

PRUNES, THE BURRO

By Juanita Sparks

High up in the mountains of Colorado, in the little town of Fairplay, there is a monument, a monument to a burro. The name of that burro was Prunes.

A burro is a small donkey. Burros can carry heavy loads on their little backs, and they are sure-footed, which means that they can walk on narrow trails without falling off.

The monument in Fairplay is not fancy, as are some monuments in public parks and cemeteries. It is made of just plain rock, like you can find in the mountains, and the rocks are held together with cement. The inscription on writing on the monument says only, "Prunes, A Burro 1867-1930." Those numbers tell us that Prunes was born in 1867 and died in 1930. He was 63 years old when he died. That is old for a burro. He worked hard and lived a good life.

His partner, a man named Rupe, was a miner. The two worked together for many years. Rupe dug big rocks that held some gold out of the mountain. Prunes strong little back carried supplies up the mountain to the mines. Prunes also carried the heavy rocks down the mountain to the mill. At the mill, the gold would be freed from the rock.

Burros will eat almost anything, but they are vegetarians, which means that vegetables and fruits are the food they like the most.

This particular burro, Prunes preferred prunes to any other fruit or vegetable. The men who worked at the grocery stores in Fairplay thought that Prunes could read, because he would go into the store and go immediately to the place where the prunes were stored.

Now you and I know that animals, even a smart little burro cannot read, but he could smell, and whenever he got a whiff of the smell of prunes he would go to that place.

After many years of taking supplies to the mines, and bringing big heavy rocks to the mill, something bad happened to Prunes.

One winter in the high cold mountains of Colorado, there was a terrible blizzard. The snow came down and the wind blew and it was icy cold outside. Prunes found an old shed and took shelter there. That was a smart thing to do, but during the night the wind blew the snow against the door of the shed, and Prunes was trapped inside. Up in the mountains snow does not melt very fast, and the poor little burro was trapped in the shed for a long time. He had no water to drink. He had no food, not even a prune. This made him very weak. When he was finally rescued he was too thin and ill to survive. Remember Prunes was 63 years old, and that is very old for a hardworking burro.

The townspeople of Fairplay tried to nurse Prunes back to health but he died. He is buried in a grave on Front Street in Fairplay, and the monument marks this spot.