



Photos by Douglas Stevens



Shawnee History Day draws 45-plus to Shawnee

20 brave weather to tour the Rocky Mountain Regional Special Packstring headquarters in Shawnee

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Full House

Presenters speak to a full house at the Shawnee

Saturday, May 19, was cloudy with occasional showers, but the weather did nothing to dampen the spirits of more than 45 participants for Shawnee History Day.

Presentations were made at the Shawnee Tea Room, and Vince Tolpo, Shawnee resident and member of the Shawnee branch of the Park County Historical Society, served as master of ceremonies.

Shawnee branch President Barbara Jerome Behl, who owns the Tea Room business, was the hostess for the day. She and her husband, Larry Behl, were garbed in period costumes. Dressed as an early 1900s railroad man, he served as the engineer on the "Popcorn Express," delivering boxcar loads of popcorn to attendees.

Tolpo began the festivities by explaining Shawnee's history as a resort destination idea of pioneer J.W. Price and the Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad. Tolpo's current residence began in the late 1800s as the Shawnee Mercantile.

Tea Room on Shawnee History Day. (Photo by Douglas Stephens/The Flume)

Among the historic documents available to the attendees was the 1910 Shawnee census. Among the listings were the Price, Gibbs and Tyler families.

Tolpo then introduced the first presenter, Christie Wright. Wright is a local author and president of the Park County Local History Archives. (See the May 18, 2012, Flume for a description of the archives and their collections.)

Wright

Wright's presentation, titled "Crime in the Canyon," began with the Riceville switch. Riceville was a seven-car siding along a bend in the North Fork of the South Platte River between Shawnee and Cassells, and it was the site of a notorious Park County murder.

It was there that Oscar Stringham allegedly killed Oliver Callahan in the early 1900s while hiding behind bushes. Stringham was later acquitted even though he had confessed.

Wright also told of Charles Hepburn, who came in 1860 to Park County and homesteaded what is now Long Meadow Ranch. In 1898 he was assaulted in his barn by Messrs. Daniel Wetzel and William Paisley. When Hepburn's wife, Agnes, went to check on the barn, Wetzel and Paisley robbed the house for a total haul of \$1.45. The Hepburns had just paid their property taxes so they had minimal cash on hand. Wetzel took off for parts unknown but Paisley was caught and convicted at the court in Fairplay.

Charles Hepburn died of his injuries. Both Charles and Agnes Hepburn are buried in the White Cemetery at the foot of Kenosha pass.

Wright also talked about Charles Combs, a Grant saloon owner down the road from Shawnee. On May 29, 1903, he shot his wife "for nagging the customers," said Wright. Combs fled to Denver, where he was subsequently arrested. He was also convicted in the Fairplay court, and his Grant saloon building is no longer in existence.

In a previous presentation for the Park County Historical Society, Wright presented the story of the 1897 Draughn Feud. (See the Oct. 7, 2011, Flume.)

More stories about Park County mayhem are available at Wright's new website at www.southparkperils.com or in The Flume's 2012 Summer in the Park, Page 14.

Dusatko

The next presenter was Rhonda Dusatko, who purchased the Charlie Tyler homestead in 1975 and still owns it. Dusatko began the presentation by showing slides of the many Ute Indian chips, points and scrapers she has found on the homestead. The Utes camped there many times.

Charles Jefferson Tyler was born on Feb. 28, 1860, and was the youngest of six children. In 1890 Charles, Bill and Ben Tyler each homesteaded 160 acres in Slaghts. In order to "prove up" the homestead, Charles Tyler had to pay an \$18 filing fee. He then had seven years to improve the homestead. Two witnesses were also required to "prove up."

Charles Tyler finished the homestead with a three-room house, a 24-foot-by-24-foot barn, an irrigation ditch and fence line. He estimated the value of the improvements at \$600. Due to illness, he couldn't go to Fairplay within the time limit but was still able to "prove up" his claim and receive his homestead patent on Jan. 10, 1898.

Meanwhile Charles Tyler had fallen in love with Lizzie, J. W. Price's youngest daughter, and they became engaged. However, Lizzie died in 1891. Charles was so despondent over her death that he sold his homestead and patent to his brother Ben on Jan. 10, 1899, after holding the patent only one year.

Charles Tyler then moved to the Summit County town of Swandyke on the Blue River to prospect. There he met Zoella Lucy Coffin.

"Zoella was the daughter of Swandyke's hotelier and quite well to do," said Dusatko. Charles and Zoella were married on Oct. 14, 1899. They had two children, both girls. Twenty days after giving birth to the youngest girl, Ada, on March 24, 1902, Zoella died. She is buried in the Shawnee cemetery.

"After the burial, Zoella's mother ran after Charles pounding on his back and yelling, 'You killed my daughter, you killed her!'" said Dusatko.



Hazelwoods

Chuck and LuAnn Hazelwood enjoy Shawnee History Day. LuAnn Hazelwood's great-grandfather was Milton Gibbs. (Photo by Douglas Stephens/The Flume)

Charles Tyler was hit by a car in Fallon, Nev., in 1941 and died in October of that year. He is buried in Fallon. Dusatko concluded by saying: "I am not sure the injuries were what killed Charles; I think he died of a broken heart."

That ended the planned presentations. However, Tolpo then introduced attendees Chuck and LuAnn Hazelwood. LuAnn's great-grandfather was Milton Gibbs. Gibbs moved to Shawnee after the Civil War and became a logger.

During that war, he had been injured in the Bermuda Hundred Campaign.

"The Bermuda Hundred Campaign was a series of battles fought at the town of Bermuda Hundred, outside Richmond, Virginia, during May 1864 in the American Civil War. Union Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler, commanding, threatened Richmond from the east but was stopped by forces under Confederate Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard," according to Wikipedia.com.

Gibbs Gulch is named for Milton Gibbs.

"My great-grandfather is buried at Gibbs Gulch on U. S. Forest Service land," said LuAnn Hazelwood. "The site is open to the public and there is a marker there as well as the remnants of the Gibbs homestead." (Artifacts there are supposed to be left alone.)

Gibbs children went to school in the Shawnee schoolhouse, now in McGraw Memorial Park, Bailey.

At the conclusion of the Hazelwoods' presentation, the Shawnee Tea Room served a light lunch of tea, hot roast beef sandwich, chips and sherbet for dessert. After lunch, about half the attendees made their way to the Rocky Mountain Regional Special Packstring headquarters across U.S. 285 on the Albert Gould Ranch.

Glenn Ryan, U. S. Forest Service Lead Packer, led the tour. Ryan has more than 22 years of experience as a mule packer, with the last nine as lead packer at the Shawnee location. The Rocky Mountain Regional Special Packstring began in 1990 in Cody, Wyo.

In 1977, 1,000 acres of the AG (Albert Gould) Ranch were purchased for \$1 million. The lodge house was existing (built in 1932) as is a historic barn. The new barn was built by Job Corps.

"Albert Gould lived where Vince and Carolyn Tolpo live today," said Ryan.

He explained some of the advantages of using mules.

"Mules can go into wilderness areas as opposed to ATVs. Mules have packed out entire abandoned bridges and mine tailings while packing in erosion mitigation items and fencing, for example," he said.

The mules are also used for public relations. "We take the mules to parades and the state fair," said Ryan. They have made appearances at Bailey Day when they are not out on a project.

Ryan told the group that the mules can work on projects up to three weeks long in the back country. That means Ryan is not only the packer but also takes care of the mules and drives the transport to the project trailhead.

"Mules have been around for over 3,000 years," he said. "The mule is the offspring of a male donkey (62 chromosomes) and female horse (64 chromosomes) which makes them a hybrid with 63 chromosomes. They are the first hybrid. As a result they are sterile and can't reproduce."

After touring the new barn with its office area, classroom/mule hospital and tack room, the group moved to the grounds and walked along the Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad bed adjacent to the North Fork of the South Platte River.

Along with two wood bridge abutments where the railroad crossed the river, the stone base of the Shawnee water tower is still along the railroad bed.

Pat Mauro, Park County Historical Society vice president, talked about the tower. "The Shawnee water tower can be seen in Helen McGraw Tatum's movie 'The Old Colorado and Southern and Engine No. 9.' In the movie, the train is taking on water from the tank," he said.

At the border of the U. S. Forest Service property and the North Fork Ranch property, is the Riceville switch. The bend in the river corresponds to the map in Wright's presentation.

For more on Shawnee and its National Register listing, see www.historicshawnee.com and www.parkcoarchives.org. The Flume's site, at www.TheFlume.com, has archived stories of Shawnee's listing on the National Register.

The Proceedings of the Sixth South Park Symposium, June 25-26, 2010, Pages 11-26, contains "A Brief History of Shawnee and Update on its Historical District Status," (since granted) by Brian Heber, past president of the Shawnee branch of the Park County Historical Society.

Those proceedings are available through the Park County Historical Society at www.parkcountyhistory.com. Also available on the site is the book "Slaghts/Fairville/Shawnee" by Gary Goodson.

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