



Summer 2011 Vol. 5, Issue 3

# CHSM

## Conifer Historical Society and Museum

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**\* DID YOU KNOW \***

The Yellow Barn, main house and guest house at Bradford Junction were all built from a **Gordon Van Tine** kit in 1918?

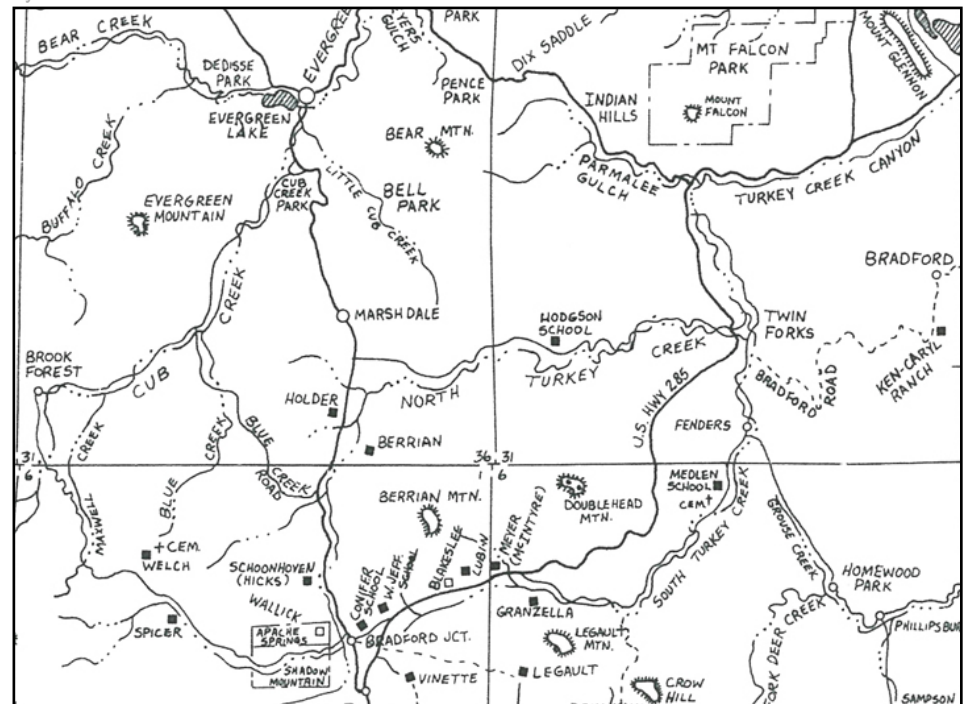
(If you are reading this online, click on the bold words to take you to websites associated with those words.)

*CHSM's mission is to share the region's legacy by collecting, preserving and exhibiting historical and cultural materials and providing public access to services, collections, exhibits and a research library.*

This issue of CHSM can be found at:  
[www.ConiferHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.ConiferHistoricalSociety.org)

### Bradford Toll Road

by Elaine Hood



*This map showing Bradford Toll Road and Junction is from The Upper Side of the Pie Crust by Margaret Bentley.*

#### **Sesquicentennial (sez-kwee-centennial): 150 years**

This year marks 150 years since the Civil War began and it also marks the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the origins of Conifer and the road that started it all, the Bradford Toll Road.

Let's take a journey back to the fall of 1861. The Civil War began in April and the [first] Battle of Bull Run was fought in July. But those events are a world away on the East coast. More important to us is the fact that gold was discovered last year in what is now the Leadville area.

We are amongst the tens of thousands of people pouring in from around the world hoping to make our quick fortunes. There are no roads penetrating the Front Range into the Rockies, and railroads to Leadville won't be completed until 1880.

The newly formed Colorado Territory has issued charters to private entrepreneurs to develop roads with the right to charge tolls for maintenance.

One of the best routes to Leadville is via South Park, where the land is flat and travel

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# A Letter to the Community

by Janet Shown, CHSM President

*Whooooosh!*

That was the sound of summer going by. Are you as befuddled as we are about the speed with which each day passes you?

It's all history-in-the making. ***And the history that we're sharing together honors the history of those who went before us.***

We hope you've had a chance to attend some of the Summer Lecture Series or Museum Project events that helped you feel closer to the Conifer area's pioneers and to the national and regional history that affected those that settled and lived here. Our little group of local history enthusiasts has lots more where they came from!

On August 14, you might join us for our annual Conifer Community Picnic at the Pleasant Park Grange or learn about the Bradford-Perley House in Ken Caryl on August 27. The Bradford-Perley House history is directly related to Conifer and the Critchell area.

Or maybe you'll join us for a tour of Conifer area cemeteries on September 10, or the Clifton House on October 19. Wherever you find us, you'll find yourself connecting to long lost friends or new ones who enrich your life with their love of our unique mountain community.

On November 5, we are hosting the silent auction of Conifer Newcomers and Neighbors' Holiday Boutique at Conifer High School. In its 34<sup>th</sup> year, the boutique attracts thousands of people looking for great holiday gifts and bargains.

The silent auction is one of the most popular activities at the boutique, and will be one of the biggest



fund-raisers of the year for our Museum Project. It will highlight local artisans, businesses, and activities.

If you're one of our local talented people, a business owner, or if you have items you'd like to re-home, please consider donating them to the auction.

If you're looking for an engaging volunteer activity, consider helping

us plan, prepare for, or run the auction. We can always use the extra help!

And most of all, if you like to shop in a local, FUN atmosphere, be sure to visit us on November 5 at the Conifer Newcomers and Neighbors Holiday Boutique!

For more information about these events, visit our website at [www.ConiferHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.ConiferHistoricalSociety.org).

Last of all, to make reading this newsletter online (previous issues are available to read on our **website**) a bit more fun, we have linked most of the bold faced words (such as **Denver, Bradford and Blue River Road** on the next page) to an Internet site that will provide more information about that topic.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet Shown".

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CHSM is published quarterly for the Conifer Community, past, present, and future. It is intended to be an online publication with limited hardcopy distribution. Story ideas and contributions are encouraged. The photo of Norm Meyer's yellow house on the front page was taken by Lana Turner. Editor: Elaine Hood [hood1959@yahoo.com](mailto:hood1959@yahoo.com)



**Toll Road** *continued from page 1*

will be easiest. Using Ute Indian trails, the first roads through our area are being built now in 1861.

We are going to take the **Denver, Bradford and Blue River Road**, which was chartered October 11, 1861. Our route today will begin in Denver and end in Conifer, which was known in the 1860s as Bradford Junction.

Major Robert Bradford built a house in what is now the Ken Caryl North neighborhood and he also owned several hundred acres at Bradford Junction (Conifer's Yellow Barn area).

One of Bradford's financial partners in the toll road was John McIntyre, whose brother Duncan would homestead the land where **Meyer Ranch** is now located.

Noah Legault, who traveled the Bradford Road as a young boy in the 1870s, related this remembrance of it when interviewed by a historian in 1935:

We started from Denver at 15<sup>th</sup> and Larimer St., then called "F" Street, drove out Larimer to 1<sup>st</sup> St. which brought us to the east side of the Platte River. Here we crossed the river on a low wooden bridge and angled southwest through the flats and low swamp land [where Invesco Field is now located] on the west side of the gully up to what is now called Federal Blvd. Federal, you must remember, was not a street but simply a darned rough road across prairie land. At 12<sup>th</sup> and Federal was the junction of two roads. One called the Green Mountain Road angled to the hogbacks at Morrison, while the other was the Bradford Hill Road....

The point where Bear Creek was crossed was called Pennsylvania Crossing. The road angled from Pennsylvania

Crossing between two large hills up the valley...then west through Weaver Gap (the first gap south of Turkey Creek). From here it followed the old Ute Trail south of the old Bradford House, which still stands. Here the road can be easily traced over Bradford Hill and down to Turkey Creek. This point was the end of the Parmalee toll road.

Bradford Hill was notoriously horrible to traverse. With a 13 % grade, it could easily take an entire day for a team of horses to pull a wagon full of supplies up, over and down the other side.

At this point, the road reached Turkey Creek where North and South Turkey creeks join at Twin Forks; where the Western Ranch business offices are now located at highway 285 and Turkey Creek.

Now, if it had indeed taken us the entire day to get over Bradford's Hill, we may need to spend the night in Brownsville, named for "Greasy" Brown, a saw miller who was not known for cleaning up much. Brownsville was located here at Twin Forks. In its heyday Brownsville had two hotels/stores and a population of 20. By 1891 it had vanished.

It is likely we can now make the rest of the way along Turkey Creek to Bradford Junction/Conifer in one day, barring unforeseen incidents.

Noah Legault also recalled in his 1935 interview that the Duncan McIntyre log home was used to house people traveling by. [Note: this is not the current Meyer home, but the original homestead log home located on the property.]

This is the old Duncan McIntyre place. The old log barn still

**Toll Road** *continued on page 4*



<http://maps.google.com>

*Bradford's home, in what is now the Ken Caryl area is shown by the red box at right. The Bradford Toll Road went over Bradford Hill at a 13% grade. The red box at left shows where the road met South Turkey Creek at what was called Twin Forks and is now where the Western Ranch Center is located.*

## Toll Road *continued from page 3*

stands but the log house has long been torn down. McIntyre came here in the early 60s. He had the finest hay ranch in the country. In the early days there never was a night but from 10 to 15 travelers stopped for the night; meals were 35 cents or whatever you could afford to pay...in 1882 Rambeau [sic Ramboz] bought the place from McIntyre.

We will now lumber along in our wagon from where Meyer Ranch is today, up through Aspen Park along the grassy meadow and pond, veering off by Aspen Park Ace Hardware store along Barkley Road toward the Yellow Barn corner.

Here the old road ran off to the right up over the hill for a mile...here at this point the old road goes down a sharp hill to Bradford Junction. The post office was called Hutchinson. The old well out there in the middle of the road was there in 1871 and I don't know how much earlier. Here was a stage station and a large stage barn, also a toll gate called Bradford Junction toll gate. The charge was \$1.25 for a yoke of oxen or two horses and wagon, and 25 cents for each additional team.

The well was dug in 1862, just as word was received of the Second Battle of Bull Run, and thus was nicknamed The Civil War Well. It sat smack dab in the middle of the road as well as in the middle of the intersection of Bergen Park (coming down from the north) and Bradford Junction toll roads, and was visited by everyone who stopped to pay the toll and rest before continuing their journey.

Bradford sold his 320 acres at Bradford Junction to Colonel James McNasser in 1873.

The following quote is from *The Upper Side of the Pie Crust* by Margaret Bentley, page 22.

A headline of the Denver Daily Times of September 27, 1878, states:

*Colonel McNasser's Place at Bradford Junction Destroyed by Fire.* The article reported that the beautiful place was built in May 1860, and served for many years as a convenient stopping place for travelers on the principle route between Denver and Fairplay. The article said the hotel had become quite a popular 'watering place.' *Nestled among the mountains many people from Denver have been accustomed to spend the hot season there in preference to the broad parks or rocky canyons in other parts of the state. It was formerly used as a stage station, but with the building of the south Park Railroad the line of travel has been partially diverted from the road, and as a consequence the place was kept principally as a resort for tourists.*



*photo courtesy of the Hiwan Homestead Museum in Evergreen*

*The Junction House at Bradford Junction later burned. The Civil War well can be seen to the left.*

In 1883 Mrs. Evaline Hamer bought the ranch for \$4,000. With the assistance of her son, they ran the rebuilt Junction House and store and were in charge of the post office located there.

In 1918, the owner at that time, JJ Mullen, built the three buildings you now see at the junction: the Yellow Barn, the former house that now houses **Aspen Specialty Foods and Catering**, and the smaller guest house that is now occupied by **Grow Your Own** indoor gardening. Mr. Mullen purchased all three buildings as kits from the **Gordon Van Tine Catalog**.

The building kits arrived by rail to the Foxton area and then were hauled to Conifer on wagons. Mullen built the barn to shelter his collection of **Kissel automobiles**, as well as his wife's horses. Every week dances were held in the barn loft, with no invitations needed as they were a routine occurrence.

There's much more to the story of Bradford Junction and the Bradford Toll Road, but we've run out of space. Contact us if you would like to learn more!

*CHSM would like to thank Elicia Ratajczyk from **EVStudio** for her excellent presentation on the history of Bradford Junction at CHSM's July 20 Summer Lecture Series, and for providing the information about Mullen's ownership of Bradford Junction printed above.*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Call us for reservations: 720.333.0223

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|--------------|---|
| August 14    | Conifer Community Picnic, Pleasant Park School                  |
| August 27    | Bradford-Perley House talk and tour, Ken Caryl                  |
| September 10 | Conifer Cemeteries Tour, noon, meet at the Pleasant Park School |
| October 19   | History of the Clifton House at Aspen Peak Cellars              |
| November 5   | Silent Auction at CNN Holiday Boutique, Conifer HS              |