



## “Prehistoric” Autos to Ascend Swan Mountain

By Randy Swan, executive director

Inside this issue:

<i>Breckenridge Discovered</i>	2
<i>Gala</i>	3
<i>Calendar of Events</i>	5
<i>Briggle House</i>	7

Gentle “nostalgians,” start your engines! On Saturday August 24th and Sunday morning August 25th a wide variety of vintage autos dating from the turn of the last century will participate in an historical “competitive” hill climb and a “concourse d’elegance” exhibit of antique cars, bicycles and horse-drawn conveyances. Old-car fans may expect to catch a glimpse of a 1931 Duisenberg racer, a Model A Ford, a Fitchburg electric and perhaps even a locally built soap box racer or two.

The paddock and staging area for the hill climb will be located at Summit High school. The hill climb cars will progress up Swan Mountain Road to Sapphire Point, then return and proceed to the Riverwalk in Breckenridge for display on the concourse d’elegance.

Swan Mountain Road has an established history of safe and entertaining hill climb events, so it will be a perfect setting for our celebration of the history of travel and motor sport events in and around Summit County.

The Summit Historical Society is

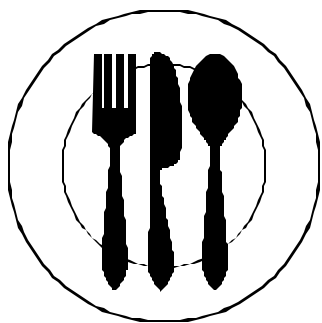
pleased to produce this engaging event in partnership with Nostalgia Racing Inc., which has been a leader and innovator in popular vintage road racing events in Colorado and the nation.



Opportunities for members to join in the fun will abound.

- Fri 23 Historics Registration
- Fri 23 music by the Queen City Jazz Band at the Riverwalk Center, Breckenridge \$17 (\$15 per ticket plus \$2 Breckenridge fee)
- Sat 24– Sun 25 Nominal general admission to the Summit Historic Venues. Call for ticket price.
- Sat 24 Firefall Concert at the Riverwalk Center, Breckenridge. \$18 (\$16 per ticket plus \$2 Breckenridge fee) Co-sponsored with Breckenridge Music Festival.
- For more information call (970) 468-

## Annual Members Picnic—Saturday August 3



Summit Historical Society announces its Annual Members’ Meeting on Saturday, August 3, 2002, in Dillon, CO. The Potluck-BBQ begins at 4:30 p.m.; the Annual Member’s Meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. Summit Historical Museum (Dillon Schoolhouse),

403 LaBonte Street, Dillon. Parking is available at the site. Beverages and desserts will be furnished. Call 970-453-9022 for more information and a meeting agenda.

## Breckenridge is “Discovered”

By Rick Hague

This is the second in a series of *Voices* articles about the history of the Washington Mine, the interpretive site in Illinois Gulch near Breckenridge. The first part of the series summarized the Pikes Peak gold rush. It is available on our website at [www.summithistorical.org](http://www.summithistorical.org)

Future articles in *Voices* will continue the story of Breckenridge, then focus on the history of the mine itself.

The Blue River Valley and what were to become the roaring gold mining camps of the Breckenridge, French Gulch, and Swan River areas were “discovered” in the summer of 1859.

Many of the historical facts that follow derive from the personal accounts of contemporary participants as contained in letters sent to Denver newspapers as quoted in the reference sources

I've made no attempt to trace the entire history of Breckenridge, only that portion of the story that leads up to the development of so-called “hardrock” or underground mining in the area and to the development of the Washington Mine. Many fine books exist which provide a more complete picture of local history in all of its aspects.

On the morning of August 2, 1859, a party of about 30 men set out from Denver into the mountains to seek their fortune. Several days later, the party split into

two groups. One party of 14 headed into South Park and proceeded through what would become Fairplay and Montgomery and over the future Hoosier Pass.

One member of this party was Ruben J. Spalding (sometimes spelled “Spaulding”), a 32-year-old man from Missouri who had arrived in what was to become Denver in July 1859. Spalding had gained gold mining experience during the California Gold Rush and was invited to join the party. There are also references to this party consisting of 29 men and one woman and to it's being led by General George Spencer; Spencer is not mentioned in Spalding's personal account.

According to Spalding's personal account of events, written later in 1891, the group proceeded down the Blue River to a point near the current Breckenridge Recreation Center and Kingdom Park and, in mid-afternoon of August 10, decided to try its luck at panning. Spalding, as the most experienced panner in the group, was elected to try the first pan. A three-foot deep pit was dug in a bar in the river; Spalding panned 13 cents worth of gold in his first pan and 27 cents in his second. Thus, with 40 cents in panned gold, the world “discovered” Breckenridge, and the “rush” was on.

Understandably elated, Spalding's group began to stake their claims, affording Spalding the honor of the “discovery claim”. This type of claim was permitted at the first point of discovery in an otherwise virgin area and carried with it the right to a claim twice as large as a standard claim. Spalding received the placer mining rights to 200 feet along the river, bank-to-bank.

Others in the party immediately began to stake their standard 100-foot claims with bank-to-bank rights.

*continued on page 4*



Contributors to this issue: Rick Hague, Karen Musolf, Robert Porter, Randy Swan, and Patty Wahtera.

*Summit Historical Society Voices* is published quarterly. Articles, letters, calendar information and other items may be e-mailed to the editor, at [BarbaraJY@msn.com](mailto:BarbaraJY@msn.com). The editor also receives U.S. mail addressed to Barbara J. Yost, 3531 Bryant Street, Denver, CO 80211 when she is not sailing on Lake Dillon, dancin' at the amphitheater or at home in her little Dillon condo.

Deadlines:

Winter issue, December 1      Spring issue, March 1

Summer issue, June 1      Autumn issue, September 1

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## *Come to the Gala*

*By Robert Porter, president*

Summit Historical Society's 2002 Gala fundraiser will be Friday, July 26 at Main Street Station, 505 South Main Street Breckenridge, CO from 6:00 to 9:30 p.m. This event is always described by those who attend as memorable and enjoyable.

The annual gala has traditionally been Summit Historical Society's main fundraiser. The money raised through the admission and silent auction contributes to the Society's successful operations and activities as well as contributing to the preservation, restoration and maintenance of historical property and archives.

In addition to the funds raised for the society, much of our success is the result of many hours work by our dedicated volunteers. They staff our museums and tours. They work on preservation construction at our sites. They research, photograph and write about the history and artifacts of Summit County. They plan and staff interesting discussions and outings. They even write,

edit, publish and fold this newsletter. Then they put on their party clothes and pay to attend our fundraisers. They love doing this.

History is a serious business. The heritage and cultural resources that occupy our landscape help us understand the people and events that make Summit County such a special place. You can help us keep history alive by attending our Gala and bringing your checkbook.

And if you are among the intrepid, you can join us in our important volunteer work.



## *Hike the Summit, then Brunch at the Blue Spruce Inn*

*By Patty Wahtera*

There's nothing like an exhilarating hike or walk to work up an appetite, especially in Summit County.

**Circle Sunday, August 18 on your calendar now** so you won't miss a wonderful opportunity to walk where the beauty of the mountains is ablaze with wildflowers and all the history of the area surrounds your every stride.

After all that exercise you'll be rewarded with a fabulous array of food at one of Summit County's favorite restaurants, the Blue Spruce Inn of Frisco. Details of the hikes and brunch will be mailed to members soon. Be sure to sign up early to get the hike of your choice, because this event has been a sellout for the last two years!

For more information:

call Patty Wahtera (970) 453-8332.

"The Blue Spruce Inn, a historic log cabin, originally was located on the old Highway 9 that ran between Dillon and Breckenridge. It had a gas station in front, so it was an important and popular stop. That site is now under Lake Dillon. The cabin was moved to the east end of Main Street in Frisco in the early 1960's, just before construction of the Dillon Dam began. It was moved to its present site at the corner of Madison Avenue and Main Street in Frisco in the 1970's."

--SHS Voices, June, 2000, page 3.

## *Welcome Karen*

Karen Fischer joined our staff as volunteer and tour coordinator, on a part-time basis, Tues, May 28, and became full-time on Monday, June 3.

Fisher has a background teaching art in middle and elementary school, serving as the liaison with Keystone Intrawest homeowners and commercial tenants, office management and budgeting, event planning, sales and marketing, and personal volunteering. She has both BA and MFA degrees.

The Summit Historical Society is extremely pleased to welcome Karen Fischer. She will bring a wealth of energy, experience, initiative, and creativity to our organization. We hope that members will have an opportunity to meet her soon.

## Breckenridge ...from page 2

The initial 1859 discovery (a stream-based placer type of deposit) became the first of three gold mining "eras" in the Breckenridge region and lasted roughly through 1862, although some placer mining was done throughout the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even into the 1960s.

The second era or boom revolved around hardrock (or lode/underground) deposits, began around 1878 – 1880, and lasted into the 1890s. This boom trailed off into the early 1900s and was fairly dead by 1910.

The third era centered around the floating gold dredges that tore up all of the major drainages in the Breckenridge area beginning in 1898 and continuing until October

Fearing for their safety from the local Ute Indians (a fear subsequently proven unjustified), the group decided to build a small fort on the west side of the river for protection and shelter. Initially a single blockhouse of logs with a sod roof, the "fort" grew into several similar buildings facing inward toward a small internal "square" or courtyard.

According to Spalding's account the fort was subsequently named Fort Mabery, in honor of the first woman to arrive in the area over French Pass, reportedly a Mary Bigelow. Other reports indicate that the fort was named after the first woman to live at the fort (who could have been the same person) or after a Mr. Mabery from Cleveland, one of the original party who built the fort. The fort was built on the west bank of the river between the original watercourse and a new canal being dug to divert the flow of the Blue River.

Many of the early names, cited from newspapers, letters, and other accounts written at the time, use slightly different spellings and/or names for the same place or person. The fort is also commonly referred to as Fort Mary B., Fort Marberry, Fort Meriby, Fort Maribeh, and Fort Maribeth as well as Fort Independence and Jones Fort. Fort Mary B. tends to be the most common name used.

The location of the diggings – before the name "Breckenridge" came into the picture – was also called Spalding's Diggings, Independence, Independent, and Blue River Diggings.

The party, in an apparently collective effort, immediately set about altering the course of the Blue River to facilitate exposure of, it was hoped, gold-bearing sands and gravels beneath the river. They built a dam across the Blue, and dug a canal with its head near the present town of Breckenridge.

By October 1859, this diversion canal was estimated to be about two miles long by one of the miners in the area. The river was diverted, and placer mining began in earnest. Lumber was cut from the abundant local trees, and "long toms" and sluice

boxes were built into which the gold-bearing sand and gravel was shoveled. Spalding later recalled that, in his first day of mining, he netted \$10 and a bad cold, having stood in the freezing water with only pieces of a blanket wrapped around his feet. The Breckenridge mining industry was launched.

It is not clear whether General George E. Spencer of Alabama (a future Senator from that state) was a part of this original group of 14 prospectors or arrived shortly after the August 10 discovery. One report indicates that he and three partners probably arrived "in conjunction with" the Spalding party, whatever that might mean. What is clear is that Spencer was instrumental in establishing and naming the town of Breckenridge.

Spencer, along with his three partners, was one of many in the rush that probably intended to make his own fortune by "mining the miners" rather than by getting his hands dirty by actually mining himself. As was true in the early days of Denver, many of those who arrived were land speculators, intent on building towns and selling lots and the buildings built upon them. Others were merchants or tradesmen with specialized tools and skills such as the ability to produce lumber from trees or to hunt game for sale to the miners for food. In fact, Spalding's original three long toms were built from lumber purchased from two such entrepreneurs in exchange for Spalding's \$140 mule.

It is also not clear whether Spencer legitimately claimed the right to build a town or swindled another early land speculator named Felix Pozansky out of his legal claim. In either case, Spencer ended up with a 320-acre parcel upon which, under then-current federal legislation, he could claim township rights by building a "first improvement", at the time a log cabin eight logs high.

*Continued on page 6*

## Calendar of Events

### July

Fri 26 Dinner Gala 6:00 p.m.

Main Street Station, 505 South  
Main Street, Breckenridge

Tickets: \$75 per person. Send a  
check to:

Summit Historical Society Gala  
P.O. Box 745

Breckenridge, CO 80424-0745

Registration Deadline is July 15.

Sun 28 Book and Travel Club:



Historic Walking Tour of

Silver Plume. Hike to Miner's  
Monument - Silver Plume  
House Tour - Silver Plume.  
Check the website for  
time and meeting place.

[www.summithistorical.org](http://www.summithistorical.org)

Tour Leader: Anne Robinson

### August

Sat. 3 Annual Membership Pot Luck

Gather to eat 4:30

Annual meeting 6:00 p.m.

Dillon Town Park

Bring a main dish or salad.

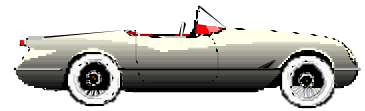
Sun. 18 Hike the Summit then brunch at  
the Blue Spruce Inn, Main Street  
and Madison Avenue, Frisco. \$30  
per person. Call Patty Wahtera for  
details, and to make your reserva-  
tions. ( 970) 453-8332

Fri 23—Sun 25 Summit Historics,

a hill climb and exhibit of vin-  
tage autos and other modes of  
transportation. Check the Web-  
site for more details and regis-  
tration information.

[www.summithistorical.org](http://www.summithistorical.org)

See story on page 1.



Sun. 25 Book and Travel Club

Interlachen (Twin Lakes),  
Winfield, Vicksburg, and Granite  
(all near Leadville) Meet either in  
Breckenridge, at the Carter Museum  
at 8:30 a.m. or in Leadville, at the  
Safeway parking lot at 9:30 a.m.  
Bring a bag lunch

Trip Leader: Judy McCarroll

### September

Sat.—Mon. 28, 29, 30



Book and Travel Club

Pencil in these dates for a pro-  
posed trip to the Aspen area -  
Crystal Mill. The proposed trip  
may involve optional one or two  
overnight stays at area hotel(s);  
arrangements were still being re-  
searched when the newsletter  
went to press. Check the website  
for updated information.

[www.summithistorical.org](http://www.summithistorical.org)

Trip Leaders: Pat & Steve Larson



#### Book & Travel Club

If you are interested in any  
of the book and travel  
club's summer outings,  
Please consult the Society's  
web site:

[www.summithistorical.org](http://www.summithistorical.org).

## Breckenridge...from page 4

Contributer Rick Hague is a member of the Summit Historical Society Board of Directors. He is active as a tour guide at the Washington and Lomax Mines as well as in maintaining the SHS website. Hague recently retired from PriceWaterhouse Coopers Management Consulting practice and is a graduate of the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado.

Although Spencer's original idea may have been to locate the town site at Fort Mary B, the final site became the town's current location. Spencer performed some rudimentary surveying (reportedly surveying only one street) and proceeded to identify (or platt) lots for sale and development.

Two additional problems then presented themselves: what to name the town and the provision of regular mail delivery through a post office. Throughout the development of mining in the West, one of the most demanded of services was regular mail delivery to provide lonely miners with contact with loved ones left behind in the outside world.

Spencer solved both problems with the instinct of a true politician. Through an intermediary (a Democratic lobbyist from Kentucky), he contacted John Cabell Breckinridge, Vice-President of the United States under President Buchanan.

Spencer offered Breckinridge the honor of having the town named after him in exchange for "pulling a few strings" to have a post office built in the town. The flattered Breckinridge obliged, and on January 18, 1860, a post office was in place and the town had a name – Breckinridge (note the spelling, with an "i" in the middle).

Spencer was also named Postmaster, although he left the area (apparently temporarily) before he could assume his new duties. It is unclear how Spencer and Breckinridge managed to communicate and to "seal the deal" so quickly considering the almost total lack of communications at the time.

Unfortunately for Mr. Breckinridge, Jan. 18, 1860, may have been his political high point. Breckinridge ran for the Presidency in the election of 1860. He lost the election, and was, instead, elected to the Senate from Kentucky.

Shortly thereafter, the Civil War broke out. Breckinridge was expelled from the Senate amid cries of "traitor." Breckinridge supported the Confederacy and slavery and he opposed Lincoln's war policy. Breckinridge went on to become a General in the Confederate army and the Confederacy's Secretary of War.

The largely Yankee citizens of "Breckinridge" were so incensed that they changed the spelling of the town name to its current "Breckenridge" (with an "e" in the middle).

Breckinridge eventually fled to Cuba, then England, and finally Canada after the war before being allowed to return to Kentucky in 1869.

*To be continued in future issues*

Artifacts in Carter Museum,  
Breckenridge.

### Help wanted

We have volunteer openings for tour guides, preservation workers, museum docents, event team members, commissioners and board members. If you love history and want to work with us to protect our heritage, call or e-mail Robert Porter, president or Karen Fischer, volunteer and tour coordinator:

Robert Porter (719) 836-0453 (H) [rporter@amigo.net](mailto:rporter@amigo.net)

Karen Fischer (970) 453-9022 [mail@summithistorical.org](mailto:mail@summithistorical.org)



## Thanks for the magic at Briggles House!

By Patty Wahtera

The Briggles House in Breckenridge really comes to life when the Summit Historical Society features a lovely evening of dinner and entertainment there as we did on May 11<sup>th</sup>. It's enchanting to see all the splendid furnishings, artifacts, etc. that make the house transport you back in time to the era when the Briggles lived and entertained there.

Thanks to Karen West for her artistic and lovely Victorian flower arrangements and thanks to Bloom, the new florist in Main

Street Station, for providing the flowers that graced the tables.

Thank you too to Kelly Renoux and Michelle Walters from the Backstage Theatre for a wonderful musical presentation.

And last but not least, thank you to the Hearthstone Catering Group who somehow managed to create a fabulous four-course gourmet dinner without potable running water or a "functioning" kitchen. They really know how to work their magic.

**Be sure to attend future dinners at the Briggles House. You will not be disappointed!**

*William Harrison Briggles (1861-1924) was a leading citizen of early Breckenridge. The following is excerpted from Spring/Summer 1986 edition of Voices, a Summit Historical Society Publication*

"Politically oriented, Briggles served as a town board member several times and as Breckenridge's mayor twice. He was also

working as a county commissioner in 1924 when he died. Even with all of those activities, Briggles found time to work full time at the Engle Brothers Exchange Bank in town. Briggles was the brother of Gertrude Briggles Engle who was married to one of the bank's owners.

After Briggles, 36, married Kathleen Trotter on Jan. 14, 1896 he built the one and a half story home on North Harris Street. The home was influenced by the Romanesque Revival style, a style normally reserved for commercial buildings—primarily banks.

Briggles and his wife Kathleen lived in the home from the time it was built in 1896 until he died in 1924. During those three decades, their name became well-known in the community as a place for fun social events.

In 1900 the Summit County Journal ... made note of the party the Briggles threw to celebrate their fourth anniversary.

"Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Briggles are just at present in an angelic frame of mind, from living on angel cake, Lucifer cake and heavenly white cakes in the calendar of cake time. January 14, this worthy couple celebrated the fourth anniversary of their marriage by giving an elegant and elaborate dinner in honor of the event.

"The menu consisted of all the delicacies of the season, and was pronounced by all present the perfection of culinary art."



The Summit Historical Society's two-hour walking tour of Breckenridge includes visits to the charming 1896 Briggles House, the 1880 Alice Milne House, the Edwin Carter Museum and much more. Tours begin at 10:00 Tuesday through Saturday. For reservations call (970) 453-9022

Summit Historical Society  
309 N. Main Street  
P.O. Box 745  
Breckenridge, CO 80424-0745

Phone: (970) 453-9022  
Fax: (970) 453-8135  
Internet: [mail@summithistorical.org](mailto:mail@summithistorical.org)

Bulk Rate  
U.S. Postage  
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Permit No. 15  
Dillon, CO  
80435

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We're on the 'Net!  
<http://summithistorical.org>

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## Summit Historical Society

Address  
309 N. Main Street  
P.O. Box 745  
Breckenridge, CO 80424-0745  
Phone: (970) 453-9022  
Fax: (970) 453-8135  
Web: <http://summithistorical.org>

Rick Hague, Webmaster  
Rich Skovlin  
Tom Wheeler  
Barbara Yost, *Voices* editor

Executive Director: Randy Swan

Board:

Robert Porter, president  
Terry E. Merrick, secretary  
Ann Grill, treasurer  
Bill Strand, assistant treasurer

[mail@summithistorical.org](mailto:mail@summithistorical.org)  
Dillon Museum & Research Annex  
Phone: (970) 468-2207  
Edwin Carter Museum & Tour Info: