

FRIENDS OF RAYMER

New Raymer, Colorado

May 1, 2020

Art & History Day is CANCELLED

FRIENDS OF RAYMER

ART & HISTORY DAY UPDATE

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We hadn't even gotten a chance to announce all the amazing things we had in store for this year's Art & History Day tour before we had to make the unfortunate decision to cancel this year's event. We will not be hosting Art and History Day this year. So many of you expressed an interest in doing this again and it breaks our hearts to cancel something that was bound to be so much fun!! Friends of Raymer is still planning a wonderful tour, and now we'll have an extra year to make it special. We will be highlighting the area's Centennial farms, dryland farming, the railroad, and featuring farmers that are still working in this area and have a wealth of knowledge to share. We'll combine the history of the area with the history of agriculture in the area. The bus tour that people have come to expect will still be a highlight. We'll still have lots of guest speakers and tour guides. You can watch for more information about this tour on our website. We'll continue to post updates about this and all the other things we have coming up soon! We appreciate your support and we look forward to when we are able to get together again. Art and History Day will be better than ever in 2021!

Let's take a little trip down memory lane!!
Let's visit Famie Box , March 25, 1984.
Please see Page 2 for Greeley Tribune article.



- Arnold G. Fiscus** Another great article !!!
Like · Reply · 5d
- Marlene Oaks** What a great story.
Like · Reply · 5d
- Deborah Artzer** My mother, Jewell Kellner Artzer was born in 1922 in the house that Archie and Fannie lived in. Her parents lived there until she was in 8th grade when they moved to Bushnell, Nebraska.
Like · Reply · 4d
- Marlene Oaks** Deborah Artzer I did not know that.
Like · Reply · 4d
- Deborah Artzer** When she was 6 yrs old they moved 2 miles west of Raymer then after that to Bushnell.
Like · Reply · 4d
- Deborah Artzer** My mother had many relatives that were in Raymer early. Her relatives were the Winterods and Addingtons. The Kile Hotel was her Aunt and husband's. Andy Burke who lived in the old Bank building was married to Mom's cousin.
Like · Reply · 4d
- Janice Oestereick** Hi Deborah Artzer. Are you still dancing?
Like · Reply · 4d · Edited
- Deborah Artzer** Janice Oestereick Doing Zumba

Farm woman beats adversity

By BILL JACKSON

NEW RAYMER — Famie Box sits at the table in her kitchen. Her eyes twinkle when she recalls warm events in her life on the ranch where she has lived since 1936.

But it's fire that comes from those eyes when she talks about the Dust Bowl days.

"I don't ever want to see those days again. But if these people keep plowing this land up, it will happen again, and don't think it won't. When we moved on to this ranch it had been vacant for a number of years. There was 6 feet of dirt piled up around this very house."

Famie Box will be 81 years old in April. She arrived in the New Raymer area with her parents, Ed and Minnie Fiscus, on April 18, 1917, along with three brothers and two sisters. They came from central Nebraska in two railroad cars, which contained all the family's possessions, including livestock.

"They were called immigrant cars," she says of the railroad cars. "We moved to a two-room shack about 10 miles north of Raymer. I thought it was just terrible. There were no trees anywhere, and we had come from central Nebraska where there were a lot of trees."

But loneliness was not among the numerous problems that faced the people who homesteaded and settled the prairies of northeastern Colorado.

"When we first got here there was a shack on every 80, 160 or 320 acres. I can still show you where they were. A lot of those people left before the 1929 crash and right after. Then, of course, the Dust Bowl days drove a lot more of them out of here. I don't know how we stayed. We didn't have the money to leave, I guess. And we just made up our minds that we were going to stay."

She met Archie Box, the man she would marry in 1922, when he first moved into the area in 1918.

"His family had actually come in 1910. Archie came out here from Pueblo the first time in 1918 but then went back to Pueblo and came back in 1920. We went to a parish in Sterling to get married — there wasn't a church then — in 1922. We had \$2.50 in our pockets when we got married and moved on to a place some folks from Nebraska had settled. They had left and gone back. Those were the days."

Her husband died Feb. 2, 1974.

Archie and Famie Box lived on the homestead and started their family and their ranch, initially paying \$1 an acre for land, and then buying more for \$1.50 an acre.

"Archie farmed a little, but he was mostly a cattleman. The Federal Land Bank had this place, and they approached us to buy it. They wanted \$800 for 320 acres, and we said there was no absolutely no way we could pay for it; that was just too much money. But the Federal Land Bank people said they could work something out, so we bought it and moved onto the place and over the years, before Archie passed on, we had built it to almost 5,000 acres, not counting the federal land we have permits for."

The couple raised five children on the ranch: Doris Vangraefschep, who lives in New Raymer; Pauline Steffen, who lives in New Raymer; Louise, who died in 1957; Allen, who lives on the ranch; and Karen Kester, who also lives in New Raymer. Famie has 14 grandchildren and a like number of great-grandchildren.

Allen Box and his wife, Margaret, took over the operation of the ranch following Archie's death, but in February 1982 Allen suffered a stroke while tending the cattle.

As is typical in rural communities, neighbors rallied and took over ranch operations while Allen battled back from the effects of the stroke. He can now drive on his own, is regaining much of his speech and is able to ride horseback.

This past winter, however, has been hard on cattlemen throughout the region but particularly hard at the Box Ranch.

"We had to sell all the cows; there was just no way we could care for them this winter. We had a hired man out here for a while, but calving just wasn't in his blood; he couldn't handle it. We're hoping we can run yearlings on the place, but we're not sure we can do that with the permits we have. We might lease some of our land. I don't know what will happen. We're working on a number of things," Famie says.

Adversity, however, is nothing new for Famie Box, and quitting is not in her vocabulary. She spoke of her early married life.

"Archie took on a mail route to supplement our income for \$42 a month. A lot of time he had to deliver the mail by horse trailer to get through the snow in the winter. We didn't have any electricity; there was very little wood in the area, so we would gather cow chips in the fall, put them in a shed and burn them for heat in the house. They burned very quick but put off a very hot fire. That's what we grew up with; we just didn't know any better," she says, with a smile.


She is particularly, and rightfully, proud of the home she now lives in and is fond of the living room Archie built. It is paneled with a rich, natural wood. A horned owl is mounted on a perch and stares down from one corner. Miniatures of other wildlife common to northeast Weld County are also on the walls. She shows off her collections of thimbles and oil lanterns. Photographs and paintings of the family and scenes from the area are prominently displayed.

On one wall is a plaque honoring Archie for his many years of dedicated work as a member of the New Raymer Lions Club, which, among other projects, sponsors the Northeast Weld County Fair each year. Next to that is a plaque naming Famie Box as a lifetime member of the Weld County Livestock Association, of which Archie was a charter member.

"I started to take some of this stuff down once, and the grandkids got upset. They said: 'Grandma, don't take anything down. Grandpa put it up, and it wouldn't be the same if you took it down.' So I guess I'd better leave it up."

She also continues at the Northeast Weld County Fair another tradition started by her late husband. One of the events of the fair is a pet show in which all the youngsters from the area show their pets, just like the older 4-H and FFA members who exhibit their livestock. For their efforts, they receive a ribbon and a silver dollar from Famie Box.

And chances are it is a tradition that will continue for a good number of years. Her father lived to be 95, her mother 93. Three brothers, Clarence of New Raymer, Glen of Fort Morgan and Mick, who lives on the original Fiscus home, are still active in the area, as is one sister, Ruth Bingson, who lives in Fort Morgan. Only one sister, Nellie Thomas, is deceased.



11,000 Years Past

Man's use of the land surrounding Pawnee Buttes has been traced back about 11,000 years to when prehistoric men roamed the area in hunting parties. Ages of wind and water have carved a geological identity into the soft earth of which the buttes are composed. The castle peak on top of the east butte, below, reflects the process.

By **ANDREW MacLEOD**
Times Staff Writer

As early as the late 1800s anthropologists came to the Pawnee Buttes area in North-eastern Weld County to study one of the most interesting fossil beds in North America.

Archaeological studies have traced prehistoric man's domination of the area back about 11,000 years.

With a 15 mile radius of the area the fossil remains of small camels, elephants, three-toed horses, rhinoceroses and numerous other life forms have been unearthed.

Today the desolate beauty of the area has given way to the appearance of a weekend campground used by four-wheel-drive vehicles, target shooters and occasional campers.

The area is now part of the National Grasslands, administered by the U.S. Forest Service, and encompasses 772,000 acres with the East Pawnee Butte and the West Pawnee Butte included in the parcel.

Folklore offers several versions of how the buttes got their name. Two versions have a group of Pawnee Indians trapped on top of the east butte after seeking refuge there from a band of hostile Indians.

One version has the attackers as Sioux Indians and the other as another faction of the Pawnee tribe.

Anyway, the tale indicates the Pawnee on top of the butte were trapped there without adequate water or food and decided to

their clothes together to fashion a rope and sending a scout down the side of the butte on the rope to cut footholds into the soft silt for the rest of the band to escape by.

If the tale is to be believed, the Pawnee escaped under the cover of night and ever since then the buttes, which rise several hundred feet off the plains, have been called Pawnee Buttes.

However, the story has been disputed by the son of a homesteader who settled near the area in 1884 who claimed his brother carved the first steps into the butte.

Which ever story is correct, there are still steps in the butte today, steps that are still used by visitors to ascend to the top of the east butte.

But neither group was the first to inhabit the area. Archaeological digs indicate that early man, Folsom or Clovis Man, roamed the area in hunting parties more than 11,000 years ago.

This assertion is supported by the relatively recent find of an apparent mass slaughter of bison that seemingly had been encircled or corralled into a dry lake bed by prehistoric men 7,000 to 9,000 years ago.

Amid the groups of bison bones found in the lake bed was a long, presley shaped spear tip indicating the kill was the work of a hunting party.

No one really knows when the first settlers or trappers located the buttes.

Around 1870 the first known expedition was sent to the area headed by Professor O.C.

collect specimens of fossil remains found in the area.

March preceded an influx of white settlers who came to the area in about 1880 as the West opened up.

The whites took the area to farm it from the Cheyenne, who had driven out the Comanches, who had taken the land from the Apache tribe that had driven out the Pawnee Indians that claimed the area more than 800 years ago.

The homesteaders' futile efforts to farm the area with eastern agricultural technology and under the mistaken notion that the rain belt had pushed westward, litter the area today in the form of crumbled foundations and buried fences.

The few farmers who were able to scratch out a living from the dry lands around the buttes were finished off by the dust bowl droughts of the 1930s.

By then the farmers' practice of turning under the natural grass of the area to plant crops had taken its toll; the droughts came; the land dried; the topsoil blew away, and when the rains came back, the water washed more soil away.

The land which had survived thousands of years side by side with man was in danger of being destroyed in the relatively short time of about 50 years by settlers who thought it could be cultivated.

In 1937 the federal government stepped in and bought up large parcels of land in the area, prohibiting farming and grazing until the land could be reseeded.

NEW RAYMER WAS THRIVING

until the dust storms hit

By BRUCE ROBB
Tribune Staff Writer

Clarence Fiscus, who says he can still play his fiddle at 83, grew up on a homestead 10 miles north of New Raymer. He retired from ranching in 1964, when one of his four sons took over the land and equipment, and he moved into a house in the town with his wife, Margaret.

Just how much the town had declined by then is apparent when Fiscus explains what he got for his money. "I put out \$1,500 and got the house and the whole block," he explains.

Land was even cheaper when his father, Ed, began working to "prove up" his homestead. It was free in terms of money, but cost a lot in terms of sweat.

"When my family came here in 1917, there were families on every half-section and quarter-section of land," Fiscus recalls. "There were 600 people in New Raymer at one time, but now there's only about 60 — if you count a few dogs."

Fiscus remembers the town's two banks, two lumberyards, two grocery stores, three hotels and other businesses. Two of his sisters worked in the biggest hotel, the Kyle Inn. "We even had an undertaker," he says.

There was a water tank and windmill right in the middle of the main street so that people could water their horses in the early days when ranching supported the town, Fiscus remembers. Later, "those big tractors" started coming in and making it profitable to farm the land, but it was always hard to make a go of it, he says.

In 1929, one of the town's banks "just went broke," Fiscus says, and that was perhaps an omen of things to come.

"My dad had a lot of money in that bank and only got back about 10 percent of it," he explains.

It was a lack of water and huge dust storms that swept across the plains in the 1930s, however, that doomed the town, he says.

"You just can't imagine how bad it was," Fiscus says. "We lived on beans, potatoes and eggs and had to burn the stickers off the cactus to feed the cattle. In 1934, the weeds never

even got started because it was so dry."

During the dust bowl years, the federal government would come to the area and buy the starving cattle for \$18 per head, Fiscus says, and would then load them in trucks, take them to a nearby hill and shoot them.

"They just buried all of them," he says. "We never could understand why they wouldn't do something with the meat — like let us eat it, for instance."

The dust storms would come in like big thunderstorms and there was so much static electricity in the air that touching somethin' metal, like the stove, inside the house could give you a big shock, Fiscus says. "Our cars wouldn't run unless we put chains on behind to ground them," he says. "There was that much static in the air."

In those days, life in New Raymer was rugged.

"A lot of fellas carried guns, and some of those boys used 'em," he explains. "I remember when Wyoming was a 'wet' state and Colorado was a 'dry' one and the bootleggers would bring their illegal hooch down here."

"One of them got himself shot on my family's place by a lawman and my brother was deputized to take the body to New Raymer," he recalls. "The guy looked like a tramp, and the undertaker didn't want to embalm him. When they took off one of his shoes and found \$400, the undertaker changed his mind fast and decided to give him a first-class funeral."

His mother had to put wet sheets across the windows so that the family could breathe when the dust storms hit, but they stuck it out. Most of their neighbors didn't.

"The people just left," Fiscus recalls, "and the businesses went right behind them."

It wasn't like the old days when the "Prairie Dog Special" would roll into town to take the hogs, cattle and grain to market, Fiscus says, but he hung on.

"I drove a school bus for 20 years and was glad to have that \$30 each month," he says. "Of course, I was also farming and got married and



Clarence Fiscus

raised four big boys, Glen, Dean, Dale and Jackie."

The school he drove to was the pride of the whole area. Built between 1915 and 1917, it cost \$50,000. It had 19 instructors and some 215 students and took the place of most of the one-room schoolhouses that had dotted the prairie.

It's almost gone now. The townspeople have torn it down and used the bricks to build a new church. The children attend the new Prairie School east of town.

The people who live in New Raymer like it, but there isn't much more than homes now. The town still has a post office and gas station, but many of the business buildings are abandoned and in decay. But life goes on.

Fiscus says, "The saddest thing was that most of these people owned the land. They had proved up on their homesteads and then borrowed as much money as they could to keep going. When the dust came, they just left."

He explains that the government took over a lot of that abandoned land and it has now become the Pawnee National Grasslands.

"This was once a booming place," he adds, "but those days are gone. Those of us that are left still enjoy it out here, though."



Max Schlosser Interesting article! Tough Resilient folks!!

Like · Reply · 1w



Wayne Corbin Nice article, all the people out on the plains were rugged people

Like · Reply · 1w



Nancy Kugler My mother-in-law Dorothy talked about those days a lot. It was sweet to read this article.

Like · Reply · 1w



Cathy Barnes I'd say Clarence was far right back row. He was a cool guy. Drove that school bus 35 mph straightaway and around corners.

Like · Reply · 1w



Portia Kummer AND I repeat so often, He said < taint no sin to be poor, but it sure is unhandy

Like · Reply · 1w



Arnold G. Fiscus Cathy Barnes Nope, better have your glasses adjusted.

Like · Reply · 1w



Glenda Bailey Great article. Thanks for sharing

Like · Reply · 1w



Nancy Kugler We loved Clarence! He always carried candy in his pockets for little kids Whenever he saw our son, Steve, when he was a toddler, he always made him laugh by singing "Pop goes the weasel."

Like · Reply · 1w



Rita Breazeale Butterscotch and peppermints!! He bought them in bulk and never left home without them

Like · Reply · 4d · Edited

This is the Ed and Minnie Fiscus family that came to New Raymer in 1917. They were survivors. ~Arnie Fiscus

Can you identify them?



Zac Breazeale

April 25 at 1:03 PM

Pretty neat newspaper article about my Great Grandpa from years ago, I'm very fortunate that I knew him and remember well the stories he'd tell.

Back Row - left to right Clarence, Glen (Tex), Vernon (Mick)

Front Row - Nellie (Thomas), Ed, Minnie, Famie (Box), Ruth (Bringelson)



WHAT'S NEW IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION NEWS? WE ARE!

On May 1, 2020 we received our second grant from History Colorado in the amount of \$27,419.00 for the Truxaw & Kruger Grocery/Seldin's Cash Grocery.

First, a little background. At the end of 2018 we received the initial grant for \$12,000 to fund a Historic Structure Assessment of the mercantile building. This work was recently completed by Architect, Barbara Darden. Now following on the heels of that grant, we have been awarded our second grant!

None of this would be possible without the extraordinary writing skills of historian, Ron Sladek. If you would like to learn more about this building or any others, we can email you his nominations for each of the historic buildings, including the mercantile—Truxaw & Kruger Cash Grocery/Seldin's Cash Grocery; the Raymer State Bank; and the Star Filling Station. We have successfully gotten through all of the designations of these buildings, with the mercantile and bank being listed on the Colorado State Historic Register and Star Filling Station being listed on the National Historic Register.

And did someone say "Mothballing"? Yes! Kim Grant with the Colorado Preservation, Inc., did. He is going to assist us in protecting the Star Filling Station from the harsh elements while we wait to get the funding on this building. We will be doing some of that work over the summer along with HistoriCorp's help! The funding for this project will also be through CPI. We have much to be grateful for in these difficult times. We are extremely grateful for the community support as we go about preserving these important buildings. Please watch our Facebook page for further events!!

Instead of monetary donations at this time, be safe and let us know if you have any photographs or history on any of these buildings or the town of Raymer. Photos are scarce of the dustbowl years and earlier but we have been given some great photos by Clay Ward, by Marjorie Crosby's family, by the Fiscus family, by Ellis Barker, by Ellis Knoll, by Susie Kester, Deb Artzer and by Dorene Walker Branning. Keep them coming folks. Look through your albums while you have time. Let us know how we can help if you need them scanned or picked up! Thank you!



Crowd gathers on Main Street in 1918 for Saturday drawing for groceries.



NINE SILOS TO BE BUILT NEAR RAYMER

That the silo doctrine preached by County Agent M. E. Knapp in the New Raymer district has had some effect is indicated by a letter which the county agent has received from the State Bank of New Raymer. The letter announces plans to construct nine silos in the Raymer country.

The list of farmers and the silage crops which they have raised follows: Lew Schmoekle, New Raymer, 3 acres of sunflowers and 26 acres of corn.

J. R. Smather, New Raymer, 40 acres of corn.

O. M. Dunbar, New Raymer, 35 acres of corn.

You, Russ Kauk, Bob Thompson and 13 others

1 Share

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Write a comment...



Zac Breazeale

Visual Storyteller · May 3 at 8:14 AM

462 Carloads of Freight Handled at New Raymer

New Raymer, Jan. 4—During 1930 a total of 462 carloads of freight have been handled by the Burlington railroad at New Raymer.

From the Raymer station during the year:

Wheat, 191 car loads; Corn, 41 car loads; Rye, 2 car loads; Cattle, 12 car loads; Beans, 51 car loads; Millot, 2 car loads; Miscellaneous, 2 car loads making a total of 325 car loads of freight billed out of the local station.

The freight shipped in to Raymer is as follows:

Coal, 34 car loads; Gasoline, 52 car loads; Distillate, 6 car loads; Kerosene, 3 car loads; Implements and tractors, 22 car loads; Flour and Feed, 6 car loads; Cement and Plaster, 7 car loads; Lumber, 10 car loads; Automobiles, 2 car loads; Cattle, 5 car loads; Miscellaneous, 1 car load making a total of 147 car loads.

Russ Kauk, Bob Thompson and 27 others

2 Comments 2 Shares

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Arnold G. Fiscus Looks like a lot of activity before the dust bowl hit

Like · Reply · 4d



Trina Kauk 1930: It was shortly after the Raymer State Bank went under, and the beginning of the Great Depression. And yes, the Dust Bowl years.

3

Archie and Allen Box.



Ben Walker Buys Grain Elevator At New Raymer

NEW RAYMER — Ranchway Feeds of Denver (formerly Denver Elevators) has sold its elevator at New Raymer to Ben Walker for an undisclosed amount.

Walker also owns the Texaco Service Station at New Raymer.

Marvin Dunlap, manager of the elevator under Ranchway Feeds, has been transferred to Fort Morgan.

Walker said Friday a former New Raymer man, Glen Fiscus, will operate the elevator. Fiscus has been working at Longmont.

You, Bob Thompson, Susie Kester and 35 others

4 Comments

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Rene Yetter Kugler Joe Kugler, Teena might like to see this:

Like · Reply · 4d



John Mertens I remember when it changed ownership, what year was it?

Like · Reply · 4d



Arnold G. Fiscus John Mertens Looks like June of 1962.

Like · Reply · 4d