

# **BUFFALO CREEK WATER**

## *Understanding Our Roots*

*Provided to the Community  
at the 2014 Spaghetti Dinner*

THE BUFFALO PARK ASSOCIATION

by Dave Rainey

On October 22, 1901, Mr. John L. Jerome purchased from Mr. Joseph L. Bailey, all of his real estate known of as "Buffalo Park". Included was 480 acres of land, together with many buildings and improvements. The improvements included the small water system originally built by Mr. Bailey to serve his holdings. From "folk Tales" information, because there seems to be little written record, this system was very limited. The natural spring flow found in "sand draw" was tapped by excavating a collection chamber about 4 feet by 6 feet 8 feet deep. This was cribbed with logs and covered with a wooden lid and recovered. From this collecting chamber water was piped to a wooden storage tank. The water main then followed the draw into the village where branch lines, mostly summer only, extended to the various cabins in Buffalo Park and on to serve Christmas Hill.

On May 10, 1902 Mr. J.L. Jerome, together with Richard H. Hart and Thomas H. Hood joined in incorporating THE BUFFALO PARK ASSOCIATION. The incorporation document was complete with great and flowing wording allowed the new association to enter into almost any business then imaginable including "cutting hay, running a stable, operating a stage coach line, owning a hotel ( it did The Blue Jay Inn), building a telephone company and a water company. While the full text is too long to include here, it did also provide for the many important aspects of what has become, for many of us, the "Buffalo Way of Life" The original hand written version ( still in association files) reads in part -----:

"Be it further known that the business of The Buffalo Park Association is intended to be made subordinate to the recreation and refreshment of its stockholders and their friends, and its chief purpose shall be the encouragement of such diversions and occupations as the following:

Sitting in the Sun  
Sitting in the Shade  
Angling for Trout  
Riding Bronchos  
The noble game of Bridge  
Ping-pong  
Sitting round the Bon Fire  
Playing the Banjo  
Singing  
Wading in the Brook  
Sleeping in the Hammock  
Making Love  
Eating Green Apples  
Star-gazing  
Playing Truant  
Knitting in the Sun  
Drinking High-Balls  
Climbing Mountains  
Telling Fish Stories  
Building Castles in Spain  
Fender Fishing  
Hunting the Snark  
Going to bed after Midnight  
Rising Betimes

Reading Detective Stories  
Wearing Old Shoes  
Making Mud Pies  
Gathering Wild Flowers  
Taking Photographs  
Going in Swimming  
Four o'clock Tea  
Huntin Indians, Bears and Chipmonks  
Skating on the pond  
Sketching  
Dancing in the Barn  
Doing What you Please

The Association will strive for the suppression of:

Telephones  
Tickers  
Nerves  
Creditors  
Banks  
Newspapers  
Dressmakers  
Teacher and all Improvement Societies

It will seek to promote idleness; will contribute to the comfort of tramps, and afford facilities for siestas, dissipation and companionship of old books and old friends."

In 1903 Mr. J.L. Jerome sold to the B.P.A. all his interests at Buffalo Creek including all land and buildings, The Blue Jay Inn and the water company. That summer work was undertaken to improve and up-date the water system. A new, larger, redwood storage tank was built about a quarter of a mile southeast of the village. At that time the main was extended to serve B.P.A. properties being constructed on the northeastern ridge of Christmas Hill. This included Mr. Jerome's new "Summer Cottage" La Hacienda. Most of the 2 inch iron main was placed 6 feet deep, but many of the branch lines serving the community for summer water only were often right on the surface or were buried only a foot or so deep.

The Rules and Regulations dated February 1, 1903 established the 2 season (Summer May to October- winter October to May) rate base with a minimum charge of \$6.00 per year for a 6 room house, plus added charges for additional rooms, bathrooms, showers, or toilets. A horse or cow cost an additional \$2.00 each and \$12.50 for the right to use an outside hose. After one year the minimum was raised to \$7.00 and the use of the hose forbidden. These rules and regulations remained in force well into the late 1930s.

The water company was run as part of the Jerome-Hart-Hood-McGowan family company and for many years was headed by Mrs. Lucy W.S. Jerome, widow of John L. Jerome and grandmother of Stephen and John Hart who took over in later years. Beginning in 1923 the Richard H. Hart family assumed the leadership and has remained the primary managers of both the family corporation and the water system.

For both the benefit and misfortune of the community, the Hart Family became the "Benevolent Grandfather" to all the water users in Buffalo Creek for they were the ones that kept it going through good times and bad times. When the company ran short of cash, the Harts paid the bills. When major repairs were needed they financed

the work, usually carrying the cost, interest free, for several years.

Over the years the system has been extended and improved. The original iron pipes put in place in the 1890s and early 1900s have been replaced. The log collecting galleries were renewed with redwood and later with concret and some of the branch lines have been extended or replaced. The old "Railroad Type" water tank many of us remember from the 1920s and 30s has been replaced with underground concrete reservoirs. When the Civilan Conservation Corp (CCC) arrived in 1930s The Forest Service had them open a second collection gallery and construct a new reservoir, there by providing the additional water storage needs of the camp. These facilities were later turned over to the water company when land was sold to the Forest Service for the Ranger Station, now the work center. During the 1930s part of the principal main was replaced with help from the CCC and the U.S.Army Corp of Engineers from Ft.Logan. The project was used by them as a training program.

In the mid to late 1950s the front range of Colorado suffered a prolonged drought and the water supply at Buffalo Creek reflected it. To relieve this situation Stephen Hart, then President, undertook to establish another source for the water supply. An extensive water collection gallery was dug accross the Sand Draw some 300 feet down stream from the springs. This underground reservoir - over 140 feet wide and 50 feet deep, cut 15 to 18 feet into the granite base of the draw, acts as a "trap" to collect water which is then fed into our system. Over \$20,000 was expended to cover this project and its related piping.

Begining in the 1960s and '70s the changes in our community began with many former summer cottages being coverted into year around homes. Most of these were to be equipted with complete inside plumbing. Also it became more evident to the Hart Family that they should no longer be the sole providers of water for the community. Steps were then taken to separate the water company from the family corperation. After the separation was made in early 1980s a restructuring of the Association was made and shares of stock were made available to residents of the community. Begining in 1985 a limited offer was made to sell stock to property owners in Buffalo Creek. This initial offering resulted in the sale to 22 individuals 31% of the outstanding stock. In 1986 Dick (Richard H.) Heflen and Dave (David A.) Rainey were elected as the first outside directors of the Association. In 1987 Stephen Hart felt he no longer could give the company the attention required. Dave Rainey was then elected President and Dick Heflen, Vice-president and Treasurer. Jim Hart Secretary, and Dick Hart, Ass't Secretary and Ass't Treasurer. At the same time Jack Green was elected a Director. At that time, though the Hart Family still owned 69% of the company, management was transfered to members of the Community. In 1989 other changes were made and 2 additional property owners purchased shares bringing the community share to 36%.

Over the 92 year history of THE BUFFALO PARK ASSOCIATION many local people have worked for the Association as Local Manager or Superintendent, those whose names appear in the records include:

Joseph Snook 1903 - ?  
Fred Searway 1910s  
Byran Farthing 1920s

Tex B (sp?) 1930 - 1940  
Les May 1950 - 1960  
Ray Anderson 1970 - 1980  
Mark Neuroth 1990 -

Many others of us also worked for the Association largely as "Skilled - Manual Dragline Operators" or "Soil Removeal Engineers" (ie pick and shovel, day labors).

Over the years care was taken to protect the water, its source, storage and distribution. The water that comes from our taps never is exposed to the outside air from the time it enters the ground as rain or snow until you open the faucet. The source is classified as groundwater and has, so far, been exempt from all treatment requirements by the Colorado Health Department. Since the 1988 enactment of the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act, the Association has performed many special as well as routine water tests to detect for possible contamination. To date we have received a "Perfect Score" - that is we have either been told "Not detectable" or that the amount found is well below any maximum contaminate level (MCL) prescribed by law. In a nut-shell we can say it is SAFE DRINKING WATER THAT TEASTS GOOD.

Among the people of Buffalo Creek there numerous "tales" about the water company and the people who ran it. Too many to ever try to repeat them here. It is a unique company being one of only 3 remaining private water companies in Colorado, where most water systems are either Cooperatives, Improvement Districts or Municipally Owned.

DAR 4/2/94