

# SMOKY HILL EXPRESS

Elbert County Historical Society & Museum Newsletter

FALL 2015

## IN THIS ISSUE

February Meeting and Program ....	3
Friends of the Museum .....	3
Membership/Sponsorship Levels ..	2
Museum Sponsors .....	6
Railroad Postal Office .....	4
Visiting Tour Groups .....	3
Who Am I? .....	2

**THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED  
FOR THE WINTER.  
REOPENING  
SUNDAY, MAY 29, 2016!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**February Meeting and Program**  
Saturday, February 6, 10:00 am  
Elizabeth Branch-Pines & Plains Library  
651 West Beverly Street, Elizabeth

**Eastern Colorado Museums &  
Historical Societies Meeting**  
Saturday, April 30, 10:00 am  
Location to be announced

**Elbert County Museum  
2016 Opening Day**  
Sunday, May 29, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

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

**Annual Membership Meeting**  
Saturday, September 24, 10:00 am  
Elbert County Museum Assembly Room

## 2015 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

The Elbert County Historical Society and Museum enjoyed a successful year due in part to our growing number of season sponsors and great volunteers. This year we had a record number of 58 season sponsorships which included individuals, business and corporations! Sponsorships made through the Enterprise Zone grew as well with contributors taking advantage of the state tax credit for their contribution. Volunteers also play a very important role in helping to keep the museum open and running smoothly. Besides hosting, volunteers were involved in many projects this year, including construction, clean up, putting together displays, working at the Pioneer Fourth and leading off-season museum tours.



In February, our general membership meeting went on the road and featured **Larry Schlupp**, from Historic Douglas County, Inc., who gave an interesting program entitled: *Breeds, Brands and Ranchers of Early Douglas County* at the Liberty Plains Baptist Church in Simla.

The museum officially opened on Sunday, May 24 with the unveiling of the second phase of the Smoky Hill Trail exhibit: *Teams of Horses to Iron Horses*, the transition of traveling the trail to riding the rails through Elbert County. This year visitors were instantly transported thirty years

from traveling the trail on foot and covered wagon to the modest comfort of riding the rails in a replica Colorado & Southern baggage car. In addition to the railway car, a likeness of the Elbert Depot and siding ushered guests through the exhibit to view railroad memorabilia from all three Elbert County railroads -the Kansas (Union) Pacific, which followed the Smoky Hill Trail, the Denver & New Orleans, later renamed Colorado & Southern, and the Chicago, Rock Island. An assortment of model railroads, toy trains and other train-related items were on display in the Assembly Room. Another wildly popular exhibit this year was a display of advertising and promotional items from local merchants and businesses of the past.

**Hank Smith** designed and spearheaded the construction of the train exhibit earlier in the spring and **Monty Ashliman, Rand and Karen Hood, Joe Martell, Carla Martell, John and Sherry Metli, and Donna Smith** all worked on it. Rand built the Rock Island train diorama depicting the railroad bridge that spanned across the Big Sandy Creek east of Matheson. **Jeff Lee** and his two sons, **Aaron and Jeffry** spent a day helping with the final details to get the exhibit ready for opening. Displays always come together as a group effort, the result of many hands and many hours.

**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?
  - Cologne
  - Bruges
  - Kiel
- When did I arrive in the Rocky Mountain region?
  - 1877
  - 1882
  - 1870
- What livestock disease did I help exterminate?
  - Blackleg
  - Botulism
  - Brucellosis



Answers on page 5

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

## 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 through the East Central Enterprise Zone\*\* 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).



## FEBRUARY MEETING AND PROGRAM

Saturday, February 6, 2016 at 10 am

**Elizabeth Branch-Pines & Plains Library Meeting Room**  
651 West Beverly Street, Elizabeth

This ECHS meeting will include an update on the *Smoky Hill Trail* exhibit and the upcoming 2016 season. There will also be a free program immediately following the meeting, cosponsored by ECHS and the Pines and Plains Library District. Program details will be announced at a later date.



## VISITING TOUR GROUPS

The Elbert County Museum makes for a memorable local destination for out of town guests, class reunions, family get-togethers, school groups and other events. This summer the museum welcomed a variety of groups:

The **Kiowa Alumni Association** visited the museum on May 9 and enjoyed a sneak peek of the *Smoky Hill Trail- Teams of Horses to Iron Horses* exhibit. This was one of the largest gatherings of the alumni to tour the old Kiowa High School building since the historical society acquired the building in the early 1990's. Stories of making stink bombs in the Chemistry Lab, lacing the toilet seats with honey and jumping out of the Assembly Room windows and then trying to come back into the room unnoticed were just a few of the stories shared.

In June the **Hilltop Social Club** held their monthly outing in Kiowa at the museum.

On September 18, a group of 25 ladies from the history chapter of the **American Association of University Women in Colorado Springs** visited the museum. **Joe Martell** and **Hank Smith** spoke to the women, recalling stories of the county's past and some of its colorful characters. The ladies were very impressed with the exhibits and many said they planned to return next season.

With this year's late Indian Summer, the month of October

## FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

Thanks to all our friends who were 2015 museum hosts, they include: **Darrel & Shirley Abbey, Keith Abbey, Diane Carpenter, Terry Courtright, Jan Erker, Maylois Fraley & Charolette Mundy, George & Bonnie Gormely, Suzie Graeff, Lucy Hoffhines, Betty Hood, Judy Kimzey, Ric & Katee Kolm, Ellen Lancaster, Jim & Carla Martell, Walt Maul, Herb & Nita McNight, John & Sherry Metli, Helena Miller, Marge Mottinger, Margie Musgrave, Paul Nasrallah, Verena Nelson, Sylvia Pemberton, Tom Peterson, Cecil & Phylis Pugh, Donna Reese, Hank & Donna Smith, Betty Tweedy and Dick & Karen Wehrman.**

The board of directors appreciates the dedication of all our faithful hosts. If you would be interested in being a museum host in 2016, please call **Carla Martell** at 303.621.2229.



proved to be very popular and on October 10, members of the **Eastern Colorado Museums & Historical Societies** stopped in after their Fall Meeting in Elbert. This organization is comprised mainly of small Colorado museums and historical societies who meet twice a year and tour each other's museums.

Later in the month we also welcomed a couple school groups. On October 27, **Carla Martell** and **Ric Kolm** hosted the Kiowa Eighth Grade history classes. Accompanied by their teacher **Maryrobin Wills** and Principal **Amy Smith**, the kids walked the wagon ruts in the Smoky Hill Trail exhibit where they were told the story of the trail and its importance to early Elbert County and Colorado. Then on October 30, **Kris Larson**, Learning Specialist at Elizabeth High School, and **Heather Ashton**, brought a group of 9th through 12th graders to visit the museum. The students were met by several ECHS Board members, who first related the history of the building and then explained what the children would see when they entered the exhibit area. The kids quickly spread throughout the building, touring Main Street, the train car and model trains, the pioneer and court house areas and the gift shop. With both school groups, the kids were told they would win a prize if they could find the name of a significant Elbert County resident displayed somewhere in the museum AND be able to explain why that person was important to the history of the county.

## RAILWAY POST OFFICE

In the 1830s, the United States Post Office realized the potential of using the railroad to not only transport mail, but later to sort the mail along the route. The Act of Congress on July 7, 1838 declared all railroads as postal routes. Mailbags were put on a train and not touched until the mail had reached its destination. This was by far the fastest and most effective way to transport the mail at that era, especially as more railroads were continually expanding.

With the organization of the Railway Post Office (RPO) in 1862, the mail bags were now opened and sorted as the train traveled to its destination. By the 1880's, RPO routes were operating on the majority of the passenger trains. A vast network of interconnected routes allowed mail to be transported and delivered efficiently and quickly.

From the middle of the 19th century, most railroads earned substantial revenues through contracts with the U.S. Post Office Department to carry mail aboard high-speed passenger trains. In fact, a number of railroads were able to continue passenger routes where passenger revenue was in the red.

RPO cars were equipped and staffed to handle most postal processing functions. First Class Mail, Registered Mail, magazines and newspapers were all sorted, cancelled when necessary, and dispatched to post offices in towns along the route.

Railway mail clerks were subjected to stringent training and ongoing testing of details regarding their handling of the mail. On any RPO route each clerk was expected to know the post offices and rail junctions along the route as well as specific local details within each of the larger cities served by the route. Originally, the RPO used converted wooden baggage cars. These cars could be dangerous because of potential fire from wood stoves and oil lamps or more serious destruction from train wreck. Later RPO cars built specifically for mail service provided safer working conditions for the postal employees. As railroads pushed west, keeping to schedules became increasingly more important. Trains began traveling at faster speeds and the number of accidents began to rise. The RPO had more than 6,000 accidents between 1890-1900, killing over 80 mail clerks and injuring another 2,072. In the 1920's, an additional problem was developing as criminals realized mail trains often carried money or gold and other valuable items leading to an increase of train robberies. This

was the reason the RPO foreman was required to carry a regulation 38 caliber pistol to discourage thieves.

In the mid to late 1800's, most RPO cars were painted a white color regardless of the railroad that owned the car; which made the RPO cars stand out from the other passenger cars. By the 1890s, this practice changed as railroads painted their RPO cars to match the rest of their passenger train making for a more streamlined look to the train.

A practical feature on most RPO cars was a movable hook system mounted on the side of an RPO car that could be used to catch a pouch of outgoing mail which would be suspended on a track-side structure called a mail crane located at stations where the train did not stop. When the train passed the station a postal clerk standing in an open door would have the hook arm in the extended position to catch the hanging mail pouch. At the same time the clerk would kick the outbound mail pouch out of the car to a waiting local post office employee for delivery to the post office. The mail bag had to be kicked far enough from the train so it would

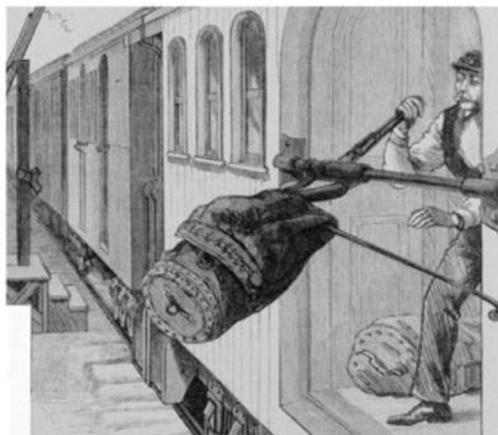
not get sucked under the moving car and create a "snow storm" of scattered mail.

The effectiveness of the Railway Post Office was in its ability to serve virtually every town. By the early 1900's railroads had been expanded to serve most localities either directly or indirectly. Mail was sorted to and received from each post office along

the route, as well as major post offices beyond the route's end-points

At their height, RPO cars were used on over 9,000 train routes covering more than 200,000 route miles in North America. After 1948, the RPO service began its decline. When the US Post Office made a major policy change to process mail in large regional centers where mail was being sorted by automated machines, not by people, the remaining RPO routes were phased out. In September 1967, all "rail by mail" contracts were cancelled, electing to move all First Class mail via air and other classes by truck transport. This announcement had a devastating effect on passenger train revenues and led directly to the ending of many passenger rail routes and even causing the demise of a few smaller railroads.

After 113 years of railway post office operation, the last surviving railway post office running on rails between New York City and Washington, D.C. was discontinued on June 30, 1977.



Images from Harper's Illustrated showing how mail was exchanged between mail trains and stationary post offices.

## WHO AM I?

Continued from page 2

**Answers:** c) Kiel, c) 1870, a) Blackleg

**August H. Beuck** was born on May 24, 1854, in Kiel on the port of the Baltic Sea in Holstein, which at that time belonged to Denmark. His father, Henry Beuck was a dairy farmer. August spent the first fourteen years of his life in his native country and then came to America, settling in Davenport, Iowa, where he learned to be a butcher. In 1870, he came to Colorado and settled in



Central City where he soon established his own butchering and packing business. In those days the butchers would go out onto the prairies and purchase the fat steers and cows and calves and drive them to Central City for slaughter.

During this time he became interested in the grazing opportunities on the plains east of Denver and by 1876 he had purchased a pre-emption and proved up on one hundred and sixty acres of land on the East Bijou in Elbert County. He began raising Shorthorns and Durham cattle. From 1876 to 1880 there was good grazing and mild winters, but the summer of 1880 proved to be a very dry one and by September most of the plains had no grass and very little hay. This, along with the brutal winter blizzards of 1881 contributed to a huge loss of livestock, averaging 60 to 100 percent, and Mr. Beuck's losses were no different. While many ranchers were not able to skin all their cattle lost in the storms, Mr. Beuck's boyhood knowledge as a butcher helped him a great deal and when spring came he had two rail car

loads of hides to sell. Even though hide prices were low, this proved to be a big financial help towards rebuilding his herds.

Mr. Beuck was united in marriage to **Miss Jennie Miller** in Central City in 1878. They had three children, a daughter who died in infancy, and two sons, **Frederick and Henry Beuck**. Jennie died of tuberculosis in 1899.

August Beuck was one of the first cattle owners in the west to experiment with Pasteur's vaccine for the extermination of Blackleg -a crippling disease that killed many calves. He was respected for his progressive methods in the care of his livestock and development of his herds and his opinions were largely accepted as authority upon stock raising in this part of the state. In 1885, Hereford bulls were purchased and in the years that followed, cow herds on the ranch grew to be some of the largest Hereford herds in Eastern Colorado.

In 1890 he was appointed to complete the unexpired term of Elbert County Commissioner, **L.R. Tucker**. At the close of his appointed term, he was elected for three consecutive terms, serving until January 1896. After leaving office, Mr. Beuck focused on building up his ranch holdings and began purchasing land from the Union Pacific Railroad Company and neighboring ranchers -ultimately his ranch encompassed 18,060 acres. His sons worked with him on his beloved East Bijou Valley Ranch until his retirement. August Beuck passed away on November 17, 1927.

### DID YOU KNOW?

A railroad station and post office on the Union Pacific Railroad originally known as **Godfrey**, adjacent to the East Bijou Valley Ranch, was renamed **Beuck** in 1916. However, due to a clerical error when the paperwork was filed, the site was labeled **Buick**. The post office was closed in 1925.

## SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

Continued from page 1



On May 30, longtime ECHS friend **Jim Jones** and wife **Marilee** returned to the eastern plains to visit old friends and give multiple presentations on his new DVD *Denver & New Orleans -In the Shadow of the Rockies*, a video companion to his 1997 book of the same name. The

morning program took place in the historic Russell Gates Mercantile Building in Elbert, where a crowd of over a hundred attended a special 80th Anniversary commemoration of the infamous 1935 Kiowa Creek Flood prior to the debut of Jim's D&NO DVD. Later that afternoon, the museum hosted an open house allowing Jim to meet with railway fans and sign autograph copies of his DVD. The day ended with an encore video presentation at the Elizabeth Middle School in the evening.

Early in the summer season, ECHS Vice President, **Hank Smith** made an appearance on Channel 9's *Colorado and Company* morning television magazine promoting the museum

and the *Our Journey* program. This was a definite boost towards this year's advertising, and website visitors grew to nearly 2,000 hits just over the summer!

This year's Pioneer Fourth celebration was one of the largest and most successful to date with ECHS President **Joe Martell** serving as MC, and musicians **Duane and Billie Owens** and **Luke Heirendt** entertaining the crowds with live music, local history trivia



and acknowledging our great museum sponsors throughout the day. Friends and neighbors enjoyed the day touring the museum, eating great burgers and brauts, watching pioneer artisan **Andrea Seder** create alpaca wool stomp rugs, participating in the kids games, cake walk and silent auction. The annual tradition of auctioning off all the pies submitted in the pie judging contest was the highlight of the afternoon, with a new record set at over \$1,300 raised and all proceeds going to the museum. **Cheri Wyatt** and **Grace Adams** were named the winners in the adult and kids pie baking categories.

## 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  
James Saul & Janet  
Daughenbaugh  
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  
Katee & Ric Kolm  
Jim & Carla Martell  
PDC Energy Inc.

### *(Locomotive continued)*

Re/Max Accord  
-Tammi Schneider  
Simla Frozen  
Food Locker, LLC  
Spring Valley Golf Club  
Sun Valley Electric Inc.  
Through Your Eyes  
Photography  
Town of Elizabeth

### *Ponderosa Pine*

Angie's Cuttin Corner  
Banner Mortgage  
Bender Mendors, LLC.  
Big R -Elizabeth  
Elizabeth Locker Plant  
Front Range Kubota  
Gordon Insurance Agency  
Hamacher Well Works  
Inc.  
Lucy Hoffhines  
Kiowa Alumni Association  
Love Funeral Home -  
Limon  
Sizzor Magic  
Town of Kiowa

### *Windmill*

Barr Bear Salon  
Bob & Sandy Claeys  
Cost Cutters -Elizabeth  
Costco -Parker  
Doris Ehman  
Elbert Tax Services  
Hair Addicts  
Betty Hood  
Jill's Feed & Country  
Supply, Inc.  
Kiowa Pizza Place  
Kiowa Post Office  
Sky-Patrice-Preston  
John & Julie Martell  
MK Liquors  
Mountain Man Nut &  
Fruit Co. -Elizabeth  
Once Upon a Tan  
Parker Port-A-Potty  
Safeway -Elizabeth  
FT Shepperdson  
Sonic -Elizabeth  
Taco Bell -Elizabeth  
The Rock Parts -Castle  
Rock  
True Value -Elizabeth  
Walmart -Elizabeth

Would you like to be a 2016 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