

# THE HISTORIC STRATER HOTEL PRESENTS: ROOM 331: MARION L. JARVIS

VISIONARY AND BELOVED FORCE BEHIND THE CURRENT BEAUTY OF THE STRATER HOTEL  
JANUARY 19, 1904-JUNE 15, 1983

## WHAT WAS SHE DOING AT THE STRATER?

It's safe to say that the Strater Hotel would not be the elegant, Victorian masterpiece it is today without the influence of Marion L. Jarvis. Her vision and love of art and culture were instrumental in guiding her daughter and son-in-law, Jentra and Earl Barker Jr., the second generation of Barker's to own the property, in acquiring period furniture and restoring the hotel with a Victorian theme.

Originally from Mesa, Colorado, Marion moved to Salt Lake City at a young age where she received most of her early education, and then returned to Durango to graduate from Durango High School. When her husband died suddenly, she immediately took over the shambles of the estate left by him and turned it around into a very successful real

estate business. Her resilience and intelligence served her well and it didn't take long for Marion to become a highly respected and well connected businesswoman in the community.

Marion had a thirst for learning and love of education throughout her life and took courses in many subjects including creative writing. She was a published author of several books, one of which is **Come On In Dearie**, the story of prostitutes and institutes of early Durango. Known to her grandson Rod, current owner of the Strater, as "Oohoo," Marion always wanted to know the details of what he had learned when he came home on college breaks, no matter how difficult or obscure the subject.

Her love of theater and performing arts was the



driving force behind the creation of the melodrama theater at the Strater, currently the Henry Strater Theater. Her vision is still felt today in the Diamond Belle Saloon and in fact, throughout the entire property.

Marion was beautiful, talented and beloved by the community and her family. Her contribution to the Strater Hotel endures to this day.

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Marion founded the Community Concert Series in Durango.*
- *She also helped create the Durango Fine Arts Council.*
- *She managed multiple real estate holdings and properties for many years.*
- *She did freelance writing.*
- *Marion published a beautiful little red plush covered book titled "The Strater Hotel Story, A story of the old landmark of the Southwest," in 1963.*
- *At Durango's Centennial Celebration in 1980, she was crowned Queen.*
- *Fort Lewis College offers a performance scholarship in the name of Marion L. Jarvis.*
- *Marion was an accomplished cook and had compiled many recipes for a cookbook that has yet to be published, including a recipe for "How To Gently Roast a Man."*

## "I'M IN THE FAMILY WAY, MR. KERLEE"

In this short novel Marion tells the story of her grandparents, Alameda and Robert Kerlee, and their trek from Georgia to Colorado in 1883. Traveling in two covered wagons with four small children, an assortment of animals, and all of their belongs, the intrepid family

encountered many hardships and challenges along the way. Part of the journey was made in a railroad boxcar and then in an immigration train. At one point all four children came down with the measles. Innovation and resourcefulness were evident in their substitute for

coffee —parched rye, barley, and wheat, and vinegar made from molasses, yeast, and rain-water. The family finally made it to the wild beauty of Colorado, which in the end, fully justified their decision to go West and start a new life.