

# SMOKY HILL EXPRESS

Elbert County Historical Society & Museum Newsletter

SPRING 2018

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 17 Mile House Farm Park Tour .....3
- Membership/Sponsorship Levels ..2
- Museum Sponsors .....6
- Pioneer Fourth .....3
- Recurring Donations .....2
- Transportation on the Trail .....4
- Yesteryear .....5

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS

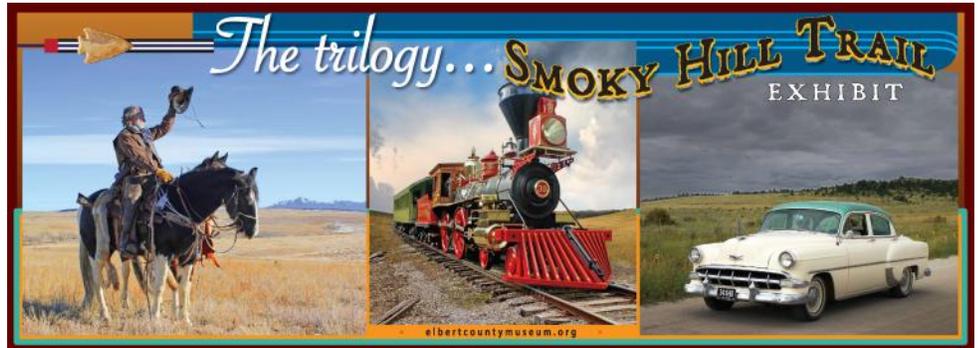
**Spring Meeting and  
Volunteer Orientation**  
Saturday, May 19, 10:00 am  
Elbert County Museum Assembly Room

**Elbert County Museum  
2018 Opening Day**  
Sunday, May 27, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

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

**17 Mile House Farm Park Tour**  
Saturday, August 4, 10:00 am

**Annual Membership Meeting**  
Saturday, September 8, 10:00 am  
Elbert County Museum Assembly Room



## THE END OF THE TRAIL?... NO, JUST THE END OF CONSTRUCTION!

It is with tremendous pride that the Elbert County Historical Society announces the completion of its multi-phase interpretive exhibit on the Smoky Hill Trail and the evolution of transportation in Elbert County.

The trail was most important to the early development of Elbert County and those who followed it in the 1860's utilized a mode of transportation much different than their followers twenty, thirty or even fifty years later. This summer culminates a six-year journey of planning and designing, developing and constructing an interactive display that details the origin, destination and purpose of the Smoky Hill Trail and continues through to the advent of the railroads and automobiles. The exhibit was professionally designed by the renowned creative husband and wife team; **Rand and Karen Hood** of **Visual West** in Larkspur, Colorado. A dedicated volunteer exhibit committee and ECHS Board members worked diligently to collect materials for display, fine-tuned text panels for each subject area and helped construct this one-of-a-kind exhibit.

Phase I opened in the Summer of 2014 with an extensive look at the Smoky Hill Trail, which followed an ancient Native American path along the Smoky Hill River across Kansas and into Colorado. Eager gold seekers followed the Smoky Hill and other trails into Colorado, where they hoped they would find their fortunes. The trail meandered across Eastern Colorado to a point west of present-day Limon, where it then split into three branches – known as the Middle, South, and North routes. The Southern Branch came through Kiowa, winding its way north of Elizabeth and into what is now Parker before rejoining the other two routes outside of Denver. To commemorate this journey, the first phase highlights the story of the trail with a panorama of the Colorado plains and a life-sized covered wagon that visitors can walk through.

By the 1880's, railroads began to replace early wagon trails as a faster and much more efficient means of travel. Completed in 2015, Phase II focuses on the trains that crossed the Eastern Plains and their influence on the growth of the Colorado territory and early Elbert County settlements. A replica of a Railroad Post Office (RPO) mail car was meticulously built, down to the last detail. Visitors walk through the covered wagon into the train car interior and then pass through onto the platform to join early travelers standing in front of the depot at Elbert. The

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.

## GIFT SHOP

Be sure to visit the museum gift shop this summer! We have a new Smoky Hill Trail T-Shirt design, a variety of books and gift items for all ages. Please remember we are able to accept cash or check only.

## RECURRING DONATIONS: GIFTS WE CAN COUNT ON!

Your recurring donation to **Elbert County Historical Society and Museum** is support we can count on!

When you use this option, you are making a commitment to donate a particular amount over a specific period of time. You can give as little as \$10 per week, month, quarter or year. Simply set up your donation schedule and your deductions will happen automatically, straight from your credit card, debit card or bank account.

To learn more about recurring donations, contact ECHS Treasurer Donna Smith, or visit [www.ColoradoGives.org](http://www.ColoradoGives.org) FAQs.

## 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](http://ElbertCountyMuseum.org).



## PIONEER FOURTH CELEBRATION

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

This July 4 will be our 18th 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.

## SPRING MEETING AND VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

Saturday, May 19, 10:00 am  
Elbert County Museum Office

This ECHS meeting will include an update on the upcoming 2018 Museum Season, a behind the scenes look at the third and final phase of the Smoky Hill Trail exhibit, and introduction into this summer's activities.

If you have been a museum volunteer in the past or would like to become one, please join us! This is a great opportunity to meet new people and learn about the changes that have taken place since last year. Everyone is welcome to attend so please feel free to invite family and friends.

## SHARE 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, **Thursday through Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.** This would be an excellent opportunity to share with visitors the rich history of Elbert County.

## 17 MILE HOUSE FARM PARK TOUR

Saturday, August 4, 10:00 am  
8181 South Parker Road, Centennial  
Cost- Free Admission but donations are appreciated

Join the ECHS as we tour **17 Mile House Farm Park**, a 158-year old farm which served as an important resting stop for pioneers traveling on the Cherokee/Smoky Hill wagon trails in the 1860's. Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society president **Garry O'Hara**, will present a program on this Arapahoe County-designated heritage area which includes a historic house, red barn, silo and milk shed -all of which were restored to their known condition in the early 1900's, as well as two replica windmills and 30 acres of open space.

When the 1859-1860 gold rush resulted in large-scale settlement of the state, a series of inns emerged along Cherry Creek to accommodate travelers and freighters. These 'mile houses' were located every 2-3 miles along the Cherokee/Smoky Hill wagon trails from Kansas, all named based on their distance to the intersection of Colfax and Broadway. Upon arrival, travelers could get a meal, spend the night, rest their animals and have minor repairs made to their coaches or wagons. With arrival of the railroad in 1882, pioneer traffic along the wagon trails ended, and so did the need for mile houses. But the name stuck. For over 100 years, hard-working Coloradans lived on the land at 17 Mile House.

In 2001, nine entities collaborated to preserve this valuable piece of Colorado history and provide an open space area for the public to enjoy. Partners included **Arapahoe County, Douglas County, Town of Parker, Great Outdoors Colorado, Gates Family Foundation, Colorado State Historical Fund, Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, City of Aurora and the Trust for Public Land.**



RSVP to [info@elbertcountymuseum.org](mailto:info@elbertcountymuseum.org).

## TRANSPORTATION ON THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL

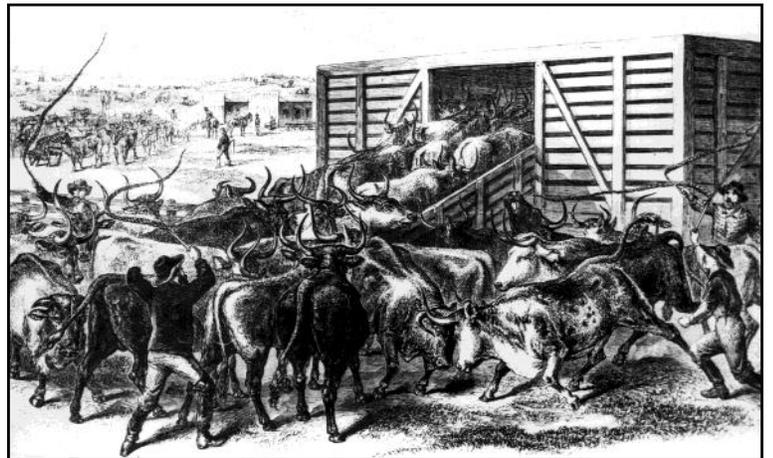
Prior to the surge of travelers to gold fields of Colorado in 1859, the only way to travel along the Trail was by walking or by horse. After gold was discovered in 1858 and the trail was established, wagons and hand carts were added. In 1859, the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express opened a stage and freight line following the Smoky Hill Trail. Passengers could now traverse the 600 plus miles between Leavenworth, Kansas and Denver by stage and freight went by wagon trains. This saved time and energy but was more expensive. Travel by stage was quicker and easier than by wagon but was rough, dusty and often crowded.

During the Civil War, transportation on the trail diminished to almost nothing but increased after the war. However, a major change in transportation of people and goods resulted with the completion of the Kansas Pacific Railway in 1870, reducing travel time from approximately two months to two and half days. After the coming of the railroad, wagons were still used to locally transport goods to and from the railroad.

The introduction of the automobile brought the next major change in transportation along the trail. During the 1920s, locally, the automobile began to replace the horse drawn vehicles in moving people and freight to and from the railroads. Then as the roads became more numerous and smoother, and cars became more reliable and comfortable they were used for longer distance travel. This caused a decline in railroad travel. People enjoyed the freedom that the car offered to go where they wanted, when they wanted.

The automobile brought other changes to the inhabitants along the trail. People loved their automobiles. Some wanted the newest or prettiest or most powerful or a customized one or the fastest, even racing them. New businesses and employment opportunities were created to sell and service the automobile in the local towns. Roads had to be constructed, others improved and all must be maintained.

Trucking companies were established to transport goods. The introduction of the Interstate System in the 1960s, along with faster, more powerful trucks made long distance hauling feasible. Livestock and grain could now be moved to faraway places more economically than by railroad. The increasing use of the automobile to transport people and goods brought about the demise of two of the three railroads that served Elbert County; the Colorado & Southern through Elbert and Elizabeth in 1936, and the Chicago & Rock Island through Matheson and Simla in 1980. The Union Pacific still operates freight trains through Agate.



## YESTERYEAR

The following excerpt is taken from an interview conducted on July 20, 1990 with **Earl Brown**, son of Elbert County Sheriff **Roy Brown**. Earl was born on November 2, 1905, in Elizabeth, Colorado and spent his early years in Elizabeth but moved with his family to Elbert when he was ten years old. Earl had many memories of Elizabeth during those first years, because at that time his father worked for the Russell Gates Mercantile store and Earl spent a lot of time observing what was happening in the store and around the town.



-Lucy Hoffhines

L - Can you tell me anything more about your childhood days in Elizabeth?

E - Well, there's been a great change from those days to the present. When I grew up in Elizabeth there weren't any automobiles, and there wasn't any paving. When they had a rainstorm, the flood would wash all the sand down in the street in front of what is now Norm's Garage (Advanced Quality Auto Repair), and I'd go out there to play, get sleepy and go to sleep right there in the street! There were two old maids, the Clayton sisters, who lived east of town and they came to town in a horse and buggy always and one day they ran over me! It excited them and awakened me!

...Nearly every Monday, in the fall of the year especially, they would ship cattle and hogs to Denver to market. After my dad covered this on horseback for quite a while, Russell

Gates got modern and bought him a motorcycle, and as I said before, in those days, there was no road grading, no culverts, and at the bottom of every hill in the county, there was a sand pile -so this motorcycle didn't work out very good for dad because every time he hit the bottom of a hill, it would throw him off and he'd have to run and push it to get it going again, and jump on if he could, before it left. So that didn't last very long, but about this same time, they got a motor truck which was either McCormick Deering or International -all the same company. And this truck had a box on the back about the size of a wagon bed, a little wider. It had high wheels behind, probably 12 feet high. No hood out in front, just a dashboard. The motor was under the floorboards, and there was no transmission -it had a chain drive like a bicycle. They used this modern convenience to haul supplies from the depot, as everything came in by rail and had to be picked up out of a boxcar and hauled to the store.

...Back in those days, the mail and the passengers between Kiowa and Elizabeth were hauled by stage coach -a spring wagon with a canvas covering on it, like the early day pioneers rode in. An old man named **Bill Wood** drove the stage. I think the contract was held by **Ed Knott** who owned the livery barn (in Kiowa), and later **Tom McCausland** ran this stage and they would pick up the drummers and other passengers in Elizabeth and bring them to Kiowa and the next day they'd haul them back to Elizabeth.

### DID YOU KNOW?

A drummer was a peddler. They were salesmen -business representatives who sold goods to stores.



## THE END OF THE TRAIL

Continued from page 1

invention of the automobile led to the end of passenger train service on most railroad routes. Trucking businesses became major competitors by the 1930's with the advent of improved paved roads, and after World War II they expanded their operations as the Interstate highway network grew during the 1950's and 60's.

Phase III of the exhibit ushers in the automotive age of travel, depicting the building of modern roads as Highways 24, 40 and 86 emerge, and the impact that cars and trucks had on society in the 20th Century. Continuing from the depot platform, visitors experience the climax of 159 years of trail travel as they progress into an early motor garage before reappearing out on the Eastern Plains landscape and the paved trail of present day.

Plan to come visit the Elbert County Museum and experience life on the Smoky Hill Trail!

## 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***

Anonymous Donor

Laurel Brown

DrJohnStevens.com

Ben & Laurie Duke

Elbert County

Abstract & Title Co.

Elizabeth Locker Plant

Front Range Kubota

High Plains Food Store

High Prairie Survey Co.

Lucy Hoffhines

JR's Village Repair

Katee & Rick Kolm

Legacy Plow & Trailer

Jim & Carla Martell

Ed and Marcia Stafford



### ***(Locomotive continued)***

Spring Valley Golf Club

Sun Valley Electric Inc.

### ***Ponderosa Pine***

Advanced Quality

Auto Repair

Angie's Cuttin Corner

James Duvall

Hamacher Well Works Inc.

Jill's Feed & Country Supply

Napa -Elizabeth

Stablemaster Products, Inc.

Jeanne Thompson



### ***Windmill***

Anonymous Donor

Bentley's Pet Store

Bernie's Kitchen

Roger Berst

Big O Tires -Elizabeth

Big R -Elizabeth

Burger King -Parker

Costco -Parker

Dominos -Elizabeth

Dusty Plains Veterinary

Service

Elbert Tax Services, Inc.

Elizabeth Family Dental

Integrity Auto Repair, Inc.

King Soopers -Stroh Ranch

MK Liquors

Mountain Man Nut &

Fruit Co. -Elizabeth

Murdoch's -Parker

Parker Port-A-Potty

Ann Pidgeon



### ***(Windmill continued)***

Safeway -Elizabeth

Sizzor Magic Haulmann/

Jean/McFarland

Sprouts -Parker

Sweet Alfas

### ***Cultivator***

Glaser Gas &

Equipment Co. -

Kiowa

HOO Motors

JC Martell

Smith Ranches



Would you like to be a 2018 Season Sponsor? Please contact Carla Martell at 303.621.2229 or email us at [info@elbertcountymuseum.org](mailto:info@elbertcountymuseum.org).

## ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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