

Fifth annual Shawnee History Day sees 125 celebrants

Change of venue draws crowd

Douglas Stephens, Correspondent



The Reynolds gang stole my \$1,000

Shawnee resident Don Cummings, as Father John Dyer, tells of losing \$1,000 in a stagecoach holdup by the Reynolds Gang. Cummings presented at the fifth annual Shawnee History Day on May 10. (Photo by Douglas Stephens/The Flume)

The fifth annual Shawnee History Day, Saturday, May 10, brought to the public three history authors, history presentations and music to the Platte Canyon Community Center in Shawnee.

Also featured were the Rocky Mountain Regional Pack String, headquartered in Shawnee, and a walking tour of the Shawnee Historic District.

In an email to The Flume after the event, Shawnee Historical Society President Barbara Jerome Behl thanked attendees and participants.

“Thank you for attending and special thanks for the vendors, members, and volunteers,” Behl said. “The music was great. The reinactors were fun and convincing.”

Local authors Bonnie E. Scudder, “The Secrets of Elk Creek;” Gary Ray Goodson Sr., “Slaghts/Granite Vale/Fairville/Shawnee, Colorado – Historical Sketches 1859 – 2013 Book V;” and Laura VanDusen, “Historic Tales from Park County – Parked in the Past,” signed their works for attendees.

Don Cummings, of Shawnee, portrayed Father John Dyer, the snowshoe itinerant, and Methodist preacher. Father Dyer’s life has been chronicled many times. However, one book, “Look For Me In Heaven – The Life of John Lewis Dyer” by Mark Fiester, was highlighted by Cummings as being available at the Bailey Country Store.

Cummings, who has presented as Father Dyer in Buena Vista and Pueblo among other places, had time for only a short telling of the life of Father Dyer.

One vignette presented by Cummings told of Father Dyer’s loss of \$1,000 that Father Dyer had stolen from a stagecoach. The stagecoach was robbed by the notorious Reynolds Gang. Dyer never recovered his funds.

For more on the life of Father John Dyer, portrayed by John Redmond at a Park

County Historical Society dinner presentation, please see the Oct. 24, 2013 Flume.

Arthur Hall, perhaps most famous for his inclusion in Pete Smythe's book, "Big City Dropout," a tale of the Smythe family's ownership of the Estabrook resort River Cliff, presented attendees with the history of the Platte Canyon Community Center in Shawnee.

Reached by phone after the event, Hall told The Flume, "The inspiration for the Platte Canyon Community Center came from the Bailey Women's Club. The club had no place to hold events. Also the fire department (Platte Canyon Fire Protection District) had no place to meet. This was in the 1940s.

"In July of 1948 construction started on the community center and it was dedicated on Dec. 21, 1948. The Bailey Women's Club raised money by holding bake sales and rummage sales," said Hall.

"Lumber was donated by George Overholt and Eric Eos. Both men had sawmills in the area. The building was assembled by volunteers," said Hall, who also worked on the building.

Music was provided by 56 Samsonite, Jerome Luke, Shawnee Band, Bradford Junction and Ridge Runners Square Dancing.

Glenn Ryan, lead packer, with the Rocky Mountain Regional Specialty Pack String, gave attendees a tour of the pack string barn and mule pens.

Ryan told of the mules' personalities including one named Skid that recently untied itself and followed Ryan as he worked on a trail. Ryan saw the mule's ears as the mule hid. When Ryan got back to the trailer Skid was standing in his spot like he had never left.

"That wasn't the first time Skid had done that," said Ryan.

Participants had the opportunity to purchase a walking tour brochure and enjoy the history of buildings in Shawnee at their leisure including the Shawnee Mountain Gallery, located in a 1904 Adirondack style house built as a summer home for a Denver family, and the Shawnee Tea Room.

For more information on the Shawnee National Historic District, or to join the Shawnee branch of the Park County Historical Society, please visit www.historicshawnee.com. For photos of early Shawnee including the construction in 1948 of the Platte Canyon Community Center in Shawnee, please visit www.parkcoarchives.org.