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CHSM

Conifer Historical Society and Museum

Local Myths

by the students of Conifer Middle School

This edition of the CHSM newsletter is dedicated to Conifer Myths as written by Mr. Frank Reetz's 7th grade English students. Each student interviewed a community member about a local myth. There is not room to reprint all the essays in their entirety, so only a few sentences of each will be printed here, followed by the author's name.

What Once Was

Everyone knows that Colorado has had a history of Native American people. The Apache, Kiowa, Cheyenne, and the Ute are just some of the many that once inhabited this great land.

Jesse McKean had one such story, which he shared enthusiastically with me and my teammates. He told of a people that lived in a place much like Conifer, but instead of living *on* the land, the people lived *with* the land, a concept which has been ignored, even laughed at in today's modern society. The people were peaceful, there was no war, and they knew only the smell of

the pine and the beating of a heart. They were broken into 4 tribes, the North Tribe, the South Tribe, the East Tribe and the West Tribe. One day, as is tradition, the leaders of the tribes went to the top of a great mountain for four days to pray for their people. While praying, on each of the four days, each of the leaders received an omen, telling of strange people that were coming. They would steal their land, tear open the earth, and kill everything.

Now here's where the good ol' people from the east come in, diggin' up gold and havin' a jolly good time, as the Native Americans, who did nothing wrong, were dying.

"It really upsets me that we did what we did to those people, they did nothing wrong," says Jesse. "I wish we could go back and change what we did." [Jake Carter]

Every year the cardinal Direction tribes' leaders head to a tall mountain, this mountain is very tall, taller than the rest of the surrounding mountains and strangely, stranger than any thing else this Mountain is in the exact middle of this old beautiful place of nature and peace. The great leaders would sit on this mystical mountain and chant, a chant that brought rain

across the lands replenishing the plants and people of the land, when this huge rain cloud rests directly over the tallest mountain, lightning flashes and strikes each great leader with lightning and thus turns them to stone. [Will Dale]

Today very few such as Jesse McKean know this tale. Even fewer know that all that remains of this tale is a lone feather. Nothing else can be found to this day so many say that it is just a myth. Jesse McKean owns a bookstore in Conifer Colorado and is leading a happy life. [Reed Helle]

The Chimneys

He was standing in line with his father. The year was 1933. They were waiting there for a small portion of food. The great Depression was to blame for this. The young boy moved to Conifer thirty-eight years later. His name...Mr. Dick Burrows. Among many other interesting stories in his life, this is the one he told us. Mr. Burrows and his wife and kids moved to Conifer in 1971. As he was moving in he noticed a few chimneys on his property. He was exploring the chimneys with his two sons, when they found a

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large bump under the snow. [Cody Miller]

“I walked closer to them and noticed a large mound of dirt close to one of the chimneys. Now I was really curious. I ran over to the mound and started moving the dirt away. When it was all removed there was a little hatch. I opened it and looked inside, it seemed to be completely empty. I thought it might be a septic tank that the previous owner covered up. [Matthew Lein]

“That’s what started this whole commotion.” Mr. Dick Burrows said blinking slowly. His hands were callused like a rock but his skin was soft like a sheep. He looked around checking to make sure all eyes were on him and he continued.

The historian came out a day later and looked at these massive chimneys, and said, “No one just builds chimneys for no reason there has to be a purpose.” Puzzled the historian sat down and thought. He stood and strolled around thinking and then he tripped. Seems to be unimportant, does it not, but this small little incident unlocked the mysteries. The historian stood up and wiped the snow from where he had tripped, and what he had found was unbelievable.

What he had tripped on was no rock but an old septic tank built during the great depression. He immediately said “These chimneys were part of a house; the house must have perished in some sort of fire or catastrophe.” He walked to his car without saying a word and drove off. [Connor Lipke]

After backtracking a bit, Mr. Burrows discovered a new path. This time he approached more cautiously. Neighbors and other locals said that a wealthy family in Denver felt pity, during the depression, for those who had lost things. So they hired victims of the depression and, maybe, had the victims work for them in two houses. They may have been working as loggers, for all the surrounding trees are about 70 years old. The two cement rooms may have been waste water tanks or septic tanks.

Even with these footsteps in the right direction, the truth is still on the run. This may be the most promising story, however, there are still plenty of unanswered questions. One is: why did they leave and cover their footsteps? Or, why did they leave the chimneys standing? [Unknown author]

Creativity

Eric West walked into the room with a pleasant smile on his face. The first thing that grabbed my attention was the bag he was carry-

ing. I noticed two things sticking out the top of the bag, what appeared to be the head of a wooden caterpillar, and the next of a banjo/guitar. I pondered about how interesting this interview would be he started his tale of creativity.

Mr. West enjoys carving and creating masterpieces. He carved a magnificent castle out of an old tree that had snapped. And remember that bag he had? Well inside of it was a *panjo*. No not a banjo, a panjo. The panjo is made out of a pan, an old floorboard, and some old guitar strings. He travels to elementary schools all around Colorado sharing his panjo music. He also uses wooden puppets in his show. He must put on a pretty awesome show. [Justin Ford]

In the 19th century the banjo was made by enslaved Africans. Little did they know it would be perfected by a man named Eric West and called the panjo. An eco-friendly change to the banjo the panjo is made of an old frying pan our old guitar strings and tuning pegs and an old floorboard as the neck. “A definite improvement over the banjo,” says 12 yr. old Justin Ford. “Better than the average banjo.”

Eric West is a long time Conifer resident, long time as in 55 years since he was born in 1955. Being behind a desk has never even

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run through Eric's head. He loves nature. His hobbies include things like wood carving, making music and making musical instruments. My favorite of his inventions is the panjo. Conifer is his favorite place and he would never live anywhere else. [Grant Martin]

The Show and Blow

In the year 2007, Katie Dix started with handkerchiefs. She started researching, collecting, and getting interested in them. There is and was a whole history about handkerchiefs and she wasn't going to let them be forgotten.

Many years ago, mothers had anywhere between 6 and 12 children. They all needed something to blow their nose in, but the mother already had so much laundry. The idea of even one more load of handkerchiefs a day was exhausting. So, they decided their kids would be given a rag to wipe things up with, and blow their nose in and it would be called a "blow." And a handkerchief to "show" called a "show." Their show and blows were only to be washed every so often, but not nearly everyday. And mothers would always scream to their children before they ran out the door for school, "Make sure you have your "show" and "blow." [Maria Jacobs]

The Ghosts in Conifer

In old-time Conifer, a house was torn down to build a restaurant. That restaurant's name was The Hi-Lander. But was there a ghost living in the house who was disturbed? Was The Hi-Lander haunted? Workers there found pots and pans moved around every morning,

and no one knew who did it. But the ghost did no harm, just tricked the workers. The workers liked the ghost even if it could be annoying. [Matthew Burroughs]

The Myth of Yvonne Ludwig

Yvonne Ludwig has a very emotional attachment to ghosts.... Her grandfather was a horse jockey who loved his sport and his family. When her grandfather died, he decided to linger.... Her grandfather, as a ghost, would protect and support [the family].... Her grandfather is not the only ghost with a connection to her family. For instance, her uncle had an intense connection with the supposed angel of death. In this connection, her uncle found terror and uncertainty. The following day after he'd seen the angel of death, a close neighbor or relative would die. [Quinn LaBarge]

School of 1933 Conifer

In the year of 1933, there was nine feet of snow in a single snow storm. In April, everyone was just minding their own business when all of a sudden a snow storm just swept in and blocked the path to anywhere. First, it was a couple inches, and then it was about two feet. Overnight it snowed nine feet. Imagine trying to shovel that off your porch! [Andrew Norman]

Norm Meyer

Back in the year 1889 when only the cows covered the vast expanses of Central Colorado, you might pass the many 1000 acre ranches that would soon be home to a young boy and his family. At the same time, a house was being built in our part of Colorado (Conifer). The builder tacked up a single board under the stairs that would

stay there for over 60 years before someone actually found it. This man was the young boy that was mentioned earlier who is now fully grown up (age 93) and his name is Norm Meyer. [Kyra Searcy]

In the year 1917 a great man named Norm Meyer was born in Trinidad, Colorado. Norm's legacy is mostly based around his passion and career flying airplanes. Norm went to the University of Colorado-Boulder (or CU) and got a degree in journalism. Soon after Norm left college that he already wanted a career change because he didn't want to work in an office. [Howie Ritter]

Norm didn't want to spend his life tethered to one place, like the sheep he had cared for as a child. Norm wanted to be a pilot. When WWII came along an opportunity presented itself, an opportunity to learn to be a pilot. So Norm learned to be a pilot. It was the best decision of his life! He loved being up in nature and learning to appreciate it. He started to work for Continental Airlines where he would stay working for 35 years. [Megan Freytag]

His house next to the runway has said to be haunted. Norm's children have said that they have heard ghost sounds coming from the stairs in the house. Many people believe that it's the ghost of Kirkpatrick. The phone often used to ring too, until the family found out that it was actually caused by two men who were flying a plane and ran into the telephone lines while trying to land on his runway. [Juliana Hastings]

Whenever Mr. Meyer was asked about flying, an incredibly large grin sprouted on his face and

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A Museum for Conifer?

The owners of the Meyer house have agreed to a feasibility study that will include an architectural assessment of the historic home and a determination of the site's viability for public use as a museum.

A grant from the State Historical Fund will require a match of \$7,500 from the community.

Will you help us meet this financial goal this summer?

Write your tax deductible check to **CHSM** and mail it to: **Box 295, Conifer, CO 80433**

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jogged from one cheek bone to the other. His furry eyebrows would rise (because he was so eager to share his tale), and he would shift in his chair. [Maja Lynn Sagasser]

Around 50 years ago there was a rather unfortunate accident on the airstrip at Meyer Ranch. Norm Meyer flew airplanes and owned his own private airstrip. One day, two men were coming up from in their small airplane for a weekend and needed a quick stop for gas....

By the time the airplane had finished refueling, the wind had picked up and turned the field from just a field, into a waving ocean of golden blades of grass. Though already things were going bad enough as the two unknown flyers were taking off.... [T]here was a telephone wire directly ahead of

them. Somehow the smaller bush plane managed to rip straight through the wires and make telephones go off all over inside the Meyer's house. [Bjorn Bingham]

One Chicken 4 Drumsticks

Well the four legged chicken was really popular for about six months, but then it started to hit the maturing age of chickens. Mrs. [Betty] Long's brother was afraid that the chicken wouldn't make it, so he decided that the world should still be able to see a flying chicken, and he stuffed it! Then everyone who had came to see the amazing four legged chicken, could still see it! Although it wasn't moving anymore, but everyone loved seeing it. [Olivia Galvin]

CHSM would like to thank Mr. Reetz for turning his students on to local history!

The Mother's Day Tea and Quilt Show

random drawing winners

Zai Antweiler

Diane Hennesey

Janet Jordan

CHSM would like to thank **St. Laurence Episcopal Church** for the lovely venue for the Tea and Quilt Show

and

You, the Community, for your patronage at the Tea.

We hope you had a lovely time!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 17	Summer Lecture, Early history of Meyer Ranch
June 26	IMHS/CHSM Dog Walk at Meyer Ranch
July 14	Summer Lecture Series continues
August 15	Old Timers' Picnic, Pleasant Park School

Questions?
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