



Guffy Roots

Part two - Current Creek

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Besides the post office at Truro, northeast of Guffey on West Fourmile Creek, there were two other small communities with a post office and small store on Currant Creek.

The town of Currant Creek was founded in 1868, and Kester was founded in 1871. Kester seemed to move up and down the creek depending on who was postmaster, but the town site, sometimes called Hammond, seemed to be centered at Benders or Hammonds near the pass.

Freshwater-Idaville-Guffey soon became the supply center for the area after a little gold was found in Spring Creek in Freshwater Gulch by Scott Philas in 1892. The town was platted in 1896.

Early settlers along Currant Creek in the late 1860s and 1870s included the Benders, Hammonds and Beerys near Currant Creek Pass, William Bainbridge White, Job Kester Sweet, William Lloyd, Olaf and Charles Davis, John T. Whistler, Sikka A. Scott, Pete Allstrum and Benjamin Reuben Dell.

Johannes "John" Bender was one of the first landowners along Currant Creek and a big part of the cattle history in the area. The Bender Ranch is one of the oldest ranches in Park County and has been in continuous operation up to the present day.

John Bender was born in Germany in 1837 and arrived in the United States in Wisconsin in 1842. Bender came to Colorado seeking gold in 1859, but settled on Currant Creek about 1871, after returning to Wisconsin to marry Annie Hammond in 1868.

Annie Hammond was born in England in 1844 and immigrated to the United States on the ship Marmion from Liverpool in 1849 with her father John and mother Hannah. Hannah was 27 years old at the time.

Hannah later settled near John and Annie on Currant Creek in 1871 or 1872, after her husband died, presumably in Wisconsin. Hannah has the first land patent in the area, 1881, with John Bender following in 1882.

John and Annie's third child, Elizabeth, was born in Kester in 1874.

With more and more friends and relatives arriving in the area, the Bender and Hammond homesteads stretched some two miles along Currant Creek, from the pass southeast along the old stage and wagon road toward Guffey.

In a 1978 family history, Annie's oldest grandchildren remembered Annie handling incoming and outgoing mail. Annie was a "very pretty small-framed woman that never walked, rather she

trotted.” John was tight with his money, and Hannah’s eyes were an unusual blue.

Harry Epperson says that John Bender had a habit of putting his hands in his pockets, a habit Annie tried to discourage. Epperson also noted that Hannah had rosebud cheeks, and everyone wanted to be Annie Bender’s cat. Also, the upper Currant Creek area was known for floods and pretty girls.

In 1895, at 75 years of age, Hannah is listed as the postmaster at the stage stop on the Bender Ranch. She passed away in 1897 and is buried in the Currant Creek Pioneer Cemetery, along with Annie who died in 1910, John who died in 1902 and several more relatives and friends.

Continuing down Currant Creek is the 1882 homestead of Captain William Bainbridge White, whose homestead included the CCPC. White was born in Pennsylvania in 1813, and he died in Canon City in 1899 at 86 years of age of stomach cancer. His son Henry Lewis also died of stomach cancer. White married Sabina B. Rowan, who was born in 1822 and died in Canon City of cerebral softening in 1901. Both are buried in the Greenwood Cemetery in Canon City along with other relatives.

White was well traveled, and even visited Australia in the 1850s, before arriving in California Gulch (Leadville) in 1861. The 1870 United States census shows White residing in Lake County, Colorado Territory. In 1873, his son William Delos White married Mary Jane McCandless, daughter of Florence is founding father James McCandless, in Leadville.

By 1877, at 64 years of age, White was running the freight office and post office at Kester. A January 13, 1881, article in The Flume mentions that Henry Lewis White, 30-year-old son of William B.

White, got a silver pocket watch from his mother Sabina at a Christmas party hosted by James B. Murford of Thirtyone Mile Creek.

In 1890, at 77 years old, White moved to Canon City where he lived next door to David Robinson, a wealthy Canon City pioneer. In 1891 White helped incorporate the Canon City and Cripple Creek Toll Road (Shelf Road), which ran north of Garden Park east of Canon City, up Fourmile and Wilson Creeks to Cripple Creek with a halfway house at Eldred.

White apparently made money in Leadville and Cripple Creek, but lost most of it through poor investments.

Benjamin Reuben (BR) Dell was born in Michigan in 1842 and married Mary G. Campbell there in 1861. Mary Campbell was born in Canada in 1843 of Scottish parents.

In 1873, BR was in Kansas where his fifth child, Calhoun Burris, was born. BR arrives in Canon City and the Guffey area about 1877. The 1880 U.S. census lists BR, 38 years old, living in Park County with an occupation of a farmer and freighter to Leadville. BR also bought a ranch on Currant Creek near Guffey, which also housed the Kester post office in 1880 and has an 1885 land patent on the creek.

An 1881 newspaper for-sale ad said that the Dell Ranch consisted of a mile on the creek, a 300-acre fenced pasture with good cattle range, 20 acres of potato ground and three springs. There was a seven-room hewn-log home and log stables.

In 1887, the town of Howbert, now under Elevenmile Reservoir, petitioned for and got a post office, and BR was the first postmaster. In fact, Howbert had been

called Dell's Camp previously, and Dell had the post office with his grocery store and a second-story hall in Howbert.

Since the Dells were all musical, and their son-in-law Bill Hammond was a square dance caller, the Dells often provided the entertainment for functions at the hall.

At this time the Dells resided on Currant Creek, where BR had a sawmill. A November 22, 1888, Flume article stated, "The family of BR Dell has lately moved into his handsome residence on Currant Creek. It is newly furbished throughout and is one of the most comfortable homes in the mountains."

In the 1900 U.S. census, BR was in Eldred, the halfway house on Shelf Road. The census says he was a sawmill manager and had been married for 38 years. In 1910, BR was in Cripple Creek, where he died in 1914 and was buried in the Mt. Pisgah cemetery. His beloved Mary died there of heart failure in 1915.

BR's obituary said he was in the sawmill business for 30 years and lived in the Guffey area for 40 years. He was survived by his wife and several children. Indeed, the Dells were one of Guffey's pioneer families, and descendants still live in the area; but that's another story.