

Manitou's Stagecoach Inn Closed

-Guy Priel

Although opened in 1881 and now known as P.J.'s Stagecoach Inn, the historic restaurant at the western end of downtown Manitou Springs, at 702 Manitou Ave., has officially shut its doors indefinitely following a recent series of lawsuits and other financial woes that have plagued the facility. The current owners are Paul Jakubczyk (AKA PJ) of Woodland Park and Joanna Barczynska, who purchased it in 2015.

Jakubczyk also owned a small cafe known as P.J.'s Bistro farther down Manitou Avenue. It opened in 2002 and closed earlier this year and is now the location of Babu's Indian and Nepalese Cuisine, which opened in October at 915 Manitou Ave. The Bistro was closed with the intention to relocate to 1015 W. Colorado Ave., the former location of the European Cafe, which was operated by his mother. The plan to merge the businesses was started in 2013. He moved the business and, in 2016, returned to Manitou Springs. When it closed earlier this year, it was stated that it was being closed for personal reasons.

The Stagecoach Inn spent several months early in 2018 adding an outside deck and began expanding their live music offerings, changed their menu and hired a new executive chef.

The restaurant was closed recently after the City of Manitou Springs shut off its water on Dec. 4 for failure to pay a bill totalling \$2,685.58, which included a past due balance and a restoration fee imposed by the city.

Previously, the owners faced a series of legal battles after former bartender Andrea Schaus filed a class-action lawsuit against the owners for failure to pay money owed from tips. She filed a suit against them stating they did not pay tips left by customers on credit card payments totalling over \$300. A previous employee also claimed that the same thing happened to her in 2017. In all, the owners paid \$1,800 in wages earned and more than \$2,000 in penalties and another \$2,000 in fines to the state. According to local residents, the restaurant owners also had issues with income taxes.

The restaurant also failed to pay into worker's compensation and unemployment, so all current employees of the company are now out of work without recourse during the holiday season. Any one employed at either PJ's Bistro and the Stagecoach Inn during the past three years are encouraged to contact the law offices of Gregory Givens at 291-4353.

There is a hearing scheduled for the class-action lawsuit on Tuesday, Jan. 14 at the federal courthouse, 212 N. Wahsatch Ave. in Colorado Springs.

This is not a new issue in the Pikes Peak region, as several restaurants have closed for failure to pay income taxes, most recently a pizza chain in Colorado Springs, Borriello Brothers, who were closed for failure to pay \$121,570 in sales tax revenues to the state, all the Denny's restaurants and a burger place once housed in the Manitou Spa Building.

The historic Stagecoach Inn was built in 1895 by William Bell, one of the founding members of Manitou Springs. Despite its barn-like appearance, it was never actually a barn. Bell built a giant wheel in Fountain Creek with the intention of producing electricity to serve the newly formed town. It never worked properly, so he later installed a coal plant to produce steam, but it was only enough to light the street lamps in Manitou Springs. After that, it housed the Manitou

Journal, which later became the Pikes Peak Journal. In 1941, the building was sold to a paperboy, A.B. Armstrong, who turned it into a restaurant.