
3. Historical Background

Please provide historical background information for the property.

The story of the Whitten Ranch, commonly known as the Michigan Creek Ranch, illustrates the way in which many cattle ranches in the Jefferson area evolved over time, shedding light on the history of cattle ranching and land development in the South Park from the 1880s to today. From the original 160 acres homesteaded by Albert and Clara Whitten in 1883, the Whitten Ranch grew to great prosperity under the capable leadership of Clara, who divorced Albert in 1895 and took over as sole owner of the ranch. Subsequent owners further expanded the ranch, which eventually encompassed more than 2,000 acres. The economic pressures of the 1980s, however, prompted the sale of the ranch's water rights, greatly diminishing the agricultural value of the property. Perhaps as a result, the once vast reaches of the ranch were parceled off and sold in the 1990s. Luckily, the original 160 acre Whitten homestead and its associated buildings have remained intact, serving as a highly visible reminder of the history of cattle ranching in the South Park and the significant contribution that strong women like Clara Whitten have made to the history of Park County.

Early on, American Indians recognized the nutritious nature of the native grasses that sustained the large herds of game that roamed the South Park. In the 1840s, Anglo visitors such as Rufus B. Sage observed the healthy herds of bison, elk, deer, and antelope found throughout the park and identified the area as ideal for stockraising.¹ However, the harsh climate conditions and remote location of the park discouraged Colorado's earliest ranchers from settling in Park County.

The discovery of gold along Tarryall Creek in 1859 made ranching in the South Park a far more attractive proposition. The gold strike at Tarryall brought hundreds of prospectors to the South Park. Seemingly overnight, large mining camps sprang up at Hamilton, Fairplay, Buckskin Joe, and other sites where gold had been found. The prospectors that flooded these rapidly growing communities needed food, creating a demand that encouraged the establishment of large cattle ranching operations in the wide open expanse of the South Park. Enterprising ranchers claimed land near reliable water sources and natural hay meadows, established their homesteads, and began raising cattle and growing hay. By 1860, nearly a dozen residents of Park County identified themselves as ranchers.²

By the time Albert Whitten, his wife Clara, and their young daughter Eva arrived in the South Park in the late 1870s, several large ranches had been established in the Jefferson area, including the Head and Schattinger Ranches. Successful ranchers in the northern South Park irrigated their lands via a system of manmade ditches that diverted water from local creeks. The highly nutritious native hay grown on their land was used to feed their cattle and/or sold at nearby markets. When the railroad reached Jefferson in 1879, the market for the area's cattle and hay grew exponentially as hay could now be efficiently shipped to more remote locations.

During the 1870s, more and more homesteaders arrived in Colorado. Ranchers began fencing their land as barbed wire became widely available and the era of the open range began to wane. Ranching operations in the South Park remained strong.³ By 1879, more than nineteen thousand head of cattle grazed on 134 ranches located throughout Park County.⁴ By 1880, cattle ranching in the South Park had transformed from a frontier operation to a major agricultural industry.

When Albert Whitten (b. 1843), first arrived in Jefferson in the late 1870s, he worked as a blacksmith before turning to cattle ranching.⁵ Clara kept house and raised their daughter Eva. Albert, a native of Maine, married Clara Geddes in Indiana, on May 19, 1873.⁶ The son of a carriage maker, Albert worked as a blacksmith in Maine before his marriage.⁷ Born in 1852, Clara Geddes grew up in Leesburg, Indiana. Her father, Robert, worked as a tinner and died when Clara was just six, leaving her mother Rachel to raise six children on her own.⁸ Clara taught school until her marriage to Albert at age 20.⁹ The couple first settled in Maine, where their daughter Eva was born in 1876.¹⁰



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In the spring of 1880, Albert Whitten filed a pre-emption claim on 160 acres approximately 2.5 miles west of Jefferson near Michigan Creek.¹¹ The Preemption Act of 1841 permitted settlers living on federal land to purchase up to 160 acres at a very low price. At that time, the Whittens fenced the land, built a frame house, and constructed the Whitten Ditch to irrigate their land with water from Michigan Creek.¹² In 1882, the family cut 75 to 100 tons of hay on the property. The *Fairplay Flume* commented on the Whittens' good fortune stating that it was, "a surprisingly large crop for the first that was ever cut on this land and with but one year's irrigation."¹³ The mild winter in 1881-1882 likely contributed the Whittens' early success. The family moved permanently to the property in the spring of 1883, after Albert transmuted his pre-emption filing to a homestead claim.¹⁴ The Homestead Act of 1862, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln, allowed settlers who met a few basic requirements file an application to claim 160 acres of federal land. To receive title to the land, an applicant had to reside on the land for five years and show evidence of having made improvements to the property.

The early 1880s were particularly profitable years for the cattle ranchers in the South Park. Cattle prices reached a historical high in 1882 and many ranchers realized record profits.¹⁵ The quality of the hay grown in the South Park made it a lucrative crop. In 1884, The Rocky Mountain news reported:

*... the agricultural domain of Park county is chiefly in that most beautiful high valley known as South Park. . . . The chief product of this region is hay, the quality of which is unsurpassed by any known, if indeed it is not superior to any other. It is the native grass of the country, which runs to a bright green color. Horses and cattle will trample over the best timothy and clover to get this native hay of the parks. Rye, barley, oats and other cereals grow here to the greatest perfection. The pasturage of South Park is very superior, keeping stock of all kinds, the year round, in good condition without other food. Some of the most successful cattle raisers in Colorado hold their herds in this park.*¹⁶

After 1885, conditions changed significantly. A series of dry summers and harsh winters resulted in losses for many ranchers. This difficult period is often referred to as "the big die-up."¹⁷ Despite these significant challenges, ranching became an integral part of Park County's economy by the end of the 1880s. Less volatile than mining, ranching quickly became the "economic and social backbone of rural Park County" with water playing a critical role in the success of a rancher's efforts.¹⁸ Given the harsh winter climate of Park County, ranchers often relied on winter feeding to keep their cattle alive through the cold months. Winter feeding required the production of a substantial amount of hay each season, which in turn required ranchers to irrigate their lands. Controlling water sources therefore was critical to a rancher's success.

As the demand for water quickly increased during the 1880s, the need for regulation became clear. In 1888, Water District 23, which included the South Park, was formed. On October 18, 1889, the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District established the priority of rights to the use of water for irrigation in Water District 23. The Whitten Ditch was assigned priority number 110 and granted the right to draw 15 cubic feet of water per second from Michigan Creek.¹⁹

The Whitten Ranch continued to prosper throughout the 1880s. James Geddes, Clara's brother, partnered with Albert Whitten, living at the ranch and supervising the work of two ranch hands, August Smith and W.C. Miller.²⁰ The proximity of the railroad to the ranch clearly contributed to the success of Whitten's hay operation. Hay could be easily loaded onto railroad cars and quickly transported to Denver or Leadville. Whitten supplemented his income by selling farm machinery related to hay production, including McCormick Mowing Machines, Walter A. Wood hay rakes, and small hay tools.²¹



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In 1883, the Fairplay Flume sang the praises of the Whitten Ranch, declaring:

“For rapid improvement few ranches will equal that of Mr. A. H. Whitten, which occupies a tract of level ground near the South Park railroad between Jefferson and Como. A year ago when the reporters visited this place Messrs. Whitten and Geddes were just fencing and building. Now the ranch has good buildings, corrals, fences, ditches and a fine hay meadow, yielding a rapidly increasing crop. A switch on the South Park road runs close to the house and affords unequalled advantages for loading hay and unloading supplies.”²²

The Whittens expanded the ranch’s irrigation system in 1885 digging the C.E. Whitten Ditches 1, 2, 3, and 4. All four ditches drew water from Michigan Creek.²³ In December 1888, Whitten gave notice of his intent to make final proof and finalize his claim to the property and presented evidence of his improvements to the property with supporting testimony from his neighbors Joseph Crockett and Samuel Lasell on January 19, 1889. Whitten testified that he had built a 26’ x 28’ frame house, a 75’ x 36’ log barn, two sheds, a 16’ x 24’ blacksmith shop and tool house, a storehouse, a wagon shed, 8 miles of irrigation ditches, and a well on the land. He also reported grazing 15 head of horses and 200 head of cattle on the property, which he used exclusively for stock raising and hay production.²⁴

Later that year, Albert expanded the ranch, purchasing approximately 110 acres to the west of the homestead from Samuel Lasell.²⁵ The following spring Whitten acquired an additional 160 acres to the south from Frank W. McCartney.²⁶ Whitten acquired the water rights associated with these parcels as well as the land. The McCartney Ditch (priority 199) constructed in 1885, drew water from Tarryall Creek. The Lasell Ditch (priority 154), constructed in 1882, drew from Michigan Creek.²⁷ The acquisitions more than doubled the size of the ranch to over 430 acres. In 1890, Whitten received the final patent for his original 160 acre homestead.²⁸

In 1888, the Whitten’s daughter Eva entered the Wolfe Hall Young Ladies seminary in Denver.²⁹ Described as “the largest and best young ladies’ seminary in the West,” the Episcopalian school for women opened in 1868.³⁰ Twelve-year-old Eva Whitten joined a student body of approximately 145 elementary and secondary students and boarded at the school.³¹ Education was clearly important to Clara, a former teacher. Clara’s younger sister Ida Geddes, taught school as well and joined the Whittens in Park County. Ida taught in the community of Chase (Weller) and beginning in 1911, served two terms as Park County’s superintendent of schools.³² At age 15, Eva Whitten began teaching school in Park County, serving the Jefferson area ranch community at the Fremont School in 1895.³³ She was described as “remarkably successful in her profession, never losing an opportunity to further the interests of those in her charge, and withal never neglecting her own advancement and improvement.”³⁴

In April 1897, Eva Whitten’s wedding to Barton Dale Bumstead attracted a who’s who list of Park County’s ranching families. The Wednesday morning wedding, which took place in the parlor of the Whitten ranch house, was described as “probably the most notable social event that has happened in Park county for years.” Attendees included the Champions, Heads, Lasells, Sanborns, Milligans, Derbys, and many others. A reception was held the following day in Colorado Springs at the home of the groom’s parents. Guests at both events showered the young couple with expensive gifts, most notably a completely furnished house in Victor given by Dale Bumstead’s employer, W. S. Stratton, millionaire owner of the Independence Mine. Bumstead worked as a bookkeeper for Stratton.³⁵ The Bumsteads would eventually move to the Oak Park neighborhood of Chicago, where Dale worked for the Du Pont Powder Company.³⁶



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It is unclear if Eva's father, Albert, attended the wedding. Four years earlier in September 1893, Clara filed for divorce from Albert, citing cruelty and abuse. Her sister Ida stood by her side as Clara instituted the divorce proceedings in Jefferson.³⁷ Clara's case came up for trial the following year in March. Albert did not contest the divorce and the jury found in favor of Clara, granting her custody of Eva. Clara chose to retain the ranch property and leased lands in Park County, while Albert was awarded property in the Denver area.³⁸ Albert moved to Meeker, Colorado, where he returned to blacksmithing.³⁹ In the 1900 census, Albert identified himself as a widower and was living with Katherine Deuber, a young German widow, her eight-year-old daughter Frieda, and nineteen year-old Francis Hunt. According to the census record, Deuber and Hunt worked as servants for Whitten.⁴⁰ By 1910, Albert had moved to Denver where he continued to work as a blacksmith and lodged with the Moylan family.⁴¹ Albert H. Whitten died in Denver on December 9, 1915, at age 72.⁴²

After her divorce from Albert, Clara continued to live on the ranch and manage its day-to-day affairs. Thomas Nagle assisted Clara as ranch foreman in the early 1900s and her sister Ida came to live at the ranch.⁴³ Clara actively participated in ranch operations and was described as "a woman of wonderful business acumen and tireless energy and industry."⁴⁴ In 1906, Clara expanded the ranch significantly, patenting 360 acres of state land to the north of the original homestead, bringing the total acreage of the Whitten Ranch to over 800 acres.⁴⁵

The Whitten Ranch's proximity to the railroad was both a boon and a bane. Along the railroad, sparks from passing locomotives frequently caused destructive fires on South Park's ranches. In November 1898, a fire caused by a train destroyed several hundreds of acres of pasture and nearly 100 tons of hay on the Chalmers & Galloway ranch.⁴⁶ Even fire prevention measures undertaken by the railroad had their risks. That same month, section hands burning a fire guard along the railroad near Jefferson lost control of the burn, destroying hay stacks, pasture lands, barns, and fences at many ranches. Clara Whitten lost seven hay stacks in the conflagration.⁴⁷

1898 was apparently a difficult year for Clara Whitten. Earlier that spring, the editor of the Alma Bulletin published a "scurrilous attack" upon Clara's character. The basis of the attack remains obscure and there is no indication that Clara held either strong political opinions or led a controversial life.⁴⁸ After the disparaging article was published, the *Fairplay Flume* rose to Clara's defense printing an emphatic denouncement of the Alma Bulletin's actions:

*The lady...by a noble character and upright business methods has built a commanding position in the business interest of the county, respected by all, against whom no one has dared whisper or even think evil...this lady and others he [the Alma Bulletin editor] has vilified will be honored citizens of this county long after its citizens have spued [sic] the none-such editor into the slime of the gutter in which he gives every indication he was spawned.*⁴⁹

Misfortune struck the Whitten Ranch again during the early 1900s. In 1903, a fire fanned by high winds spread from the railroad to the ranch destroying a barn and 100 tons of baled hay.⁵⁰ The barn was presumably replaced, but early in the morning of February 16, 1908, sparks from a locomotive once again destroyed the Whitten's hay barn. According to neighbor Samuel Lasell, the glare from the fire could be seen from a mile away. At the time of the fire, the Whitten barn contained about 225 tons of baled hay and the nearby sheds, scales, and corrals were a total loss. Fortunately, the five carloads of beef cattle that stood in the corrals escaped the flames. The cost of the destruction was estimated at between \$3,000 and \$3,500. Insurance covered only a portion of the loss, but Whitten fully expected to



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recover the rest from the Colorado and Southern Railroad.⁵¹ By the end of the following July, a new barn constructed by Mac Oshier was completed.⁵²

Ranching in the South Park was a challenging endeavor, undoubtedly made more difficult for Clara Whitten by the gender biases of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture did not acknowledge the important role women played in agriculture until 1913 when it stated:

*The woman on the farm is a most important economic factor in agriculture. Her domestic work undoubtedly has a direct bearing on the efficiency of the field workers, her handling of the home and its surroundings contributes to the cash intake, and, in addition, hers is largely the responsibility for contributing the social and other features which make farm life satisfactory and pleasurable. On her rests largely the moral and mental development of the children, and on her attitude depends in great part the important question of whether the succeeding generation will continue to farm or will seek the allurements of life in the cities.*⁵³

Given the critical role women played on the farm and ranch, it is all the more impressive that Clara was also able to take on the traditional male rancher's role as well, managing the ranch's business affairs, buying and selling cattle, managing the hay harvest, and selling the crop. Clara likely found a role model in fellow female rancher Marie Guiraud who ran the Guiraud Ranch near Garo. After Adolphe Guiraud's death in 1875, his wife Marie took over management of the 640 acre ranch. During her lifetime, she expanded the Guiraud Ranch to 5,000 acres. Marie was not only a capable rancher but also a clever businesswoman. After it was revealed that the Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad would pass through the Guiraud Ranch, she platted the town of Garo, which would become an important supply hub and railway station for area ranchers.⁵⁴ When Marie Guiraud died in 1909, she was described as, "a truly remarkable woman" who had struggled to keep the Guiraud ranch operating after her husband's death and built it into one of the largest and most successful cattle operations in Park County.⁵⁵ Though Clara Whitten's ranch would never compete with the Guiraud Ranch in terms of size and scale, her accomplishments as a female rancher in the South Park are just as remarkable.

Given the growing demand for water throughout Colorado's Front Range, the water rights held by Jefferson area ranchers like Clara Whitten were seen as an increasingly valuable commodity by investors outside Park County. Beginning in the 1880s, private commercial ventures began developing plans for construction of reservoirs in the Colorado high country that would supply water to the Front Range cities. In the early 1890s, Franklin F. Noxon of Colorado Springs, developed plans for a large reservoir located 3.5 miles above the junction of the Tarryall Creek and the Platte River. Noxon intended to sell the reservoir to the commercial company supplying Denver's water. The Denver Union Water Company, however, rejected Noxon's plan in favor of a reservoir site located on the South Platte. Despite the rejection, Noxon persevered, expanding the hydroelectric components of his plan and offering his plan directly to the city of Denver in 1902.⁵⁶

In January 1903, an article in the *Denver Post* declared that work would begin on Noxon's Tarryall Water and Power project within two months.⁵⁷ The article included a claim that water rights secured by Noxon predated those held by the Denver Union Water Company, which effectively undercut the Denver company's plans for their own reservoir. A few weeks later, Noxon traveled to the South Park to distribute the initial payments to Jefferson area ranchers, including Clara Whitten, for their water rights. Noxon's Tarryall Water and Power Company distributed around \$25,000 to ranchers on the Tarryall,



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Michigan, Rock, and Jefferson Creeks, including Thomas Dunbar, William R. Milligan, Thomas T. Wilkie, Samuel Lasell, David Baker, R. Sanborn, Mrs. McCartney, W. R. Head, Eli Portis, Henry Schattinger, and Seth S. Slater.⁵⁸ All told, more than fifty ranchers received payments for an option on their land and water rights.

Exactly how Noxon planned to fund his scheme remained unclear. Noxon initially claimed that “eastern capitalists” would provide \$5,000,000 in funding to purchase the water rights necessary to ensure the success of his reservoir project.⁵⁹ But by early October Noxon was already qualifying his comments, reportedly stating that if the “New York capitalists” failed to provide funding, he had “parties in Denver” who would furnish “all the money needed.”⁶⁰

Unsurprisingly, Noxon asked ranchers for an extension on his options, which were set to expire on October 15, 1903, offering to pay five percent of the purchase price on February 1, 1904 and the balance on July 1, 1904.⁶¹ Despite Noxon’s failure to pay on time, optimism among ranchers continued to run high, with Noxon claiming that even if the city of Denver declined to buy into his plan, he had ample capital to complete the reservoir and begin producing hydroelectric power within a year and a half.⁶²

After Noxon failed to meet his February 1 deadline the *Fairplay Flume’s* reporting on the project took on a negative tone. On February 12, the *Flume* suggested that Noxon’s plan was simply a bluff designed to force the Denver Union Water Company into buying him out.⁶³ The following year, Noxon’s options on the South Park water rights expired, yet he continued to actively promote his reservoir as a viable project. The *Flume’s* response to Noxon’s assurances that the deal would someday go through was direct and to the point, “Not much reliance is placed on Mr. Noxon’s word by those who have had business dealings with him.”⁶⁴

Noxon refused to give up, announcing in December 1905 that he had once again secured funding for his reservoir from New York investors and that he would soon be in Park County to begin acquiring water rights. Predictably, the money failed to materialize. In 1909, Noxon’s Park County assets were sold at Sheriff’s sale in the spring of 1909.⁶⁵ Noxon died later that year.⁶⁶

C. C. Chapin, the Boston businessman who provided Noxon with the \$25,000 for the initial option payments in 1903, attempted to resurrect the project. Chapin arrived in Park County in September 1909, reportedly offering “prices greatly in excess of the ordinary ranch values.” Many local ranchers granted Chapin options on their land and water rights.⁶⁷ Clara Whitten was presumably among those prepared to sell their ranches to Chapin, though the plan would never come to fruition.

Clara Whitten died suddenly from pneumonia the following month on October 14, 1909, at age 57. Prior to her death, she had been planning to retire after the sale of her ranch, apparently to Chapin. Her obituary recognized her considerable ranching acumen, stating, “No man has made a greater success of ranch and cattle business than she.”⁶⁸ Between 1895 and 1909, Clara nearly doubled the size of the ranch, weathered multiple fires, survived the vagaries of the South Park’s fickle climate, and more than capably managed what was described as “one of the best and most beautifully improved ranches in the north end of the Park.”⁶⁹

After Clara’s death, her foreman Thomas Nagle managed the ranch for Eva Bumstead until 1911, when Eva sold the nearly 800-acre ranch along with nearly 100 head of cattle and 30 horses to Samuel I. Altman (b. 1856) of Colorado Springs for \$25,000.⁷⁰ Originally from Ohio, Samuel I. Altman ranched in



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Lincoln County during the early 1900s.⁷¹ Samuel and Luella Altman's 19-year-old son, Earl, took over operations at the ranch after his father's death in 1912.⁷² Earl apparently met his first wife Beulah Muller of Jefferson, shortly afterward. The couple split their time between Colorado Springs and the ranch.⁷³ Samuel Altman's widow and five children held the property for six years, eventually selling to a group of individuals that included members of the Guiraud family in 1917. At the time, the ranch included, "an electric light plant, a blacksmith shop, a store house, an eight room dwelling, a cook house, a bunk house, a horse barn, a pump house and a ware house."⁷⁴

Between 1917 and 1919, the ranch holdings were expanded to include the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 12 in Township 8, Range 75.⁷⁵ In 1919, Joseph T. Milligan, brother of local rancher William R. Milligan, acquired the ranch on Michigan Creek.⁷⁶ In the early 1900s, Joseph worked as a farmhand on his brother's ranch located to the southeast of the Whitten place.⁷⁷ After purchasing the Whitten Ranch, Joseph moved into the ranch house with his wife Marie, growing hay and raising cattle throughout the 20s and 30s.⁷⁸

Joseph T. Milligan was born on April 14, 1873, in Coitsville Township, Ohio, near the Pennsylvania border, one of seven children born to William John and Martha Milligan.⁷⁹ Joseph and his brothers, William R. and Edward (Eddie) F. Milligan left Ohio to make their fortune in Colorado. William R. arrived in Park County in 1883, marrying Isabelle (Belle) McCartney, daughter of Jefferson area rancher William McCartney in 1891.⁸⁰ William R. and Belle established the Milligan Ranch near Jefferson. After arriving in Park County, Joseph and Edward Milligan lived with their brother William and Belle. Joseph worked as a laborer on the Milligan Ranch while Edward taught public school.⁸¹ Some time before 1910, Edward left Park County for Geary, Oklahoma, where he practiced medicine for many years.⁸² Joseph stayed on at the Milligan Ranch into his early thirties. In 1919, Joseph Milligan purchased the Whitten Ranch. Joseph and Marie Milligan's only child, a daughter named Hazel, was born shortly afterward.

Cattle ranching had been particularly lucrative during World War I, but after the war cattle prices quickly declined in Park County from \$44.09 per head in 1919 to \$34.61 in 1930. Despite the downturn in cattle prices, the number of acres of grazing lands in Park County increased by nearly 235% during this time period.⁸³ Given its high quality, Park County hay remained in demand and represented the county's largest crop in 1931.⁸⁴

During the early decades of the twentieth century, open range land in the South Park continued to diminish, encouraging established ranch owners to expand their holdings.⁸⁵ In 1928, Joseph T. Milligan patented 680 acres of land south of the ranch in what is today the Indian Mountain subdivision.⁸⁶ Milligan now controlled over 1500 acres of prime hay fields and grazing land in the South Park.

The national economic depression, coupled with difficult weather conditions and severe drought presented serious financial challenges for Park County ranchers like the Milligans during the 1930s.⁸⁷ Milligan financed his purchase of the ranch via a mortgage held by successful Fairplay businessman George M. Teter. Milligan refinanced his loan frequently throughout the 1930s, eventually selling the ranch to Teter on January 11, 1940, with the stipulation that Milligan could continue to occupy the ranch house and use the south pasture until May 1, 1940.⁸⁸ Joseph and Marie Milligan left the South Park soon afterward, moving to Englewood, Colorado, where Joseph lived until his death in 1971 at age 97.⁸⁹

Originally from Iowa, George M. Teter (b. 1861) grew up working on his father's farm.⁹⁰ He moved to Colorado in the early 1890s, settling in Fairplay where he opened a blacksmith shop. Active in



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Republican politics, George served as a Fairplay trustee, county commissioner, and school board treasurer. He later opened the South Park Motor and Livery Company, converting his blacksmith shop into a garage.⁹¹ Although Teter and his family lived in Fairplay, his business ventures included a ranch south of Fairplay. In the early 1900s, the Teter Ranch encompassed 880 acres.⁹² Rather than work the ranch himself, Teter employed a number of ranch managers including J. H. Patterson, Fred Wiley, Vess Law, John Fisher, and J.E. Johnson.⁹³ The Teter Ranch produced around 400 tons of hay in 1908.⁹⁴ Teter later partnered with the Milligan family in the mid-1910s.⁹⁵ In addition to the ranch south of Fairplay, Teter also owned a ranch west of Michigan Hill.

George M. Teter took ownership of the Whitten Ranch shortly after the onset of World War II. He was 79 years old at the time. The war years brought higher beef prices and new markets for Park County's agricultural products and the ranch likely did well.⁹⁶ George M. Teter died four years after acquiring the Whitten ranch, two years after the death of his wife Mary in 1942.⁹⁷ The Teter heirs, son George W. Teter and his wife Edith Almgren Teter, chose to divest themselves of the Whitten ranchland shortly after the end of World War II.⁹⁸ The Teter family continued to ranch other lands in the South Park for many years. In the late 1990s, George M. Teter's grandson Roy E. Teter transferred the Teter family ranch west of Michigan Hill to the State Parks and Wildlife Department. The area is now the Teter-Michigan Creek State Wildlife Area.

The Teter family sold the Whitten ranchland to Joe M. Hatton and his wife Evelyn Lucile, known as Lucy.⁹⁹ Joe Hatton (b. 1913) hailed from Orange, Texas.¹⁰⁰ Born in Tennessee in 1918, Lucy grew up in west Texas before marrying Joe Hatton in 1936.¹⁰¹ Before moving to Colorado Springs in 1940, Joe Hatton earned a bachelor's degree in animal husbandry from Texas A&M University.¹⁰² According to Lucy, ranching was Joe Hatton's passion. "...All he had ever wanted to do was have a ranch," she said.¹⁰³

The Hattons became prominent ranchers in the Colorado Springs area as well as ranch brokers. In addition to their holdings in Park County, the couple owned ranches in the mountains south of Florissant and near Ellicott, Colorado. Joe and Lucy Hatton were very active in the Pikes Peak Cattlemen's Association. Both were charter members with Joe later serving as president of the Cattlemen's Association and Lucy as president Pikes Peak Cowbelles, an auxiliary to the association. Joe also served as chairman of Colorado Cattlemen's State Land Committee.¹⁰⁴ It is doubtful that the Hattons spent time at the Whitten Ranch headquarters, which was likely leased or managed by others. They held the Whitten Ranch for only four years, but during that time more than doubled its acreage, acquiring an additional 1200 acres of land to the south of the headquarters.

After the Hattons sold the ranch in 1950, it quickly passed through the hands of Nebraskans Herbert Hughes and Ivan Jennings before E. V. Cavness sold the ranch to fellow Texans J. Clarence Shepherd, Marlin V. Eagle, and G. Victor Held in 1953.¹⁰⁵ The three owners, related by marriage, lived in the small Texas community of Panhandle near Amarillo. J. Clarence Shepherd's sisters Opal and Hester married Marlin Eagle and G. Victor Held respectively.¹⁰⁶ The ranch, known as the Shepherd Ranch during this time, was likely managed by others. During the 1950s, ranching and hay raising continued to form the bedrock of Park County's local economy. However, the total number of ranches declined as smaller ranches were consolidated into larger holdings. In 1959, the average ranch in Park County reportedly included nearly 5,000 acres, the largest average acreage per ranch in Colorado. Ranches not absorbed by larger operations were increasingly converted to residential or recreational uses.¹⁰⁷



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In 1962, J. Clarence Shepherd and his brothers-in-law sold the ranch to Guy L. Scarborough (b. 1916) and his wife Elnor of Baca County, Colorado.¹⁰⁸ Originally from Texas, Guy Scarborough lived in Colorado Springs. In 1968, he expanded the ranch further by patenting 520 acres of state land in Section 12, Township 8, Range 76.¹⁰⁹ The ranch now comprised over 2,500 acres of land on both sides of Highway 285. Around this time, Scarborough also acquired a noncontiguous 600 acre parcel to the west of the Whitten homestead. In 1969, Scarborough sold the bulk of his land holdings, with the exception of the land in Section 12, Township 8, Range 76, to Ralph D. Janitell, Jr. and Richard L. Janitell.¹¹⁰

The 1970s was a difficult decade for ranching in Colorado. Land owners in the South Park increasingly sold their water rights to Denver area interests for large payoffs. From county records, it is clear that Janitell encountered significant financial difficulties in the 1970s that ultimately resulted in Lloyds Bank of California acquiring the property via Sheriff's sale in 1978.¹¹¹ By late mid 1990s, the City of Thornton, located in the Denver metro area, had acquired a portion of the ranch property that included the original 1880s homestead and the majority of the property once held by Albert and Clara Whitten. The City of Thornton's primary interest in the land was the water that flowed through the Whitten, McCartney, Packer and C.E. Whitten No. 1, 2, 3, and 4 Ditches. In 1997, the City of Thornton sold the land, sans water rights, to the Observatory Rock Ranch, LLC.¹¹² The water rights were eventually transferred to the City of Aurora.¹¹³ No longer valuable for hay production or able to support a cattle ranching operation, Observatory Rock Ranch, LLC, broke the property into smaller parcels. In 2000, the present owner, Paul McDaniel acquired a 338 acre parcel containing the original 160 acre Whitten homestead and the surviving ranch buildings. Recognizing the historic significance of the property, McDaniel began restoration work on the largest of the barns and a smaller log building located near the main house. The land is used today primarily as a vacation and recreational property.

¹ Rufus B. Sage, *Rufus B. Sage: His Letter and Papers, 1836-1847* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1956), 189.

² Front Range Research Associates, Inc., *Park County, Colorado, Historic Contexts* (Denver, CO: 2002), 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁴ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 21, 1880, 5.

⁵ Whitten Homestead Papers, National Archives.

⁶ Kosciusko County Indiana; Marriages 1846-1891, Brides Compiled by Ruth M Slevin 1972; Book: E; Page: 89. Accessed via ancestry.com.

⁷ 1850, 1860, 1870 U.S. Census Records.

⁸ 1860, 1870 U.S. Census Records.

⁹ 1870 U.S. Census Records.

¹⁰ 1880 U.S. Census Records.

¹¹ Whitten Homestead Papers, Northeast ¼, Section 24, Township 8S, Range 76, National Archives.

¹² The headgate of the Whitten Ditch was located on the southwest side of Michigan Creek in the northwest corner of Section 13; Decree of the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District of the State of Colorado, October 1889 (CA0341).

¹³ "Twenty-five Years Ago, What Our Daddies Did in 1882," *Fairplay Flume*, September 13, 1907.

¹⁴ Whitten Homestead Papers, Northeast ¼, Section 24, Township 8S, Range 76.

¹⁵ Front Range Research, *Park County, Colorado, Historic Contexts*, 36.

¹⁶ *Rocky Mountain News*, January 1, 1884.

¹⁷ Front Range Research, *Park County, Colorado, Historic Contexts*, 38.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁹ Decree of the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District of the State of Colorado, October 1889 (CA0341).

²⁰ 1885 Colorado State Census Records.

²¹ *Fairplay Flume*, July 12, 1888.

²² *Fairplay Flume*, May 24, 1883.

²³ Decree of the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District of the State of Colorado, October 1889 (CA0341).



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Resource Name: Whitten Ranch

- ²⁴ Whitten Homestead Papers, Northeast ¼, Section 24, Township 8S, Range 76.
- ²⁵ Park County Deed Records, Book 38, Page 627.
- ²⁶ Park County Deed Records, Book 29, Page 498.
- ²⁷ Decree of the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District of the State of Colorado, October 1889 (CA0341).
- ²⁸ Park County Deed Records, Book 25, Page 419.
- ²⁹ *Fairplay Flume*, September 6, 1888.
- ³⁰ *History of the City of Denver, Arapahoe County, and Colorado* (Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Co., 1880), 271, 565.
- ³¹ Pat Pascoe, *Helen Ring Robinson: Colorado Senator and Suffragist* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2011), 5-6.
- ³² The July 1895 issue of the Rocky Mountain Educator listed Ida Geddes as teaching in the community of Chase. *The Rocky Mountain Educator: A Monthly Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Teachers, Students, School Directors and Educational Institutions of the Rocky Mountain Region*, Volume 1, July 1895, 142; "Miss Ida Geddes, Former Park School Teacher, Dies," *Fairplay Flume*, August 28, 1936.
- ³³ *The Rocky Mountain Educator: A Monthly Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Teachers, Students, School Directors and Educational Institutions of the Rocky Mountain Region*, Volume 1, July 1895, 142.
- ³⁴ *Fairplay Flume*, April 9, 1897.
- ³⁵ *Fairplay Flume*, April 9, 1897.
- ³⁶ *Fairplay Flume*, October 29, 1909.
- ³⁷ *Fairplay Flume*, September 21, 1893.
- ³⁸ *Fairplay Flume*, March 22, 1894.
- ³⁹ 1900 US Census Records, ancestry.com.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ 1910 US Census Records, ancestry.com.
- ⁴² <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=WH&GSpartial=1&GSbyrel=all&GSst=7&GScntry=4&GSsr=6081&GRid=34863685&>.
- ⁴³ *Fairplay Flume*, November 30, 1906; 1900 US Census, ancestry.com.
- ⁴⁴ *Fairplay Flume*, May 4, 1906.
- ⁴⁵ Park County Deed Records, Book 70, Page 161-2.
- ⁴⁶ *Fairplay Flume*, November 4, 1898.
- ⁴⁷ *Fairplay Flume*, November 4, 1898.
- ⁴⁸ Microfilm of the *Alma Bulletin* from 1898 housed at the Park County Local History Archives includes only the month of the December.
- ⁴⁹ *Fairplay Flume*, April 15, 1898.
- ⁵⁰ *Fairplay Flume*, January 9, 1903.
- ⁵¹ *Fairplay Flume*, February 21, 1908.
- ⁵² *Fairplay Flume*, July 24, 1908.
- ⁵³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1913* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 38-9.
- ⁵⁴ Front Range Research, *Park County, Colorado, Historic Contexts*, 10-11.
- ⁵⁵ *Fairplay Flume*, June 11, 1909.
- ⁵⁶ Ashley Bushey and Steve Plutt, Tarryall Reservoir Land & Ditch Co. Rock Marker Nomination Form (Park County Office of Historic Preservation Records), 8.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ *Fairplay Flume*, February 27, 1903.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ *Fairplay Flume*, October 2, 1903.
- ⁶¹ *Fairplay Flume*, October 23, 1903.
- ⁶² *Fairplay Flume*, December 11, 1903.
- ⁶³ *Fairplay Flume*, February 12, 1904.
- ⁶⁴ *Fairplay Flume*, February 10, 1905.
- ⁶⁵ *Fairplay Flume*, February 16, 1909.
- ⁶⁶ *Fairplay Flume*, September 10, 1909.
- ⁶⁷ *Fairplay Flume*, September 19, 1909.
- ⁶⁸ *Fairplay Flume*, October 15, 1909.
- ⁶⁹ *Fairplay Flume*, October 15, 1909.



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Section 3: Historical Background

Resource Name: Whitten Ranch

⁷⁰ *Fairplay Flume*, October 29, 1909; *Fairplay Flume*, August 18, 1911; Park County Deed Records, Book 74, Page 257.

⁷¹ 1900 US Census Records, ancestry.com.

⁷² 1910 US Census Records, ancestry.com; *Fairplay Flume*, December 17, 1915; *Fairplay Flume*, March 19, 1915.

⁷³ 1920 US Census Records, ancestry.com; *Fairplay Flume*, November 7, 1913; *Fairplay Flume*, April, 23, 1915.

⁷⁴ Park County Deed Records, Book 88, Page 233.

⁷⁵ Park County Deed Records, Book 88, Page 232; Book 88, Page 221.

⁷⁶ Park County Deed Records, Book 88, Page 221.

⁷⁷ 1900 & 1910 U.S. Census Records.

⁷⁸ 1920 & 1930 U.S. Census Records.

⁷⁹ 1880 U.S. Census Records, Colorado Social Security Death Index.

⁸⁰ Family memorial in Bordenville Cemetery. Park County Marriage Records Book A, Page 107.

⁸¹ 1900 US Census Records, ancestry.com.

⁸² 1910 US Census Records, ancestry.com.

⁸³ Front Range Research, *Park County, Colorado, Historic Contexts*, 52-53.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸⁶ Serial Patents 1021098 & 1021063. Accessed at www.glorerecords.blm.gov.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁸⁸ Park County Deed Records, Book 119, Page 366.

⁸⁹ 1940 U.S. Census Records (Marie Milligan); Social Security Death Index.

⁹⁰ 1880 U.S. Census Records.

⁹¹ Paul-Teter House. Historic Fairplay Walking Tour, http://www.southparkheritage.org/common/southparkheritage/itineraries/fairplay_walking_tour/index.html.

⁹² *Fairplay Flume*, March 19, 1909.

⁹³ *Fairplay Flume*, May 26, 1905, June 2, 1905; August 7, 1908; May 18, 1910; May 5, 1911.

⁹⁴ *Fairplay Flume*, August 7, 1908.

⁹⁵ Issues of the *Fairplay Flume* published in 1916 and 1917 mention a Teter & Milligan Ranch.

⁹⁶ Front Range Research, *Park County, Colorado, Historic Contexts*, 58.

⁹⁷ George M. and Mary J. Teter headstone, Fairplay Cemetery, Fairplay, CO.

⁹⁸ Park County Deed Records, Book 134, Page 531.

⁹⁹ Park County Deed Records, Book 134, Page 531

¹⁰⁰ *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, November 14, 1993.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, October 24, 1993 and January 22, 1994.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, November 14, 1993.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, October 24, 1993.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, November 19, 1973.

¹⁰⁵ Park County Deed Records, Book 143, Page 91; Book 143, Page 499, Book 147, Page 37; Book 148, Page 55

¹⁰⁶ *Amarillo Globe-News*, June 14, 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Front Range Research, *Park County, Colorado, Historic Contexts*, 59.

¹⁰⁸ Park County Deed Records, Book 172, Page 339.

¹⁰⁹ Park County Deed Records, Book 204, Page 836.

¹¹⁰ Park County Deed Records, Book 205, Page 274.

¹¹¹ Park County Deed Records, Book 284, Page 571.

¹¹² Park County Deed Records, Reception Number 476755.

¹¹³ Email from Amy Clark, Records Coordinator, City of Thornton, Colorado. April 9, 2013.

4. Statement of Significance

Please explain the significance of the property in relation to the criteria selected in Section 1.