Sign of the Times

On Wednesday, June 22nd, we hosted our loyal members at our Annual Meeting and the opening reception for our newest exhibit, “Sign of the Times: The 1960s.” Though we said farewell and thank you to Board members, Erica Gallagher, Kim Crawford, and Bill Gay, we welcomed new members, Sanse Berry, Michael Cook, and Nancy Smith. In addition to the meeting, the evening featured delicious refreshments, and to help celebrate the 1960s exhibit, staff dressed in 60s fashion costumes (designed and created by staff member, Katy Taylor!).

Where were you when Kennedy was shot?

Our groovy new exhibit titled: “Sign of the Times: The 1960s - An Exhibition on a Decade of Change in a Nation and in a Community,” transports visitors to the 1960s to experience the politics and culture of this iconic era. This fun, new exhibit parallels the events of the 1960s in the United States with events and trends in Steamboat Springs. With many artifacts loaned from Routt County locals, the exhibit offers something for everyone – learn to dance The Twist, share where you were when President Kennedy was shot, read about personal stories of the times, learn about the development of the Steamboat ski area, or sit in a 1960s living room to test your recognition of 60s TV show theme songs. The fun never stops in “Sign of the Times!”
Curator’s Corner  By Katie Adams, Curator

Objects Tell a Story
A pioneer wedding, bricklaying, the timber industry, working in the garden, a child’s playtime; all of these are stories that can now be told at the Tread of Pioneers Museum. Each year the museum accepts new artifacts into the permanent collection. Items are given by generous donors throughout the community and beyond.

This year, several exciting new donations came through our doors, such as: Doc Utterback’s veterinary apothecary jars, a handcrafted, horse hair hitched harness and lead rope, a “Row Hoe” garden implement, a log scale (which measures the amount of usable lumber in a log), a 1940s marble collection (complete with two “strikers”), and a “Steamboat Springs Brick Company” engraved brick.

The more information donors can provide about their object, the better equipped we are to tell its story. With the right background information, each particular object from the valley can be connected directly to our area’s history. For instance, a woman’s dress was donated this year. Donors told us the dress belonged to Clara Louise Carver who married Henry Clay Monson, Jr. Additional research on the family revealed that: 1. the Monson family came to Routt County in 1886 and named the area at the base of Rabbit Ears Pass, “Pleasant Valley,” 2. Clara Monson wore the dress on her wedding day, February 6, 1908 in Steamboat Springs, and 3. a local seamstress made the dress especially for Clara.

Monson family members donated items from this same wedding 34 years earlier: Clara’s wedding shoes and Henry’s wedding vest. The museum can now use all of the wedding items as tools to teach visitors about a variety of subjects, such as: the Monson family, Pleasant Valley, early pioneer weddings and attire, the seamstress occupation, and many other topics.

As you can see, each item within the Tread of Pioneers Museum collection reflects the history and pioneers of our area. Because the majority of the collection is comprised of local donations, the artifacts housed at the museum are very much the community’s collection. We encourage you to come by the museum and get reacquainted with your collection. You never know what you will discover next!

Book Review: Nothing Daunted

Nothing Daunted is flying off of bookstore shelves all over town. The Denver Post raves about this “extraordinary” book: “The Western frontier had been officially closed for 25 years by 1916, when two society girls from Auburn, N.Y., arrived in Elkhead, Colo., to teach school (in Routt County). They found the frontier was still flourishing in northwestern Colorado. Travel was by horseback over dim trails. Homesteaders eked out a bleak existence. And wild animals and desperados roamed the land.

But nothing daunted the two young women, Rosamond Underwood and Dorothy Woodruff, lifelong friends, graduates of Smith College, who were looking for something more meaningful than debutante balls and society teas. Although they had never taught school, they answered an ad for two teachers in the remote Colorado community and were hired.

Their employer, Farrington Carpenter, a young rancher who in later years was named the first director of the U.S. Division of Grazing, later the Bureau of Land Management, hired them because of their photographs. Elkhead bachelors wanted wives. In fact, the teachers' qualifications were minimal. Nothing Daunted, the story of these two remarkable women, began when Dorothy Wickenden, executive editor of The New Yorker magazine and Dorothy's granddaughter, discovered a folder titled ‘Dorothy Woodruff Letters, Elkhead 1916-1917.'"

Wickenden then made her own journey to the Elkhead school and Routt County to learn more. The book is largely based on the letters, as well as interviews and other research conducted at the Tread of Pioneers Museum. You are sure to be surprised by the positive attitudes of the two New York society girls who travelled from their comfortable homes to the great unknown. You will not be able to put this book down! Get your copy at the Tread of Pioneers Museum Store today!
Brown Bag Summer Lectures

If you have not attended the ever-popular Brown Bag Summer Lecture Series, it’s not too late to catch the last few lectures of the exciting summer lineup. These weekly history talks feature stories and recollections from the locals who lived them. Recently, Jim Crawford, descendent of James Crawford, founder of Steamboat Springs, retold the story of our town’s first Fourth of July:

“As the Fourth of July approached, Pa (James Crawford) thought how he could let the beautiful new flag speak for him of the good will he bore his dark-skinned neighbors [Utes]. He decided to have a flag raising. Selecting a tall lodgepole pine, he chopped it down, trimmed and peeled it, and planted it solidly halfway between the Iron Spring and the cabin.

….On the morning of the Fourth the Ute Indians were the first to arrive. As curious as children, they squatted about the pole and the cabin...The Crawford family marched down the gentle slope to the flagpole with considerable formality, Pa leading the way and carrying the large flag. They unfolded the bunting so all could admire the red and white stripes and the blue field in one corner. In that field were 37 stars — one large one in the middle, two circles of smaller stars around it, and a star in each corner.

The Indians began to withdraw, muttering among themselves. No doubt they had observed flags waving at forts and agencies and were suspicious that new restraints could be put upon them.

Pa sought to assure them that here on Bear River the flag would watch over both red men and white. Having fought under that banner three years in the struggle to preserve the Union, his feeling for it was deep. His earnestness spoke better than his Indian words he knew, and the Utes gathered close again.

Now it was time to raise the flag. But the halyards refused to work, and the rope, being new, kinked in the wooden pulleys Pa had made, and strenuous efforts only seemed to make things worse... The flag would go neither up nor down. The pine pole, being peeled, was so smooth that it was thought impossible to climb up and adjust the knotted ropes. Pa’s grand celebration seemed in danger of collapsing.

With great dignity Yarmonite (leader of the Utes) stepped forward... He called his nephew, Pahwinta, a fine lad about fifteen years old, who “cooned it” up the slick pole and removed the knots and kinks so that the flag was sent to the top, spreading to the breeze, to the great delight of all, even the Indians, who, having assisted in the raising, lost all reserve and danced and shouted.”

*This version excerpted from Crawford Pioneer Tales by Lulita Crawford Pritchett

Memoirs: Writing Your Own Story - by Susan De Wardt

Throughout human experience, people have gathered in circles to tell each other stories. Our stories shape us, give us a sense of place, language, and self. Memoir is a story from life and brings with it memories of events, experience, and meaning. Writing a memoir is as simple as telling a story on paper. No special writing expertise is required.

If you are ready to tell your story but don’t know where to begin, find a quiet spot, some paper and pen (or your computer if you use one easily without editing) and answer this question: “The story I want to tell is . . . .” Write one to two pages or set a timer for ten minutes. This quick write will give you the direction for your memoir. Perhaps you want to tell the story of your childhood, or the story of your success in an unusual career, or how you overcame a particular challenge. Having a theme will help you organize your thoughts and the smaller stories that are embedded within the larger context.

Once you have the theme, the next step is to fill in the blanks; write small vignettes. Keep your memoir writing manageable with small do-able pieces. If you can’t remember details or need some prompts, try this writing prompt: write “I remember...” at the top of a page. Set a timer for five minutes and write everything you can remember. This will give you some story starters. If you are still curious, start a timed write with “I don’t remember...” You will be surprised at the information that comes flooding back. Keep writing short vignettes until you feel satisfied that your story is complete. Edit later - AFTER you have written the complete first draft.

Writing a memoir validates life experience and leaves a legacy for others. Whether writing for family or writing for history, all stories are important. You can begin right now by thinking about what matters most to you—what has challenged you, formed you, influenced you. These are your stories.

Susan de Wardt (CJF/CAPF) is a writer and Life Coach specializing in writing process for self-discovery and creative expression. Susan frequently facilitates workshops on journal writing and memoirs. For more information contact Susan at www.mindworkscouaching.com
Looking Back at Museum Events

Jim Crawford’s Brown Bag Lecture - July 2011

Haunted Tours of the Historic Crawford House - October 2010

Vintage Ski Fashion Show - January 2011