

Belonging to an old Montrose community



Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

The music must have been raucous. The dancing carried on from afternoon well into the evening. Though crowded, the old mill building took in more people as they jammed every space. Stacks of flour sacks seated the weary, while the barrel heads were taken over for card playing. Everybody danced.

Gertrude Clark and William Torrence hosted the "Mil Bawl." Water that was used to run the 1897 grist mill to make flour by day was traded over to a dynamo (generator) to create steam-generated electricity by night. Clark's dad was part owner of the mill; Torrence ran the Montrose Electric Light and Power Company.

And they danced. The two-inch pine boards took a pounding that hot August evening. Cooling off meant slugging down iced lemonade, prohibition in the county dictated no alcohol, or stepping outside to catch breezes wafting off the Uncompaghe River.

Judge Bell (then one of two congressmen for Colorado) passed the hat to all. One of the more severe economic depressions faced in the U.S. was in its fourth year. The proceeds were given to the poor.

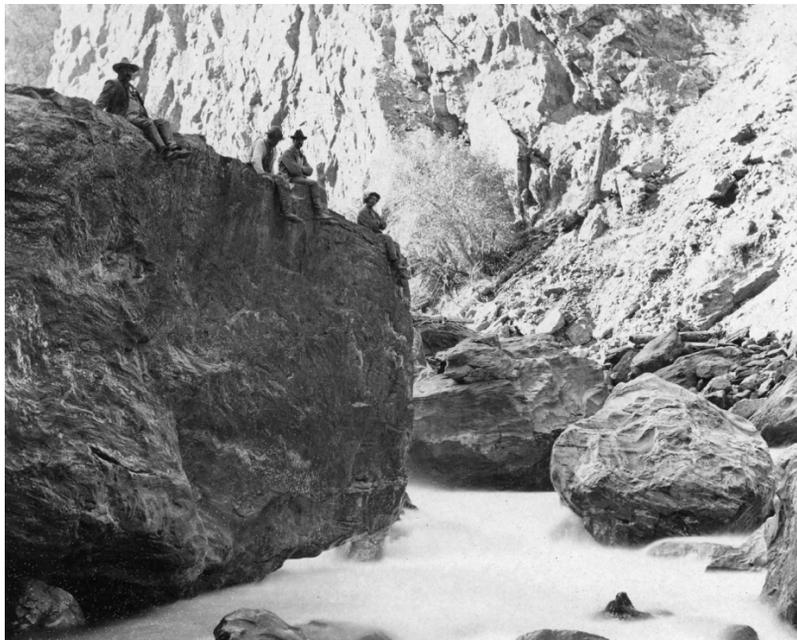
As host of the ball, we see the first glimpse of how Torrence felt about supporting community.

Wil, as he was commonly called, tinkered with everything, and loved being a part of nearly every new technological advance of his day. Born in Ohio (his 144th birthday is next Monday), he was educated at Seattle's Western Division School of the Northern Pacific.

Electricity was booming in the 1890s. Wil was young, single and full of life.

Gregarious, perhaps to the extreme, he enjoyed getting to know people.

And they wanted to know him.



Wil Torrence took this photo of explorers on the first Black Canyon trip in 1900. They paused at Flat Rock Falls while looking for a Gunnison Tunnel location. People can find community anywhere. (Submitted photo/John Pelton family)

IF YOU GO:

Learn more of Torrence's Montrose

- Pick up a walking tour folder at the Montrose Visitor Center downtown, www.visit-montrose.com/116/Visitor-Center.

- Montrose County Historical Society has a virtual tour of historic Montrose. The museum opens in May where they have an exhibit on electricity in the valley. www.montrosehistory.org/.

Pioneered originally for industry, domestic demand for electricity was for one primary purpose: the light bulb. He brought power lines to buildings and then set the wiring inside. The light bulb pushed back the boundaries of loneliness and expanded the social calendar as sunrise and sunset no longer regulated people's lives.

Electricity was available primarily in the evening hours. For a young man, this might have made a challenge to meet people. Torrence, however, wove them together by hosting many gatherings at the power plant including

Halloween, New Year's, oyster season (they came straight to Montrose by train), costume parties; the list goes on.

He tinkered. He built his own automobile and drove it up to Spring Creek Mesa for a picnic on the Fourth of July. He loaded the machine with passengers and whizzed along at 15 miles per hour: His favorite device, though, was the camera.

He purchased a Kodak (predated the Brownie camera) to take photos of people to give them. Bicyclists at "picture rocks" (Shavano Valley Rock Art site) had their picture snapped. A Sunday

School group to "Shore Springs" was photographed. Fans at baseball games (Wil played catcher) were pictured.

He became best known as one of the five explorers of Black Canyon to unsuccessfully look for a site for the Gunnison Tunnel in 1900. He returned the next year, hired by Abraham Lincoln Fellows. The two, risking life and limb, were the first to traverse the river in the depths of the canyon. Their trip led to tunnel construction. His photos are the first images people saw of the canyon.

People loved him.

In Montrose, he fell in love and married. In Montrose, he convinced the owner of the electric company to build an efficient power plant. In Montrose, he found belonging.

But . . . Torrence had ambition. A traveling manager from General Electric offered him a leadership job. They moved to Schenectady, New York, in late 1905.

It wasn't the same. He wrote a local friend, "I wanted to go right back to Colorado, but I am getting a little accustomed to it now and it does not seem so bad."

Perhaps it was too difficult to belong.

He became impulsive. He and his wife, Frances, moved to New Jersey after a couple years, and shortly after that to Denver. Even there he was restless. They changed addresses several times in the decade after they arrived. Wil died from typhoid fever in 1921, age 48.

Today we also have opportunities to build community. There are many galas, updated from Torrence's "Mil Bawl," which benefit many charities. The Daily Press publishes the schedule of meetings of numerous groups, clubs and organizations which welcome new people.

Of course the people of his day had disagreements, but they didn't live their lives to be disagreeable. Building community is the fastest means to fight the turmoil we see in society today. And more importantly, it's a strong way to find belonging. Torrence's life in Montrose reflects a 100-year-old path to restore civility in our world.

Paul Zaenger has been a supervisory park ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park since 1993. Other park assignments include Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

Time to update your CPR training



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

In January, all members of the Sheriff's Posse updated their certification for CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). The classes also included use of the AED or automated external defibrillator. The certification for these classes is only valid for two years and must be updated.

Sudden cardiac arrest is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, with more than 350,000 people inflicted annually. The average response time for 911 responders is between eight and 12 minutes. For every minute that defibrillation is delayed, the survival chance is reduced by approximately 10 percent.

CPR is the emergency procedure that combines chest compressions and often artificial ventilation to try and preserve brain function until more advanced life support can be provided to restore blood circulation and breathing in a person

suffering cardiac arrest.

If you are like the majority of people, it has probably been many years since you have taken a CPR course. In 2010, the American Heart Association (AHA) and International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation updated their CPR guidelines. Many important changes were made with these guidelines, and you should take a new class to learn about them.

One of the new procedures is called "hands only CPR." This technique is very effective in adults if you witness the cardiac arrest and see the person collapse. There is enough oxygen in the blood for three to four minutes if you perform aggressive chest compressions. If the EMS has not arrived after four minutes, rescue breathing must be incorporated.

The new guidelines for untrained rescuers call for chest compressions only, at a rate of 100 to 120 compressions per minute for adults. Try keeping beat to the song Staying Alive as it helps keep the proper rate of compressions.

Hands-only CPR is not for use in children, drowning, asphyxiation, overdose, or when breathing was absent or troubled before the heart stopped beating.

If two rescuers are available, or one with proper training, a ratio of 30 compressions



Members of the Sheriff's Posse practice two-rescue CPR on a dummy. (Submitted photo)

to two breaths is recommended by the AHA in adults and 15 to 2 in children.

A very important part of this training will include use of automated external defibrillator, or AED. CPR does not restart the heart but an AED can.

The AED will automatically analyze the patient's condition. The life threatening cardiac arrhythmias, which lead to cardiac arrest, are quickly diagnosed. Most AED units have spoken prompts and a visual screen to provide instructions to the user.

AEDs are designed to be used by laypersons that have had the basic training with

them. When available, the AED can be used on a patient in just over a minute.

AEDs are found just about everywhere these days. Walmart, grocery stores, restaurants, community centers, airports, shopping centers and just about anywhere people gather, an AED is available. The prices have come down in recent years which makes them more affordable and available to people. For emergency units, there are a few government grants available to help defray the costs.

One of the nice things about the classes is that they are taught "hands on." Every student gets to practice

compressions and ventilations on a practice dummy. I think that this is one of the most important aspects of taking the class every two years.

Unless you work for Montrose Fire, CPR is not a skill you get to use on a regular basis. In fact, most of us will probably never get to use it on a person. If you have a loved one in front of you who needs CPR, you will be glad you kept up with your training.

I highly recommend that everyone, regardless of age, take a class in the use of CPR and the AED. For more information online, take a look at the website for the American Heart Association at www.heart.org.

Montrose has classes available at many locations. Montrose Memorial Hospital or Montrose Fire can direct you to a class or check with the Montrose Recreation District at www.montroserec.com.

This is one of the trainings you take that you hope you will never need, but if you do, you will be sure glad you had it. Until next time, see you on the trail.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director and PIO for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcsppi.org



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