

Nackin J Fawcett

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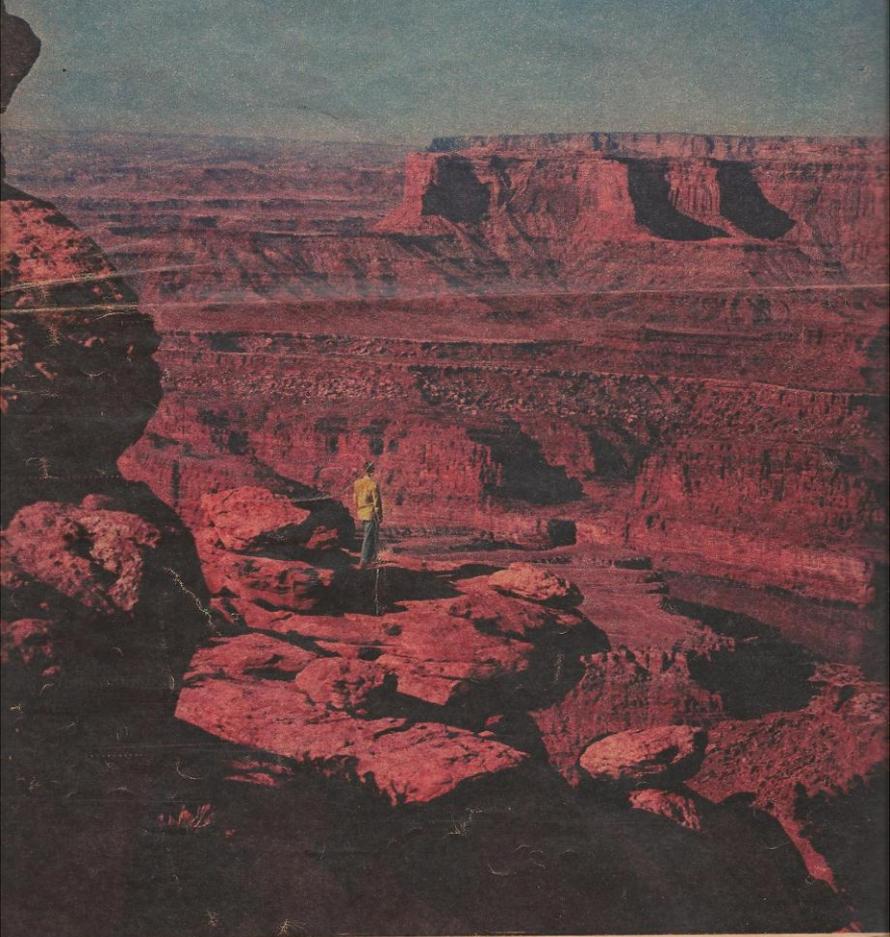
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● **FORT COLLINS FAIR TIME**
A Town Looks Over Its Children's W



THE GRAND CANYON (See Shrine of the Ages, page 8)



Dorothy and Wayne Mackin and ancient hotel they revived on a shoestring.

***Perhaps the forgotten Chapter
In Dorothy's Book
The one someone else wrote
GL***

The Mackins of Cripple Creek

By Ellen O'Connor

June 19, 1955

In the Empire Magazine of the Denver Post

They romanticized a forgotten hotel into a thriving resort complete with theater

CRIPPLE CREEK. COLO., success stories usually hinge upon million-dollar strikes made during the gold rush era half a century ago. But a 1955 version the Mackin story is a tale of an old hotel, young love and revived melodrama.

The Imperial, is a four story brick hostelry erected after the Great Fire in 1896. It stands just off Bennett Ave on a rocky side street. It was built to provide better beds, beef and bourbon, crabmeat and champagne, for miners who struck it rich. It catered to gamblers, brokers, politicians, and the glittering opera stars and mustached actors who trouped in to entertain them.

The Imperial flourished with the community for three decades. Then boards were nailed across its windows. For 20 years thereafter they stayed in place. The Imperial joined the limbo of abandoned structures which mark a dying gold camp.



Isabelle McClung, Norma Loy and Shirley Strain, Imperial "mellerdrammer" stars.

EMPIRE MAGAZINE

So it remained till 1946. When a pair of young newlyweds peeked in on the cobwebs and clutter, the beds with broken slats and rat torn mattresses, the curlicue dressers with smashed mirrors, the scatter of yellowing newspapers, rag scraps and the dust of the years.

However, the bride and groom, Wayne and Dorothy Mackin. Were in love and to them what they saw was an

abandoned palace long on charm.

She was an ex New Yorker and he was a former Oregonian, and both wanted to live in this semi remote part of mountain Colorado very much indeed, so they put their joint savings into reviving the Imperial.

The Mackin's bought the Imperial from Mrs. George Long, an Englishwoman. She was the widow of an artist who had worked in the mining district "back when."



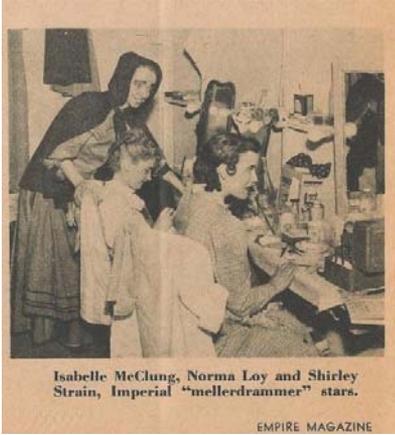
"Our searching was over," Dorothy says. "When we went through the hotel, both of us knew we wanted it for our own. We loved the high mountain country, the ghost town aspects of Cripple Creek, and the unexplored possibilities of making it a major tourist attraction."

Dorothy had managed a food brokerage business in Denver. Wayne had been in the wholesale and retail ice cream trade before the army sent him to Camp Hale, then Italy and finally back to Camp Carson.

This was a gamble, and maybe there were times when they thought they'd been foolish. A few mines were reopening, but the government held out little inducement for gold miners to pursue the once precious yellow stuff. Realistically, the Mackin's could expect small trade from that direction.

Their best chance seemed to lie in recreating the plush Victorian atmosphere which the hotel had known in its heyday, with the thought that this would attract guests as romantically inclined as the Imperial's current proprietors. They counted on aid from the scenery too the sight of the faraway Sangre de Cristos, Mount Pisgah close by, and handsome old Pike's Peak.

They proved themselves right. There are many tourists and travelers who'll go quite a distance to enjoy a stopping place when they know that hits of long ago, and Orvis Grout, the Civic Players director from Colorado Springs, brought the shows to amusing life for delighted summertime audiences.



Isabelle McClung, Norma Loy and Shirley Strain, Imperial "mellerdrammer" stars.

EMPIRE MAGAZINE

In nine short years the Mackin's have built a reputation with their Imperial hotel and that reputation is a magic magnet. The cookery is part of the place's pulling power, so's the widely credited hospitality, and then there's the melodrama-honest-to-goodness old-time melodrama.

The year 1948 saw introduction of Gay '90s stage plays in the Imperial's Gold Bar room. The Mackin's obtained college kids as actors to do the hits of long ago, and Orvis Grout, the Civic Players director from Colorado Springs, brought the shows to amusing life for delighted Summertime audiences.

Last season, 20,000 people applauded these ancient productions, and lingered to dine and/or to stay over at the gallant Imperial. When guests departed, they did so regretfully. "We'll be back," was the promise which rewarded the Mackin's, and "We'll tell our friends" was the often repeated statement that had the Mackin's breathing easier about seasons to come.

When the pair first started their enterprise, Dorothy was the cook, but, with the passing of time and the arrival of Stephen Kirk Mackin (now 8) and Susan Diane (now 6), she surrendered the kitchen to a wonderful French chef named Francois de Priest.

The couple decided that it would be best if the youngsters grew up in a regular old-fashioned home environment, so they bought a house half-a-block distant, and there the latest Mackin, Jeffery Wayne, born last May, flourishes with the rest of the clan.

Last year the Mackin's decided to invest their profits in Cripple Creek real estate. They purchased the big brick building next door to the Imperial to

rent for stores and apartments. Then they bought an early-day rooming house close by and fitted it up as a dormitory for their male employees at the hotel.

The Mackin's have very little idle time. Once the melodrama season ends they get busy putting the actors' quarters, the men's dormitory and part of the kitchen into bed for the winter. They keep one maintenance man busy throughout the year fixing leaky faucets, mending refrigerators, replacing window panes, varnishing window sills, painting inside and out the food is exceptionally good, the setting is theatrically appealing and the community is set in a colorful part of the old west.

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About Oct. 1, Wayne and Dorothy begin reading old melodramas to pick a show for next season. By January, they are ready to send out application forms for the cast and other employees.

All winter they do talent scouting. They visit university theaters in Colorado and attend all the Civic Players shows in Colorado Springs.



From January to June Wayne and Dorothy are busy processing some 200 applications for jobs. They hire a staff of 40 to 45. Besides redecorating rooms, laying carpets and refinishing furniture, the Mackin's visit auctions and antique sales in Denver and Colorado Springs to pick up vintage pieces which will heighten the Imperial's atmosphere.

The hotel stays open during the winter and serves special luncheons and dinners to groups of 25 to 150 townspeople and visiting firemen.

Dorothy does the winter shift of cooking, and Wayne is greeter and bartender. Dorothy and "Mack," as he is known to the Cripple Creekers, have been welcomed into the Sylvanite club, a miners' group that meets every month at the Imperial. He is a wheel in the Gold Camp Chamber of Commerce. Dorothy is on the Cripple Creek Museum board of directors and belongs to the Kindergarten Mothers club.

For the Mackin's there are no vacations other than busmen's holidays. When they travel they make it a point to study the decor of places where they stay, check the quality of mattresses, appraise kitchens and dining room service, and drive miles out of their way to visit ghost towns and theaters. Even the children have become aware of hotel and motel shortcomings.

The Mackin's' ambition and constant search for better things add up to a better Imperial, a bigger melodrama season, and a greater Cripple Creek. What's more, they're very happy people.



Tourist audiences pack the theater and sit engrossed at the "Gay '90s" plays which the Mackins select and cast during the long, busy months of the winter.

The Denver Post