



MESA

DWELLERS

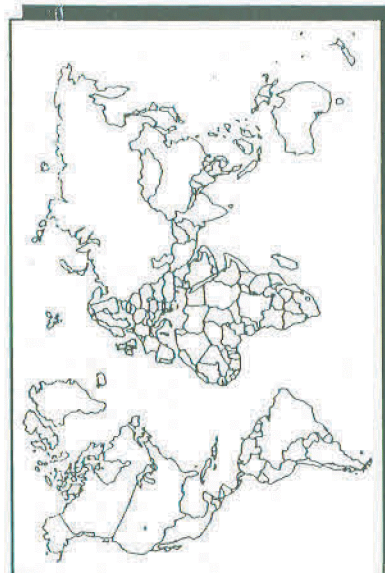
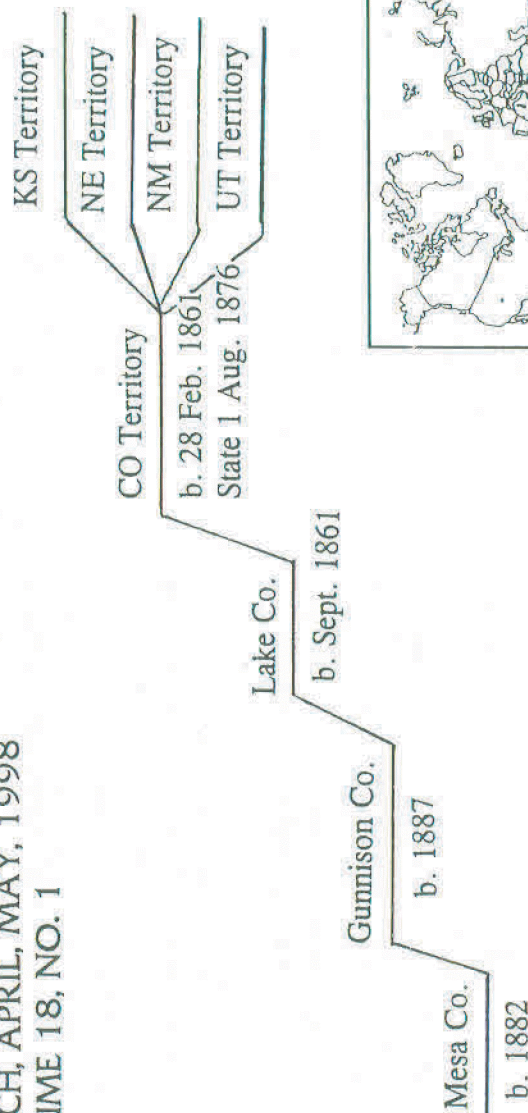
A PUBLICATION OF THE MESA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1506

GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO 81502-1506

[REDACTED]

MARCH, APRIL, MAY, 1998  
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## 1998 OFFICERS

President	Jody Nestler
Vice President	Donna Roberts
Secretary	Diana Sheldon
Treasurer	Laveta Kay
Corr. Sec'try	Wynona Hennessey

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One Year Term	Norm Kronvall
Two Year Term	Joan Chaffin
Three Year Term	Betty Jane Grosskopf

## COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

AGLL Librarian	Betty Grosskopf
Historian	Jeanne Edwards
MCGS Librarian	Gloria Heitsman
Membership	Open
Programs	Dennis Jenkins
Computer Editor	Rick Sheldon
Web Page Editor	Russ Herre
Newsletter Editor	Juanita Moston

Annual Dues: \$10 Singles; \$12 Family. Membership period is March 1st to April 30th. Those with **UNPAID DUES** (after April 30th.) will not receive the Newsletter. Send a **SASE** to receive a current membership card if you do not attend regular meetings.

The Mesa County Genealogical Society was established in 1980 as a non-profit organization to promote an interest in genealogy. A Newsletter is published in March, June, September, and December. Regular meetings are held at the Museum of Western Colorado, C. D. Smith Building, 5th. and Ute Ave., Grand Junction, CO at 7:00 p.m., on the second Thursday of each month. Visitors are welcome.

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Contributions of neatly typed or written stories, requests for/or giving information, queries, or other information of importance to the membership are welcomed. Please direct your information to Editor Juanita Moston, [REDACTED], Grand Junction, CO 81504-4219, or [REDACTED].

The Society disclaims responsibility for statement of fact or opinion made by contributors and will not accept material with obvious errors. #

## \*\*\* CALENDAR \*\*\*



NOTE: All society meetings are held at 7:00 PM, in the C. D. Smith Building, 5th and Ute. **PARK AND ENTER** on the west side of the building using the ramp at the corner of the parking area.

## MARCH

12 Dr. Gene Carstea of the Saccomanno Research Institute will present *Family Trees and Their Key to Unlocking Genetic Diseases*.

## APRIL

9 Harold and Phyllis Likes of Orem, Utah will talk about their new book on Mack and New Liberty, Mesa County, Colorado. Their experiences in writing this book include writing about family history.

30 Board Meeting. At Laveta Kay's home, [REDACTED]

## MAY

9 National Genealogical Society Conference in Denver.

A detailed brochure can be ordered from NGS '98 Conference Registration Brochure, 4527 17th St., North Arlington, VA 22207-2399 or call -800-437-0050.

14 Share Session: A discussion of experiences from those attending the National Genealogical Society Annual Conference in Denver May 6-9, 1998.

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## REFRESHMENT VOLUNTEERS

February	Betty Grosskopf
March	Donna Roberts
April	Bonnie Karp
May	Jodie Nestler
July	Norm & Mary Kronvall
August	Annual Picnic
September	Dorothy O'Dwyer & Dorothy Roper
October	Gloria Heitsman
November	Joyce Stinson
December	Christmas Party

**DON'T MISS A THING! DUES ARE DUE NOW!**



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER by Jody Nestler



Our annual election of officers has been held; as you may have guessed, I am your newly elected President. I can only hope I will be able to do half the job Joan Chaffin has done. Many thanks to Joan and her group of officers for their leadership. As you can see, some officers have agreed to serve again, and some individuals have agreed to serve in another capacity. One of our hard working committee chairpersons wishes to step down. Before I call members in an effort to replace Betty Dougherty as the Membership Chairman, I am soliciting a volunteer for the position. Please call me at your earliest convenience if you are interested. Basically, the person in this position greets new members and gives them the new member packet. I am sure Betty could give you a more complete job description.

As you read this, we will have had another successful Family History Faire. Many thanks to all the society members who helped with this annual information-packed affair.

Those of us using computers for research have noted our Mesa County Genealogical Society web page run by Russ Ferre. This is a wonderful site; a couple of months ago I mentioned at a meeting my own personal success from this site. A distant cousin - a native German - contacted me after finding my name and list of family surnames I am researching on the MCGS web site. We have been exchanging messages ever since. He recently sent me some information (unfortunately not by Gedcom which he says he cannot export). Since my knowledge is limited, I sought Russ' help to bring up all the attachments he had sent. It is a blessing to have such helpful, knowledgeable people to assist us.

As March gets underway I am planning a trip to Georgia and South Carolina to research my father's family. The planning process is very time consuming, but hopefully will pay off when I find all those burial locations and fill in the holes from early family history!! More about this later...

See you all at future meetings. Bring all your success stories and questions about your "stone walls".#

## NEW BOOKS IN THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

The following new books in the society's collection may provide helpful information in your research; they represent only a few of the books that are available. If you have not as yet used this collection you might want to check it out.

Dewey # 912, *Migration Routes, Map Guide to America*, William Dollarhide.

Dewey # 929.1072073, *Land and Property, Land and*

*Property Research In the United States*, E. Wade Hone.  
Dewey # 929.3, *The Last Trapper: An American Saga*, Emona Armstrong

*The Goodrich Progenitors and Allied Families.*

Dewey # 929.343, *The German Research Companion*, Shirley J. Riemer.

Dewey # 977.581, *History of Columbia County, Wisconsin*, Chapter's Various Authors.

Dewey # 974. New England, *The Early Settlers of Nantucket*, Lydia S. Hinchman.

The society library is manned by volunteers; if you need more information on the collection or are interested in helping contact Gloria Heitsman at [REDACTED]



## COMPUTER CORNER By Rick Sheldon

Since this was due in February and Valentine's day is in February, this article is kind of like a box of chocolates, all mixed.

For those of you who were not able to make the monthly meeting in February, the Genealogy Society's Internet Web Page has a new address. It was discussed in January, that although the Geocities site was nice because it was free, the addition of advertising on the site was becoming annoying and ...how to put it... a pain. So Russ and I, during and after the meeting, talked about trying to find some other site that would be not so obtrusive. Well, pat Russ on the back, because he was able to get us FREE a spot on a local provider. Rural Net, which is an Internet provider that several of the members use, agreed to open up the space on their system. The only thing that they asked for in return, was a link and a statement on our page that the space was provided for us by them. So, to those members who use Rural Net, thank you, because every time you send in your monthly fees you are supporting us. And to those of you that are thinking about using a local Internet provider, give Rural Net a shot.

With the new site available to us, Russ has already moved us to our new home. If you access the old site, you can either transfer to our new site by clicking on the new link, or the page should automatically transfer you there. So make sure you bookmark our new home. And for those who want to take the quick way to get there, and our new address to pass along to anyone that might be interested, our new Internet home is:

[REDACTED]  
that's it - a short and sweet address. You don't have to worry about capitalization or a long, hard to remember address. Thank You Rural Net.

Now for some kudos, just before the decision to leave



Geocities was made or right about the same time, our site, and by this I mean the Mesa County Genealogical Society's Web Pages, was nominated for two honors. The society home page was recognized for it's content and the design was selected as a featured site for the Geocities network and was also suggested as a featured site of the month. So congratulations, other people recognize what a good site the MCGS has.

Of course, then we pulled the plug and moved, so those honors went out the window. Talk about timing.

Now just like the Rocky Mountain Public TV, here's our hook. To all of you that access the MCGS web site, this is the society's web page; that means as a member, it is your web site and you are as responsible for it's content as much as Russ or myself. When Russ and I got together and developed the concept that the MCGS should have it's own Home Page it really was not for our benefit or our ego's. Dianna can tell you that my ego is big enough, and I know that Russ already is managing three or four other sites as it is. The idea behind building a home page for the society was to be able to offer another means for the members of the Mesa County Genealogical Society to use the Internet as a tool for research and to have us lend a hand for others to use us as a research tool. We all know how important it is for our own research to have at our disposal a means or a tool for us to gather information regarding our own family history.

Your input and ideas for the Web site are both welcomed and needed. Russ and I try to incorporate concepts that we think will benefit anyone that uses or visits the MCGS web pages. If you have something that you would like to see or have on the web site let us know.

When the site first went up many of us were novices at using the Internet as a tool, now I know for a fact, that more and more of you have developed into some pretty fair web surfers, so, if you see something that you think we should have or use on the web pages let us know. Both Russ and I want this to be a members site, your site, and without your input it lacks this.

Not only did we move, but for those who have not checked it out, Cyndi's, what most will agree is the premier genealogical web site on the Internet has also moved and revamped. Her new address is <http://www.cyndislist.com/>. You can still access her old site and it will also automatically transfer you to her new address. Oh, and by the way, we have been accepted as a link off of Cyndi's page. So we are moving up the ladder. Plus, I received word that Dennis Jenkins will be part of a Rocky Mountain PBS show regarding genealogy and hopes to be able to mention our site on air (he says it's just a small part of the overall program, but we all know there are no

small parts only small actors).

And speaking of Dennis, those that missed the February meeting missed a really good one from Dennis on Land Records. He did an excellent presentation, as he always does. You missed a informative evening. It's amazing how something, like land records, can lead to so much information and give clues to someone's past life and tribulations.

Okay, so much for the Internet. Within the last month I have been able to use the new PAF3 and the Family Tree Maker that the society received from Broderbund.

I have to admit it, even though PAF is still not windows based, it is really nice. It may not have the screen graphics that we get accustomed to with windows, but it has been really improved for the better. Seems to be easier to use and operate than its predecessor and has increased functionality. I had to open up a couple of Gedcoms that we received and it was so easy. It definitely is still a program to have, even if you use a windows based software package. The improvements to PAF3 were nothing but for the better. It still is one of the simplest programs to use and manipulate. Very easy to get around in and find the data that you need. And the price can't be beat, for under \$20.00 anything else that you could get or find would be junk. That sounds a little harsh; how about could not come close to comparing to the new PAF.

I also had the opportunity to begin to use the new Family Tree Maker from Broderbund. This is a typical Windows based genealogical program. Has nice graphics throughout the program, merges, can import family pictures, and the options it offers in printing out descendant charts, family groups, and individuals, give a professional look to any thing that you might want to display or give to someone. It has features that I haven't used yet, but look extremely sharp. If you are looking for something that you can use to present to children or grandchildren this program would certainly work well. It does take a little bit of a learning curve to get around in it and use the features properly, as does any windows product. But patience and effort would pay off in a more than just presentable family history. Anyone interested in using this let me know. It is the society's, so it is available for any member to use on their own home computer.

There are some requirements to make the program work; you have to have a CD-rom player on your computer, of course you have to have windows 3.1 or better and there are some memory and processor requirements to make it run properly. But what a good program for the society to be able to distribute to any of it's members for use. #



### GENEALOGIST'S GREATEST LOSS: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE 1890 FEDERAL CENSUS?

*The following article is from Genealogy Records Service Monthly Newsletter and is copyright 1998 by GRS. It is re-published here with permission of the author.*

Many genealogy researchers have become frustrated once they began searching for the 1890 US Federal Census. Soon, the researchers learn the 1890 Schedules were destroyed by a fire in the National Archives in 1921. This statement is only partially true. Part of the census was lost in 1921 but the fate of the remaining schedules stands testament to the dangers of government miscommunication and red tape.

The Eleventh Census of the United States taken in June 1890 would have provided a wonderful study of our country if available today. Over 47,000 enumerators, usually chosen by political appointment, distributed the schedules in advance to give the residents time to complete the forms. Once completed the population of the US topped over 62 million individuals.

Shortly before publication in 1896, the original 1890 special schedules for mortality, crime, pauperism and benevolence, special classes, and portions of the transportation and insurance schedules were damaged and finally destroyed by the Department of the Interior. However, according to a 1903 census clerk the general population schedules seemed to be in good shape.

In the afternoon of January 10, 1921, the schedules were located in the basement of the Commerce Building. That afternoon, building fireman James Foster reported seeing smoke. The fire department was called.

The fire was contained to the basement level of the building but flooded most of the area. Once extinguished, no immediate surveys were done of the damage. The records were allowed to remain soaking in water overnight. The next morning when the damage was assessed, the census director, Sam Rogers, sent a note to the Secretary of Commerce reporting: "...a cursory examination show that the census schedules from 1790 to and including 1870, with the exception of those for 1830 and 1840, are on the fifth floor of the Commerce Building and have not been damaged. The schedules of the censuses of 1830, 1840, 1880, 1900 and 1910 have been damaged by water, and it is estimated that ten percent of these schedules will have to be opened and read and some of them recopied."

These schedules were located in the basement in a vault considered at the time to be fire and waterproof. However, the archivist had discovered a small broken pane of glass, which allowed water to seep in damaging the schedules

located in low shelves.

The 1890 schedule did not fare as well. It was located outside the vault. Director Sam Rogers continued and reported in the same document to the Secretary of Commerce the damage.

"Approximately 25 percent of these schedules have been destroyed and it is estimated that 50 per cent of the remainder have been damaged by water, smoke and fire."

The preliminary report by Census Bureau Clerk T. J. Fitzgerald was much more pessimistic. Fitzgerald reported that the 1890 records were ruined and that no method of restoration would be capable of restoring the records.

The cause of the 1921 fire was never determined, although some speculate that a worker in the basement was smoking and set off the blaze. Others believe that bundles of papers spontaneously combusted causing the blaze.

The remaining schedules of the 1890 census abandoned by the government, survived for many years. Rumors speculated that Census Director Sam Rogers had recommended that the schedules be destroyed. The public and historians were outraged and began a letter writing campaign. Each letter received much the same reply. Everyone was told that the records were not going to be destroyed and plans were being made to provide a suitable archive.

In May of 1921, the census remained in temporary storage and the new census director William Steuart reported they would gradually deteriorate. The records were returned to the census building for storage at Steuart's order.

Ten years would pass and finally in December of 1932, the Chief clerk of the Bureau of Census sent the Librarian of Congress a list of papers to destroy.

Included in the list was Item 22, "Schedules, Population-1890, Original." The librarian gave the okay to destroy the list of records including the 1890 Census Schedule. Congress authorized the destruction on February 21, 1933. Only a small note in the census bureau file marks the official demise of the record. It states "remaining schedules destroyed by Department of Commerce in 1934 (not approved by the Geographer.)"

Sadly, just one day before Congress authorized the destruction of the census, President Herbert Hoover laid the cornerstone of the permanent National Archives building.

Of course, many researchers fail to realize that some of the original schedules still exist. In 1942 during the move to the new building a bundle of the Illinois schedules appeared during a shipment. In 1953, more fragments were discovered including those from Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas and the District of Columbia. The remnants of the 1890 census have been filmed and are available through



many sources. There are only three rolls of microfilm containing the records. Only about 6,000 names are listed on these precious pieces of our past.

Many researchers lament over the loss of these records but we must be grateful that most pages of the United States Federal Census Schedules survived. Imagine just how difficult North American research would be without the census.#

### WORD MEANINGS

Some of today's most familiar words had different meanings previously. The change in meaning usually occurred in words referring to social relationships. For example, the word 'cousin' often meant niece or nephew; and the title "Mrs." could show high social status, not necessarily marital status. There are a few other relationship terms that you should look out for:

- The terms "niece" and "nephew" spring from Latin words which meant "granddaughter" and "grandson", so you may find them used in that context.
- When we use the words "junior" and "senior", we normally think of a father and son relationship. However, in the past, these words were used much more liberally and could refer to an uncle and nephew, or even to two people with the same name who were unrelated.
- The words "brother" and "sister" also were used in different ways. Members of the same church often referred to each other as brothers and sisters, and a married couple would refer to their brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law just as brothers and sisters.
- The term "in-law" can also cause problems. In the past, "in-law" relationships could be either step relationships or the regular in-law relationship that we think of today.

Misunderstanding and misinterpreting these terms can really twist the branches of your family tree, so when you are reading older records it is important to be cautious. When it is possible, verify information with other records. This is the best way to make sure that you have the correct information. In addition, look at the rest of the language in the document. The more arcane terms and spellings you find, the more careful you should be. #

### CEMETERY BOOK PROJECT By Ron Halsey

The cemetery project to catalog, index and publish the cemetery records for all cemeteries in Mesa County, is steadily progressing thanks to the drive of Joan Chaffin. She has spent hundreds of hours on this project.

This project originally started for the Centennial of Mesa County in 1982. With the initial data being placed in storage for a decade, it has been a job to determine the status of the

overall project. Without knowing exactly what procedures were used in collecting this material, it was assumed that the cemeteries had been thoroughly researched. It was obvious that the original committee had spent an enormous amount of time walking the cemeteries, Joan started going through the Orchard Mesa sexton records and re-walking the cemetery. She started finding numerous discrepancies between the sexton records and the headstones.

Joan has been re-walking the cemeteries and matching the sexton records with actual burial sites and locating hundreds of additional burial sites without a full headstone and not located in the initial records. These findings have required that we re-walk all cemeteries and match findings with any known records. This will ensure that we have the most accurate records for publication. Laveta Kay, Dennis Jenkins, K. Don Thompson and Joan Chaffin are diligently working on this project so the Mesa County Genealogical Society will be able to start to publish these records this Spring or Summer.

We can use additional volunteers to input data or help in re-walking the cemeteries. If you are interested, contact Joan at 242-9308. If you have a query about a relative you believe is buried in Mesa County you can contact Wynona Hennessy at [REDACTED]

### SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION RETURN TO THE WESTERN SLOPE

by Norm Kronvall, Grand Mesa Chapter Registrar/Historian

After an absence of more than fifty years a chapter of the Colorado Society of Sons of American Revolution was established on May 17, 1997. In a ceremony at the Grand Junction Hilton Hotel, Colorado State Society President Michael Igoe presented the charter designated "Grand Mesa Chapter".

The SAR is a patriotic organization. The basic Tenets of the national Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) are to perpetuate the memory of people and events of the American Revolution, to maintain the institutions of American Freedom and to promote fellowship among the descendants of Revolutionary War Patriots. The National Society was organized on April 30, 1889 and the Colorado Society was organized on July 1, 1896.

Any man joining the chapter before May 17, 1998 will be considered a charter member. As of this writing (Feb. 1998) the new chapter has 32 charter members. Following is a list of these men:

John Almgren, Kremling, CO; Roger Almgren, Montrose, CO; Lionel Andrews, Cortez, CO; Jared Clark, Grand Junction, CO; Justin Clark, Grand Junction, CO; Lowell Clark, Grand Junction, CO; Duane Cunningham, Montrose,



CO; Gorden DeMara, Grand Junction, CO; Ivan Dodson, Grand Junction, CO; Stanley Dodson, Grand Junction, CO; Harold Emick, Pearland, TX; Alvin Foster, Grand Junction, CO; Bruno Grosskopf, Grand Junction, CO; Grant Hess, Loveland, CO; Greg Hess, Loveland, CO; Carey Hicks, Craig, CO (Chaplain); Edward Hicks, Silt, CO; Alan Hutchinson, Onsted, MI; Harold L. Hutchinson, Olathe, CO (President); Harold R. Hutchinson, Wixom, MI; Frederick Jeffries, Denver, CO; James E. E. Kimble, Montrose, CO (Vice-President); Norman Kronvall, Grand Junction, CO (Registrar/Historian) Brian Kronvall, Ellinwood, KS; Oscar McCollum, Glenwood Springs, CO (Secretary); John Medearis, Montrose, CO; Philip Powers, Clifton, CO (Treasurer); Gerald Smith, Crestline, CA; Jeffrey Smith, Los Gatos, CA; Rexford Smith, Montrose, CO; Hal Taylor, Grand Junction, CO (Newsletter Editor) Richard Woodfin, Grand Junction, CO.

The previous chapter was the "Grand Junction Chapter" which was organized on October 16, 1915 with fourteen members. It is not known to this writer as to when this chapter was abandoned, however, it is reported at the state level that only two chapters were still active in 1946. The Grand Junction chapter was not one of the two remaining so it is assumed the chapter was dissolved sometime in the early 1940's due to World War II.

We, of the Grand Mesa Chapter, are pleased with the strong start and invite all interested men to call one of the members for more details or call Harold "Hutch" Hutchinson at [REDACTED] or Norm Kronvall at [REDACTED].

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER: MARCH IS THE DEADLINE!



### BOOK REVIEW

**SECOND AMERICAN REVOLUTION**, by S. C. Douglas. This is a startling and controversial volume in which Douglas reveals the heretofore seldom discussed phenomenon of Northern-born US citizens who, upon the onset of hostilities with the South in 1861, elected to aid and abet the Confederate cause vocally, covertly, and most surprisingly, militarily. The reader will be astounded to discover that Northern political leaders advocated secession long before the Southern states moved to secede. This book tells us that Southern secession was soundly endorsed by key Northern newspapers and Confederate troops were raised in

the very heartland of Union territory. The book covers the story of the scores of Union soldiers who readily enlisted in the Confederate Army to actively oppose the government of the United States.

If nothing else he presents some interesting and otherwise unknown aspects of the War Between the States. (Review taken from the Family Tree, Feb/March, 1998, pg4A.)

# ?

### QUERIES CORNER

# ?

**Editor's note:** This column is always available for your queries. If it doesn't appear in each issue it is because there have been no submissions.#

Looking for Art, Jr., Smith and Richard Smith, born in Mesa County, CO around 1920 and 1921. Father Arthur J. Smith born 5-1-1903 in Nebraska and moved to Mesa County in 1919 or 1920 where he married a woman named Ruby.

Last known address of Art Jr. is Downey, Idaho and of Richard is White Sands, New Mexico. These are my cousins.

Please contact Robert L. Smith, 6125 Glacier Dr., Grand Junction, CO 81503.

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Looking for help with research in Poland. Frederick Schultz came to Danville, PA in 1888. His family came in 1895 they next appear on the 1900 census in Pueblo, Pueblo County, CO. His wife Susanna died in Pueblo in 1926 and his youngest son William died in 1929. In William's will there is an address *Bialas Scruto W.O. Goysk, Plock, Poland* where the telegram was sent notifying Frederick of William's death.

Frederick would have been 70 years old at this time. I don't know where he was born, but I feel that he must have known the Plock area for him to have returned there at that time in his life. There was no mention of whether the telegram was received.

If you have any suggestions please contact Juanita Moston,

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



## SERENDIPITY AND COLLECTIONS RESEARCH:

### *Detectives on Duty!* by Carolyn Howard, Registrar

(The following is reprinted from the January/February 1998 issue of the MUSEUM TIMES with the permission of the Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction.)

Have you ever wondered what happens to Grandma's wood stove after you donate it to the Museum? What do those Museum people do with all the "things" they receive? Read on.

Quoting from our Mission Statement: "The Museum of Western Colorado is an educational institution that collects, preserves, and interprets artifacts, specimens, and information concerning the cultural and natural history of Western Colorado and the contiguous area. We enhance the quality of life for the public we serve through research, programs, and exhibits to promote awareness, understanding, appreciation and preservation of the past and present." This means that the Museum staff not only preserves artifacts themselves, but we also preserve the history associated with the artifact, such as who owned or used it, and we make this information available to anyone who is interested. This also means that if the donor does not know the history of whatever is being donated, the staff and volunteers will do research to find this information.

Once a decision is made to donate something to the Museum, the donor should contact the Registrar or one of the Curators. The appropriate Curator will then decide if that object meets the Museums collecting guidelines. If the answer is "yes," the Registrar will give the donor a Gift Agreement contract to sign and an Artifact History form to fill out telling us about the donated object(s). The donor may also be asked for biographical information on the user/owner.

Once legal title to the donated material has been secured, the Registrar assigns a unique number (indicative of year and donor) to the collection and transfers the material to the appropriate department: history, archives, research library, paleontology, education, or Cross Orchards. Each department will then catalog the material according to guidelines specific to their areas.

A recent donation to the History Department included a number of plaques awarded to Rudy Susman, a prominent Grand Junction citizen. Once a number was assigned to the collection, history volunteers *Betty and Jay Cayton* began the cataloging process. The plaques were described, measured, cleaned and photographed. I gathered information about Mr. Susman and the history associated with the plaques. Our curiosity was aroused by one particular plaque because part of the inscription was in French and meant "The Society of Forty Men and Eight Horses" and it also had a small shelf on it which held a miniature railroad car and tracks. We wondered about the reason for this award. What was this "*Societe*" that issued this plaque? This is where serendipity in collection research entered the picture. Serendipity is the making of fortunate, unexpected

discoveries by accident. I was talking to Museum volunteer *Betty Grosskopf* about her recent genealogy research trip home to Pennsylvania and *The Searcher: The Newsletter of the Genealogical Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania* she had received, when, out of the blue, no questions asked, she dropped the answer to the question about the plaque and the "*Societe*" into my lap (so to speak). Betty told me about an article in the newsletter that talked about the history of "*La Societe Des Quarante Hommes Et Huit Chevaux*" (The Society of Forty Men and Eight Horses) and she said that she had a smock of her father's which also bore the same words. This article gave me some idea about what the Society was about and gave me a lead about why the plaque had a boxcar on it. To follow up on the boxcar end of the puzzle I asked *Bill Jones*, formerly at the Railroad Museum in Golden, Colorado, what he knew about the Society and its association with railcars. He brought in Edition 33 of *The Colorado Time-Table* newspaper for railroad enthusiasts which had a letter to the Editor about Pennsylvania's and Georgia's "*Merci Cars*," which formed another question in my mind. "Where was Colorado's *Merci* car?" I talked with *Time-Table* Editor *Steve Shoe* and he provided more information on the Society in the form of articles and photographs printed in his newspaper. (See Editions 27-29, 31 and 34.) All of this sleuthing led to some answers to the mysteries of Mr. Susman's plaque, "*La Societe Des Quarante Hommes Et Huit Chevaux*" and the boxcars.

The boxcar model on the plaque was based on a type of 12-ton freight car built between 1872 and 1885. These boxcars were 29 feet long, 9 feet wide and had chain link couplings and button-type buffers. During World War I, these boxcars were used to transport military troops and horses to and from the fighting. Each car held forty men and eight horses and thus were called "Forty and Eight Cars." (During World War II the Germans used the antiquated boxcars to transport prisoners of war.)

In 1920 the American Legion formed an honor society based on these cars and the troops and horses they carried and named it "*La Societe Des Quarante Hommes Et Huit Chevaux*". The society was designed to honor members in good standing who gave meritorious service to the Legion and to the United States. At its peak the Society had 100,000 members. Perhaps a member of your family was so honored.

After World War II, the French refurbished the boxcars and filled them with gifts to the American people as a way of expressing their gratitude for the supplies sent to Europe by Americans during the war via "Friendship Trains." The 49 car "*Merci Train*" (one car for each state at that time and the District of Columbia) was packed full of gifts from the people of France to the people of the United States. The last boxcar arrived in 1949. The contents varied from car to car depending on what had been donated by individuals. Some states kept a listing of the contents of their boxcar, other states did not.

Colorado's boxcar arrived on February 14, 1949, and was



paraded down the streets of Denver to the State Capitol Building by members of the American Legion's Forty and Eight Club. The gift car was formally accepted by Governor Knous. Other ceremony participants included Denver Mayor Newton, French dignitaries, and Drew Pearson, the Denver Post reporter who originally suggested the idea of the "Friendship Train." After the ceremony, the boxcar was supposed to tour all sixty-three Colorado counties to allow everyone in the state an opportunity to see it.

Some of the "nearly 1000 gifts in thirty packing crates" from Colorado's "Merci Car" included: a ten-foot plaster statue of the Virgin and Child, a 168-year-old wooden carving of the crucifixion from a family church in Brittany which a note said was carved in 1780 for the LeCamus family, a Sevres vase, puppets, toys, dolls, paintings, a handmade aluminum lunch bucket, dresses, books, flags, pottery, embroidery, knives, papers, and other articles. Two items from the boxcar reportedly at the Colorado Historical Society are a flag and an album from Buchenwald Concentration Camp.

Barbara Day, a librarian at the Colorado Historical Society, located a number of news articles about the arrival of Colorado's "Merci Car." Stories in the Denver Post stated that some of the contents of the boxcar were sent to the Colorado Historical Society Museum and the others were distributed by the Superintendent of Schools to school libraries for exhibit. It is unknown what happened to them after that.

The dedication plaque from Colorado's boxcar may be found in the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden. It reads: "Boxcar used in the 1st World War presented by the French National Railroads to the State of Colorado in gratitude for the help given to France by the American people".

Recently one train enthusiast on the internet, Roger Kirkpatrick, made it his goal to locate all of the "Forty & Eight Cars" and he has listed the locations of many on his web site (kirkpatr@mcnet.marietta.edu). According to the Denver Post, the Colorado "Merci Car" was to be turned over to the Forty & Eight Society of the American Legion after the gifts had been distributed. American Legion State Adjutant Pat Smith was unable to provide any information on the current location of the boxcar.

If you know the location of the Colorado "Merci Car" please let us know - it has been "AWOL" for more than forty years.

Now back to the original owner of the plaque that started us on this trail of mysteries. Research revealed that Rudolph "Rudy" Susman was born in New Jersey in 1894 and grew up and married in Denver, Colorado. He and his wife, Fannie Ruth Gordon, moved to Durango in 1925, to run the Gordon Store and then to Grand Junction in 1938, to operate the Gordon store here. He was in the Army during World War I,

serving from May 1918, to January 1919.

Mr. Susman was actively involved in community activities and was a member of the Shriners, the Lions Club, the Rotary, the Masons and the American Legion. He served on the boards of the Salvation Army, the Goodwill Industries and Community Hospital for many years, and donated time to the Museum of Western Colorado, Mesa College, Operation Foresight, the VA Hospital, the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Development Authority, among others. Mr. Susman was one of the organizers and supporters of the Eagles Baseball Club and one of those responsible for fencing the baseball field at Lincoln Park.

Commenting on his many awards during an Oral History Interview (OH-308), Mr. Susman said, "Every once in a while [I] look at [the plaques] because I have them on the wall in my room, and it makes you feel good when you look back and see what you have done for the community."

What was once one award plaque among many has now become unique because of the history associated with it. The plaque will be stored with its fellow plaques at the Museum and will make occasional appearances in exhibits and educational programs. The collections research (history) gathered during the cataloging process will be stored in the collection folder and may also be in the Research Center and Special Library of the Museum of Western Colorado. This same process (with variations) is carried out for many of the once cherished items which are donated to the Museum. (Some come complete with history). Each will be preserved, and, with the associated history, be available for the enjoyment and edification of future generations.

(Please contact Carolyn at [REDACTED] if you saw the "Merci Car" while it was in Grand Junction or if you have additional information to share. Thank you.)

*Editor's Note:* Stories, queries, and any other information you feel is of interest to the members is welcomed for use in the newsletter. Please send your items to the editor at least two weeks in advance of the next newsletter. I can accept e-mail, or the other *traditional* form of submissions

## IN MEMORIAM

Ivan Frank Dodson, was born January 18, 1921, he died February 25, 1998. Ivan and his wife Wanda were avid genealogists; traveling to Germany several times to research their ancestral roots. Our sincere sympathy goes to Wanda and her family during this time. You may contact Wanda at [REDACTED]