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www.prisonmuseum.org
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Summer Hours

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Daily
 Adults \$10
 Children 6-12 \$8 (under 6 Free)
 Over 65 \$8
 CDOC and FBOP \$8
 Military \$8

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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.



TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Hello Everyone,

It is with a heavy heart we announce the loss of Board Member Donna Murphy in June 2020. Donna gave so much, not only to her career at the Dept. of Corrections but also to the Museum. She was Chairman of our Board of Directors for a few years and was very dedicated to preserving history. She will be missed. My thoughts go out to all her family and friends. Thank you, Donna, for your service, not only to us but to many, many organizations in our community.

The museum is open and running, with some restrictions, but we are happy to be open again. During this time, the museum was treated to some deep cleaning, minor fixes, and updated exhibits. A HUGE thank you to Stacey Cline and our staff for getting things done.

If you get a chance, please come by and say hello.

Take care of yourselves and others.

Maureen Sheridan
 Board Chairman

“A diamond is a chunk of coal that did well under pressure”

- Henry Kissinger

DEATH PENALTY ENDED March 23, 2020

Once again Colorado has abolished the Death Penalty. The first time was in 1897 but it was reinstated four years later in 1901. In 2009, it failed to be abolished by one vote in the State Senate. This time the bill passed the Senate by a 19-13 vote and passed in the House by a 38-27 vote. On March 23, 2020, Colorado has once again abolished the death penalty making it the 22nd State in the Union to do so.

Quoting a piece from the “Death Penalty Information Center” written by CNN’s Christine Maxouris: “Capital punishment across the U.S. remained near “historic lows” last year...22 people were executed in 2019—the second fewest since 1991.

“A majority of Americans said that life in prison with no possibility of parole was a better punishment for murder than the death penalty, according to a Gallup poll published in 2019. It was the first time in at least 30 years that most Americans preferred a life sentence, the company said.”

“Colorado legislators failed to repeal the death penalty five times since 2000. There had not been an execution under Colorado law since 1997.

“With Colorado, there are now 22 U.S. states and the District of Columbia that have abolished the death penalty. The governors of California, Oregon, and Pennsylvania have placed moratoria on executions, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

“The American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado acknowledged those who opposed abolishing the death penalty, though it called the repeal long overdue.

“It is a difficult issue for many people, but we have come to learn the reasons that

the death penalty should be a thing of the past: it does not deter crime, it is arbitrary and often discriminatory in its application, it lengthens the trial process and is much more costly than alternatives, it places a heavy burden on those who must carry it out, and it can and does make fatal, irreversible mistakes,” the organization’s executive director Nathan Woodliff-Stanley said in a statement.”

*-Death Penalty Information Center
written by CNN’s Christine Maxouris*

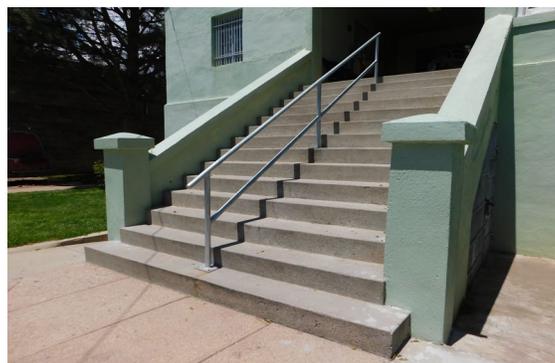


LOCAL INTERN ASSISTS IN THE ARCHIVES ROOM

Meet Tristan Jacobs who will be working at the Museum part-time as a volunteer intern. Tristan is working on a Bachelor’s Degree in History at CSU-Pueblo and will give us 126 hours this summer.

Tristan is working on scanning and coordinating the glass negatives stored in the Archives. These are photos of the inmates taken in the late 1800s and early 1900s when photography was in its infancy and negatives were imprinted on glass. The Prison Museum prides itself that it is in possession of a photo of every inmate ever incarcerated here in Canon

City. But in order to make these exhibits available to be seen by the public, it's necessary to scan the photos into a digital format and coordinate the photo with the prisoner's intake sheet. This effort is a tremendous help in cataloging and preserving these historic glass negatives.
Thank you, Tristan!!



PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS



BENCHES SANDED AND STAINED

SIGNS STAINED & RE-PAINTED



For two months, the Museum was closed due to the Governor's "Shelter-at-Home" order because of the Covid-19 virus. Our Museum Administrator Stacey Cline took the opportunity to do some sprucing up around the Museum and the Grounds. With help from the staff and a couple volunteers, the visitors' benches have been sanded and varnished, the signs in the yard and at the entrance have been re-stained and the lettering freshly painted, the flower beds were cleaned out and weeded, the front pillars at the foot of the stairs have been newly stuccoed and painted, and the handrail was freshly painted. Inside the building, every cell and every item in the exhibits was thoroughly cleaned. Cracks in walls and floors were filled and paint was touched up wherever needed.

To make the building compliant with the health regulations when it re-opened, the floor was marked off at six-foot intervals. Masks are made available at the front desk for anyone not wearing their own mask when they enter the building.

This all involved herculean effort and dedication and we want everyone who worked on this project to know your work is very much appreciated; the Museum looks fantastic! The Board and all the Membership want to say THANK YOU!!



WALTER JONES. #17220
The Last Man to Die on the Gallows

By Paula DeCook

Joe Less was traveling through Colorado from his home in New Jersey. The 17-year-old knew he was taking some risks by riding the boxcars on the railroad, but the this was October 1932 and a boy with no job prospects was just doing the best he could. He had a traveling companion named "Red" Johnson and the two of them were enjoying the scenery through the mountains. The fly in the ointment was the fact that two other travelers shared the boxcar.

Walter Jones, alias Jack Morgan, from Flint, Michigan. was 23 years old and already an ex-convict. He had served 34 months in the Michigan State Penitentiary on two different charges. His pal was Monrad James Nelson from Minnesota.

At some point east of Palisade, Colorado, Jones and Nelson attacked the other two with pieces of iron pipe. Jones hit Johnson with enough force to badly fracture his skull, then Jones threw the body off the train. Nelson had attacked Joe Less and also threw his victim out of the boxcar, but young Joe was not seriously injured. He

made his way to the local authorities and was able to give descriptions of the two men. While Nelson was nearly 6 ft. tall, his pal Jones was easy to identify at 5 ft 1 inch and 149 pounds. It seems only natural that Jones' nickname was "Shorty".

The motive was presumably robbery as Jones had \$58 in his possession and Red Johnson's knapsack when he and Nelson were arrested in Salida the next day.

Mesa County Sheriff Charles Lumley and Game Warden John Hart left Grand Junction the morning after the arrest. They went to Salida and brought both prisoners back to Mesa County that same evening to face murder charges. Both men signed a joint confession. They stated Jones hit Johnson and Nelson hit Joe Less with iron pipes and then threw them from the train. Joe Less was retained in the Mesa County Jail as a material witness.

Hartford "Red" Johnson's body was recovered and lay in the mortuary in Palisade. In an effort to identify the body and perhaps notify relatives, Chief of Police Decker took Johnson's fingerprints. Joe Less had mentioned Red told him he had been in the United States Navy so Decker asked the Navy to compare fingerprints to aid in the identification.

A jury later found both men guilty of murder but recommended life imprisonment for Nelson and the death penalty for Jones.

Over the next year, Jones's court-appointed lawyer Quentin Bonner and Sheriff Lumley repeatedly tried to get Jones's sentence commuted to life imprisonment, but the Supreme Court and later Governor Ed Johnson did not agree to do that. It seems they trusted the jury's judgement and

refused to intervene. In a direct quote from the prisoner's record sheet: "October 20, 1933—Supreme Court affirmed judgement of District Court of Mesa County and Order execution to occur week ending Saturday December 2, 1933". Walter Jones was executed by hanging on December 1, 1933.



And what became of Monrad James Nelson, Jones's sidekick?

Mr. Nelson's personal information is very scanty. We know his mother was living in Badger, Minnesota when Nelson was arrested and that he had worked as a laborer.

A mere 19 months into his life sentence Nelson was part of an escape attempt, emphasis on attempt. He worked with three other inmates digging a tunnel from the Bake Shop to a point along the West Gate Tower.

The next notation on his record is February 12, 1949 when his sentence was commuted by Governor Lee Knous to 49 years 11 months and 16 days to Life. Nelson was paroled in July of 1951 and totally discharged on December 26, 1962.

Information for this article was taken from:

In an Exhibit in the Museum of Colorado Prisons, you will see the noose used to hang Walter Jones. The Exhibit also includes the Execution Order and information about the Gallows itself.

*Museum of Colorado Prisons
The Daily Sentinel
(Grand Junction) 1933
Newspapers.com*

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PLANS FOR THE SUMMER

July 10 & 11 and again on Sept. 25 and 26: Ghost Hunts USA will be here. See their website for more information and tickets.

**The GIFT SHOP
Is open!!!
Don't forget to wear
your mask!**

June 18, 2020: A group called

H A R T—“Historical Artifact Recovery Team”— brought their metal detectors to the grounds of the DOC properties along First Street to see what, if anything, they might dig up. Anything discovered will automatically become the property of the Museum.



The HART team ready to explore DOC grounds.



Stacey receiving instruction on using the metal detector and other equipment



Typical discoveries in the first hour in the museum area.



Stacey quickly discovered buried treasure—a bent nail!