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Estes Park Trail Gazette

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Holiday Cleaning



Photo by Walt Hester

Deb Barlow, of Estes Park, hoses off the walkway near the Riverwalk on Monday. Estes Park is sprucing up in anticipation of the Independence Day holiday.

Town to wage advertising war

By JAY GENTILE

The Town of Estes Park's Advertising Department is waging an all-out war on nationwide economic uncertainty this summer. The Town will spend more money on advertising this summer than it ever has.

The Town is adding magazine ads, expanding its newspaper advertising, incorporating a new Internet banner ad, and taking the unusual step of advertising on television in the summer in an effort to keep the community's main tourist season afloat in these times of economic softness.

"We're in overdrive mode right now," said Marketing Director Tom Pickering.

"This is the most we've ever done to hold summer together," said Advertising Director Peter Marsh, who has held that title for 11 years. "It's a lot to do but it's something we felt was important enough to put the effort into it."

As the Internet continues to change the way people travel, the Estes Park Chamber Resort Association has seen calls for information via its toll-free hotline plummet.

The good news for the Town is that with the phone call numbers dropping faster than advertisers had anticipated, it is not costing the Town as much to answer the calls. This has freed up money to be put to use elsewhere.

Advertisers have taken \$33,224 from the fund that holds money for answering phone and other requests for information and spent it on this summer's expanded media advertising. Local lodging properties, through their voluntary participation in the Estes Park Improvement Contribution (EPIC) fund,

are chipping in \$20,000 for the expanded media blitz.

"It's been a difficult summer," said Marsh. "We're doing all that we can think of to do to rectify it as much as we can." Yet he admits that "there's only so much advertising can do."

The magazine ads will be placed in early summer issues of *Sunset Magazine* and *Better Homes and Gardens*, at a cost of \$14,025. Advertising in the *Denver Post* and *Denver Rocky Mountain News* has already begun. The Town traditionally doesn't advertise in those publications until late July.

The \$20,000 television ads will appear in July and August on Channel 4 and Channel 7, two of Denver's three network affiliates. In addition, an Internet banner ad costing \$5,000 will appear in July on the Internet network Engage Media, which claims 40 million unique consumers every month.

The Town is also already eyeing the fall season, adding \$4,200 worth of fall ads in AAA's *Colorado Motorist Magazine* and \$10,000 in expanded advertising on Channel 4 and Channel 7.

"We have to start thinking about fall now," Pickering said at the June 28 meeting of the Community Development Committee. "Anything we can do to concrete the fall as well as the summer, we have to take advantage of."

Pickering said an informal survey of local lodging properties shows that bookings this summer are down 5 percent from last summer. "For us to be down 5 percent in our peak season has great impact on the community," he said.

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Hospital achieves critical access status

By LUCIE R. WILLISIE

As of June 1, the Estes Park Medical Center has officially received the critical access hospital designation it has been trying to get for the past year.

Critical access is a designation by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), which means EPMC will receive Medicare reimbursement based on cost rather than a percentage of cost, which will save the hospital thousands of dollars per year.

As expected, a cash flow delay due to a disruption in the paying of bills has already occurred.

According to chief financial officer Tim Bishop, "The transition to the designation as a Critical Access Hospital is temporarily delaying the receipt of reimbursement from the Medicare program." This has resulted in a backlog of account receivables that are just now — in June — able to be submitted, but, despite the delay, the department has been able to keep its average of unpaid

claims down to 75.8 days as of the board meeting on Tuesday, June 26.

Financial status

In addition, the rest of the financial condition for the hospital is improving steadily. The year-to-date net operating revenues have fallen short of what was expected by only 1 percent by the end of May, an improvement from the 7 percent shortfall through the end of April.

"Our operating expenses continue See Hospital: Page 2

Largest fire this season ignited north of Lyons

By JAY GENTILE

The largest fire to strike the Front Range so far this summer has been contained and fire fighters have been sent home, Larimer County Sheriff's Office spokesman Jim Sullivan said Monday.

A lightning strike ignited the blaze at about 1:30 p.m. Saturday, about three miles north of Lyons on north Dakota Ridge Road. The three-acre fire spread to encompass 80 acres at its peak time.

At its peak, the fire attracted 60 fire fighters and 11 pieces of equipment. A helicopter taking water from a nearby reservoir assisted on scene Saturday and Sunday. Also on Saturday afternoon, an air tanker made nine trips over the fire area, dropping red slurry to aid the massive fire suppression effort.

"Sixty fire fighters sounds like a lot," said Sullivan, "but when you're fighting an 80-acre fire, it's not that many. The fire fighters were terrific."

The fire was contained by 4 p.m. Sunday. "I think it was real quick to have an 80-acre fire contained that quickly," said Sullivan.

No one was injured in the blaze, and no one was evacuated from their homes. Sullivan said the only damage was one shed and one trampoline that were burned.

"The fire got within 100 feet of a few very expensive houses," Sullivan said. The fire suppression effort was aided by local residents who operated a bulldozer and water tanker, Sullivan said.

The fire burned northwest from its location three miles north of Lyons and just east of Lyons, on the 25,000 block of north Dakota Ridge Road.

The Lyons Fire Department, Berthoud Fire Department, Hygiene Fire Department, Larimer County Sheriff's Office, Poudre Valley Fire Department, and Northern Colorado Interagency Fire Crew — which includes the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, and Larimer County Sheriff's Office — responded to the fire.

The helicopter came from a private helicopter service in Redfeather Lakes.

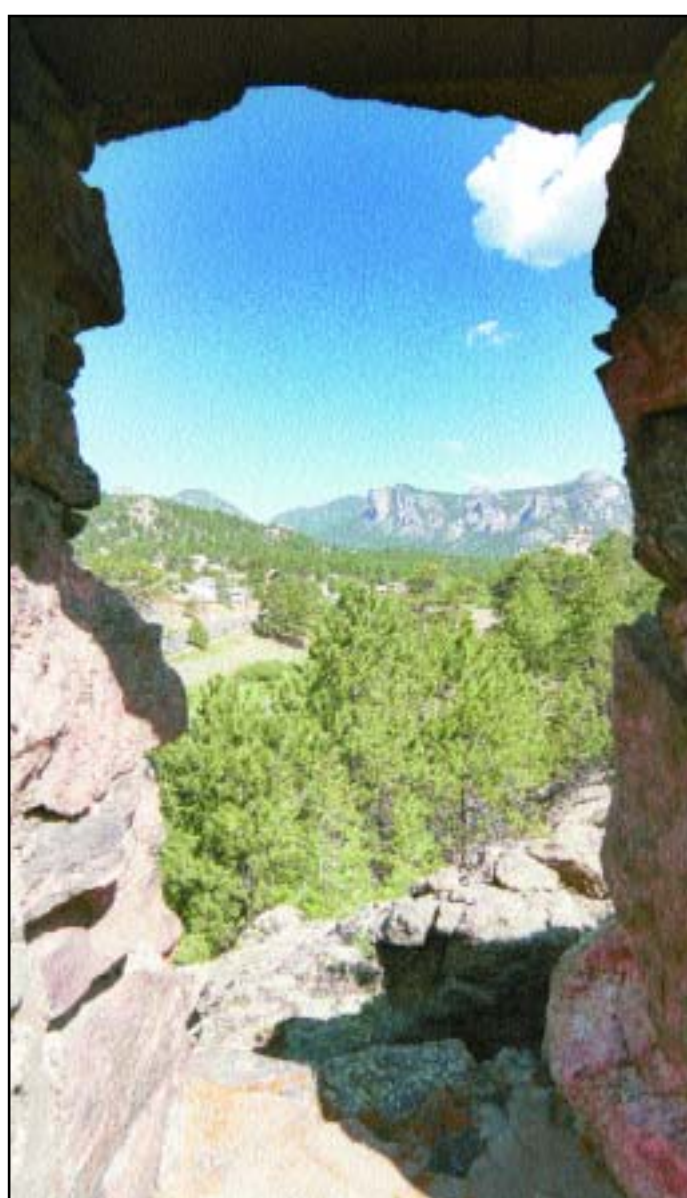


Photo by Walt Hester

Sunshine drenches the view from the stone ruins overlooking the Willows on Monday. The town hopes to have the area placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Willows property will be nominated for State Register

By JAY GENTILE

With its final payment of the property recorded July 1, the Town of Estes Park is now the sole owner of the 5.65-acre parcel of land just north of the Municipal Building known as the Willows.

The land is currently open space and includes several historic structures left from the era of Albert Birch, a longtime newspaperman with the *Denver Post*, who built a vacation home on the Willows property in 1907.

After that home was destroyed by fire that same year, Birch began work on a nearby cabin, outhouse and utility shed that remain on the property to this day.

At Thursday's meeting of the Town of Estes Park's Community Development Committee, Estes Park Area Historical Museum Director Betty Kilsdonk was granted authorization to nominate the Willows property to the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties.

The entire property will

be nominated for historic status designation. This will include the Birch cabin, shed and outhouse, as well as the stone ruins left behind by the fire that consumed the original home.

"It's a formal recognition that the area is historic," said Kilsdonk of the designation. "The property will also become eligible for state historical funds." She said she expects a response to the designation request from the Colorado Historical Society by mid-December.

Kilsdonk said the Town has received such funds in the past, most recently for work on the old Fall River hydroplant, which is being restored for future use as a museum and is scheduled to open next July.

Four properties within Estes Park are currently listed on the State Register of Historic Properties. These include the Colorado-Big Thompson project administration building, the Estes Park

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Willows: Properties placed on the Register are eligible for state tax credits

Continued from page 1

Chalet, a wood frame residence built by William Hallett, and the Mountainside Lodge on the grounds of the YMCA of the Rockies.

All of these properties were designated on the State Register of Historic Properties between 1995 and 1998.

The Birch cabin is a single-story log structure built in 1908, which exhibits the rustic style commonly used in the regional mountain resort architecture of the 1910s and 1920s. The frame one-hole out-house is just above the cabin to the north. The frame utility shed, divided into two rooms, lies between the cabin and out-house.

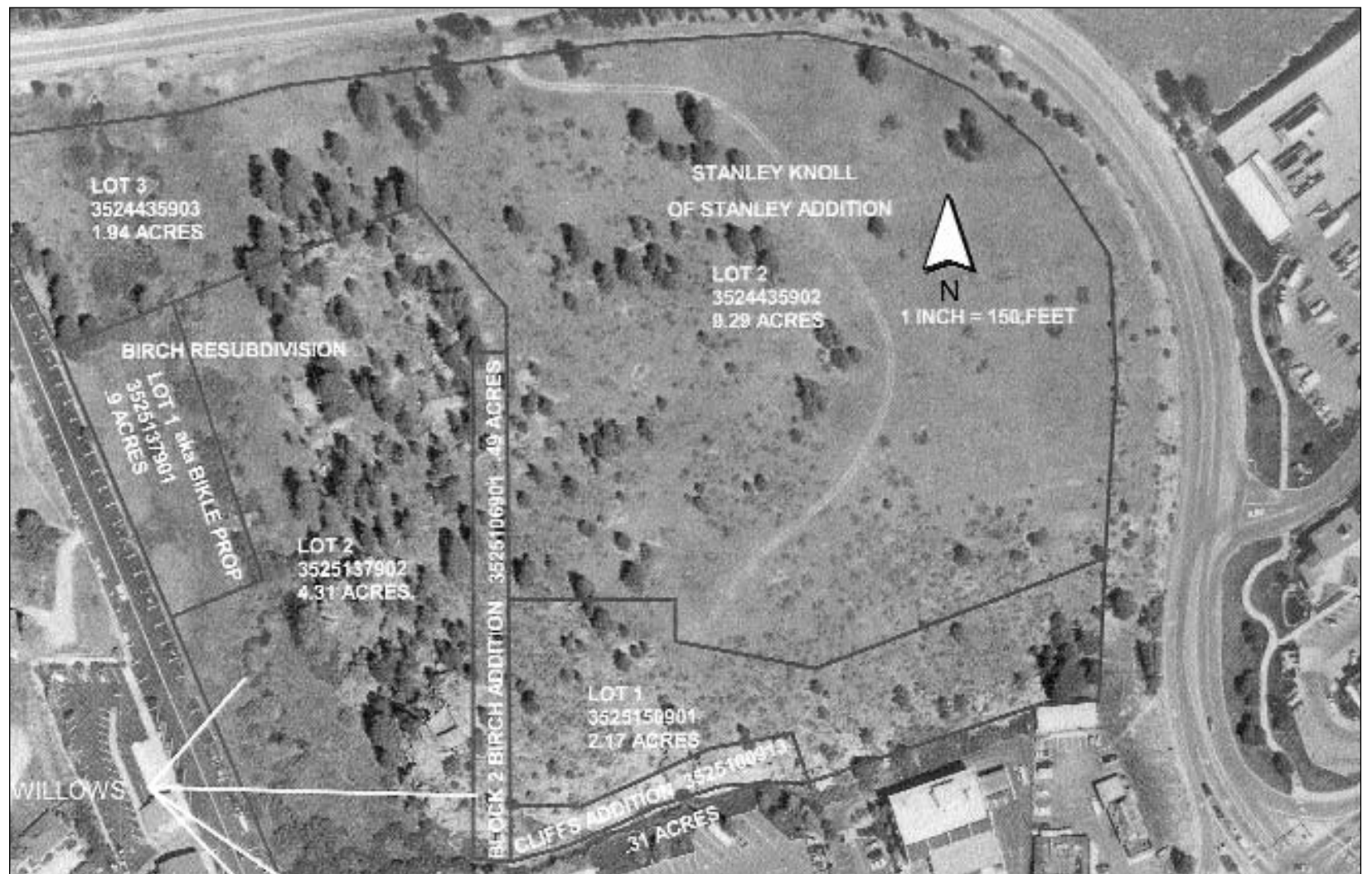
South of the cabin, atop a hill easily seen from MacGregor Avenue near downtown Estes Park, sits the ruins of the stone structure.

Birch's historical significance stems not so much from his work as a reporter, but from his reputation as a promotion genius and scam artist. In 1917, he staged the journey of 20-year-old Agnes Lowe, who was supposedly attempting to live in the wilderness of the recently designated Rocky Mountain National Park.

"Her progress, detailed in a series of Denver Post reports under Birch's byline, drew attention to the new Park," according to a manuscript on background information supplied by Kilsdonk. "Later it was revealed that Lowe had at the very least been given food and water and may not have stayed in the Park at all."

Birch is also infamous for parading a hundred dogs around town to publicize a Broadway Theater production, called "The Under Dog," pretending to kidnap a star at the Orpheum, and staging a fake escape of a monkey act booked at Elitch Gardens.

At age 58, Birch married 26-year-old Phoebe Phillips and moved to California where he became a movie press agent. He later returned to Denver and became the promotion director of the *Denver Post*, where he worked until the late 1960's. He



Courtesy map

The map above includes the Willows area, located in the lower left corner of the map, which is currently under consideration for historic designation.

utilized the cabin as a summer retreat for about 70 years.

According to the Web site of the Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, designation recognizes "Colorado's significant cultural resources worthy of preservation for the future education and enjoyment of Colorado's residents and visitors."

It adds that properties placed on the Register are eligible for state tax credits

for restoration, rehabilitation or preservation, in addition to their eligibility to compete for Colorado's State Historical Fund grants.

Designation also results in "Limited protection from state agency actions that would affect the property," according to the Web site. "Agencies must solicit the comments of the Colorado Historical Society to assure that State Register properties are given consideration in the state

planning process."

Owners of State Register properties "are free to manage their property as they choose, provided no state license, permit or funding is involved," according to the Web site.

The Town of Estes Park made its final payment of \$27,590 on the property last Sunday. The Town paid \$524,429 for the Willows property over the past five years.

Advertising: Entire state down 5 percent, others 14 percent

Continued from page 1

Trustee Jeff Barker said that loss will transfer across the board to other industries like retail and restaurants. "So this is critical that we react right now," replied Pickering.

The marketing chief added that the entire state is down 5 percent, with places like Breckenridge recording drops of 14 percent in first quarter revenues. He said Vail is the only community having some success. He said Vail is aided immensely by its marketing district, which pumps in millions of dollars for marketing of the town.

He said declines in other resort communities will effect Estes Park because ski areas will try to make up for their losses in the summer with deep discounting on their accommodations. "These guys are trying to cover up losses in their industry at

our expense," he said.

A report recently released by the Canadian research firm Longwoods International shows that Colorado's share of the national tourism market has dropped 40 percent since 1992.

A report in the June 12 edition of the *Rocky Mountain News* shows that the Colorado Tourism office is armed with a \$6 million budget — half of the \$12 million average that states spend on promoting tourism and a tenth of the \$60 million that Hawaii spends.

Pickering recently met with representatives of the state's tourism office as well as representatives from all of Colorado's tourism communities. At the meeting, Estes Park "voiced our displeasure" with the deep discounting ski communities are offering in direct competition with Estes, Pickering said.

Yet on the other hand, total requests for information about Estes Park were up 6.5 percent last month compared to May of 2000. This is the first time requests have registered an increase since February. And with gas prices stabilizing, people may be willing to take that summer vacation after all.

Pickering said the total requests have increased lately because people are making last-minute plans to travel. They want information quicker about destinations closer to home, he said. That is why Estes Park is targeting visitors from the Front Range and nearby states.

He added that \$300 to \$600 tax refunds could also help Estes Park. "If you get three to six hundred [dollars] back, you're not going to Disneyworld," he said, "but you may go to Estes Park."

Hospital: A new EPMC brochure available around town

Continued from page 1

to be 5 percent less than expected as well," Bishop said. "These items combined result in a year-to-date net profit of approximately \$435,000 as opposed to the \$266,000 budgeted."

Summer season

"The summer tourist season is upon us," said chief of staff Dr. Martin Koschnitzke in his report. "(And) it's taking up a lot of time and energy." Dr. Koschnitzke wants to remind visitors that high altitude sickness "is a significant issue here in our climate."

Remember to rest and drink plenty of fluids, especially in the first 24 hours in Estes Park, "rather than trying to climb Longs Peak," Dr. Koschnitzke said.

In addition, he added, that some other projects the hospital may be working on, or had been working on, have been put on the back burner until September because of this extra work load.

Physical therapy

Since early February, when the physical therapy department and the Rocky Mountain Athletic Club have collaborated in providing physical therapy at the club, revenues have increased — 25 percent in March, 30 percent in April and 45 percent in May.

"This is certainly the trend we had hoped for," said Mike Curtiss, director of the hospital's physical therapy department, "... (and) there continues to be potential for further ... development."

New brochure

A new brochure has been designed which is available and has been dispersed at various locations around town let residents and visitors alike know exactly what services are available at EPMC and what numbers can get them in contact with the various departments.

For more information, call the main hospital number at (970) 586-2317.



Photo by Walt Hester

Tiptoe ...

City employee Bernadette Murphy steps lightly through the flowers along East Elkhorn Avenue on Monday. The flowers should get more than enough moisture for the next couple of days.

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Weldon Lee's
ROCKY MOUNTAIN PHOTO ADVENTURES

adventures in nature & photography

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| <p>July 15-21/July 21-27: Alaska Wildlife \$2450 Brown bear! Bald eagles! Mottled and tufted puffin! These, plus other wildlife species will be our subjects on this adventure into Alaska's Lake Clark National Park.</p> <p>August 19-25: Mountain Goats of Colorado \$825 Mount Evans, one of Colorado's most photogenic locations, has it all—mountain goats, pika, and marmots, plus carpets of alpine wildflowers and two-thousand-year-old bristlecone pines.</p> <p>Sept 8-15: Canadian Rockies Adventure \$1525 Banff, Jasper, and Yoho National Parks contain the most breathtaking mountain landscapes found anywhere in North America. The abundance of wildlife, including grizzly and black bears, elk, moose, mountain goats and big horn sheep, add the coup de grace to this once-in-a-lifetime photo adventure.</p> | <p>September 25-29: Fall Wildlife: Rocky Mtn Nat'l Park \$795 Wildlife photography at its best! Photograph elk, moose, mule deer, and spectacular mountain scenics amidst the glory of Colorado's fall colors.</p> <p>October 7-15: The American West: Mesa Verde, Monument Valley & Tot Canyons \$1150 Photograph the awe-inspiring red buttes of Monument Valley, the spectacular slots of upper Antelope Canyon, and the ancient Anasazi cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde National Park.</p> <p>November 25-December 1: Birds of Bosque \$1150 Bosque is a bird photographer's paradise. Photograph thousands of sandhill cranes and snow geese; plus, a wide array of other wildlife.</p> |
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