

Recent History

News from the Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Society

P.O. Box 724

Hotchkiss, CO 81419



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Annual Meeting Features Author George Sibley

By Thomas Wills

The popular Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Society's annual meeting will be held Sunday, February 12 at 2 pm at Crawford Town Hall's Community Room. The speaker will be George Sibley of Gunnison, former North Fork resident, retired university professor, former Crested Butte newspaper editor, as well as the co-author (with Mamie Ferrier) in 1982 of the popular two-volume history of Crawford Country – *Long Horns and Short Tales* and well as other books including *Part of a Winter* and a collection of essays - *Dragons in Paradise*. Sibley's HCHS talk will include a theme of "A Sense of Place", something that he has referred to in many of his writings over the years.

George Sibley is a freelance writer and retired educator who has lived in the Upper Gunnison River valley most of the past 55 years. From 1988 through 2007 he taught journalism and regional studies at Western State College of Colorado in Gunnison, and coordinated special projects for the college, including the college's annual fall Headwaters Conference and summer Water Workshop. He has been a member of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy and the Gunnison

B a s i n
Roundtable,
and is still
i m m e r s e d
in western
water issues.

H i s
most recent
p u b l i s h e d
book is *Water
Wranglers*, a
commissioned
history of the
development
of Colorado's
share of the
Colorado River,
published
by the Colorado
River District.
His essays
and articles
have appeared
in *Harper's*

Magazine, *Technology Illustrated*, *High Country News*, *New Age Journal* and *Old West*, and regional publications like *Colorado Central* and *Mountain Gazette*.

He lives in Gunnison with his partner, Maryo Gard Ewell, and has two grown offspring, Samuel and Sarah Sibley.

HCHS Board President – Carl Clay will also give attendees an overview on what the historical society has been up to over the past year and what is in store for 2023.



Volunteer Sheila Maki reminds everyone that she is leading the project to produce a **Hotchkiss High School year book for 1942**, the year that due to America joining the WWII efforts, no yearbook was made for the graduates. Sheila and society would appreciate any info, pictures, etc. you might have on any family member or relative that was a member of that class and maybe what their bragging points were.

You can reach Sheila by calling 970.985.8489 or makisheila@yahoo.com.



Yet To Be in '23: Monthly Sense of Place Themes

Throughout 2023, we will be in hot pursuit of determining what it is historically and contemporaneously that attracts and maintains a "Sense of Place" for residents of the North Fork and Smith Fork Valley. In that endeavor we will be hosting a number of themes throughout the year around which we will be exploring what makes this place so special.

In February we'll explore "A George Sibley" kind of place...

In March we'll explore "A Love of Music kind of place

In April we'll explore "A Tree Planting" kind of place...

In May we'll explore "A Remembering Our Founders" kind of place... And "A Livestock Producers" kind of place... And "A Remembering Our Warriors" kind of place...

In June we'll explore "A Local History Author's" kind of place...

In July we'll explore "A Hearts for the Arts" kind of place...

In August we'll explore "A

Respect for Retailers" kind of place...

In September we'll explore "A Mexican Independence" kind of place...

In October we'll explore "A Remembering Indigenous Peoples" kind of place...

In November we'll explore "An Honoring our Veterans" kind of place...

In December we'll explore "An Old-Fashioned Christmas" kind of place...

Each exploration will begin with a brief presentation about the history surrounding that month's topic followed by a celebration, performance, tour, or storytelling by attendees.

Dates and places for these explorations will be announced in our monthly newsletter to members and in print media and on Facebook, and you can help us by talking over the garden fence with your neighbor inviting them to join in.



George Hiram Duke - First Mayor of Hotchkiss

2023 Society Officers

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Newspaper Project - Lois Cotten

Publicity - Mary Hockenbery
(Facebook), Sheila Maki (Print)

Consultant - Dan Hilliman
www.hchm.freehostia.com

We are also on Facebook

Museum Hours:

Tues & Thurs. 10-2

Sat. 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Newsletter

Desktop Publishing

Tom Wills (872-2664)

North Fork Merchant Herald

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Elizabeth Meyers Reich
A founding mother of Hotchkiss

2022 Museum and Historical Society Highlights

Our year began in February when we kicked off our membership year with a presentation at the Memorial Hall by Curtis Martin, author of Ephemeral Bounty-Wickiups, Trade Goods, and the Final Years of the Autonomous Ute.

In March we joined hands with the North Fork Libraries as we sponsored Family History Day as we began our pursuit of the theme "A Sense of Place" with stories shared by members of the Hotchkiss & Crawford communities about families in the North Fork and a scrapbooking tour led by Anna Jean Hill George and her extensive scrapbook collection.

In April Bill Houseweart, Janice Ruble Cooper, Kathi Busey Cramer and members in the audience took us on an historical tour of Lazear.

In May we hosted an open house for the participants in the annual Stock Dog Trials, and we shared a program about "*Little Stories from A Little Piece of Montrose County*" at the Pavilion in Montrose with presenters Lois Cotten, Orval and Shirley Cotten, and others who have been residents of that piece of Montrose County for many years.

In June Mary Jacobs and Marilyn Tate and Karen Martin represented the Society by offering local history books at the Crawford Pioneer Days festivities.

In July Water Law Attorney Aaron Clay spoke to an audience of around 150 folks on the topic "*The History of Water in the North Fork and Smith Fork Valleys*" on behalf of the Society.

In August Mary Jacobs and her crew sponsored a booth at the Delta County Fair at the Fair Grounds where they sold a number of books to interested fair goers.

In September we offered a video production of a talk that Marilyn Tate had given in 2014 about the "*Rural Schools in the Valley*" beginning in 1890. And we took a program to the North Fork Rotary Club meeting where we shared our interest in the "Sense of Place" theme we continue to explore.

In October we met with Katie Arnsten with the Bureau of Reclamation to explore any opportunity we might have for assisting with the historical research that is required for completion of funding for ditch improvement projects, primarily in the Smith Fork drainage.

In November we convened at our annual membership meeting at which time candidates were elected to serve in offices that had been vacated during the year. Then, we celebrated an Old-Fashioned Christmas in our historic cabin in December.

When Hotchkiss Dumped Its Raw Poop into the River and Other Issues From 1927

By Thomas Wills

It was 1927, a couple of years before the great stock market crash and Mrs. S. A. Sylvester was thinking about improvements the Town of Hotchkiss could make. The result of this contemplative activity was a paper by Mrs. Sylvester, delivered to the Woman's Wednesday Club and printed on the front page of the Hotchkiss Herald on April 7. Her essay covered a lot of figurative and literal ground, from the Town's water and sewer systems, junk, trash, old outhouses, muddy downtown streets, intermittent electrical power, planting trees, beautification of the school grounds, and more.

She recommended that "in the way of pure water and sanitary conditions our pipelines must kept free from rubbish and sediments and screens kept clean and in order at all times." That plea reveals that drinking water filtration appears to have been pretty basic at the time. Later sand filters were added until the federal government stepped in to mandate advanced methods of safe water treatment.

On the issue of sewer, she reported that the Town's sewer system at that time served all of the business section and a good portion of the residential areas. The "system" consisted of short sections of buried clay tile pipes with bell joints that were subject to infiltration by roots and groundwater, and ex-filtration by sewage water. She further observed that "*A change in the river channel has left the discharge of the (raw untreated) sewer on an open rock bar and provision should be made for it to empty directly into the river.*" In other words, dumping raw sewage into the river wasn't an issue but having it spread in the open air over an area next to the river to stink up things was unacceptable. The prevailing winds from the southwest probably brought the smell right back to the source of the sewage. The direct release of raw sewage into the waterway continued until the early 1970s after the first Hotchkiss Sanitation District was formed and a lagoon treatment system built.

Downtown Improvement: Mrs. Sylvester advised that to begin an improvement of the business district one needed to "*do away with the mud and rough places and replace with cement paving if only in the three blocks of the main business district.*"

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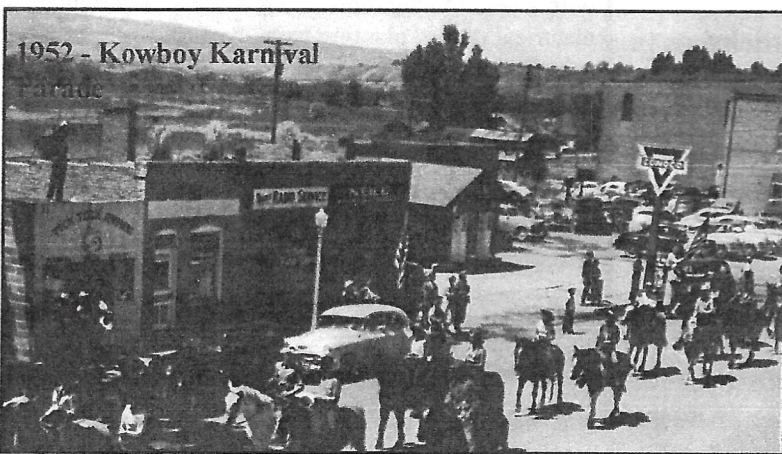
THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS LOCALLY IN THE 50'S AND 60'S

THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS...

Those of us who grew up in the Nifty Fifties and the Sexy Sixties remember Walter Cronkite who signed off each of his newscasts with the headline above. But for kids in the Valley, most of whom didn't have TV until the early Sixties, we had a different slant of the way it was...

Clothing to fill out a ticket to guess on what date Derwood could measure 3" of new snow on the sidewalk in front of his store next door to the new First State Bank on Bridge Street...

It was an annual snake dance from the 1925-vintage high school, down 4th Street and Bridge Street and in and out the



For us it was pooling our money to buy a large order of French fries and tobasco sauce on a Friday night after a ballgame at Winnie's Cafe...

It was a trip to Clymer's Dairy in Grand Junction, which had the only drive through hamburger stand within driving distance of the valley, and we pooled our money to buy 33-cent/gallon gasoline to get there...

It was the every-noon-hour and after-school dragging main for pure entertainment, both for the driver and for those who stood along the street to watch the driver...

It was stopping by Garber's

doors of the businesses along the route to celebrate Homecoming...

It was the weekly free roller skating at the new Memorial Hall that was built to honor the men and women from the valley who had served during World War II...

And it was the nightly habit of tuning in to KOMA out of Oklahoma City to listen to "popular" music, but mostly to catch the periodic "kissing tone" they played as an excuse to wax romantic...

The "back stories" to these, and many others, are told at the Museum. Come visit!

HOTCHKISS IN 1927 CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

(Oak/A to Third). She then says that if concrete cost too much even gravel would do for the time being, indicating that Bridge Street in 1927 was still mostly dirt. She said that volunteers, even from the surrounding mesas, had expressed a willingness to help with this.

"Alley and streets should be kept clear of rubbish and all unsanitary toilets (outhouses) and out-buildings should be removed," she declared. This suggests that such problems were fairly common around town at the time. She advocated for an annual town cleanup, perhaps with the aid of Boy Scouts or school children.

She also pointed out that the fronts of some businesses could use some fresh paint and "make the windows attractive and keep our streets clean."

"The question of day-electricity is one which interests all citizens," she wrote, noting that if more electricity was used it would become profitable for the company to supply power 24 hours a day.

Although there had been some electric power in Hotchkiss for at least a decade and a half, apparently it was not yet universal since Mrs. Sylvester encourages more in the town to use electricity, which was apparently only supplied at night. She suggested that the Town needed to replace its downtown "arc lights" with "Boulevard lights having two or three lights on ... iron posts at street corners." This would make for a "brighter lighted city."

She also promoted the planting to trees in residential areas, along with general beautification. She was also fond of birds and thought the Town should try to attract them, especially pretty and tuneful ones. She advocated for widening the verge area between the street and property lines to accommodate trees without undue damage to curbing or sidewalks, her only reference to sidewalks in town.

A new Hotchkiss High School had been built on 4th Street in 1925 and Mrs. Sylvester had numerous ideas of trees and landscaping to make the grounds "more finished."

It was probably no coincidence that the printing of Mrs. Sylvester's opus came shortly after the election of a new Hotchkiss Town Council on April 25. Horace F. Dent - Mayor, Charles E. Myers, -Treasurer, George Carr - Town Clerk, and Trustees - Dr. W. Copeland, Fred Foster and Guise Wilcoxon for two-year terms and George Gunther, W.W. Cook and George Tuttle for one-year terms. The Herald noted that "there was only a light vote cast in comparison with other years."