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The Marshall-Martinek Team



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Martinek**

**Your
Colorado
Realtor**

Equal Housing
Opportunity



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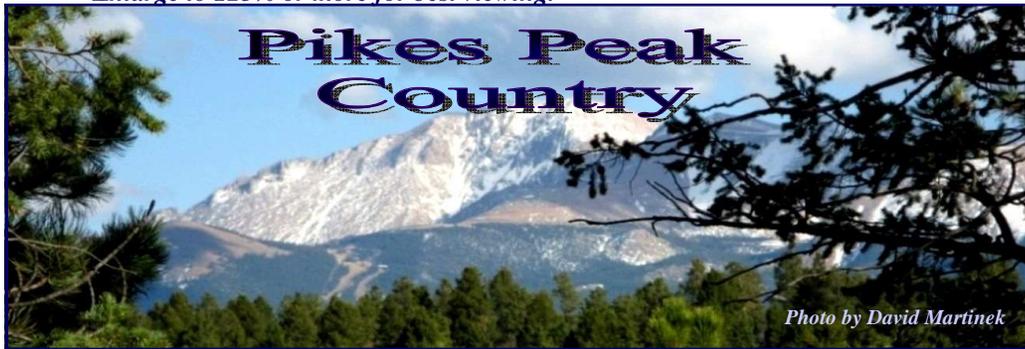
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The Skelton Ranch

The Skelton Ranch was perhaps one of the first “dude ranches” in Colorado. Located 3.5 miles west of Woodland Park, the 400-acre resort ranch operated from 1905 to 1916 and included an additional 1,140 acres just north of Divide that was used for grazing cattle and for agriculture. The entire 1540 acres was owned by Judge William T. Skelton and his wife, Lizzie Butler Skelton, along with a partner, Thomas Smiley.

William Skelton was born in Kentucky in 1864 and married Lizzie Butler in 1885. They moved to Denver in 1898, where Skelton was a member of a law firm and briefly held the position of judge. The couple left Denver in 1906 to reside in Woodland Park at the ranch.

While in Denver, Judge Skelton initially purchased 140 acres near Divide in 1904. Another 400 acres just west of Woodland Park was added shortly afterwards. This was followed by the purchase of an additional 1,000 acres north of Divide by Thomas Smiley, Skelton’s partner.

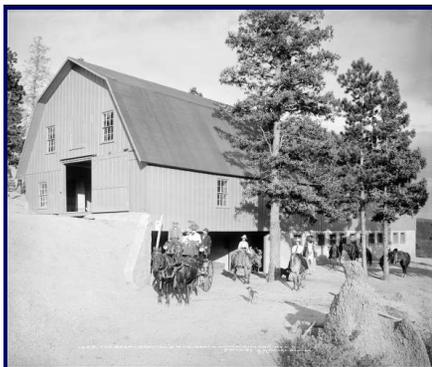
The properties were divided into two parcels – the 400-acre resort ranch and the approximately 1140-acre farming and grazing ranch.

The resort ranch was located north of County Road 25, immediately west



Horseback riders readying for a trip to one of the scenic rock formations on the Skelton Mountain Ranch, seen here in front of the log dining house with a covered porch. (Denver Public Library)

of Woodland Park and essentially surrounding what is now Tranquil Acres. The farming ranch was located on the east side of County Road 5 about two miles north of Divide. That acreage later became the Valley Park Ranch. During the Skelton’s time, the farming ranch grazed dairy cattle and goats and grew several grain crops using dry-land



The large barn with underground storage or stable area at Skelton’s Mountain Ranch near Woodland Park.

(Denver Public Library)

farming techniques (no irrigation). The wheat grew as high as a man’s chest. (see page 2)

The resort ranch was famous. It had 30 log guest cabins, a 10-room house and a log dining house (see above), a large three-level barn (left), a 104-foot long chicken house and an assembly hall with a large stone chimney (see page 2). The promotional literature claimed that each cabin had indoor plumbing, but the reality was that there were surely several outdoor privies, instead. The ranch could accommodate up to 250 people at \$15/week. And they only accepted “refined people” as guests, according to the literature.

Guests disembarked from the Colorado Midland train in Woodland Park and rode wagons to the ranch. Camping and hiking were common activities, as well as horseback rides throughout the property to such rock formations and sites as Balanced Rock, Bridal Dell, Buena Vista Point, Solomon’s Gate and Temple and Wagon Wheel Pass. In addition, excursion (wagon) trips were taken to the Fossil Beds in Florissant, to Cripple Creek and to Pike Peak.

In 1908 a fire nearly destroyed the resort ranch and several of its buildings. According to some, a new two-story dormitory was built in 1910 to replace some of the cabins consumed by the fire. But others say it was never built.

Despite the confused history, after the fire the resort ranch never operated up to its full potential again. The entire ranch, including the farming parcel, was finally sold to F. A. Sudholts from St. Louis in 1916. Sudholts was an executive in a shoe company.

See “Skelton Ranch” continued on page 2

See past issues of Pikes Peak Country at <http://www.davidmartinekcb.com>

“Skelton Ranch” - from page 1

He wanted to convert the properties into a stock ranch.

However, from 1917 to 1940 the resort ranch was largely vacant, although it was used for camping and outings. The Boy Scouts used the abandoned ranch grounds as an encampment in the 1920s, similar to an earlier account of a Boy Scout outing while the ranch was in operation (as recorded in *Boys Life*). Outings from Paradise Ranch (another “dude ranch”) in Woodland Park were also held into the 1930s.

On the other hand, the farming acreage north of Divide was improved and a kit house built (it is still standing). The Sudholtz’ later sold the ranch to the Larsens, who called it the Valley Park Ranch; in 2010 the Larsens sold the property for \$4 million to a Texas family.

The vacant buildings of the resort ranch were still around in 1938 when the 400-acre parcel was condemned and taken over by the U.S. Government. By 1939 the property had been made part of the Fountain Creek Wilderness Project. Later, in 1940, the buildings were torn down by the CCC to revert the property back into a wilderness. Finally, the resort parcel became part of the Pike National Forest in 1960. All that remains today of the famous Skelton “dude ranch” is a couple of concrete fireplaces, the foundations of the barn, chicken coop and maybe the house and the large chimney from the assembly hall.

After the ranch properties were sold in 1916, Judge Skelton and Lizzie moved to Colorado Springs where they practiced their faith (Christian Scientists) in a storefront office in the city. William Skelton died in 1932, followed by Lizzie ten years later. Both are buried in Evergreen Cemetery. DM

Sources: The primary source for the Skelton Mountain Ranch comes from research done by historian, Eric Swab, to whom full credit and appreciation is given for use of the material. For more information, please contact Eric at (719.632.0251; eswab@comcast.net).



Here’s a view of a wheat field on the farming acreage of Skelton Mountain Ranch (now Valley Park Ranch). Wheat and barley were grown via dry-land farming (no irrigation). This scene shows men and women standing in chest-high wheat with a view of Pikes Peak in the background. (Denver Public Library)



Nestled among the trees on a hillside with a view of Pikes Peak in the background, the wood-framed assembly hall on the Skelton Mountain ranch had a steep-pitched roof and a stone chimney. All that remains today of this structure is the chimney. Riders can be seen in front of the large porch in this picture. (Denver Public Library)

Note: All of the photos of the Skelton Mountain Ranch were taken between 1900 and 1919, using the glass-plate photo technology of the time, by Louis C. McClure (1867 to 1957), and are part of the Louis C. McClure collection at the Western History/Genealogy Department of the Denver Public Library.

Properties In Leadville, Colorado



605 & 607 Harrison Ave.

Two commercial locations, plus four rentals above, add up to an ideal investment situation. Features many updates while maintaining a Victorian feel. The spots currently house an ice cream/coffee shop in one of the commercial locations. See on www.k2colorado.com



1809 Lodestone

Enjoy the Leadville outdoors from the large deck and huge fenced-in yard. Three bedroom, ranch style home with a full basement. See on www.k2colorado.com

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Dave's Buyers' Guide

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To inquire, email or call 719.687.1516

(Marshall-Martinek Team listings are BOXED)



\$454,900

1158 Windflower Ln, Woodland Pk Beautiful ranch! Custom mountain home w/ walkout lower level. Stucco and rock exterior. Huge decks with mountain view. 4BR/4BA/3GAR, 3330 S.F. on 0.54 acres. Backs to common area. Main level MBR w/ fireplace and 5 piece bath. Hardwood floors, granite counters and cozy breakfast nook. Oversized garage. #646503



\$399,900

REDUCED!

1000 S. Fourth, Cripple Creek Investment! Rambling ranch on 4.79 acres carved up into 6 rental units that overlooks historic Cripple Creek. The 3505 S.F. bldg. has 9BR/6BA/2GAR and a 10-space storage shed. Rental income for the last three years available. Could be converted back to a home. #627984



\$399,000

101 Bald Eagle View, Divide Gated Community! Custom built in 2005. Marble counters, 6-seat bar, formal dining. Cherry and Alder cabinets. 3BR/3BA/3GAR, 4261 S.F. on 0.87 acres. Master suite, office and laundry on main level. Tiger wood floors, several walkouts. Brazilian cherry deck. Family room, radiant heat. Oversize garage. A must see! #427394



\$359,900

409 Pike View Dr., Divide Log Home! Great room concept with main level MBR and laundry. 3BR/3BA/3GAR, 2716 S.F. on 1.03 acres. Large decks; Pikes Peak and northern view. #680285



\$359,900

33 Still Forest, Woodland Park Unique! Main level living, vaulted ceiling, formal dining, huge MBR w/ deck. 5BR/3BA/3Gar, 3792 S.F. on 0.45 acres. Move-in ready; fenced backyard, rock patio. Oversized garage. #628603



\$359,850

87 Pine, Florissant Bear Trap Ranch! 20 acres; horse property. Dramatic log and wood w/ beam ceilings. 5BR/3BA/4GAR and 3822 S.F. Rock formations in back w/ outdoor kitchen. Huge pole barn. Must see! #646059



\$355,000

1520 Crestview, Woodland Park Pride of Ownership! Bright, open floor plan, rich hardwood floors, lots of windows. 5BR/3BA/3GAR and 3522 S.F. on 0.28 acres. 3 BRs and laundry on main level. Chef's kitchen w/ island. Large family room and hobby area. #621796



\$349,900

24 Cherokee Dr., Florissant Mountain Setting! Immaculate! Great Pikes Peak view from deck, rock formations. Large MBR and country kitchen. 2BR/2BA/3GAR, 2048 S.F. on 20 acres. Horse property. Radiant heat. 3-car heated garage. #483236



\$299,900

426 Blackbear Dr., Divide Solid Log Home! Seclusion; 2 wooded acres. 2BR/2BA/0GAR, 3020 S.F. Pine Beetle Kill wood interior. Loft MBR; kitchen has granite counters, copper sink and hickory cabinets. Wood stove. Unfinished basement. #624728



\$299,900

REDUCED!

48 Bison Cir., Florissant Immaculate! 2600 S.F. log-sided home on 4.5 beautiful acres. Horse property. 3BR/2.5 BA/2GAR. Quality construction, long list of amenities. Attention to detail in this bright and sunny home. Privacy and seclusion. #657656



\$134,900

PRE-FORCLOSURE

971 CR 61, Cripple Creek ACT NOW! 1BR/1BA 936 S.F. on 8.1 private acres w/ aspen, meadows and views. Cute galley kitchen and loft BR. Very secluded. Built in 2002. A wonderful get-away or investment. Short-sale. #686211



\$98,900

380 Paradise Cir, Woodland Pk Condo! Perfect for weekends in the mountains. Condo C-3 has 1BR/1BA and an upgraded kitchen and bath. 600 S.F. New LR window. Care-free living. Easy commute to Woodland Park and Colorado Springs. #663316



\$16,000

1001 S. Mtn Est. Rd, Florissant Meadow! Two acres of meadow and trees and some nice building sites in beautiful Colorado Mountain Estates, south of Florissant. Easy access to nearby Fossil Beds and Cripple Creek. #530773



\$16,000

2856 Blue Mesa Dr., Divide Fronts Water! This heavily treed lot in Highland Lakes (1.67 acres) slopes down to Beaver Lake No. 2. Strategic tree cuts will make room for a driveway and a building site. See this beautiful lot. #457747

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