIL, MARLEA & MARCIA ANTES
LORI BABCOCK-WARGO
JUDY BUILTEMAN
TRAVIS & DIANA CASEY – Lifetime Membership
DAVID CAYTON – Lifetime Membership
BETTY CLIFFORD
GAIL COOMBS
ROGER & JANICE DAY
MARY ELDER
KIM FAZZI - Lifetime Membership
STEVEN FULLER
HARRY HUTTON
ALAN & PATTY LAMBERT
JAMES & ALBERTA LANGSTAFF
DAVID & SHIRLEY LAWSON
RUTH LAWSON
WALTER LEMON
JAKE & BECKY MALL
DIRK MYERS
DICK & KAREN RHOADES
KEVIN & KATHY RUNIA
CECIL & BETTY WALDRON
JOHN SCALZO
ELAINE & RAYMOND LANGSTAFF
MARRYHANNAH THROM

NEEDED ITEMS FOR DISPLAY

Ute and Native American artifacts and items.