



UTE PASS HISTORICAL SOCIETY & Pikes Peak Museum

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Friendfield Turkey Farm Woodland Park, Colorado

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Continued from 3rd Quarter Newsletter

Elizabeth *Betsy* Forster was born on December 23, 1886 in Georgetown, South Carolina. Her parents, Charles and Fairinda Forster were very well known and respected. Betsy's mother Fairinda was distantly related to George Washington and her father Charles was a 1874 graduate of the Virginia Military Institute.

Her grandfather was Dr. Alexius Forster, III. Dr. Forster was a large South Carolina plantation owner before the Civil War. Immediately prior to the War, he was a signer of the Ordinance of Secession which enabled South Carolina to succeed from the Union in 1860. During the war, he was a 2nd Lieutenant with the 7th Battalion, South Carolina Reserves (Confederacy). According to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Dr. Forster for a while owned the Friendfield Plantation which is a 3,305-acre property whose history dates c. 1750 until 1946. First Lady Michelle Obama's great-great-grandfather was a slave on this plantation.

Betsy enrolled in nursing courses at Union Memorial Hospital of Baltimore, Maryland and graduated in 1912 at the age of 26. She then went on and furthered her nursing education at Johns Hopkins University where she studied public health nursing.

After John Hopkins, in 1913, Forster was hired by the *Visiting Nurse Association* in Colorado Springs and after two years was made a nursing supervisor. FYI, the *Visiting Nurse Association* was Colorado's first home healthcare agency and still exists today. It is Colorado's oldest and largest home health care provider.

It was while employed at the VNA during the flu pandemic that Laura Gilpin's mother Emma hired Betsy to care for Laura. The two ladies really hit it off together and developed a deep friendship. At the end of 1918, with Laura now fully recovered, Betsy left to work briefly for the Red Cross but maintained her relationship with Laura. She returned to Colorado Springs in 1919 and resumed her employment with the VNA as a supervisor.

In 1930 Betsy and Laura went on a camping trip out west. While motoring their Buick through the Navajo Reservation they happened to run out of gas. Betsy stayed with the car while Laura started walking to find a filling station. While Laura was gone, a group of Navajo's found Betsy with the stranded car and gave her



Betsy, August 1946

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water and kept her company until Laura came back. They instantly developed a friendship with one another, a bond that would remain with both Betsy and Laura for the rest of their lives.

Betsy continued to work at the VNA until 1931 when she took a position as a public health nurse in Red Rock, Arizona for the New Mexico Bureau of Indian Affairs. Laura also moved there to live with Betsy and photograph her and her work with the Navajo's. That job lasted until 1933 when she returned to Colorado and went to work with the Emergency Recovery Administration in Fairplay, Colorado, working there until January of 1936. The ERA was a Federal program established by President Roosevelt in 1933 and was dissolved in December of 1935.

In 1935, both Betsy and Laura were living at the Gilpin Family cabin in Woodland Park while Betsy worked in Fairplay. Even though the Great Depression had ended in 1933, the couple struggled financially. That was when they decided to go into the turkey business. Laura had done so well in it before, they started the Friendfield Turkey Farm in Woodland Park.

For the next few years that business thrived and succeeded. They raised thousands of turkeys and sold and shipped them to customers all over the United States.

The farm did well but in 1939 they shut it down. They operated a guest house until 1942 when Betsy went back into nursing during World War II and Laura went to work as a photographer for the public-relations department at the Boeing Company in Wichita, Kansas.

In August of 1944 Betsy was diagnosed with acute encephalitis and later polio. Her health deteriorated and she was declared legally incompetent. She was then moved to her sister's home in Nebraska. Laura insisted on caring for Betsy herself but the two were not recognized as a *married couple*.

In 1945, Betsy mostly recovered and her mental incompetency was voided. She and Laura sold their Woodland Park acreage to Bishop Kennedy of the Grace Episcopal Church of Colorado Springs. The church then formed the Thunderbird Church Camp. Laura and Betsy moved permanently to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where the town was tolerant and accepting of the gay couple.

In Santa Fe, Betsy remained too ill from polio to do much of anything. Laura wrote books on photography and kept earning money from commercial photography as well, although they both struggled financially.

Betsy's health continued to go downhill and Laura was now in her 70s and facing her own health problems. In the fall of 1971, after a 50 year love affair, Laura was forced to place Betsy into a professional care home. She died there just a few months later on January 1, 1972. She is buried in Evergreen Cemetery, Colorado Springs.

Raised by Two Women these choice turkeys show that Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Three years ago two well-known Colorado Springs women, Miss Laura Gilpin and Miss Elizabeth Foster, surprised their friends and poultrymen by launching into the turkey business on a 100-acre ranch near Woodland Park with the idea of producing quality birds. This year they are preparing to market 1,500 birds, declared by experts to be among the finest ever raised anywhere. The high altitude, sunshine, shade, cool nights and expert feeding have combined to produce birds of exceptional quality and this year many a Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years dinner on the eastern seaboard will have as the chief dish Friendfield turkeys. Miss Foster and Miss Gilpin have designed special individual cartons for shipment and are planning to develop a business of the kind. The above photograph shows some of the boggles who are awaiting the ax but who show no signs of the impending doom for them and glorious holidays for purchasers.



The Gazette & Telegraph, November, 1937

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Forster's Friendfield Plantation in South Carolina

This narrative just scratches the surface of the work Laura and Elizabeth did on the Navajo Reservation. It also just barely touches on the photography awards earned by Laura.

It does, however, give an insight into the lives of two remarkable women that for a while lived in Woodland Park and ran their turkey farm. I'm sure no one living here today has neither heard about nor remembers this couple or their farm. Hopefully this essay will secure their place in Woodland Park's history. ~Steve Plutt~



Laura Posing with One of Her Live Turkeys



Mrs. John Billy Teaching Betsy to Weave, 1932



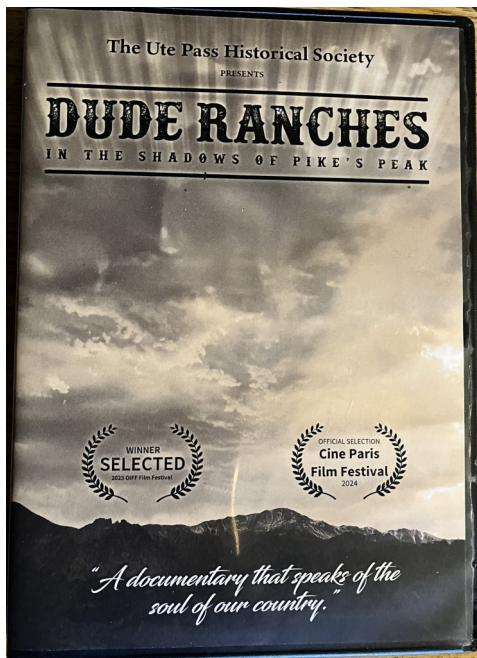
Happy New Year from our board of directors!

2023 was a great year for the Historical Society. Our film, *Dude Ranches in the Shadows of Pikes Peak* was produced and shown at the local Theater in Woodland Park to sold out audiences several times. It was well received. The film was part of our effort to share our local history with a larger audience. DVDs are available in our Gift Shop for \$25 + tax. Patrons receive 10% off most items in the shop. It is also available for streaming at: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/duderanches> .

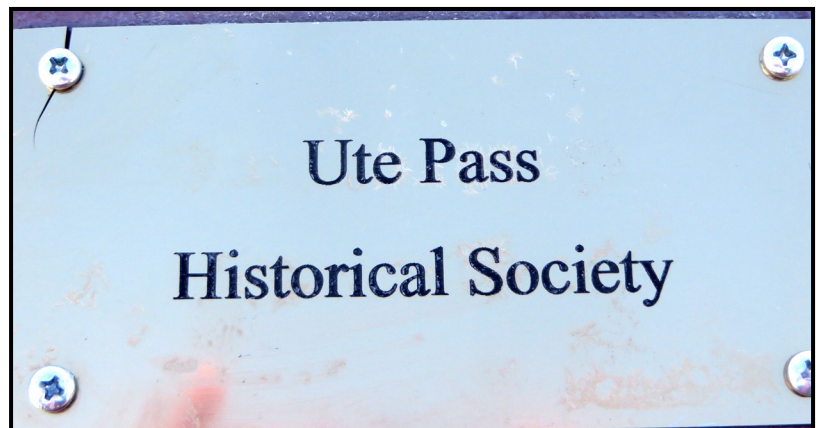
We are currently working on a second film *The Mighty Midland and the Towns it Built*. It will be ready to see this Spring. Check our website for updates.

Along with the success of the film, the Gift Shop and the summer book sales in Green Mountain Falls were impressive. Thanks to Judy Perkins and our volunteers for the great work this year!

The Ute Pass Historical Society lost one of its most dedicated volunteers, Paul Loyd, in January 2023. Paul was the Photo Librarian and served on the Board for over 15 years. He was one of our most charitable benefactors, giving every time he was asked. He is greatly missed.



The DVD *Dude Ranches in the Shadows of Pikes Peak* is available now in the UPHS Gift Shop for \$25 + tax. Patrons receive 10% off most purchases in the Gift Shop. *Credit cards accepted!*



This is the placard on the bear proof trash cans in Memorial Park. Paul Loyd donated them in UPHS' name.

Cranberry Ricotta Cake

Ingredients

- * 1 1/2 cup flour
- * 2 t. Baking Powder
- * 3/4 t. Salt
- * 1 1/4 cup sugar, divided
- * 3 large Eggs
- * 1 1/2 c. Whole Milk Ricotta Cheese
- * 1/2 c. Unsalted Butter, melted
- * 1/2 t. Vanilla
- * 1 1/2 c. fresh Cranberries, divided

Sugared Cranberries

Combine 1/2 cup granulated sugar and 1/2 cup water in a medium saucepan over medium heat. You are basically making a simple syrup. Stir until the sugar is dissolved.

Stir in 1/2 cup of cranberries until well coated. This step is quick so don't let the cranberries hang out in the simple syrup pool for too long.

Use a slotted spoon and transfer the cranberries to a wire rack to cool and dry up to an hour.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch round cake pan with parchment paper; grease. Combine flour, baking powder, salt, and one cup of the sugar in a large bowl.

Whisk together eggs, ricotta, butter and vanilla in a separate bowl; fold into flour mixture. Fold in one cup of the cranberries, and spoon into prepared pan.

Bake in preheated oven until golden brown and a wooden pick comes out clean, about 50 minutes. Cool in pan on wire rack 20 minutes. Remove from pan.

Once the cranberries are cool, work in batches and roll the cranberries around in more granulated sugar. Once that's done, you can top the cake!

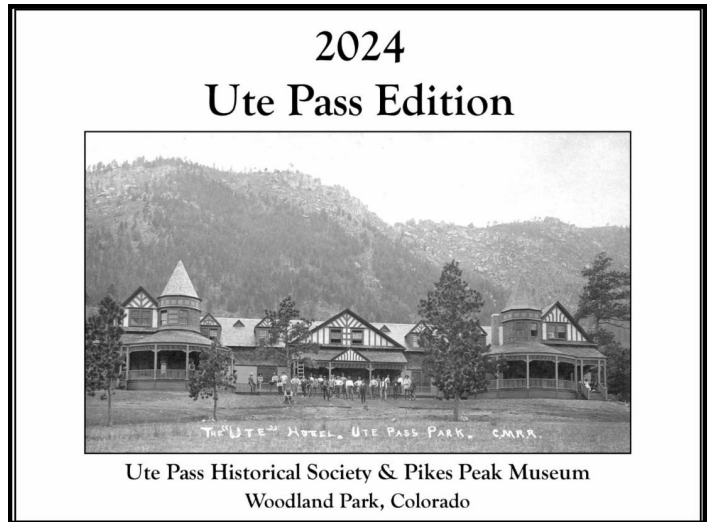
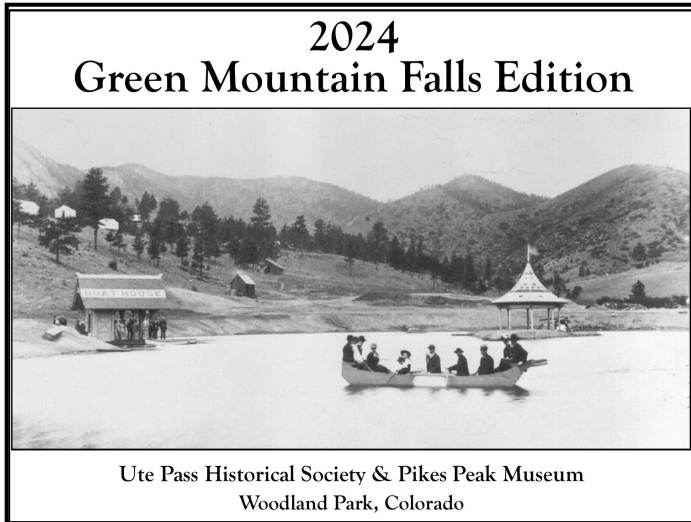
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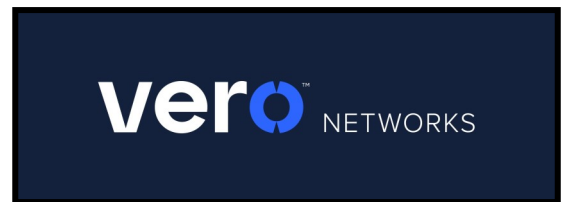


Have you ever considered volunteering? We are always looking for new volunteers: History Park tour guides, gift shop coverage, cleaning and building maintenance.



**NATIONAL
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FOR THE
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Funding for these grants has been provided by Colorado Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the NEH Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan (SHARP) initiative.



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THANK YOU!

The Ute Pass Historical Society's Board of Directors is grateful to our loyal patrons and enthusiastic volunteers. Without your generous financial contributions and dedicated volunteer service, we would not exist. Thanks to all of you for supporting our mission to preserve and share the history of the families and communities of the Ute Pass area of Colorado.

It is an honor to serve you!