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www.prisonmuseum.org
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Open Weds. – Sun.

(October 1 – May 13th, 10am to 5pm)

Open Daily

(May 15 – Sept. 30th, 10am to 6pm)

Adults -\$8
Children 6-12- \$6 (under 6 Free)
Over 65 -\$7
CDOC and FBOP - \$6
Active Military/Retired 20yrs. - \$6

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In This Issue

- **Who was Polly Pry**
- **Women Wardens at Book Signing**
- **Gift Shop Renovation**

The *Tall Wall* is published quarterly for Museum members. If you have comments or are interested in having information published in the *Tall Wall*, please send articles, pictures, and/or correspondence to the above address.

TALL WALL



TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Hello Everyone!

It is spring again, and we have a lot of exciting things happening! As many of you know we did not have the Ceili fundraiser on Saint Patrick's Day. We decided to stay closer to home this year with a dinner at the museum on June 9th!! It will be a chuckwagon-style dinner in memory of times gone by at our Old Max Prison. There will be an amazing band called Blue Canyon Boys which, for one, I am super excited about. You can tour the museum and see all the new displays our staff has been working very hard to complete, including the mural done by Federal inmates, and a charming re-do of the Gift Shop!

Along with spring and summer come our paranormal tours. The ghosts have been very active lately so it should be a fun summer. Come hang out with me and some other paranormal investigators, see what we do and find out why. You may have a good night and get to meet some of our residents. We are coming up with dates now; call the museum to find out exact dates.

As always, thank you for your continued support! Without people like you our history could get lost and, in a world that wants to forget it's roots, it is important we have people like you who help us preserve our past!

Maureen Sheridan, Chair

“It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not

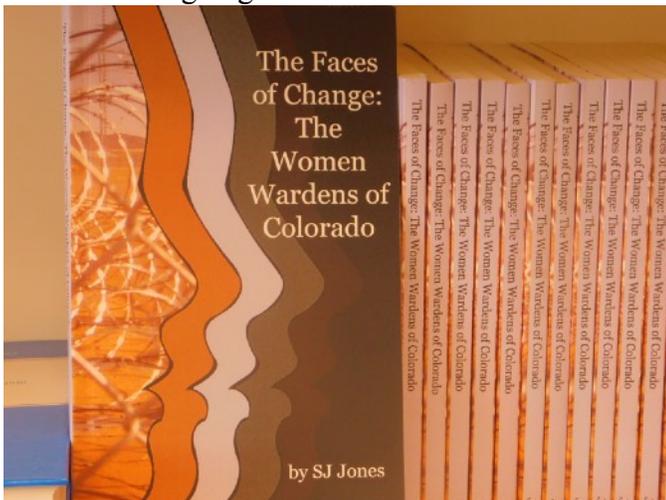
be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”

— Nelson Mandela

WOMEN WARDENS



Donice Neal, Susan Jones, Laurie Tafoya, Cherrie Greco, Joanie Shoemaker, Wallis Parmenter
All were present on January 11, 2018 for Susan Jones' book signing event at the Museum.



Susan's book is available at the Gift Shop in the Museum of Colorado Prisons, 201 N. 1st St., Canon City, CO.

A Great Morning with First Graders

On March 15th the Canon Exploratory School hosted a “Wonderful Student Project” and The Prison Museum was invited to speak to Ms. Brenda Foster's First & Second Grade Class. Stacey Cline was interviewed by First Grader James DiOrio. His topic of choice was “The history of the

very first prison in Colorado.” The research James did, the written presentation complete with pictures, the visual interview, and the verbal speaking report given to the class are all part of the final grade. Each First Grader was assigned a Sixth Grade mentor. James' mentor was Keenan Cooper, a confident young man who gave James the limelight and served as backup if needed, although that case never developed. There was a lively and interesting exchange during the question and answer session. James and his classmates seemed to have a strong interest in the history of the State Prison. We hope to encourage in young people an active interest in the past and all we can learn from it.



James gives report



Stacey answers questions



James and Keenan

GOOD NEWS!!!

International Training Academy has put the Museum of Colorado Prisons on it's curriculum. Due to the educational value of the Museum and it's wealth of information, the Academy directors decided to make tours of the Museum part of it's policy, starting immediately.

WHO WAS POLLY PRY?? FEMALE REPORTER-PART OF TERRITORIAL LORE By Sandy Dexter

She was instrumental in getting Alferd Packer paroled from prison after his sensational cannibalism/murder trial. Her name was Polly Pry and she was the first female reporter for "The Denver Post" newspaper.

I was doing research on Alferd Packer for an article I was thinking about writing when this flamboyant character caught my attention.

Polly Pry was, of course, a pen name. She was born Leonel Ross Campbell in 1857 to a wealthy socially-elite Mississippi family.

Nell, as she liked to be called, began flaunting her independent nature at age fifteen by running away from her exclusive boarding school to marry a much older man, George Anthony, a wealthy

railroad industrialist. Five years later a bored Nell left her husband and moved to New York City searching for excitement.

Needing to work, Nell relentlessly pursued the editor of "The New York World"—then one of the largest newspapers in the country, and brazenly asked for a job as a reporter. It helped that the man was a friend of her father's. To pacify her he gave her a small assignment thinking she would fail and quit badgering him. Nell's article about a fire in the slums impressed the man so much he offered her a full-time position as a reporter.



photo courtesy The Denver Post

And so was born "Polly Pry". It started as a nickname given her by fellow writers at the newspaper, because she could "pry" information from the unlikelyst of sources. She kept it for the rest of her life.

Within months "The New York World" sent Nell to Panama. Rumors were swirling that the United States was going to build a canal there but no one had been able to confirm it. Nell somehow got an exclusive and broke the story. The rumors were true.

During her career Nell attacked unions, capitalists, anarchists, communists, and government. She wrote scathing expose's with a dramatic flair that not only endeared her to her readers but also attracted enemies. She was a strong advocate for women's rights, fighting prejudice in the work place and paving the way for future

women writers. According to one peer, “Polly Pry did not just report the news, she made it.”

Even her hiring by “The Denver Post” as their first female reporter had a Hollywood-ish feel to it.

Nell’s father had been diagnosed with tuberculosis and her parents moved to Denver for his health in the mid-1890’s. On the train to visit them in 1898, Nell struck up a lively conversation with the man sitting next to her. That man happened to be Frederick Bonfils, co-owner of “The Denver Post”. He hired Nell as a reporter before the train pulled into the station in Denver. Her first article for “The Post” was an expose’ of Colorado’s mental health system. It was titled “Our Insane Treatment of the Insane”.

Her connection to the Packer case was as an investigative reporter. In 1901, she was visiting Canon City’s Colorado State Penitentiary (CSP), now our Territorial Prison, to sniff out a possible story on the state’s penal system, when she met prisoner #1389, Alferd Packer.

Packer had been serving time since 1886 on five counts of manslaughter and cannibalism. Not once in all those years had he given an interview or spoken to anyone from the media. He spoke to Polly Pry, and she believed what he told her. Packer always maintained that, “I may have et em, but I didn’t kill em.”

Polly made several more trips to the prison in Canon City, fascinated by the incarcerated Packer and his story of survival. She began writing articles suggesting perhaps Alferd had been unjustly prosecuted, softening the public’s view regarding the man thought of as a “ghoul”. So powerful were her columns she finally convinced the owners of “The Post” to hire a lawyer and seek a retrial. They agreed, largely because her stories were selling newspapers.

When it comes to Alferd Packer people tend to dwell on the cannibalism charge against him because of its sensationalism. They fail to look at the man.

In 1862, shortly after the start of the Civil War, Packer enlisted in Company F, 16th U.S. Infantry. Although he was discharged because of epilepsy, he received a pension of 25 dollars a month from the

Government, who also paid for his funeral and a tombstone.

According to author Matt Masich in an article for “Colorado Life Magazine”, March/April 2013 issue, Packer was a model prisoner. He spent his time gardening and braiding horsehair watch fobs and belts to sell to visitors. From these funds and his veteran’s pension, he gave money to paroled prisoners to buy respectable clothes and a month’s rent when they got out. “He was the soul of generosity and cared nothing for money,” according to the prison warden.

Packer’s second trial was also sensational, not only for its content, but for the arguments used in his defense. I have heard three versions. The most widely accepted is the incident took place on the Ute reservation, which is federal land, and he was tried in a county court. It should have been a mistrial. Another argument was that in 1874 when the incident occurred, Colorado was a Territory, not a state, and had no murder statute (law); therefore, technically, he had committed no crime. One article claimed Polly argued since sailors were legally allowed to eat people if lost at sea, the same rule should apply to people stranded in the mountains.

Not having the actual transcript of the trial at my disposal, I can only say that whichever argument was used, it was successful. Governor Charles Thomas paroled Packer, but never pardoned him. This meant he could never leave the state and had to report any move he made to the parole board. One of his jobs after his release was as a security guard for “The Denver Post”.

After the Packer retrial Polly Pry was once again in the headlines, this time as a heroine.

She discovered the lawyer hired to defend Packer, one “Plug Hat” Anderson, took money from both the owners of “The Post” and Packer. When confronted by H. H. Tammen and Frederick Bonfils, with Polly in attendance, Anderson pulled a gun and shot at both men. Before he could fire a second round, Polly threw herself in front of her bosses, saving their lives. A rumor circulated that the bullets lodged in her heavy skirts. This wasn’t true, of course, but it made Polly an even bigger legend to her followers.

Nothing lasts forever.

The love affair between Polly and “The Post” came to an end when she wrote articles exposing corruption in labor unions. Threatened by a boycott of their paper, Tammen and Bonfils, pro-unionists, fired her.

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No problem for Polly. She became one of the first women to own her own newspaper calling it-- what else-- the “Polly Pry”. Her paper was part gossip column and part tabloid magazine interspersed with serious investigative journalism pieces.

Late one evening in 1904, a disgruntled reader attempted to shoot her in her own home. The man got away before police arrived but the incident received national press coverage, even appearing on the front page of the “Los Angeles Herald”.

That was enough for Polly. She sold her newspaper and moved back to New York City, only to return to Denver when offered a job as a reporter for the “Denver Times”.

Polly added O’Bryan to her list of surnames when she married Denver attorney Harry J. O’Bryan in 1910.

The rest of her life continued to be just as turbulent. She was sent to Mexico during their revolution in 1914 to interview Pancho Villa; she worked as a war correspondent in Europe during World War I; and she came home to fight for the women’s right to vote. By the end of her illustrious career of out-scooping her male colleagues, many of them admitted, “for a woman, Polly Pry was pretty damn good.”

Polly died in Denver at the age of 81 in 1938.

As for Alferd Packer, after his release from prison he lived and worked in Littleton, Colorado, until his death in 1907. And, by the way, according to Western History Resources of the Denver Public Library, he lived the rest of his life as a vegetarian!

SOURCES:

Denver Public Library, history-biographies/Polly Pry

“Los Angeles Herald”, January 11th, 1904

“Smithsonian Magazine” January, 1991 issue

Wikipedia

“Colorado Life Magazine” March\April 2013 issue

GIFT SHOP RENOVATION



COME IN AND SEE FOR YOURSELF WHAT A NICE CHANGE OF DISPLAY AREA WE’VE DONE. STILL NO CHARGE TO SHOP THE GIFT SHOP



The dinner will be held on the grounds of the Museum of Colorado Prisons:

Bar-B-Q Dinner will include contributions from the 5-star Culinary Department of our neighbors to the west. Find your boots (no spurs please) and cowboy hats and bring your friends for a real hoedown! This is our biggest fundraiser of the year!

UPCOMING EVENTS

At the Prison Museum and in the Community during *April, May & June.*

Paranormal Investigation Tours - Investigators will be there with their equipment. Only 18 and older, please. There will be a \$35 fee. Call the Museum for dates & times. The first one will be April 21st.

The Annual Music & Blossom Festival -
May 5th & 6th
The Museum will have a booth on the West end of Veterans Park with gifts and souvenirs to buy. Drop by for a visit!

Chuckwagon Dinner, Fundraiser and the Blue Canyon Boys (High Octane Colorado Bluegrass)

Cocktails at 5:30 Dinner at 6:00. The price includes a tour of the Museum. Get your tickets early, there is limited seating. Table of eight \$240; Individuals \$35

See you there!