

# Weekly Register-Call

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PUBLISHED SINCE 1862 IN GILPIN COUNTY

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- Two Black Hawk officials retire after more than a decade of service. **CITY p2-3**
- Enhancing the Central City “Wow” factor for visitors. **CITY p6**
- New Nederland mayor and board of trustees sworn in. **CITY p7**
- CDOT to help improve cell phone service from Golden to Black Hawk. **COUNTY p10**



DAVE GIBSON

**The Face on the Barroom Floor...** from poem to reality here in Central City's famous Teller House. **p12**

# The Face on the Barroom Floor

## The Story of the Famous Painting in Central City

by Dave Gibson

The 1887 Hugh Antoine D'Arcy poem, "The Face on the Barroom Floor" tells of a broken man still longing for the woman that he lost to another man. In the last two stanzas of the ballad his last thoughts are of her.

*Say boys, if you give me just another whiskey and I'll be glad, I'll draw right here the picture, of the face that drove me mad.*

*Give me that piece of chalk with which you mark the baseball score;*

*You shall see the lovely Madeline upon the barroom floor.*

*Another drink and with chalk in hand, the vagabond began,*

*To sketch a face that might well buy the soul of any man.*

*Then, as he placed another lock*

*upon that shapely head,*

*With a fearful shriek, he leaped and fell across the picture – dead!*

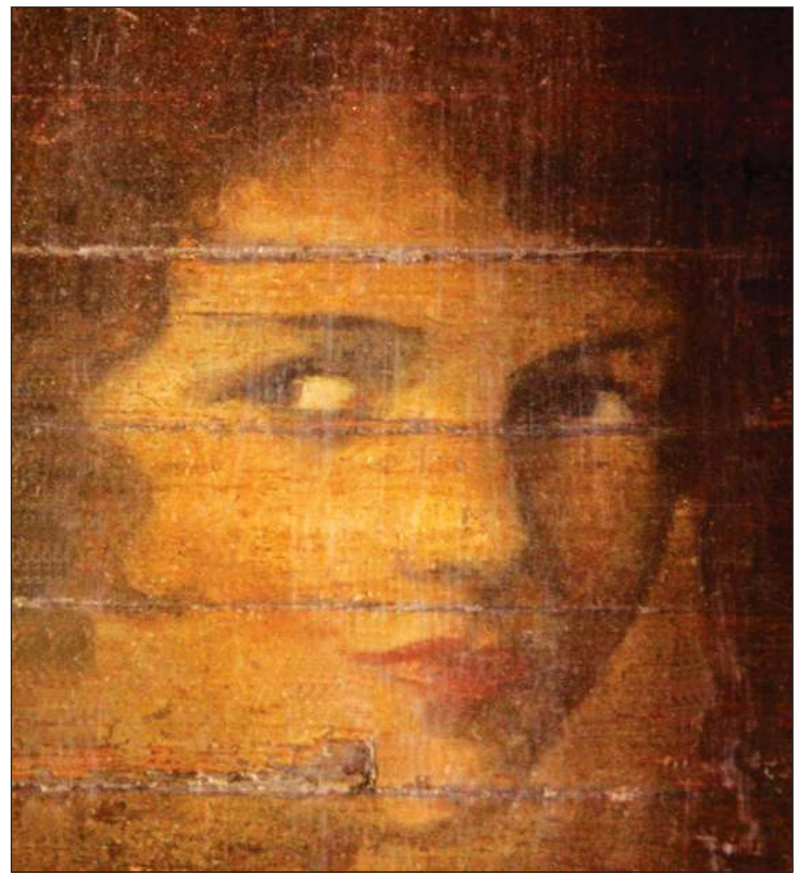
Inspired by D'Arcy's words, in 1936 Denver Post staff artist Herndon Davis painted the famous "face on the barroom floor" in Central City's Teller House. Hired by the Central City Opera Association to produce a series of paintings for the Opera House and Teller House, Davis had a falling out with project director Ann Evans over content. Forced to quit, on his last night's stay at the Teller House, he and a busboy snuck down to the bar. In a final act of defiance, Herndon began painting a woman's face on the barroom floor. With his accomplice holding a candle and a fifth of rum consumed, he finished his unsigned masterpiece at three in the morning. It was of his wife Nita.

The Central City Opera commissioned the one-act cabaret chamber opera, "The Face on the Barroom Floor," in 1978. Composed by Henry Mollicone

with libretto by John S. Bowman, it begins with present-day Larry and Isabella entering a bar. Larry asks the bartender about the face painting on the floor. He proceeds to tell the story flashing back in time to an 18th century saloon. A disheveled traveler enters and orders a drink as beautiful bargirl Madeline is asked to sing. While she is singing the traveler explains to the barkeeper that he can't pay for his drink, but in exchange will paint a face on the floor of the only woman that he ever loved. Agreed upon, when he is finished the barkeep sees that it is a painting of Madeline and a fight ensues. Madeline then throws herself between them with tragic results.

By now besotted, Larry laughs mockingly at the tale and forces Isabella to dance with him. Angry at Larry's treatment of Isabella, the bartender reveals his past romantic relationship with her. The two men commence fighting and...

Teller House and Opera house tours are available May 28th



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through September 5th. "The Face on the Barroom Floor" will be performed during the Central City Opera Festival on July 29th and

31st. For tickets or more information, call 303-292-6700 or go to [www.centralcityopera.org](http://www.centralcityopera.org).



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After photographing the Face on the Barroom Floor, this ghostly painter manifested itself in the photo, but definitely wasn't visible during the photo shoot at the historic Teller House!