



Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds eNewsletter

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Every Fossil Needs a Friend

#28—July 2015

SUMMER SEMINAR SERIES - 3 MORE STILL OPEN

The Friends Seminar Series is rapidly coming to an end. The 4 seminars that we have had were lots of fun and full of great knowledge for everyone. We hope that you might consider attending one or more of the 3 left. Dr. Herb Meyer and his staff are presenting “*Follow a Fossil: Behind the Scenes of the Florissant Fossil Beds NM*” on **Saturday, July 25th from 9 AM to 5 PM**. As a participant, you will have a rare experience of being able to view the fossil lab to see how fossils are prepared. Also, you’ll experience the splitting of shale at Clare’s Quarry which is always like experiencing a mystery novel. On **Tuesday, July 28, from 9 AM to 5 PM**, please join us for a day of learning about GPS through 2 different activities on the hiking trails. Bob Hickey, volunteer naturalist, will be presenting the seminar. Lastly, on **Wednesday, July 29, from 9 AM to 5 PM**, Linda Groats, naturalist from *Mueller State Park* will present: *Project Archaeology*.” If you are interested in any of these seminars, please call the Monument at 719-748-3253, ext. 109 and leave a message. Thank you for your interest in our seminars. Please note the following article by a member Roger Greenlaw who attended John Stansfield’s (another member) seminar entitled *Park Pioneers: Conservation Champions of Colorado’s National Parks and Monuments*. Thank you Roger for being willing to share your insightful remarks on what you learned. Thank you also to Roger who has become our unofficial photographer for the seminars this summer. Here are pictures from the wildflower seminars and the Mammals of Colorado.

Park Pioneers: Conservation Champions of Colorado’s National Parks and Monuments

By Roger Greenlaw

Were we to speak with most residents of our United States, it seems safe to say that a great majority would agree that it’s wonderful to have our beautiful and breathtaking national parks and monuments set aside for us to enjoy. But, were these same residents to know the tremendous stories of the remarkable individuals behind the creation of our parks and monuments, it also seems safe to say that they would feel an ever-greater sense of good fortune and gratitude.

Call it entrepreneurship, industry, or a doorway to success, or call it greed, inconsiderate opportunism, or even a heedless assault on Mother Nature, the facts remain, whether well-intentioned or not, that our most amazing scenic wonders needed protection to ensure their preservation. In fair measure, we have some of our U.S. presidents to thank, like Teddy Roosevelt, and Howard Taft for signing bills that established these protections. But, these easily-marked moments in history are preceded by visionary individuals who tirelessly worked against formidable odds, for much of their lives, to set in motion the momentum for these parks and monuments to be established.



Take, for example, Enos Mills. Here's a man who, as a boy, had good cause to believe that he might not even see his twenty-first birthday. Yet, he loved nature, and he loved the land, and he was endlessly curious. He learned to be a miner, cowboy, teacher, writer, and accomplished speaker with a desire, as he mentioned, to work for the "preservation of scenery against the onslaught of man." Whatever fire burned in his soul, it seemed to match the beauty of all that nature offers. Then, with a life of skill and experience on his side, he was able to influence enough of the movers and shakers in his day to turn the wheels of politics into a law establishing Rocky Mountain National Park.

So, we are lucky – so very lucky. We are lucky to have had this unsung hero, Enos Mills, to champion the establishment of our beloved national park in the Rockies. But, along with



the scenic beauty of the park, what I now also treasure is the beautiful dream, coupled with tireless effort and patience, which Mr. Mills followed to such a level of completeness that Rocky Mountain National Park can now be enjoyed by the whole world!

In like manner, another man, John Otto, seemingly forged in some ways from the same crucible as Enos Mills, also chose a lifelong path to realize the dreams of his heart. Thought by some to be insane, or in later years, maybe just a nut working by himself



in the rim rock of a beautiful no man's land, his love of the land he came to cherish surpassed any criticism that could be leveled against him. Along with his extraordinary trail work, all crafted from his inventive blasting as a "powder monkey," he wrote many letters which, in various ways, served the purpose of calling attention to the singular beauty of the land he wanted everyone to enjoy. Such is John Otto's dedication, and now the land is there, as he wanted it to be, for everyone to enjoy.

So, once more, we are luckier than we know. Another unsung hero, John Otto, in most improbable fashion, championed the preservation of another awe-inspiring place, the place we call Colorado National Monument. Which do we treasure more – the land or the man most responsible for preserving the land? Was John Otto insane, as some say, or are all the rest of us, who don't work as hard as he did to protect our natural wonders, the ones who are insane? Truth be told, I can't answer the question of insanity as it relates to John Otto or anyone, but I do believe that our prosperity, as a nation, was immeasurably advanced by the pinnacles of success achieved by this man.

Men don't often become men without mentors. The road to success rests on the layers of pavement laid down by others who made and improved the road. So it was with Enos Mills and in some measure, with John Otto, too. By pure chance, it seems, on a beach in California, Enos Mills met John Muir. Enos Mills was initially fascinated by John Muir's talk with an attentive crowd about an octopus plant, and when Enos lingered after the crowd departed, John Muir was equally impressed with this uncommonly observant, young man named Enos

Mills. From their visits together, Enos became encouraged with both new knowledge and the extraordinary idea that it was possible to "preserve scenery" if enough effort and resources were directed to that noble purpose. From the historical record, we know that John Otto also knew about John Muir, and though he was a mentor figure from afar, just knowing of John Muir's accomplishments may well have provided some incentive for John Otto to forge ahead with his grand idea to share the wonders he so revered with the world.



So, having considered John Muir's pivotal role in the life of Enos Mills and Muir's cursory role in the life of John Otto, I conclude that the life of one man, alone, rarely achieves the level of greatness that would engender a lasting outcome of true worth for the ages. Rather, it also requires someone to have come before to share certain knowledge, skill, and inspiration that becomes the springboard for the far-reaching individual to achieve the success we remember and so deeply appreciate for generations.



In thinking carefully about today, it seems that the deepest appreciation for great things comes from the stories behind them. So, it is from John Stansfield's stories that I take away at least two things. The first is that people, the world over, enjoy our most precious places only because a person or group, with a fervid spirit, worked tirelessly to see that the necessary legislation would pass to make the preservation of these areas the law of the land. The second is that the raw power needed to fight the forces of land developers, when so much money is at stake, is rarely found within one person, alone. Rather, it takes uncommon individuals, who have benefited from invaluable mentorships, and often coupled with other like-minded individuals or groups, to rally forth the effort that would save the land. So it was with the Florissant Fossil Beds, too. I have to shake my head, and conclude as well, that, even after the strongest and most notable efforts of great people have been expended, sometimes humankind just gets lucky!

