

Museum Musings...

Lula W. Dorsey Museum

YMCA of the Rockies



Spring 2003

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Carol Clark packs Mentholatum collection



John Coker gives entry a new coat of paint

Our Mission:

To support the YMCA of the Rockies' mission through preservation and documentation of our corporate history by:

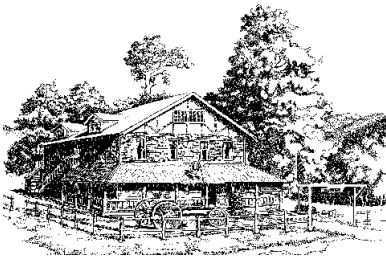
Collecting, preserving, and interpreting cultural artifacts related to the YMCA's history in a museum venue,

Offering interpretive programs to guests and members,

Identifying and participating in the preservation of historically significant buildings and sites,

Actively researching and publishing materials related to our history.

View From the Museum Porch



The view from our porch this winter can only be described as "interesting." During our last visit we were knee deep in packing material preparing for the

museum renovation. As we started thinking about this edition we found ourselves hip deep in snow.

As many of you know we pride ourselves on running a tidy ship, but most of the winter our porch was such a mess that Jeff Foxworthy would have found fertile material for some of his famous jokes. It was so embarrassing that we didn't even take a photograph!

The last three months have been an emotional roller coaster. First there is the anticipation of actually starting the project. Next, you completely overwhelm us with your response to our annual appeal. Then as winter turned into spring and we came face to face with the enormity of the project, we began to question our sanity.

You can imagine the internal turmoil we felt as twenty-three years of work disappeared into scores of boxes carefully packed by volunteers Lori Dawes, Carol and Earl Clark and Marian Lewis. We wondered if we would ever see it all again.

For most of the winter an ugly white semi-trailer backed up to the front sidewalk dominated our view of the world. All during the renovation it sat there quietly whispering to us that someday we would have to unpack it.

Our view of the world was radically altered on March 17 when the biggest storm in ninety years struck Colorado. As luck would have it, the semi had disappeared seventy-two hours earlier and Jack had just hauled away the last of the construction trash from the porch.

Had he not carted off the debris, Mother Nature would have covered it up for at least two weeks adding immensely to our normal spring cleanup. Needless to say both the storm and the remodeling are major topics for this edition.

So ambitious was the museum renovation that we've scaled back our hiking program to devote more time to finishing displays. But we promise to

pull some "rabbits" out of our hiking boots to make things interesting. So, for those of you who have tried to catch us at the museum recently you might actually find us there this summer.

Until the recent storm our winter was extremely dry and windy. Although we would have liked our moisture spread out through the winter the dry weather did facilitate the renovation.

The severe drought of the last several years has taken a toll on available forage for deer and elk. By January anywhere ground was showing everything was eaten down to the dirt.

After the elk and deer have eaten the grass they start to nibble on anything available. This winter we've seen them eat pine, spruce, juniper, aspen, sage and wild roses. While it isn't unusual to see such foraging activity, the extent that they relied on these plants was unusual.

During the heavy snow in March elk walked in single file to conserve energy. For the most part they bedded down to wait out the storm. We observed several very emaciated animals in obvious distress.

The redwing blackbirds showed up two days before the big storm noisily announcing their arrival. Jack also saw a bluebird in the museum parking lot. These first signs of spring are always welcome.

The drought also affected the permanent avian population. Some seed dependent species such as grosbeaks and crossbills were almost totally absent this winter. The nuthatches and chickadees were extremely abundant relying heavily on our feeder.

The coyotes were very visible and vocal while searching for food this winter. One day we saw a pack of eight individuals. That number is somewhat atypical as groups of half that are more the norm.

One of the best changes this winter, at least from Jack's point of view, has been a new computer. His old one was completely overloaded by the demands put upon it. The Y's computer guru accused Jack of trying to "stuff fifteen pounds of potatoes into a ten-pound sack!"

The new silicon wonder easily manipulates huge graphics files associated with creating new exhibits. It truly delivers on the promise of multi-tasking. Efficiency aside, our aging eyes really enjoy the ultra sharp nineteen inch flat screen monitor. We can almost read it without glasses.

Since there is lots more to share with you, we had better end our "Views" for now. Be sure to drop by the museum to see all the changes taking place at your museum.

Thanks for your faith, prayers and generosity.

Lulie and Jack

Surviving the Storm of '03

Unless you've been under a rock you know that Colorado was stuck by a monster storm in March. To put it in perspective, some parts of Colorado received one-third of their annual precipitation in forty-eight hours. Now, as Paul Harvey would say, "Now for the rest of the story."

When you say something is the biggest or worst in history you have to temper that statement with the word "recorded." Surely, Mother Nature pounded Colorado with bigger storms during previous glacial periods. Only problem was there wasn't some reporter, microphone in hand, giving a snowflake-by-snowflake account.

All winter we looked at the clear skies and bare mountains praying for snow. By the first of February, weather forecasters told us we needed at least seven feet of snow just to bring the snow pack up to normal for the winter. We could only listen and say, "That'll never happen."

The third week of February turned cold and snowy. We happily watched as the first hints of normal winter weather patterns appeared. We welcomed almost two feet of snow over several days along with bitter cold. Then the weather returned to its dry and windy pattern.

As bare ground reappeared we resolved ourselves to a dry spring and persistent drought. About Friday March 14 the forecasters began to talk about an "interesting" storm off the coast of California.

We only half listened until we heard the magic words, "Four Corners Low" describing the ultimate snow maker for eastern Colorado. Sunday the 16th was warm, calm and heavy moisture laden clouds obscured the sun. We had a gut feeling that we were in for a real storm.

Monday was cooler but above freezing. All day long it alternated between rain, snow and sleet. After lunch the snow began to stick to the grassy areas. About 5 p.m. the snow started to fall like white rain. Visibility was less than a hundred yards.

Tuesday morning about 4:30 a.m. Lulie's principal called telling her school was canceled in Loveland. By that time we had 18 inches of snow, but the experts were saying the storm was just getting started. After digging out we went to the museum to work on new displays. All the while it was snowing about an inch an hour.

Wednesday morning we awoke to almost three feet of snow. The Y called telling Jack to stay home. We spent the day trying to keep up with the continually falling snow at our house. About 3:30 p.m. we went over to the Y. It was either a winter wonderland or a disaster depending whether you



After the Storm of '03. Note fence post barely showing in foreground.

were a guest or a snowplow driver.

Not bothering to set the alarm Jack awoke about six Thursday morning. When he looked out the window all he could see was white. After coffee Lulie ventured out with the tape measure and recorded almost four feet of snow, but still it snowed.

Finally, late Thursday the storm broke. Some areas in the Estes Park area recorded seven feet. Around Conifer and Evergreen, west of Denver there were reports of over ten feet of snow. Snow Mountain Ranch was isolated due to the closure of Berthoud Pass. Food supplies were running very low.

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We measured an even 50 inches of snow at our home just south of the Y. Every storm in our 23 years of living in Estes Park paled by comparison. Our collective "historical" memories began to wonder how it compared to the historic storm of December 1913.

Soon the media caught up with us and measured the storm of '03 against the one ninety years earlier. The record keepers confirmed our gut feeling announcing that "our" storm was the second biggest in recorded history.

The storm of the previous century took four days to accumulate seven feet of snow. Had it been below freezing when the storm struck Monday and snowed for four days, we would have topped that storm by at least two feet.

At the Y, the 1913 storm collapsed the roof of the Dining Hall and damaged the Administration Building. Estes Park was isolated from the outside world for over a week.



Collapsed Dining Hall, spring 1913.

The storm of this century managed to remove the heating exhaust vents from the Longhouse just in time for a major youth conference. Frantic work by our Buildings and Grounds Department had everything ready in time. Snow sliding off the Longhouse roof broke the rafters of the porch in front of the Craft Shop.

Heavy equipment used to open the roads caused extensive damage to asphalt and vegetation. At the museum most of the timbers in the parking lot were rearranged. The expensive road base put down several years ago is now across the street. Everywhere mountains of snow were still visible two weeks after the storm.

Over the last few years tens of thousands of folks have moved to Colorado during a period of relative warmth and drought. Many have never seen a "real" snowstorm much less one of historic proportions. While we coped with the storm, newcomers had what can only be described as a shell-shocked look by the end of the week.

While this one storm didn't break our multi-year drought, it did put a real dent in the current year's deficit. In forty-eight hours the snow pack in the North Platte drainage including Estes Park went from 79% of normal to 104%.

Since 1980, the previous single storm was three feet on May 17, 1982. After surviving this monster storm we can sit in our rocking chairs on the museum porch in the coming decades and talk about how we survived the storm back in '03.

Museum Annual Appeal Surpasses Goal

Through the years you have generously supported the Dorsey Museum. Time and time again we challenged you to help preserve your YMCA legacy. Each time you stepped forward and exceeded our expectations.

Executive Director Walter Ruesch mentored us before and after he retired, teaching us many valuable lessons. Among those lessons was you have faith in what you are trying to accomplish, and if your project is worthy and it helps fulfill the mission of the YMCA of the Rockies, you will succeed.

If you remember, we told you we were starting the renovation before any money was raised. Jack was asked, "What are you going to do if you don't meet your fundraising goal?" Jack smiled and said, "I'm not going to worry about the money. It will come." Walter was right as usual.

When first conceived, the plan to renovate the museum was scheduled over two years. We prioritized our needs and communicated them to you. We totally underestimated your response to our appeal. So successful was our fundraising that we moved the timetable forward compressing the project into a single year.

There is no possible way to fully express our personal gratitude and that of the YMCA of the Rockies except to say "thank you" for your support.

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Museum Renovation Provides Many "Opportunities"

Many years ago, during a very trying time, Executive Director Walter Ruesch told the Board of Directors, "We have no problems only opportunities." Through the years we took that statement to heart and have used it to make opportunities of the challenges presented to us.

Jack's father also had a saying which goes along with what Walter said, "When you are neck deep in alligators it is hard to remember the initial objective was to drain the swamp." We have tried to keep both sayings in mind as we dove into renovating the museum.

We often hear folks talk about moving after many years in the same home. You find stuff you forgot you had, stuff you should have pitched years ago and stuff you can't remember why you kept.

Another reality of moving after a long time in one place is the realization that you are a lousy housekeeper. Behind and under things you find unpleasant reminders of how long it has been since you moved things like that big desk. We won't waste space inventorying what we found. Just go look behind your refrigerator.

At the museum our job is to accumulate stuff and to remember where it is. However, as we began to pack we found plenty of stuff that we forgot we had and stuff we should have pitched. Jack can't remember how many bags of trash he pitched comprised of memos and correspondence accumulated over the last twenty-three years plus leftover supplies from building displays.

One of the most interesting opportunities came as a result of packing our artifacts. On any given day me might touch a large number of artifacts. However, there are many artifacts tucked away in nooks and crannies that we seldom see much less handle.

As we packed we often paused commenting, "I forgot we had that." Sometimes we stopped to look through a book or stare at a photograph. As we handled some artifacts, they brought back memories of people now deceased who entrusted us with mementoes and keepsakes of their lives.

While packing books we made an interesting discovery. In one of our bedrooms we found The Soldiers' Hymn Book published by the Boston Young Men's Christian Association. As we handled the fragile tract we tried to read the water damaged name inside the cover.

We could make out the following:

Charles A. Pl??
1st Sergeant Co. A
12th Regiment ???

Chaplin ?????
Feb. ?/65

This small book had accompanied a soldier into the Civil War. We would like to see if it is possible to track down this soldier from muster rolls. So, if there are Civil War historians out there we'll be glad to accept your help.

The museum was packed and ready for the arrival of Buildings and Grounds in late January. Carol and Earl moved archives and items too irregular to the cabins behind the museum. Housekeeping sent over a "spare" crew for an

afternoon of moving furniture and other items into the trailer.

We left the big, heavy items for the muscles of Buildings and Grounds. The artifact that caused them the most consternation was the old switchboard. No one knows how much it weighed, but we watched the fire escape steps sag as four men wrestled it down the stairs.



Moving the Knabe piano

Our biggest "alligator" came in the form of the Knabe grand piano. Buildings and Grounds refused to tackle the beast. So, a piano moving company was called in to move it under the Longhouse for storage.

Painter John Coker was the first workman to arrive. As he looked at the sheetrock pock marked from over two decades of rotating displays he could only shake his head. He spent most of a week spackling and patching small holes and dings.

Next electricians arrived to put in new track lighting and outlets. They were challenged with the opportunity to make sense out of the work of several previous electricians and figure out what was tied to which breaker. After sorting things out we decided to put in a couple of new circuits for lights and outlets.

Now the work began in earnest with the arrival of a full crew from B&G. While tearing out a wall they learned that some of the sheetrock in the museum was only one-quarter inch thick. That

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sent B&G scrambling to find a sheet tucked away from an old project to make patches.

Sheetrock and sawdust hung in the air clinging to every surface. Plastic protected wood trim and windows. Jack clung to a corner of his office with plastic draped over his computer. Finally, he gave up and became homeless wandering from office to office panhandling for a spare computer or telephone to use.



What a mess!

When the floor refinishing company arrived with their huge deafening machines they filled the air with even more dust. Dust was replaced with fumes from drying polyurethane. Jack called it quits and deserted the museum for several days.

Lulie doesn't deal well with chaos especially in her museum. Consequently, for her own well-being she was banned from stepping inside after all the artifacts were removed. When she was finally allowed to return all she could do was sneeze as she touched the dust coated surfaces. How would we ever get the museum clean again?

Now the whole process of moving was reversed. Again Buildings and Grounds along with Housekeeping emptied the trailer placing the furniture in the proper room. Volunteers, Carol and Earl Clark, arrived to help Jack clean rooms, unpack, dust and place artifacts.

Jack had the forethought to take over one hundred photographs of the museum before it was dismantled. Joined by volunteers Carey Stevanus and

Betty Meyer they went from room to room cleaning, hanging curtains, unpacking and arranging.

When finished even Lulie agreed that the museum hadn't been this clean since 1979. The now brightly lit walls shone with new paint. The smell of lemon oil filled the air. Looking on the bright side, we don't have to worry about spring-cleaning this year!

After we did our work, Lulie took a Friday off from teaching and spent the weekend putting the finishing touches on everything. Finally, on March 16 we pronounced the museum ready for opening. Then the storm of the century struck delaying our opening another week.

When we said ready for opening we should have put "" around ready. The museum room settings were finished but not the displays. There are still bare walls, unlabeled photographs and two completely empty rooms awaiting new displays.

Almost twenty-four years ago Lula Dorsey and Walter Ruesch gave us a blank canvas, in the form of an empty Dorsey Museum, upon which to document the history of the Y. Like a child learning to form letters with a jumbo pencil, some of our early interpretations of Y history were both clumsy and inadequate. Through the years our work improved as our skills developed and resources expanded.

Now, those blank walls are a new opportunity. They challenge us to achieve even higher levels of creativity.

It will take several more months of work to finish what we have begun. Meanwhile you are welcome to come by and see our work in progress.

This project has been filled with many opportunities and there have been a few alligators, but we have endeavored to stay focused upon our goal.

Museum Annual Report

So dismal was the return on investment for the Endowment Fund in 2002 we almost skipped writing this report. Falling contributions throughout the year compounded the museum's financial problems.

Consequently, we cut out all but necessary operating expenses. We can only hope that the turnaround in the stock market will happen in 2004.

In the midst of the negative financial picture we announced plans for our renovation. While 2002 was bleak, we have to look at the bright picture painted for 2003 by the museum's successful Annual Appeal.

	2002	2001
Revenues:		
Investments	(\$21,821)	(\$12,579)
Oil Royalties	\$679	\$952
Contributions	\$19,647	\$27,859
Total Revenues:	(\$1,495)	\$16,232
Expenses:	\$10,227	\$11,261
Excess Revenue	(\$11,722)	\$4,971
Endowment Fund:	\$166,708	\$185,855

Summer Programs

While we scaled back the number of hikes and programs we've actually branched out, courtesy of the National Park Service's extensive rebuilding of the Bear Lake Road. The next two summers promise to be chaotic in the Bear Lake corridor.

Consequently, we're going to lead a number of hikes into the Indian Peaks Wilderness south of Rocky. Take note that since that area is a wilderness the maximum number of hikers is **ten**.

As in previous years, you may make advanced reservations for any of these activities in writing, by telephone at 970-586-3341 extension 1136 or by email at jmelton@ymcarockies.org. We will confirm your reservations by email, telephone or in writing. You may make advance reservations until May 23. If your plans change please notify as soon as possible.

June 3, 25, 26, July 3, 17, 30 August 13: 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. **Archaeology Walk**. We'll take you on a 1.5 mile walk to Snuggler's Cove where you'll see sites used between 1,100 and 1,700 years ago by Native Americans. You will handle both real and reproduction artifacts. Limit 20 persons.

June 20, July 24, August 20: 7:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. - **Hike on the Upper Ute Trail and the Game Drive Walls of Hidden Valley**. Join Lulie and Jack to explore the most accessible Native American game drive walls in RMNP. This is a hike above tree line. Come adequately prepared. Limit 15 persons.

June 23: Time TBA: Hike to **Mitchell and Blue Lakes** in the Indian Peaks Wilderness. Requires drive to Ward, Colorado south of Estes. Beautiful 5 mile hike. Limit 10 persons.

June 26: 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. **Cub Lake & Pool Circuit**. Lulie loves this 6 mile hike. It is great for birding and the flowers along the river are beautiful. Limit 15 persons.

June 30: 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. - **Black Lake and above**. The plateau above Black Lake is one of the most spectacular spots in the Park. We will make a group decision whether to go to Green or Frozen Lake after reaching the plateau. This is a tough 11.5 mile hike requiring proper conditioning and equipment. Limit 15 persons.

July 2: Time TBA: Hike to **Lake Isabell and Isabell Glacier** in the Indian Peaks Wilderness. Requires drive to Ward, Colorado south of Estes. Beautiful 7.6 mile hike. Limit 10 persons.

July 7: 7:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. - Hike to Miner Bill's. This all day hike culminates above treeline on the side of Mt. Chapin. This 3.5 mile (round trip) hike is not for the faint of heart or knees. The elevation gain is over 1,400 feet. The "trail" is extremely primitive. Very dependent on weather and the traditional opening of Fall River Road on July 4. Limit 15 persons.

July 8: Time TBA: **Hike to Ouzel Lake**.

July 15: Time TBA: **Hike to Lake Dorothy and 4th of July Mine** in the Indian Peaks Wilderness. Requires drive to Eldora, Colorado south of Estes. 7 miles round trip. Limit 10 persons.

July 18: Time TBA: Hike to **Fern & Odessa Lakes**. This 8.5 hike is a classic covering one of the most beautiful areas of RMNP. Limit 15 persons.

July 22: Time TBA: Hike to **Araphoe Lakes**. This 7.2 mile hike to the Indian Peaks Wilderness requires driving to Rollinsville, Colorado. Limit 10 persons.

July 28, August 27: 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. - **The Game Drive Walls of Flattop Mountain**. All-day hike to the game drive walls, hunting blinds, and butchering sites on Flattop. These sites date from over 4,000 years Before Present to 350 years ago. While we will not climb to the summit of Flattop, we'll be above tree line, off the trail and doing some boulder hopping. 7 miles. Limit 15 persons.

July 31: Time TBA: Hike to **Timber Lake**. This 9.5 mile hike requires driving across Trail Ridge. One of the most beautiful lakes on the west side of the Park. Limit 15 persons.

August 11: 6 a.m. - 5 p.m. - **Mt. Ida**. Join Lulie and Jack for this spectacular 9 mile hike to Mt. Ida that overlooks Trail Ridge, Forest Canyon and peaks west of the Park. Spectacular 360 degree views. Limit 15 persons.

August 15: 7 a.m. - 3 p.m.: Hike to **Chasm Lake**. Lulie & Jack will take you on an 8.4 mile hike to one of the most beautiful lakes in Rocky Mountain National Park situated at the base of the Diamond of Longs Peak. Limit 15 persons.

LULA W. DORSEY MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

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