

FULFORD, COLO.



BY

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A Look at Fulford, Colorado: Past and Present

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Outline

Thesis sentence: Fulford, Colorado, now a quiet town of the rockies, has one of the most unique backgrounds of all the ghost towns in Colorado.

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II. Camp Fulford in the beginning

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A Look at Fulford, Colorado: Past and Present

Fulford, Colorado, now a quiet ghost town of the rockies, has one of the most unique backgrounds of all the ghost towns in Colorado. The old mining town is located twenty miles southeast of Eagle on the old Brush Creek road, Although reachable in the winter months, Fulford serves as a main attraction for tourists visiting the Eagle Valley area during the summer months.

The town of Fulford grew rapidly and declined rapidly as did most mining towns in the earlier days. If ever a town had a tragic beginning it was Camp Fulford. The town was originally called Nolan's Creek camp after an early prospector, who with another prospector discovered some rich mines in the vicinity in 1887. While making camp one night, Nolan crossed Brush Creek on a log, carrying his gun straight up. The trigger caught and the gun went off, cutting his tongue. There was no one around to give him proper care, and he bled to death. The creek was then renamed Nolan Creek and his name and the date of his death were blazed on an aspen tree.¹

The Fulford mining boom started in 1889. The original townsite was laid out in blocks and lots. The upper town and lower town were built at the same time. The upper town was smaller, but held most of the businesses. A log hotel, boarding houses, saloons, livery barn, general store, and assay office were all in the upper part of town. The post office was originally a part of upper Fulford, but was moved to the lower part of Fulford and run by J.I. Sampson. Fulford never really had a cemetery to speak of, the closest thing to a cemetery was the few graves beyond the

bridge in lower part of town.²

In 1892 the district attracted attention as a producer of gold ores; and over five hundred claims were staked. "Everything pans out gold, copper is plentiful and here and there are strong indications of silver and lead. The mining interests of Brush Creek alone are promising enough to warrant the belief that a fair-sized town will be someday built here," prophesied the optimistic miners.³

In 1896 there was enough ore present to run a process plant for five years in the Polar Star and the Cave mines. A twenty-five stamp amalgamating and concentrating mill was built during the years of 1901 and 1902 to handle ore coming from the Mendota, Kittie B., New York, Adelaide and Layton mines.

The silver boom reached Brush Creek around 1912. It lasted up to about 1918. During this boom the old log hotel in Upper Town was razed and its logs were bought and used to timber the Lady Belle mine.⁴

Transportation from Eagle to Fulford started in 1890. In 1890 the old Buckholz livery barn was built in Eagle. The barn was built by the Fulford Brothers, but sold at once to the Hadley Brothers. The Hadley Brtohers started a route to Fulford, running a stage daily each way for several years.⁵

There was a school in Fulford for several years but not much is really known about it. In the late 1930's the school furnishings were brought down to the Brush Creek school. Presumably, after the school in Fulford was closed down, the children attended the Brush Creek School.⁶

The hills and mines around Fulford are graves as well as storehouses of treasure, much of which has never come to light. Its early history is grim and consists of a succession of rich strikes, snowslides, deaths, and lost mines. The Denver Republican of May 8, 1892, refers to "the evil genius about the place" and hints at the "spirits of men who lie buried

at the base of old Slate Mountain." It also tells the first of the strange stories which are linked with the camp.⁷

In 1849, Buck Rogers organized a party to go west and strike it rich in the California gold fields. After traveling over one hundred miles, the party reached the Pikes Peak region. Six men of the party, including Buck Rogers, stayed to prospect. They found gold which estimated from sixty to one hundred thousand dollars in gold. But after a few weeks of prospecting, their provisions ran, so Buck Rogers decided to go for supplies to the nearest camp which was one hundred miles away.

Rogers traveled for seven days, using up all the gold for his own provisions. Soon he became a bum in the saloons. In six weeks he became worried and decided to go back to his crew. Five days later he reached the camp. During his absence, a snowslide had taken his crew. A mound remained where his crew and the gold lay.

Rogers went for help but after many days of digging, the gold and the men still laid beneath the snow. Rogers wandered from camp to camp, a broken man. In 1881 he died as he told the preceding tale.⁸

Two tales follow the loss of the Buck Rogers treasure. The first tale begins with Arthur Fulford. Fulford was described as being a very powerful person who people respected very much.

Fulford was the town marshall of Redcliff in the early 1880's, after which he began running the Halfway House on Brush Creek. This was a stop between Eagle and Camp Nolan, which was later renamed Camp Fulford after Fulford's tragic death.



ARTHUR FULFORD

The tale begins in 1891. During this year Fulford met a man who claimed he had a notebook of Roger's that explained where the lost Rogers treasure was. The man told Fulford he had been secretly searching for the hidden tomb on Slate Mountain, had found an abandoned tunnel with "Fragments of tools and parts of human bones,"⁹ plus some nuggets that had been soiled for nearly fifty years. Now he was looking for someone to help him dig up the old treasure. Fulford was very skeptical about becoming the man's partner until he saw samples of the man's ore.

Two weeks later, the man was killed in a drunken brawl in a Redcliff saloon. Though still skeptical, Fulford went and searched the man's cabin for the notes, which he found. Fulford took the notes and samples of ore to a speculator and ex-pro prospector in Aspen. He hoped they would help him locate the mine.

In September, Fulford started back to Brush Creek to hunt for the treasure. For months men reported having seen him digging in the gulches of Brush Creek. During the winter months a terrible snowslide occurred on New York mountain. Apparently Fulford was on his way to jump some claims. Fifty men searched the mountain, but failed to find him. Some claimed Fulford had found the lost treasure, but it is really unknown whether or not he actually did.¹⁰

The second tale is told by Burt Pottinger in the Denver Republican of 1890.

In 1886 two men arrived at the Fulford ranch below Brush Creek. They rode up Brush Creek and were gone several days. They returned and rode away. Soon they returned to the Fulford ranch and took another ride up Brush Creek, only to return and ride away again. On the return of their third visit, they stopped and talked to Mr. Fulford and related the following tale of a lost mine to him.

In 1881 an Irishman had some gold nuggets which he asked a Denver bartender to exchange for currency. The two became friends and the Irishman told the bartender how he had killed his partner. Apparently the man and his partner had found the rich Buck Rogers treasure. The two quarreled over the treasure which soon ended in a fight. Finally the Irishman killed his partner in self defense.

The Irishman gave a description to the bartender of how to reach the hidden treasure, saying that there was at least a million in gold to be found there, then he left and the bartender never saw him again.

The bartender became ill before he could take advantage of the gold strike. He told the doctor of his acquaintance with the Irishman and gave him the description before he died. The doctor tried very hard to locate the mine, but with no success he showed the paper throughout the neighborhood so that by 1890 "nearly every family along the Eagle River had a copy of it"¹¹

Take the D. & R.G. to Tennessee Pass; from there take wagon road and trail along Eagle River to mouth of Brush Creek. Follow up Creek 5 miles to the forks, then take east branch about 5 miles until you come to a shift of rocks, coming almost at the water's edge; from there you find on the right a dry gulch running north. Follow up the gulch until you come to 4 large trees standing close together, with the bark all taken off, about two feet around them. Turn due east and go directly up the hill until you strike a small hole dug in the ground and keep directly on until you come to another one and so on until you have reached the third one. This line is also marked by blazed trees on both sides. Here turn due north and about two hundred feet from the last blazed tree you will see three tall trees standing in a triangle. This is about 300 feet from timberline, and the vein runs about north and south from the place described. On the top of the hill you can see the Mt. of the Holy Cross and west, the Taylor Range.¹²

The directions to the mine were very good and everything was found except the vein.

After the silver boom diminished in 1918, Camp Fulford became a ghost town. Its streets became overgrown and its cabins were surrounded by willows.

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It was a peaceful and provocative place visited by few people who returned to relive the past. Then in 1948 a tax accessor by the name of Hemberger became interested in Fulford. It was during this year that part of the Fulford land was being sold for back property taxes. Hemberger bought the land, and then in 1951 he acquired the rest of the property through back property taxes. When Hemberger died, his estate was put up for bids. Local people soon started buying the land in blocks and lots.

In 1974, the Scandian Corporation of Denver bought the remaining property on the the Hember estate. The Corporation split the property into blocks and lots and began selling them to the current owners ranging from 1500 dollars a lot.¹³

Now there are many people who come to Fulford to stay in the summer months. One man in particular is worth mentioning, Mr. Harvey Ickes.

Mr. Ickes is the present mayor of Fulford. The four lot property where he lives has been owned by his divorced wife's family since the 1880's. Mrs. Terry and her brother Paul Ickes are the current owners of the property.

Harvey first started visiting the area in the 1930's on vacations. He has lived on the mountain permanently for about thirteen years—"maybe because it was there,"¹⁴ he says.

But living in Fulford was hard at first according to Harvey. The conditions were very primitive to begin with, but Harvey now has indoor plumbing which is brought to him by a mountain stream only three hundred and fifty feet away. He uses bottled gas to heat his cabin and to fuel the generator that produces his electricity. To cook by, Harvey has a wood burning stove. He also has radio and television.



HARVEY ICKES

Harvey communicates to the outside world by citizens band radio. Every day at noon he radios reports of the weather conditions to the local forestry service.

Harvey claims he is never lonely. 'I guess I don't have time for that,' Harvey claimed, 'I'm the kind of guy who can't sit still. It's my nature to keep moving. I raise a garden in summer time and in winter I scoop snow every day. There are always people wandering in and out. Like ski dudes. Or people looking for the long lost Fulford gold mine. Other people may be looking for a good trout stream.'

Harvey lived in Fulford year round up until a few years ago. In the winter months Harvey would use a snowmobile¹⁶ to get to town when he needed to get supplies. But with age, Harvey has found this more and more difficult each year. He now lives in the town of Eagle during the winter months and he makes his way back up to Fulford in June to welcome the tourists.

In 1975, Harvey was faced with being pushed out of his job as the Mayor of Fulford. While Gerald Ford was still the President of the United States, the job of honorary justice of the peace and mayor of Fulford was bestowed upon him by Mr. Joseph R. Hartt of Englewood.

Hartt is one of the principal planners in the Scandian Corporation, which has purchased a large portion of the Hemberger estate.

Hartt first learned of Ford's wish to become more involved in Eagle County through a public statement which he made several months before. Ford claimed he would like to become more involved in Eagle County since he has visited it quite often during his vacations.

Apparently Harvey was out of town when this honor of justice of the peace and mayor of Fulford was bestowed upon Mr. Ford. Therefore, when he did return and learned that his job of Mayor of Fulford



GERALD FORD

was in trouble, he decided he was not going to step down and give up his job, to anyone, not even the President of the United States. Harvey decided he would call for an election to officially determine who reigns as the Mayor in the old, deserted mining town near Eagle.

When interviewed by the Eagle Valley Enterprise, Harvey was quite upset. Harvey did not paint a rosy picture of the Mayor's job. "I wonder if Mr. Ford would be willing to be the garbage collector and take care of the sewer system,"¹⁷ he asked.

Ford's eligibility to hold office in Fulford was also questioned. "He'd have to establish residency," Ickes pointed out.¹⁸

Ickes said that in his opinion, about the only aspect of the Mayor's job the President seems even remotely suited for is receiving the numerous foreign dignitaries and special guests the Mayor of Fulford entertains each year. "With his previous experience maybe he could handle that part of the job"¹⁹ Ickes said, though he warned his potential opponent that this is no simple responsibility. "Last year 1,973 people signed my guest book between June 1 and November 1, and I had several visitors from foreign countries, too,"²⁰ he reported.

Carl T. Curtis, a U. S. senator for the state of Nebraska at this time offered advice to the President. Curtis wrote a letter to Ford informing him that he was not the only Mayor of Fulford. He told Ford that Mr. Ickes was ready to fight for his job. Senator Curtis then pointed out a few reasons why he felt the President should not run for the job in Fulford.

1. The U.S. senate would have to determine the validity of Ford's certificate claiming him the honorary justice of the Peace and Honorary Mayor of Fulford, if there was any.
2. He did not want the President to run in the election for a personal reason. "I wouldn't want you to lose and I hate to think how the election would come out in a ghost town where the only votes cast beyond those of your opponent would have to come from the local graveyard."²¹

Curtis proposed to Ford that he should attempt to settle this problem by negotiation and compromise.

Receiving this letter, Ford decided to concede his Fulford Mayorship. Ford wrote a letter to Harvey explaining he did not know of Harvey's present job as Mayor and he realized that he would lose the race because Fulford consists of only one citizen. Therefore, he was forced to withdraw, because the race would be so close!²²

The town of Fulford has been quiet since then. Tourists come and go during the summer months. They come to visit Harvey and sign the famous guestbook which has signatures from people all over the world. They sometimes stay and chat for awhile sipping some homemade brew and listen to Harvey tell the great stories of Fulford's past.



Old buildings at Fulford. Picture by Jim Ward.

Footnotes

¹Muriel Sibell Wolle, Stampede to Timberline(Denver, Colorado: Alan Swallow, 1962), p. 257.

²Eagle County Schoolchildren and Teacher, original manuscript, Eagle County History(Eagle, Colorado, 1940), p. 2.

³Wolle, p. 260.

⁴Ibid. p. 261.

⁵Eagle County Schoolchildren, p. 3.

⁶Ibid. p. 4.

⁷Denver Republican, May 8, 1892, by Wolle, Stampede to Timberline, p. 257.

⁸Ibid. p. 257.

⁹Ibid. p. 258.

¹⁰Ibid. p. 258.

¹¹Burt Pottinger, Denver Republican, 1890, quoted by Wolle, Stampede to Timberline, p. 260.

¹²Ibid. p. 260.

¹³Robert McMorris, "One-Man Town Isn't Lonely," Omaha-World Herald, 27 December, 1975, p. 13, cols. 4-6.

¹⁴Ibid. p. 13.

¹⁵Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁶It was impossible to travel any other way to Fulford during the winter months except by snowmobile. This is the kind of transportation Harvey would use.

¹⁷"Who Will Reign in Fulford," Eagle Valley Enterprise(Eagle, Colorado), 25 March, 1975, p. 6, cols. 1-3.

¹⁸Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁹Ibid. p. 6.

²⁰Ibid. p. 6.

21 "Senator offers advice on Ickes-Ford Dispute," Eagle Valley Enterprise (Eagle, Colorado), 18 March, 1975, p. 2, cols. 1-2.

22 "Ford Concedes Fulford Mayorship," Eagle Valley Enterprise (Eagle, Colorado), 18 September, 1975, p. 2, cols. 3-4.

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