



# CHSM

Conifer Historical Society and Museum

**INSIDE:**

**Raymer Family**  
Page 1 & 3

**Suzi Says**  
Page 2

**Upcoming Events**  
Page 4

## The Raymer Family

by Elaine Hood



*James and Mary Raymer, shown on the left in the photo above, homesteaded in the Critchell area in the late 1800s. Their granddaughter, Betty Raymer, the little girl in front, was recently interviewed about her life growing up on the homestead ranch in the 1930s. Betty's mother, Minnie, is behind her in the dress coat. Betty's cousin is the boy at right.*

**\* DID YOU KNOW \***

**Alfred Packer, Colorado's most famous alleged cannibal, lived his final years in the Deer Creek area.**

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

Betty Raymer grew up near Critchell in the 1920s and 30s. Now in her early 80s, Betty was recently interviewed on video camera by CHSM volunteers in her Colorado Springs home.

Critchell was a small community at the east end of Pleasant Park Road in the early 1900s. There is no longer a post office there, but the name is still used by those who live in the High Grade Road area.

Betty's grandparents, James and Mary Raymer, homesteaded land

*Raymer Family continued on page 3.*

# Suzi Says

## Letter to the community

by Suzi Morris, CHSM President



Greetings!

Summer brings warm weather and more special events for the Conifer community. Get your calendar and add these dates!

On May 17 the third annual Conifer "Armchair Adventure" was cosponsored with the Mountain Area Land Trust. The Pavilion at Meadow Creek Bed and Breakfast provided a lovely venue for "Exploring Conifer's Roots."

Local historian Hank Alderfer presented a talk and slide show featuring stories and photos of our homesteaders. Hank's friends provided musical entertainment on guitar, fiddle, and banjo.

A book of Conifer area maps delineating early homestead property lines was carefully researched and is now for sale at CHSM events. The book includes family photos and a bonus DVD with selected oral history recordings.

We begin our Summer Lecture Series on June 10. Join us in the Main Lodge of Conifer Community Park at Beaver Ranch at 7:00 p.m. when Bob Kuehster recalls growing up on the family ranch

on Kuehster Road and attending the Pleasant Park School House that was built by his grandfather. Additional summer lectures are scheduled for July 8 and August 12 at Beaver Ranch. These fun events are free to CHSM members and \$5 to non-members.

Come with or without a dog to the Dog Walk on June 27. This is a benefit for the Intermountain Humane Society. Take Eagle Cliff Road to join us at the upper end of the grass runway on Meyer Ranch. Our Museum signs will identify historic buildings such as the first Conifer Library. Visit our booth for a wide selection of local history books, DVDs and our own note card collections. Our professionally recorded DVDs feature stories and photos of Conifer residents from the 1880s to the 1960s.

On July 19 the second annual Old-timers' Picnic will celebrate Conifer area families – both old and new. This is a family re-

union for the entire Conifer community! Enjoy an old-fashioned picnic under the trees at the 115 year old Pleasant Park School.

This is a great opportunity to sit down with famous older residents and ask them what it was like to live in the Conifer area in the old days!

The best method of keeping up with Museum activities is to visit our Web site: [www.coniferhistorymuseum.org](http://www.coniferhistorymuseum.org). Upcoming events are posted, historical photos can be viewed, you can buy our local historical notecards and DVDs, and much, much more!

Or, you can just give me a call for information on any of these programs and events 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](mailto:hood1959@yahoo.com)

**Raymer Family** *continued from page 1.*

above Critchell in 1897 along what is now Arnett Ranch Road. Their son, Earnest, was Betty's father.

Earnest had one leg 7 inches shorter than the other and until age 14 his parents had to carry him piggyback to the Critchell school. "He would joke that his one leg was shorter from walking around in the mountains too much," Betty chortled. "He had a good sense of humor."

Earnest and his wife Minnie bought 10 acres from his parents and built their home there. Minnie built a barn on their land, which is still standing. Betty was born in 1925 and grew up helping her crippled father with chores that he was unable to do. Her only sibling died when he was one year old.

The stories flowed easily for Betty. When asked what her earliest memory was, she replied, "Chasing owls. I had a white cat and they wanted my cat. And I had a .22 [gauge shotgun] and I was real good at it. I'd wait until it got dark and I'd see something swoop down and I'd shoot. One dead owl."

Betty attended the Lamb School, still standing along Kuehster Road, for most of her elementary school years. However, after an encounter with an especially cruel teacher, she finished her lower education at the Sampson School, where she graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

"Elaine Gordon and I were the only two students in the Lamb School for the longest time. We had to chop the wood, clean the outhouse, sweep the school and closets, bring in the wood, bring in drinking water. It was all up to us kids to do. I

walked to school everyday. My chow dog and me!"

"I was raised as a country girl. I had to milk the cows, shovel cow "sawdust," walk to school, come home and work on the ranch. If the fence was down, I'd put up the fence. I plowed the fields with horses. We were poor. We didn't have tractors."

Betty finished her education in Littleton. Because there were no buses, she and her mother lived in a small house in Littleton so Betty could attend high school, going home on the weekends to help her dad with the farming chores.



*James and Betty Raymer in front of their homestead house north of Critchell. This photo was probably taken in the 1930s.*

Other memories include taking the horses and wagon to Denver and camping for the night along Deer Creek Road. Betty says there is a small overhanging rock area, protected from the elements, that is still blackened by the smoke from travelers such as her family. Her grandfather would build a fire and her grandmother would heat bricks to keep them warm while they slept, before continuing their journey to the city the next morning.

The photos shown here were scanned by CHSM, allowing Betty to keep the originals for her family. Digitizing the photos also allows CHSM to easily use Betty's photos for historical events, by simply printing them off the computer.

If you know someone who has memories of growing up in the Conifer area, contact Elaine Hood at the email below to schedule an interview. CHSM is eager to capture their stories on video for future generations and scan their photos for historical use.

[photos.stories@coniferhistorymuseum.org](mailto:photos.stories@coniferhistorymuseum.org)



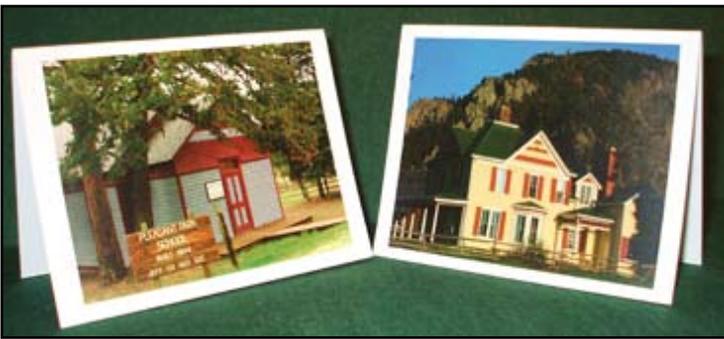
*Betty Raymer's father, Earnest, had one leg 7 inches shorter than the other, a condition he jokingly attributed to walking on the mountainsides for so long.*

## Tell Us Your Family Stories

Oral history is a simple conversation about your life. If you grew up in Conifer, where did you buy your groceries and where did you go to school? If you moved here, how was Conifer different then compared to today? Someone who would move to Conifer this spring may think we have always had the excellent high school and wide variety of businesses we have today. The members of CHSM believe it is important to preserve the stories of what it was like to live in Conifer "before ...." We are recording the oral histories on digital movie camera, and will have all the interviews available for the public. Each family will also receive a personal copy.

**The mission of the Conifer Historical Society and Museum** 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.

# Notecards



## Notecards for Any Occasion

Give the gift of notecards honoring the Conifer community.

Beautiful notecards illustrating the rich historical buildings of Conifer are available for sale. Over 24 different cards can be purchased in 7 different boxed sets.

Each photo was taken by local photographer Lana Turner. Proceeds of sales go towards furthering the endeavors of CHSM.

Contact Laura Debus to buy cards: 303.697.0465

Cost and order information is also available on the "Museum Store" page at: [www.coniferhistorymuseum.org](http://www.coniferhistorymuseum.org).

## Conifer History DVDs

You can now purchase two professionally produced DVDs featuring Conifer area residents describing their mountain memories from 'the good old days.'

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

The 2007 edition features 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.



**\$20/DVD**

Contact Suzi Morris  
303.697.0871

## Red Stag Productions Video & DVD Services

Contact Bob Potrykus: 720.261.0860

[bob@rstag.com](mailto:bob@rstag.com)

[www.redstagproductions.com](http://www.redstagproductions.com)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| June 27   | IMHS Dog Walk at Meyer Ranch                        |
| July 8    | Summer Lecture, Beaver Ranch, 7 pm                  |
| July 19   | Old Timers' Picnic, Pleasant Park School, 12 - 4 pm |
| August 12 | Summer Lecture, Beaver Ranch, 7 pm                  |