

MACKINS MAKE MELODRAMA TRADITION IN CRIPPLE CREEK

The stage for drama was set when gold fever hit Cripple Creek in 1890. A gold rush of major proportions was underway at the turn of the 20th century and a boomtown atmosphere called for entertainment galore.

Tired, thirsty and social hungry miners preferred gambling halls and saloons that lined the streets of all the small communities around the mining district. Madams, dance hall girls and medicine shows kept the less cultured, working element entertained.

But there was also a more sophisticated lot who yearned for the social cultures they left back East. Moving to the West where social dress and fine dining was as scarce as running water, was not easy on the socially inclined.

Cripple Creek and Victor early on both sported grand opera houses, providing grand theatrical shows and music. Such notables as Texas Guinan, Lily Langtree

In 1946 Wayne and Dorothy Mackin purchased the Imperial Hotel and began the tradition of producing 60- plus years of melodrama.

The first year they hired a group from Kansas to produce a show and the second year they started producing their own shows. In 1953 the Mackins began the tradition of producing true turn-of-the-century melodrama at the Imperial, a tradition that continued for 45 years.

The Imperial Players performed to summer crowds in the 280-seat Gold Bar Room Theater and helped revitalize the town with a new tourism economy. The award winning dinner/theater venue was a hit and such notables as Victor Borge, Arthur Godfrey, Walt Disney, Mary Tyler Moore and Lowell Thomas visited the theater. Ragtime pianist Max Morath got his start at the keyboard in the Imperial. In the early 1990s the last Imperial show was performed as the Imperial became a casino and the Gold Bar Room closed.

Early in 1999, the city of Cripple Creek began extensive renovations to refurbish the Butte Theater on Cripple Creek's west end with fresh paint, Victorian-era wallpaper, and period chandeliers. The stage was set for another era of theater.

The Butte became home to the renewed tradition of classic Cripple Creek melodrama with the Mackin Family's new Cripple Creek Players taking the stage during summer months. Bonnie and Steve produced again the classic melodrama

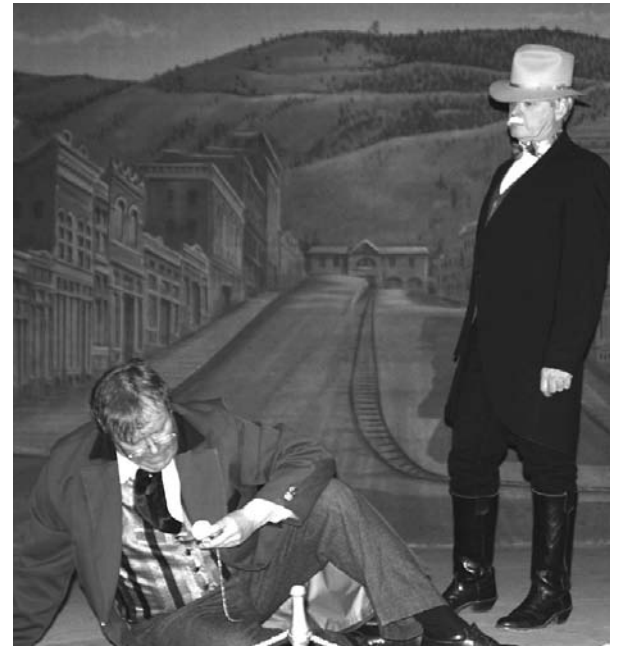
so well loved from the former Imperial Days. The Cripple Creek Players brought back to life the traditional scripts that Dorothy Mackin edited and recreated the summertime melodrama craze. Stacy Mackin eventually became the third generation of Mackins to produce melodrama at the Butte, serving as the Butte Theater manager and melodrama producer.

The Mackins ended their productions in 2006; but Steve opted to take the stage in the community theater production of *A Cripple Creek Christmas Carol* that holiday season.

In 2007 Thin Air Theatre Company took the lead to produce melodrama and a variety of theatrical venues.

The success of the Butte's new lease on life is due to the long tradition Wayne and Dorothy began over 60 years ago; and due to the professional path of classic melodrama that the Mackin family created.

In this 2009 season, we at TATC salute the Mackins and their dedication to promoting Cripple Creek and professional theater and for making possible the town's long tradition of melodrama.



Steve Mackin, right, took the stage in 2005 in *A Cripple Creek Christmas Carol* as Winfield Scott Stratton, along with Mel Moser as Gooch.



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