

Moments recalled on The South Platte River

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The South Platte River and Colorado History are intertwined. Each successive explorer identified their discovery path, usually by name of the River. The Platte River forks just outside Colorado in Nebraska, the North Fork heading into Wyoming, the South Fork to central Colorado. Even at their origin there, both are small streams unnavigable most of the year. In Colorado, the South Fork River ascends so gradually that when named by the Spanish near its source, they called the stream Rio Chato (Calm River).

In 1872, the Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad began operating a passenger and freight line from Denver to Leadville as a narrow gauge railroad. This route is pretty much the present US-285. After a series bankruptcies, the section between Waterton Canyon and Bailey, Colorado became the property of Denver Water.

In fact most properties along the all that section of the South Platte up to the town of Bailey Colorado were been bought by Denver Water. And then annually, some were leased on an annual basis for a nominal fee, with the understanding that the property could be reclaimed by Denver Water at any time, and that improvements on buildings become the property of Denver Water. There were a few Post Office drops along this River but in time as residents left. The Post Office at Foxton, Ferndale, and Buffalo Creek have been discontinued.

Across the South Platte near Foxton, there remains the end pieces and a Center Pier of a Railroad bridge that had crossed the stream there. That bridge was maintained for a time by the Lessees of properties on the east side of the stream. That central property here had once been a summer homestead of the Mamie Dowd family (nee Mrs Eisenhower).

That lessee was our neighbors. We spent many a week-end with them there relaxing, socializing, fishing, pitching horseshoes, gardening, hiking throughout the year.

As an aside, this family maintained photos of they and visitors playing bridge, on chairs with card table, all seated in the middle of the South Platte River, in winter, the water frozen, the foursome wearing winter coats, waving to the camera, to denote they were enjoying that winter outing.

The State of Colorado stocked this stream regularly. On one occasion, the delivery truck got too near the edge of the stream, partly toppled in the water and could only be rescued when all the trout and water was dumped from the tank of the delivery truck into the South Plate. Imagine the delight of the casual fisherman who dropped a fly into the stream those next few weeks.