



Summer 2012 Vol. 6, Issue 2

CHSM

Conifer Historical Society and Museum

INSIDE:

Little White School

Page 1

Letter to the Community

Page 2

*** DID YOU KNOW ***

Conifer's first school classes were held in a shack at Conifer Junction in 1879. In 1885, a school building was constructed 1/2 mile south of Bradford Junction, near where the entrance to the high school is located today.

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

Call us at 720.333.0223

Little White School

by Carla Mink



photographer unknown

Long time Conifer area teacher Phebe Granzella stands in front of the Little White School in this undated photo.

Eighty-nine years ago, the new Conifer Junction School opened its doors to a handful of students ranging from first through eighth grades. The one room school filled the need for education, in a simpler time when life was hard and schools were few and far between. For the better part of the years since then, the little school has continued to serve this community well.

Conifer Needed a School

The need for a school in Conifer was of a great concern in the early 1900s. The outlying one-room school houses, like the Pleasant Park and Medlen School, no longer served the purpose as, "the taxpayers of the Conifer school district were in dire need of a new school and it should be

School continued on page 3

A Letter to the Community

by Janet Shown, CHSM President

History In The Making

We're delighted to announce that the Conifer Historical Society and Museum is in negotiations with the Jefferson County School District to acquire the Conifer Junction School.

Known to local residents as the Little White School House, the iconic building was constructed by community members in 1923 near the historic Bradford Junction at the intersection of Barkley Road and County Road 73.

The Jefferson County Board of Education recently voted to surplus the property, making it available for community use. The Jeffco Preschool which has operated for many years at the school will be moved to West Jeff Elementary School.

The historical society plans to open the school for tours, events and a public museum before the end of 2012.

A feasibility study remains in progress to determine the viability of using the Norman Meyer home as a public museum.

No one is better qualified to describe the history and use of the school than Carla Mink, who worked for 27 years at the Little White School House. We invite you to read her article in this newsletter.



We Need You

Helping hands are welcome! The making of a museum is an immense task – even when the building has been kept as well this one over the years.

If you're interested in local history and want to help, if you're good at organization, construction and/or restoration, financial management,

strategic planning, administrative work, or if you can just lend a hand in any of our clean-up, set-up and grounds maintenance tasks, we'd love to hear from you!

For further information about the LWS project,

- visit www.ConiferHistoricalSociety.org,
- follow our progress on **Facebook**,
- or email me at **President@ConiferHistorical-Society.org**.

And watch for our pre-opening and grand opening events in the coming months!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Shown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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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

more centrally located” (*Golden Transcript*, June 8, 1922).

The question of where the new school should be located was answered when in 1922, John J. Mullen, then owner of the Bradford Junction corner, donated one acre of land, 400 yards up the hill, for the building of a school.

Community members built the school and it opened on the morning of February 12, 1923.

In those early years of the new school, water was hauled from the ‘Civil War Well’ located at Bradford Junction and heat was provided by the burning of logs that the students were required to bring to school each day.

Articles written in the *Golden Transcript* newspaper when the little school opened describe a community hungry for education and grateful for their ‘state of the art’ schoolhouse. One article from April 12, 1923, reports a visit from Mrs. Evangeline Cummings, county superintendent of school District No. 9 and Miss Ridley, county nurse for schools as “truly inspiring and inciting toward better things for the future of the district, which is awake, and alert for progress.”

The building was improved during the early years when the lower level, previously used to stable the horses, was closed in and a potbelly stove was added to provide heat. To further modernize the little school, a pot of soup was placed on the potbelly stove as the little school boasted of having a hot lunch program for the students. A barn was built behind the school to house the horses that students and teachers rode to school. New out-houses, one for the boys and one for the girls, were placed adjacent to the barn.



photo by Jean Lambert

Phebe Granzella holds her self-published history of local schools in the Conifer area.

Literally thousands of mountain area children received an education at this school. For some of the early students, this school was the only school they ever attended. In order to continue past the 8th grade, they had to pay tuition and provide their own transportation to the secondary school in Evergreen, and it just wasn’t possible for many of them to continue.

Many teachers came and went from the one room schoolhouse as teaching opportunities became available at larger schools. One well known teacher was Phebe Granzella, who taught there from 1928-1930, and again from 1953-1955, when the new West Jefferson Elementary School opened (farther up Barkley Road) in the spring of 1955.

The following is an account of teaching at the school by Phebe

Granzella taken from her 1993 self-published booklet entitled *A Century of Jefferson County Mountain Area Schools*:

This was my first school, in the fall of 1928. I was not quite twenty years old and had but one year of college at Greeley, which gave me what was called a third class teaching certificate. At first I had nine pupils who were soon joined by five more. I did the janitor work and built the wood or coal fire each morning in a basement furnace. On cold days, until the room warmed up, I would have the pupils, with coats on, move their desks into a square around the register in the middle of the room. I brought drinking water from home in a milk can and poured it into a water crock with a spigot at the bottom. Most the children had their own cups, which were considerably more sanitary than the communal dipper used for so many years.

From my parents’ home about one mile east of Meyer Ranch I walked, rode a horse or buggy or drove a Model T Ford coupe the three miles to school. I parked the Model T Ford on the north side of the school. One day I saw a strange white head peering through an

open window on that wall. I said, "What is that?" A pupil, Gus, said, "That's my goat." He had jumped onto the back of my Model T to reach the window. I had Gus bring him inside, whereupon the goat immediately leaped onto my desk and school was a bit more entertaining than usual for an hour or two, until I dispatched Gus to take his livestock to his home nearby.

I taught the school years 1928-1929 and 1929-1930 in the new Junction School, which was later known as Conifer Junction School, then finally as Conifer School. My tenure ended when I married, but I returned years later.

The Conifer School remained a one teacher establishment until 1953 during my second stint at Conifer, when Pauline Griffith joined me. There were just too many children for one teacher with six grades and the 7th and 8th grades had already been transferred to Evergreen. Pauline and I held all our classes in the one room. It was advised that a curtain be put up to divide our classes but we thought it best to see rather than just hear. Classes were moved to the new West Jefferson Elementary School when it opened in the spring of 1955.

The opening of the elementary school did not mean the one-room school was now abandoned. In fact, the school did not sit empty for long as the growing community filled the new West Jeff Elementary to capacity with students, resulting in the Little White School taking the overflow students.

Library

For a few years during the 1960s through the early 1980s the little school doubled as the Conifer Library. That program was discontinued when it was decided that the Public Library would be located at the new Conifer High School. Until Conifer



This drawing of the Little White School was done by Conifer resident Alan Frazier in 1984. It appears in Phebe Granzella's book about area schools.

High was built, a weekly Book-Mobile parked in the current Staples Center parking lot served as Conifer's Library.

Preschool Program

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Jefferson County Public Schools began opening preschool programs in their older and vacated school buildings. These preschool programs were optional and tuition-supported. It is not clear when this program moved in at the Little White Schoolhouse, but other than a couple of years when preschool would be 'bumped' from the building for overflow classrooms –

the Little White School was the home of the West Jeff Preschool Program. For the past 30-plus years the Jefferson County Preschool Program at the Little White Schoolhouse has served approximately 100 children and families per year.

Nearly ninety years of educational service ended in the spring of 2012, when the Jefferson County School Board decided to close the doors of Little White School. On June 7, 2012, the school board voted unanimously to surplus the school.

Portions of this article first appeared in the Mountain Connection in the spring of 2011.



photo contributed by Sharon Minick

Pauline Griffiths taught in the Little White School for many years.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Call us for reservations: 720.333.0223

August 12
September 16

Ice Cream Social at the Little White School, 1 pm
Colorado in the Civil War, Little White School, 1 pm