

# SMOKY HILL EXPRESS

Elbert County Historical Society & Museum Newsletter

SPRING 2015

## IN THIS ISSUE

1935 Kiowa Creek Flood .....4  
 Farewell To A Friend .....5  
 Here Comes The Flood Program ..3  
 Membership/Sponsorship Levels ..2  
 Museum Sponsors .....6  
 Pioneer Fourth Celebration .....3  
 Sharing The Museum .....4  
 Who Am I? .....2

**THE MUSEUM IS OPEN  
 THURSDAY THRU SUNDAY  
 1:00 TO 4:00 PM  
 EVERY WEEK  
 DURING THE SUMMER!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Elbert County Museum  
 2015 Opening Day**  
 Sunday, May 24, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

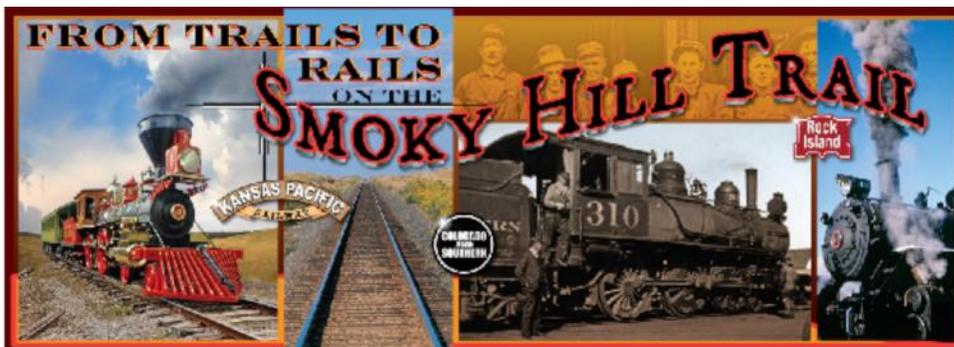
*Here Comes The Flood, There Goes The Train!* Program  
 Saturday, May 30  
 See page 3 for more details

**Pioneer Fourth Celebration**  
 Saturday, July 4, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
 Elbert County Museum Grounds

**Elbert County Museum  
 2015 Closing Day**  
 Sunday, September 6, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

**Volunteer Appreciation and Annual  
 Membership Meeting**  
 Saturday, September 26, 10:00 am  
 Elbert County Museum Assembly Room

**Eastern Colorado Museums &  
 Historical Societies Meeting**  
 Saturday, October 10, 10:00 am  
 Location to be announced



## SMOKY HILL TRAIL: TEAMS OF HORSES TO IRON HORSES

Last year the Elbert County Historical Society opened a new exhibit on the Smoky Hill Trail. The exhibit started with the Native American Indians, then to the Trail’s beginning in 1859 as the shortest, though most dangerous route, for the gold seekers to get to the Rocky Mountains.

This year we will open the second phase of the exhibit covering the ending of the Trail by introducing the railroads. Elbert County had three railroads. The first railroad to enter the county was the **Kansas Pacific** (KP) in 1870. The KP started in Kansas City and built west basically following the Smoky Hill Trail. As the rail head (end of the tracks) moved west the Trail got shorter and shorter. By train, one could travel in an hour as far as a wagon could make in a day, quite a time savings. The KP followed the Northern Branch of the Trail (close to I-70) and established three communities along the railroad in Elbert County. River Bend, the eastern most community was located a few miles west of Limon (which was not yet built) and was the major livestock shipping point in the area. The next town was Buick located south of Agate where a short branch served a small coal mine for a brief time. Both River Bend and Buick are now ghost towns with very little evidence that a settlement ever existed. Agate, the third town, served the ranching and farming activities. There were also sidings at Cedar Point and Lowland. Because of the lack of trees on the plains of eastern Colorado and western Kansas, many of the saw mills in the county cut railroad ties for the track and lumber for bridges and structures

The next railroad to enter the county was the **Denver, New Orleans and Gulf** (DNO) in 1882. The DNO entered from the northwest coming from Denver. Then it followed the southern branch of the Trail to a point north of Elizabeth where it turned south into Elizabeth and then on to Elbert and exited the county south of Elbert in route to Eastonville and points south. The DNO brought in supplies and goods for the farms and ranches and shipped out their produce to markets outside the county. Passenger service also included tourist excursions from Denver and Colorado Springs to Elbert as well as regular scheduled service between Denver, Colorado Springs and the Gulf Coast. After several ownership changes the DNO finally ended as part of the Colorado & Southern system. Traffic had declined and when the flood of 1935 in Kiowa Creek destroyed many of the bridges it was not economical to perform the necessary repairs therefore the railroad was finally abandoned shortly after in 1936.

Continued on page 5



# ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

**Joe Martell**

President

**Lucy Hoffhines**

Secretary

**John Metli**

Board Member at Large

**Carla Martell**

Past President

**Hank Smith**

Vice President

**Donna Smith**

Treasurer

**Monty Ashliman**

Board Member at Large

## Elbert County Historical Society

515 Comanche Street ▪ PO Box 43

Kiowa, Colorado 80117

[ElbertCountyMuseum.org](http://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?
  - Ireland
  - Kentucky
  - Austria
- When did I prove up on my homestead?
  - 1882
  - 1862
  - 1892
- What county office did I not hold?
  - Surveyor
  - Sheriff
  - Treasurer



Answers on page 5

## GIFT SHOP

Be sure to stop by the gift shop. We have T-Shirts, a variety of books including the Smoky Hill Trail, Elbert County individuals and towns; Pioneers and Indians; cookbooks; children's books, pioneer craft kits and much, much more!

## 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:

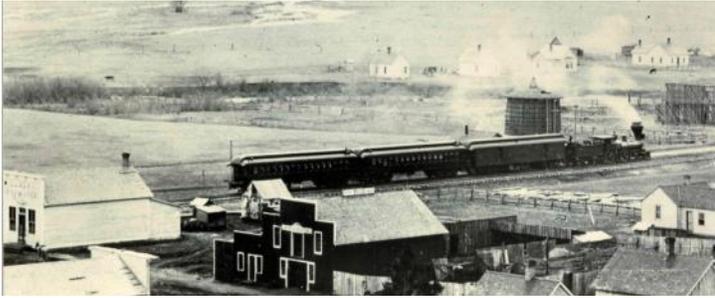
- recognition on signage inside the museum
- inclusion in the newsletter(s)

### \*\*East Central Enterprise Zone

By making a \$250 or more 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](http://ElbertCountyMuseum.org).

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



## HERE COMES THE FLOOD, THERE GOES THE TRAIN! PROGRAM

Saturday, **May 30** Two options, three locations!

### Morning Presentation 10:00 am to noon

*Russell Gates Mercantile Building*

Southwest Corner of Eccles St. and Lavell Ave., Elbert

### Evening Presentation 6:00 pm

*Elizabeth Middle School Auditorium*

34427 County Rd. 13, Elizabeth

### Meet the Author Open House 2:00 to 4:00 pm

*Elbert County Museum*

515 Comanche St. (Hwy. 86), Kiowa

The Elbert County Historical Society is proud to sponsor *Here Comes The Flood, There Goes The Train* on the 80th anniversary of the tragic flood that changed the face of Elbert County, and the railroad forever. **James (Jim) Jones** author of *DENVER & NEW ORLEANS: In The Shadow Of*

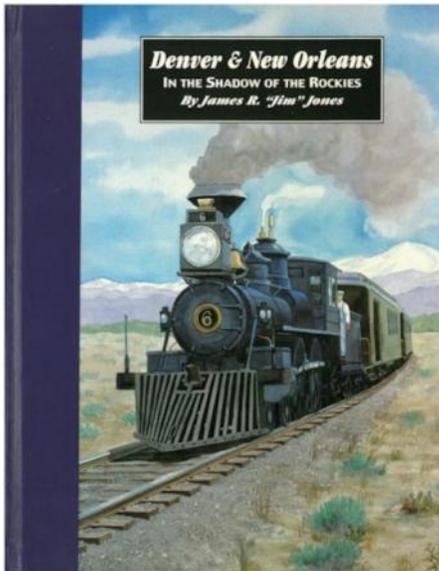
*The Rockies*

(Sundance

Publications, 1997)

returns to Colorado, from the Northeast, for the first time in fifteen years, to host this event. The film producer and radio personality has created a

documentary film as a part of this anniversary, which also features flood survivors recollections of that memorable Memorial Day.



Because Jim's previous appearances often reached seating capacity, it is requested you choose between one of the two free shows. Mark your calendar for **Saturday, May 30**. The first performance takes place at the historic **Russell Gates Mercantile building**. Old-timers who remember the flood are encouraged to attend and participate. The evening performance takes place at **Elizabeth Middle School Auditorium**. A special meet the author open house will take place in between both shows at the **Elbert County Museum from 2 to 4 pm**.

## PIONEER FOURTH CELEBRATION

Saturday, July 4 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Elbert County Museum Grounds

This July 4 will be our 15th year to celebrate Independence Day on the museum grounds as we look forward to being able to pause and reflect on the rich heritage we enjoy in our great nation. We welcome neighbors and visitors to join us in relaxing to live music, eating good food, taking part in games and auctions and viewing exhibits inside the museum. Local artisans will be demonstrating their talents again this year in various locations throughout the grounds.



## SHARING THE MUSEUM WITH VISITORS

Please keep the museum in mind when guests come for family reunions, birthday parties, alumni reunions, church events or other special occasions. Doors are open four days per week from **1:00 to 4:00 pm, Thursday through Sunday**. This would be an excellent opportunity to share with visitors the rich history of Elbert County.

## THANK YOU!

A special thanks to **Larry Schlupp** with **Historic Douglas County, Inc!** Larry gave a very entertaining and informative program on *Breeds, Brands and Ranchers of Early Douglas County* at our **February 7** meeting in Simla.



## 1935 KIOWA CREEK FLOOD

The worst single disaster associated with Elbert County weather was the Kiowa Creek flood of **May 30, 1935**. Heavy rains south of Elbert the night before followed by a cloudburst of perhaps 24 inches that afternoon resulted in a wall of water smashing through the towns of Elbert and Kiowa. Half of Elbert was literally swept away and the damage to Kiowa was almost as bad. Six county residents drowned.

Long-time Elbert resident, **Ella Musick** was interviewed in February 1991. Ella was born in 1902 and came to Elbert as a child. She and her husband Ed lived on a farm east of Elbert. She had this to say about the 1935 flood:

*Well, it was the day of the flood and it was just raining pitchforks everywhere, you know. We didn't know what was going on downtown, we were having a bad enough time at home. We had rather a new kitchen, but it had a flat roof and in a storm like that it began to leak and I was baking bread and I just had to set and watch it because all the time there would be a new leak. I had some little ducks in a shoe box and Ed thought it would be a good idea if we just let them out to splash around. There is always something funny about anything that is tragic, you know.*

*In all the midst of this, there was a rap on the door. It was Kury (Conrad) Peterson and his son and they had heard that the flood was coming to Elbert - they had gone to town that day and Kury said, "Let's just drive up the hill and watch it." I guess it was almost more than they could take. They didn't think it could ever be this bad..... So they came and told us what was happening and then I did have something to worry about, because I didn't know if I had any folks. (Ella's parents lived in the town of Elbert.) Of course we had telephones, but they were all out, you know. And the bridge had washed out. So Ed said, "Let's go to town as early as we can in the morning."*

*Harold Dietrich was farming out there and he was staying in the little house near us and his house was leaking terrible, so he had come over to our house and he stayed all night with us and he was just sure that his folks were gone too. So the next morning, they hitched the horse to what they call a spring wagon ... Ed drove the horse and Harold and I rode in the wagon. When we got (close to) to Elbert, Ed didn't know how deep the creek would be by then, so he rode across on the horse to be sure, and he didn't think that we'd better take the wagon, so he took Harold across first and then he came and got me. There my folks stood! They were watching for me. They just knew we'd be there, you know. They had had to get out the day before and they had gone to Harper's - that is a little higher, you know.*



*There were two creeks south of Elbert and it was a cloudburst to start with, then the two creeks met up and there was a wall of water 8 feet high. And it was full of hail and you know when the water hit anything, it would just go in the basement of a building, knock the windows out and then raise the building up and then the building would disintegrate. It was terrible.*

*The flood came to the west side of town too. Oh, the bank - that old brick building - was on this (the west) side of town and the water came up the bank steps.*

*Three people died from Elbert - the section hand's wife and George Gresham's sister and her daughter. They were running a cafe in the Oddfellow's building, and they were told to get out, that the water was coming, but they'd had the first flood so in the morning, they didn't think there could be another flood that afternoon, but it was a lot worse than the one in the morning. The ladies were cleaning up the restaurant - so they knew, but they got caught. They never did find them. They found some teeth in Kiowa that they thought might have belonged to one of the ladies, but they never found anything more.*

*School had been let out that morning, or there might have been some children drowned. The kids were supposed to graduate that night and none of the kids were able to save their clothes - but that was just a drop in the bucket compared to what other people lost. Of course when you are a kid, things like that mean so much.*

*I heard that there were 52 pianos lost. My dad lost his safe, but they never did find it. Everybody got out and looked for things but most were never found.*

*Now Gotbels had a big house and it was practically new. They had come to Elbert to retire and she had died and Mr. Gotbels and his grandson were living in that big house. That house went first. Mr. Gotbels and the grandson were upstairs because they saw the water coming and pretty soon their house took off down the creek and Pottengers said it looked like a big ship. They saw that they couldn't stay in their house, so they raised the upstairs window and got out and climbed into the cupola on the creamery building.*

*Well, pretty soon the creamery started to go, so they went by a big cottonwood tree and the man and his grandson climbed out onto the tree. All night long, the people in Elbert knew there were some people in that tree, but they didn't know who they were - then it got dark (the flood was at 3 PM). So then the next morning, the people rescued them and they were all right, and that man was elderly too!*



Grain elevator and railroad water tank, Elbert looking north.



Elbert looking west.

## WHO AM I?

Continued from page 2

Answers: a) Ireland, a) 1882, a) Surveyor

**John H. Lundy** was born December 16, 1845 in Belfast, Ireland, the son of Henry and Sarah (Carlin) Lundy. He came with his parents to America around 1848. The family located at Pawtucket, Rhode Island, where they continued to live the remainder of their lives.



When John was twelve years old, he began working on a farm in the summers and attended school during the winters. In 1862 he enlisted in the Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry. He became ill soon after the Battle of Bull Run and was discharged. He then took up the blacksmith trade, but in 1865 started for Colorado. He drove an ox team from St. Joseph, Missouri to Denver arriving there in August. The remainder of the summer and that fall he worked in the mines at Russell Gulch and then went to South Boulder for the winter. He arrived in Elbert County in April 1866, where he worked in a sawmill on Running Creek for about two years. He rented a farm near Kiowa for a few years and then went to California Gulch (now Leadville) taking with him three mules to work at setting ties. Later he returned to Elbert where again he worked in a sawmill. He finally took up a claim of 160 acres of land on Comanche Creek about six miles east of Elbert.

## TEAMS OF HORSES TO IRON HORSES

Continued from page 1

The last railroad, the **Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific** (RI), came in 1888 from Kansas going to Colorado Springs, the same route is now known as I-70. The RI crossed the KP line (now owned by Union Pacific) about a mile east of the Elbert County line east of River Bend. The junction of the RI and the Union Pacific was a natural place for Limon to spring up. Most of River Bend then moved to this new growing town making River Bend another ghost town in the county. The RI traversed the southern portion of the county establishing the communities of Resolis, Matheson and Simla. When the RI obtained track rights from Union Pacific to Denver, the RI had service to both major markets in Colorado. The RI premier passenger service was the Rocky Mountain Rocket (1939 – 1966). The west bound trains were split in Limon with the bulk of the train going to Denver and the “B” unit took the rest of the train to Colorado Springs and east bound trains were joined together before proceeding to Chicago. Passenger service ended in 1966 and freight operations in 1980.

Both the KP and the RI were major routes for the emigrants coming from the east to homestead in the west, which provided growth for existing towns and establishing new

He proved up on this land in 1882. He kept buying adjoining land until his ranch covered about 1400 acres. He stocked it with Shorthorn cattle and did some farming and dairying also.

He was married to Miss Sarah King in 1880. Five children were born to this union. When the children became of school age there was no school in the vicinity, so Mr. Lundy turned one of his ranch sheds into a school room, supplied it with a heating stove and hired a Miss Margaret Thomas as one of the first teachers. After three or four years the nearby settlers elected a school board, erected a school building a mile away on an acre of land donated by George Elsner. This was Comanche School District #7, but was better known as the Lundy School.

Mr. Lundy gradually changed the home site from the few sheds used first as shelter and the small log cabin home into one of the most attractive homes in the whole area drawing the admiration of people for miles around.

John Lundy was the first elected sheriff to serve the newly formed Elbert County in 1874. He served from September 19, 1874 to January 9, 1878. In 1883 he was elected County Treasurer and served in that capacity to 1897. He was also sent as a delegate to County and State Conventions. He was a member of Elbert Lodge No. 85 IOOF.

Mrs. Sarah King Lundy was born April 21, 1847 and passed away December 23, 1906, interment at Elbert.

John H. Lundy and Mrs. Janet Houlehan were united in marriage January 1, 1913. After their marriage they moved to California where he lived until his death in 1927. He was buried beside his first wife in Elbert.

*Portrait and Biographical Record of Denver and Vicinity, 1898 and Western Pioneer Days, 1974*

communities. Post offices and one room schools sprang up all over the county to serve these new emigrants.

More information is available at the new exhibit in the museum and at the presentation by **Jim Jones** on **May 30** in Elbert and Elizabeth see page 3.

## FAREWELL TO OUR FRIEND

It is with tremendous sadness that we bid farewell to our friend **John Hoffhines, Sr.**, who passed away last December.

John was an active member of the Elbert County Historical Society & Museum for over twenty years, serving in countless roles including but not limited to building and grounds maintenance, museum host, ECHS Treasurer and most recently Vice President. John had a

voracious love of history and anything mechanical. His enthusiasm to share that knowledge with both young and old will be greatly missed, as well as his attention to detail, willingness to lend a helping hand and sense of humor.



## 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*

Laurel Brown  
Glaser Gas &  
Equipment Co. -Kiowa  
JC Martell  
John & Sherry Metli  
Smith Ranches



### *Locomotive*

AAC Enterprises, Inc.  
Andrae Michaels  
Photography  
Ben & Laurie Duke  
HB Wick Drains  
High Plains Food Store  
HOO Motors  
Intermountain Rural  
Electric Association

### *(Locomotive continued)*

Katee & Ric Kolm  
Jim & Carla Martell  
Re/Max Accord  
-Tammi Schneider  
Simla Frozen  
Food Locker, LLC  
Spring Valley Golf Club  
Sun Valley Electric Inc.  
Through Your Eyes  
Photography



### *Ponderosa Pine*

Angie's Cuttin Corner  
Banner Mortgage  
Bender Menders, LLC.  
Big R -Elizabeth  
Elizabeth Locker Plant  
Front Range Kubota  
Gordon Insurance Agency  
Hamacher Well Works Inc.  
Lucy Hoffhines  
Kiowa Alumni Association

### *(Ponderosa Pine continued)*

Love Funeral Home -Limon  
Sizzor Magic  
Town of Kiowa



### *Windmill*

Barr Bear Salon  
Bob & Sandy Claeys  
Elbert Tax Services  
Hair Addicts  
Jill's Feed & Country Supply  
Kiowa Post Office  
Sky-Patrice-Preston  
MK Liquors  
Once Upon a Tan  
Parker Port-A-Potty  
FT Shepperdson  
Sonic -Elizabeth  
The Rock Parts -Castle Rock  
True Value -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](mailto:elbertcountymuseum@gmail.com).

## ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

515 CONANCHE STREET • PO BOX 43 • KIOWA, COLORADO 80117