

# Fort Peabody Guardhouse

---

A Historic Preservation Project conducted by San Miguel County with authorization from and direction by the GMUG National Forest personnel in 2010. Fort Peabody was nominated by MaryJoy Martin and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The site represents labor history in the West.

“At the top of Imogene Pass, between Telluride and Ouray, a machine gun emplacement and a small wooden fort survive as silent testimony to workers’ struggles and as a legacy to labor. A century ago, millions were made in the San Juan Mountains in gold and silver but not by miners. The early days of the pick and pan prospecting had given way to deep-shaft industrial mining, and miners traded their lungs and brawn for a few dollars a day to work in increasingly dangerous conditions. As more miners and mill workers died from cave-ins, explosions from dangerous gases and dust in their lungs, they demanded better working conditions and something we take for granted - the eight-hour workday.

Fierce competition between capitalist mine owners and immigrant mine workers resulted in increasing tension and calls of unionization. In Telluride in 1903, the mine workers went on strike, and Gov. James Peabody, in collusion with the wealthy mine owners, called out the Colorado National Guard. Montrose resident MaryJoy Martin has chronicled the rise of the Western Federation of Miners and its hero, Vincent St. John, in her book *The Corpse on Boomerang Road*. She writes vividly of Bulkeley Wells, a captain the Colorado National Guard who took command of Troop A, First Squadron Cavalry, comprising cowboys, Wells’ employees at the Smuggler-Union Mining Co. and a few union-hating locals. Martin writes that Wells declared martial law in Telluride with “mass deportations on special trains, false criminal charges, beatings, threats and arrests without due process. No one could leave the county without official permission.” As the illegally deported miners trickled back into Telluride over Imogene Pass, National Guardsmen under Wells’ command build a wooden sentry post or redoubt complete with small stove, a flagpole and a stone sniper or machine-gun nest with a Colt rapid-fire machine gun. Wells named it Fort Peabody after the governor.

MaryJoy Martin said, “ Labor history has been totally ignored in the United States, and it’s a dramatic history in Colorado. People should know that a governor had the gall to permit a border patrol station to prevent workers from entering a Colorado county.” *Excerpted from a Nov 8, 2009 Durango Herald article entitled The Guns of Imogene by Fort Lewis College history professor Andrew Gulliford.*

# Fort Peabody in the 1950s

Photo courtesy of Don Paulson



# Planning for work on the Fort Peabody Guardhouse work began in 2007.

Photos courtesy of Felicia Harmon, KRH Group



# 2007 Fort Peabody Guardhouse North West View

---



Photos courtesy of Felicia Harmon, KRH Group

# 2007 Looking Through the Structure East to West

---



# 2010 Photo of the Structure Prior to Start of Work

Photo courtesy of Rich Hamilton, Project Supervisor



# 2010 Work in Progress

All materials and tools were carried up to the site by hand.

Photos courtesy of Rich Hamilton



# Excavation of Fort Peabody Guardhouse 2010

After excavating down to the original wood floor, the work crew discovered that most of the boards were rotten where the boards and battons connected with the floor.



# 2010 Fort Peabody Historic Re-build



- All of the historic boards, battons, and hardware were saved and re-used when possible.
- The majority of century old boards were deteriorated and could not be re-used.
- Every effort was made to restore the structure to historical standards.

# 2010 Fort Peabody Work Continues

The entire project took about one month and over 200 hours to complete

Photos courtesy of Rich Hamilton



# 2010 Artifacts Excavated from Site

---



- During excavation of Fort Peabody, the work crew found numerous ammunition shells, a silver hair pin, an old piece of newspaper, coal, leather pieces, glass fragments, and a fire poker. All artifacts were turned over to the USFS.

# 2010 Front Door and South Wall Detail

Completed project includes new door with historic hinges and thumb latch. Window shutters were added to protect structure from the elements. Rock wall was re-stacked to replicate the original wall.



Photo courtesy of Linda Luther-Broderick

# 2010 Fort Peabody Northwest View

The original wood was mixed in with rough cut pine. All new nails were soaked in acid prior to construction to produce a more historic look.



# 2010 Fort Peabody Interior Detail

A historic bench was re-built and a storage compartment was installed in its original location. The rough cut floor acts as the foundation for the walls and stabilizes structure.



# 2010 Interior Detail

All boards with historic graffiti where saved and applied to the interior of the guardhouse.



# 2010 Fort Peabody Guardhouse South View

---



# 2010 Fort Peabody Guardhouse Northwest View

---



# 2010 Fort Peabody Guardhouse Work Crew

San Miguel County Parks Crew Rich Hamilton (right), Dave Bush (left), and project assistants Josh Williams (left center) and Chason Russell (right center)



Photo by Linda Luther-Broderick