

Autumn 2009 Vol. 3, Issue 3

CHSM

Conifer Historical Society and Museum

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Local Stories

by Elaine Hood



photo by Elaine Hood

Tom and Barb Butterfield of Foxton bought their ranch from the Corbins, who were the original homesteaders on the land.

CHSM members interviewed several local residents this summer. The historical society is video-recording the stories of people who have a long history in Conifer, to preserve the lore of “how it used to be.” Here is a small sampling of some of the people and areas:

Foxton: Tom and Barb Butterfield

The Resort Valley Ranch near Foxton is home to Tom and Barb Butterfield. Among the original landowners who homesteaded the area were various Corbin family members. Tom Butterfield grew up on a ranch near Sedalia. His father, a respected Denver surgeon, purchased the land from the various Corbins in the 1940s. Tom began ranching the

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*** DID YOU KNOW ***

Kitty Drive in Conifer is named for Myrtle Fields Beeler’s daughter, Kitty Beeler. The Beelers lived where the Mountain Resource Center is now located.

This issue of CHSM can be found at:
www.coniferhistorymuseum.org

Suzi Says

Letter to the community

by Suzi Morris, CHSM President

Greetings!

It's autumn. If you look carefully, the Aspen trees are just beginning to shimmer with gold. What a summer! The rainfall we received was similar to the climate the pioneers experienced. Now we know how our pioneers could manage to grow enough lettuce, potatoes, and other crops to sell at the market in Denver!



Our popular Summer Lecture Series was held in the Main Lodge at Conifer Community Park at Beaver Ranch. In June, Bob Kuehster shared many memories of his childhood on Kuehster Road. His industrious family grew vegetables and hay, raised rabbits, and operated a sawmill. In July, Yvonne Ludwig shared memories of her early years in a cabin on Pleasant Park Road. Our August program featured Lew Hopkins, who shared his research on Mt. Lugo. The ski hill was one of two built and operated by Lew's father. Mt. Lugo was located where Meyer Ranch Open Space Park is today.

In September, it still felt like summer. We added a bonus program

after a surprise phone call from Texas. Carroll Brown was the Director of the Southwest Community Center when the Main Lodge was built at Beaver Ranch. Mr. Brown wanted to donate documents and photos to the Conifer Historical Society and Museum. We were fortunate that Carroll and his wife had plans to come to Denver! The program evolved to include the early history of the property from the 1860s to the 1890s when the George Kennedy family lived on the ranch. George Kennedy's great-granddaughter, Marilee Croft, spoke to us about those early years and copies of family photos and documents were donated to our Historical Society.

These programs were recorded as part of our Oral History program, and the DVDs are available.

What's next?

Join us on October 20th for our special Reception and Gift Gallery at Lucille's in the Conifer Town Center. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, wine, beer or soft beverages from 4:30 to 7:00. Photographs featuring the natural beauty and historic landmarks of Conifer will be exhibited. Our Museum photographer, Lana Turner, has

studied on location with John Fielder. In addition to framed and unframed photographs, our Gift Gallery will include a selection of local history books, our own note card collections, and professionally recorded DVDs. Bring your gift list! Birthday and holiday gift wrap will be available. Member tickets are \$8.00, guests are \$10.00, and tickets at the door will be \$12.00. For tickets and more information, please call 303.697.0871 today!

On November 7 we will participate at the Conifer Newcomers and Neighbors Holiday Boutique at Conifer High School. Stop by our booth! On December 5, we will have a booth at the Conifer Chamber of Commerce Holiday Parade.

For information on any of these programs and events, please call me at 303.697.0871. We look forward to seeing you!

Suzi Morris

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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

Local Stories continued from page 1.

land in 1946 upon his return from WWII. He and Barb moved onto the land in 1955.

The ranch did not have electricity until 1962, due to the distance off a main road. Barb showed us the various homestead deeds granted to the Corbin family members. The earliest was signed by President Grant in 1875. Others were signed by Presidents Arthur, Cleveland, Teddy Roosevelt and Wilson!

Shadow Mountain Road: Welch/Wood



Minnie Norton Wood Welch passed on several hundred acres of homesteaded land to her children along what is now Shadow Mountain Drive. Photo provided by Danny Wood.

In the early 1900s the Welch family had cabins along what is now Shadow Mountain Road. People would ride a bus owned by the Welch family from the Brown Palace in Denver to the Shadow Mountain Resort to “rough it” for a day or two in the mountains and others came directly to the area for vacations.

CHSM video-recorded Danny Wood Jr. visiting with locals who now

live on what used to be Wood and Welch homesteaded land. Some of the original cabins still remain along Shadow Mountain Road.

Critchell: McCollum Cabin

Mildred McCollum was a single college educated career woman when she purchased 60 acres near Critchell in 1937. Born and raised in rural Kansas, this fiercely independent woman moved to NYC following college and then to Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. She was vacationing in Colorado when she fell in love with the land. She married John Feeley, a writer and poet, when she was in her mid-30s. They lived for a few years in the tiny cabin, sans electricity and plumbing, but then moved back east to New Hampshire.

Mildred’s children spent their childhood summers during the 1950s at the cabin and continue to spend summer vacations here from their current homes around the world.



photo by Elaine Hood

The descendents of Mildred McCollum Feeley continue to visit their family cabin near Critchell. Mildred purchased the cabin and 60 acres in 1937 when she was a single woman visiting Colorado from New York City.

Conifer: Myrtle Fields Beeler

Myrtle Fields Beeler and her younger sister Betty Fields Long both enjoyed recounting their early days on Sylvan Park Ranch, located off Oehlmann Park Road (today known as the Lorenz Ranch). Myrtle and Betty recounted that their father and oldest brother built the Fields Trading Post in 1929, from concrete block and a few years later they placed decorative stones on the outer façade.

The older Fields children lived in a house built behind the store, milking the cows, collecting the eggs and dressing the chickens also located on the store premises, while running the store, gas station and small restaurant. The store was located approximately where the Staples parking lot is today.

The younger children helped Mom run the ranch while Dad was working construction and masonry jobs. Myrtle went on to drive the school bus for 27 years. She and her husband Lloyd lived in a house that was located where the Mountain Resource Center is now located. In fact, Kitty Drive is named for Myrtle’s daughter.

Do you have a story to share?



photo by Elaine Hood

Sisters Myrtle Fields Beeler and Betty Fields Long shared their memories.

Reception and Gift Gallery

Tuesday, 20 October, 4:30 - 7:00

Lucille's Restaurant
Conifer Town Center



Hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, wine, beer and soft beverages will be served.

Photographs featuring the natural beauty and historic landmarks of Conifer will be exhibited.

Our Museum photographer, Lana Turner, has studied on location with John Fielder.

In addition to beautiful framed and unframed photographs, our Gift Gallery will include a selection of local history books, our own note card collections, and professionally recorded DVDs. Bring your gift list! Birthday and holiday gift wrap will be available.

Tickets purchased in advance are \$8.00 for members and \$10.00 for guests.

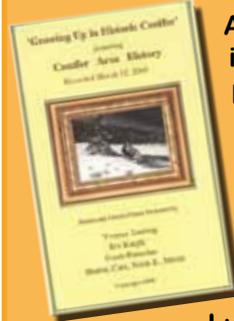
Tickets at the door will be \$12.00.

For more information and to purchase tickets, please call 303.697.0871 today!

Conifer History DVDs

A holiday gift idea for someone who has "everything."

Purchase three professionally produced DVDs featuring Conifer area residents describing their mountain memories from 'the good old days.'



All DVDs were filmed during the Armchair Adventure public presentations held in conjunction with the Mountain Area Land Trust.

The 2007 edition presents the stories and photos of Bob Kuehster, Betty Fields Long, Jack Antweiler,

Lucille Tanner and Norm Meyer talking about their family heritage in the Conifer area.

The 2008 edition features the stories and photos of Yvonne Ludwig, Erv Knight, Frank Blakeslee, and the Meyer children (Sharon, Cara and Norm, Jr.) recounting what it was like to grow up in Conifer years ago.



The 2009 DVD is a delightful presentation by local historian Hank Alderfer talking about the homesteads of the Conifer area. Also available for purchase are homestead map booklets produced by Hank Alderfer, published in conjunction with his presentation.

Each DVD is only \$20!

Call 303.697.0871 to buy one today!

www.coniferhistorymuseum.org



Notecards



**Contact Laura Debus to buy cards:
303.697.0465**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- October 20 Reception and Gift Gallery at Lucille's
- November 7 Conifer Newcomers and Neighbors Holiday Boutique
- December 5 Conifer Chamber of Commerce Holiday Parade