

SUPERIOR HISTORIAN

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

FALL 2004

OCTOBER, 2004

Town Will Miss Doreen Ruffe



The Superior Historical Commission is sad to announce that Doreen Ruffe has moved from our town to Pennsylvania and will no longer be the driving force she has been over the past few years. Doreen's vision and dedication are already sorely missed.

Doreen's crowning achievement is the compilation of the book Lost Superior which sprinted from inception to publication in only seven months. The Commission is proud of the book's completion and knows that without Doreen's foresight and stamina that it would never have been printed in time for the Superior Centennial last June.

The Historical Commission and representatives of the Town of Superior recognized Doreen with a lunch at Mimi's Restaurant in August.

We all wish Doreen and her family the best in their new venture and welcome their return in the future.

The wonderful picture history of
Superior and its buildings,
Lost Superior
Is available in the Town Office for
\$15

Shootout at the Superior Depot

The Long Strike that hit the Northern Colorado Coal Fields from 1910 to 1914 was a trying time for all who were affected and resulted in a high degree of frustration, desperation and strained relationships. These three ingredients, stirred in the caldron of the strike, boiled over in one curious incident: the shooting death of John "Dude" Searcy at the Superior Depot on November 28, 1911.

The passage of nearly 100 years has obscured some of the facts, but this much we know. Coal miners in the towns of the Northern Fields (Superior, Louisville and Lafayette for example) had gone out on strike hoping for better working conditions and higher wages. Management responded by hiring non-union strike breakers, known derisively as "scabs." These men, often desperate themselves, were detested by the strikers because they crossed the picket lines and worked in the conditions the strikers were trying to eliminate and for the low wages they were trying to improve.

Into this hotbed of tensions came the Searcy family of Tennessee. John Duncan Harrison Searcy, known around town as Dude, came to Superior along with his mother and brothers and the wife of one of the brothers. The boys crossed the picket lines and went to work in the mines violating a sacred code amongst union men. Since he was seen as a scab by the striking miners and due to his hot temper, Dude Searcy was not well liked in his newly adopted town. He was also suspected of the shady deed of blowing up a local farmer's house.

The fire heating the caldron of



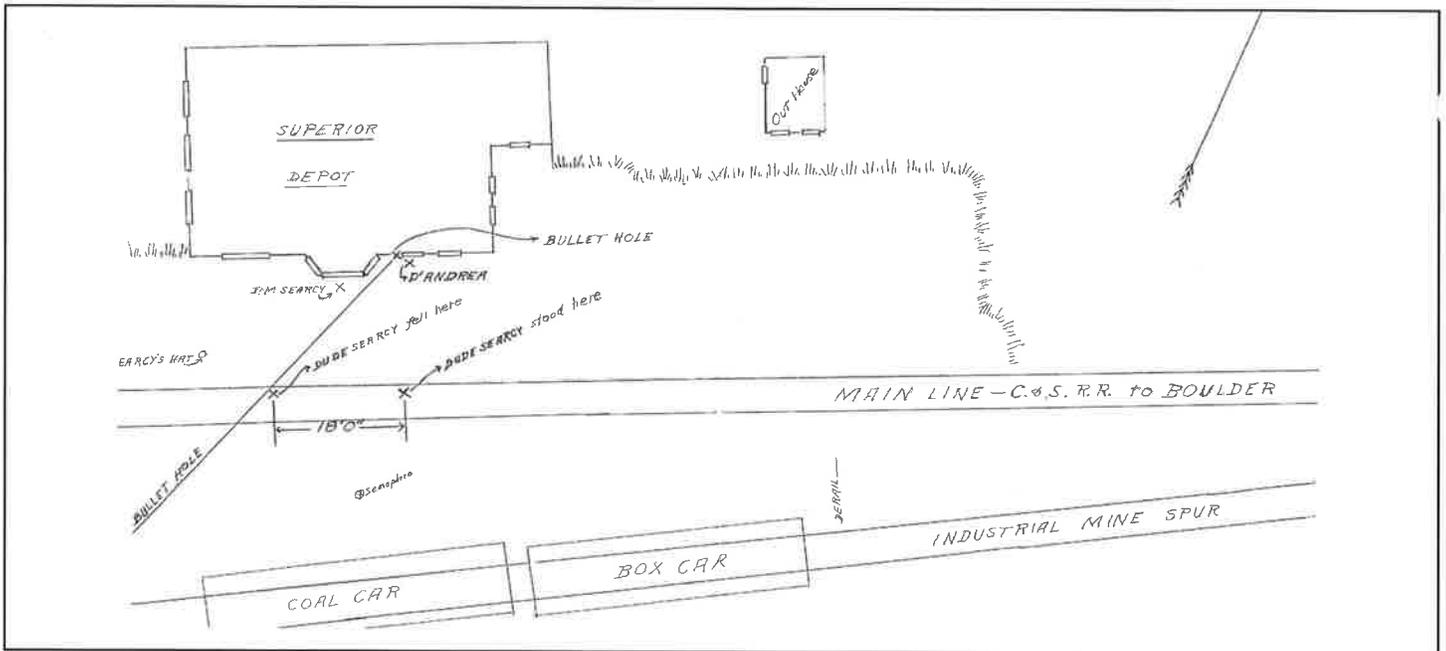
Superior Depot circa 1910

distrust flared one evening when Dude and his brother Jim went to the train depot to meet Jim's wife coming in on the train from Denver. When the Searcys arrived around 6:00 PM, they found Night Marshal Angelo D'Andrea and about 30 strikers milling around the station in what was probably an inhospitable mood. After an exchange of unpleasantries, Searcy is reported to have said he would "get the first son-of-a-bitch who spoke to him when he returned later."

When the brothers returned at 8:00 that evening, Marshal D'Andrea supposedly said, "there are some of those scabs." As so often happens, Dude said something back and started to draw his pistol, but D'Andrea got off the first shot, hitting Dude. The Marshal followed with another successful shot hitting Jim Searcy. After that, "the lead flew for about 15 minutes" according to observers.

Dude Searcy, mortally wounded, was loaded on the next interurban rail car passing through Superior on its way to Boulder. He was taken to the University Hospital which was then located on the Boulder campus. He died from the wounds the next morning at 11:15, November 29th.

Superior residents now feared retaliation from the mine owners in the



form of the Baldwin-Felts detectives. Armed miners and their families descended on Superior from other area mining towns ready to protect all from the hired guns. Sheriff Capp arrived from Boulder on the 29th to take control of the volatile situation. Marshal D'Andrea informed him that he indeed shot Searcy and "he shot to kill." A crowd of over 100 representing both sides of the strike lined the tracks beside the depot and some said it was a "pent up hell." Capp tried to get aid from the State but failed. He was able to convince the scabs to spend the night in the fortress-like compound that had been constructed around the Industrial Mine, hoping that time would salve the inflamed emotions.

The next curiosity in the case comes with the coroner's inquest. County Coroner J.G. Trezise convened a jury of Boulder businessmen who reviewed the case and heard testimony including one miner's statement that Searcy said, "Which one of you bastards will I get first?" while he pointed his drawn gun directly at Marshal D'Andrea. In spite of the evidence, the jury found D'Andrea guilty of killing with felonious intent.

Residents of Superior banded together and raised \$10,000 bail for the

marshal who was released with the understanding he would stand trial within the next year. Angelo D'Andrea was an Italian immigrant who was 23 years of age when the shooting took place. He moved to this country at age five and began work in the Industrial Mine at Superior at the age of 12. He had been the Night Marshal for three years when he had the run-in with Searcy and had earned a good reputation as a miner, citizen, and law officer.

Angelo D'Andrea was acquitted of the murder of Dude Searcy in November of 1912. The acquittal was based on D'Andrea's character and reputation but also on the testimony of convicted murderer, inmate of the Canon City prison, and crony of Dude Searcy by the name of William Adams. He testified that Searcy was brought to Colorado to break the strike and had killed two men in West Virginia as a gun for the mine owners. Most importantly, he had gone to town to avenge the words said about his mother by strikers and drew his gun and fired at D'Andrea.

John D. Searcy was buried in Boulder's Green Mountain Cemetery in December of 1911. His death and Angelo D'Andrea's reprieve punctuated

a time of intense labor unrest in Colorado's history.

Sources: Superior Historical Commission, Lost Superior; Cynda Arsenault, Superior: A Folk History; Michael Collard, Superior Cemetery, An Historical Report; Phyllis Smith, Once A Coal Miner.

New Officers Elected

It was a busy summer for the Superior Historical Commission. An important event was the election of officers who will serve until 2006. They are:

- Chair — Errol Waligorsky
- Vice Chair — Denzil Acklin
- Treasurer — Bob Morgan
- Secretary and Superior Historian
- Editor — Larry Dorsey

A special thanks goes to Karen Waligorsky for her years of service as Commission Secretary.

Attend A Commission Meeting

All are invited to attend Superior Historical Commission meetings. Please join us on the third Friday of the Month at the Town Hall at 10:00 AM. If you have any questions, call Wally Waligorsky at 303-499-1675