

SMOKY HILL EXPRESS

Elbert County Historical Society & Museum Newsletter

FALL 2014

2014 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

2014 was an incredibly busy year for the Elbert County Historical Society and Museum. The year started off with a very well attended membership meeting and program at the historic Russell Gates Mercantile Building in Elbert in February. Local historians, Ric Morgan and Dr. Jeff Broome presented a fascinating program on the conditions and circumstances that led to the 1864 and 1868 Indian Wars in Elbert County.



As weather permitted, during the months of March, April and May, a dedicated team of volunteers worked to prepare for the opening of the first phase of the Smoky Hill Trail exhibit. The Assembly Room was given a complete makeover from top to bottom, including a fresh coat of paint, new and improved exhibit lighting and installation of the first of two overhead landscape exhibits occupying the ceiling space of the former skylights. With guidance from Rand and Karen Hood (the creative team behind Visual West), volunteers built an authentic replica of a covered wagon, installed panoramic exhibit backdrops and text panels and assisted in filling glass exhibit cases with trail period artifacts. In addition to the new SHT exhibit, displays were arranged commemorating the advent of World War One, early surveying equipment, and promotional giveaways from early Elbert County businesses.

Work was not limited to just the main exhibit room; a new display on Early Pioneer Families and the Jim Rowledge Barbed Wire Collection was unveiled in the old coat closet adjacent to the East Room. The early families' exhibit

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MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND PROGRAM

Saturday, February 7, 2015 at 9:30 am
Liberty Plains Baptist Church
604 Summit Street, Simla

This ECHS meeting will include an update on the second phase of the Smoky Hill Trail exhibit and the upcoming 2015 season. There will also be a free program open to the public entitled, *Breeds, Brands & Ranchers of early Douglas County*, at 10 am following the meeting.

The Elbert County Historical Society is delighted to have Historic Douglas County, Inc.(HDC), founding member, Larry Schlupp, present a fascinating and educational look at the demanding question posed by Clara Peller in Wendy's 1984 television commercial, "*Where's the beef?*" This bit of time travel delves into Douglas County's early beef cattle industry, exploring the early entry of beef cattle into the County ...from where the early various breeds of beef stock originated ...and the pioneering ranchers who first introduced the major blooded breeds to the County. "*BBR*," as the production is abbreviated, also provides a brief history of cattle brands ...where and when brands were first used and the use of cattle brands in both ranging and early Colorado law enforcement. And, "*BBR*" attempts to provide a socio-economic perspective of the beef cattle industry by



identifying impactful events that influenced the beef industry and by recognizing the various historical eras from 1860 to present-day that shaped the statistical peaks and valleys of the ever-changing beef market.

Larry has served as HDC vice-president since October, 2008. Having spent 40 years in telecommunications domestically and internationally, Larry brings technology leadership and marketing strength to HDC. He is also certified as a Citizens Emergency Response trainer and is a member of Colorado Preservation, Inc. and the Larkspur Historical Society. Larry and his wife, Julia, live in the Perry Park community of Douglas County, Colorado.



ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Joe Martell

President

Lucy Hoffhines

Secretary

John Metli

Board Member at Large

Carla Martell

Past President

John Hoffhines

Vice President

Donna Smith

Treasurer

Hank Smith

Board Member at Large

Elbert County Historical Society

515 Comanche Street ▪ PO Box 43

Kiowa, Colorado 80117

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.

WHO AM I?

- Where was I born?
 - Charleston
 - New York
 - Bismark
- What was my profession?
 - Merchant
 - Farmer
 - Barber
- What community did I run for Mayor?
 - Calhan
 - Elbert
 - Denver



Answers on page 5

THANKS!

A special thank you to all the volunteers who help in so many ways –exhibit construction, museum hosting, Pioneer Fourth laborers, and building/grounds maintenance!

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 ElbertCountyMuseum.org.

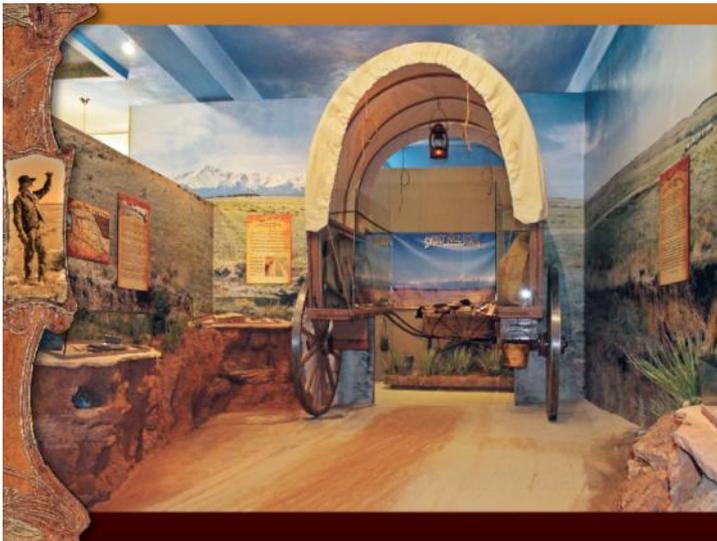
Thanks to all who contributed to this issue of the Smoky Hill Express.

Continued from page 1 highlights pioneering families who have been in Elbert County for one hundred years or more, and the barbed wire exhibit is an extensive collection that identifies the countless variations of barbed wire developed over the years. New signage was also installed on the exterior of the museum building.



Opening day on Sunday, May 25 brought a number of curious visitors who were among the first to experience what traveling on the Smoky Hill Trail might have been like in the mid-1800s as they walked along simulated wagon wheel ruts, viewed scenery of Colorado's front range -including Pikes Peak, and then passed through the interior of a covered wagon, complete with pioneer artifacts. Samples of dried foods typically eaten on the trail completed the whole experience.

In mid-June, ECHS President, Joe Martell and Smoky Hill Trail exhibit icon, Allen Crippen made their television debut on Channel 9's, *Colorado & Company*. Joe and Allan talked about the opening of the first phase of the SHT exhibit, the *Our Journey* program and network of museums, as well as the Elbert County Museum's annual Pioneer Fourth celebration.

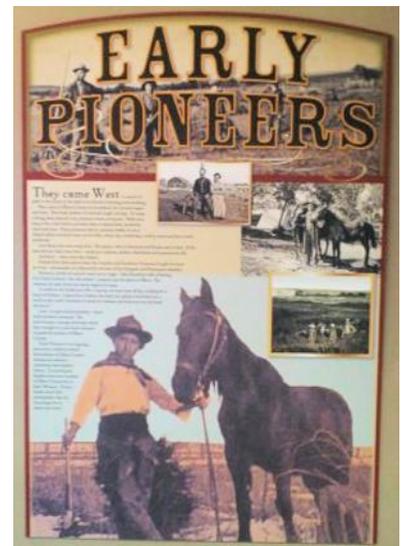


The 14th Annual Pioneer Fourth Celebration on the museum grounds was one of the most successful to date, with several hundred visitors in attendance and began with Cecil Pugh singing the National Anthem. Featured this year were some very talented artisans demonstrating and displaying their pioneer crafts. Judy Glaser, attired in pioneer dress, had her spinning wheel set up under the pine trees. She showed kids

and adults the craft of spinning and carding llama wool. Judy and her husband Kurt raise their own llamas in Elbert County. Jim Bane and fellow woodcarvers from Fort Collins brought his antique 1924 Ford Depot Hack truck and displayed many toys that they had carved from wood. Inside, local quilters had a display with Evie Scott hosting.

In addition, visitors were entertained with the traditional Pioneer Fourth events -kids' games, pie baking contest and auction, cake walk, watermelon eating contest, silent auction, live music and museum open house. Donna Reese organized the pies to be judged by Linda Ehmann, Debbie Maul and Jim Emig. Winner of the youth pie was Grace Adams and the winner of the adult pie was reigning champion, Jim Frase. Mr. Lee Benjamin auctioned the pies. Live music was provided throughout the afternoon by Thomas MacKiewicz, Bailey Zezulka and Joe Lindt. Inside the museum, visitors explored the different exhibits and checked out all the great, new merchandise in the gift shop -including the new Smoky Hill Trail T-shirts!

The ECHS hosted a number of groups this year, including the Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce's Business-After-Hours, the Kiowa Alumni Association, Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society and numerous family and class reunions.



The last day of the museum season seemed to arrive earlier than usual as Labor Day weekend was in August this year. Overall, numbers were up considerably this year with over 700 visitors signing the guest register book. The museum closed on Sunday, August 31, and work began in earnest on the next phase of SHT exhibit area the following Friday. Based on visitor feedback, the steps exiting the back of the SHT exhibit space were converted into a gentle ramp. Also, a textured backdrop that will contain the Hank Gentsch dioramas was completed.

The Annual General Membership Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation reception was held on Saturday, September 27. Highlights of the meeting included:

- Recognition of those who hosted, volunteered and shared their talents with the museum this year.
- All those in attendance were able to view the recent modifications on the SHT exhibit area.
- Joe Martell (President), Lucy Hoffhines (Secretary), and John Metli (1st director-at-large) were reelected to serve on the board.
- The next membership meeting will be February 7, 2015.

SMOKY HILL TRAIL EXHIBIT SPONSORS

The Elbert County Historical Society was the recipient of two large financial gifts this year. The first gift was given earlier in the spring by the Colorado Office of Economic Development (Heritage & Agritourism Program) in the amount of \$5,000. The Boettcher Foundation awarded ECHS over the summer with a \$10,000 gift. Both organizations were very impressed with the creative visitor-interaction aspect of the exhibit as well as the professional quality of the displays.

Additional exhibit sponsors to date include: Intermountain Rural Electric Association, Mountain View Electric Association, Tri-State Electric, and two anonymous donors. A special thanks to all our exhibit sponsors!



EASTERN COLORADO MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

The Eastern Colorado Museums and Historical Societies meet twice a year. These gatherings provide an opportunity for museum and historical society volunteers to network with others in the seven county region of Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Douglas, Elbert, El Paso, Kit Carson and Lincoln counties.

This year's spring meeting was hosted by Bob Ostrowski's Classic Car Museum in Flagler on April 26. There were 21 people in attendance, representing 14 different historical groups. Danielle Dascalos, public relations consultant to *Our Journey*, gave an informative presentation on generating positive media coverage. Danielle spoke on how attendees could and should promote their activities through traditional media (newsprint, radio and television), social media (Facebook and Twitter) and the internet.

After the presentation the group enjoyed a double treat, first touring Bob Ostrowski's collection of vintage cars and collectibles, followed by a tour of Flagler's historic Second Central School.

The fall meeting of the ECM&HS was held at the Pikes Peak Grange in Franktown, with 19 people in attendance, representing 10 historical groups. Co-hosted by the Parker Area Historical Society and Historic Douglas County, Inc., the highlight of the morning was Larry Schlupp's program on Breeds, Brands and Ranchers. Later on people toured the historic grange, viewing pictures and admiring the restoration of the building.

THE STORY BEHIND VISUAL WEST

If you visited the museum this past summer and as you walked into the main room, viewed the vast panorama of the eastern Colorado plains, with Pikes Peak in the distance, then walked up the dirt path and through the life-sized covered wagon, you were enjoying the creative work of Rand and Karen Hood, of Visual West

Rand and Karen have had years of education and experience working with various museums in Colorado and the Elbert County Historical Society has been fortunate to have them share their talents with the Elbert County Museum.

Rand became interested in museums and dioramas when he was a child and his mother, who had a real appreciation for historic events, took him to museums all over the state. He was especially fascinated with the dioramas at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, which he felt not only represented genuine art, but told stories as well.

Rand's mom always encouraged her son's interest and supplied him with materials so that he could build his own dioramas at home. He had an all-consuming interest in history, and when he was in Junior High and the class was studying the Civil War, one day he corrected his teacher about the Battle of Shiloh and was assigned a project. Rand conceived and built an entertaining and educational game about the Battle of Gettysburg. Eventually he was awarded the distinction of being the Outstanding History Student in his high school.

After high school, Rand went to CSU and got a degree in Arts and History. Immediately after graduation, he moved to Chicago, where he became a freelance graphic designer. It was there that he and Karen met. A native of Indiana, Karen has an Arts and Design degree from Minneapolis College of Art and Design. They formed a design company and worked together on projects involving graphic design, outdoor murals, signage, and several 3-D creations. Together, they have won many national awards.

After 22 years in Chicago, Rand and Karen decided to move back to Colorado, but they stayed in touch with some of their Illinois clients. They soon made contacts here and started working with several small Colorado museums, including those at Burlington, Limon, Cheyenne Wells and Craig. They designed museum interiors and built full-size and scale dioramas. Besides their current work for the Elbert County Museum, they are also doing restoration on carousel animals for the Kit Carson County Carousel Museum in Burlington and the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado Springs. In their designs, the Hoods always try to insert subtle entities and the environment is an important part of every scene.

In addition, Karen designs jewelry and is also a pastel artist.

WHO AM I?

Continued from page 2

Answers: b) New York, a) Merchant, c) Denver

RUSSELL GATES was born the son of a Baptist minister in Broome County New York in 1845. He attended local schools until the age of 17 and then taught as school master for another two years before heading off to the oil regions of Pennsylvania. He arrived in Pitt Hole City during the petroleum boom and made his first \$100 during the winter of 1864-65. Returning home without the fortunes he dreamed of, he soon became employed by the Geneva Nursery firm. As the Eastern representative of the firm he ran the affairs of the company from Boston for three and a half years.



Advised to seek better health in the western climate of Colorado, Gates embarked in the sheep business in 1874. He ranged his herd in El Paso County, east of Colorado Springs and was successful from the start. He established a commissary near the present location of Calhan, known then as the Big Sandy Post Office, where he was postmaster for a time.

Originally intended for the local settlers like himself, Gates' small commissary rapidly grew into an increasingly well stocked store. With his health renewed and store profits secure, Gates purchased additional land, all the while formulating a plan for the surrounding area.

Built at just the right time, the Denver & New Orleans railroad and later the Rock Island railroad assisted in convincing Gates that his new enterprise would surely succeed. –a revolutionary concept that in many respects might not have happened without the railroad. He opened similar stores in Eastonville, Elbert, Elizabeth, Kiowa, Limon, Peyton and other places in the vicinity. The Russell Gates Mercantile Company was soon one of the best known names in all of Eastern Colorado, becoming a distributor of all kinds of services and products from lumber yards to creameries and cheese factories, even ice houses and livestock buying.

Gates' main store was at Eastonville until 1902, when he purchased the old J.B. King store at Elbert. There he made the town the center of his vast mercantile empire with the completion of his largest store ever in 1906. Built of brick, it measured 54 x 150 feet and was connected to the existing King store which was 54 x 50. It was truly a modern store for that day and age. Local newspapers advertised the variety of items stocked from dry goods to footwear to groceries (including meats and fresh fruits and vegetables) to hardware to farm machinery, as well as lumber, brick and all kinds of building materials. Several years later he bought out competitor, Lem Gammon, and continued running the established grain elevator and lumber yard.

BEHIND THE SCENES....

Volunteer Fun

When the doors closed on our museum season after Labor Day, work began in earnest on the Phase 2 portion of the Smoky Hill Trail Exhibit. New walls and a tower have been constructed as well as a second wide ramp which returns museum patrons to ground level after walking up the trail through the covered wagon.

Upon completion of the ramp, an impromptu *Smoky Thrills Trail* race course was setup using our 4-wheeled "scooters" which are employed to move heavy cabinetry. The starting point was the top of the new incline, out onto the main floor, around "horns of a dilemma" curve lined with buffalo skulls, through the new pioneer family exhibit, finishing at the "TRAILS END" scaled diorama by Hank Gentsch.

Johnnie "NO FEAR" Hoffhines (right) blazed the course in 18.71 seconds, establishing the course record. Hank "INDY" Smith placed a close 2nd with a time of 18.83 seconds.

Hank attributes his loss to the phenomenal skill "NO FEAR" showed through the tricky horns curve. "He leaned so far into that curve that he was only on two wheels, less friction, faster time". Hank was awarded a bag of Cheetos for his race efforts.



If you become a volunteer with ECHS, fun is definitely the norm with our group!



The Gates Family move to Denver in 1888 and he called the mile high city his home for the rest of his life. He participated in politics and even ran for the mayor's race in 1899. All in all, Gates was a man of integrity and of his word. He took an active interest in his family, gave to various charities and let his managers run the stores. He was even said to have been an enthusiastic baseball fan. Russell Gates died of Bright's disease at the home of son in Calhan on June 15, 1916. Services and burial were performed in Denver.

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!



Cultivator

Bender Menders
Laurel Brown
Colorado Office of
Economic Development
Glaser Gas & Equipment
Co. -Kiowa
JC Martell
Mountain View Electric
Association
PDC Energy Co.
Smith Ranches
Spring Valley Golf Club
Sun Valley Electric Inc.



Locomotive

Ben & Laurie Duke
Elbert County Abstract &
Title Company
Elizabeth Family Dental
Farm Bureau -Kiowa
Front Range Kubota
High Plains Food Store
Intermountain Rural Electric
Association
Katee & Ric Kolm
Through Your Eyes
Photography



Ponderosa Pine

Angie's Cuttin Corner
Elizabeth Locker Plant
Gordon Insurance Agency
Hamacher Well Works Inc.
HOO Motors
J.C.'s Greenhouse
Jim & Carla Martell
Kiowa Creek Community
Members
George Krieger, DDS
Re/Max Accord -Tammi
Schneider
Simla Frozen Food Locker
LLC
Sonic -Elizabeth
The Rock Parts -Castle Rock
True Value -Elizabeth



Windmill

Barr Bear Salon
Boykin Chiropractic Care
Costco -Parker
Christian Hertneky
Elizabeth Tanning
Kiowa Post Office
John & Lucy Hoffhines
MK Liquors
Parker Port-A-Potty
Safeway -Elizabeth
Sizzor Magic
Subway -Elizabeth
Walmart -Elizabeth

Would you like to be a 2015 Season Sponsor?
Please contact Carla Martell at 303.621.2229 or email us at
elbertcountymuseum@gmail.com.

ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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