

ECONOMIC PROFILE

Park City History

Park City & Summit County Utah

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PARK CITY HISTORY -- SUMMARY

Long before Park City became a world class mountain resort town and venue for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, it was famous as a silver mining town, and boasts a lively and colorful past. Founded by prospectors in the late 1860s, Park City continued to mine silver until the early 1970s. The mining company, Park City Consolidated Mines, started the ski business in 1963, when they built the first lifts on what was then called Treasure Mountain. The Park City area now has two world class resorts: Park City and Deer Valley Resort.

UTAH BEFORE PARK CITY

- 1847 Brigham Young and the Mormon settlers pass near the north end of the valley on their way to Salt Lake City.
- 1850 Parley Pratt's toll road leads from Parley's Park westerly into the Salt Lake Valley, collecting \$1,500 from travelers en route to the California gold rush.
- 1862 Brigham Young's "City by the Salt" is booming and Federal troops from California under Colonel Patrick Connor are sent to guard the stagecoach lines and watch over the "Saints," who might side with the Confederacy in the Civil War. Figuring that a find of valuable ore would bring in outsiders and dilute the Mormon population, Col. Connor sends soldiers prospecting.
- 1863 Utah's first mining claim is filed in Bingham Canyon west of Salt Lake Valley.

SILVER DISCOVERY DRAWS A CROWD

- 1868 In late October soldiers climb over the mountains from Big Cottonwood Canyon to the Park City area and find silver. As the snow is swirling and a storm brewing, they mark the outcropping with a bandanna and return in the spring. The first mine is named Flagstaff. Park City will become known not only for its silver, but for lead, zinc and gold. The Flagstaff Mine is the first to ship ore from the Park City area.
- 1869 The transcontinental railroad is completed at Promontory, Utah. Laid-off workers, including many Chinese, settle in Parley's Park.
- 1870 Parley's Park has a total population of 164.
- 1872 George and Rhoda Snyder name the area "Parley's Park City," soon shortened to "Park City." The discovery of exceedingly rich silver ore (400 ounces to the ton) leads to the opening of the Ontario Mine and starts a boom-town atmosphere in Park City, population 5,000. George Hearst, the father of William Randolph Hearst, and partners buy the Ontario for \$27,000. It will produce over \$50 million in its lifetime.
- 1875 A free public school is established.
- 1880 Water in the mines is a continuing problem despite numerous underground pumps. The Cornish Pump, a machine 30 feet high with a 70-ton flywheel, is imported from Philadelphia by freight wagon. It pumps water from 1,000 feet below the surface in the Ontario Mine, taking out over 4 million gallons of water a day. Later, drain tunnels will replace pumps. The first issue of The Park Record comes off the press. Published continuously since this date, the newspaper is available every Wednesday and Saturday.
- 1881 Park City is the third city in Utah to receive telephone service. A typhoid epidemic hits. The Catholic Church builds a frame church and names it St. Mary's.
- 1882 The Ontario has competition as other discoveries of silver occur. Among the larger ones are the Crescent, the Anchor and the Mayflower.

PARK CITY BECOMES OFFICIAL

- 1884 Park City is incorporated, and City Hall is under construction, to be finished in 1885.
- 1889 The town's population is over 5,000. The city is one of the first in the state with electric lights.
- 1892 Silver King Mine is incorporated. It will prove to be one of Park City's largest silver producers.
- 1893 Because silver is no longer to be used to back currency, silver prices drop. Miners at the Silver King accept a pay cut from \$1 to 50 cents, allowing the mine to continue while others remained closed. First drilling contest occurs. In 15 minutes Frank Ward sinks his drill 17-1/2 inches into the rock. Yearly contests continue to this day as part of the Miners' Day (Labor Day) festivities.
- 1894 The Silver Queen, Susanna Bransford Emery, is making \$1,000 a day from her interest in the Silver King Mine.
- 1896 On statehood day, January 4, Park City has a population over 7,000.
- 1897 Silver King tramway uses buckets to bring ore down to town, resulting in lower transportation cost, 22 cents a ton compared to \$1.50 per ton when hauled with horses and wagons. Dick Smith, a nine-year-old, receives a "blistered bottom" from his mother after he climbed a tramway tower, inched hand-over-hand along the cable and down the ladder of the next tower.

TRIAL BY FIRE

- 1898 Park City approaches a population of 10,000. In June, 200 of the 350 structures, homes and businesses burn in the worst fire Park City has ever seen. Three-quarters of the town is gone, 500 are homeless, \$1 million in property is lost. Gone is the grand new opera house, built at a cost of \$300,000 and open less than three months. Seventeen volunteers leave to fight in the Spanish-American War, which forces up the price of silver.
- 1899 The town is rebuilt in one and one-half years! The new buildings are more substantial—many are built of brick and stone to withstand fire. George Manning's saloon is first to be rebuilt.
- 1902 The mines are going strong, with new companies, new buildings and equipment. William Tretheway is honored at a special banquet for his heroism in carrying a case of burning dynamite from the Silver King Mine up and out to safety. On July 15, 34 men die in the explosion of a large underground store of dynamite, and from the resulting fumes. It is the worst mine disaster in Park City history and has resulted in a state law which forbids the underground storage of large amounts of explosives.
- 1904 The Miners Hospital (now a community center) is built for the sum of \$5,000, raised by the local #144 of the Western Federation of Miners. Six thousand miners are treated for miner's con, similar to silicosis, in the first year.
- 1906 One of the first skiers in the area, "Bud" Wright, spends the winter on skis, troubleshooting as a lineman for the telephone company between Alta, Brighton and Park City.
- 1907 Hard times befall the town, with cave-ins and flooded tunnels, making mining a poor enterprise. The panic of 1907 affects the whole United States, causing a general recession; however, the economy improves by the end of 1908.
- 1916 Heavy snows cause fatal snow slides and the collapse of the famed Dewey Theatre (where the Egyptian Theatre now stands) just hours after 300 patrons finished watching the evening movie.

THE GREAT EXPERIMENT CALLED PROHIBITION

- 1917 The prohibition of liquor, called “The Noble Experiment,” begins in Utah, two years before the rest of the nation. Bootleggers abound, and stills and home brewing are popular.
- 1918 The great influenza epidemic prompts a law requiring anyone on the streets to wear a thick gauze mask or be arrested. Consequently, the impact of the disease is less severe here.
- 1920 Skiing becomes more widespread as some workers take the mine train to the top of Thaynes Canyon for a ski trip to the bottom of the mountain, the same route which is used in 1963 for the Mine Train Ride which moves skiers up the mountain.
- 1921 There are 27 bars in Park City and, despite prohibition, a thirsty soul could buy a drink in all but one of them. Prohibition continues through 1932.
- 1926 The town’s first Winter Carnival is a success, with over 500 skiers arriving in Deer Valley on a ski train, a four-hour journey from Salt Lake City.
- 1929 The stock market crashes. Silver King stock plummets from \$12.87 to \$6.50 in one year; Park Con from \$2 to 27 cents. A rope tow is installed at Snow Park (now Deer Valley Resort).

SKIING STARTS WITH A JUMP

- 1930 Ski jump is built on Creole mine dump. Downhill skiers are few; skiing mostly spectator sport.
- 1931 Alf Engen sets a world record at Ecker Hill jumping 247 feet. The next December he jumps a new record, 266 feet.
- 1934 Ski jumper Calmer Anderson, hampered by strong crosswinds and hard-packed snow, dies on Ecker Hill.
- 1936 A special ski train running from Salt Lake City to the slopes above Deer Valley is so popular that it is repeated the next year.
- 1940 Swedes and Finns carry mail over the mountains to Brighton and Alta using very long skis and usually only one pole to control speed.
- 1941 December 7th, Pearl Harbor is attacked. Gas rationing prohibits travel to the Ecker Hill site.
- 1946 The first lift goes in at Snow Park. Mining prices drop lower.

GHOSTS INHABIT TOWN

- 1949 On July 1 the mines shut down, putting 1,200 miners out of work.
- 1951 Park City is included in a book called “Ghost Towns of the West,” indicating no population. There are actually 1,150 “ghosts.”
- 1952 Some mines are opening up as mineral prices rise.
- 1954 People are leaving town. Welsh, Driscoll and Buck’s department store closes after 50 years. The red light district is raided, not an uncommon event.

SKIING GIVES TOWN A LIFT

- 1958 United Park City Mines looks to diversify and starts a feasibility study to begin the Treasure Mountain Resort (Park City Mountain Resort).
- 1963 Park City qualifies for a federal loan from the Area Redevelopment Agency. The government gives \$1.25 million and, with Park City contributions, a total of \$2 million is used to start a ski area. A gondola, chairlift and 2 J-bars are installed. A lift pass costs \$3.50 and there are almost 50,000 skier days the first year. A mine train takes skiers into a Silver King Mine tunnel, then up a shaft to the top of the mountain - the trip proves too lengthy to be popular.
- 1965 Word of the new ski area spreads, people move to Park City. Snow Park is open weekends.
- 1968 Snow Park closes; ParkWest Ski Area opens.

ART HITS MAIN STREET

- 1970 First Park City Art Festival debuts on Main Street.
- 1976 Kimball Art Center, in old Ely Garage, opens doors with two galleries, gift shop, classrooms.
- 1978 On Valentine's Day, Park City is without a working mine for the first time in over 100 years.
Despite a rally in the early '80s, mining will be over by 1981. A skeleton crew keeps the water pumped out of the mines in case the price of metals increases dramatically.
- 1980 Deer Valley Resort opens at the site of the old Snow Park area. KPCW, Summit County's noncommercial public radio, goes on the air.
- 1981 The United States Film and Video Festival, highlighting independent films, opens in January for the first season in Park City.
- 1982 The Miners Hospital, threatened with demolition, is moved from its site near the base of the Park City Mountain Resort to City Park and its new use as a public library. After extensive renovation on the building a human chain forms a "book brigade" to move the thousands of books in the collection from the old library on Main Street to its new home.
- 1984 There are 14 lifts at Park City and a day pass is \$26, with 500,000 skier days.
- 1986 TV45, Park City's television station, begins broadcasting.
- 1990 The estimated population of year-round residents is 5,000. Skier days for the three areas are over 850,000.
- 1995 June 16, Salt Lake City is named host city for the 2002 Olympic Winter games in the first round. Summit County venues are Deer Valley Resort—slalom, combined slalom, aerial, mogul; Park City Ski area—giant slalom, dual slalom, snowboard, half-pipe snowboard; and the Utah Winter Sports Park—nordic ski jumping, bobsled, luge. City Council denies demolition of Burnis Watt's historic National Garage on Park Avenue.
- 1996 The Silver Mine Adventure Tour opens in the Ontario Mine and remains open for four years. The historic Park City High School Auditorium is named for Jim Santy, one of the old miners in Park City.
- 1997 Canyons Resort opens (formerly ParkWest and Wolf Mountain—open since 1969). Bear Hollow makes history with the Olympic bob and luge track opening at the Winter Sports Park.
- 1998 Park City Mountain Resort retires gondola, replacing it with two high-speed chairlifts.
- 1999 President Bill Clinton visits Historic Main Street while on a ski holiday in Park City – his second visit to Park City.

OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES LIGHT PARK CITY'S FIRE WITHIN

- 2002 Park City hosts multiple events for the XIX Winter Olympic Games. Deer Valley hosts slalom, freestyle moguls, and aeriels; Utah Olympic Park holds bobsleigh, luge, skeleton, Nordic combined and ski jumping events; Park City Mountain Resort hosts giant slalom, snowboard GS and half pipe events.
- 2008 President George W. Bush visits Park City while attending a fundraiser for the Republican party at politician and 2002 Winter Olympic Chief Mitt Romney's house in Deer Valley. Forbes Traveler Magazine names Park City one of America's 20 "Prettiest Towns."
- 2009 Deer Valley Resort is named the number one ski resort in North America by readers of *Ski Magazine* in both 2008 and 2009.
Several international world cup competitions grace Park City's resorts and Olympic Park in the last 10 years.
Park City has 64 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- 2013 Vail Resorts acquires Canyons Resort, the company's 10th ski area in five states and its first in Utah. Canyons is included in Vail's 2013-14 Epic Season Pass program.
- 2014 Snowboarder and Park City local Sage Kotsenburg won the first-ever Olympic gold medal in men's snowboard slopestyle at the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. Vail Resorts announces acquisition of Park City Mountain Resort and its plans to combine Park City and Canyons creating the largest ski resort in the United States.
- 2015 Park City Mountain Resort's Quicksilver Gondola opens linking the Park City and Canyons base areas and making history as the largest ski resort in the United States.

For further reading about Park City history:

Diggings & Doings in Park City, Raye Carleson Ringholz, Park City, Utah, 1983.

Park City, Katherine Reynolds, The Weller Institute for the Cure of Design, Park City, 1984.

Trail of the Leprechaun, William M. McPhee, Exposition Press, Hicksville, New York, 1977.

Treasure Mountain Home, by George A. Thompson and Fraser Buck, Dream Garden Press, Salt Lake City, 1981.

Walking Through Historic Park City, Raye Ringholz and Bea Kummer, Park City, Utah, 1984.

For more about Park City's past, please visit the Park City Historical Society and Museum website at parkcityhistory.org