



# THE QUILL

CHERRY CREEK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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## Our Previous Meeting

On April 24th Gordon Tucker gave us an outstanding presentation on the history and archeology of the Mile Houses along Cherry Creek from Parker to Denver. Dr. Tucker is one of the foremost archeologists in the region, and it was instructive to hear him discuss the archeological aspects of most of these stations along the Smoky Hill/Cherokee Trails. CCVHS has partnered with the Piney Creek chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution to locate the site of the original 12 Mile House, and Gordon Tucker's timely information will help us in this regard. In a future Quill we hope to present to you our findings and expand on Dr. Tucker's research.

Also at this meeting multimedia specialist Kirsten Canfield gave us a glimpse of what can be done at local libraries to preserve old audiovisual media (see her article later in this Quill).

## OUR NEXT FIELD TRIP: Friday, August 19 The Watt Wagon Museum

On Friday August 19th we'll join the Larkspur Historical Society on a field trip to an outstanding wagon museum in Elbert County. It's at the ranch of Tom Watt, and we'll carpool from Franktown (described below). Tom has collected over 50 old wagons which were used in the late 1800s and early 1900s (real items, no replicas). These include stagecoaches, a cowboy chuck wagon, several carriages and surreys, many heavy- and medium-duty utility wagons, two hearses, milk and oil-delivery wagons, a few wintertime sleighs, and other horse-drawn vehicles (including carriages once used by Teddy Roosevelt and William Jackson Palmer).

On August 19th we'll meet at the Franktown post office at 9:00am; at 9:10am we'll carpool to the Watt ranch (about 40 minutes from Franktown). The Watt address is 23480 County Road 61, Elbert 80106. We will give Tom an honorarium of \$5 each; guests are welcome. Maybe lunch in Elizabeth afterward?

Also we would like to revisit two museums we visited two years ago:

- The Telephone History Museum at 931 14th Street in Downtown Denver
- The Adams County Museum in Henderson (near Brighton)

We don't have dates/times for these trips yet because at this point we just need to know how many of you would like to go. Please call or email Garry if you're interested in going on any of these trips by August 15th (303-751-3140 or gohara46@aol.com).

## **Melvin School News by Nita McKnight**

We have taken a few weeks off from our weekly workday at the school. But, thanks especially to Gary and Sherrie Wolf, a few things have continued to happen. Gary designed and constructed a lovely table for the large dictionary. We will anticipate leaving that in the classroom. He also designed and created an addition to the map rack that will keep the maps upright and accessible. Both additions are so needed and so appreciated. Thank you, Gary. Sherrie has continued to reorganize and reshelve books in the Crowle Library. Thank you, Sherrie. We have some books that have been purged from the shelves and are

available for the taking. (They are not for sale. But, we will appreciate a donation. You may take as many as you want). We anticipate getting back together, finishing the reorganization of the maps and library and a new glass display case. Then, we'll look forward to having monthly open houses again. Thank-you to everyone who has spent time and energy on this reorganization! Editor's note: Unfortunately the photos of Gary with the items he built didn't turn out. We'll include them in the next Quill when my camera skills hopefully have improved.

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## **17 Mile House News by Karen Sear**

We sincerely thank the Ghost Town Club of Colorado, Inc. for awarding us \$750 to help buy window shades for 17 Mile House. These shades have been needed for some time to block out sun glare at the house and to keep artifacts from deteriorating. We especially thank Shirley Miller for nominating us to the preservation committee of the Ghost Town Club for this award.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the school and adult group visits this summer. We hosted 6 groups with a total of 300 people who came to the 17 Mile House for tours and history lessons! The volunteers had some rest and relaxation time on June 10th to see friends, and talk with Arapahoe County representatives Bill Bauer, Glen Poole, and Nira Duvan, and the Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners director Casey Davenport. The group also welcomed Arapahoe County Commissioner Nancy Jackson who joined them for the conversation and a wonderful picnic lunch! New displays with the Cherry Creek Grange #58, Cummings family dishes, and fiber arts/needlework (thank you, Sara Greer!) have

been added in the house. And we greatly appreciate all the volunteers who helped with cleaning to prepare the house for the annual Arapahoe County Shareback Ceremony. Future volunteer events include the monthly open houses, an information table at the Arapahoe County Fair on July 29 and 31, and the annual 17 Mile House Fall Festival on October 15th. We hope you can volunteer or visit 17 Mile House that Saturday! Please contact Karen Sear at (303) 514-2094 or [seark@msn.com](mailto:seark@msn.com) for more information.

We also want to express our gratitude to Vonnie C'deBaca for her many hours of tending the flowers and cherry trees at 17 Mile House. Ruth Dolan donated the cherry trees, and Vonnie has made countless trips to and from the water tank to keep these trees in good shape. Thanks, Vonnie, and thanks to all of you who volunteered to make our July 16 open house a success (we had about 40 visitors!). Carol Epps, you deserve special recognition for your hours at the open house (in the hot sun!) weeding the garden in front of the house. [Back to Contents](#)

## FAREWELL TO TWO ORIGINAL MELVIN-AREA RESIDENTS

### Gunhild Dransfeldt 1918-2016

Gunhild Dransfeldt died on May 28 at the age of 97 (or, as she reminded everyone, "97 and a half!"). She was a charter member and lifetime member of CCVHS, and she was one of the longest continuous residents of the Cherry Creek Valley. In her earlier years she lived in many of the houses along Cherry Creek, including 17 Mile House and 20 Mile House.

Gunhild Kragelund was only five years old when she came with her family to Colorado from Denmark. She graduated from Parker High School in 1936 and four years later married Fred Dransfeldt. Their farm was near the old town of Melvin, which is now part of Cherry Creek State Park. (Fred's father Hans donated the land for the original site of Melvin School in 1922. ) When Melvin was condemned for the construction of Cherry Creek dam, they moved to a dairy farm in Parker. All this time Gunhild volunteered at the Grange agricultural organization, local historical societies, the Parker Garden Club, Parker volunteer fire department, and other civic associations. In 1978 the Dransfeldts were instrumental in forming a Bank of the West in Parker. When Fred died in 1993 Gunhild bought a house in the Chenango subdivision. She immersed herself in volunteer efforts for such organizations as the Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce, Parker Chamber of Commerce, and Parker Women's Leads Club. Her name was especially associ-

ated with the Grange; at one point she became Master of the Cherry Creek Grange 58, one of the oldest in Colorado. For ten years she and her daughter JoAnn operated the Glitzy Glitz Girls boutique, a women's clothing store. ("Josie" is also a lifetime CCVHS member and a former student at Melvin School.) Gunhild was once named grand marshal of the Parker festival parade. She also was able to visit her birthplace in Denmark and her namesake village of Dransfeldt in Germany. Dransfeldt Road in Parker was named for her family.

### David Rowland 1922-2016

Longtime CCVHS member David Rowland died on June 12 at his home in Flower Mound, Texas. He was a former student at Melvin School and attended the school's 80th anniversary celebration in 2002. At that time he presented the Society with a Bible that he carried with him as a C-46 cargo pilot in World War II. (He spent much of the war flying over "the hump" - the Himalaya Mountains.) He graduated from the Colorado School of Mines with a degree in petroleum engineering and received his doctorate in this field from Stanford University in 1969. He was a professor of control engineering at the University of Texas. When he worked as an engineer in Japan in the 1970s he met his future wife Kazuko, who supplied us with this information about her husband. The Rowlands had two daughters and two sons.

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## Notecards and Books Available at 17 Mile House

CCVHS Secretary Vonnie C'deBaca makes beautiful notecards that are on sale at the 17 Mile House for \$2 each (a bargain!). These handmade cards show photograph collages of 17 Mile House in different seasons of the year. Also on-sale there are Vonnie's paintings of the historic house and barn; these sell for \$50 to \$100 depending on size. One half of all profits goes toward purchases for the 17 Mile House. Call Vonnie at 303-7664457.

Also for sale at 17 Mile House are Ruth Dolan's entertaining Tales from the 17 Mile House with Prairie Chicken (\$10) and her newer book Prairie Chicken and the Chicks (\$12). And Lee Whiteley's The Cherokee Trail, the most authoritative book on the subject, is also on sale at the house for \$10. Contact Garry at 303-751-3140 or gohara46@aol.com. [Back to Contents](#)



Vonnie C'deBaca and Ruth Race Dolan

## A Little July History (with a Colorado Connection)

On July 2, 1881 newly elected President James A. Garfield arrived at a train station in Washington DC to travel to Massachusetts to give a speech. Like most presidents at that time, he had no bodyguards; he was only accompanied by Secretary of State James G. Blaine. As the two men were walking through the station, a mentally deranged man named Charles Guiteau approached them from behind and fired two bullets at the president. The first bullet grazed Garfield's arm, but the second went through his body and lodged in his lower abdomen. Guiteau was quickly arrested, but Garfield was sprawled out on the floor in great pain. According to historian Feather Schwarz Foster, it was then that the "comedy of medical ineptitude started."

Several physicians immediately came to the president's aid and tried to locate and remove the bullet, which had missed all arteries and come to rest next to the pancreas (where it likely should have stayed). Author-historian Evan Andrews writes, "It was a survivable injury, but the army of well-meaning physicians only worsened the damage by using their unsterilized fingers and instruments to probe the wound."

Garfield was eventually taken to a bedroom in the White House, where he languished for 73 days. All the time his physicians kept probing the wound on a path to the right, ignorant of the fact that the bullet had followed a leftward course into the president's body. Feather Foster writes, "[A]ll the probing achieved was to forge a false channel in the President's abdominal cavity where it would become a sinkhole of infection." The doctors gave the president large doses of morphine and quinine, which caused vomiting and the inability to ingest solid food. The primary physician was Willard Bliss, who simply "took charge" and alienated everyone with his autocratic behavior. But the president's doctors soon became national "laughing stocks," and the term "ignorance is Bliss" began to be heard around the country. Journalists continually harassed the president's secretary for any news of his condition. Foster relates, "Occasionally the country would be treated to a special bulletin regarding Garfield's bowel movements."

Garfield eventually developed abscesses all over his weakened and fevered body. He died on September 14, 1881 after having served as president for just four months;

he was only 49 years old. Author Rick Beyer writes, "Together the sixteen doctors who poked and prodded Garfield turned a three-inch hole into a twenty-inch infected canal... Garfield would have survived ... if only they'd left him alone."

Guiteau admitted the shooting but claimed it was "God's will." However, he was essentially correct when he claimed at the trial, "I only shot at the President. The doctors killed him." His lawyer entered a plea of "not guilty by reason of insanity," one of the first major uses of this defense. But the jury was unmoved, and Guiteau was hung in June 1882.

There's a Colorado connection to this story. Vice-president Chester Alan Arthur became president upon Garfield's death. When his Secretary of the Interior resigned, President Arthur chose Colorado Senator Henry Teller to be his new Secretary of the Interior (the first cabinet member to come from a western state). Wanting Colorado to have a second U.S. senator even though there were only 36 days left in Teller's senatorial term, the Colorado legislature made an interim appointment of Lieutenant Governor Horace Tabor to serve out Teller's term. So Horace Tabor, the wealthiest man in Colorado, became a U.S. senator for about a month. Tabor was selected even though he was at the center of a national scandal, for in 1882 he secretly (and illegally) divorced his first wife Augusta and married his paramour, the young and beautiful Elizabeth "Baby" Doe. After a legal divorce was later obtained, Horace and Baby Doe were married a second time (this time legally) on March 1, 1883, just two days before his senatorial appointment ended. The wedding was an extravagant affair that was attended by President Arthur, other congressmen, and the Washington elite. (However many of their wives considered the whole affair too scandalous and did not attend.)

If it weren't for the assassination of President James Garfield, Henry Teller wouldn't have become a cabinet member and Horace Tabor wouldn't have become a senator.

Used in this article were Feather Schwarz Foster's 2014 *President Garfield's Doctors: A Tragi-Comedy (Part I)*; Evan Andrews' 2016 *History in the Headlines: The Assassination of James A. Garfield*; and Rick Beyer's 2003 *The Greatest Stories Never Told*. [Back to Contents](#)

## Digitizing Services at the Smoky Hill and Southglenn Libraries by Kirsten Canfield

Did you know that you can digitize your VHS tapes, audio cassette tapes, vinyl records, photos, negatives, 35mm slides, and other media at the Arapahoe Library District's Smoky Hill Library and Southglenn Library, completely free of charge? The most effective method of preserving old media is to make high-quality copies. Digital copies can be duplicated and disseminated easily, reduce the amount of handling the original artifacts undergo, and help ensure that a copy will survive in case disaster strikes.

Visit the Studio, a well-equipped room at both libraries devoted to creative endeavors, to use all of our media conversion equipment. You can convert your VHS tapes to digital format, which you can then save to a flash drive or burn to a DVD (home videos work best; copyright-protected films such as those produced by Disney cannot be converted). You can also convert audio cassette tapes and vinyl records to MP3 format, and then burn them

to a CD if you wish. If you have old photographs, negatives, slides (including 35mm and glass slides), or other historic documents, come to the Studio to learn how to make high-resolution digital scans of them. Then, learn how to retouch those scans by removing dust, creases, and cracks in Photoshop. Technology Specialists are often available to help you use the conversion equipment, or you can book an appointment with a librarian here: <http://arapahoelibraries.org/book-a-librarian>.

Kirsten Canfield, a Multimedia Librarian who spoke at the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society meeting in April, is delighted to teach people how to digitize their old media. She's also happy to help with the identification, care, and storage of old photos and other media. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, email Kirsten at [kcanfield@arapahoelibraries.org](mailto:kcanfield@arapahoelibraries.org). (The Arapahoe Library District can be reached at 303-792-8999.)

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### News of Other Historical Societies

On Saturday August 27 the Parker Area Historical Society (PAHS) is joining with the Town of Parker and Douglas County Libraries to sponsor the 5th annual Parker Quest. This free event is a family-oriented scavenger hunt in downtown Parker in which people can have fun while learning about the town's history. The event starts at 9:00am at the Parker Heritage Center (19650 E. Mainstreet, Parker 80138) where participants will receive a passport with clues. There are ten stops on the Quest with hands-on activities between stops. Participants should register in advance by calling 303-791-7323 or visiting [douglascountylibraries.org](http://douglascountylibraries.org). Those interested in volunteering at the Parker Quest can contact PAHS by going to the "Contact Us" page of the [parkerhistory.org](http://parkerhistory.org) website.

On Saturdays August 20 and September 17 (10:00am to

2:00pm) the Larkspur Historical Society (LHS) will hold open houses at the historic Greenland School at 1524 E. Noe Road. This one-room school is part of the historic Greenland townsite (south of the town of Larkspur) that LHS is in the process of restoring. Step back in time to meet "teacher" Bob Easterly and other former students of this beautifully restored schoolhouse.

Author and historian John W. Anderson will hold a program and book-signing on Ute prayer trees on Sunday July 31st (1:30-3:00pm) at the Perry Park Country Club, 7047 Perry Park Blvd., Larkspur 80118. Mr. Anderson's new book is *Ute Indian Prayer Trees of the Pikes Peak Region*. A \$10 donation is requested. Contact him at 719-651-2337 or [JWAnderson.com](http://JWAnderson.com). [Back to Contents](#)

## Happenings at the Aurora History Museum

The Aurora History Museum is hosting two open houses in August:

**August 13** at DeLaney Farm, 170 S. Chambers Rd. (noon to 3:00pm). Experience Aurora's agricultural roots and explore the Gully homestead and the round barn.

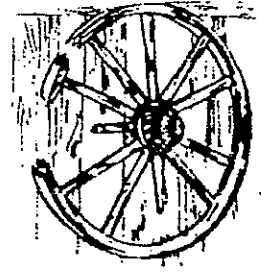
**August 14** at Centennial House, 1671 Galena St. (noon to 3:00pm): Visit this 1890 house in the original part of Aurora (then called Fletcher).

Until September 11 the museum is displaying "A Mosaic of Cultures: Aurora's Ethiopian Communities." Aurora is home to a vibrant Ethiopian community; come celebrate the heritage and contributions of the city's residents of this culture. Learn more on July 30 and August 27 when

the museum hosts Ethiopian coffee ceremonies; drop in anytime from 11:30am to 1:00pm.

Through September 16 the museum is showing "Herblock: Highlights from a Political Cartoon Master." This is a display of 25 prints from the Library of Congress' collection of works by renowned political cartoonist Herbert L. Block.

The Aurora History Museum is located at 15051 E. Alameda Pkwy., Aurora 80012. It is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9:00am to 4:00pm and Saturdays-Sundays 11:00am to 4:00pm (closed Mondays). Call 303-739-6660 or visit [auroramuseum.org](http://auroramuseum.org). Admission is always free. [Back to Contents](#)



*Address Correction Requested*

Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society  
16100 East Smoky Hill Road  
Aurora, Colorado 80015

## A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE MELVIN SCHOOL

1922 - The Melvin School was built in the NW1/4 of Section 13, T5S, R67W, Arapahoe County, Colorado on land donated by Hans Dransfeldt. The DeBoer brothers built the school for \$4,450. The original site was at the junction of Belleview Avenue and the old Sullivan Road (now Jordan Road) in Cherry Creek State Park. The school opened in September of 1922.

1949 - Families in the community of Melvin received condemnation papers telling them to move from the area in preparation for the building of the dam. The school was included in this area, and it closed its doors in June of 1949. The building was sold to J. Edwin Stout for \$1,500. He sold it to William Minshall who had it moved to the southwest corner of the intersection of Parker Road and Quincy Avenue (Section 12, T5S, R67W).

1953 - After extensive remodeling, the former schoolhouse opened as the Emerald Isle Tavern on Saint Patrick's Day. Glenn Barrier managed it as Glenn's Emerald Isle Tavern until 1970.

1975 - Five area residents who were interested in local history and in saving the old Melvin School incorporated and became the first Board of Directors of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, Inc. They persuaded Mr. Silverberg to donate the building to the Society in trade for their moving it elsewhere and leveling the site after the moving of the building. The Society's purpose was to restore the old Melvin School and to use it as a classroom-museum-library for the study and collection of local historical information.

1976 - Cherry Creek School District offered a site on the campus of Smoky Hill High School. It was moved on December 14, 1976.

1977-1981 - With the help of the community, the school district, and the historical society, the Melvin School was restored. The exterior was authentically restored as was one classroom. The second classroom, the one which originally had a stage, was adaptively restored into a museum and a library. A plaque which honors those who helped in the restoration has been engraved with the slogan: "Restored by the Community - For the Community."

1984 - The Melvin School was put on the National Register of Historic Places.

1988 - The City of Aurora honored the Melvin School as Aurora Historic Landmark #1.

*The Quill* is the quarterly newsletter of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society (CCVHS). The purposes of the Society are to study, record, preserve, and display the history of the Cherry Creek Valley and surrounding areas. Membership is open to anyone interested in this history. Quarterly general meetings are usually held at the Melvin Schoolhouse, 4950 S. Laredo St. (between Smoky Hill High School and Laredo Middle School) in Aurora, Colo. Correspondence concerning *The Quill* should be directed to Garry O'Hara, editor, at (303) 751-3140.

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### YOU CAN HELP MAKE HISTORY

*Collect the past*

*Preserve the present*

*Plan for the future*