

SMOKY HILL EXPRESS

Elbert County Historical Society & Museum Newsletter

SPRING 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS

Opening Day of Elbert County Museum

Sunday, May 26, 1:00 to 4:00 pm

The Museum is OPEN Thursday through Sunday,

1:00 to 4:00 pm every week during the summer.

Volunteer Meeting

Saturday, June 1, 10:00 am

Pioneer Fourth Celebration

Thursday, July 4, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Closing Day of Elbert County Museum

Sunday, September 1, 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Annual Membership Meeting

Saturday, September 28, 10:00 am



ABOVE- New trail exhibit space taking shape. BELOW— Hank, Paul, Rand and Carl working hard.



HOW an exhibit is BUILT

Witness the construction of the new Smoky Hill Trail exhibit and see just how an exhibit is built!

SMOKY HILL TRAIL EXHIBIT

Did you know that you are traveling on part of the Smoky Hill Trail in order to visit the Elbert County Museum? This trail is an historical factor in the development of Elbert County, as it saw people and freight wagons head to the gold fields of Colorado.

The *Smoky Hill Trail Exhibit* is the beginning of an exciting multi-year project by the Elbert County Historical Society. It explores the importance, impact and challenges of the trail as it continued westward from Kansas, bisecting present-day Elbert County before reaching the Cherry Creek settlements. The exhibit will continue to expand from trail to rails, then to roads and highways as towns in Elbert County developed from stage stations and railroad stops.

Trails begin foot-print by foot-print, with each turn of the wagon wheels, and by every plodding step of livestock. A permanent trail (or road--as it was called back then) was created by continuous traffic over time, and then nature added to its wear, as rain and snow collected in the depressions further deepening the ruts.

Just as a trail begins step-by-step, the ECHS is using this season to demonstrate how an exhibit takes shape step-by-step. There have been numerous planning meetings and hours of research, writing and editing before work on the actual physical display began this spring.

Come explore and watch the process of building an exhibit, and have fun discovering what's new each time you visit throughout the summer. Enjoy this year's special displays as well as the educational activities developed for all ages. And stay tuned for the future expansion of trail to rails to paved roads, and the birth of Elbert County's early towns.

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



ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Joe Martell

President

Lucy Hoffhines

Secretary

Carla Martell

Past President

John Hoffhines

Vice President

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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.

VOLUNTEER MEETING

Saturday, June 1st at 10:00 am

Elbert County Museum Office

This meeting is a great time for volunteers to gather who have hosted at the museum and helped with the Pioneer Fourth Celebration or for anyone interested in being a new volunteer. Come see the changes and hear about the plans for this season. Everyone is welcome to attend so please feel free to invite family and friends.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Saturday, September 28th at 10:00 am

Elbert County Museum Assembly Room

Only active members of the Elbert County Historical Society are able to vote at the meeting, but everyone is welcome to attend. A member is someone who has paid the membership fee for the calendar year (January through December) OR has opted to volunteer for at least six hours or attended two functions or events prior to the fall meeting.

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.

PIONEER FOURTH

'A Grand Old Fashioned Celebration'

Thursday, July 4th from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
Elbert County Museum Grounds

Every July 4th we celebrate Independence Day and appreciate the pioneering spirit of the people who settled in this area. Share the day with family and neighbors as you listen to live music, enjoy good food, play games, take in the museum exhibits, participate in the pie and silent auctions, take part in the costume parade, and join in the watermelon eating contest. This is a wonderful time to visit with others and relax at an old fashioned community celebration of our country.



Costume Parade

With the success and fun of last year's costumes, we look forward to having the costume parade again this year. Come as a particular person in history, wear a costume from a historical period or simply dress in a patriotic costume. If you would like to participate in the parade, please gather by 12:30 pm near the information tent. The parade is for all (any age) who wear a full costume, and those participating will receive free tickets to use at the games, cakewalk or snow cone booth.



Craft Booths

10' x 10' craft booth space is available for \$15.00. Booths will be set up on the basketball court next to the museum. Crafter registration forms can be printed from our website at www.ElbertCountyMuseum.org.



Pie Judging and Auction

If you would like to enter your pie(s) for the pie judging and auction, please bring them to the museum by 11:30 am (no cream pies please). The auction will start at 1:00 pm and is a "delicious" fundraiser for the museum. We thank all of you who donate your wonderful pies and all who bid on them.



Silent Auction

Please contact Carla Martell at 303-621-2229 if you would like to donate any item(s) to the silent auction. Items need to be received by Saturday, June 15th. The silent auction is part of the museum's fundraising activities, and all donations and bids are appreciated.



Photographs courtesy of William C. Thomas

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

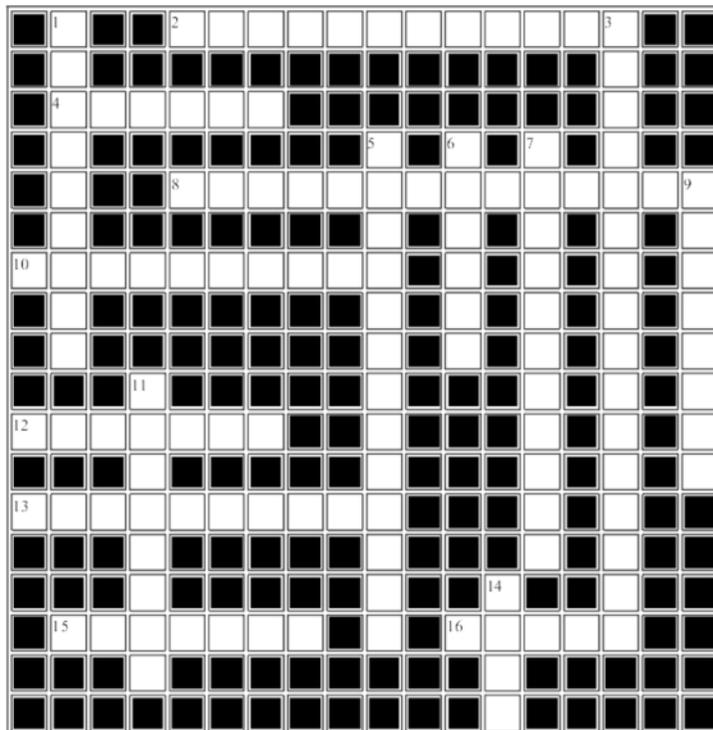
The answers to the crossword puzzle can be found in the article *History of the Smoky Hill Trail* on page 5.

Across

- 2 Left Atchison, Kansas in September, 1865.
- 4 State of origin of Smoky Hill Trail.
- 8 Name of river the trail followed.
- 10 Final western destination of trail.
- 12 A type of service the BOD provided.
- 13 Name of brother who survived.
- 15 Name of Indian tribe that rescued traveler
- 16 BOD followed this branch of trail.

Down

- 1 Colorado landmark travelers saw.
- 3 Other name for Middle Branch
- 5 Town where north and south branches split.
- 6 Three branches went thru this county.
- 7 Plant people ate to stay alive.
- 9 What replaced the stage business.
- 11 What halted most travel on trail
- 14 Metal people were looking for



Woodcut image as it appeared in *Harpers Weekly*, August 13, 1859.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

In the past, there have been exhibit themed items hidden throughout the museum's Assembly Room (main exhibit area) for children to find. Due to the ongoing construction, there will not be a "find the ___ ___" game this summer. However, there is a children's area set up with a variety of educational games and activities. Come and check it out, have fun and enjoy learning about history.

GIFT SHOP AND BOOK STORE

The freight wagons rolled west along the Smoky Hill Trail bringing new goods and fresh supplies. Our museum's Gift Shop and Book Store inventory has changed for this season with "new arrivals." (Remember--cash is good, checks are accepted, credit card use hasn't arrived yet.)



Departure from Atchison, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, July 1867.

HISTORY OF THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL

Beginning in 1859, gold-seekers began moving westward on the Smoky Hill Trail. The trail had its origins in eastern Kansas and primarily followed along the Smoky Hill River. This trail was blazed specifically for the Colorado Gold Rush and was used by gold-seekers, stagecoaches and freighters. Pikes Peak was the landmark for those on the trail, but Denver City, formed in November 22, 1858, became the gold rush's actual destination.

The western end of the trail had three distinct branches, with parts of all the branches going through present day Elbert County, and all led to Denver City. The Smoky Hill Trail's sources of dependable water, grass and game paled in comparison to other routes. In early May, 1859, three brothers and a friend got lost while traveling on foot near the headwaters of the Smoky Hill River. Daniel Blue was later found by Arapaho Indians and taken to their camp before taken to station 25, south of present-day Agate.

A year later Daniel published an account of his experiences which included the three brothers staying alive by resorting to eating their dead friend's flesh and his ordeal of staying alive by eating his two deceased brothers. The Middle Branch soon earned the name of the Starvation Branch. Despite this story and others of people staying alive on prickly pears and wild onions or one hawk and the remains of a dead ox whose bones the wolves had almost entirely cleaned, some still claimed that the Smoky Hill Trail was the best route to the "Pikes Peak goldfields" because it was shorter than competing trails.

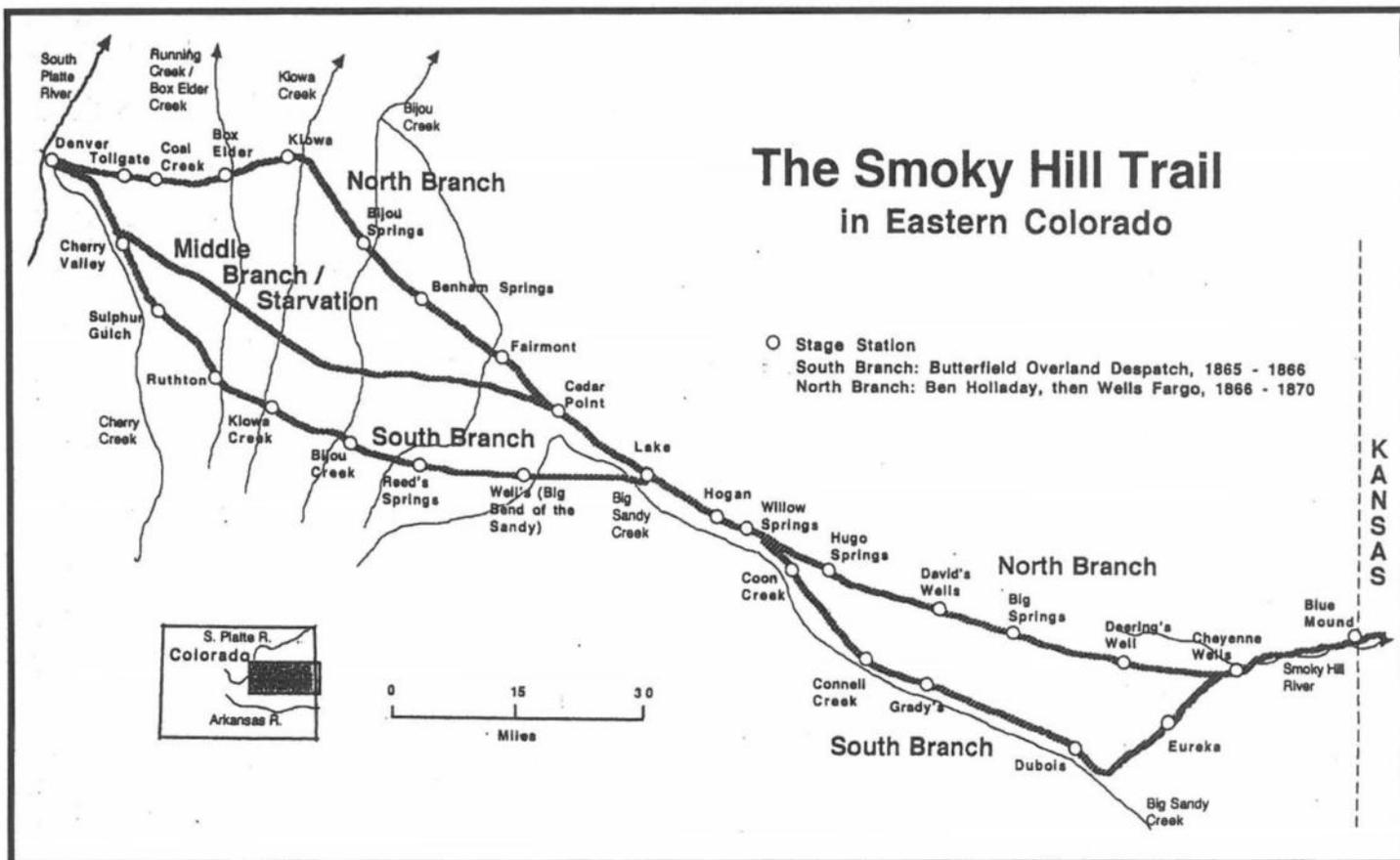
The Civil War halted most travel on the Smoky Hill Trail. But in 1865, a new entrepreneur revived the route. David A. Butterfield re-established the Smoky Hill Trail by providing dependable stage and freight service. The company operated as Butterfield's Overland Despatch (BOD)--with the alternate spelling of "despatch," meaning "an organization or a means for the fast and efficient sending of messages or goods."

The BOD stagecoaches left Atchison, Kansas on September 11, 1865, arriving without an incident in Denver on September 23rd. In Colorado, Butterfield's route followed what would become known as the South Branch of the Smoky Hill Trail. From old Cheyenne Wells, five miles north of the present-day town, it turned southwest to Big Sandy Creek, then northwest, passing through present-day Kiowa and descending present-day Hilltop Road to Parker.

When Butterfield sold his enterprise, the new owner, Ben Holladay, moved the route to what would become known as the North Branch of the Smoky Hill Trail. From old Cheyenne Wells, the road continued west, avoiding much of the Big Sandy route. From the Limon area, it veered northwest to enter Denver from the east, approximating the present course of Interstate 70.

In November, 1866, Holladay sold the business to Wells Fargo who continued using the North Branch. The United States Express Company began using the South Branch in 1867. Eventually the railroad replaced the freight and stage business along the Smoky Hill Trail.

Map and images courtesy of Lee Whiteley



ELBERT COUNTY MUSEUM SPONSORS

While the museum receives funds through monetary donations given at the museum, and 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 to this years sponsors for their tremendous support in offering residents of Elbert County and visitors an open door to the history of this area!



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Laurel Brown
Kiowa Glaser Gas &
Equipment Co.
Tri-State Electric



Locomotive

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Kiowa Farm Bureau
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LLC



Windmill

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Barr Bear Salon
Elizabeth Sonic
Elizabeth Subway
Elizabeth True Value
Kiowa Advanced Quality
Auto Repair
Kiowa Pizza
MK Liquors
Once Upon A Tan
Parker Port-A-Potty
Riggs Chiropractic &
Acupuncture

There is still time to be a sponsor for the 2013 Season. If you or your business would like to be part of this historical and community effort, please contact Carla Martell at 303-621-2229.

ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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