

# The North Fork Merchant Herald

**Digital History Edition  
Volume 24 - Number 2.5  
February 15, 2021**

**The Digital Version of the  
Newspaper From the Valley  
That Has its Mud Boots On**

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**NORTH FORK HISTORY:**

**The Ballad of  
Reuben Dove**

*By Thomas Wills*

It seems that every area has a story of a hermit or mysterious anti-social character that lived apart from "civilization" and everyone seems fascinated with because no one understood him in his own time. In the North Fork this almost universal myth story has attached itself to the life of Reuben Dove.

Reuben the man wasn't particularly mysterious. He was a mem-

ber of the pioneer Dove family which settled in the Crawford/Fruitland Mesa in the 1890's. He was born near Criders, Virginia on April 8, 1865. In 1888 he was reported in court records to be working in the Gunnison area as a timber cutter chopping trees and shaping them into railroad ties for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad.



**Rueben Dove's 1926 funeral was held at the Crawford Methodist Church and he was buried in the Garden of Memories cemetery behind the church - Tom Wills photo**

ber of the pioneer Dove family which settled in the Crawford/Fruitland Mesa in the 1890's. He was born near Criders, Virginia on April 8, 1865. In 1888 he was reported in court records to be working in the Gunnison area as a timber cutter chopping trees and shaping them into railroad ties for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad.

According to the story related by Cyrus Wells (Doc) Shores who was Sheriff of Gunnison County at the time, the boss of the job cheated Reuben out of part of his promised wages and Reuben got even by setting a large stack of the finished ties on fire one night. One story says an inspector rejected about three quarters of the ties that Dove had made over a season and Dove had

burned the culls, which the railroad had not paid for. Dove would have been only 23 years old at the time.

Shores says that he then pursued Dove up into the mountains and eventually caught and arrested him. Reuben then was convicted of burning the ties and served a sentence in the Gunnison County Jail.

After his release from jail, he reportedly came to the North Fork with, or just after, the main Dove clan's arrival. For some reason, he chose not to

settle near his family but instead ended up in the upper Leroux Creek area. He would have been a young man in his mid-twenties at the time and he was described as "a big good looking fellow with hair down to his shoulders."

According to an account by Lee Gray (HCHS collection) of the Rogers Mesa pioneer family who was a small boy when Dove first appeared, Reuben spent his first winter in an abandoned sawmill cabin somewhere called Duke's Stomp in the Leroux Creek area.

Gray said that: "He had some tools, for he built a lot of bee hives out of the lumber that was left there when

**Continued on page 18**

**LOCAL  
HISTORY:**

**Nineteen Ninety-Six  
and Seven:  
Part One - Hotchkiss**

*By Thomas Wills*

Nan Romane, the Herald's advertising, distribution and office/organizational goddess for the past four-plus years, recently undertook a project to sort through our collection of back issues stacked in cupboards, closets and boxes and assemble a couple of complete sets to reference and for future local historians: 1996 to 2021. The back issues are now stored in a set of neat binders with each copy slip-cased in plastic. It is now an easy matter to find a certain year or issue.

The Merchant Herald began as the Hotchkiss Merchant Herald in November of 1996 with the first issue dated December of that year. For the first three years the Herald was published by the Hotchkiss Community Chamber of Commerce as a sort of newsletter-promotional tool.

So, according to the Herald, what was happening in Hotchkiss in 1996-97—twenty-four years ago?

Compared to 2021, Hotchkiss in 1996-97, like the Valley in general was in the midst of a growth boom and had quite a few more small, eclectic retail shops. The Town of Hotchkiss built a new sewer treatment plant in 1996-97 that ended up costs more than expected. The County adopted a Master Plan in 1996 that divided the county into seven planning districts including the Leroux Creek Area. There was a controversy when an Eagle County developer closed a section of the Coal Road and blackmailed the BLM into trading him some land for the 90-year-old right of way.

And legendary British rock singer, Joe Cocker and his wife Pam, opened up the Mad Dog Fountain Café and Bakery in Crawford in November of 1997. There's a blast from the recent past!

December 1996 – The Herald was promoting people buying Christmas gifts locally. Linda Tuin's Fudge Factory/Country Home Store (plus antiques and gifts- 1996 Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year) at 290 West Bridge (Pack Shack in 2021), which had started a couple years before, was doing a good business. The Mountain Rainbow Shop – Otto and Carol Hadtstadt (112 W. Bridge) sharing half of the Garber Building with Coldwell Banker Realty was a craft and gift shop, and the town's second used bookstore. The first, Wills' Gallery and Used Books (229 W. Bridge) began in 1990 and in 1996 was advertising its expanded stock. Hotchkiss Pawn and Gifts, operated by Forrest and Midge Wheeler was located in the Old Town Hall/Bank of the North Fork building at 286 E. Bridge St. The business had previously included the

**Continued on page 8**

*From the O'Brien COVID-19 Report:*

## Thoughts and prayers to the friends and family to all those that passed away early due to COVID-19.

The O'Brien COVID-19 Report uses the raw daily COVID metrics from the State Dashboard and spreadsheets along with the Delta County Health Department (DCHD) Dashboard. The O'Brien COVID-19 Report provides additional metrics, trends, charts, and graphs beyond the DCHD Dashboard, delivered by email so that individuals can make better health care decisions.

The State and DCHD data are summarized into monthly statements, scaled to 100,000 population for comparison purposes, and additional metrics are calculated such as averages, high-watermarks, and 7-Day and 14-Day moving average graphs.

All calculated metrics are confirmed when possible against the State's metrics. Graphs are confirmed against the Harvard Brown School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, the New York Times, and the Washington Post websites.

Delta County COVID-19 Monthly Metrics as of January 22, 2021 at 5:00 PM							
Metrics Taken Directly from the Delta County Health Department (DCHD) Dashboard							
	Total New Cases (from DCHD)	Daily Case Average	Possible School Cases (Age 0-17)	Possible School Cases (Age 18-24)	All Other Cases (Age 25-64)	High Risk Age Cases (65+)	Total Deaths
March through October Cases from the DCHD Dashboard	217	1.0	17	22	141	37	3
November Cases from the DCHD Dashboard	430	14.4	42	40	250	98	8
December Cases from the DCHD Dashboard	932	30.1	105	101	515	211	14
January Cases from the DCHD Dashboard (through 1/22/2021)	622	28.3	56	50	320	196	20
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,201</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>1,226</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>45</b>

This ad paid for by Terry O'Brien as a public service on behalf of the people of Hotchkiss and Delta County.  
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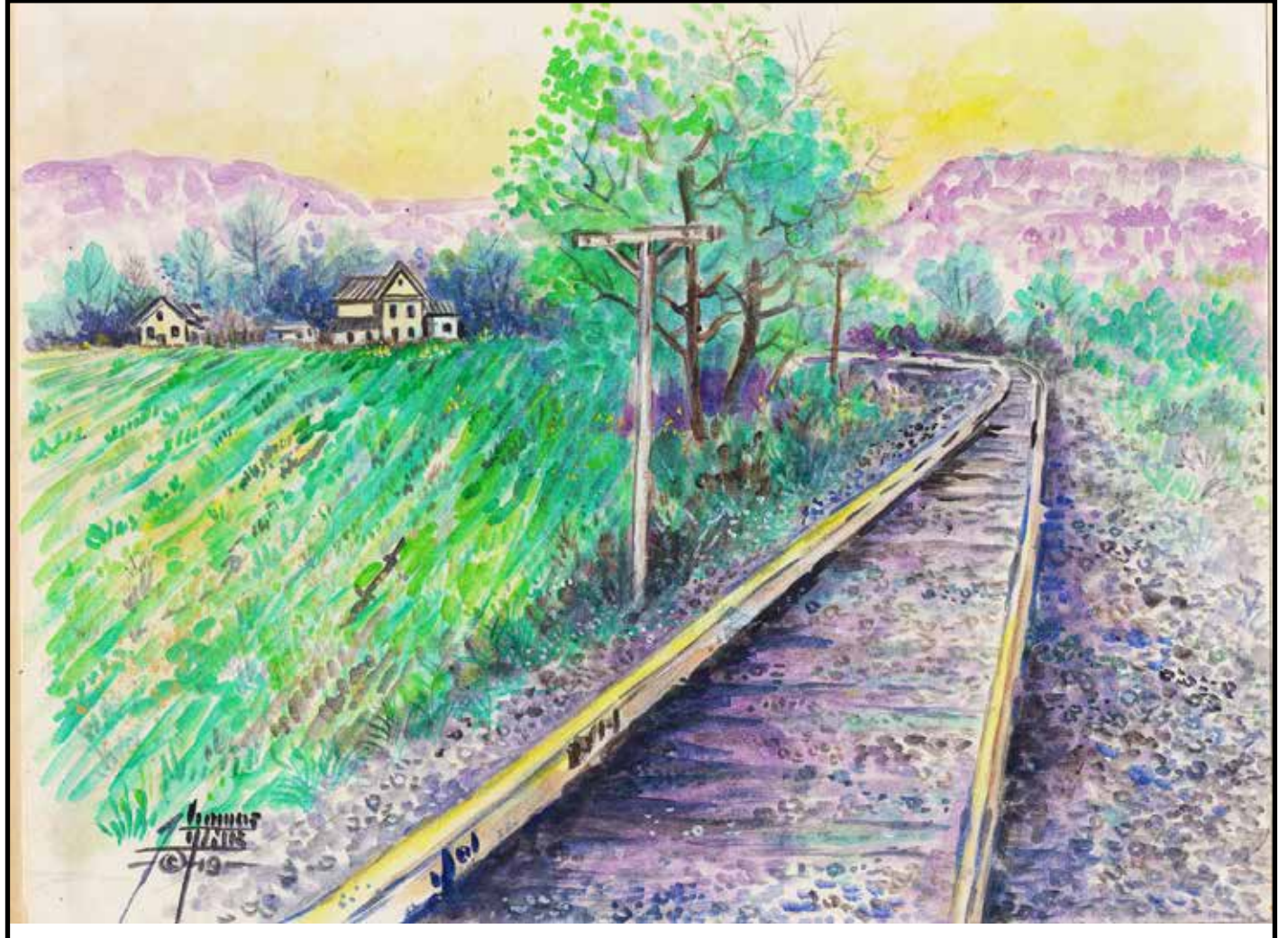
## Valley Railroad Days: From the Denver and Rio Grande to the Union Pacific

By Thomas Wills

The first Railroad Day in Hotchkiss began early on a pleasant Thursday morning on September 18 of 1902. The train started out from Delta at 8:00 a.m. with three full passenger cars full of people including some local residents who had traveled down to Delta the day before by horse and buggy in order to ride the first official train to travel from Delta to Hotchkiss over the newly laid tracks. The railroad had reached Delta twenty years earlier in 1882, a mere year after the former Ute lands were opened to white settlement, and when that city was just a few businesses and scattered homes and Hotchkiss was even less impressive.

In 1881, the Denver and Rio Grande tracks had been extended over Marshall Pass, arriving in Gunnison in August of that year, after the company purchased the toll road right-of-way owned by Otto Mears, who among other things had employed Enos Throop Hotchkiss to direct construction on a road from Saguache, in the San Luis Valley, to the mining camp of Lake City.

The train arrived at Hotchkiss just before 10:00 a.m. after having made a relatively slow journey by today's standards. A trip from Hotchkiss to Delta with a loaded wagon usually took two days with an overnight stop near Austin. The coming of the railroad was seen as a huge boon to the valley making the fruit and coal mining industries economically feasible. It was also an equal boost to the North Fork cattle ranchers who could now ship cattle out by rail. There were numerous other travel benefits including that in the case of medical emergencies a patient could be placed on a train and arrive at a Denver hospital in a day. The D&RG even operated their own hospital in Salida. *(Note: the writer was born in that facility in 1957. His family lived in Villa Grove in the upper San Luis Valley, south of Salida and just ten miles from Saguache, co-founded by Enos Hotchkiss.)*



Hotchkiss homestead house and railroad southwest of Hotchkiss - Tom Wills sketch - Private Collection

Upon arrival at Hotchkiss, the passengers on the first train from Delta found a huge welcome and a full and raucous day of activities taking place in a field at the Hotchkiss Ranch just south of town. Hotchkiss Mayor George H. Duke acted as Master of Ceremonies for the day. Speeches were made by a Congressman Bell and Hon. H.M. Hogg of Telluride.

After the round of speakers extolling the virtues of the railroad and the North Fork, everyone had dinner, which was served on the site. Everyone admired the display of locally grown fruit since it was at the height of local harvest season.

Then it was fun and games for the rest of the day which included foot races, horse races, rodeo events and a game of baseball played between Hotchkiss and Paonia teams. Paonia won. A boxing exhibition between two professionals imported for the occasion was stopped after a single round by the Town Marshal.

The celebration of Railroad Day in Hotchkiss continued for several decades.

The rails that reached Hotchkiss in 1902 were the less expensive narrow gauge. In 1914 the standard gauge tracks were laid.

That the D&RGW spur line was built from Delta to Somerset in 1902 was due to many factors, not the least was a determination on the part of General William Jackson Palmer, president of the D&RGW to beat any competition. Two other competing railroad routes into the upper Valley had been proposed at times. One could have been an extension of the Denver South Park and Pacific's (DSP&P) line to the coal mines of Baldwin and Castleton above Gunnison on over Ohio Pass. In fact, the first good roads accessing the Somerset area came not up the North Fork but east from Crested Butte over Kebler Pass. The D&RG had a railroad line that reached to and

well above Crested Butte at the time.

Another rail route was proposed to come over McClure Pass from the Crystal River Valley where there were also mines, many developed by J.C. Osgood the founder of Colorado Fuel and Iron, Company of Pueblo, Colorado. He also developed the marble mines near present town of Marble. At one time, Osgood proposed extending a rail line from the Crystal Valley over McClure Pass south into the upper North Fork to access the coal deposits there.

But with the Utah Fuel and Iron's (D&RGW's sister company) 1901 purchase of extensive coal mining claims in the Somerset area from shrewd Hotchkiss businessman/developer, John Edward Hanson, the railroad had the final economic piece in place on top of relatively easy access from their line at Delta. There was, as previously mentioned,

Continued on Page 7

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**FEBRUARY JOURNAL**

**January 25** – More light snow overnight and in the early morning. An emerging sun melted much of it in Hotchkiss by mid-day.

**January 26** – More snow in the mountains was welcomed while there was just a dusting across the Valley. Night time low temperatures are in the 20s. The February Herald went off to the printer.

The Paonia Town Council held their regular meeting on Zoom. It was relatively uneventful. It looks to be a couple months before anyone wanting to open a pot shop can apply to do so. The Council will be looking at a draft of proposed regulations at the end of February.

And, an anti-mask agenda man caused havoc at the Hotchkiss Library when he refused to both wear a mask or leave. Compounding this, the Hotchkiss police who responded were confused as to their powers to enforce the mask mandate (*which has the force of law under a declared health emergency*) and did not suggest filing simple trespass charges. They refused to remove the man. The Library then closed for the day to everyone.

**January 27** – Night time temperatures dropped into the teens in the central Valley. Another dusting of snow overnight followed by clearing skies.

Libraries remained closed due to the anti-masking incident as legal options were explored. The Hotchkiss Marshal's Office researched and confirmed that they *could* have either issued a citation to the man for failing/refusing to wear a mask in a public space in violation of the health emergency mandate, or for trespassing at the request of the library. The officers will know better next time.

**January 28** – Warming temperatures rose well above freezing in Hotchkiss, with mud and water puddles emerging.

**January 29** – Some more light snow fell across the Valley overnight. The Montrose Daily Press reported that it is still a dry winter and major late winter snowfall in the mountains is needed to avoid 2021 irrigation worries.

**January 31** – Noticing that some lamb's quarter (native edible greens) plants were poking up inside my coldframe, I planted some snow peas just to add some early tastes of the coming season.

**February 1** – Overcast but relatively warm. With spring still in the future, mud season seems to have arrived.

**February 2** – The thaw locally continues as the Northeast U.S. received over a foot of snow in places.

I stopped by the Hotchkiss Public

**Another Month in the Valley**

*By Thomas Wills  
Publisher - Editor*

Library, where enforced masking and distancing protocols were firmly in place, to find that Hotchkiss Library hours have been further reduced to a single day, Tuesdays.

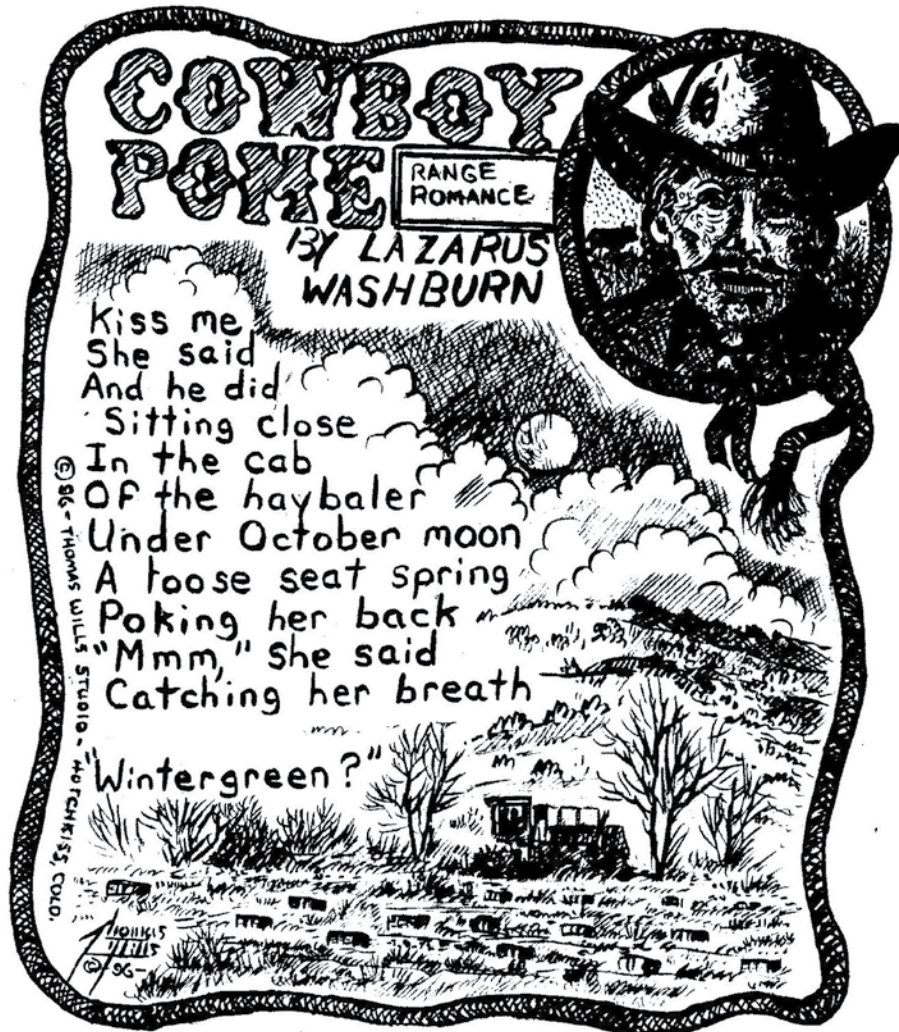
**February 3** – Almost balmy during the day. Rain in the evening.

**February 4** – A dusting of



snowfall.

Business in the bookstore was steady as I baked bread in the vintage woodfired kitchen range (in the cookbook/ health section) and had a big pot of chili going. Stubby the Cat stayed busy greeting newcomers.



snow fell on Hotchkiss overnight. I reviewed the contents of a new Hotchkiss Downtown Improvement website and was amused to find that results of a recent survey included the question: How does downtown Hotchkiss make you feel? The top two answers by quite a bit were: 1. Nothing in particular and 2. Neutral. Maybe there should be new entrance signs that say: Welcome to Hotchkiss – Meh...

**February 5** – A drop in daytime temperature and overcast. Mount Lamborn and the West Elks were shrouded in clouds and hopefully,

**February 7**–Sunday. A pleasant, sunny day across the Valley. Nan reported that she had the first dandelion bloom of the season in a warm spot in front of her south-facing Hotchkiss Avenue home.

**February 8** – Another sunny day. I worked outside clearing the last of the 2020 seasons remains from my raised beds (actually, old orchard fruitboxes filled with created soils).

**February 9** – The Paonia Town Council continued to meet via Zoom, an internet application for meetings that allows both the council and visitors to be visible and heard on computer screens.

**February 10** – A light rain was falling at 5 a.m. when I let the cat out. The sun poked in and out during the mild feeling day. I'm seeing more and more tufts of green, hardy grass emerging.

**February 11** – The Hotchkiss Town Council met "virtually" in the evening via Zoom. It was announced that the charming Kris Hillman has tendered her resignation as Trustee meaning that the Town will be advertising for a replacement. Lots of discussion of water issues.

**February 12** – A little light rain in the morning and hopefully some nice snow in the mountains.

**February 13** – Rain and snow depending upon where you were. McClure Pass was closed overnight due to danger of avalanches. Very good sales day in the bookstore the last two days after three very slow days. (I sold eight BookCards!) That's life in retail.

**February 14** - A nice snow of several inches fell overnight as the Valley and region got a taste of the winter storms that are affecting much of the nation. A gentle version for us, as some cities in Texas were brought to a standstill by about the same amount of snow and cold as Hotchkiss and Paonia received.

**February 15** – A little more snow overnight; just a dusting but the roads were icy this morning. The sun came out for a while but after sunset it was snowing lightly again.

**February 16** - More snow and colder temperatures locally as the polar vortex was pushed downward as far as Texas by warming in the Arctic. The plus for us is some nice snowfall in the basin's high country, which had been well below the 30-year median average for accumulation.

**Business News and Other Rumours**

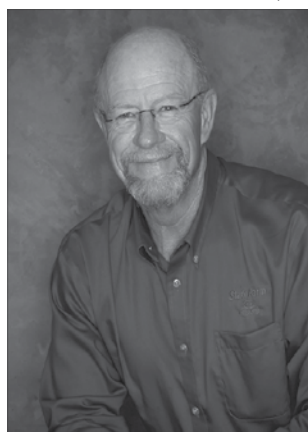
**KVNF Public Radio** announced on January 27 that they have hired Alex Reed as their new Membership Manager.

**The Creamery Arts Center** in Hotchkiss will be reopening on Friday, March 5 after a two-month winter break from having the retail gallery open.

Local realtor, Gary Hubbell, reports that **the Stahl Orchard property** at the entrance to Paonia has new owners.

Hubbell said in a Facebook post that "the plan is to keep raising fruit on the orchard, and they have some interesting ideas for the horse pasture property at the entrance to town between Stahl Road and Samuel Wade Road."

In early February the USGS snowpack maps showed our greater area (Gunnison Basin) in **extreme drought** with about 78% of the 30-year median (what is referred to as "normal") in water content contained in winter snowpack. The North Fork snow test sites



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**Continued on page 15**

# Hotchkiss Trustee Resigns Water Issues Bob to the Surface

By Thomas Wills

**Hotchkiss Town Council**  
February 11, 2021

*Present (on Zoom): Mayor Larry Wilkening, Mary Hockenbery -mayor pro-tem, John Marta, Jim Wingfield, Patricia Medina, and Patrick Webb.*

### Trustee Kris Hillman Resigns

It was announced that recently appointed trustee Kris Hillman had submitted her resignation due to health-related reasons. The Town is advertising for a replacement who will possibly be appointed at the March 11 meeting. Any applicant must be an in-town resident, 18 or older, who has resided in the Town limits for at least the past 12 months. The appointment will run until the April 2022 municipal election.

Terry O'Brien, who ran for a trustee spot in 2020, has submitted a letter of interest.

**Irrigation Water Leases.** Water. That was the topic that drew the most discussion at the February Hotchkiss Town Council meeting. First the trustees

### Back River Road Water Tap Request

Then, the trustees voted to reject a request from John Odle to purchase three out-of-town water taps on Back River Road. The line in question is only two-inches in diameter and already oversubscribed, resulting in very low pressure at times. Trustee Jim Wingfield questioned whether the Town should be selling taps on a line where proper water pressure cannot be supplied. Town attorney Bo Nerlin noted that the Town *could* sell taps there with a disclaimer attached about the reduced quality of service. Public Works Director, Mike Owens noted that 2021 appears to be yet another dry year and he wondered if it was wise for the Town to be selling *any* out-of-town taps in a year when in-town residents will probably be asked to conserve water?

The trustees agreed and denied the request although they had approved the sale of one tap on the line a few months previously while stressing that the Town would not guarantee adequate pressure. It was noted that Bone Mesa Domestic Water District, which also serves that area, has no taps available at this time.



**1966 construction on the First State Bank.** The top story was removed from the vintage brick structure, everything modernized, and building extended to take in the Ataway building at right. First State became United Business Bank in 2019.  
*The Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Museum has an extensive collection of historical photos.*

considered bids to lease the Town's shares in the Fire Mountain Canal and the Overland Ditch and Reservoir. The Town purchased the water many years ago in anticipation of their primary year-round Leroux Creek water source someday becoming inadequate in peak summer season. In order to keep the shares in use they are leased out for two-year terms.

The surprise this year was that, in a change from the usual single bidder on each, there were multiple bidders for both groups of shares. Of the three bidders for the Fire Mountain water, the present lease-holder, Baker Ranches LLC, had the winning bid of \$2,603.36 per year for two years for the Town's 848 shares, which comes to .58 cubic feet per second. Basic assessment charges for the shares have been \$1,240 per year most recently.

Trustees chose to reject all three bids for the 300 shares of Overland Ditch since the best bid only covered the yearly assessment costs and no more. The Town will readvertise for a new round of bidding on the water. Overland Ditch serves Redlands Mesa but crosses Leroux Creek at one point so the Town's water could, if needed, technically be transferred there and then onward to the Town's takeout on the Highline Ditch at the top of Rogers Mesa. That water, in a good year, comes to about 1.5 cfs., running from about June 1 to September 1. The 2021 snowpack at Overland, according to the USGS, is only about 72% of normal (30 year) median this year so far.

**Building Code Fees.** The Trustees approved a resolution to adopt building codes fees with new construction based on 80% of the national average building costs. That percentage is the general average for our region. The council had spent a couple of months going back and forth between 75% and 80% after adopting the newest 2018 version of the International building codes for the Town. The codes include a building inspection fee schedule.

### Trash Rate Up Again

The trustees approved a request from the Town's contract trash hauler, Double J Disposal of Orchard City, to raise rates by 50 cents per account to cover the cost of a recent rise in the tipping fee charge at the Delta County dump at Eckert. Hotchkiss resident saw an earlier rise in trash fees as of the first of the year when the new contract with Double J went into effect.

### Other actions and discussion:

Trustee Mary Hockenbery passed on news from the Chamber of Commerce's Kim Shay, that the planned electric vehicle charging station will be installed by Atlasta Solar at the Hotchkiss Crawford Museum sometime in March.

Mayor Wilkening reported that One Delta County (economic development) will have board meeting every other month and, among other things, they are looking at the opportunity zones within the county.

# News From the Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Museum

Notes from Karen Lacey -  
HCHS Board President

Our museum is trudging away with projects that are adding to our already great collections of history resource materials. We are not just an object(s) museum as I mentioned to someone here lately. Besides the newspaper project that has been in the works for a couple of years, close to 100 cassettes of recorded oral histories of local people are being digitally recorded and saved for the future.

There will be a plan in place for copies to be made if you for a minimal fee in the future.

As usual we are on a constant search for volunteers to help with keeping the museum open on the weekends when we get back to our regular schedule.

It takes a village to raise a child and I say that with the museum in mind

also.....We seriously need more helping hands, bodies and brains to continue what we've been doing for the past 45+ years.....There are/were ladies here who have been volunteering for 20 or more and it's time to get new help.... please think about it, we have experts who will guide and educate all who come to help.

Volunteering is an opportunity to learn about the history of the North Fork, your family or your neighbors' family. Our museum is full of family history files, most things are cross referenced so it's easy to find out or see a picture of what you are looking for. It's an opportunity to learn about historic events and everyday happenings.

Please consider becoming a volunteer or supporting member of the Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Society.

While the snow flies, dream of the

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# HOTCHKISS MUNICIPAL COURT Junk, Speeders, and Failing to Show Up

By Thomas Wills

February 11, 2021

Judge Lynn French presiding:

Due to the pandemic, attendance at the Hotchkiss Municipal Court continues to be restricted to those directly involved in cases. This report is written from court results provided by Marshal Dan Miller.

Ezekeal Donte West pled guilty to a charge of operating a vehicle with an expired driver's license. A \$22 fine was assessed and a second charge of failing to provide proof of insurance was continued until the March 11 court.

Jared Nelson of 210 East Orchard pled not guilty to accumulation or garbage, accumulation of refuse, and junk vehicles on private property and will appear for a trial to the court on March 11. Generally, in such cases property owners receive a (red tag) warning and are give a few weeks to show some progress before a summons is issued.

Craig Mathew Blevins of

Hotchkiss, scheduled for pre-trial on an assault charge, saw the charge dropped and the case dismissed.

Wesley Ryan Ewert of Paonia pled guilty to failing to observe a traffic control device and was assessed a fine of \$111 plus \$50 in court costs.

In a case review, it was determined that Ryan William Cole of Hotchkiss/Hanson Mesa had failed to make arranged payment required after conviction on multiple vehicle/traffic related charges. He will be summoned to show cause as to why he should not be held in contempt of court.

Denise Ann Astbury of Westminster, CO failed to pay her ticket or appear on a speeding charge and her information was sent to the State.

Casey James Dagnan of Hotchkiss failed to pay a ticket, or appear in court, on a charge of failing to yield the right of way at an intersection. His FTA information was sent to the State.

Note: Charges are merely accusations and those charged should be considered innocent until they either plead guilty or are found guilty by the court.



**Judge Lynn French**  
Town of Hotchkiss Municipal  
Judge since 1979

## HOTCHKISS BOOKMAN: History, History, History...

By Tom Wills - Wills' Gallery and Books  
229 West Bridge St. Hotchkiss  
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(970)872-2664

In these turbulent historical times, I'm seeing a lot of interest in History.

One of the better stock sections in my bookstore is the history section, which is divided into several separate areas: Western and Regional History, General History, Civil War, and Military History.

In Western and Regional History I try to keep the local, regional and Colorado-specific books together. These

range from locally published books to general histories of the state. The section includes some pretty hard to find stuff priced at well below Internet costs.

General History takes up one whole wall and includes recent literary non-fiction history books along with a wide range of volumes about American and world history.

There is an extensive Civil War history collection and I am in the process of reestablishing a general military history section after the previous area was taken over by the expansion of Western and Regional History.

# HOTCHKISS MARSHAL'S REPORT

## Anti-Masker at Library Results in Policy Clarification

By Thomas Wills (using monthly report and additional information from Marshal Dan Miller.)

check were conducted during the month of January.

**January 26 -Hotchkiss Library Incident:** The Hotchkiss Library District reported: "On the afternoon of Tuesday, January 26, an individual entered Hotchkiss Library and refused to wear a mask. After several requests were made, library staff members asked the individual to leave the building. The individual refused to leave. At that time, and in accordance with the library district's current procedures, a library staff member called local law enforcement in to remove the individual. Upon arrival, law enforcement officers (Ed. Sgt. Chad Lloyd and a female deputy) questioned, but ultimately refused to remove the individual from the library." The library then closed and ushered everyone out.

Marshal Dan Miller later told the Herald that the officers were in error in not removing the individual for a State mask mandate violation or after inquiring as to possible trespass charges. The Department's policy, after extensive research and consultation with the Town Attorney has now been clarified as to how to respond in such situations.

The District libraries, including Hotchkiss, were closed in response for two days and Hotchkiss reopened for a single day per week—Tuesdays for six hours. An employee at Hotchkiss Library said that the reduction in hours was due to a personnel shortage.

For the month of January 2021 there were 110 logged incidents, some of which may resulted from single response calls. On the 110 items over half, 65, were vehicle or traffic related. Of those there were 41 traffic contacts, 20 Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) inspections that most usually take place when an out-of-state vehicle is reregistered in Colorado. There were also four traffic accidents that were investigated.

Other items included: one unlawful sexual contact, one assault (strong arm) that was family-related and involved "hands, feet, or fists", one shoplifting incident, two fraud incidents, one case of identity theft, one violation of court-ordered protection order, one harassment, one disorderly conduct, one criminal mischief, one theft of a vehicle, one suicidal threat, and one fugitive from justice was arrested.

Other minor issues included: three responses to alarms going off, three animal problems (usually dogs), nine medical assists, two agency assists, five welfare checks, one civil problem, three code enforcement actions, and one citizen assist.

No stolen property was listed as being recovered during the month of January. 59 home and business security



## Valley Museums Store Local History During Historic Times

By Thomas Wills

We are living in historic times, locally as well as nationally. Or rather, we are *always* living in historic times, but some periods are more eventful than others. Like now.

History's lessons cannot teach us anything if we don't have access to, and are adequately educated on the details of past history on all levels, including local history.

Which brings us to the local historical societies and museums in Paonia and Hotchkiss. These institutions are important as storehouses of local information about Valley history along with artifacts of the past. Resources include: newspapers, obituary files, historic

photographs, historic documents, family histories, and objects of local/general historical significance. Paonia's museum complex includes the entire, relocated Bowie School, while in Hotchkiss a nineteenth century log cabin is attached to the museum.

Memberships and financial donations for the Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Society can be sent to: P.O. Box 724 - Hotchkiss, CO 81419 Board president, Karen Lacey, may be contacted for information at (970) 872-2586.

The North Fork Historical Society and Museum would be happy to receive financial donations and memberships at P.O. Box 1239 Paonia, CO 81428 (970) 527-3470.

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## Paonia Considers Opposition to BLM's RMP

By Thomas Wills

Paonia Town Council  
February 9, 2021

### Western Slope Conservation Center Requests Town Support on Reversing RMP

The new executive director of the WSCC, the Paonia based environmental issues organization, Tanya Henderson, asked the Paonia Town Council at their February 9 virtual meeting to consider sending a letter requesting Senators John Hickenlooper and Michael Bennet to support efforts change the mandates in the newly adopted BLM Uncompaghre Resource Management Plan (RMP). To that end, Henderson provided a pre-written draft letter.

The letter noted that despite previous input from the Town of Paonia, urged on by local farm/environmental interests, the BLM-RMP did not include addressing the Town's concerns stating:

*"In the Town's protest on the final plan, we noted that the plan ignores the input of the Town across the board and downplays the significant health and environmental risks associated with oil and gas development proximate to our community, fails to consider the impact on the local agricultural economy, and offers nearly the entirety of the federal mineral estate within the North Fork Valley to development without adequately assessing the impacts on surrounding communities."*

The draft letter goes on to note that there are multiple lawsuits challenging the RMPs focus on fossil fuel extraction, including one filed by the State of Colorado. The Colorado Senators are urged to help stop the direction of the current RMP concluding: *"We hope that you'll partner with us in finding a permanent solution to federal land management in our Valley that is*

*aligned and in tune with the values of our community to keep the North Fork fruitful."*

Other North Fork organizations including Citizens for a Healthy Community (CHC), and the Valley Organic Growers Association (VOGA) have urged similar actions and have praised the Biden Administration's recent pause on the consideration of new oil and gas leases on federal lands. WSCC is part of the Keep the North Fork Fruitful initiative: [KeeptheNorthFork.org](http://KeeptheNorthFork.org).

### Public Comment Versus a Public Argument

In the meeting packet Town Administrator/Clerk Corinne Ferguson, asked that consideration of changes to meeting formats be deferred until the Council could return to in-person meetings. Also shared in the packet were article about how while Town Councils needed to listen to public input there should not be "back and forth" debates with the public. Trustee Dave Knutson had previously asked for a discussion of ways to have more open discussions among the trustees and public. But, at regular meetings even allowing multiple comments from usually only two of the more vocal local critics had begun to become unmanageable with the Mayor asking for only one comment per public member per issue.

In a shared article from the Jurassic Parliament blog, it was noted that while Council meetings are held in the public eye, they are "not meetings of the public."

So the issue remains as to how adequate public input can be allowed, received, and considered, while not bringing the deliberative work of the council to a grinding halt. Knutson suggested separate, more informal, work sessions.

## Paonia Discusses Short Term Rentals (STR) and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)


By Thomas Wills

Governmental Affairs committee members Mick Johnson and Michelle Pattison hosted a public Zoom meeting on January 14 to take input from the public on options for regulating short term rentals (STRs) within the town. Johnson noted that the current Town land use code does not address the issue, which has risen to the fore with popularity of Internet sites like AirBnB and VRBO that allow homeowners to more easily run STR business in their home or property. The committee is exploring how other communities regulate STRs. The issue was brought up by residents as an issue during the Master Plan process.

One concern among some is that short-term rentals can, when they involve entire homes, have the side-effect of eliminating rental housing stock for long term residents at a time of a tight supply and high prices. Short

term rentals also sometimes function as motels/hotels/B&Bs without collecting the County lodging tax or paying commercial property taxes like more formal lodging businesses. So, the issues become: should STRs be allowed and if so where, and under what conditions? While paying proper lodging and property taxes. And what about the difference between absentee landlords renting whole homes as STRs vs someone just renting out an occasional spare room. Then there is the question of zoning since STRs could be seen as running businesses in neighborhoods that are not zoned for business uses. Should STRs be reviewed as home-based businesses?

In town resident Sharin Patterson questioned the need for regulating short-term rentals. She thought that it sounded like more government interference into private




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Originally from Oklahoma, Dr. Scholle attended medical school at Ross University of Medicine in Dominica, a small island in the Caribbean. As a new physician he began his residency training in General Surgery in Baltimore, Maryland where he learned his passion for rural medicine. After starting his first practice in the remote location of Salmon, Idaho, Dr. Scholle experienced the full scope of rural healthcare.

## Railroad History continued from page 3

enough agricultural development in the Valley by 1902 to make the line even more profitable.

**Later.** By mid-century, with automobiles, trucks and much improved roads, the Hotchkiss and Paonia railroad shipping/passenger depots were eventually closed and the North Fork spur of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad was limited to the shipping of coal from the upper Valley mines.

Forward to 1974 when the Paonia railroad depot was officially closed. The depot had, for most practical purposes, been closed for many years since passenger service had been suspended in the early 1950's (a dedicated daily passenger train was stopped in 1931) followed by freight service except for hauling coal from the mines. Although the Hotchkiss depot had been closed and sold a decade before, some "railroad business" was conducted from the Paonia depot until

displaced by modern technology.

Following the official closings both of the Town depots were removed. The Hotchkiss depot, located at about Third and High Street, closed in 1962, was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Harris Williams of Grand Junction in 1969, who, had the entire structure trucked some 55 miles to a site on Blue Mesa overlooking the lake where it became their summer weekend home.

According to a 1974 story by historian/reporter Muriel Marshall, the Paonia Chamber of Commerce, under then President Ken Byers of Dependable Lumber, made an attempt to get the D&RG to donate the old Paonia depot to them and have it moved to a site where it could become a Chamber office. That effort was apparently unsuccessful.

Rio Grande purchased the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1988 operating as Southern Pacific, and then in 1996 Union Pacific and Southern Pacific merged under the Union Pacific name.



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# Hotchkiss in 1996-1996

## Continued from Page One

Wheeler's Hotchkiss Video but that had been sold, and in the summer of 1996 the Wheelers build an addition onto the east side of their building and expanded their gift/variety business. Another gift shop, Mary Lee Lemoine's Jay Creek LTD begun in 1989 at 385 E. Bridge St., was still doing well.

The Leroux Creek Inn (Tom Leach) opened in 1996 at 1220 3100 Road. In 2021 it is still in business with subsequent owners Yvon Gros and Joanna Gilbert. The Russ Ochs family was celebrating their first year as the new owners of the High Country Gardens plant greenhouses on Rogers Mesa at 2930 Hwy. 92. The Ochs have the business for sale in 2020. Don Olsen and Cindy Wehling of Hotchkiss were celebrating the Valley Chronicle features paper being in business since 1992 when it was founded by Joan Leon. They had since taken over ownership. Tri-R Liquors (180 W. Bridge next to Roberts Shortstop) was advertising having 20 different Colorado produced

in the building as of December 1996. The building had been renovated by new owner Julia Ferry Littlefield, who had also purchased the sprawling Scenic Mesa Ranch south of town where she was establishing a herd of bison.

There were two busy bars in town: The Past Times Tavern and The West Elk Inn, which was also a restaurant and featured a dance floor and bands on weekends. There were also four attorneys having offices in town: three making up the firm of (Jim) Briscoe, (Greg) Stanway & (Steve) Harper and Michael J. McCarthy. Karen and Jeff Sartain's Valley Sign and Design were also staying busy. Lloyd and Carol Burdick operated North Standard Service and Motel at the west end of town (92 Hwy 133) at the 133/92 intersection. Dr. Loren Steenson served as Hotchkiss dentist at North Fork Family Dentistry (164 E. Bridge) from 1994-97.

The Barlow Rooming House building (280 E. Bridge St. - a private rental residence in 2021) was renovated into a sort of Alternative Health Center in 1996 that included an Ayurvedic Skin Therapist, a naturopathic doctor, and an acupuncturist, massage therapist, a chiropractor and a mid-wife.

In 1996, Forget Me Not Antiques (Gretchen Scanlon) opened in the unit of the Hotchkiss Hotel that is a Pilates fitness center in 2021. Another antique shop, Hotchkiss Trading Company (Ernie



wines. Next door, Roberts Shortstop gas station/convenience store was a gathering place for local chew-the-fat coffee-shop conversation presided over by the unofficial mayor of West Hotchkiss, Tommy Roberts.

The Ark II - antiques and collectibles (Liz Lillien) continued to add flavor to downtown in the east corner of the Hotchkiss Hotel - 101 W. Bridge. The Coyote Drive-In at 117 E. Bridge St., a retro 50s style drive-in, was a lively spot in downtown with owners Ronnie and Ron Heatherington. The pre-merger Hotchkiss Community Federal Credit Union (Charlene L. Price - manager) was located downtown sharing a building with The Neill Agency Insurance (Travis Neill) next door to a brand new (1996) cinderblock/brick-faced building constructed by the First State Bank of Hotchkiss located across the street. Gambles/Our Own Hardware of Hotchkiss (John and Stephanie Williams) had just moved into the new structure, expanding their business, which had previously been in the Barrow Building next to the Hotchkiss Elks lodge.

At the Taylor Building next to First State Bank (122 E. Bridge - Shadescapes Americas in 2021) Chamber President, Michael Stone, operated Gallery Connections/Framery and Carol Youngblood had just opened No Bologna Deli in an off-the-cross-alley unit. Tickle Your Fancy Beauty and Tanning Parlor was also located

and Katie Gnauck and Jim Briscoe) was located at 215 E. Bridge between the West Elk Inn and Taylor Mortuary. D.C. Fabrics (Della Collins) was located at 148 E. Bridge Street in 1996-97.

Hardin's Natural Foods (Jim and Thresa Hardin) opened on Rogers Mesa (3144 Hwy 92) in 1996. Hotchkiss and Delta County entered the Internet age with dial-up service via Grand Junction, which was no longer a long-distance call thanks to TDS Telecom. Remember those AOL chat rooms and the weird sound dial-up modems made?

**Hotchkiss Sewer Plant Construction Battle.** In 1996 the Town of Hotchkiss was in the process of constructing a new sewer plant south of town on Riverpark Road. The December 1996 Herald reported that the several Chamber officers (Mike Stone, Nathan Sponseller, and this writer) made an unofficial tour of the portion of the newly purchased property that was planned as a future public-access river front park. A quarter century later, no action has been taken to develop public access or amenities for the land that was partially purchased with GOCO lottery money.

In December of 1996 the contractor Nordstrom-Davis withdrew from the project due to a contract dispute and Town had to hire a new company to complete the work as well as ultimately, after a court ruling, paying off the

**Continued on Page 9**



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Colleen Hansen, Blue Sage Center, North Fork Senior Connections  
and others.



**1996 - 97**

Continued From Page 8

first. The plant had been scheduled for completion in November 1996. It took until April of 1997 to rebid the project and then only a single bid for \$1.04 million was submitted by Triad Construction of Cortez. This was \$300,000 more than the original bid by Nordstrom-Davis. The bid was approved in May after the price was reduced by about \$85,000. The plant was completed in the fall of 1997, one full year behind schedule. An open house celebration was held at the plant and North Fork Wildlife Park on November 1, 1997.

In a final coda, after another year of court wrangling, in 1998 Nordstrom-Davis was awarded \$251,952 for the work they had done in 1996. In the end the project the plant cost more than \$400,000 more than the original bid but the Town now had an expandable sewer plant good for many decades of growth.

**Coal Road Controversy.** In 1996 Eagle-based developer Steve Peters, who owned property on both sides of the section of the Coal Road above Hotchkiss claimed that there wasn't a legal right of way in his section despite it being in steady public use for about 90 years. In the end, Peters was successful in getting the government (BLM) to trade him some land elsewhere in exchange for the right of way after the Delta County Commissioners refused to be proactive and take Peters to court. The trade was finalized in mid-1998.

In 1996 Delta County adopted their first substantial Master Plan that included dividing the county into seven separate planning districts based on watershed areas. The unincorporated area around Hotchkiss from Jay Creek on the West and including Redlands Mesa on the east was called the Leroux Creek Planning Area and an eleven-member board was appointed by the County Commissioners to review subdivision proposals before they were then reviewed by the main Delta County Planning Commission.

**1997 Businesses:** In early 1997 Harry and Tuckie Carey operated North Fork Mail Station in house at 192 W. Main doing UPS shipping and U-Haul rentals. Warren Robinson's Service Drug (Rexall) was still going strong at 142 E. Bridge (now Levels Gym with one of the old Rexall signs still on the front.) The Pet Peddler/Western Slope Bird Taxidermy (Cindy Price) opened in the Fair/Patterson Building (130 W. Bridge) in February of 1997. In April 1997 the Herald reported that Dan and Sue Stucker were opening Hotchkiss Rentals at 3005 Hwy. 92 just south of town. In February the Eakin family sold Hotchkiss Feed and Tack on south 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to Jerry and Pat Sollenbarger of Crawford. In May, the Peace Circle of the Methodist Church expanded their small Warehouse thrift shop in the Memorial Hall basement into the "Art Room" that had been long used by the Hotchkiss Fine Arts Assn. and other community groups for meetings.

In 1997 First State Bank's Community Housing Development arm was busy building a second large commercial building that eventually became the home of the North Fork Vision Center. The Bank and development arm both led by then bank President John McCallister built three commercial buildings downtown, and three new homes on Main Street approved in 1997.

And looking at the period in the Valley, one of the most talked about new businesses of 1997 was Pam and Joe Cocker's construction of the Mad Dog Fountain Café and Bakery, a renovation of the old Hagie's Grocery that kicked off a revitalization of downtown Crawford and was a nice boost for the whole Valley. The

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# Marla's Valley: The Goat Who Got His Tongue Stuck to the Gate and Other Small Troubles in a World of Larger Ones.

All by Marla Bear Bishop – Fruitland Mesa, Crawford Country and beyond correspondent

February has arrived as it always does, ready to put some sugar in our already holidayed-out bodies. Once again, the days are getting longer, looking forward to spring, and dark enough to remind us that winter is definitely still here waiting for snow to help our coming summer.

I really do enjoy the month of LOVE! I know it puts unwanted pressure on some that have cooler hearts and other's think it's corny but who needs a dark cloud ruining what can be a sweet time to consider that there's many ways to show that you care—when all you have to do is be kind. Yes, love in the time of COVID has its limitations for sure but there are still flowers, homemade Valentines, chocolate, jewelry and my favorite, cookies from **Blue Sky Bakery** at **Farm Runners** in Hotchkiss. They are mighty difficult to share but it can be done if you get enough of them.

It's been more than cold up here on the Mesa, colder than in town and lots colder than it is in Hotchkiss. I'm telling you this as a preamble as to how my goat got her tongue stuck on her pen gate. The blame is on the lasagna noodles if there was/is to be blame. The weather and the noodles were a bad combo. There always seem to be the wrong amount of those big wide ruffle pasta strips when I make lasagna. I keep them in the fridge for a while forever thinking that I could use them for something. Nothing can be made from them because no matter what, they look like lasagna. On day five, I feed them to the goat—one by one and by hand. This gives me some quality time to hold our bond. Yes, I know she's only interested in the noodle but I pretend she's purring at me. I soaked the noodles in some vegetable broth to make them extra delicious and nutritious and, in turn, this made them not only tasty but also damp. Damp to wet if I'm to be precise in the re-telling of this, yet another barnyard drama. I was feeding the giant pasta strips through the gate and it was 12 degrees out. One of the noodles stuck to the gate and the goat went for it like white on rice. Actually, like tongue on noodle on metal post. What a calamity. What bleating to break all the hearts for miles around. I ran inside for a pan of warm water and the windows were shaking with the most



**Marla takes a horseback phone call regarding her delinquent Fruitland Mesa water bill.** Photo By Friends of Marla

horrifying gut-wrenching screams. Out I ran with the warm water and tossed it on the obvious problem and voila! Instant release! Now the best thing about a goat is that they never hold on to trauma. This goat was asking for the noodles again immediately after she was thought to be dying. This time I decided to open the gate and feed the rest out of a bowl, and this I shall do for any further treats until the weather is above freezing.

Feeling a bit out of sorts writing of the minutia in life while all around

me in this world many suffer the troubled times of politics and pandemic. How blessed are we, shouldering big troubles such as a missing puzzle piece, a flat tire, mismatched socks, lack of a good haircut, another invasion of snow fleas, (those guys I once loved and actually sought out with my spy glass), or a clever and resourceful mouse in one's house? How lucky are we to view our sunrises and sunsets with astonishment over and over again, never tiring of the landscape? Yes, I know that real trouble

exists within our lives, medical, emotional, familial, financial and whatever else looms in the dark out there but that said, the majority of the North Fork Valley residents will give and receive help from neighbors if they are in trouble. Thank-you Farm Runners, Cindie Sorensen, Isaiah Bristow and everyone who has contributed to food banks, food boxes and other supplies during these last several stressful months.

I'm grateful and full of love for every family member, friend, fan, and even some of my secret foes, for my riding horse, and the Cowgirls I ride with, (the dogs gave me the look that reminds me that I love them, too.) Ok, with all the honking and beeping going on around me, I love them all, I do. Let this month be the time to remember all who bring the love to you and you to them. Recognition of the good in our lives.

How many of you can say you love your insurance agent? Mine is Kevin Parks and I can say I love him. This is a shout-out to the guy who recently spent over an hour and a half on the phone with me while I negotiated the tough terrain of the Medicare and Social Security mumble jumble. If Kevin doesn't have the answers, he finds them. If I have questions any time on my old vehicles, my tiny home, my precious life, all I have to do is call and if he's busy, I get a timely call back. I have his cell phone number. Maybe some can get less costly rates? Maybe. I don't care because the sound of Kevin's voice is worth having him in charge of my tiny empire. If you are new to the area, Kevin has his State Farm offices local. He's been here forever. I recommend him. He's my Valentine to you.

Crawford Country and beyond extends a sad farewell to Dick Hansen and sends condolences to Susan and all the family. He will be missed. Also, the passing of former Crawford resident Aron Ciegieski long before his time has us holding his mother, Hendrika, in our thoughts.

Ok, there's a word limit and so I say, move forward in love, keep your heart open but also protected from those who don't show it honor and respect. Heads up all ya'all!

*(Postscript: Marla shared over the phone some sweet memories of Rick Brodel, who passed away on January 11. Rick lingers in our hearts.)*

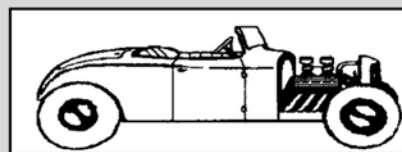
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Paonia Water Advisory Committee

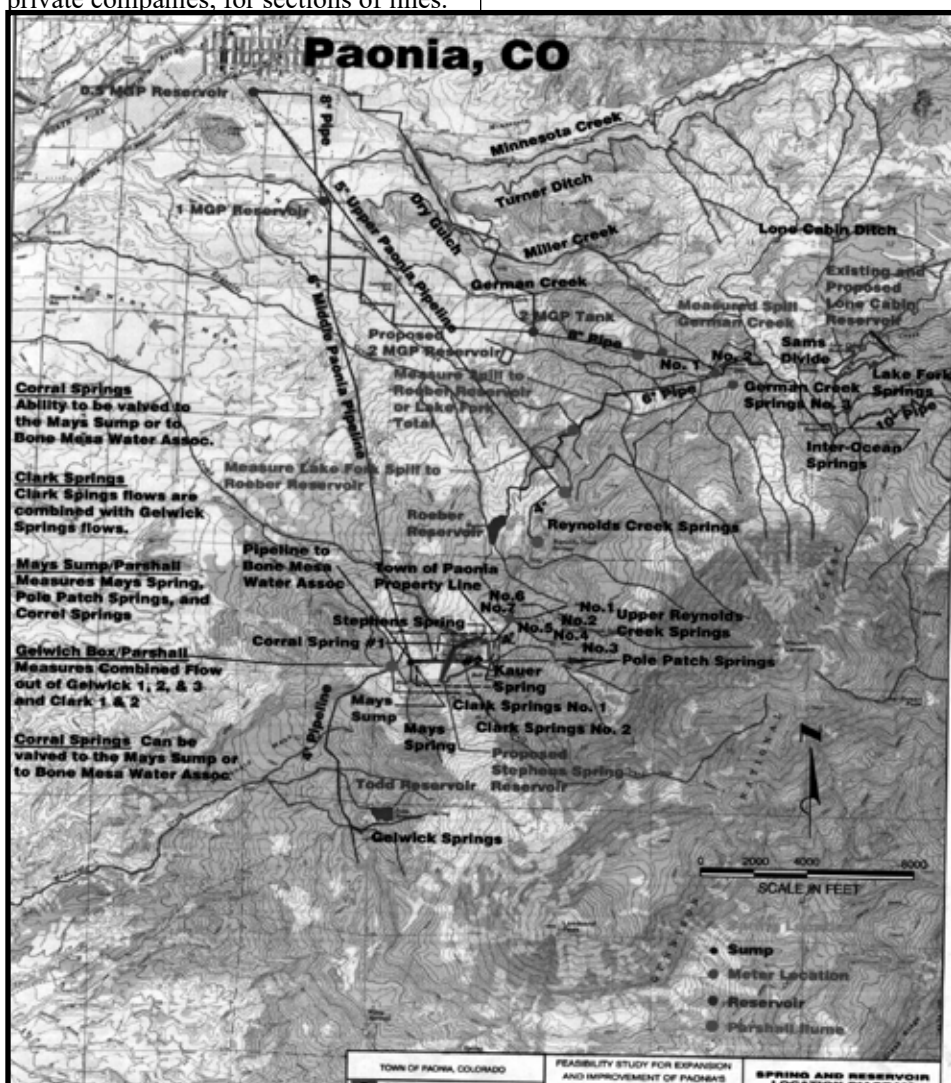
There are 27 water (pipeline) “companies” some loosely defined as companies, that the Town of Paonia serves outside of the town boundaries. According to Town Administrator Corinne Ferguson at the meeting there is no documented history of the formation and history of many of the “companies.” She said that apparently at certain time the Town decreed that certain groups of out-of-town users were told they would need to become a water delivery company and a master meter for that particular section of line was installed. The reasoning was apparently to move responsibility for water line maintenance from the Town, to private companies, for sections of lines.

and his wife operate The Local Nomad hostel in Paonia.

Markle says that he also has had some experience in running small water companies.

In the early discussion, Ferguson suggested that perhaps looking at the possibility of one or two of the small water/pipeline companies being absorbed back into the Town-maintained system might be a priority. She also noted that local videographer David Jacobson would be filming a virtual tour of the water plants that will be available for review. Committee members expressed interest in touring the facilities.

The current studies being done of the water system were mentioned. SGM is currently finishing up a mapping of both



Paonia’s raw springwater collection system covers a wide area on two sides of Mount Lamborn. The system will face challenges as the region feels more effects of climate change including decreasing winter snowpack.

At the first meeting of the appointed Paonia Water Advisory Committee held on Zoom in late January the non-officio members introduced themselves:

Phil Ceriani lives on Stucker Mesa, which is served by a private water system not supplied by the Town. He said that he is a retired physician but also has an extensive background in small local water systems and is a sort of “engineering geek.” He said he has worked with many small local water companies and many are struggling right now mainly due to supply issues related to drought.

Mike Drake lives on Stewart Mesa Road and had been on the board of Stewart Mesa Water Company for over a decade. He has a master degree in engineering with emphasis on aerospace.

Thomas Markle, citizen of the Town and husband of trustee Michelle Pattison, said that he has a bachelor’s degree in engineering that he hasn’t “put to good use.” He told the members that he does have a political axe to grind in that he would like to see the way the Town bills businesses that have multiple units in one structure, more equitably. Markle

the water and sewer systems and an asset inventory. The committee members also expressed an interest in reading through the old water studies including the 1999 study that concluded that the Town had an apparent water supply deficit if all committed, but inactive, taps (some 400) were included. The Town, not liking the conclusions, attempted to suppress that study, creating some major controversy at the time.

Mike Drake noted that the Town needed to have year-round, year to year, dry and wet years, flow data from the Town’s various springs, something he said was lacking up to now.

Phil Ceriani noted that with the Town’s standpipe fill station temporarily off-line the Pitkin Mesa fill station was hit hard with new users. Paonia PW Director, Travis Loberg, noted that the Town was in the process of installing a new fill station and system that should be operational about two weeks into February.



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# VALLEY ARTS AND CULTURE

## North Fork Local History:

### The Ballad of Rueben Dove - Continued from Page One

the sawmill moved.”

“He came down the next spring and squatted on the Southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of section 21 T 13, 6 pri Mer 93 W. he fenced it and built a log cabin on it, about where they drilled the oil well (*the Duke Brothers and Ed Hanson*).” Gray goes on to say that Reuben had “2 or 3 horses and bunch or burros. The biggest I’ve ever seen.” The cabin and 40 acres was located northwest of when the Hanson Castle (7X Ranch) is today.

From about 1891 until 1906, when Hanson had Enos Hotchkiss nephews, Carl and Al Sherman, build his huge stone house, Reuben Dove was a beekeeper, hunter and small-scale farmer. In 1906, when Reuben would have been about 41, according to Lee Gray, Ed Hanson had a man named Red Morrison, negotiate with Reuben to buy his homestead. Gray says he sold out for \$800, not an inconsiderable sum in those days and was put on the train with a ticket to California.

If Reuben actually made it to California, he apparently didn’t like it, for by 1909, or perhaps earlier, he was back in the North Fork and in the Leroux Creek area living as a hunter and trapper. He had always been a loner, but now his behavior was more erratic. In the next 15 years from 1911 to his death in 1926 he went from a quiet loner who coped with a lonely life to a prematurely aged man who lived under a rock ledge on Hubbard Creek and went to unnaturally great lengths to avoid his fellow men.

It was about this time that Reuben became a curiosity, someone that everyone in the Valley had heard stories of.

According to Harley Orahood’s 1989 self-published short pamphlet about Reuben Dove, one such story related that a farmer met Reuben walking down a road carrying a small wood burning cookstove on his back, presumably heading from Paonia back towards Hubbard Creek. When asked if the stove wasn’t awfully heavy, Reuben reportedly said that it hadn’t been too bad... until he had placed a sack of flour in the oven.

There were many stories along that vein that described Reuben as extremely strong and as sort of a North Fork Paul Bunyan at times. He was a large man, about six feet four inches to six eight, if “Doc” Shoes description is accurate.

One other famous story told about Reuben was probably the invention of a writer for the Denver Republican newspaper in 1910. The writer claimed that then Secretary of State James Pierce had been told the story by a driver who transported him to Hotchkiss and back. The story, which sounds suspiciously like an adaption of an Appalachian folk tale went thus:

“Reuben it seems, first gained fame when he discovered six bears asleep in a cave in the dead of winter. He entered the cave and made a thorough investigation. The snow was too deep and it would have been a hard job to get the bears to civilization if he should kill them, so he decided to allow them to continue their hibernation until spring. Fearing that their hides might be worn out if they were allowed to sleep too long on one side, Reuben, it appears, arranged his affairs so that he could visit the cave every week and roll them over. This kept them in excellent condition and when spring came he slew them and tanned their hides.”

The writer went on to claim that Reuben Dove regularly fought and killed bears with his bare hands; no pun intended. The writer suggested that Reuben be summoned to fight the then heavyweight boxing champion, Jack Johnson, who had won the title on July 4, 1910. The piece was reprinted in April 21, 1911 North Fork Times and one can imagine the reactions of Reuben’s North Fork contemporaries.

Then, there was the tales that attempted to turn Reuben into a one-man Butch Cassidy gang. The most complete version of this story is the one by Lee Gray found in the Hotchkiss Crawford Museum collection. He wrote that: “One day my brother went to town and brought back a letter for Dove in care of my dad. He was not home so she left word

with Frank Arnold, who lived on the Hotchkiss place, to tell him she had a letter for him. This Frank Arnold had a white horse and George Duke had a mortgage on it. Dove got the word and borrowed Frank’s horse to come up to our place and got his letter and went back out to the road and read it, got on the horse and rode west.

About a week later we heard about the bank in Ouray being robbed and that a man on a white horse had been shot at with a shotgun as he crossed a bridge and that he had quit the horse.

About a week later, one night, we saw a fire on the hill across the (Leroux) creek. The next night there was a fire on the side of Oak Mesa and this went on for about a week.

Dove came to our place to get some liniment. he said he had sprained his knee. In a day or two, my dad went down to Dove’s (cabin) and found him in bed with his leg swelled up. They got Doctor Mickeljohn and he came up and took out seven or eight buckshot. he was never caught. There were two of them in the holdup. George Duke had to send to Ouray to get his horse back.”

This would have happened, if it happened at all, before 1906, while Dove was still at his homestead on Leroux Creek.

Orahood’s book has several different versions of the story in-

cluding one that has Reuben robbing a train on Marshal Pass. One result of the bank/train robbing stories has been the creation of still other stories about buried gold in the Hubbard Creek area. Supposedly many people over the years have gone looking and digging for the buried loot but with no success, or, not that they reported.

According to Orahood’s pamphlet, Walt Gilliam, the local forest ranger, and John Beezley found Reuben Dove near death under his ledge overhang home in late May of 1926. He had fallen desperately ill and had been unable to move from his bed of blankets and bearskins to get to much food or water. The men brought him fresh food and water but finally Reuben’s nephew, Grant Dove, of Crawford with the aid of several other men carried the ailing Reuben down out of the rough canyon and eventually transported him to Grant’s home at Crawford.

He died on August 25, 1926 at age 61 and, after a funeral service in the Crawford Methodist Church, he was buried in the Garden of Memories cemetery behind the church. When all of the tall tales and hyperbole are put aside, Reuben Dove could maybe be best seen as the last mountain man in the North Fork, living well after the time of the mountain man trapper had passed. Every place need its mythical hermit and Reuben Dove was ours.

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## COVID-19 in the Valley Journal

### DELTA COUNTY COVID-19 UPDATE:

## Positivity Rate Drops and County Moves Back to Yellow Status

Delta, Colorado (February 11, 2021):  
COVID-19 Update from Delta County  
(From Darnell Place-Wise -  
Delta County Public Information Officer)

Delta County continues to get vaccines at a steady rate; we are hoping to see an increase in the coming weeks with the Federal Government increasing their allotment to the states. Despite information circulating, Delta County Health Department does not currently "reallocate" vaccines to other vaccine providers. "We are not holding vaccines back," said Public Health Director Karen O'Brien, "We are literally using up every last vaccine as quickly as we are able to do so, as is Delta County Memorial Hospital." Each vaccine provider in Delta County receives their own allotment of vaccines, which includes Delta County Memorial Hospital, River Valley, City Market in Delta and Hotchkiss, as well as Safeway. A Kidz Clinic is planning to vaccinate all of Delta County School District, and Vision Charter Academy's staff and will also receive their vaccines directly, as will Walmart once they become a vaccine provider in Delta County.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has changed the provider for the free mobile COVID-19 testing to Mako; updated links for the required pre-registration are below. The free mobile testing continues in Delta County every week through February, The testing will take place every Friday in Delta at the Lion's Pavilion from 9:00a - 4:00p; pre-register here: <https://mako.exchange/scheduler/registration/?location=2402>. Every Saturday, free COVID-19 mobile testing will take place at Delta County Fairgrounds in Hotchkiss, from 9:00a - 2:00p; pre-register here: <https://mako.exchange/scheduler/registration/?location=2413>.

Delta County has officially moved to the Yellow "Concern" phase of the State's COVID-19 dial framework; click here for additional information.

As of today, Delta County reported 8 new positive cases today for a total of 2405 with 26 active and 2324 recovered; we currently have 1 individuals hospitalized.

Delta County Call Center remains open every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:00a -1:00p and can be reached at 970-874-2172. If you would like to get on the COVID-19 waitlist, and have access to the internet, please visit [deltacounty.com/covid-19](http://deltacounty.com/covid-19). If you do not have access to the internet, please call the call center to be put on the list.

Mental Health Assistance:

- Center for Mental Health: 970-252-6220 or text "Talk" to 38255
- A KIDZ Clinic: 970-874-2753 or Text: 970-901-0445
- Families Plus: 970-874-0464 or Text: 970-433-6835
- Colorado Crisis Hotline: 844-493-TALK (8255) or Text "Talk" to 38255

Delta County has two

community test sites: Delta County Health Department, located at 255 W. 6th St., in Delta. Tests are by appointment only on Tuesdays ONLY. Call 970-874-2165. You can also continue to get tested at North Fork EMS, located at 110 E. Hotchkiss Avenue, in Hotchkiss. Appointments are Mondays only. Call for an appointment at 970-778-7426.

Additional information on the COVID-19 vaccines can be found at <https://covid19.colorado.gov/vaccine>. For additional COVID-19 resources, See Delta County's COVID-19 resource page and the State's COVID-10 resource page.

### COVID-19 Journal – February

COVID-19 vaccinations of the 1-A (health care related) and 1-B groups is continuing in Delta County. The 1-B group is those persons 70 or older. Getting vaccinated requires making an appointment at a vaccine site, showing up to get the first shot and then returning for an appointment for a follow-up booster shot three weeks later. The shots are available without cost regardless of insurance status. Lower age group vaccinations may begin by April.

Registration through the health department began in February for those 65 to 69.

Free COVID testing is happening from 9-3 each Saturday at the Delta County Fairgrounds.

**January 25** – 15 new cases and three additional deaths bring the cumulative total to 48.

**January 26** - An anti-mask agenda man caused havoc at the Hotchkiss Library when he refused to both wear a mask or leave. Compounding this, the Hotchkiss police who responded were confused as to their powers to enforce the mask mandate and did not suggest filing simple trespass charges. They refused to remove the man. The Library then closed for the day to everyone.

**January 27** - Only 10 new cases reported in the last 24 hours but also 5 new deaths (53 total). Four current COVID cases in the Delta hospital.

**January 28** – 10 new cases, 4 current DCMH COVID hospitalizations and no new deaths reported on the County dashboard.

**February 1** - Only three new cases reported.

**February 2** – Seven new cases, only one current hospitalization (DCMH) but two new deaths since January 27. Now a total of 55. The positivity rate has fallen to 9.62%.

**February 3** – 14 new cases, 1 current CV hospitalization at DCMH, 2,358 cumulative cases since 3/20, 2,195 recovered and 102 active cases. Things seem to be looking better after a spike in January COVID deaths.

**February 4** – Only five new cases and the positivity rate has dropped to 8.42%.

**February 7** – With a dropping positivity rate and few new cases the State rolled Delta County back to the Yellow-Caution level on the COVID concern dial.

## Paonia: Short Term Rental Discussion - From Page 7

enterprise.

Two other residents said that they were renting rooms in their homes, one on AirBnB and the other to students coming in to study at Solar Energy International for a few days or weeks.

Activist and frequent commenter on Town affairs, Suzanne Watson, also questioned the need to regulate those who were resided in a home and rented out rooms short or long term. Should the Town interfere on roommate situations. (Note: STRs are generally defined as rental units that are as a matter of course rented for less than 30 days to distinguish them from normal rental/roommate situations.) Watson also argued that STRs might be better maintained than normal rentals since people would be looking at pictures on-line.

Susan Capps, who with her husband has recently rehabbed a Paonia house into a STR, gave an overview of the issues they have encountered over the past few months. Like a need to set house rules and enforce them so things like all night parties do not ensue.

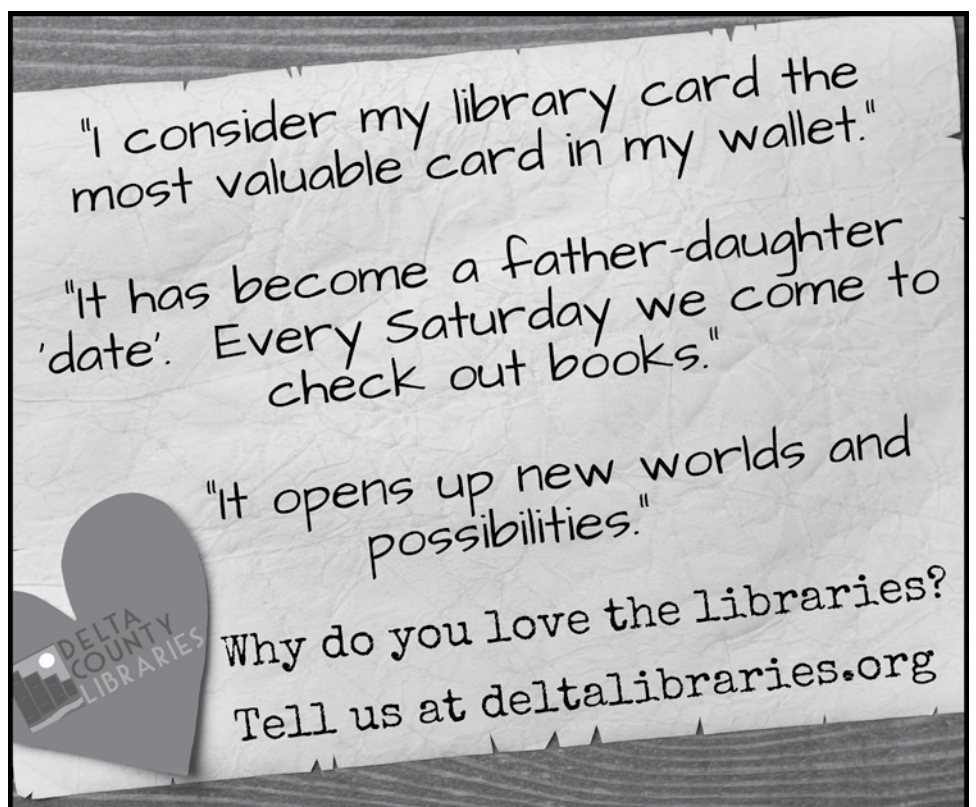
All in all, those few commenting, some of whom had a dog in the fight, generally didn't like

the idea of onerous regulation and there was some talk of a STR issue working group and/or coming up with some voluntary best-practice rules.

Johnson mentioned the STR regulations developed by the Town of Nederland, a Colorado municipality of about the same size as Paonia. The committee is also looking at other similar towns. In Hotchkiss, STRs are a use by review in some zoning and the owner fills out an application and essentially promises to mitigate any negative impacts as a condition of approval. Johnson emphasized that the Town hasn't chosen a direction and is currently just gathering information.

The committee is also looking at updating the Code in relation to accessory dwelling units (ADUs) like separate apartments within a home, above a garage, or in a separate backyard structure. This is seen as a way to add more housing stock to the town, but some might use such units as STRs as well.

Johnson and Pattison invite further input through their Town e-mail addresses listed on the Town's: [townofpaonia.com](http://townofpaonia.com) website.





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## Local Groups Protest BLM Resource Management Plan

### A Better Way Forward: Communities Join Together to Keep the North Fork Fruitful and Thriving

By Emma Gregory – Western Slope Conservation Center

Amongst the sprawling mountains, deep valleys, and idyllic farmlands of the North Fork Valley, a plan is afoot. Residents of the Valley might remember the long and arduous journey the community took during the drafting of the Bureau of Land Management's most recently released Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Uncompahgre Field Office. Despite years of collaboration and substantial public input, which culminated in the community-developed North Fork Alternative Plan, the final RMP released in April 2020 pivoted to a brand-new Alternative. This final plan opens up nearly the entirety of the North Fork Valley to oil and gas development, thus heavily favoring the interests of extractive industries over those of local communities. Last month, the state of Colorado became the third group to file a lawsuit against the BLM to overturn this RMP, which falls woefully short of protecting the climate, environment, public health, critical resources, and sustainable economic future for the region.

Historically, the North Fork Valley has been a mining and agricultural region whose economy has been closely tied to the boom and bust cycles of the coal industry. In recent years, though, the Valley has successfully diversified its economy with agro-tourism, family farms and ranches, renewable energy, outdoor recreation, and other local businesses. Dubbed the 'farm to table

capital of Colorado,' the Valley has the highest concentration of organic farms in the state. It is also home to abundant outdoor recreation opportunities and a growing tourism industry as a result of the beauty and pristine nature of its surrounding public lands. However, the most recent RMP, increasing water scarcity, and the economic impacts from the COVID-19 global pandemic are creating a great deal of uncertainty for the local communities of the North Fork Valley.

In response, the Western Slope Conservation Center, Colorado Farm and Food Alliance, Valley Organic Growers Association, The Wilderness Society, Wilderness Workshop, and Conservation Colorado, have launched the Keep the North Fork Fruitful campaign. Its goal? To lift community voices together and develop solutions that embrace sustainable economic opportunities and protect everything we all love about the Valley! The project seeks to foster a just transition away from extractive industries, protect the natural environment of the North Fork Valley, and preserve our heritage and way of life. By building a broad coalition of community members, businesses, and organizations, the campaign sees this moment in time as the chance to come together and chart out a unified vision for a sustainable future in the Valley. Add your voice to this movement today by visiting [KeeptheNorthFork.org](http://KeeptheNorthFork.org) to learn more and sign the petition.

## Love Your Libraries in February

(Submitted)

February is National Library Lovers Month and here in Delta County there is likely a lot of love to go around.

All five libraries are vital hubs in each community they serve. People rely on the libraries to acquire books and movies, learn new skills, access public computers and internet, participate in programs, chat with friendly librarians, and more.

The libraries also provide a "virtual" hub through their online library where patrons can access a variety of resources, including downloadable books, movie streaming, continuing education courses, music, genealogy resources, and much more.

In 2020, the online library services became even more essential to the community due to library closures in the spring and limited hours due to COVID restrictions. While physical materials checked out less in 2020 usage of download resource, OverDrive, increased by 17% in 2020.

Another popular online resource is Universal Class, which provides hundreds of high-quality online courses in a wide-variety of topics. In 2020, library patrons in Delta County took advantage of the opportunity to take a class from home or on the go.

Patrons who want to show their library love for Delta County Libraries in February can do so in a number of ways. Library Lovers Month is a great time to reconnect with your library, say "hi" to your librarians, browse the shelves, get a library card if you don't already have one, and check out an item.

Another way to participate is to

## NORTH FORK REAL ESTATE REALTY Lending Careful in a Tight Market

By Mike Jackson  
WesternColoradoRealty.com  
Offices in Hotchkiss and Paonia

Those of you who have read this column over the years (15 and counting) may know that February is my least favorite month (too cold and gray) and this year it also represents the one-year anniversary of Covid-19 popping up. As the virus began to spread, causing the stock market to plummet, I remember thinking "Oh no, here we go again." Concerned that the ripple effect would also derail the local real estate market, much like the financial meltdown of 2008 did, we braced for impact... *pause for dramatic effect*, but as you probably already know, quite the opposite occurred - the market took off!

Fueled by record low interest rates, urban refugees whom the boss said could work from home, and ready-to-retire-and-get-out-of-the-city boomers, the COVID rush of 2020 pushed prices and sales volume to new highs throughout the intermountain west. So, where does that leave us?

In the North Fork, the inventory of homes for sale is as depleted as the City Market toilet paper aisle was last March. As of the third week in January, excluding single-wide mobile homes, tiny houses, mountain cabins, and yet-to-be-built new homes, there are only twelve homes available to purchase under \$400,000 - while eighteen in the same category are currently under-contract. And, with the median local home price now hovering around \$300,000, it's become harder for folks to afford the home they really want. As far as I can tell, this is the new normal.

The dream of homeownership has long been an American value - one which is buoyed by a Federally supported financing system. The 30-year fixed rate loan is an anomaly among nations and is as important to our housing industry as the sun is to solar power.

Some 70% of all home loans are backed by the government-sponsored enterprises (GSE) Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac. Let's back up a bit. If home financing were left to the banking system,

loans would be more expensive, of shorter duration, and more susceptible to interest rate fluctuations. Such was the case for home loans before the Great Depression, when in 1938, the Federal National Mortgage Association was created as part of the New Deal. Then, in 1968, the entity was transformed into a stock issuing public company for the purpose of expanding the secondary mortgage market to provide liquidity through the issuance of mortgage backed securities. These securities, which carry little risk due to implicit government backing, have long been investment favorites of pension funds and insurance companies.

Fast forward to the real estate boom of the mid-2000's when lenders pushed the envelope of prudence by making subprime loans (poor credit risk) and no-doc loans (uncertain income to repay). The result was a collapsing house of cards that ended with these GSE's being taken into conservatorship by the feds-- where they remain today. The Trump administration made

changes allowing the GSE's to pocket more of their profits, bolstering their capital reserves, in an effort to move them beyond conservatorship but were, in the end, stymied by the economic disruption brought by the COVID pandemic. Losses to the GSE's due to Covid related foreclosures and forbearance are estimated to surpass \$7 billion.

To get insight into how this is affecting local lenders, I called Chris Ledesma at Cornerstone Home Lending in Delta. She said that the documentation process is more rigorous than ever, particularly for the self-employed, of which Delta County has many. Before funding a loan, the underwriters want to see that borrowers are still within the required debt-to-income ratios. They're asking for current financial statements and bank account records right up to closing. Ultimately, a system born of the Great Depression that has survived the inflation spike of the 80's, the financial melt-down of 2008, and now the pandemic, is proving to be as resilient as the American spirit itself!



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# Another Month in the Valley

Continued from page 4

continue to show a little less than the basin average. And, the trend for decades has been a slow decline in that median/normal snowpack with science collecting growing overwhelming evidence that this is due to human-caused global warming, which in turn is causing the climate change.

In the arid West, the viability of agriculture at lower elevations is entirely dependent upon stored moisture at higher elevations being available through the growing season. Making things even more complicated are interstate water compacts that legally require a certain share of what water there is to be allowed to flow out of the region.

Regional environmental groups, including Paonia-based, **Citizens for a Healthy Community (CHC)**, are excited about the Biden administration's initiative to pause leasing federal lands for fossil fuel development, something that may have a dramatic effect in the Valley region. This does not affect current leases for drilling and mining activity.

The action was part of a new policy to move the county away from burning fossil fuels in order to mitigate human-caused global climate change. The Biden administration also took action to rejoin with 97 other nations in the Paris Climate Accords, a voluntary agreement to reduce emissions over the coming decades.

Scientific consensus, as determined by the periodic IPCC assessments, is that the world will need to eliminate human carbon emissions by at least 80% by 2050 in order to (maybe) avoid some of the worst impacts of climate change. Some major impacts are happening now, including a trend towards more frequent drought periods in our region.

The Delta County Independent of February 10 reported on the front page that former Hotchkiss Mayor **Wendell Koontz, now District 3 County Commissioner**, had been assessed \$700 in fines for violations of State campaign regulations that happened during his 2020 Commissioner campaign. Koontz failed to initially register a campaign committee in order to accept third party donations and disclaimer text identifying who financed certain ads and signs were sometimes improper or absent. Koontz admitted to not having made himself fully aware of the requirements.

**Crawford News - February 12 afternoon.** A car and driver went pole dancing: "Outage Alert: 2:52PM DMEA is experiencing a power outage in Crawford affecting 62 members. This is around Fir St, I St and G St. The cause is a car pole accident. DMEA crews are responding."



Snowy Day in February- With a polar vortex affecting a lot of the nation Hotchkiss recieved a little light snow and lower temperatures. The old Town of Hotchkiss dump truck scapes away an inch or two and the Hotchkiss Shamnic Center looks atmospheric. *Tom Wills photos*



**2020 has been quite a year for climate change and climate-related events such as drought, floods, and wildfire in the West.**  
**Climate Change due to human burning of fossil fuels, methane release, deforestation, cement manufacturing, farming practices, and more, is not a problem for future. IT IS HERE NOW - END CLIMATE SILENCE - TAKE ACTION**

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**BEAUTIFUL AND SPACIOUS HOME**  
 on the highly desired Rogers Mesa, near Hotchkiss, that has been completely remodeled and updated with tons of charm! Open floor plan. Well maintained property. Great livestock set-up, nice barn, corals, storage shed/shop, & an equipment shed - on 9.37 acres.  
 #777739 \$449,000 Myles Roberts 234-3391

**MODERN AND EFFICIENT**  
 3bd/3ba home on acreage. Of 261 acres, about 100 acres in Corn, Wheat, and seed grade Triticale. Years have been spent enriching the soil and perfecting the irrigation delivery system. In past years the property grew hay and the unirrigated acres were used for winter calving ground for the owner's cattle.  
 #777463 \$1,691,800 Dave Mitchell 234-4046

**A GREAT FARM/RANCHING OPPORTUNITY**  
 265 acre piece of farm ground. 4 bd/4 ba 3029sq. ft. main home. Good productive farm ground with 100+ acres in corn, 64 acres in pinto beans, some winter wheat, 4 irrigation take outs off. There's 1994 doublewide in good condition and a 1978 singlewide for extended family or farm help to live on premises.  
 #777669 \$2,509,250 Dave Mitchell 234-4046

**BEAUTIFUL DNTOWN DELTA HOUSE**  
 Recently remodeled kitchen with stainless steel appliances. Master bedroom has a spacious walk-in closet and 3/4 bath. Two bedrooms and a full bath are also located on the main floor. Large finished basement with 1/2 bath and 3 non-conforming bedrooms. fenced backyard and a screened porch.  
 #776675 \$319,000 Joe Young 787-0734

**LIVE ON THE SMITH FORK OF THE GUNNISON RIVER IN CRAWFORD.**  
 Great 35 acres with every type of wildlife you could imagine in the Western Rockies. 5 irrigated acres to raise a little hay. Wooded hillsides, a little waterfall and a pond to soak your feet in. #771437 \$265,000 Bob Pennetta 234-2232

**2 BEDROOM AND 1 BATHROOM IN HOTCHKISS.**  
 Recently renovated. Beautiful hickory cabinets, and porcelain tile flooring in the kitchen. Laminate flooring throughout the rest of the home. Quiet neighborhood with great views of the valley. There are 2 shed spaces. Plenty of room outdoors for any gardening or rv parking.  
 #775434 \$129,900 Jocelyn Wiggins 765-5251

# Happy Valentine's Day North Fork Valley

Every \$ Spent Locally Keeps  
Our Beloved Community Strong

Buy Local  
Eat Local  
Drink Local





# STORIES FROM

ZOOM

# THE

# NORTH FORK

Wednesdays starting Feb 10 ~ 4pm



# COMEDIAN



# NANCY

Zoom

# NORTON

Friday, Feb 29 ~ 6pm

INITIATIVE

ZOOM

# STRESS

# OUR BODIES

# & COVID

Feb 13 ~ 5pm



INITIATIVE



[info@bluesage.org](mailto:info@bluesage.org)

970-527-7243