

# SURFACE CREEK NEWS

April 8, 2020



Submitted photo/ Surface Creek Historical Society  
Kids learned how to trick rope from Charley "Two Dogs" at the 2019 Heritage Days celebration.

## 40 years of Surface Creek Valley Historical Society: Old Surface Creek goes digital

BY LUCAS VADER  
Staff Writer

For 40 years, the Surface Creek Valley Historical Society (SCVHS) has preserved the legacy of the Surface Creek area in many ways. Members throughout the years have taken measures to protect historical artifacts and community locations, recover and restore, teach the community about its heritage and run the Pioneer Town at the heart of Cedaredge.

Part of this project, taking place in 2019, was to restore and digitize the area's historic newspaper publication, *The Surface Creek Champion*, which ran for 39 years from July 1904-July 1943, covering news and recording genealogy in the earliest years of Cedaredge.

The Surface Creek Champion is now online as part of the Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection at [coloradohistoricnewspapers.org](http://coloradohistoricnewspapers.org). The website includes text recognition of the digitized papers. Therefore, stories are able to be searched on-site, like Google.

"The search mechanism in it is very cool," said Jerry McHugh, society vice president. "Some of the transcriptions of course have errors in them but you can look at the original copy, and it's great."

In a web browser, the transcribed article, mostly accurate, normally shows on the left while the image of the scanned original print edition shows on the right. Either version is complete and easy to view. Since the scan is an unedited copy of the original edition, the old-time advertisements are included as well, and each edition can be downloaded as a PDF. The service is free to use.

McHugh's familial heritage is deeply ingrained in the Cedaredge area, leading him to take on the protection of that heritage as a passion project. In fact, he's writing a book about the Surface Creek Valley.

"I'm working on a book about the Surface Creek Valley and its first settlers, and it's a lot of research," McHugh said. "I've been working on it for a year now and I've got at least another year before it's ready."

According to McHugh, the archived Surface Creek Champion provides pertinent details that help him along the way in his research. "With the book that I'm working on, it's often a resource for me," he said.

Through *The Surface Creek Champion*, McHugh found stories of his grandparents, who hosted Bridge parties at the Cedaredge hotel. Additionally, he found an obituary for an ancestor, who had an unusual story in the end.

"He was lost," McHugh said. "He'd taken the train

from Idaho to visit some of his kids. He got off a train at a stop and he'd missed getting back on the train and wandered off, and they found him in a tepee. He'd had a heart attack."

Since the paper covered the Surface Creek area at a time when Cedaredge had as few as 200 residents, the publication was very strongly about people and accomplishments. McHugh said he hadn't found overly interesting events from the past as much as he'd learned about his genealogy and key players along the way.

The Historical Society Foundation celebrated its 40th year at their annual banquet on Feb. 8 at the Pioneer Town's Stolte Shed. According to McHugh, this was about four years after the group first formed in 1976 with the crucial help of early member Doris Stewart.

"Doris Stewart was one of the very first people involved in the Historical Society," McHugh said. "It started in 1976 with the bicentennial in the Colorado Centennial, and then it was just 50-some dollars out of the grant that came from Colorado for the centennial stuff that didn't get stuff. That was the original funding that they started Pioneer Town with."

As May approaches, the annual Heritage Days celebration, in theory, should be approaching with it, as it traditionally happens over Memorial Day weekend. However, with the current situation during the COVID-19 crisis, Heritage Days is, like everything else, not certain at this time.

McHugh said he's hoping that Heritage Days can take place in July. Heritage Days also normally starts the museum season, when the Historic Society opens their doors into the six-acre museum site. McHugh said the Historic Society will decide details on that soon.

As far as staffing goes, they could still use volunteers.

"We're basically all volunteer-run, so if we're able to open this year, we're going to call for volunteers," McHugh said. "We have some Tuesday committees that are super active, a group that does maintenance and another group that takes care of our gardening and all our outdoor spaces."

Until such a point when the museum can open and the Historic Society can host their regular Heritage Days event, research is still being done behind the curtains. The museum is still being maintained and repairs are being planned for the Chapel of the Cross.

Reporter's note: The DCI will report further on Surface Creek heritage as the Surface Creek Valley Historical Society celebrates 40 years.