



SLUICE BOX

NUGGETS AND OBSERVATIONS ABOUT LIFE IN COLORADO



Ethan Gannett (left)/Wikimedia Commons

Pleasant Valley Schoolhouse No. 7 is the last one-room stone schoolhouse in Larimer County. It is being revitalized by the family that co-founded Noosa Yoghurt.



Pleasant Valley past comes alive in one room

Rare schoolhouse restored on Noosa Yoghurt's Larimer County campus

by ETHAN GANNETT

There is no bell in the belfry of Pleasant Valley Schoolhouse No. 7 in rural Bellvue. That the school and its belfry exist at all is surprising, considering it last held classes more than 100 years ago. In fact, it is Larimer County's last remaining one-room stone schoolhouse.

The restored Pleasant Valley Schoolhouse is nestled to the side of a verdant field on the estate of Morning Fresh Dairy and Noosa Yoghurt. A wooden rolltop map case adorns the corner of the 24-by-38-foot classroom, which is filled with student chairs of all grade levels. A recital chair sits at the front of the room, seemingly ready for the next nervous student to step up.

The stone schoolhouse was built in 1879 to teach the children of local farmers and ranchers. Prominent Fort Collins businessman Abner Loomis gathered the community to build the school from lo-

cally quarried sandstone after the previous wooden schoolhouse burned down. When the stone schoolhouse closed in 1913, the building reverted to the Graves family, who owned the land.

The Graves family is descendant of William Charles Graves Sr., whose son went to school here. And that little boy's descendant, Robert Graves, is the current owner of Morning Fresh Dairy and the co-founder of Noosa Yoghurt. Five generations of Graves have run this dairy farm since 1894.

Sherry Graves, Robert's mother, did the work to get the schoolhouse listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 and is now seeking to outfit it with period furniture.

Lori Graves, her daughter-in-law, led the contractors during the restoration, which required work on the schoolhouse's foundation and original stone, a new inte-

rior wood floor and even horsehair plaster walls.

When asked about the next steps of the restorations, Lori said, "The list is long, and the day is short." Sherry's next priority is finding someone with a period schoolmarm's desk they would be willing to donate to complete the schoolroom furnishing.

There is also the matter of the school's missing bell, which was donated to a local church many years ago. Sherry and Lori are working with church leaders to see if they will trade it back, putting the finishing touch on a restoration decades in the making.

Tours of Pleasant Valley Schoolhouse No. 7 are included as part of regularly scheduled Morning Fresh Dairy farm tours. Call (970) 482-5789 for tour information.



Gold Crown Foundation

Little league dreamers play like big leaguers

by LEAH M. CHARNEY

Driving on West Alameda Avenue in Lakewood might elicit a double take. Is that ...? It can't be! But it is: a carbon copy of Coors Field, home of the Colorado Rockies baseball team.

The miniature field, 90 percent the scale of the original but with far less seating capacity, opened as Coca-Cola All-Star Park in 1998. Built in conjunction with the Rockies and Major League Baseball, the venue's creation was part of festivities surrounding the 1998 All-Star Game in Denver. The league donates annually to community programs in each city where All-Star games are held. That year, it partnered with the Gold Crown Foundation, a nonprofit athletic organization serving Colorado youth, resulting in the replica of the existing stadium.

The space was renamed Keli McGregor Field at Coca-Cola All-Star Park in 2011, honoring late Colorado Rockies President Keli McGregor, who died unexpectedly the previous year at age 48. The park continues to be used by young people throughout the region, hosting the Colorado High School Athletic Association's yearly baseball playoffs and serving as home field for Colorado Christian University's baseball team. It is also home to "Eye on the Ball," an oversized, reflective, baseball-shaped sculpture that visitors are encouraged to take photos with.

Though no professional games have ever been played at the field, no detail was overlooked in its design: It has the same "LoDo green" metal awnings and gates as Coors Field; the same rows of red bricks course around the building and clocktower; even columbines, the state flower, adorn tiles perched at the tops of columns, as they do at the big-league park. The same architectural firm that built Coors Field created the miniature version, too.

"The one thing people don't notice – on Coors Field, I'm not sure people notice them, either – are the columbines," said Tom Quinn, executive director of Alameda Connects, the business district that surrounds the field. "I didn't notice them for a year or two and then was like, 'Why didn't I ever see those before?'"

People can see for themselves – and take a selfie – at the intersection of West Alameda Avenue and South Harlan Street.