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From May 1st to September 30
Summer Hours 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. DAILY.
Admission \$10

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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



June 30, 2019
Issue 2/2019

TO THE MEMBERSHIP:

Hello Everyone,

Welcome Summer! It's officially our busy time of year. Sadly we had to cancel the movie night on the wall do to Colorado's crazy weather. Looks like we are going to try again, this time on July 20th...please keep an eye out for more information and join us. **You should have received your invitation to our Annual Membership BBQ on August 21st. If you haven't please give us a call 269-3015. And don't forget the Alferd Packer Cannibal Buffet is coming on September 21st!**

The new Director of Prisons Dean Williams paid us a visit and was very impressed, and showed us support.

The paranormal nights continue. This is a very popular event. The last time I checked we were listed as the 3rd most haunted place in Colorado! We would like to thank Ghost Hunts USA for helping with those paranormal events.

As always, your support means the world to us. Thank you for your continuing support of the museum and our local history.

Maureen Sheridan

- If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree.

- Michael Crichton

Murder and Mutilation

By Tracy Harmon

FLORENCE -- A favorite topic among Colorado historians is the criminal case of Alferd Packer, who became a cannibal to survive a cold Gunnison County winter in 1886.

But Colorado has another cannibal in its history, this one much less well known but nonetheless fearsome. His name was Antonio Neroni, aka Tony Bavori, a young Italian immigrant who butchered four Florence residents and was plotting to go back for more when he was arrested in 1908.

Packer was convicted of five counts of manslaughter for killing and eating his fellow traveling companions to survive the winter. He was behind bars in 1886 serving a 40-year sentence at Colorado State Penitentiary in Canon City, today known as Colorado Territorial prison or "Old Max."

Florence cannibal Neroni arrived at the prison in May 1908. Neroni's story was one of unrequited love, a terrible blood bath, dismembering his victims, prison and, finally, his own gruesome end.

"To me, he (Neroni) was much more gross," said historian Susan Cochran of the Royal Gorge Regional Museum & History Center in Canon City. "Alferd Packer had to eat something or starve to death; this guy is just killing people, eating their organs and burying them in his vegetable patch."



"Out of all the crimes committed in Fremont County and throughout most of Colorado, the act of cannibalism committed by Neroni was probably the most gruesome," according to "A History of Eastern Fremont County," penned in the late 1970s by Fremont Middle School's Local History class.

Neroni was born in 1877 in Italy, and reportedly committed his first murder there when he was just 12.

He was accused of killing a gardener on a neighboring farm by stabbing the man nine times in the chest.

He served 10 years for that crime and by the time he had slashed and stabbed his way through a fourth Italian victim, he decided it was time to flee to the United States, according to the history book.

In 1904, he moved to Trinidad and worked at the coke ovens near Walsenburg.

“When his employer fell behind on payroll, he threatened to kill his employer’s wife and children,” according to the book.

Instead, Neroni moved to Florence in 1907, at age 30, where he would commit “his final and most horrific crime.”

Neroni lived on a ranch near the River Road in Florence and he operated a “truck garden,” growing produce and selling it out of a truck.

In late December 1907 and early January 1908, four people -- all Italians -- were reported missing. They included Antoinette Palmetto, 18, a housekeeper who refused to marry Neroni. Neighbors believed Neroni killed her because he was infatuated with her and she would not return his affection.

Also missing were brothers Dominick and Joseph Minichiello, and the 60-plus-year-old Ercola Buffetti.

Police Chief Edward Furniss investigated the case and searched the Neroni farm. He found various pieces of evidence, including a bloody knife, hatchet and ax. He also found \$350. One of the bills had a stain believed to be blood.

Furniss arrested Neroni.

There were no bodies to prove the four missing people had been murdered, so Detective Frank Sedesky went undercover to try to find out more.

“By his (Sedesky’s) brave and clever undercover work, he got a complete and beastly confession from the lips of Anton Neroni,” according to the history book.

Sedesky posed as a county jail prisoner and said he was a member of the infamous Black Hand Society. He told Neroni he would be eligible for the society’s protection -- and even an assisted jailbreak -- if he had killed enough people and qualified for membership.

Neroni, who appeared eager to join, spilled the beans.

“Yes, I killed those people down in Florence. I hid their bodies where the police will never find them,” he said.

“I killed Joe (Minichiello) too but tell (sic) the officers that Joe killed his brother, old man Buffetti and Antoinette and got away. If Furniss did not arrest me that day, I was going to kill Joe’s wife and two little girls that night.

I would bury the woman in the ground somewhere, but the little girls make too much blood, so if I could get rid of them any other way, I would make soup out of them and drink the broth. I like human blood and relish eating human flesh,” Neroni confessed to Sedesky.

Still, Neroni would not tell where the bodies were hidden, so authorities threatened his life and he finally caved. He said he scattered some parts and buried others.

According to a January 10, 1908, Littleton Independent account of the crime, “The victims have been foully murdered and their bodies chopped to pieces, the police consider certain.”

After digging a few feet in Neroni’s garden, the police ran across the mutilated pieces of his victims. After chopping up the

bodies, Neroni threw some parts into the river and authorities recovered human lungs, a thorax and the base of a tongue from the Arkansas River, according to the newspaper.

“Towns below here have been notified to watch for the appearance of any evidence of murder that may come to surface,” the newspaper article said.

Authorities believed Neroni killed his would-be lover first, then cut the throat of old man Buffetti from ear to ear as he slept.

In the same night he also killed the Minichiello brothers—Dominick first and then Joseph. Evidence showed Joseph’s head had been crushed as he put up a fight and was killed in the orchard, perhaps witnessing the attempted burial of his brother before confronting Neroni.

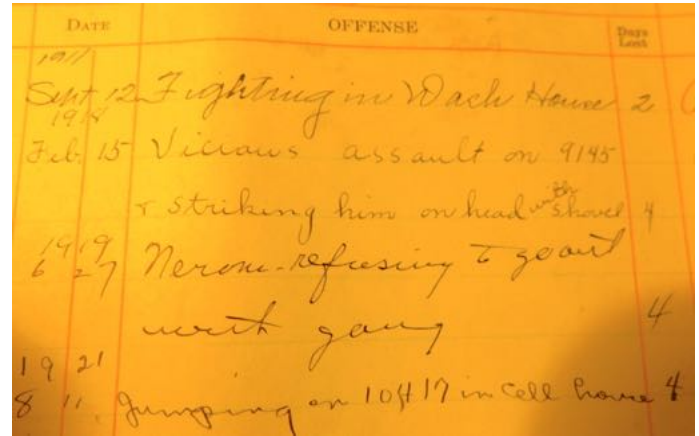
Newspapers across the country carried stories of the blood-curdling crime from the San Juan Prospector in Del Norte to the Fort Worth Telegram and the Aberdeen (S.D.) Daily News.

“He admitted having a craving for human blood and preferred eating human flesh to other meat,” one newspaper account read.

By May 2, 1908, Neroni was behind bars serving a life sentence at Colorado State Penitentiary in Canon City. But his cannibalistic ways didn’t change.

He fought frequently and was disliked by other inmates. Since his term began in the state prison, he has on several occasions attacked others several times using his teeth and biting chunks of flesh from his

victims,” according to a Florence Daily Citizen article.



DATE	OFFENSE	Days Lost
1917 Sept 12	Fighting in Wash House	2
1918 Feb 15	Vicious assault on 9195 & striking him on head with shovel	4
1919 6 27	Neroni refusing to go out with gang	4
1921 8 11	Jumping on 10419 in cell house	4

According to a prison log sheet carefully preserved by the Museum of Colorado Prisons, 201 N. First St. in Canon City, Neroni was written up for fighting, a vicious assault on another inmate during which he struck him on the head with a shovel, refusing to work and jumping on another inmate.

By August 20, 1924, Neroni was dead at the age of 46.

The prison log book indicated Neroni died August 20, 1924, at 1:30 a.m. at the hospital of “traumatic shock,” the result of an altercation with two other prisoners.

Guard James Tillman reported that he saw Neroni wielding a knife in an effort to stab convict Jack Robinson and that Robinson and another inmate, W. P. McCoy, beat Neroni and he died.

However, a coroner’s jury found that Neroni’s death also was caused by the guard, Tillman.

A Daily Record article indicated the courtroom was packed for the coroner’s jury inquest. Several inmates testified they saw Tillman strike Neroni on the side of the head and that Tillman and the two inmates kicked Neroni while he was down.

Tillman reportedly asked McCoy to join in saying, "Kill him," and Tillman also was seen jabbing Neroni in the stomach with a broom handle. Reports said Neroni was begging for mercy and screaming in pain during the attack and that McCoy wanted to stop it, but Tillman answered that he didn't care if he killed Neroni.

None of the inmate witnesses saw Neroni with a knife as Tillman reported. Tillman was charged with Neroni's murder August 27, 1924, after the coroner's jury verdict.

That same day, Neroni's body was released and buried at the Colorado State Penitentiary burial ground – a plot know as Woodpecker Hill at Greenwood Pioneer Cemetery. Unclaimed inmates were buried with a generic "CSP Inmate" marker. His exact resting spot would be impossible to pinpoint, Cochran said.

On April 21, 1925, Tillman's trial started. Along the way, jurors were advised that Tillman could not be convicted of murder and they had the option of returning either a manslaughter or an assault verdict.

"There was little or no interest, unlike the inquest when the courtroom was packed," according to an April 23, 1925, Daily Record article.

Tillman was found guilty of assault and ordered to serve six months in the county jail. He had already served four months of that sentence at the time of his conviction.

McCoy and Robinson never were charged in Neroni's death. McCoy who was serving a prostitution sentence, was discharged February 9, 1927; and Robinson, who was serving a sentence for taking indecent

liberties with a child, was discharged on April 26, 1933, according to the prison museum records.

This article was published in the Pueblo Chieftain newspaper January 2, 2012 and printed in this newsletter with the permission of the author.

OUR HAUNTED MUSEUM

By Sandy Dexter

It seems our prison museum has become a nationally recognized hot spot for paranormal activity. Blossom weekend was a prime example as "Ghost Hunts U.S.A." booked both Friday and Saturday night, May 3rd and 4th.

The group spent from 8 P.M. to 4 A.M. each night in the museum. They had forty people one night and thirty people the next. It was so successful they booked the following weekend, May 10th and 11th, to accommodate the overflow of people who were turned away the previous weekend, and scheduled added weekends August 23 & 24, October 4 & 5, November 29 & 30, 2019.

Tyler, Andrew, and Beth, the Ghost Hunts U.S.A. people in charge, reported back that the museum's "spirits" were very active the entire weekend.

It is a great group according to Museum Director Stacey Cline. "They come in, bring their own equipment, snacks, water, coffee, and then clean the place up before they leave," she said. It's nice to have the added money for the museum too!

One of the stories circulating was about a chair placed in a back cell for people to sit on. No male member of the group wanted

to sit in the chair after the biggest, huskiest male member of the group tried and lasted less than 4 seconds.

You also might want to ask our archivist Tonya Sandoval and her husband Paul about their experience that night in May. It is a “make your hair stand on end” tale.

Does that peak your interest? It should.

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GHOST HUNT USA is on schedule for July, August, October and November. Tickets will be on sale **throughout the U.S.** for approximately \$125 each. For more information go on-line to “Ghost Hunts USA.com”

Paranormal Nights will be starting again soon. Please call the Museum, 269-3015, to schedule.

Tinsley Award

By Susan Jones

A new display has been added to the Prison Museum, compliments of the Colorado Criminal Justice Association (CCJA). This display provides detailed information about each of the people who have been awarded the Harry C. Tinsley award from CCJA



The Harry Tinsley Award was initiated by the Colorado Corrections Association (now known as the Colorado Criminal Justice Association) in 1984. This award was named in honor of Harry Tinsley to recognize individuals for their contributions to the field of corrections. The first Tinsley Award was given in 1984 to Alex Wilson of the Colorado Department of Corrections. Since that time the Colorado Criminal Justice Association has continued to bestow the award to deserving recipients from various disciplines with the Colorado Criminal Justice Association.



On March 21, 2019, a reception was held for the unveiling of the display and invitations were extended to the people who had received this award in the past. A total of eight awardees attended, along with family and friends.



At the conclusion of the display presentation, Patricia Sheets and Rhonda Hardrick, representatives of CCJA and Major Ryan Flores, from the Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility, provided a donation to the museum to show their support of the important work that is occurring within the museum.

Be sure to stop by to see the display and look back in history at some the great accomplishments that have been a part of the Harry Tinsley legacy.



Executive Director, Dean Williams and Museum Director, Stacey Cline with Board Chairman Maureen Sheridan.

Executive Director Dean Williams was impressed with the extent of the old records held in the Museum.

DOC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR VISITS MUSEUM OF COLORADO PRISONS



Administrator Stacey Cline greets DOC Executive Director Dean Williams

UPCOMING EVENTS!!!!

Reminder Annual Membership BBQ will be August 21st. If you have not received your invite please call 719-269-3015.

The Alferd Packer Banquet will be September 21st. Mark you calendars and watch the papers for further information.