

SMOKY HILL EXPRESS

Elbert County Historical Society & Museum Newsletter

FALL 2025

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**THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED
FOR THE WINTER.
REOPENING
SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2026!**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Legendary Ladies Program
Saturday, March 7
Location and time to be announced

Museum Host Orientation
Saturday, May 16, 9:00 am
Elbert County Museum Assembly Room

**Elbert County Museum
2026 Opening Day**
Sunday, May 24, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Pioneer Fourth Celebration 2026
Saturday, July 4, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Elbert County Museum Grounds

Annual Membership Meeting 2026
Saturday, September 12, 9:00 am
Elbert County Museum Office

**DONATE NOW
THROUGH
COLORADOGIVES.ORG**

2025 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

The Elbert County Historical Society and Museum started the year sponsoring a fun and entertaining program featuring the *Legendary Ladies*. Historical reenactors portrayed six fascinating women from the American West who entertained with stories from their persona's trials, tribulations and impressive accomplishments.

An encore of the ***Elbert County 150 Years!*** exhibit was extended for a second season to honor last year's once-in-a-lifetime celebration. However prior to



opening, museum volunteers worked to install several new displays. The first was the addition of a stunning arrowhead and early ammunition display case from the Emil and Gladys Anderson Museum to the Early Pioneers room, together with twenty new family biographies. The Main Street exhibit welcomed a new business - a bakery, complete with an assortment of kitchen utensils, faux baked goods and a vintage Windsor gas stove. Also, hidden within each storefront was one item that didn't quite belong.

The Pioneer Fourth celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary this summer with a fusion of fan favorites and new traditions. The kid's games, cake walk, silent auction, museum open house, BBQ lunch, live

music and pie baking contest & auction were enjoyed by all. Each year we are blessed to have a fantastic, energetic group of volunteers and this year was no exception!

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AMERICAN REVOLUTION EXPERIENCE TRAVELING EXHIBIT

The countdown is on to the 250th Anniversary of the War for Independence. To commemorate the occasion, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the American Battlefield Trust have partnered to bring a special traveling exhibit, the *American Revolution Experience* to towns across the nation. The Elbert County Running Creek Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is excited to feature the exhibit at the Kiowa Creek Community Church Fellowship Hall from December 4 through 11.

The innovative pop-up exhibition includes display panels and interactive digital kiosks that use storytelling, illustration, technology and unique artifacts and primary accounts to connect modern audiences with the people and places that shaped the birth of our nation.

American Revolution Experience
AN INTERACTIVE EXHIBIT WITH
STORIES OF EVERYDAY PATRIOTS
December 4 - 11, 2025 * 10A - 4P
KIOWA CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH
FELLOWSHIP HALL
231 CHEYENNE ST, KIOWA, CO 80117
SPONSOR: RUNNING CREEK CHAPTER, NSDAR






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ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

JOE MARTELL

President

DEBBIE SCOGGIN

Secretary

PATSY NORTH

Board Member at Large

CARLA MARTELL

Past President

SARAH MALERICH

Vice President

HANK SMITH

Treasurer

DONNA SMITH

Board Member at Large

ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

515 Comanche Street • PO Box 43
Kiowa, Colorado 80117

ElbertCountyMuseum.org

The Elbert County Museum is owned and operated by the Elbert County Historical Society, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.

MISSION STATEMENT

To record and maintain the history of Elbert County, Colorado from the earliest settlement.

To work for the establishment of appropriate vaults and archives for the preservation of original manuscripts, documents, photographs and artifacts which may come into the possession of the Society.

To maintain, preserve and house the above stated articles in the Elbert County Museum.

AMERICAN REVOLUTION EXHIBIT

Continued from page 1

The traveling exhibit includes 12 panels highlighting thematic connections between profiled individuals and 3 interactive kiosks that connect to their full digital biographies, provide documentary context on the Revolutionary War and offer information on how to visit the places tied to these individuals today. The exhibition features custom illustrations by artist Dale Watson and also draws from documents and objects in DAR's collection, as well as the American Battlefield Trust's industry leading digital interpretation resources.

EVENT DETAILS

Kiowa Creek Community Church Fellowship Hall
231 Cheyenne St., Kiowa, CO 80117

December 4 through 11, from 10 am to 4 pm.

NOTE: Exhibit closing early on December 11 at 2pm.

No registration or fee required. Group accommodations outside of these hours require an RSVP and can be requested by contacting Gayle Gardner at 303.520.2080 or gtDavis57@msn.com

Free Admission - Donations Appreciated!

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

Individual -\$15

Student/Senior -\$8

Family -\$20

Volunteer -Donation of six (6) hours of volunteer time or participate in two (2) functions and/or events.

SEASON SPONSORSHIPS

Museum Season Sponsorships are collected annually and expire at the end of each calendar year. Sponsorships support the general operating fund, new and permanent exhibits, development of educational initiatives and public programs, and the historic museum building and its infrastructure.

Season sponsorships are available at four different levels and are identified by icons of early Elbert County industry

LOCOMOTIVE-

Contributions of \$200 cash/merchandise or more will receive:

- acknowledgment as a Season Sponsor on all exhibit and event flyers (including Pioneer Fourth)
- recognition on signage inside the museum and at the Pioneer Fourth
- inclusion in the newsletter(s) and
- on our website



PONDEROSA PINE-

Contributions of \$100 cash/merchandise or more will receive:

- recognition on signage inside the museum
- inclusion in the newsletter(s) and
- on our website



WINDMILL-

Contributions over \$25 cash/merchandise will receive:

- recognition on signage inside the museum
- inclusion in the newsletter(s)



CULTIVATOR-

Contributions of \$250 cash or more through the **East Central Enterprise Zone**** will receive:

- acknowledgment as a Season Sponsor on all exhibit and event flyers (including Pioneer Fourth)
- recognition on signage inside the museum and at the Pioneer Fourth
- inclusion in the newsletter(s) and
- on our website



**East Central Enterprise Zone

By making a \$250 or more cash donation, **contributors receive 25% of that amount as a credit against their state tax liability (i.e.: \$250 donation = \$62.50 credit).** The contribution also may be itemized on their federal tax return.

For additional details on the different levels of **membership** or **sponsorship**, forms can be picked up at the museum's visitors desk or printed off our website at ElbertCountyMuseum.org.

FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

Thank you to our fantastic museum hosts for another successful season! Our docents for the 2025 Season included: Carol Baxter, Anita Brown, Terry Courtright, John DuVall, Linda Ehmann, Gayle Gardner, Lucy Hoffhines, Dulcie Jones, Peg Kelley, Judy & Dan Kimzey, Rick & Katee Kolm, Barbara LeTourneau, Sarah Malerich, Carla Martell, Joe Martell, Debbie McManus, Sherry Metli, Helena Miller, Marge Mottinger, Patsy North, Debbie & Tom Scoggin, Evie Scott and Hank & Donna Smith.

The board of directors appreciates the dedication of all our faithful volunteers. If you would be interested in being a museum host in 2026, please call Carla Martell at 303.621.2229.



2025 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

Continued from page 1

Towards the end of the summer the museum hosted several group tours, including the Elizabeth Historic Advisory Board, the Kiowa High School American Literature and Native American History Classes, and the Elbert Middle School History Class.

Finally, contributions and season sponsorships given in person and through ColoradoGives.org and East Central Colorado Enterprise Zone program continue to grow. We are grateful and appreciate all our supporters.

JOIN THE STATEWIDE WAVE OF GENEROSITY ON COLORADO GIVES DAY!

The Elbert County Historical Society & Museum is excited to announce our participation in Colorado Gives Day 2025 happening on Tuesday, **December 9**.

Last year, more than 95,000 donors donated \$54.8 million for Colorado Gives Day, creating a powerful wave of generosity across the state benefiting nonprofits, proving Colorado Gives Day as one of the largest giving events in the nation and Colorado's biggest day of giving.

Giving for Colorado Gives Day begins November 1 and runs through 11:59 pm on December 9, 2025. During this period, every donation is boosted by a \$1 million+ Incentive Fund and gives nonprofits the chance to win part of \$100,000 in prizes made possible by Colorado Gives Foundation and presenting sponsor, FirstBank.

When you donate to the **Elbert County Historical Society & Museum**, you're helping to ensure the museum's commitment to developing quality displays, presenting informative historic-themed programs, and expanding educational opportunities to museum visitors and tour groups.

Donors who set up a new recurring donation on ColoradoGivesDay.org for the **Elbert County Historical Society & Museum** will get their first month's donation matched up to \$100 from Colorado Gives Foundation.

Visit our donation page at www.coloradogives.org/ElbertCountyHistoricalSociety

CENTENNIAL FARMS & RANCHES BANQUET

The second annual Elbert County Centennial Farms & Ranches Banquet took place during opening weekend of the 2025 county fair. This year's banquet honored the five newest Elbert County properties to be designated through History Colorado's Centennial Farm & Ranch Program: Ehmann Land and Cattle, LLC, Glenn Benjamin Land, LLC, Hoefler Ranch, LLC, ^L^ Ranch, and the Pine Ridge Ranch.

The evening featured a delicious prime rib dinner catered by SALT Craft Meat Market of Castle Rock and two extraordinary video presentations - the first being a slideshow of the five inductee properties, and the second was Berkley Schneider's 4-H Youth Project presentation on the history of her family's centennial ranch. The performance from Doc Rolland and Meryl Brown (Fresh Apples) kept everyone in stitches with their lively toe-tapping, old-fashioned humor and feel good music. The honored families were presented with a limited edition Elbert County Centennial Farms & Ranches belt buckle.

Anyone who may qualify for History Colorado's Centennial Farms & Ranches program is encouraged to look into the program, future banquets will honor new inductees.

The banquet was presented by the Elbert County Fair and Elbert County Historical Society in partnership with the Elbert County Fair Foundation. This year's sponsors included Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA), ONEOK, Rural 1st and Wagner Equipment Company. Photographs taken by Sarah J. Malerich Photography.



MERYL BROWN AND DOC ROLLAND OF FRESH APPLES

BRIDGING THE PAST: ELBERT COUNTY'S ONE-LANE WONDERS

Did you know there are nineteen one-lane bridges in Elbert County? Primarily scattered near and between Agate and Fondis, these narrow crossings are quiet testaments to the county's resilience and rural character, and they owe their existence, in large part, to one of Colorado's most devastating natural disasters.

After the Flood: A County Rebuilt

In mid-June 1965, torrential rains over several days unleashed catastrophic flooding across the South Platte River basin. Although Denver-area flooding occurred on June 16, another storm on June 17 devastated Elbert County, when between five and twelve inches of rain fell in just a few hours. Four dams failed, including Agate Dam on Bijou Creek, and countless rural bridges were washed out. Roads turned to rivers, ranches vanished under water, and channels along East, Middle, and West Bijou Creeks were gouged deeper overnight.

In Elbert County, the floodwaters from East, Middle, and West Bijou Creeks combined into a surge that reached 466,000 cubic feet per second by the time it was measured downstream near Wiggins. Long stretches of highways and county roads were destroyed, leaving many residents isolated for days and, in some places, weeks.

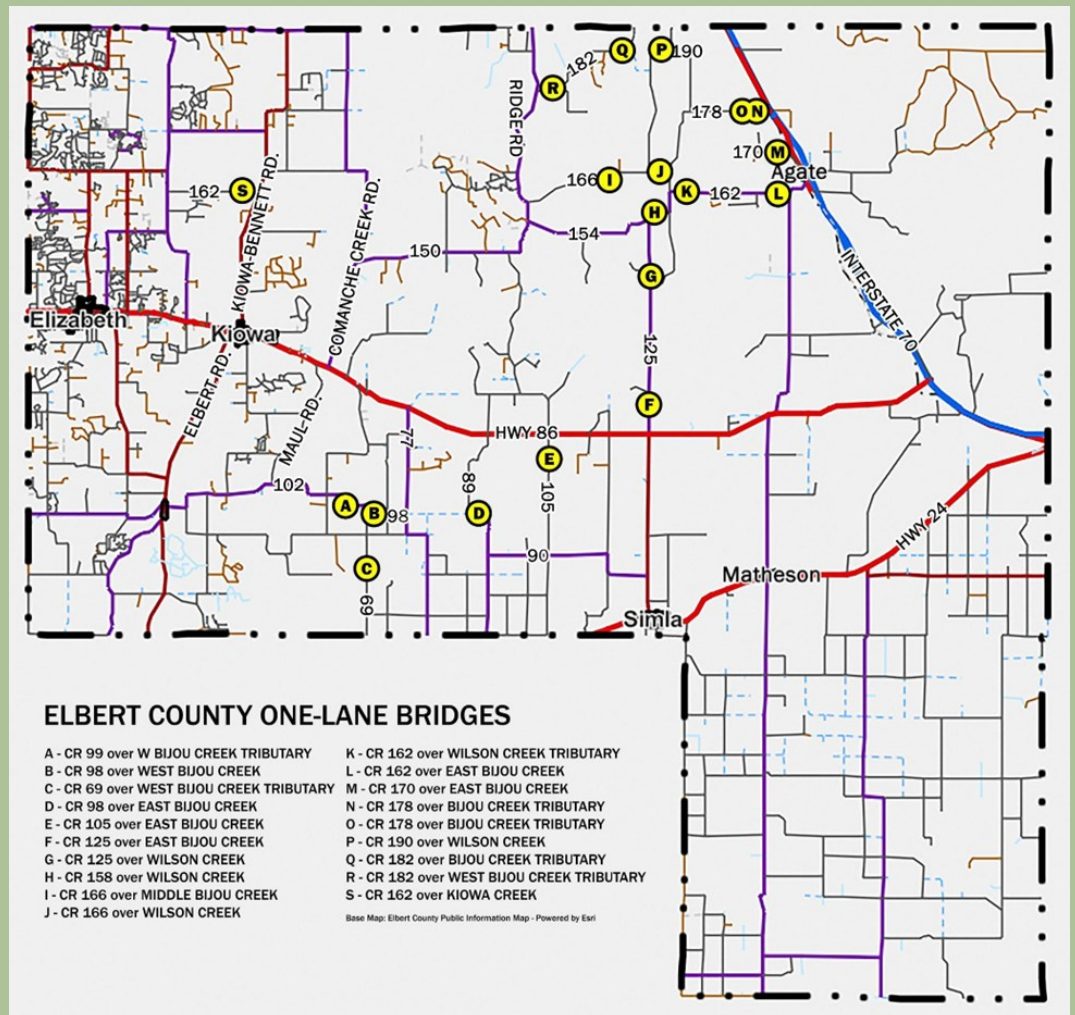
In the weeks and months that followed, the county and state scrambled to restore transportation links. Many of the bridges we cross today were installed as "temporary" replacements, quickly-poured concrete decks reinforced with rebar, just wide enough for a pickup to pass. Six decades later, they remain in service, weathered and cracked but stubbornly functional, though many are in concerning disrepair.

The Ramah Road (County Road 105) Bridge, for example, was one of those "temporary" replacements. It still carries traffic today, sixty years later, a tangible reminder of how necessity and practicality shaped local infrastructure.

Nineteen Bridges, One County

From the branches of Bijou Creek to Kiowa Creek and Wilson Creek, each one-lane bridge has a story. Nearly all were built between 1964 and 1966, with a few older survivors, including the County Road 170 Bridge over East Bijou Creek, originally constructed in 1919 and reconstructed in 1991. A pair of twin bridges on County Road 178 near Agate, dating from 1964, span a small Bijou Creek tributary half a mile west of Interstate 70. One of the few to be replaced in recent years is the County Road 182 bridge over a West Bijou Creek tributary, reconstructed in 2020, a rare example of a "temporary" one-lane bridge finally being brought up to modern standards, though it remains a single lane.

These bridges are scattered like breadcrumbs along rural backroads, their coordinates forming a hidden map of the county's waterways. You can find them at the locations marked on the map. Together, they trace the path of recovery after 1965, a quiet network of lifelines connecting ranches, farms, and communities once cut off by floodwaters.

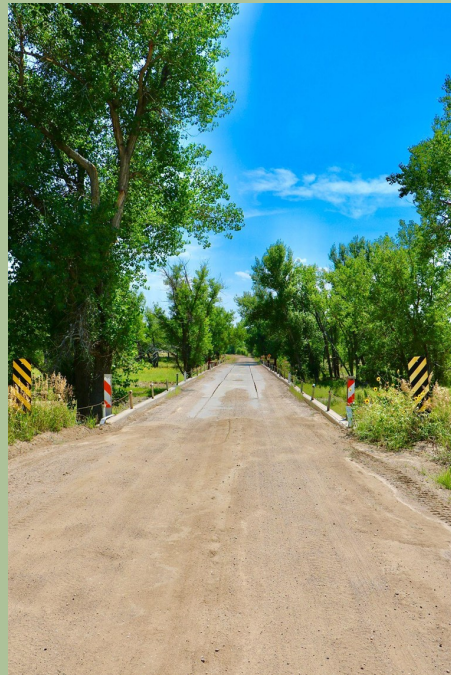


A One-Lane Road Trip

If you are feeling adventurous, you can turn this history into a one-day road trip. Grab your best friend, pack a picnic, fill your tank, and chart a loop around the county to visit a few of these relics. You will pass rolling pastures, hidden creek valleys, and views that have not changed much since the bridges were poured. Be mindful of traffic and respect private property, as the crossings sit on active roads, but take your time to appreciate their endurance.

Each bridge may look ordinary, but together they tell a remarkable story of how a community rebuilt after disaster, one narrow span at a time.

RIGHT: "J" - COUNTY ROAD 166 OVER WILSON CREEK, LOOKING WEST.



ABOVE LEFT: LEFT: "B" - COUNTY ROAD 98 OVER WEST BIJOU CREEK, LOOKING WEST TO FONDIS. CENTER: "E" - COUNTY ROAD 105 (RAMAH ROAD) OVER EAST BIJOU CREEK, LOOKING SOUTH. RIGHT: "S" - COUNTY ROAD 162 OVER KIOWA CREEK, LOOKING WEST.

AGATE DAM

This is where a lot of the South Platte River flood in northeast Colorado started. Agate, Colorado, is in the background. The Agate Dam, at left center, is broken in several places in this view looking west. The reservoir which held back the waters of east and main branch of Bijou Creek is left of dam. Creek flowed to right or north.

THE ABOVE CAPTION AND ARIAL PHOTO (RIGHT) TAKEN BY DENVER POST PHOTOGRAPHER, BILL JOHNSON, APPEARED IN THE PIKE VIEW FARMER, JUNE 24, 1965.





ELBERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

PO BOX 43 • KIOWA, COLORADO 80117

ELBERT COUNTY MUSEUM SPONSORS

While the museum receives funds through monetary donations given at the museum and with annual historical society memberships; Season Sponsorships and the Pioneer Fourth celebration are the main areas of income which allow the Elbert County Historical Society to develop exhibits and educational opportunities and to improve and maintain the museum building.

Thank you for your commitment to the educational and historical importance of the Elbert County Museum!

LOCOMOTIVE

A Cowgirl's Heart
Boutique & Gallery
AAC Enterprises, Inc.
Anonymous Donor
Beuck Land Company
Bino's Pizza
Laurel Brown
Mark & Lynn Conroe
CORE Electric Cooperative
Douglas County Septic
Ben & Laurie Duke
Elbert County Democrats
Elizabeth Locker Plant
Front Range Kubota
Carl Gottbehuet
High Plains Food Store
High Prairie Survey Co.
High Prairie Tree & Turf Inc.
Lucy Hoffhines
Innovative Eyecare
Integrated Electrical
Contractors
JR's Village Repair
Just Peach Day Spa
Kamerzell Bros
Well & Pump Service
Kiowa Car Wash
Kiowa Outdoor Adventures
Katee & Rick Kolm
Legacy Plow & Trailer

(LOCOMOTIVE CONT.)

Jeff & Connie Lehman
Keith LeTourneau
Lifetime Properties Inc.
Lowes -Castle Rock
Jim & Carla Martell
Mountain View
Electric Assn (MVEA)
Patty Ann's Café
The Prickly Pear
Prism Builds, LLC
Tom & Debbie Scoggin
Sun Valley Contractors, LLC
Betty Taylor
Timberline
Family Dentistry, LLC
Todd Collins &
Associates, LLC
Town of Elizabeth
-Historic Advisory Board
Town of Kiowa
True Value -Elizabeth

PONDEROSA PINE

360 Diesel & Auto Repair
Bare Bear Country Cuts
Carriage Shoppes Vendors
Elbert County Republicans
Fox's Pizza Den
Galt, Inc.
Gayle & John Gardner

(PONDEROSA CONT.)

Gigi's Pet
Grooming & Supplies
Gordon Insurance Agency
Hamacher Well Works, Inc.
Christian Hertneky
HOO Motors
Pat Huddleston
IC Threads, Inc.
Jill's Feed & Country Supply
Vikki Johnson
Daniel Jordan
Kiowa High School
Alumni Association
Diane McMahan
-Medicare Enthusiast
Tom & Marge Mottinger
Murdoch's Ranch &
Home Supply -Parker
Napa -Elizabeth
Patsy & Jason North
Outback Liquor
Parker Port-A-Potty
Rock Bottom Propane
South 40 Bar and Grill
Marnie Tilkens
Walmart -Elizabeth
Mindy Webb

WINDMILL

1897 House "The Nest"
Adriana's Mexican Restaurant
All Wired Up Electric
Tammy Bentrout
Big R
Carriage Shoppes Tea Room
Dairy Queen -Elizabeth
Dusty Plains
Veterinary Service
Elizabeth Tack Trunk
Freddy's -Castle Rock
Deb Golder
Betty Haulman
Home Depot -Castle Rock

(WINDMILL CONT.)

Home Depot -Parker
Betty Hood
Debra Jacobs
King Soopers -Stroh Ranch
KW Home Accents
-Karin Royston
Lisa Lawrence
Lowes- Parker
Deborah Maul
Mountain Man
Fruit & Nut Co. -Elizabeth
Murdoch's Ranch &
Home Supply -Castle Rock
Levoy Ramey
Randy's Antiques & Art, LLC
Running Creek Chapter DAR
Safeway -Elizabeth
Sam's Club -Castle Rock
Cissy Simms
Sprouts
Farmers Market -Parker
William Thomas

CULTIVATOR

Advanced Quality
Auto Repair
American Family Ins.
-Zach Bough Agency
Catalina's Diner
David & Linda Ehmann
Farmers State Bank -Kiowa
Glaser Gas &
Equipment Co. -Kiowa
JC Martell
Sherry Metli
Raylene Owen
RE/MAX Accord -Elizabeth
Smith Ranches
Unbridled Contractors, LLC