



Grand County Historical Association  
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Emily Warner Field  
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# THE SPOKE

Grand County Historical Association

## Railroads Build the Ski Industry

By Tim Nicklas

In the early to mid-1900s, the popularity of skiing spread across the western United States. Ski areas popped up in many mountain communities, particularly in the Colorado Rockies. Much of this was due to access afforded by the existence of railroads to these areas. Railroads broke the barriers of isolation during the winter months when most other forms of transportation were blocked (skiing being the exception).

Grand County has long depended on tourism. From its earliest days of settlement, tourists were drawn to the springs of Hot Sulphur Springs and to the waters of Grand Lake and its surrounding streams. Grand County was reached by stagecoach from Georgetown, via the Berthoud Pass Wagon Road. In the summer months tourists would fill up Hot Sulphur Springs' five hotels. Nonetheless, those same hotels would sit mostly vacant during the long winter months when the road was shutdown.

In 1911, Hot Sulphur Springs held the first winter sports carnival west of the Mississippi River. The purpose of the carnival was to boost the town's economy by filling the empty hotels and restaurants with out of town guests for that one weekend at the end of December. This was only possible due to the Moffat Road railroad, which had broken the town's isolation just six years prior.

Not only did the railroad bring spectators for the winter carnival, it also brought the two most important participants of the event. At least, it brought them part way. Carl Howelsen and Angell Schmidt boarded the train in Denver's Moffat Station and rode it to the top of the divide at Corona, where they detrained and skied the rest of the 40-plus miles to Hot Sulphur Springs, where the carnival was under way. Once re-united with their fellow train passengers, Howelsen and Schmidt performed the biggest event of the day, the ski jump competition, which made history. The ski jump competition at the 1911 Hot Sulphur Springs Winter Sports Carnival was the first west of the Mississippi and is considered the beginning of Colorado's ski industry.



The 1911 winter carnival was such a successful and enjoyable event that it grabbed the attention of Denver newspapers on the front pages. Consequently, John Peyer and the other carnival organizers of the carnival decided to make it an annual event and put together the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Hot Sulphur Springs Winter Sports Carnival six weeks later in February 1912.

The railroad was the sole reason that the success of the winter carnival at Hot Sulphur Springs was even a possibility in those early years. Berthoud Pass, the former wagon road converted to an auto route was closed in the winter months. Even if the highway were open, automobiles of that day could not have made the winter drive anyway. The railroad was the only way to bring people to the remote town in the winter and take advantage of the abundantly snowy hills.

The Moffat Road quickly realized the potential for profit that the Hot Sulphur Springs Winter Carnival presented in the typically slow winter months of the railroad. In 1913, the Denver and Salt Lake Railway (D&SLR) advertised a special round trip fare to Hot Sulphur for the winter carnival. The following year, further up the Moffat Road, Steamboat Springs held its first winter carnival. Once again, the D&SLR provided the means to reach the new ski destination. People rode the rails from Denver and Hot Sulphur Springs.

As the popularity of Hot Sulphur Springs as a winter destination grew, so did ridership of the D&SLR to the winter carnival. In 1936, the Rocky Mountain News sponsored the "Snow Train" to Hot Sulphur Springs for the 25th anniversary of the winter carnival. Despite the fact that Berthoud Pass was open year round starting in 1933, over 2,200 passengers rode the ironhorse from Denver and another 500 came over the Moffat Road from Steamboat Springs for the event. Over 7,000 people attended the carnival that weekend.



The Snow Train at the base of Cooper Hill near West Portal in 1983

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Ski Train

In the early years of the ski industry, Nordic was the dominant form of skiing. By the late 1920s, Alpine skiing began to grow by leaps and bounds in the United States. This coincided with the opening of the Moffat Tunnel, which made the railroad far more reliable in the winter time. It would be at the west portal (West Portal) that the railroad would make its biggest impact on skiing in Colorado.

Following the opening of the Moffat Tunnel, skiers would ride up to West Portal from Denver to slide the deep and steep slopes immediately adjacent of the tunnel. Not long after the opening of the tunnel, the Arlberg Club was formed and they built their clubhouse not far from the tunnel to take advantage of the rails from Denver to the slopes on the west side of the divide.

Arlberg Club members and other ski enthusiasts flocked to West Portal by rail throughout the 1930s, even though there was no formal ski area. Skiing and riding the train to West Portal was so popular that in 1938 the D&SLR started the "Snow Train," offering

regular weekend service to West Portal. The D&SLR even provided a place for skiers to wax their skis in the West Portal Depot.

The start of the Snow Train coincided with decision of Denver Parks Director, George Cranmer's decision to locate Denver's Winter Park at West Portal. Cranmer announced his intention of creating for Denver a winter sports playground that would be "unequaled in the world. When he determined that West Portal would be the location for Denver's Winter Park he referenced the great ski conditions of the area and additionally remarked that "West Portal may be reached by auto or train." Cranmer clearly recognized the importance of access by train from Denver.

As ski trails were cut and T-bars were installed on the mountainside the base area facilities for Winter Park were literally constructed on the tailings of the Moffat Tunnel. This provided easy access to the facilities and slopes of the ambitious new ski area for those riding the train from Denver. The D&SLR continued to provide the Snow Train weekend service when Winter Park opened in 1940 for \$1.75 per round trip. Unfortunately, due to the demands of World War II and a coal workers strike in 1943, the Snow Train service came to an end. This would prove to be temporary though. In 1946, one year after the end of World War II, the Denver and Rio Grande Western (D&RGW) brought the special weekend service back to Winter Park and christened it as the "Ski Train." This was the foundation of the Ski Train that ran between Denver and Winter Park until 2009.



Ski Train 1950s

Grand County was not the only ski destination that benefitted from the railroads in the early growth years of the ski industry in the west. A couple of major examples are Marshall Pass in Colorado and Sun Valley, Idaho.

Beginning in 1938, the D&RGW literally acted as a chairlift for skiers from Salida and Gunnison. A special excursion train on the weekends selling seats as lift tickets to the top of Marshall Pass. The first train sold out with 500 tickets and 200 skiers were turned away that day. The railroad even provided a warming hut at the bottom of the slopes.

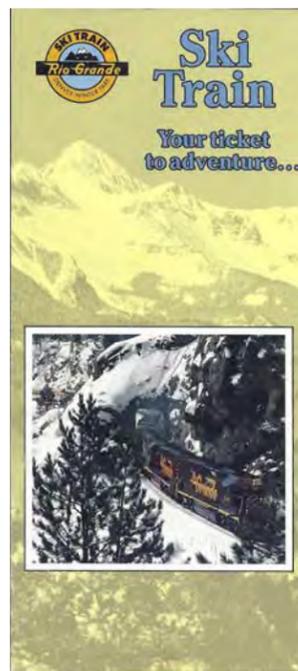
Grand County was not the only ski destination that benefitted from the railroads in the early growth years of the ski industry in the west. A couple of major examples are Marshall Pass in Colorado and Sun Valley, Idaho.



Passengers unloading the Snow Train at the West Portal Depot in 1938

In possibly the greatest example of the railroad on the ski industry of the west is Sun Valley, Idaho and the Union Pacific Railroad (UP). Sun Valley was literally the conceived, constructed, and operated by the UP. Under the leadership of Averill Harriman, who was a ski enthusiast himself, conjured up the plan to build a world class ski destination that would rival any in Europe. This resort was to be reached by rail as a means to boost ridership on the UP, which it did. Sun Valley became the glamorous playground for the rich and famous. At Sun Valley, skiing was elevated in class and viewed as elite. Nonetheless, it was at Sun Valley that the railroad made its most significant contribution to the ski industry. The first chairlifts in the world were installed at Sun Valley in 1936, replacing the rope tow. Engineers for the UP developed the chairlift at the railroad's headquarters in Omaha. The invention of the chairlift transformed the method of how skiers were to be transported to the top of ski trails the world over.

The impact of the railroads on the development of the ski industry in the western United States cannot be understated. Without the assistance of the network of steel that penetrated into remote mountain locations, the ski industry could not have developed with the rapidity that it did in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, as we look to the future of the ski industry and try and figure out ways to conveniently transport skiers to the slopes of Colorado trains emerge more and more as the answer. This is apparent in the rejoice that devotees to Winter Park sang when Amtrak's Winter Park Express returned weekend service in 2017 that had been left in a void ever since the Ski Train made its last run in 2009. Once again skiers are riding the rails of the old Moffat Road.



## Ranger Stories

By Dan Nolan

Durwood (D.O.) Johnson spent his entire Forest Service career from 1925 to 1956 in Grand County. He served as the District Ranger on all four ranger districts: Williams Fork, Fraser, Sulphur, and Kremmling. Following his Forest Service career, he served for many years as county commissioner. In December of 1966, he sat down with Herb Schwan, a Forest Service colleague, to record an oral history interview. The following are excerpts from that interview.



D. O. Johnson

### Background

**Schwan:** D.O, were you raised in this area or in Colorado?

**Johnson:** No, up until I was 11 years old I was raised in the short grass country of the western plains of Kansas. We moved to Denver and spent about a year there. Then my father bought a place north of Denver and had a little store. We sold that and went up to the Greely District and went into farming. Due to the potato blight, frost and one thing or another he went broke farming there. Then in 1914 we went into to the North Park country; I was about 19 years old. He homesteaded there and afterwards bought a sawmill but the market wasn't very good.

### First Forest Service Job

In the summer of 1925 I went to work for ranger Charlie Kutzleb on the Grizzly Creek District. During that time, we built 51 miles of trail, five of us. Ed Gamber (sp?) and I were the axe men, doing the chopping out and clearing the trail; the other crew followed making the tread. I noticed the present road they're building towards Rabbit Ears follows right in the old trail.

### Taking the Ranger Exam and Reporting for Duty

**Johnson:** In the fall of 1925 I went over to Steamboat Springs and took the ranger examination, that was the old ranger exam. I was going with a Boston school teacher that fall, and she mentioned something about the exam and said that I couldn't pass it. So, it was kind of a challenge, and so I took it.

I broke my leg skiing and was in the hospital when the notice came for me to report to the Fraser Ranger District as assistant to ranger Johnnie Johnston. I did manage to get out of the hospital with a brace on my leg. At that time, we were ordered to report for duty with a horse and pack outfit—a pack horse; so, that was how I arrived, on June 18, 1926.

### Cutting Ski Trails, First Creek Cabin

**Schwan:** Now about the beginning of the Winter Park Ski Area.

**Johnson:** Along about 1930 or '31, when they started keeping the Berthoud Pass open, the following summer we laid out the first ski trails with the help of Col. Peck's son, Frank Ashley President of the First National Bank now, Darrel Phillips, and Thomas Dye (sp?). I don't believe I had any men or any funds at that time. One trail went down Cooper Creek, and one went down north from Berthoud Pass to connect up with the old stage road. We also cleared up on the hill west of Berthoud Pass. This let the skiers come on up in the winter time with a carload. One man would drive down to the lower switchback on the north side and the skiers would have a run there of approximately three miles. That one on the Cooper Creek side was a shorter run of approximately a quarter to a half mile that we cleared out. This would give them a faster run. As far as I know these were the first really ski runs that were built or long trails. Steamboat Springs and Hot Sulphur Springs had the ski jumps long before, of course.

I might make a note that the Arlberg Club was formed by the same group of men.

Later on, we built a ski shelter cabin on First Creek, and also built a ski shelter behind the Idlewild Ranger Station. The one up on First Creek was built by the CCC crews. I remember, because I packed the boards in there for them.

### Snow Survey

**Schwan:** You were telling me about snowshoeing from Slate Creek over to Horseshoe on the Williams Fork. That sounded like kind of a hazardous trip that the safety people wouldn't permit now a days. Is that right?

**Johnson:** Oh yes, it was 27 miles round trip on snow shoes. There was no place to stop or stay. I could have gone down to the old Horseshoe Ranger Station, but there was no food or anything, just beds at the office. So, I would make that trip—get up early in the morning, and it would be maybe 8 or 9 o'clock before I'd get back in. We were also using the tubes at that time. It was supposed to be two men, and later on it was two men who made the trip

**Schwan:** That was snow sampling and weighing

**Johnson:** Yeah, I did it all alone on two courses.

**Schwan:** One day over and one day back?

**Johnson:** No, all in one day.

**Schwan:** Well I mean, ...Oh, you went back again?

**Johnson:** Yeah, all in one day.

**Schwan:** Well that was quite a trip.

**Johnson:** Yeah, all in one day

**Schwan:** And not a house along the way? Not a ranch or anything else?

**Johnson:** No, there were none. And practically all of it had to be broke, new trail. At least 25 miles of it I had to break new trail along the way.

## Emily Warner Field - Aviation Museum Earns Statewide Award

History Colorado recently announced Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum volunteers earned their 2016 Josephine H. Miles Award Honorable Mention Award for community involvement in creating and operating the Grand County Historical Association museum.

In a letter announcing the selection, Steve Turner, History Colorado Executive Director and State Historic Preservation Officer, said, "The museum documents an important story and the community support is a testament to your efforts and the public's interest in sharing Granby's aviation history."

Nominated for this prestigious award by the Greater Granby Area Chamber of Commerce, Gayle Langely, Executive Director, said "We are so thrilled with this statewide recognition of this new heritage tourism attraction. Our visitors and locals love learning about our unique aviation history. Did you know Charles Lindbergh used to fly into the Granby area after his historic Spirit of St. Louis flight and Emily Warner is America's first female airline captain?"

The Josephine H. Miles History Colorado Award annually recognizes organizations which significantly advanced Colorado history through education programs, exhibits, and historic preservation. The Miles Award recognizes Colorado history projects statewide. The Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum is a FREE, family-friendly museum at 1023 CR 610 at Granby/Grand County Airport in the former Rocky Mountain Airways airline terminal. The museum held an event on Friday, March 17 for a Celebration of Women's Aviation History & Irish-American Captain Emily Warner from 11AM to 2PM. Future aviation museum events are posted at [www.grandcountyhistory.org](http://www.grandcountyhistory.org)



The Grand County Historical Association Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum uses aviation history and airport adventures in their programs. Community outreach and partnering with other organizations were important factors in the museum's recent History Colorado award selection. (Photo Penny Hamilton)

## Grand Quilters Exhibit

Opening Reception Thursday June 29, 5 - 7 pm, at Cozens Ranch Museum

GCHA is pleased to announce a second collaborative exhibit with the Grand Quilters. The Grand Quilters are a group in the Fraser Valley that comes together monthly to share their work and visions. Three years ago, Cozens Ranch Museum displayed close to 100 quilts by these amazing textile artists. Again, from June 29 to July 29, the quilters will showcase fabulous new works on a theme of 'Faces.' Betsy DeVries is administrator of this outstanding group of friends and artists.

In addition, in conjunction with the Town of Fraser's Public Arts Commission and Fraser Elementary, we plan to have a Quilt Trail in place by June 29. Businesses that support heritage arts and quilts will participate by showing a homemade 3 x 3 ft wood, painted quilt block on their building. Quilt Trails and Barn Quilt Trails are national programs, see the Colorado Quilt Council for more information.

Lastly, the Grand Quilters show and the Grand County Quilt Trail will work closely with our county's other quilt group, Peaks & Pines Quilt Guild. If you or your business is interested in sponsoring or hosting a Quilt Block along the trail, please contact Kristi at 970-726-5488.



Quilt Square hand-stitched by Nina Wood



Stars & Stripes Quilts by Grand Quilters in Eisenhower Room at Cozens Ranch Museum



Grand Quilters



Bronco's Colors Quilt by Grand Quilters

## Barger Gulch and the Duhka Ethnoarchaeological Project. Presentation at Spring Potlach—April 7, 2016

By Tyson Arnold

I'm sure most of you remember the days of fort building. A time when the television and electronics were secondary to our adolescence yearning for outdoor exploration. The sage covered surroundings around Granby have changed so much since I was a kid. After the construction boom in the 1990's, houses now pock the once barren hills surrounding town. I had two childhood friends that lived out above Silver Creek (now the Granby Ranch area), and we would spend hours just walking around the hills with our pellet guns. In those days, the timber was more abundant surrounding the homes, and we had dozens of hidden forts, rarely ever seen by those that didn't build them. Our choice of forts were of course tree houses, but the most common fort we made were tipis. Gathering already fallen timber, we bucked the rails back to our fort location. Leaning them up against a strong central pine, we would stack and stack the poles until we had a visible form of protection. This rudimentary design, was so easy and basic, it seemed subconsciously inherent. Just how long has this design been in the minds of humans?

The unique layout and geomorphology of North America, deemed it uninhabitable during times in which other parts of the earth were thriving with human populations. The fact that North America is the youngest of the continents with human populations gives us a rare opportunity to learn about human migrations and habitational conditions, that have surprisingly changed very little since people first stepped foot on the continent. Prior to European contact, the tipi had been a staple on the land scape for thousands of years.



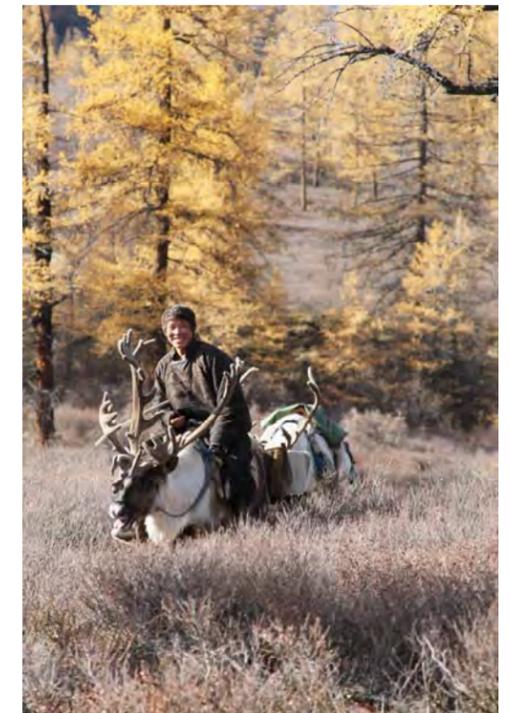
It was in the late 1980's when locals and archaeologists became aware of the significance of Middle Park for its abundance of Paleoindian artifacts. Local collectors made contact with professionals, and a snowball of information and research took shape. Early surface surveys were conducted by Brian Naze, in the summer of 1986, recording several key Paleoindian artifacts. In the year of 1997, a team of archaeologists from the University of Wyoming began the painstaking excavation of Barger Gulch. Situated along a Colorado river tributary, the Barger Gulch site became the focus of one culturally defined group in particular, the Folsom people. Folsom artifacts are a distinct class of chipped stone projectile point, being used by groups that hunted the area around 12,000 – 12,650 years ago (Calendar Years, Before Present). The monikers on the Folsom projectile point, include fine pressure flaking edge work, thin bi-faces and preforms, and of course the most distinct; the flute that runs down the length of the spear point.

The fluting has always been a mystery to those that study Folsom artifacts. Although fluting is a distinction, there were other, even older cultures throughout North America that practiced this style of production.

As fascinating as the projectile points are, there was something else at Barger Gulch that changed the theories about Folsom peoples forever. Though it would take years to develop, the plotted artifacts and debitage when viewed as a whole, left an interesting pattern at the site. Piecing together thousands of plots, archaeologists were able to see the foundations of some of the earliest known habitational structures in the New World. The result was a circular lodge structure, most likely made of wooden posts and beams, covered in numerous animal hides. In an environment like Middle Park, clothing and shelter were the only technologies that allowed the Folsom people's survival.

We know they used the lodge structures, but how were they used? To help answer that question, the Duhka Ethnoarchaeological Project was formed. The nomadic reindeer herders of inner Mongolia rely on their herds for survival. Along with the ancient practice of reindeer herding, the traveling people still live in structures similar to the lodges of the native populations of North America. To connect the data, the team studies and records the spatial relationships within the living structures of the herders. Living and traveling with the Duhka, also allows the researchers to analyze how long they stay in a certain area, and why they choose the locations for their camps.

To explain the research further, GCHA is pleased to present our guest speaker for the upcoming Potlach on April 7<sup>th</sup>. It will be our honor to host Dr. Todd Surovell of the University of Wyoming, to present his fascinating discoveries, stories and experiences as we explore both Barger Gulch and the Duhka Ethnoarchaeological Project. The Potlach will be held at the Granby Community Center, April 7<sup>th</sup> starting at 6:00 pm. The speaker will start his talk after our meal, beginning around 7:30 pm. Show off your favorite dish and bring an appetite for this year's Spring Potlach!



## April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month Thank You GCHA Volunteers

GCHA has an incredible group of volunteers that help us run the museums, host events, bake cookies and make our fundraiser, Taste of History, successful. Some play art and Santa with children, and others edit and research books. Our board of directors is also an all volunteer crew that works many hours to sustain and improve GCHA. Thank you to all our volunteers, many listed here, and regrets for inadvertent omissions of each wonderful volunteer.

We are incredibly grateful for your time and love!



Volunteer Trish Cyman

Mark Afman  
Bob & Mary Amann  
Tyson Arnold  
Ken Ball  
Lisa Bornfreund  
Anne Astrella Buell

Tom Corrigan  
Suzie Royce Cruse  
Trish Cyman  
Don Dailey  
George & Shawn Davis  
Jan & Vic Derks  
Sally DeSciullo  
Francie de Vos  
Betsy & Gary DeVries



Volunteer Steve Martens

Jeff & Lynn Klopstad  
Patty Madison  
Casey Malon  
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Andy Miller  
Dave & Kathy Naples  
Sandra Naylor  
Dan Nolan  
Gary Piper  
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Cathy Rapp  
Ann Rosati  
Sara & Rich Rosene  
Monica Sandstrom  
Karen Sangster  
Roxanne Singler  
Martin Smith



Volunteer Board Member Shawn Davis



Volunteer Dave Naples with Women with Altitude, many are GCHA volunteers



Volunteers Susan Ellis and Bob Johannes, Christmas at Cozens

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Dede Fey  
Susan Fields  
Mikey & Greg Gallavan  
Shanna Ganne  
Kathy Gilbertson  
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Ashley, Rachel & Catherine Trotter  
Mike Turner  
Suanne Yarbrough  
Jim Yust  
Carol & Kent Van Meter  
Steve & Elaine Watts



Volunteer Ann Stricklin

## SAVE THE DATE

What: 6th annual Taste of History Champagne Brunch  
When: Saturday, August 26, 2017, 10 am - 1 pm  
Where: New Venue, Casa de Engel, Fraser

Keep in the know at [www.grandcountyhistory.org](http://www.grandcountyhistory.org), GCHA on Facebook, or via our email newsletters. Please subscribe at [cozens@qwestoffice.net](mailto:cozens@qwestoffice.net)



## A TO Z: YOUR GRAND COUNTY HISTORY ALPHABET CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK PUBLISHED

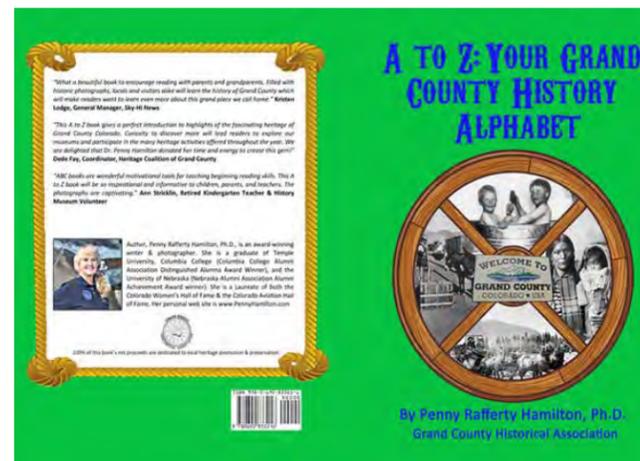
Because Grand County Historical Association is committed to heritage preservation and promotion for all ages, **A to Z: Your Grand County History Alphabet** is now available for purchase through our Cozens Ranch and Pioneer Village museum gift shops. Several local retail outlets as ACE Hardware stores both in Fraser and Granby will have copies for sale soon, too.

Individual buyers can also purchase this unique history book at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ISBN: 978-0-692-83321-6. But, GCHA members receive a special discount off the \$17.95 cover price, if they purchase through our museum gift shops.

Grand County Historical Association hosted author-book release events at their museums: Friday, March 17, 2017 11AM to 2PM Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum Granby/Grand County Airport and Saturday, March 25, 2017 11am to 2PM Pioneer Village Museum Hot Sulphur Springs, 110 East Byers Ave

The next hosted author-book release event will be event :  
Saturday, April 1, 2017 11AM to 2PM Cozens Ranch Museum Fraser 77849 US Hwy 40 Fraser/Winter Park

March is Women's History Month. This new book features several of our pioneer women as C is for Cozens-Mary, D is for Doctor-Doc Susie, K is for Kremmling -Lillie McElroy, and other Grand County pioneers. "We are thrilled to also celebrate International Children's Book Day at Cozens Ranch," said author and volunteer, Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D.



Dan Nolan, GCHA President, reminds us, "100% of our proceeds from this book go to our historic preservation projects. We are pleased to have this legacy project for current and future generations."

**A to Z: Your Grand County History Alphabet** features historic and contemporary photographs and stories. Using the alphabet, fun Grand County facts and history tidbits are grouped. For example, B is for Brands, E is for Eisenhower, G is for Granby and Grand Lake, Hot is for Hot Sulphur Springs, T is for Trains and Z is for Zephyr and Zerex.

Tabernash resident, Jim Hoyhtya, recently wrote a five-star amazon review for our new book, "I purchased this book for my grandchildren. My eight year old grandson read it to me. He was so excited about it, he insisted that he HAD to read it to his brother and sister. It is a great Grand County history lesson for all ages."

Buy your own copy soon.