



2023 Volume 3

“What’s in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet.”

– William Shakespeare

Everywhere in the world there is a rich array of place names. Some roll off our tongues easily, some we mispronounce or even mangle, but each is unique in its own way.

Some names are widely used. For instance, the name San Jose is the most common place name in the world, with over 1,700 places being called that or a variation of that name (1,716 to be exact).

In the United States, the most common city names are Washington (88), Springfield (41), Franklin (35) and Greenville (31).

Colorado’s own capitol city, Denver, shares its name with 22 other places in the world. 19 are in the US, 2 are in the UK and 1 is in Australia. Our city is named after James W. Denver, who was Governor of the Kansas Territory when the townsite was planted in 1858 in what was at the time Kansas Territory. The name was chosen to curry favor with the governor but what the city founders didn’t know was that Denver was no longer in office.

Our own county bears the popular name (5 additional counties in the US), Garfield, after James A. Garfield, the twentieth president of the USA.

Other names are less well known as names are drawn from different languages, cultures, geological formations, historical events or people, or other aspects of history. In our own state of Colorado, there are a plethora of names that leave one nodding their heads and understanding why Dry Creek is called Dry Creek (sic). However, people are also inclined to ask things like what put the cripple in Cripple Creek, or the government in Government Creek or the rifle in Rifle Creek.

So let me introduce you to the unique names of some of the cities, towns, municipalities, and hamlets that surround Rifle, Colorado.

Just to the west of Rifle are two towns which do not share their name with any place else in the world Parachute and De Beque are the only towns with that name in the world. To the east of Rifle, the city of Glenwood Springs also does not share its name with any other place. (geotarget.com)

Silt and Rifle each share their name with one other town. Silt shares its name with Silt, California and Rifle shares its name with Rifle, South Africa.

There are 5 places in the world named Grand junction and they can all be found in the United States.

Just 14 miles to the east is New Castle which is found 14 times throughout the world in 4 different countries. The USA has the highest number of New Castles, but the northernmost New Castle is in Monmouthshire in United Kingdom and the southernmost New Castle is in Limon in Costa Rica. However, there are 33 places in the world named Newcastle. Only 5 New Castles (or Newcastle's) are found below the equator.



Meet the Board

Kevin & Kathy Runia

Our humble beginnings started with Kevin on a dairy farm in Iowa and Kathy, a native of CO, in Leadville.

Our lives came together in Longmont in 1978. We met in 1977, started dating in Jan. 1978 & were married in Oct. 1978.

Our son, Jake, was born in 1983 and in 1989 we uprooted our family and moved to the Rifle area.

We have volunteered as 4-H & FFA leaders, GarCo Fair board members and now for the museum, both as board members and museum staff people.

Kathy’s passion is history and art which pairs well with her work at the museum.

Kevin’s knowledge of maintenance & construction is put to work on a regular basis at the museum also.

Our challenge to you is to volunteer some of your time to the community.

Volunteerism is always needed and it is so rewarding to give of yourself while building a better community.



1953 Art Kirkham photo



2019 flickr.com photo

Rifle- Tale of Two Towns

Rifle, South Africa is below the equator in the providence of the Free State in South Africa. Information about the name was unobtainable but it lies on a dead-end road in the region of the Boers Wars of the region so the name may be a reference to those conflicts, especially as it is surrounded by towns with such names as Skatfontein, Roleleathanya, and Smithfield.

As you know, our sweet little City of Rifle is located north of the equator in the beautiful Rocky Mountains of Colorado at an elevation of 5,348 ft (1,630m). With the building of a set of cabins at the confluence of Rifle Creek and the Colorado River in 1882, Abram Maxfield founded what was to become the town. Rifle was incorporated in 1905 and today sports a population of 10,437 (2020 census), making us the largest town in Garfield County.

When Maxfield settled here, the settlement was referred to as the Maxfield Ranch, as was the post office that was the distributing point for all the north country, the surrounding area, with the exception of the Ferguson community, and the Parachute area. The creek that flowed down from the north through the settlement was already referred to as Rifle Creek and was (and is) a confluence of East, Middle, and West Rifle Creeks. When the town was incorporated, it took its name from the creek that flows through it.

This is what we do and don't know about the origin of the name.

We do know that the name first appeared in the Hayden Report, a U.S. geological survey, in 1876. Geologist Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden was heading a survey party in the Rifle area in the 1870s, which was then Ute Territory.

Thus begins the mystery of the origin of the naming of Rifle Creek.

Walter Wilder, an editor of The Rifle Telegram, wrote that the earlier exploring parties had to name all the different creeks and found it difficult to select names and so (con't p. 3)

A post office called "Silt" has been in operation since 1898. The community was named for the silt deposits at the original town site where, reportedly, the DRG posted a sign warning trains of the "silt" on the tracks and named their section house and depot "Silt" after the powdery soil.



the story goes that a party camped one night near the mouth of an unknown and unnamed creek. In the morning, they had gone a mile or so when one of the members discovered he had left his gun standing against a tree and had to go back to get it, so they put this camp down as Rifle Creek. A variation of this story is that in one of the surveys commissioned by the federal government in the late 1800s, a surveyor left his gun leaning against a tree near a creek at their camp and so marked it on the survey so they could return to get it. The notation was not erased and the survey was filed with the notation.

According to the book, Rifle Shots (Rifle Reading Club-1973), the story is that early cattle camps assembled at a roundup area at the south entrance to Ward Gulch, where three streams joined. It was the custom for the cowboys to fire their guns to signal their location and approach to the cattle herds in the distance. The streams were dubbed East, West and Main Rifle creeks.

Yet another tale told by S. Wood and R. Morgan involves early explorers camping by a small stream and upon breaking camp in the morning finding a thoroughly deteriorated rifle standing against a tree and exclaiming, "A rifle! Why this must be Rifle Creek."

Stories are stories and are handed down from grandpa to grandchild or from friend to friend or from drinking buddy to drinking buddy so they are always second-hand information that is often embellished or made more colorful by the one relating the story. It makes it fun for us hearing the stories today to pick and choose which one tickles our fancy!

The small town began as George Ferguson's Ranch after the Ute Indians' land was opened to homesteading in 1881. Mr. Ferguson operated a ferry so the first settlers could cross the Grand (Colorado) River until the first bridge was built in 1908. The area was named Ferguson and had their own post office separate from the post office operated on the Maxfield Ranch (in present day Rifle). After the DRG started calling the area Silt, the name Silt stuck after Mr. Ferguson death in 1892.

Henry Hasley bought Ferguson's ranch in 1899. Mr. Hasley had the town of Silt surveyed and platted in 1907. The citizens tried to incorporate the town in 1912 but due to the railroad not wanting to be taxed by the town, it took three more years to become the Town of Silt. Silt was the last town incorporated in Garfield County in 1915. (from Silt Historical Society & USGS)

Visit <https://silthistorical.org/> to find out more about Silt's history and to find out about the picture to the left of an "institution" of the 60's through the 90's of Silt's downtown.

Meet a few of our Volunteers

It takes an army of volunteers to keep the doors open during our season, maintain the building we are housed in, acquire, care for and create the museum's displays and host programs throughout the year such as speakers at the library, Rifle Heritage Days and Voices in the Dark.

We could not even begin to list all the people that have volunteered in one capacity or another throughout the year but would like to acknowledge a few of them.

Our heartfelt thanks to Misty Williams for keeping our website up and running.

Thanks to Shirley Lawson's "girls". The girls in her family are an integral part of our annual fashion show at Rifle Heritage Days. Add the grand girl of Jan Day, Simone, and there is the making of a style show fit for Paris!

And a big thanks to Gabe Roe and Maddy Brandt, our junior volunteers!

The museum needs YOU! We have lots of irons in the fire and we will certainly find a place that you can do something that you enjoy. Call us today or better yet, stop by and talk with us.



How did
get its
may never
correct
that as
several

versions depending on who is telling the story! One of these that back in 1879, a survey team said the watershed patterns of the Roan Plateau looked like parachute lines. Looking at a satellite image, one can see the similarity.

However, there are several other theories on how the town of Parachute actually got its name. In the 1900s a local newspaper ran an article saying it came from the Ute word Pahchouc, which meant twins that ran between two mountains with early settlers mispronouncing the word as parachute.

A story from Maxine Benson's Book of 1001 Colorado Place Names, says the name comes from the shape of a creek upon which hunters, looking down upon the area, remarked, "We need a parachute to get down there."

Which story have you heard or have you heard an entirely different one?

Parachute
name? We
know the
answer to
there are
different

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

