

SMOKY HILL EXPRESS

Elbert County Historical Society & Museum Newsletter

SPRING 2016

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Pioneer Fourth Planning Meeting
Saturday, June 4, 10:00 am
Elbert County Museum Assembly Room

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

**Elbert County Museum
2016 Closing Day**
Sunday, September 4, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

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

**Eastern Colorado Museums &
Historical Societies Meeting**
Friday, October 7, 10:00 am
Highlands Ranch Mansion



SMOKY HILL TRAIL EXHIBIT

-THE NEXT CHAPTER IN OUR HISTORY

Three years ago the Elbert County Historical Society and Museum embarked on its most exciting project to date -to tell the story of the **Smoky Hill Trail** and the history of transportation in Elbert County through a new, fun and interactive exhibit.

Our professional team of designers, artists, craftsmen and engineers has created an exhibit comprised of three distinct phases: ONE- the origin and early years of Elbert County's most well-known trail, TWO- the transition of traveling from trail to rail as railroads began making their way West, and THREE- the advent of automobile travel and how today's Highway 86 shadows segments of the original trail.

Phase One was completed and unveiled in 2014 and Phase Two opened last year.

Both phases were funded largely in part by a grant from the Boettcher Foundation, gifts from the Colorado Tourism Office-Heritage and Agritourism Program, several anonymous donors, and through the generous support of museum season sponsors.

As we reflect back on where we've been and what's been accomplished on the eve of the **Elbert County Historical Society's 60th Anniversary**, we must also now boldly look forward to what lies ahead. Phase Three will be a phenomenal climax to the Smoky Hill Trail exhibit and once completed, it will be the keystone display to the culmination of the trail's story. We've been able to complete the first two phases; however we need your financial help to finish this project. A scale model of this exceptional exhibit will be on display in the museum throughout the summer, the cost will be \$18,900.00.

Please help the museum achieve this goal by generously making your tax deductible contribution.





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

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?
 - Central City
 - Denver
 - Holyoke
- What was my father's profession?
 - Butcher
 - Baker
 - Candlestick Maker
- What political office did I not hold?
 - County Clerk
 - Justice of the Peace
 - State Representative



Answers on page 5

THANK YOU!

On Saturday **February 6**, members and friends attended our annual Spring meeting where **Shaun Boyd** with the **Douglas County History Research Center** gave an interesting presentation on library resources. Thanks Shaun!

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

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)

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

****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.



PIONEER FOURTH CELEBRATION

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

Mark your calendars so you can plan on spending a fun-filled time celebrating Independence Day with new and old acquaintances, neighbors, and visitors. Enjoy live music, games and viewing the exhibits inside the Museum and various crafts inside and outside. Don't miss out on the traditional BBQ lunch prepared fresh during mid day. The cakewalk and a pie auction will enable attendees the opportunity to take a delicious homemade pie or cake with them. At the end of the afternoon, following a watermelon eating contest, winning bidders will gather up their treasures at the silent auction, leaving with great memories.

GIFT SHOP

The museum gift shop offers a variety of items, including full-length two-hour DVD documentaries on the life and times of the D&NO, people and places along its snake-like route across Elbert County. Get your collectable 80th Anniversary copies of the new *Here Comes The Flood, There Goes The Train* for only \$19.35 and its companion *Denver & New Orleans Railroad: In The Shadow Of The Rockies* DVD at only \$10. On-line orders can be made at www.coloradorailvideos.com.



KEEP THE MUSEUM IN MIND

The Elbert County Museum is a great place to bring summer guests during family reunions, birthday parties, alumni reunions, church events or any special occasion for a time of education, entertainment and just being supportive of the community. Doors are open four days a week from 1:00 to 4:00 pm, Thursday through Sunday.

A HISTORY OF DOLLHOUSES

A new feature in the museum this summer will be a completely furnished Victorian dollhouse, donated by the **Roberts Family**. Following is a brief history of dollhouses over the centuries.

Miniature homes, furnished with household articles and tiny people, have been made for thousands of years. The earliest known examples were created about 5,000 years ago and were found in Egyptian tombs. These models were made of wood and depicted



servants, furnishings and animals. They were probably placed in the tombs to serve some religious purpose.

The earliest known European dollhouses were called baby houses, the first of which were made in the 16th century. They consisted of cabinet display cases of individual rooms. These showed idealized interiors complete with detailed furnishings and accessories. These were intended solely for adults and were collected and owned by wealthy matrons in Holland, England and Germany. When fully furnished, these cabinet houses could be worth as much as a real house.

Smaller dollhouses appeared in Europe in the 18th century. These early European houses were custom made by individual craftsmen and were unique in style, as were the furnishings in them.

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, toys, including dollhouses, and furnishings for them, were mass produced in factories. Germany produced the most exquisite dollhouses and miniatures up until World War I. German dollhouses were regularly exported to Britain and North America and were very popular in those countries. However, when Germany became involved in the Great War, toy production there slowed significantly and manufacturers in other countries began producing dollhouses, with many of them copying German designs. Furnishings in these houses were made mainly of wood or metal and many were quite detailed and elaborate in design.

After World War II, dollhouses began to be mass-produced in factories on a much larger scale and the craftsmanship was less detailed. By the 1950s, the typical dollhouse was made of painted sheet metal and filled with plastic furniture. These cost little and many children in Western countries owned and played with them.

In the 1970s, there was a renewed interest in dollhouses and miniatures and adults became fascinated with building and furnishing them, many of which contain custom designed furnishings, electrical hookups, real-life looking dolls and much more. Doll house kits and furnishings are still available in retail stores and online.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

A group of more than two hundred people met in the school house at Kiowa, on Sunday, June 24, 1956, for the purpose of greeting old friends and organizing an Elbert County Historical Society. The project was sponsored by the Elbert County Farm Bureau, with a committee from that group and others in the county who were interested, of which Mr. J.E. Taylor of Kiowa was the chairman...

So reads the first few lines of the minutes from that first meeting 60 years ago. It was at that gathering which laid the foundation for a county's dream that has lasted up to this day. And yet at the time no one could have possibly envisioned the significance of what that afternoon would bring years later. After all, the day had been billed simply as an "Old Timers Picnic" that was sponsored by the **Farm Bureau of Elbert County**. *Spend the afternoon among old friends* the letters read... *If you know of anyone else who may be interested in attending please ask them to come. Bring all of your family and friends or have your family and friends bring you.* Obviously the invitation to honor old time Elbert County citizens must have been pretty powerful, because folks from all corners of the County converged in Kiowa that Sunday afternoon in '56 and met in the newly completed red-brick school house.

Minutes taken from that day state that J.J. Kruse was elected the first permanent chairman of the Historical Society, with James McCausland as secretary-treasurer, and fifteen others... namely, Reuben Olson, Hester Hovey, Edward Phillips, Fred Albin, Dorothy Squires, Robert Benjamin, Robert Fuchs, Jack Woods, Ed Ager, Kittie Holt, Rex Hixson, Joel Fletcher, Earnest Hagerman, Charles Melburn and Henry Wedemeyer were named to the board of directors. It was even noted that the first donation to the Society was given by Vivian Schoneweiss, and later other donations brought the days total to ten dollars!

By the time the 2nd Annual Picnic met the following year, the constitution and by-laws had been drawn up and adopted for the Elbert County Historical Society, establishing it as an organization whose purpose was to work for the establishment of appropriate vaults and archives for the preservation of original manuscripts, documents, photographs and all articles of public interest. There was even a whisper in the air of establishing a county museum as various items were donated. The next few years that followed were slowed in progressing towards the dream of a museum

as original members passed and others moved away.

It wasn't until June 1975, with talk of Colorado's Centennial celebrations that interest was renewed in the Elbert County Historical Society. The reorganization of the Society was passed on to the next generation as Gleason Kruse, son of J.J. Kruse -the original chairman, was elected president. Other officers of that new era were Harold Brintnall, Geneal Gerratt, Sally Litwak, Eva Adams, Rueben Olson, Kittie Holt, Breden Doyle, Joel Fletcher, Margaret McGaugh and Mrs. Obrecht.

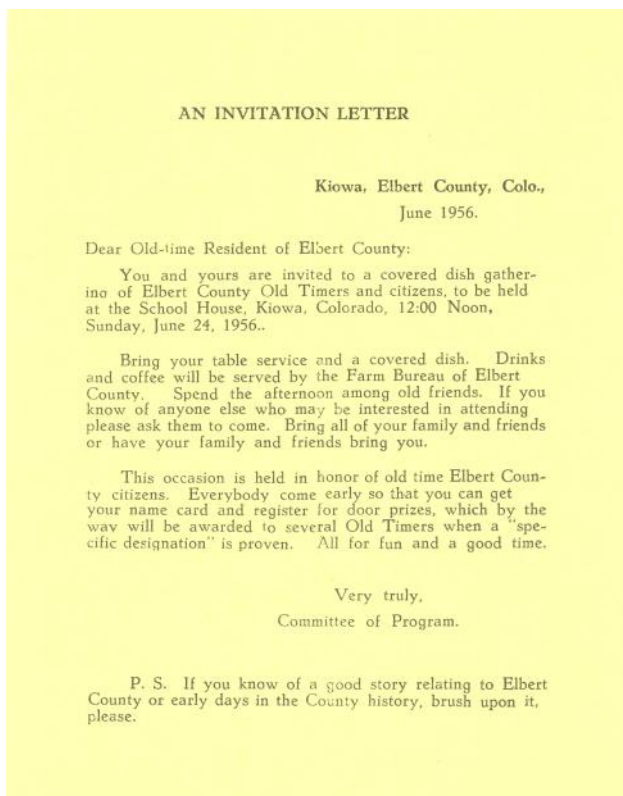
During this second rebirth, the Historical Society made great strides in growing memberships, fund raising and the continuing effort to establish a county museum. For the next

decade through the efforts of such individuals as Joe and Leona Gilbert, Kenneth and Lyndall Scott, Nellie Lamberson, Lucy Hoffhines and countless others the Society sponsored history programs, "Pioneer Dinners", county fair booths and auctions, along with various publications of brochures, cookbooks and postcards all in an effort to raise awareness of the county's history. Dreams of a county museum had been so close to a reality at the time, that plans had been drawn up for a museum complex.

Pioneer Park, as it had come to be known was a vision that was to include old structures from across the county all located in one place... a "living history museum". However, with the untimely passing of both Lyndall and Leona in the 1980's, the Society's momentum once again slowed down to a crawl and the hope for a museum began to fade.

The Elbert County Historical Society experienced its third and most recent revival in 1990 as a new era embraced the vision of its predecessors. Under the leadership of President Jim Martell and executive officers Lisa Gilbert and Angie Arterburn, the Old Kiowa High School was acquired and work began to transform it into the future home of the **Elbert County Museum**. Joe Martell and John Hoffhines were at the forefront of early building renovations as dark paneling was ripped from the walls, floors were refinished, and walls of turquoise and pink were painted over. A core group of individuals including Betty and Gus Janssen, Jim Jones, Carla Martell, Lee and Jane Whiteley and others contributed not only with the building improvements but with a new adventure when the Society was awarded a grant from the **Colorado Endowment for the Humanities**. This

Continued on page 5



Old Timer's Invitation, June 1956.

WHO AM I?

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Answers: b) Denver, b) Baker, b) Justice of the Peace

Jacob J. (J.J.) Kruse was born on February 6, 1877, to Hans and Matilda Kruse in Denver, Colorado. His father had emigrated from Germany seventeen years earlier and had prospered as a baker, then a successful merchant in Central City before moving the family to Denver in 1877. Jacob (Jake) spent his childhood and adolescence in both Denver and Central City, helping at his father's store. He attended grade and high schools in Denver before graduating from the Colorado School of Mines.



In 1899, he moved to Elbert County where he helped managed his father's cattle ranch three miles south of Elizabeth. Together with his older brother Hugo, the two oversaw the operations of the ranch and the supply of fresh beef it provided to their father's store in Central City. J.J. was elected Elbert County Superintendent of Schools in 1903 and served two terms. As part of his duties, he regularly traveled on horseback to personally visit, review and evaluate all sixty-nine school districts in the county.

Mr. Kruse married **Miss Florence Gleason** in 1909 and two children were born to this union, **Mildred** and **Earl Gleason**. By now, he had acquired his own ranch out on the Bijou Basin where he and his young family called home.

Two years later the family moved to Kiowa when Jake was

elected Elbert County Clerk and Recorder. While in office he personally witnessed the public outcry demanding a suitable permanent brick courthouse replace the old wooden one, the challenge to Kiowa's claim as the county seat that followed, the subsequent fraudulent petitions calling for the relocation of the county offices, the District Court action that ordered Kiowa would remain the county seat, and ultimately the celebrated construction of the new courthouse. After his term as County Clerk ended, he won a seat in the State House of Representatives but only served one term.

In 1918, J.J. made a complete career change and went into the banking and abstract business. Shortly thereafter he bought the Adolph Coors' Pioneer Saloon building in Kiowa and opened his **Stockgrowers State Bank**. The business did well for a number of years and provided friendly competition for the Kiowa State Bank across the street. When the Great Depression hit, the two banks negotiated a deal with each other which allowed one to assume the abstracting portion of both, and the other took over the banking side. Kiowa State Bank managed to survive the depression and the **Elbert County Abstract & Title Company** immersed with Jacob Kruse at the helm. He continued in the abstract and title business and was president of the Colorado Title Association. He also served 10 years on the State Board of Abstract Examiners.

Jake was a member of the Kiowa Masonic Lodge No. 116. A.F.&A.M, and stayed active in local and state politics. At an "Old Timer's Picnic" in June 1956, he was unanimously elected the president of the newly formed **Elbert County Historical Society**. J.J. Kruse died on December 29, 1956.

OUR BIRTHDAY

Continued from page 4

grant marked the beginning of a 19-month effort to bring together an exhibit that was the result of countless oral histories, photo days and historic research across the county. The end result, **Window to the Past -Door to the Future**, was the first permanent exhibit unveiled at the Elbert County Museum's Grand Opening in June 1993. The Historical Society was later awarded the coveted **Denver Posse of Westerner's Fred A. Rosenstock Award** for its efforts to preserve western history through the new exhibit. Later in the decade, Donna Reese stepped into the role of Museum Curator and helped develop some of the most memorable themed exhibits of the museum's early years.

The arrival of the twenty-first century didn't diminish the dedication of historical society members and friends as some of the highlights from the last sixteen years have included: cultivation of the annual **Pioneer Fourth Celebration**, the museum building designated an **Elbert County Historic Landmark**, thoughtful and necessary building renovations that encompassed such projects as roof and window replacements to updating interior finishes, an active participant in the **Our Journey** program, establishing the

Eastern Colorado Museum's and Historical Societies network forum, design and development of quality exhibits and displays, and most recently the recipient of the **Smoky Hill Trail Association's Award of Merit** for contributions towards the preservation, protection and promotion of the Smoky Hill Trail through the Society's new permanent exhibit of the same name.

Today, 60 years later, the resolve of the Elbert County Historical Society remains intact and centered on preserving the county's history for future generations.



ECHS Directors (left to right) Monty Ashliman, Jim Jones (friend), Joe Martell, Carla Martell, Lucy Hoffhines, Donna Smith and Hank Smith (not pictured John Metli)

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!



Locomotive

AAC Enterprises, Inc.
Andrae Michaels
Photography
Banner Mortgage
Bender Menders, LLC
Ben & Laurie Duke
Elbert County
Abstract & Title Co.
Elizabeth Auto Repair
Hayward Baker, Inc
Harold Heckman
High Plains Food Store
HOO Motors
Katee & Ric Kolm
Jim & Carla Martell
PDC Energy Co.
Simla Frozen
Food Locker, LLC

(Locomotive continued)

Spring Valley Golf Club
Sun Valley Electric Inc.
Taco Bell -Elizabeth
Tell-Tale

Productions -Jim Jones
Town of Elizabeth
Through Your Eyes
Photography



Ponderosa Pine

Angie's Cuttin Corner
Elizabeth Locker Plant
Front Range Kubota
Hamacher Well Works Inc.
Kat Eyes Optical
Love Funeral Home -Limon
Paul & Alicia Nasrallah
Sizzor Magic

(Ponderosa Pine continued)

Taylor Mortgage Group
True Value -Elizabeth



Windmill

Big O Tires -Elizabeth
Boykin Chiropractic Care, PC
Cost Cutters -Elizabeth
Lucy Hoffhines
Jill's Feed & Country Supply
MK Liquors
Mountain Man Nut &
Fruit Co. -Elizabeth
Napa -Elizabeth
Parker Port-A-Potty
Safeway -Elizabeth

(Windmill continued)

Sawmill Bar & Grill
Wal-mart -Elizabeth



Cultivator

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

Would you like to be a 2016 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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