

## REPORTER-HERALD

# Memorial celebrates Buckhorn Valley veterans

**Buckhorn Valley Veterans Memorial will be dedicated at Masonville Post Office on May 21**

*By Shelley Widhalm, Reporter-Herald Staff Writer* - POSTED: 05/17/2016 05:22:36 PM MDT

### If you go

**What:** Buckhorn Valley Veterans Memorial dedication ceremony.

**When:** 10 a.m. Saturday, May 21.

**Where:** Masonville Post Office, 8669 N. County Road 27.

**Parking:** Half mile northeast of the post office in a field; physically challenged drop off at the post office.

Superior resident Gladys Forshee got the idea for Masonville's first veterans memorial when she was at the National Archives researching the Buckhorn Valley.

Forshee noticed a large number of draft registration cards of World War I and II veterans from the area and saw that they hadn't been officially recognized. So, she worked with the Larimer County commissioners and the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources to get the Buckhorn Valley Veterans Memorial created that will be dedicated May 21 at the Masonville post office during Armed Forces Day.

"These veterans have never been recognized in Buckhorn Valley," said Forshee, who has roots in Masonville and the Buckhorn Valley area going back to the mid-1800s. "By doing this memorial, they will have that recognition past and present. ... They served our country. They gave us our freedoms today."

The memorial, which will be placed near the post office's entrance, is made of donated native stone from Arkins Park Stone quarries in near Masonville. Arkins Park Stone sandblasted the design and verbiage on the memorial that states: "This memorial is dedicated to honor the military men and women of the Buckhorn Valley — past and present. Their commitment, service, sacrifice is remembered and appreciated forever."

Forshee, who has self-published a history of the Denver International Airport and a Centennial cookbook, is working on a history of Masonville and the Buckhorn Valley, a project she undertook a year ago. She plans to include a chapter devoted to veterans and used the registration cards from Masonville and Buckhorn Valley veterans to help conduct her research.

Forshee initiated the process of getting the memorial established by contacting the commissioners and working with Gary Buffington, director of Department of Natural Resources.

The department will be installing the stone this week, Buffington said.

"The Buckhorn Valley is a pretty small rural community," Buffington said. "It's so important to be able to honor veterans, not just from World War I and World War II, but all veterans who come from the Buckhorn Valley and the Masonville area for their outstanding service to our country."



## Best mountain biking trails in Fort Collins

[Stephen Meyers](#), 4:09 p.m. MDT May 13, 2016



Zooming down the singletrack trail into the valley below, I felt like a kid again.

A little bit reckless. A little bit scared.

That's the joy of mountain biking.

Blue Sky Trail, which connects Horsetooth Mountain and Devil's Backbone open spaces, is a gem among Fort Collins' trail system. The singletrack rolls through a beautiful valley along the red hogback's ridgeline. Yellow and white wildflowers pop up along the trail. A stream crosses the trail in several locations.

For beginners, the trail offers a good challenge while you're learning the nuances of mountain biking. For experts, the trail is an opportunity to fly.

As the weather continues to warm, take out your mountain bike and find some dirt. Here are five go-to mountain bike trails near Fort Collins.

### Blue Sky Trail

**Distance:** 6.2 miles one-way.

**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate.

**Terrain:** Singletrack with rolling hills. Elevation ranges from 5,400 to 5,800 feet. Some technical sections ascending and descending. Some uphill sections may require hiking the bike for beginners.

**Trailheads:** Blue Sky Trailhead, at the southwest corner of Horsetooth Reservoir, along Larimer County Road 38E, before Inlet Bay; Devil's Backbone Open Space west of Loveland and Coyote Ridge Natural Area, one mile south of Trilby Road on Taft Hill Road south of Fort Collins

**Fee:** Free if accessing from Devil's Backbone or Coyote Ridge; \$6 if accessing from Blue Sky Trailhead parking lot.

**Snake alert:** Yes, you're likely to see bullsnakes and rattlesnakes on or near the trail. Observe from a distance and don't mess with them and you'll be OK.

**Why go:** This scenic trail connects Horsetooth Mountain Park, Coyote Ridge and Devil's Backbone trail systems, making it a versatile area for quick lunch rides or weekend adventures. A must-do for beginners and experienced riders alike. For extra mileage, take the 2.1-mile Indian Summer Loop. You'll find awesome views of the red hogbacks and valleys. Go now and you'll ride through stream crossings and enjoy the sweet sights and smell of blooming wildflowers.

**Information:** [www.co.larimer.co.us/parks/htmp.cfm](http://www.co.larimer.co.us/parks/htmp.cfm)

### Foothills Trail

**Distance:** Six miles one-way.

**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate.

**Terrain:** Singletrack.

**Trailhead:** You can start either at Michaud Lane or behind Hughes Stadium off of Larimer County Road 38E.

**Fee:** Free.

**Why go:** You won't find trail access as easy as this. From Hughes, you can ride the steep ascent to Horsetooth Reservoir, or take a loop around scenic Dixon Reservoir in Pineridge Natural Area. Pineridge is an excellent area for a beginner to cut his chops on the mountain bike.



## It's camping season: Best NoCo camping sites

### Bobcat Ridge

**Distance:** 11 miles on several trails.

**Difficulty:** Easy to challenging.

**Terrain:** Singletrack, double-track, loose rocks, steep and rolling hills.

**Trailhead:** Take Harmony Road west from Taft Hill Road. It turns into Larimer County Road 38E. Follow County Road 38E to Masonville. Go left at the Masonville Mercantile on County Road 27. Follow County Road 27 about 1 mile to County Road 32C. Head west on this gravel road about 1 mile to the Bobcat Ridge parking lot.

**Fee:** Free.

**Why go:** A go-to, nine-mile loop is combining the steep climb of Powerline Road with the more technical Ginny Trail. Powerline is a dirt road that will get the heart pumping on challenging, steep uphill. Reach the flat, pretty meadow portion of the trail and go to the left at the intersection to hop on Ginny Trail, which offers a fun descent. On the backside of the natural area, you'll be treated to some great views of Rocky Mountain National Park to the west. The four-mile Valley Loop is a fun trail in the trees.

**Information:** [www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/finder/bobcat](http://www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/finder/bobcat)

### Lory State Park

**Distance:** 15 miles total.

**Difficulty:** Easy to challenging.

**Terrain:** Nearly all singletrack with trails ranging from flat to steep, rocky hills.

**Trailhead:** Take Overland Trail north to Larimer County Road 50E (Bingham Hill Road). Turn left, and go west to Larimer County Road 23. Turn left, and go 1.4 miles south to Larimer County Road 25G. Take a right and drive 1.6 miles to the Lory State Park entrance.

**Fees:** \$7 for a daily permit; \$70 for annual state parks pass.

**Why go:** The East and West Valley trails offer easy, flat riding for beginners, while the 3.7-mile Timber Trail is an expert corkscrew climb.

## Hewlett Gulch Trail

**Distance:** 10-mile loop.

**Difficulty:** Moderate.

**Terrain:** Singletrack with creek crossings, some technical stretches and challenging climbs. Area was damaged by Hewlett and High Park fires in 2012 and flooding in 2013.

**Trailhead:** Take U.S. Highway 287 north to Colorado Highway 14. Go left on Colorado 14 for 9 miles until you reach the point between mile markers 112 and 111.

**Fees:** Free

**Why go:** The trail features some rocky climb sections that an intermediate rider should be able to ride comfortably. The downhill is a lot of fun, plus you'll cross a stream about a dozen times.

**Information:** [bit.ly/HewlettGulch](http://bit.ly/HewlettGulch)



Don't miss Jeffrey Boring's bicycling article on page 20 of [Ride 2016!](#)



## Horsetooth Reservoir boat ramp hours extended



[Stephen Meyers](#), [stephenmeyers@coloradoan.com](mailto:stephenmeyers@coloradoan.com) 8:19 a.m. MDT May 4, 2016

Thanks to Connor DeMott for submitting this timelapse video of the sunset at Horsetooth Reservoir. Courtesy of Connor DeMott



Boat ramp hours at Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake have been extended.

Hours of operation at Horsetooth Reservoir boat ramps are now 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., daily at South Bay, Inlet Bay and Satanka.

Hours of operation at Carter Lake boat ramps are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., daily at North Ramp and South Shore and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday at North Pines.

Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake require mandatory vessel inspections. All watercraft, including their motors, trailers and compartments, will be inspected for exotic invasive species before launch or departure. Exclusions include

hand-launched rafts, kayaks, belly boats, float tubes, canoes, windsurfing boards, sail boards and inner tubes.

## The Bison Is Poised To Become The U.S. National Mammal

The bald eagle may soon have a large, furry friend: The North American bison is on the verge of being named the first national mammal of the United States.

The House approved [the National Bison Legacy Act on Tuesday](#), and it passed the Senate on Thursday. Now it's awaiting President Obama's signature to become law.

The measure says the bison is considered a "historical symbol of the United States" and it is "integrally linked with the economic and spiritual lives of many Indian tribes through trade and sacred ceremonies."

It adds that the bison adorns two state flags and is the official mammal or animal of three states.

[As The Washington Post reports](#), the bison had a diverse team of backers making its case:

"Lobbying for the official mammal designation was a coalition of conservationists; ranchers, for whom bison are business; and tribal groups, such as the InterTribal Buffalo Council, which wants to 'restore bison to Indian nations in a manner that is compatible with their spiritual and cultural beliefs and practices.'"

The bison is an "icon that represents the highest ideals of America: unity, resilience and healthy landscapes and communities," says Wildlife Conservation Society president Cristián Samper, the newspaper reports.

Keith Aune, bison program director with the Wildlife Conservation Society, [tells Here & Now](#) that the bison has a "special place in our history":

"For us, there are several really important reasons we think bison deserve this designation. First off, it's a very economically important animal. There's a tremendous commercial industry, and it's a tremendous good red meat. And it also is ecologically very important. Our healthy prairies are really dependent on not just any grazing, but the right type of grazing – and bison are entirely adapted to the Great Plains and create that scenario."

That's along with its cultural significance to many tribal groups, Aune says.

He adds that the bison's comeback from a low of [just hundreds](#) is a "remarkable story."

The bill says efforts early last century to save the bison "resulted in the first successful reintroduction of a mammal species on the brink of extinction back into the natural habitat of the species."

According to the *Post*, bison now have a presence in every state, with about 20,000 living on public land.

## Prehistoric peoples of Roberts Ranch tour featured as part of open space educational series

BY [NFN](#) ON APRIL 28, 2016 IN [DISPATCHES](#) · [ADD COMMENT](#)

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is hosting a series of free educational programs for the 20th anniversary of the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax. Travel back in time to learn about the prehistoric peoples of Roberts Ranch during a tour of the ranch on Saturday, May 21 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Participants will visit more than 10 prehistoric Native American sites spanning the last 10,000 years. Many of the sites were excavated by Colorado State University between the early 1970s and late 1980s. Sites will include several stone circles, rock shelters and campsites that have yielded abundant stone tools, pottery, animal bones and abundant fire pits.

Participants will meet at Jax Ranch and Home, located at 1000 N. Hwy. 287 in Fort Collins, at 8:30 a.m. and carpool up to Roberts Ranch. The tour will return at 1:30 p.m.

Participants will be hiking off trail on flat ground, grasslands and rocky terrain. Round-trip distance is about 3 miles. Hike rating: moderate. Please bring hats, sunscreen, water, lunch, backpack, camera, etc. Long pants and sturdy shoes are recommended.

Jason LaBelle, noted CSU archaeology professor and director of the Center for Mountain and Plains Archaeology, will lead the trip. LaBelle has been conducting archaeological surveys and excavations in the Laramie Foothills area for the past 10 years. He is leading new research into these sites through both class and thesis projects based on **CSU's prior work on Roberts Ranch.**

The program is free, but registration is required. Please go to [www.larimer.org/NRregistration](http://www.larimer.org/NRregistration) to sign up. Direct questions to Heather at (970) 619-4489 or [hyoung@larimer.org](mailto:hyoung@larimer.org).

For information on the 20th anniversary of the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax and other fun, free activities taking place in 2016, visit [www.larimer.org/openspaces20th](http://www.larimer.org/openspaces20th).

## REPORTER-HERALD

# Little remains of plaster plant at Devil's Backbone

*By Kenneth Jessen*

POSTED: 04/29/2016 10:27:51 AM MDT



All that is left of the plaster mill today is its foundation as seen in this view from the Devil's Backbone trail. (*Kenneth Jessen*)

All that is left of the plaster mill today is its foundation as seen in... (*Kenneth Jessen*)

This story begins with pioneer industrialist Alfred Wild who came to the Loveland area in the early 1880s to manage his brother's homestead.

He filed for his own homestead and eventually began to experiment with fruit trees. Located west of Loveland, he was in an unusual

location — sitting at the south end of a long series of vertical fins known as the Devil's Backbone.

Wild's biggest opportunity came when the Loudon Ditch Co. dug a canal around the south end of the Devil's Backbone through his property. On the east side, the workers struck some soft, white material. When water was released into the ditch, it took weeks for the water to flow past the white material.

Wild watched with curiosity and sent a sample of the material to Brown University in Rhode Island for analysis. It turned out to be pure gypsum.

Using his wife's pots and pans, Wild began experimenting with the gypsum, hoping to discover how to convert the material into plaster. He pulverized it into a fine powder, then heated it in a kettle over an open fire, and dumped the material out on the ground. After it cooled, Wild pulverized it forming plaster. Adding water reconstitutes the plaster chemically back to gypsum.

At the time, all of Colorado's plaster was shipped in from other states. Because of the cost, plastered walls were a luxury, and Wild's idea was to make it affordable.

He borrowed money to purchase a carload of sacks. By using an old threshing machine engine, Wild constructed a crude crusher. A large iron kettle was used to heat the crushed gypsum over an open coal fire.

He named his new business the Buckhorn Plaster Co. and built an enclosed mill. His success was immediate as contractors clamored for as much plaster as he could produce. A short rail spur was built to the mill from the existing Arkins Branch.



Alfred Wild pioneered the Colorado plaster business using gypsum found on his property west of Loveland. (Steve Wild collection)

Wild laid a 3-foot gauge railroad to haul the gypsum from the quarries located to the north, down to the mill. Mining started along the top of the deposit and eventually, the rails were moved into the quarry proper. The gypsum deposit was divided into two lobes and as one lobe was depleted, the rails were moved to the other lobe.

The Buckhorn Plaster Co. was eventually purchased by the United States Gypsum Co. A new mill was built, and it continued to operate until 1965 when a flood damaged both the mill and warehouse. The company decided not to repair the mill since the supply of gypsum was nearly exhausted.

The quarries are within Larimer County Parks and Open Lands and can be seen from the Devil's Backbone trail. The quarry area is not yet open to the public. The foundation for the mill is adjacent to the horse trail, part of the Devil's Backbone trail system.

It is sad that some of the mill could not have been preserved as an example of a Colorado pioneer industry.

*Kenneth Jessen has been a Loveland resident since 1965. He is an author of 20 books and more than 1,600 articles. He served on several Loveland boards and was an engineer for Hewlett-Packard for 33 years.*



Under United States Gypsum Co. ownership, this is how the plaster mill looked during its latter years. (Joe Miner Collection)



## REPORTER-HERALD

# Crew, volunteers building trail at Devil's Backbone

By Pamela Johnson, Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

POSTED: 04/27/2016 05:24:20 PM MDT



Ryan McElyea, left, and Stephanie Lee use picks to cut into brush and rock to create a portion of the new trail at the Devil's Backbone west of Loveland. The crew has another month of work on the 1.8-mile trail, which they estimate is about two-thirds built. (Pamela Johnson / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

With picks, shovels and other hand tools, members of the Larimer County trail crew chipped away brush, rock and dirt to create portions of a brand new trail at the Devil's Backbone Open Space.

They hauled wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow of dirt away as they carved a new 3-foot-wide trail through the Hidden Valley section for a 1.8-mile trail to open in May.

"Building a new trail is fun because you're creating something new," said Joel Schwab, leader of the trail crew

responsible for planning and building new trails and maintaining the county's current trails "There's a creative aspect to it.

"It opens up the outdoors to people, gives them access to places they've never been. There's some satisfaction in that."

The new trail will run from the main trailhead through the Hidden Valley area, and then tie back into the main trail just north of the Wild Loop.

It is about two-thirds built with the help of a large group of volunteers. Earlier this month, about 60 people from several different clubs donated their Saturday to chip into the new trail and constructed about 1,000 feet.

"They helped us out a lot," said Schwab.

The Hidden Valley Trail was designed and is being built specifically for mountain bikes and horses, which once this trail opens, will no longer be allowed on the Wild Loop.

Schwab said he and his crew chose the location, grade and design of the trail on what would best work for a broad range of mountain bike users and equestrians. They also looked at not disturbing habitat and wildlife and the ideal grade to prevent erosion.

"They're all cut at 8 percent, which is ideal for watershed," said Stephanie Lee, who works on the trail crew. "A lot more goes into trail building than people assume. Eight percent is best because of the use to keep it sustainable."

Months of planning go into mapping out any new trail. Crew members said they put in at least two months for the Hidden Valley loop they are building and even more for another project, a seven-mile trail, planned later this summer at Hermit Park.



Stephanie Lee measures the angle of a new trail she and the rest of the Larimer County trail crew are building. They are aiming for 8 percent grade, which is ideal for runoff and to avoid erosion. (Pamela Johnson / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

Once the work begins, the trail builders literally just dig in, working from point to point that they had mapped out with flags. Crew member Ryan McElyea described it as connecting the dots, and moving a lot of dirt, and more dirt, and even more dirt to perfect the trail.

They have special tools to measure the incline and the width of the path.

At Hermit Park, the work will be different because the terrain is not as flat, and there will be trees to cut and remove for the trail.

At Devil's Backbone, the area is flat, and the ground is filled with gypsum. Layer by layer, the crews remove dirt and see what challenges they face, always keeping in mind erosion, water flow and the safety of the people who will be using the trail

Crew members said they love working outdoors and relish the mixture of physical work and planning that goes into building a new trail.

"You get to be a little more creative," said McElyea. "Maintenance is fun too, but it's nice when you have a blank canvas."

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Joel Schwab, supervisor of Larimer County's trail crew, teaches the newest crew member, Forest Nichols, how to build trail on a recent work day at the Devil's Backbone. Schwab, at front, and his crew work on trails throughout Larimer County's parks and open spaces. (*Pamela Johnson / Loveland Reporter-Herald*)



## Take a hike: Horsetooth Falls

[Stephen Meyers](#), 2:59 p.m. MDT April 23, 2016



Distance: 1.7 miles one-way

Difficulty: Moderate

Elevation range: 5,600 to 6,700 feet

Trailhead: Go west on Harmony Road (Larimer County Road 38E) and follow this around for 6.5 miles to the parking lot on the north side of County Road 38E.

Hours: Open 24 hours a day

Fees: \$6 for daily entrance

Facilities: Restroom, water, information kiosk located at parking lot

Pets: Yes, on leash

Maps: None needed, but pick up a park map at the information kiosk

Information: Larimer County Parks, 970-679-4570 or

[www.co.larimer.co.us](http://www.co.larimer.co.us)

**Why go:** Spring through early June is prime time for this foot-only hike because that's when the falls and the wildflowers are at their best. The falls, roaring now, drop about 20 feet, creating a pool at the bottom, fun for splashing. Boulders around the pool make for a very nice picnic area. Soon, wildflowers will begin to dot the dry hillsides. Continue on the Spring Creek Trail that parallels the creek. In this meadow, you'll see the best wildflower show. Hook up with the well-marked Soderberg Trail after a little more than a half-mile.