

THE HISTORIC STRATER HOTEL PRESENTS

ROOM 415: HATTIE MASHBURN

EARLY STRATER CO-MANAGER; SAVVY BUSINESSWOMAN; REAL ESTATE ENTREPRENEUR
FEBRUARY 19, 1859-APRIL, 28, 1910

HER EARLY INFLUENCE AT THE STRATER

In many ways Hattie Mashburn was a woman ahead of her time. In an era when most women were housewives and mothers, Hattie became the co-owner of the Strater Hotel with Charles E. Stilwell when the two of them purchased the Strater from the Bank of Cleveland in 1893.

Hattie was born in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in 1859. She was the third of eleven children of William and Martha Grant Mashburn of McDowell County, North Carolina. Her father, a Confederate Civil War veteran, owned a large farm and also taught school. He made sure all his children were well educated.

Hattie, along with two of her siblings, moved to Colorado prior to the 20th century, possibly due to the state of the economy in the South after the Civil War.

As co-manager with Stilwell, one of Hattie's responsibilities was supervising the activities of the fourth floor where employee quarters for maids and waitresses were located. The back of the floor earned the nickname "Monkey Hall" because of the "monkey shins" taking place under Hattie's supervision. Some walls were made only of canvas which afforded little privacy, but made it easy for "extra guests" to slip in and out.



Although all of the rooms on the fourth floor have been updated and the canvas walls replaced, Hattie Mashburn's very important contribution to the early success of the Strater Hotel endures today.

Hattie died at the age of 51 and is buried at Durango's Greenmount cemetery, along with many other historic local figures.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- A diamond brooch she gave to one of her sisters was evidence of Hattie's financial success as a single woman in Durango's early days.
- Hattie was an original member of the Durango Wheel Club, formed in 1895 and still active today. Originally formed as a cycling advocacy group, it later became a social cycling club.
- In addition to Hattie's management skills, she was a shrewd businesswoman who acquired many real estate properties throughout Durango.

LIFE FOR WOMEN IN EARLY DURANGO

Imagine life in this frontier town from the 1880s to early 1900s. In spite of the narrow gauge train bringing supplies and mail, everyday necessities were much more limited than in cities and even small towns in the East. Almost all of the food was made from scratch or preserved. Respectable jobs for women were few

and far between. There were certainly exceptions, but life in this picturesque mountain town as we know it today was anything but that in its early years. It wasn't as lawless and wild as many mining towns, but its lifeblood, the railroad and the ore smelters, caused a smoky, grimy pall to hang over the streets.

Typically, women would not have had much decision-making power, however the women of Durango, and Colorado in general, were some of the first in the country to win the right to vote, which came to Colorado in 1893.

