

SMOKY HILL EXPRESS

Elbert County Historical Society & Museum Newsletter

FALL 2013

2013 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

Construction began on the *Smoky Hill Trail* exhibit inside the museum's Assembly Room, and visitors were able to watch the beginning steps (construction pictures on page 3) and enjoy several special displays. The "Hungate Massacre" display, based on the Hungate Massacre Research Project, was on loan courtesy of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society (CCVHS). This project was undertaken in October, 1985 to search for artifacts at the location of the Nathan Hungate home site in northwestern Elbert County. The special "Surveying Equipment" display was on loan from AAA Surveying and Russell Surveying, and shows the tools and techniques used in mapping out the land and later in laying rail. The display cases on Smoky Hill Trail station stops (with artifacts on loan from the CCVHS) and on area Native Americans (items from private collections and the

museum's inventory) showed a part of these cultures' everyday life. The hand cart display included both items used on the trail and items being freighted to the "gold fields". And the addition of the children's activity table offered educational information and fun things to do.

The Pioneer Fourth is an annual day of celebration and this year it was a day full of fun, fellowship and good weather. Music and laughter, people eating and visiting, games, pie and silent auctions, taking in museum displays and construction progress on the new exhibit, apple bobbing and watermelon eating were some of the days activities. We thank everyone who participated, through donations or purchases, in the fundraising activities throughout the day. Also we appreciate the many volunteers who always help make the Pioneer Fourth a successful and enjoyable family event.

THE ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PROUDLY PRESENTS

1864 AND 1868 INDIAN WARS IN ELBERT COUNTY

A PROGRAM GIVEN BY AREA RESIDENT RIC MORGAN
ON THE BACKGROUND TO THE WARS AND THE LOCAL
CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONDITIONS AT THE TIME.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2014

MEMBERSHIP MEETING - 9:30AM
PROGRAM BEGINS - 10AM

RUSSELL GATES MERCANTILE BUILDING, ELBERT

Thanks to all who contributed to this issue of the Smoky Hill Express.



ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Joe Martell

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Board Member at Large

Carla Martell

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Vice President

Donna Smith

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Hank Smith

Board Member at Large

Elbert County Historical Society

515 Comanche Street ▪ PO Box 43

Kiowa, Colorado 80117

www.ElbertCountyMuseum.org

The Elbert County Museum is owned and operated by the Elbert County Historical Society, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.

MISSION STATEMENT

To record and maintain the history of Elbert County, Colorado from the earliest settlement.

To work for the establishment of appropriate vaults and archives for the preservation of original manuscripts, documents, photographs and artifacts which may come into the possession of the Society.

To maintain, preserve and house the above stated articles in the Elbert County Museum.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Saturday, February 8 at 9:30 am

Russell Gates Mercantile Building,

Southwest corner of Eccles St. and Lavell Ave, Elbert

This ECHS meeting will include an update on the *Smoky Hill Trail* exhibit and the upcoming 2014 season. There will also be a free program open to the public entitled, *The Indian Wars in Elbert County*, at 10:00 am following the meeting.

The ECHS is delighted to have area resident, Ric Morgan, lead a discussion on the 1864 and 1868 Indian Wars in the Elbert County area. He will also present local historical information explaining what was behind the wars, including local circumstances and conditions at that time. Information shared throughout this discussion will update historical materials about the 1864 and 1868 Indian Wars since this presentation was last given in 2008.

Ric Morgan has been in the Elbert County community for many years and has collaborated with Dr. Jeffrey Broome on field research projects relating to the Indian Wars in Elbert County. Dr. Broome, a professor of philosophy and history at Arapahoe Community College, is a regional expert on the 1864 and 1868 Indian Wars.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

Individual -\$15

Student/Senior -\$8

Family -\$20

Volunteer -Donation of six (6) hours of volunteer time or participate in two (2) functions and/or events.

SEASON SPONSORSHIPS

Museum Season Sponsorships are collected annually and expire at the end of each calendar year. Sponsorships support the general operating fund, new and permanent exhibits, development of educational initiatives and public programs, and the historic museum building and its infrastructure.

Season sponsorships are available at four different levels and are identified by icons of early Elbert County industry

Cultivator -

Contributions of \$250 cash** or more will receive:

- acknowledgment as a Season Sponsor on all exhibit and event flyers (including Pioneer Fourth)
- recognition on signage inside the museum and at the Pioneer Fourth
- inclusion in the newsletter(s) and
- on our website

Locomotive -

Contributions of \$200 cash/merchandise or more will receive:

- acknowledgment as a Season Sponsor on all exhibit and event flyers (including Pioneer Fourth)
- recognition on signage inside the museum and at the Pioneer Fourth
- inclusion in the newsletter(s) and
- on our website

Ponderosa Pine -

Contributions of \$100 cash/merchandise or more will receive:

- recognition on signage inside the museum
- inclusion in the newsletter(s) and
- on our website

Windmill -

Contributions over \$25 cash/merchandise will receive:

- recognition on signage inside the museum
- inclusion in the newsletter(s)

****East Central Enterprise Zone**

By making a \$250 cash donation, contributors receive 25% of that amount as a credit against their state tax liability (i.e.: **\$250 donation = \$62.50 credit**). The contribution also may be itemized on their federal tax return.

For additional details on the different levels of [membership](#) or [sponsorship](#), forms can be picked up at the museum's visitors desk or printed off our website at www.ElbertCountyMuseum.org.

1859 OR 2013?

The ruts of the Smoky Hill Trail can still be seen on local ranches, where the trail continues to be part of our living history. Sometimes the effort of preserving a part of our history can reflect some of the travelers' original challenges. One may begin to wonder if it is the 19th or the 21st century.

Due to numerous late spring snows, travel has been more challenging for everyone and progress is delayed.



Meals are eaten together and prayers include the safety of all from injury.



An idea takes root. There is a vision of new possibilities with the underlying excitement of a goal taking us in a new direction. Resources and supplies are committed.

Months of planning beforehand and still adjustments are needed along the way.



The days and months roll by and so far the journey is taking longer than expected.

The skills and life experience of those present help add to the success of the undertaking.



There is a sense of accomplishment as some of the stops along the way begin to be reached.

While the end is still ahead, there is a renewed excitement and an unshakable commitment for staying on course.



NEWS BRIEFS FROM ECHS

- During the Smoky Hill Trail Association's annual conference in Parker, the ECHS & Museum was honored at the banquet with a Merit Award in recognition of our contributions to the preservation and promotion of the trail. Heritage Preservation awards were given to Maarten and Kees Van Zoeren, local Elbert County residents, and to Frasier Farms-Riverbend Ranch for their efforts in preserving the history of the trail on their properties.
- Those attending the SHT Assoc.'s conference were invited to participate in a car caravan to several trail sites from Kiowa to Limon. On Sunday, October 13, there were 25 attendees who stopped at the Elbert County Museum. They were able to take in the progress and

future plans of the permanent *Smoky Hill Trail* exhibit focusing on the Colorado side of the trail (and specifically the Elbert County portions) and enjoy the hand-carved Gentsch dioramas. Lee Whiteley gave a short presentation on the southern branch of the trail that includes the Elbert County Museum's location.

- While the museum season ended on Labor Day weekend, the work continues on the new exhibit until the doors open next Memorial Day Sunday. No work can be done when it is cold since the Assembly Room is not heated, but there will be work days scheduled when possible in the spring, and posted on the website, for all who would like to help with the exhibit as well as getting the museum cleaned and ready for the summer.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Annual Membership Meeting was held on Saturday, September 28. Here are some of the highlights:

- Everyone was able to see continuing progress on the new permanent exhibit. The Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society was thanked for their many contributions to the overall exhibit this year.
- The *Smoky Hill Trail* exhibit will have its official opening in 2014. The following two years will focus on the development of railroads (2015) and then on highways (2016). Elbert County will be celebrating its 140th Anniversary in 2014.
- Those who volunteered as hosts, helped with the fundraisers, represented the museum at various events and worked on the exhibits were honored for their time and commitment.
- John Hoffhines (vice-president), Donna Smith (treasurer) and Hank Smith (2nd director-at-large) were re-elected to serve on the Board.

EASTERN COLORADO MUSEUMS AND HISTORICAL SOCIETIES MEETINGS

Several members of the ECHS Board attended the spring and fall meetings of the Eastern Colorado Museums and Historical Societies. The spring meeting was on Saturday, April 27 and was hosted by the Kit Carson County

Carousel & Museum in Burlington, CO. There were 24 people in attendance, representing 11 different historical groups. Rand and Karen Hood, owners of Visual West, presented helpful ideas on museum exhibit design which included the importance of using color in your museum, consistency of font types on text panels, accompanying artifacts with narratives and bringing local environment indoors. Those present shared their organization's

plans for the year. The group was able to hear about the history of the famous carousel (originally built for Denver's Elych Gardens and later sold to Kit Carson County and moved to the county's fairgrounds) and the preservation of it, before taking a ride on the carousel and then touring the museum. They were also invited to take in Old Town in Burlington which celebrated its 25th anniversary this year.



Carousel No. 6 Burlington, Colorado

- The Board is looking into updating the website. This will help make the website more user-friendly and offer more options.
- Work days in the spring will be posted on the website for all who would like to contribute time and talent.
- The Board anticipates expansion of Gift Shop and Bookstore inventory, to include more items related to the Smoky Hill Trail. Please contact a board member with any suggestions you may have.
- Possibilities for outside signage for the museum were presented and options were discussed concerning the outside landscaping.
- Lee Whiteley reported on the schedule of the Smoky Hill Trail Association's annual conference held in Parker on October 11-13, and invited all to attend. He also shared information concerning the bus tour on Saturday and the car caravan (which will include a stop at the Elbert County Museum) on Sunday.
- The next membership meeting will be held Saturday, February 8, 2014.



The fall meeting was held on Saturday, October 5 and was hosted by the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society and Melvin Schoolhouse & Museum. Adam Speirs, archivist for Douglas County Libraries (Douglas County History Research Center), gave an interactive presentation on the historical changes of archivist document storage, information cataloging and user information-accessing techniques to the many possibilities of today's technologies. The Melvin Schoolhouse & Museum, which celebrated its 90th Anniversary this year, is located on the school campus of the Smoky Hill High School. Information was shared on the history of the schoolhouse and its changing exhibits and on the Smoky Hill Trail Association's annual conference the following week.

The gatherings are always a support and outreach for those working with the museums and historical societies of the seven county region of Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Douglas, Elbert, El Paso, Kit Carson and Lincoln counties.

Photographs courtesy of Larry Schlupp, Historic Douglas County

CELEBRATING ELBERT COUNTY

Elbert County celebrates its 140th Anniversary on February 13, 2014!

The ECHS's booklet, *Elbert County: Window to the Past*, began as a Colorado Endowment for the Humanities planning grant in August of 1991 and the text and photographs became part of the museum exhibit in June, 1993. The following are excerpts from the exhibit's text panels and booklet which look at the early days of the area that later became known as Elbert County.

Elbert County: Window to the Past

"Elbert County is 1,854 square miles of hills, rolling plains, creeks and springs, ranches, farms, towns, people and history. Lying at the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains it ranges in elevation from 7,350 to 5,000 feet and stretches for 50 miles east and west.

The southern portion of the county makes up part of what is known as the "Divide Country." The Divide is the name given to the long, high plateau or ridge running east from the Rocky Mountains between Colorado Springs and Denver. Here are found the headwaters of several streams that snake across Elbert County. Those on the north of the Divide, Running Creek, Kiowa, Wolf, Comanche and East and West Bijou Creeks, flow into the South Platte River, and those on the south, Big Sandy, Horse and Rush Creeks, strike out for the Arkansas. Hence, the name "divide."

First Elbert Countians

"The Great Plains have been occupied for at least 12,000 years. Early nomadic people hunted mammoths and ancient bison with spears and a keen instinct for survival.

Various Indian tribes ranged over the area of Elbert County when the first Hispanic and Anglo explorers spied the Rocky Mountains. Beginning in the 1500s, Apache hunters likely entered the region in pursuit of the descendants of the ancient bison, the buffalo of today. These Apache dominated the High Plains until the early 1700s. By 1800, the region was to see the arrival of the Arapaho and Cheyenne, who would claim the land until they were removed to reservations in Indian Territory."

Trails to Riches

"The Pike's Peak Gold Rush saw hordes of Fifty-Niners streaming across Kansas for the gold fields of Colorado. One of the more controversial routes was the Smoky Hill Trail....One small party that took this route in 1859 met with

tragedy in the area of Elbert County....According to Daniel Blue, the only survivor, as each member died those still living succumbed to cannibalism. Because of this gruesome episode and additional hardships reported by others, the Smoky Hill Trail fell into disfavor. The route across Elbert County came to be known as the Starvation Trail.

In April, 1859, the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Co. began sending Concord stagecoaches between Leavenworth, Kansas and Denver, charging passengers \$125 for a one-way trip. There were 27 stations on the line's route, two in Elbert County. They were only in use until July, however, when the stage road was moved north to the Platte River. Six years later, stagecoaches again traveled through the county as part of the Butterfield Overland Despatch. The Despatch took a different route still, requiring new stations. One of these was the site of present-day Kiowa. This stage road (considered a part of the Smoky Hill Trail) was also popular with freighters shipping supplies west by ox wagon. But the arrival of the

railroad in Denver in 1870 put an end to this traffic."

Struggle for Tenure

"Several sawmills were established within Elbert County in the early 1860s. One of these, the Webber Mill, was the site of present-day Elizabeth. The mills drew individuals to the area to work them, and other settlers began arriving to farm and ranch.

But those living in the region of the Divide were settled on land claimed by the Arapaho and Cheyenne. Although the Indians "officially" gave up this

territory by treaty in 1861, the question of tenure was far from settled. In 1864 a small party of Arapahos swept down on the Hungate family at a ranch on Running Creek. All four family members were killed.

On November 29, the Third Colorado and other units under Colonel John M. Chivington attacked and massacred men, women and children in a Cheyenne village on Sand Creek, a village that had been promised safety by the commander at Fort Lyon.

Hostilities again broke out in the region in 1868. A Mrs. Dietemann and her child were killed on Comanche Creek and settlers gathered together for protection. But this was to be the last real threat for the whites of Elbert County. The Indians were losing their fight for the plains, and in 1869 the Cheyenne and Arapaho were assigned a final reservation in Indian Territory (Oklahoma)."



ELBERT COUNTY MUSEUM SPONSORS

While the museum receives funds through monetary donations given at the museum and with annual historical society memberships; Season Sponsorships and the Pioneer Fourth celebration are the main areas of income which allow the Elbert County Historical Society to develop exhibits and educational opportunities and to improve and maintain the museum building.

Thank you for your commitment to the educational and historical importance of the Elbert County Museum to the communities and residents of Elbert County!



Cultivator

Laurel Brown
Glaser Gas & Equipment
Co. –Kiowa
IREA
JC Martell
Mountain View Electric
Association
PDC Energy Co.
Tri-State Electric



Locomotive

Elbert County Abstract &
Title Co.
High Plains Food Store
Smith Ranches
Spring Valley Golf Club
Spruce Up Roofing &
Construction



Ponderosa Pine

Big O-Tires –Elizabeth
Community Bank of
Colorado –Kiowa
Elizabeth Locker Plant
Farm Bureau Insurance –
Kiowa
Hamacher Well Works Inc.
HOO Motors
Katee & Ric Kolm
George Kreiger Dentistry
Jim & Carla Martell
Re/Max Accord –Tammi
Schneider
Simla Frozen Food Locker
LLC
Sun Valley Electric Inc.



Windmill

Advanced Quality Auto
Repair –Kiowa

Angie's Cuttin' Corner
Barr Bear Salon
Boykin Chiropractic Care
Cost Cutters –Elizabeth
Costco –Parker
Dave's Custom Cutting Inc.
Good Samaritan Society –
Simla
John and Lucy Hoffhines
Kiowa Pizza Place
Beth McKnight
MK Liquors
Mountain Man Fruit & Nut
Co. –Elizabeth
Napa –Elizabeth
Paul Nasarallah
Donald Olsen
Once Upon A Tan
Parker Port-A-Potty
Riggs Chiropractic &
Acupuncture
Sizzor Magic
Sonic –Elizabeth
Subway –Elizabeth
True Value –Elizabeth
Wal-Mart –Elizabeth
Western Trails Steakhouse

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