



KOELBEL

A Storied History
A Stunning Land



INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time, there was a prehistoric eruption,
which parented flora and fauna from solid stone.

There was a Marquis, a Mogul and a Matriarch,
separated by time, joined by a place.

A town was delivered by rail and visited by a very bully man,
but not the bullying kind.

There was a Lake named John, a Princess named Anne,
bulls named Minotaur and Little Governor and
twenty-four Scotties with, as you might suppose,
twenty-four individual names.

Visitors were greeted by the flags of their home countries
and a door of spears. They sat in bloody chairs and survived
on wine-soaked bread. At least they were able to meet
Churchill and Charles II.

The dinner parties were lavish, yet the pineapples were inedible.

And the home around which the story centers is simultaneously
less than one – and more than five centuries old.

The next chapter in this astounding tale will chronicle
your exploits and adventures. For now, your family is part of
The Keep. And it – is now a part of you.

HOMESITE 1

RHYOLITE – THE FIRST STORY

The titanotheres were enjoying a leisurely meal when it started. A distant rumble grew to a subtly perceptible vibration under the feet of the enormous, rhinoceros-like herbivores. Soon, the ground began to tremble violently, persistently shaking the animals' hungry mouths away from the previously easy to reach vegetation. And then, the roar – not of a prehistoric beast being denied its breakfast, but of a massive volcanic eruption – gave far too scant a warning of what was to come next. The force of the explosion sent great arcs of molten volcanic rock in all directions. From within a dense cloud, the searing ash, hot enough to liquefy glass, impacted into the earth, solidifying on contact, swallowing everything it touched.

Over long, dark weeks, the cloud settled, revealing a landscape, which had been dramatically altered, from what's known today as Monarch Pass in the Sawatch Mountains, all the way east to the present town of Castle Rock. Now, suddenly, instantly really – massive caches of stone, fifteen to twenty feet thick joined the lush forests and grassy meadows. The pink, maroon and garnet hues gave a complexity and beauty to the land. Humans would not learn to take advantage of Mother Nature's masonry work for more than 36,000,000 years. But eventually, this substance would find use as a building material – and find a name – Castle Rock Rhyolite.

HOMESITE 2

THE ANCIENTS – STORY NUMBER TWO

I am a Plains Indian. I will tell you of my life here in your language.

We lived in this place, on our mountain, from 1250 to 1590 A.D. in homes hollowed out of the rock. Our walls were stone, as were our floors. One of our shelters measured thirty-five by twenty-four feet with a fifteen-foot ceiling at the entrance, which dropped as it approached the inner wall. The height let in the sun and the stars. It was a very good place to live.

What you call winter was a harsh time for us, but we were skilled in the ways of survival. We had fire and skins to keep us warm. This place brought animals, which provided our food. We hunted the buffalo many times upon this land. We also knew how to make tools, which we have left behind for you – knives, scrapers, sharpened rock points we used for hunting, even a drill.

You have also found metates, stone slabs with raised sides for holding grain. And manos, the smooth stones we used for grinding. We created needles from the bones of animals to punch holes in hides, allowing us to sew our clothing. Much of our time was spent working to feed, clothe and shelter our families. That, along with this place, is something we have in common with you.

HOMESITE 3

HOMESTEAD – STORY NUMBER THREE

“While the population of a country are the proprietors of the land which they till, they have an interest to surround their families with comfort and make their homes happy – the great incentive to industry, frugality and sobriety. It is such habits alone that give security to a government and form the real elements of national greatness and power.”

On February 29, 1860, the Honorable Galusha Aaron Grow of Pennsylvania delivered his speech, Free Homes for Free Men to the House of Representatives. He argued strongly in favor of what would be known as the Homestead Act, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on May 20, 1862.

Settlers took swift advantage of the new law, which offered title to 160 acres of land with few stipulations – the prospective owners were required to: be over the age of twenty-one, build a house at least twelve by fourteen feet on the property and work the land for five years. After which, ownership was free and clear. Wealthier citizens could opt to purchase their land for \$1.25 an acre after waiting only six months, still a bargain in those times.

Far from Washington, Colorado Territory’s recently established Douglas County drew men from far flung lands – Marquis Victor from France, Frederick Flower from England and so on. Their stories are to follow.

Here, a love – and ownership – of the land had legally begun.

HOMESITE 4

SUNFLOWER – STORY NUMBER FOUR

You were the first we know of to settle here, on the land we now protect. Nearly a hundred fifty years ago, your journey began.

It was an early morning, one might suspect, when you loaded all your worldly affects into the wagon – provisions, clothing, household goods, pots and pans soon to be clanging along the rutted trail – and the apple slips, the tiny trees to be.

You drove your family and your cattle west, from Kansas to Sedalia to prosperity, a hundred sixty acres along East Plum Creek. The winter that year was too cold and you moved your family once again – not that far this time – just up toward the mountain, where you built the home that still stands, anchored to passing time by one of your original apple trees.

Our modern architects don’t know quite what to make of that home of yours. Not in any of their design books, they say. They do agree it was stately and elegant, belying the time and what history would expect of a man who tended wheat, sorghum and cattle. Let them wonder. For today, your house is listed in what we call the National Register of Historic Places. It’s our way of saying, well done John Blunt. Well done.

HOMESITE 5

ROUND CORRAL – STORY NUMBER FIVE

In the West – in 1865, many things were possible. You could easily earn the right to own land. You could build whatever kind of house you wanted, although the most preferable kept out the cold and remained standing in the wind. And in Colorado Territory, in 1865, you could even start a town. You of course, could also name that town. And later, after more people had decided to settle in your town, you could even sell it.

That’s what happened in Sedalia. Only it hadn’t been named Sedalia yet. Hadn’t been named Plum either. No, because in 1865, when John H. Craig, a homesteader and rancher built a large, round corral near the confluence of what are now called East Plum Creek and West Plum Creek, he also named his town, Round Corral. John’s round corral was used for business purposes back in the day, specifically as a holding and shipping area for cattle drives which moved through the area. And it attracted a fair amount of interest in Round Corral, the town. Over time, the population grew, and in 1869, John Craig sold the whole place to Jonathan House.

We’re not entirely sure whether the sale of Round Corral included the round corral, although that certainly would have brought things full circle.

HOMESITE 6

THE RAIL – STORY NUMBER SIX

In 1871, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad came to town, stirring things up overnight. Proof of which occurred on the morning of September 6th, when the town’s name was changed from Round Corral to Plum. This was a reflection of the newly opened Plum Station, into which freight trains – and the future – pulled. Soon, carloads of timber were steaming out of Plum Station daily, bound for Denver and beyond, to support the rapidly expanding railroad system. The bustling town gained its first post office in 1872. It also received its third and current name, when Postmaster Henry M. Clay, prominent landowner and former resident of Sedalia, Missouri became a resident.

It took ten years for the Denver & Rio Grande to rename Plum Station Sedalia. By then, the town had welcomed its second rail line, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe.

Sedalia, Colorado was thriving – shipping timber and coal, welcoming visitors with a hotel, saloon and a number of shops and services. Beneficiaries of the Homestead Act had settled and improved the land, and many possessed impressive acreages on which they raised corn and rye, horses and cattle.

The hopes of an entire, growing population were finding purchase as well.

HOMESITE 7

CITIZEN MARQUIS – STORY NUMBER SEVEN

He was a sailor, a blacksmith, a Union soldier, a pioneer, farmer, husband, school board member, medical practitioner and a father – one of Sedalia's.

Marquis Victor was also temporarily, a Frenchman. But he and this particular attribute parted ways on December 5, 1882. Marquis had settled in Sedalia earlier in the year – April by all accounts – when he and his Irish-born wife Margery took advantage of the Homestead Act. They claimed their acreage and built a modest frame house. There was but one small complication; landowners were required to be citizens of the United States. And so, in a Denver City courthouse, Marquis Victor took the crucial step toward becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen by speaking the words, "I hereby renounce my allegiance to the Republic of France."

Eventually, Marquis and Margery bought a fine brick house, built by John Craig – yes, the founder and previous owner of Round Corral. Their land holdings increased to seven hundred acres. In addition to his various ranching and civic pursuits, Marquis also opened a sawmill and a blacksmith shop. Marquis Victor died on April 23, 1905, but when you visit Sedalia, you can still see him, in a manner of speaking, as soon as you turn onto Victor Street, the thoroughfare named in his honor.

HOMESITE 8

FRED'S PLACE – STORY NUMBER EIGHT

When Frederick Flower built his home, high up on a saddle near the peak of what we now know as Cherokee Mountain, he did so as if to say, "I'm not going anywhere, anytime soon."

The four-room home was built of native Rhyolite, the prehistoric stone. It was quarried on the site, meticulously carved into blocks and set into place. The front porch tells a similarly sturdy story – tree trunks support it.

The construction would have foretold early visitors the story of Fred Flowers, and the strong stock of which he was built. Potato farmer from England; made his way across the Atlantic, then to Denver, where he cast off his citizenship in order to become a Sedalia landowner. He moved into his small, but fine home with his wife Amy and sister-in-law Beatrice on January 18, 1895.

Fred may have been a successful fabricator in more ways than one. He supposedly wrote on his homestead claim form that he had plowed twelve acres and strung a half-mile of barbed wire in order to contain livestock. However, historical rumor has it he actually used the land for potatoes.

Fred Flower continued adding to the size and quality of his ranch, eventually amassing 2,380 acres. Once he started building it seems, he really never stopped.

HOMESITE 9

NATURE'S FIREWORKS – STORY NUMBER NINE

The turn of the century arrived today, and while this New Year brings cause for celebration to many, the citizens here simply go on about their work, as they have for millennia. They are quiet now, sleeping, readying themselves for spring, when they will awaken and set off fireworks of their own original design.

They are the wildflowers, soon to bloom, to create a sea of color as far as the eye of man or beast can see – and the wild plum, for which a nearby town was once known. Some call them scrub oak, for their roughly stubby appearance. But we prefer their proper moniker – Gambel oak, after the American Naturalist, William who gave them notice and his last name. They are everywhere here, bright green in summer, turning brilliant orange and yellow in the autumn. A fiery, yet smokeless blaze.

Yes, this mountain is indeed alive – with pinon and ponderosa pine, with chokecherry, prickly pear and low-lying Blue Gamma grasses. The original homesteaders planted the junipers, not too long ago. Their roots have joined the others and their evergreen boughs add depth and texture to the palette.

Collectively, these things bring nature's living beauty to this place. As future becomes past, the human world will change – but the flora here will remain steadfast and unyielding, like this mountain on which they live.

HOMESITE 10

WHISTLE STOP – STORY NUMBER TEN

In more modern times, children would greet such a happening with appropriately current expressions: "Keen," "Neat-o," "Groovy," "Far out," "Cool," "Awesome." But in the early nineteen hundreds, the equivalent of these words, as made famous by one very famous American, was "Bully."

Of course, as you probably know, the catch phrase belonged to Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt Jr. On this particular day, President Roosevelt was making a stop in Sedalia, Colorado. And the schoolchildren were released from classes early to greet his arrival.

They'd studied the President. They knew he'd worn many hats, historian, naturalist, explorer, author and politician – but his most well known was the hat he wore as a soldier, more specifically, as the leader of the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry Regiment or the Rough Riders, which fought in the Spanish-American War.

The children most likely also knew he'd been the Vice President of the United States of America, until September 6, 1901, when President McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist by the name of Leon Czolgosz.

And now, our country's leader was in their town, standing at the back of a train, looking at them. A President visiting Sedalia was impressive – and telling – in just forty years, the town had made the trip from pioneer start up to an important rail center.

It was all very bully.

HOMESITE 11

MR. JOHNSON – STORY NUMBER ELEVEN

He was born July 13, 1868 in Salem, Massachusetts. But his arrival of the financial sort would occur in Denver many years later. His name was Charles Alfred Johnson.

As a young man, Mr. Johnson worked as a cobbler. Alas, a shoemaker's life he would not endure for long. "In those days," he was once quoted as saying, "a man came west for health, wealth or reputation. I came to make a fortune."

Indeed he did. Less than a decade after his 1891 arrival in Denver, Mr. Johnson was named trustee for the Baron von Winckler, the man who originally platted – or mapped out – Denver's Park Hill neighborhood. After the Baron's death, a suicide of unclear motivation, Charles Johnson became the exclusive developer for the area, then known as Park Hill Ranch.

Charles' fortune was quickly secured.

Some years later, in May of 1920, Charles Johnson married Alice Phillips and they, along with Alice's young son Gifford, returned to Denver and took up residence in Charles' stately Montview Boulevard home, to which Mr. Johnson referred as "The Hut."

Fate provided a continuation for our story in 1924. Whilst on a horseback ride near Sedalia with their friend, Charles M. Wilcox, the Johnsons spotted the perfect piece of land upon which to construct a weekend home away from the city.

Turned out it was owned by a sheep man, by the name of Fred Flower.

HOMESITE 12

THE WILD – STORY NUMBER TWELVE

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HOMESITE 13

MR. JOHNSON – STORY NUMBER THIRTEEN

"For years, I have wondered why a man will build a summer home or a country place in a valley or a canyon, when these hills and promontories are everywhere and from which marvelous views may be obtained." Charles A. Johnson, The Rocky Mountain News, August 1926.

The highest point on the Johnsons' one hundred sixty acres afforded spectacular views of the Rocky Mountains, from Pike's Peak near Colorado Springs to the south, and north to Wyoming's Medicine Bow Range. To the West, as it is today, stood thousands of acres of wide, open spaces, home to countless wild species. It was truly the ideal spot for a home, good for weekends away from the growing city of Denver.

Originally, Charles and Alice had envisioned a small place – "...a shooting box sort of house" according to Mr. Johnson, and so, he sketched and the couple thought of what they needed – one or two bedrooms, one or two bathrooms, a kitchen and dining room. Plans changed as plans, especially those of the housing variety frequently do, and soon the sketches were complicated enough to call in an architect – or two in this particular case. Merrill and Burnham Hoyt were retained by the Johnsons, after which the couple left for European travels, giving the architects free – and as it turned out, larger than life – reign.

HOMESITE 14

THE WILD – STORY NUMBER FOURTEEN

Merrill and Burnham Hoyt were born in 1881 and 1887 respectively. They were brothers – in the way the word is usually used, and also in the fraternity of architecture.

The elder Hoyt practiced here in Colorado from 1910 to 1933, when his life and career were cut unfortunately short by a heart attack. Yet, during those twenty-three years, Merrill Hoyt left a structural mark. Delta National Bank was Merrill's first known design. He was also responsible for the striking addition to Denver's Steele Elementary School as well as a number of significant area homes.

Burnham Hoyt, after studying at the Beaux Arts Institute in New York City, gained prominence as one of Colorado's best-known Modernist practitioners. The Central Branch of the Denver Public Library, which today features a Michael Graves addition, still stands as a remarkable achievement, as does

Mr. Hoyt's most timeless design – Red Rocks Amphitheater – which, upon completion, was chosen by New York's Museum of Modern Art as one of the decade's outstanding examples of American architecture.

Alongside brother Merrill, Burnham Hoyt created the Denver Press Club building, St. Martin's Chapel at St. John's Cathedral and many more public and private places, including, of course, what began as a modest home on a hilltop. And became rather something else.

HOMESITE 15

THE ROAD HOME – STORY NUMBER FIFTEEN

It began at what was long ago known as the Second Territorial Road.

At the base of the property.

And with an agreement between the owners and their adventurous architects.

It meandered up, into fields of native grasses. And completely uncharted territory.

Climbing higher, past white-faced cattle and final blueprints.

There's the stone home an Englishman built fifty years ago. There's a team of Cornish stonemasons, which just began work today.

Twists and turns, up the hill and a spiral staircase. Nearly to the crest now, anticipating the view. Finally to the top. Half a mile and three years.

A road.

A road map.

The journey to their new home.

HOMESITE 16

PIONEER CASTLE – STORY NUMBER SIXTEEN

While it is customary to collect keepsakes from one's journeys, these mementos are generally small enough to fit inside a suitcase. In certain instances, a steamer trunk might be required to transport such treasures. However, rarely if ever would one bring home, a home. But that's what Charles and Alice Johnson did, to use a bit of literary license.

You see the Johnsons enjoyed castles. They'd toured many during their travels to Europe and were most fond of the stately Scottish manors they'd visited.

And so, thanks to their architects, Merrill and Burnham Hoyt, Charles and Alice were soon to be lord and lady of their very own Scottish castle – an Americanized version, complete with modern conveniences such as running water and a coal-burning furnace.

Given that it was built in Colorado in the mid-nineteen twenties, there was really no reason for a moat, although the Hoyt brothers included an homage to one anyway. Nor did Charles and Alice require a battlement, from which their bowmen could defend the property against attackers – oh but they had one of those as well.

In all, what began as a modest shooting box, expanded to twenty-four rooms – eight bedrooms, eight bathrooms, eight fireplaces and four turrets. The Hoyts also added two towers, from which one could marvel at 360-degree views rather than pour boiling oil onto one's enemies.

In all, just your average, 11,000 square foot souvenir.

HOMESITE 17

THE MASONS – STORY NUMBER SEVENTEEN

It would certainly be possible to build a palatial home from wood. There are also many a grand mansion constructed of adobe. But a castle, completing the mental picture insists on stone. And in this case, Burnham and Merrill Hoyt, as well as the Johnsons, were indeed fortunate. For remember that great prehistoric blast and its resulting stone deposits? Call it Wall Mountain Tuff as geologists do – or its more common name, Castle Rock Rhyolite – Charles and Alice Johnson's deed included more of this perfect castle-building material than they could ever need or use. The only trick was turning it from its raw state to a finished one.

Good fortune smiled once again – or perhaps we should we say thirty times.

To the north, working in a Wyoming mine, Burnham Hoyt discovered a group of thirty stonemasons, native to Cornwall, who'd journeyed to America to ply their craft. He hired them all on the spot and transported them to the site of the future castle.

On a mesa to the east of the site, the stone was quarried. Then, each mason would apply his own personal chiseling style to create finished blocks. The varicolored stone was accented by petrified wood, also discovered on the Johnsons' land.

For two-and-a-half years, the Cornish masons lived and worked right there, building a castle of which their ancestors would have been proud. They must have felt quite at home.

HOMESITE 18

FIVE-HUNDRED – STORY NUMBER EIGHTEEN

They say great architecture is timeless – that it, when accomplished correctly, will never be out of style, never really irrelevant. Such an idea was most definitely on the minds of Merrill and Burnham Hoyt as they designed their grand home on the hill.

True enough, it was to be modeled after, inspired by really, a fifteenth century Scottish castle. And indeed it was. In the Great Hall, the Hoyts specified the thirty-foot ceiling to be constructed of exposed oak, just as it would have been in the mid-fourteen-hundreds. Around 1450, a monastery would have included a courtyard opening, through which weary travelers were passed wine-soaked hunks of bread. And so, Burnham and Merrill designed just such a sop of wine door into their castle. Beams fashioned by an ancient cutting tool called an adz, copper drains and other features were also all faithful reproductions of fifteenth-century architecture.

But the Hoyts, visionaries as they were, designed the castle to represent typical architectural details chronicling the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries as well. A visitor to the castle would be able to, in one tour, witness examples of European building practices spanning five hundred years, to see how the original castle might have changed over centuries. Yet, to the casual observer, the building would appear neither incongruous nor schizophrenic, simply, what is that word again? Oh yes, timeless.

HOMESITE 19

ONE CORBEL – STORY NUMBER NINETEEN

Corbels are, in architectural vernacular, masonry projections, meant to support beams, arches and other extremely heavy structural components. They are designed to, in other words, “hold things up.” We put this term in quotes because it is particularly ironic to this story.

As you know (assuming you’ve been reading chronologically) Burnham and Merrill Hoyt hired a cadre of Cornish stonemasons to sculpt raw Rhyolite into various portions of Charles and Alice Johnson’s shooting box-turned-castle. Given that the masons possessed individually signature styles, the Hoyts assigned a specific job to each man – one was given the responsibility of carving all the arches, another was to focus on spiral staircases and so on.

Which brings us back to the corbels. The ones in the castle’s Great Hall were meant to support a portion of the room’s massive beams. Yet, after carving the first, the mason to whom the job had been given, vanished. The man, who was rumored to have a drinking problem, finally reappeared some two months later to a stinging reprimand by Burnham Hoyt. Apparently, the tongue-lashing was more than the man was willing to accept. “You can’t talk to me like that, I’m an artist,” he said. And promptly quit.

Even though, to this day, all but one of the Great Hall’s corbels remain unfinished, they’re still holding things up – just as the absent mason did.

HOMESITE 20

FIRE TALE – STORY NUMBER TWENTY

There were eight fireplaces built into Charles and Alice Johnson’s wonderful castle. But this is the largest by far – large enough for a man of some stature to stand inside.

Burnham Hoyt designed the enormous screen himself. Its metallic mesh features symbols, each cut from a piece of steel, each representing a piece of the history of this place. A thunderbird and Indians on their captured Spanish ponies pay tribute to those who settled here long before the homesteaders. They too are remembered with a prairie schooner – John Flower’s perhaps. There are forests depicted on Burnham’s fire screen, and oxen and cowboys on horseback. All reminders of the fact that while this may have been a new building, its land had a vivid past.

If you look into the screen with a huge blazing fire behind it, the steel figures appear to move. They’re telling their stories – of buffalo hunts and living off the land, huddled against harsh winters – of leaving the place of your birth and traveling, not just across the ocean to an American port city, but far beyond to the rugged West.

As you watch, you can imagine the hardships faced here, and also the rewards. You saw them as you drove here, up the twisting three-mile drive, and then to the crest, where nature and history unfolded before you like an ancient tome.

This place warms, even without a fire.

HOMESITE 21

SUPPERTIME – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-ONE

Perhaps no room in a home, and the same would hold true for a castle, more signifies togetherness than the dining room. It is a place to gather, to dine of course, but more significantly, to share stories of friends and family.

It is appropriate then, that the dining room of the Johnson’s castle was decorated ever so subtly, with the Tudor Rose, a symbol of togetherness – and one with, of course, a story.

This all began in England, around 1455 with a dispute over the crown and the throne, which led to a series of civil wars.

On one side of the table, was the House of York, whose soldiers each wore a badge emblazoned with a white rose – the White Rose of York. A red rose symbolized the other warring faction, the House of Lancaster.

It is widely believed that, after thirty years of conflict, the House of Lancaster, led by Henry Tudor, at last prevailed. Henry assumed the throne and with it, the title of King Henry VII. Henry is credited with bringing the divided sides of the royal family back together, culminating with his marriage to Elizabeth of York.

As a demonstration of this reunion, Henry blended the image of the white rose with that of the red, thus creating the Tudor Rose.

And, we imagine, although no one can be sure, they had one quite astounding dinner party.

HOMESITE 22

WINE & BREAD – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-TWO

You’ve been traveling all day, through the forest. Up hills and down, scrambling over rocks, meandering far out of your way around streams, wading waist deep straight through them as your patience thins, along with the light of day.

And now it is night. This is not a safe time for movement here, no matter how much you might wish to better your time. There are many dangers into which you might stumble – animals or course, although they’re likely more frightened by you. Your presence does not frighten the highwaymen however. In fact, drawn to you they’d be, to your purse more to the point.

Then, you see a faintly friendly light. It must belong to a monastery, you think. With its courtyard, safety, a resting place, if the monks judge you to be the trustworthy sort.

Knock, knock and a face appears. You plead your case, you and your friends; making your way home from far away, mean no harm. Acceptance comes in the form of great pieces of bread soaked in wine along with the promise of an unworried night’s rest. Outside, but better than out there. Through the door your welcome comes. The beggar’s door it’s called. Or sop of wine door, named for the sustenance you receive.

Five hundred years later, you and others like you are remembered in a castle continents away, as guests pass a replica of that sop of wine door, too making their way home.

HOMESITE 23

ASCENSION – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-THREE

A number of memorable events were recorded in the summer of 1926. Norma Jean Mortensen was born in Los Angeles, California in June. The event was historic at the time only to her immediate family, including her mother, Gladys Pearl Monroe. Note the last name, which would become significant years later when Norma Jean changed her name to Marilyn.

In Europe, Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel. The Manhattan native was a gold medal-winning Olympic swimmer before successfully making her crossing, which originated in Cap Gris-Nez, France and concluded fourteen hours, thirty minutes later in Kingsdown, England.

A weather map was televised for the first time that August, making everyone's favorite small-talk topic that much more accessible. But in and around Sedalia, Colorado, the weather took an unprecedented second position to the news of the day – the Johnsons were moving into their castle.

After two years, the home was complete, furnishings, art and personal effects arrived and the family began making preparations to show off the property to friends, relatives and of course, members of an eager press.

But what, when it appeared in the papers, would the place be called?

HOMESITE 24

NAMESAKE – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR

If you are famous and enjoy a storied career in show business or sports, it might happen to you. Then again, to gain such an honor, you might have spent the majority of your life as an academic – curing disease, fighting for peace, or what have you. Perhaps you are known far and wide as one of the world's foremost business leaders, a courageous politician, or a well-heeled philanthropist.

You might have simply been one of the earliest settlers in a pioneer town, such as Sedalia's own Marquis Victor.

In any of these cases, if you are good and generous and fortunate – and most of all, memorable, you may, one day have something named after you. It might be a street, or a park, perhaps a coveted award. It could be a wing or an entire building. In any event, were such an honor to be bestowed upon you, you would almost certainly not be a five-year-old boy or his somewhat older brother.

Unless you happened to be either Charles A. Johnson Jr., son of the senior Mr. Johnson – or his half-brother Gifford Phillips. In which case, you would have had a castle named after you.

And Charlford would have been its name.

HOMESITE 25

THE GUARD – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-FIVE

To look at him, or rather the plate armor suit he left behind when finally his battles were over, you might not think him much a formidable adversary. This is not because of his stature – barely 5'6" – but due to that suit. An ungainly looking contraption, all metal and stiff. It might protect, but might it not also have virtually immobilized him?

You wonder this until your tour guide, perhaps Mr. Johnson, perhaps Alice, tells you his story. He would have been a wealthy man; suits of armor of this quality would cost the equivalent of a fine house or fancy motorcar of today. And it did indeed protect its wearer; able to deflect a crossbow bolt and even a musket shot, provided the range was not point blank. In fact, a knight of the mid fifteenth century would likely have been defeated, not by a sword, but rather by a concussive blow, from a mace or war hammer, which would have reverberated through the steel, breaking bones or hemorrhaging organs.

And about movement, surprise, the wearer of such an article would have been practicing since he was a teenaged boy and therefore able to run and scamper, even clamber up ladders and mount horses with marked agility. By contrast, this sixty pound or so suit would have actually been lighter than the protective equipment worn by modern day soldiers.

So then you look again. "No wonder he's still standing guard," you marvel.

HOMESITE 26

THE POINT – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-SIX

In the mid nineteen twenties, we have largely given up the brandishing of personal weapons, most certainly in our population centers. To us everyday citizens, such an old west and certainly older custom is outdated, uncivilized and unnecessary in today's modern era.

Yet, we've heard, up that long, three-mile road lies Charlford, the castle of Charles and Alice Johnson, where can be found a medieval cache of gruesome weaponry from a time long past – when knights on horseback could be depended upon to swing mighty swords in the defense of damsels and weaker mortals, a time in which one's very life could depend more on the sharpness of steel than wits.

In this castle, we hear, lies a door of spears, a well-preserved relic of that thankfully bygone time. We're told they have a Beefeater's spear, which would have been carried daily by one of the guards of the Tower of London. This door also holds two German beheading axes, apparently neither has been recently sharpened, we're relieved to report. There's a spear with a hook, no more description than that is available and a French weapon known as an Agincourt (pronounced az-en-core), presumably named after a battle during the Hundred Year War.

And we hear they have a suit of armor. Fitting, from the description of the castle's armament, it sounds as though we may need one.

HOMESITE 27

SNAKE EYES – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

At least you heard them, the warning they gave when passers-by passed too close. People from around these parts know it, that's for sure. Rattle, rattle, rattle. In English vernacular, it's called onomatopoeia – a word, which imitates the sound it is describing, “Crash.” “Bang.” “Boom.” “R-a-t-t-l-e.”

One would think you'd have preferred the first three to the fourth. Yet, as a five-year old boy, living in a castle high above nearly everything, the rattlesnakes were a curiosity and this curiosity was so convenient – the noisemakers nested in the rocks just in front of the house.

Your father, Charles A. Johnson, Sr. decided the snakes posed too much of a danger to you, your brother Gifford, and everyone else around here. Could you imagine a party guest stumbling into one of the nests, late at night, after one too many sidecars or gin gimlets? That wouldn't do. So he offered a bounty, one dollar a rattle. It was a good incentive, considering the going wage in 1927 was three to five dollars a day.

By the end of that year, forty-three rattles had been delivered and forty-three dollars paid. The snakes moved off, to a more remote part of the property. The grounds were safer, albeit somehow less appealing to a five-year old, who must have wondered what all the fuss was about. “Shucks,” you might have exclaimed, in a show of your own onomatopoeic mastery.

HOMESITE 28

GARGOUILLE – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

What word does the title of our story conjure up for you? Is it “throat,” from the original French, or rather something more mysterious and sinister? Gargoyle perhaps?

Burnham and Merrill Hoyt did indeed commission gargoyles to adorn the Johnson's new home. After all, it was a castle, and castles after all are generally adorned with the foreboding creatures.

And if you know your architecture – and your French, you'll also know that, because these were true gargoyles, their use was benign and purposeful, not to frighten off demons.

Remember gargoille? Derived from the Latin root gar – to swallow.

True gargoyles are simply ancient downspouts. Artfully designed to bring a bit of ornate style to the simple act of moving water away from a home or other building. And the Johnson's gargoyles did just that – as the rain fell or the snow melted, the ensuing water gathered and projected out of the sculpted mouths.

Oh, your memory is not failing you – you have indeed seen such creatures attached by great claws to the tops and sides of buildings, yet not part of any drainage system. But to add history to our history, these are called, in fact, chimera.

They, not mere gargoyles are the creatures, which indeed should cause you to guard your own gargoille.

HOMESITE 29

EVENT – STORY NUMBER TWENTY-NINE

“You are cordially invited to Charlford Castle...” began the invitation. Somehow, you really didn't need to read much further to imagine the sort of event to which you were being invited. Even if, for some unknown reason you were unfamiliar with Charles and Alice Johnson and their history, that word castle would have given something away. Indeed, the parties thrown at Charlford from 1926 on were the stuff of legend – as well as the stuff of Society Pages. Though the residence was a considerable distance from Denver, though in the winter, guests – all of whom would have been outfitted in some finery – were frequently required to wrestle chains onto their tires in order to navigate up the snow-covered Rattlesnake Road, an invitation to Charlford was worth nearly any inconvenience.

At the top of the hill, regardless of the season, the welcome surely would have been a warm one. And inside the front door, you never knew who you might meet – a mogul, a star, a political luminary from our country or another, even royalty. One thing was certain; the flash of a news photographer's camera would have captured your meeting.

The party went on at Charlford for over two decades, until spirited toasts to good health were no longer efficacious.

HOMESITE 30

SUNSET – STORY NUMBER THIRTY

Charles Alfred Johnson had come to Denver in 1891 with the goal of amassing a fortune, a feat, which he accomplished with seeming ease. He made a name for himself, excelled in business, married well, built a castle and raised a family.

And of course, played host at many a fine party.

Charles Johnson was a citizen of Denver and Colorado until 1949, when, at the urging of his doctors, he and the family moved to California, whose milder, sea-level climate was thought to be beneficial.

From then, yearly trips were made to Denver – and to Charlford Castle. On the occasion of his 1954 pilgrimage, the Rocky Mountain News wrote, “One of Denver's most distinguished former citizens and pioneers is back in town for his annual visit – with the twinkle undimmed in his eye...”

The former citizen and pioneer visited Charlford later that week, but it would be his last visit to the beloved place, and to Colorado. Charles Alfred Johnson, whose wife Alice had passed away five years earlier, died just two weeks after returning home to California, leaving behind the couple's three sons, a daughter, and a thousand stories, each one impressive as that castle on the hill. He was 86 years old.

HOMESITE 31

HOMESICK – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-ONE

Perhaps it wasn't a heart attack that really ended the life of Charles Johnson, but the news, brought to him shortly before his last visit to Denver, that Charlford was, for the first time in nearly thirty years, empty.

On Monday, June 7, 1954, at promptly 10:00 a.m., the doors to Charlford, which had previously been held for dignitaries and celebrities, opened to admit over four-hundred women, some with husbands and children in tow, to view and purchase Charlford's treasures.

The lacquered French bedroom set was sold to Mrs. John H. Rentz. The entire formal dining room, including the 15-piece Italian table and hand-carved chairs, went to Mr. and Mrs. Edwin A. Francis. Fine art dealers Marco Polo Galleries and Lemon Saks made short work of the living room.

Marquetry tables, Limoges French dinner plates, a French brass letter holder, a pair of hand-worked sterling table candelabra, a hand-painted Dresden lamp – even a cigarette case with the initials "C.A.J." were carted away by the eager buyers, the vast majority of whom had forever wondered what lay inside the castle on the hill.

And now they owned a piece of it.

By the time the sun had set that evening, everything was sold, with the exception of the one item not on the sale docket that day – the Saxon suit of armor. Standing guard, as ever.

HOMESITE 32

INTERMISSION – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-TWO

Time never stops. It neither tires nor lies down to rest. Its individual events have beginnings and endings, yet they overlap, creating a timeline of perpetual motion. Historically speaking, there is not ever what we would call a dull moment.

The same rules, of course, governed this place in the summer of 1954. All around, time marched on. The hillside was alive with flora – the Blue Gamma grasses, the Gambol oak, the juniper and wild plum, the wildflowers, back for another year's brilliant encore. All in their various stages of growth and blossom, soaking up the summer sun, and the rain.

The animals too kept a forward motion, bearing and raising young – Father Time's next generation. The raptors and so many other birds sailed overhead – catching glimpses of elk and mule deer. Bears, foxes and mountain lions hunted and played. Their lives were as they had always been, at least for the recent millennia. Peacefully evolving.

Nearing the top of the hill, seconds passed as well, as they always had – when chisels etched stone, when children frolicked loudly in the family pool, when glasses were raised in song, when trunks and suitcases closed for a final departure.

In the darkened Great Hall, at the top of each turret, under the Tudor roses of the dining room, time made its passing in absolute silence, filling the space between one owner – and the next.

HOMESITE 33

THE SECRET – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-THREE

Most all of us have been given information in confidence. Secrets of various sizes. Sometimes we have been simply asked to keep such things to ourselves. Other occasions – and other secrets have called for greater assurances in return for the information – and we have been threatened with punishment of one form or another should the secret escape the lips.

But how many of us have ever actually been compensated in return for our silence? Yes, these are the promises, which result from the most interesting secrets, the ones, which cause the imagination to run wild.

Just such a payment was offered to protect just such a secret, back in 1954, to the eventual second owner of the castle on the hill. She was in the process of a divorce from her husband, a man by the name of Merritt Ruddock. Mr. Ruddock, fearing his ex-wife would divulge her accounting of their divorce, offered to purchase any property she wanted, provided it lay west of the Mississippi.

The castle known as Charlford was, of course, the property she chose.

And so, with her two young boys and her secrets, the woman made preparations to assume the post of lady of the manor. She would begin an entirely new chapter in the history of this place. Her name was Mildred Montague Genevieve Kimball.

HOMESITE 34

TWEET – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR

She had at least two names by which you might have comfortably referred to her. "Mildred, let's go out and play," would have certainly sounded just fine. Or then again, "Genevieve, are you there?" That rolled off the tongue quite easily, didn't it?

But neither of these monikers – and most assuredly not "Montague" was likely ever used by friends of this particular young girl. Even though her mother was a former Italian countess and her father, a proud graduate of the most formal West Point.

No, had you been her giggly ten-year-old friend around about 1924, you would have called out something along the lines of, "Tweet, can we please have our ice cream now?" In fact, even though the question or statement in quotes would have been different for everyone, everyone called Tweet, Tweet. It was a nickname, of course, since it didn't appear on her birth certificate. But then again, it was something more, given her father, the aforementioned Army officer, had bestowed it before the young Miss Kimball's birth.

And so her name was Tweet Kimball, from the very beginning – in fact before the very beginning. And once you get to know her and her feisty spirit, at least through words, you'll begin to realize why Mildred, Genevieve or Montague would never have done at all.

HOMESITE 35

ART HISTORY – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-FIVE

The universe of art in general has a history, of course. And each individual piece of painting and sculpture and what have you has a storied past as well. It would follow then, that each and every lover of the arts; each scholar and collector, also possesses a historical accounting of his or her own experience with the art world and its intricacies.

Young Tweet Kimball's history among the arts began early.

She was, as you may already have supposed, the daughter of well-to-do parents. Father was an Army officer, West Point Class of 1907; mother was descendant of Italian royalty. They lived together in Chattanooga, Tennessee among land, privilege and a great many valuable antiques. And while her friends and schoolmates may have also lived among such treasures, Tweet was required to be more than respectful of the furniture; she was expected, over time, to know each and every piece by style and period.

Tweet's more formal education took place at Bryn Mawr, where she majored in art history. College was followed by marriage to, as you know, Mr. Merritt Ruddock, who at the time was serving as a diplomat in Great Brittan. It was during this time that art student made the transition to art collector, and Mrs. Ruddock amassed a sizeable and impressive collection.

Now, where to put it all?

HOMESITE 36

CHEROKEE – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-SIX

They called themselves The Principal People. They hunted, fished and farmed. They ruled themselves democratically. They aided the American colonists in the fight against the British and taught their land's newcomers how to grow food and survive harsh winters.

They were Cherokee.

And as Tweet Kimball made her journey across the country from her native Tennessee, she brought the memory of those proud people along with her to the castle on the hill.

Tweet changed the name of the residence from Charlford to Cherokee Castle. She named the peak upon which the castle laid, Cherokee Mountain. She did both of these things in honor of the tribe, which long ago had been displaced from the land its citizens had called home.

Now, at least in name, the Cherokee, whom cherished this country's land and its bounty for centuries before we arrived here, had a new home, the owner of which would write a new chapter – and ultimately guarantee the name Cherokee would never be lost to history.

HOMESITE 37

THE TOUR – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-SEVEN

Welcome, honored visitor, to Cherokee Castle. Oh we know; even though the name has changed, this is not your first visit here. You've traveled up this road before. Past its twists and turns, long-vacated homesteads and memories, to stand where you do now, atop this magnificent promontory. You're no stranger to this architecture either – a modern tip of the hat to Scottish castles, centuries old and venerable – aging, yet ageless. You've heard of the rattlesnakes that once made their home right there, where you just walked, in fact. And of course, you've been inside these great castle walls, the guest of Charles and Alice, many, many times.

But this is Tweet's home now. And many things have changed, namely nearly everything in the way of furnishings and art. She's quite the collector you know. And she's amassed a number of impressive treasures, all of which add to the history of this place – a place, which seems to have been built specifically to house such antiquities.

And now, upon the occasion of your return, Mrs. Kimball would like very much for you to have your own private tour of her new home. Your docent will be Tweet's butler and friend for nearly two decades, Mr. John Lake.

HOMESITE 38

MR. LAKE – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-EIGHT

He had been formally trained in hospitality and served as the Food and Beverage Controller at the famous Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. It had been an orderly career. Then John Lake met Tweet Kimball.

At first, John tended bar for Tweet's frequent soirées – he enjoyed polite verbal exchanges with the guests, but the lady of the house preferred silent service. So as John tells it, “We had a silent battle over that one for a while.” It was Tweet actually, who started them speaking again, one late night after yet another party, when she admitted, “Oh, I just love you John.” From then on, John became Tweet's right hand man. His duties ranged from the ordinary – changing a light bulb or coaxing Tweet's cat Tiger from her hiding places, she didn't enjoy being put away before parties, but John had a knack – to the eccentric, such as carrying out Tweet's custom of raising the flag of a foreign guest's home country.

One night, John was readying for the arrival of a group of British art conservators who were coming to the castle to thank Tweet for taking part in their exhibition of landscape paintings. It was a terrible blizzard, and the group called to offer their condolences – their vehicle would be unable to forge through the snow. So Tweet sent John – down Cherokee Mountain, into an abandoned Denver, to the Brown Palace – and back. It was 10:00 pm before the guests arrived, 2:00 am by the time John ferried them home, telling stories of Tweet and castle life all the way. And to John, the only strange thing about this story, is that it isn't strange at all.

HOMESITE 39

PITHOS – STORY NUMBER THIRTY-NINE

Other than the Rhyolite and the petrified wood – and the earth of course, these are the oldest things here, positioned in front of the castle's main entrance to set the tone for the history lesson found inside.

Each is called a pithos, pithoi if you're referring to both of them at the same time. They're more than 3000 years old and were brought to America by Tweet's Uncle, Alexander Kirk, after having been excavated in Crete, sometime in the 1940s.

In ancient Greece, pithoi were known to be very large storage jars. They were nearly as a rule, ceramic, a material whose properties were perfect for repelling dirt, water, animal life and as you can see, time. This impermeability was a great benefit, given the vessels were used to contain precious commodities – grains, seeds, wine and oil.

If we were the leaders of Crete, or the owners of a palace, a thousand years before the beginning of the current era, we would likely have decreed that our pithoi and their valuable stores be placed in great rows, collectively refereed to as storage magazines. Were we to be overrun by enemies however, this practical decision could have resulted in our downfall, since a torch dropped into the oil from a ruptured container would have easily set off a chain reaction, burning our home to the ground.

With that, let's go inside.

HOMESITE 40

SAINT RUBENS – STORY NUMBER FORTY

Stop if you will here in the entrance hall and gaze upon the work of an artistic genius. It's Saint Peter by Peter Paul Rubens, one of the great painters of the seventeenth century, and among the best-known Flemish masters.

Rubens, who in addition to Peter Paul was known as Pieter Pauwel, Pedro Pablo and Petrus Paulus, depending on whom was marveling at his work, was not only an incredibly prolific painter, but also a humanist scholar, art collector and diplomat. He was even worthy of knighthood – twice, having been dubbed by the swords of King Philip IV of Spain and Charles I of England.

This particular piece, an original to be sure, is known as a “study.” Which means it was a practice painting, one that would most likely have been included in a larger work. It was completed in 1613, during which time, Rubens was living in Antwerp, turning out, with the help of his apprentices, a staggering number of paintings for church and state as well as private patrons, in the home which is today a museum known as the Rubenshuis.

While this piece would certainly not fall into the category, Rubens, by virtue of his penchant for painting voluptuous women, inspired the term, Rubenesque.

Did you know; the word voluptuous is derived from the Latin, voluptas, meaning pleasure? And it would be ours to guide you into the Great Hall.

HOMESITE 41

THE VIEW – STORY NUMBER FORTY-ONE

Tweet Kimball was indeed, an heiress. She led what most if not all people would describe as a life of great privilege. A fortuitous accident of birth.

And as such, it would have been easy enough for the young Mildred Montague Genevieve to bask in the warmth of wealth – acceptable even. Yet, as you almost certainly discovered, long before you stood here in front of her portrait, Tweet had work to do, not in some bastion of modern aristocracy, but way out west, and out of doors. Somehow, the Colorado mountains must have gotten word to her, far away in Washington D.C., where she was living in 1947 at the time this lovely egg tempura was commissioned. The wildlife, who, although they will never know the woman or her deeds, will live here peacefully – and safely – forever. The wildflowers, wild oak and grasses will never be disturbed atop her, and now our, mountain.

All will be as all has ever been. It was foretold somehow, in this painting of our benefactor. For years in advance of her arrival here, she had the artist place the Rocky Mountains and this area's native flowers behind her. She knew the place she loved. She must have already known what she would do here and just how very long her work would last.

That's what visionaries do, you know.

HOMESITE 42

KINDRED – STORY NUMBER FORTY-TWO

Why does an art collector collect? Well let's see, the sheer love of art would be one reason. And don't forget investment, which is frequently a consideration. But also, many times, the buyer feels a personal connection to the piece. Perhaps the frame holds more of a mirror than a canvas.

In Cherokee Castle's Great Hall, the painting of Elizabeth Stuart, Elizabeth of Bohemia certainly would have fulfilled the first two reasons listed above. It is a beautiful piece, painted in 1616 by the great Dutch artist, Gerrit Honthorst, and as such, has great value. But learn a bit more and you might well understand how the woman who purchased the painting felt a kinship to the woman in the painting.

She was born in 1596, into aristocracy, the eldest daughter of James I of England. She excelled at writing. And mastered French and Italian with seeming ease, an eager student of the world. When she married Frederick V, Elector of the Palatinate, she caused an almost immediate stir by steadfastly refusing to accept certain provincial customs – she loved her husband, and was at the same time, very much her own person.

Frederick and Elizabeth were crowned King and Queen of Bohemia – today's Czech Republic – in the fall of 1619. But war and betrayal resulted in their exile by the spring, which is why Elizabeth is sometimes referred to as The Winter Queen.

Yet, through this and many other challenges, Elizabeth remained true to herself and her beliefs, which, is why, like few women of her time, she continues to intrigue, just as someone else we know.

HOMESITE 43

THE CHAIRS – STORY NUMBER FORTY-THREE

What happens when there are three people, and only room for two? Oh, be sure, this is no children's game, during which the music suddenly stops, and the contestants scramble madly for a place to sit. Although the story does involve more than a bit of madness – and these two chairs, exact copies of the ones David Rizzio (say “Rit-see-o) presented to his employer, Mary, Queen of Scots. The Bloody Chairs, as they became known.

Rizzio was hired to be the private secretary of the Queen, but Mary's husband, the young, unpopular, frequently violent King Consort of Scotland, Henry Stuart, or Lord Darnley to which he was more frequently referred, suspected more than paperwork was being shared by Rizzio and the Queen. Lord Darnley's jealousy culminated in the murder of Rizzio, in the presence of the pregnant Mary. And then there were two, Darnley and Mary reconciled, their son was born, the future King James VI of Scotland.

Then, the music started again. Lord Darnley continued to offend important, would-be supporters. A practice, which ended on the night of February 10, 1567 when the home in which Darnley was a guest, exploded. Evidence indicates Lord Darnley somehow escaped the conflagration, only to be caught and strangled outside the home.

Anyone care to have a seat?

HOMESITE 44

EVERMORE – STORY NUMBER FORTY-FOUR

People are fond of saying that certain things run in families, and rightfully so, this is frequently true. Physical features – blond hair, blue eyes, height or the lack thereof, Rubenesque physiques – these certainly can all run in families.

Aptitudes also run in families – an artistic talent for instance, as is evidenced here in this small grouping from Tweet's collection. Note the marble bust. The woman is Tweet's great grandmother, Mary Caroline Wilson Allan. Mary Caroline's mother – Tweet's great-grandmother, Caroline Davis Wilson, sculpted the piece.

See the portrait behind the bust? That's Mary Caroline as well, captured when she was seventeen, by her brother Buckingham Wilson, who by the way, was tragically killed at the age of nineteen when a falling lump of coal struck him in the temple as he walked down a Cincinnati street. He was Tweet's great uncle.

To the left of Mary Caroline's portrait is one of her husband, Patterson Allen – Patterson's brother showed quite a bit of family aptitude for the arts as well, he was Edgar Allen Poe. Yet the two were but half brothers – Patterson's mother and father had raised the orphaned Edgar from infancy, which begs the question, could Edgar's talents have been awakened by his adoptive family? Or were their talents awakened by him?

HOMESITE 45

REMEMBER – STORY NUMBER FORTY-FIVE

Love is one, if not the most celebrated of all human emotions. It buoys us when given, allowing even the harshest of hardships to be endured. To love another unselfishly is perhaps our greatest endeavor – we may not think such a feat possible, yet even so, we strive to accomplish the seemingly impossible.

Selflessness aside, we each wish for ourselves, a great love, the likes of which Queen Victoria shared with her husband, Prince Albert.

Albert and Victoria were cousins, which at the time, would not have precluded them from marrying. In fact, a marriage between the two was exactly what their uncle, King Leopold I of Belgium wished for. He arranged the introduction, and from there, nature took its course. Victoria was immediately smitten with Albert, writing to her uncle, “...He possesses every quality that could be desired to render me perfectly happy.”

They were married on February 10, 1840 at St. James Palace. For nearly twenty-one years, Victoria and Albert, who himself would eventually earn the title of Prince Consort – the only husband of a British Queen to be granted the honor, lived and loved. Albert succumbed to typhoid fever and died on December 14, 1861.

The country, whose populace had been largely critical of Albert, descended into a deep state of mourning in sympathy for Victoria, who wore black for the rest of her life.

Out of respect for the Queen, the frames surrounding any painting of the Royal Family were painted black, which is how Tweet found the portraits of William III and Queen Mary II.

HOMESITE 46

WILD BLUE – STORY NUMBER FORTY-SIX

Here we stand, on the terrace, just off the Great Hall. As we look out upon the land, we see masterpieces are abundant here as well. They're considerably older than the ones inside however; nature's skills were developed long before those of women and men.

If you have patience, a steady hand and a good quality pair of binoculars, you can witness a number of the smaller living pieces of art out there. These exhibitions take place around houses – bluebird houses to be more precise. All in all, scattered here and there between the property lines of the castle, there are two-hundred small homes, each of which offers welcome and safe haven to these native Coloradoans.

It's called the Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring Project. The goal of this endeavor and others like it in the area is to establish bluebird trails that will eventually span all of Colorado, east to west, north to south. These trails will help the birds recover their numbers, which have dwindled due to habitat loss and competition from non-native species.

The nest boxes are placed at least 300 feet from one another, due to the fact that bluebirds are highly territorial creatures. They're like the people out here, fond of undisturbed space.

HOMESITE 47

THE FEAST – STORY NUMBER FORTY-SEVEN

A dining room is a place where you expect to find gastronomical delights, especially the dining room of a castle. But the dining room at Cherokee Castle was and is a feast for the eyes as well. What might you notice first? Possibly the centerpiece of any dining room, and the place upon which the centerpiece resides – the table. This one, along with the chairs, were crafted in 1905 – Chippendale reproduction

Look above the fireplace, the tile is Portuguese. The caption, translated, reads, “A sidewalk along the River Batejo.” Then look up, to the ceiling. Notice the stone was towed over with plaster, reflecting European building techniques of the 1550s or so. And there, where the molding ribs meet, the Tudor roses – you know that story, don’t you (if not, refer back to story #21)?

Charles II is the subject of the portrait hanging over the sideboard. Notice he’s wearing a blue ribbon over his armor – it’s the Order of the Garter, England’s highest and possibly oldest order of Knighthood. Charles wasn’t old at all at the time, just 21 as captured here.

The china closet is laden with treasure, Venetian blown glass from the eighteenth century, Waterford crystal, china made by Spode and Dresden, Meissen china from the 1700s. All exquisite, and nearly enough to make a guest forget all about food. But in Tweet’s dining room, there was always room for a story. Make that eight generations’ worth.

HOMESITE 48

GREAT, GREAT – STORY NUMBER FORTY-EIGHT

“Great-great-great-great-great Grandfather.” And “Great-great-great-great-great Grandmother.”

That’s how Tweet would have referred to the original owners of this 1703 Queen Anne marquetry china cabinet. Including the most recent Mrs. Kimball, the previous owner of this castle, the china cabinet had been in the homes of eight, yes, eight generations of Kimballs.

At dinner parties, under Tweet’s reign, she would tell guests about the long family history of this particular heirloom, adding, “I wish it could talk, just imagine the stories it could tell.”

Indeed, eight generations of stories – three-hundred years of tales – of being created in the Queen Anne style, inspired by the great monarch, whose reign began just one year before the cabinet was built; through wars both revolutionary and civil; standing by during the age of slavery and its thankful abolition; witnessing quietly the rise of a new nation; being moved countless times and being admired by countless people; of being surrounded at various times by captains of business, titans of society and philanthropy, even members of the royal family; and finally finding its way to what may well be its final home, on a hill, in a castle, in this very dining room.

Great-great-great-great stories.

HOMESITE 49

ROYALTY – STORY NUMBER FORTY-NINE

It was the first time a British Protocol Officer had ever entered the castle. But there he was, instructing Tweet and the others just what would and would not occur during the visit of Princess Anne. The place settings would be measured with a ruler. No one would speak to the Princess unless addressed by Her Highness. She would be seated when served her meal – and served only by men wearing gloves – no buffet for a Princess and no skin showing below the neck of any server. Each course would begin when she lifted her utensil and end when she lowered it. There would be a helicopter, ambulance, fire truck with crew and police on the premises in the case of any emergency.

Tweet informed all her guests of the rules of etiquette and drafted appropriate conversationalists to join the Princess in the dining room while the other sixty-five invitees would dine buffet-style in the Great Hall. In the end, they decided, curtsying would be optional.

In the end, it was a lovely evening. Tweet ordered small British flags and gave them to as many friends and locals as she could draft before posing them, waving their flags on either side of Rattlesnake Road as the Princess’ procession passed. All the guests put on their best clothing and behavior and not a single reputation was sullied. The Princess herself was wonderfully gracious, and reportedly, much more attractive in person. And not one of the emergency personnel was needed.

All in all, a perfect evening.

HOMESITE 50

THE CHEF – STORY NUMBER FIFTY

The woman who prepared the meal on the evening of Princess Anne’s visit – in fact the woman who delighted the palate of every party and dinner guest at the castle for more than twenty-three years, is Ms. Meg Anderson. If Tweet was local royalty, Meg was the Royal Caterer.

The two met, shortly after a tea attended by Tweet, during which she complained she could never get any good help up at the castle. The woman to whom Tweet was declaring her woes just happened to be a friend of Meg’s. “You must meet my friend,” the woman said. Tweet, not one for dilly-dallying, phoned Meg that very afternoon, and they met, where, after a brief overview of credentials and credits, Tweet declared, “Well, let’s get down to meat and potatoes.”

As Meg tells it, Tweet seemed to everyone to be a naturally adept hostess, when in fact, she’d been in training since she was sixteen, when Tweet’s mother put her in charge of every aspect of every gathering at their Chattanooga home. Tweet knew how to treat her guests, and the people who served them. “She was very thoughtful,” Meg recounts. “She would call me and say, ‘Well Meg, I have a thought for a party, which of these three dates will work best or you?’”

One night, very late, while John the butler was braving a blizzard to return a group of guests to their hotel, Tweet recognized how exhausted Meg appeared and suggested she sleep in the castle that night. Meg resisted, Tweet insisted and whom do you think won the point? That night, Meg was Tweet’s guest, in the very bedroom her mother used to occupy.

HOMESITE 51

NORTH SOUTH – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-ONE

If one were to acquire a great deal of land, let's say a million acres for argument's sake. Then, at some later date, a war broke out, the outcome of which could cause that very land to be absconded, what would one do?

The following story offers a wily solution to the conundrum, and all the better, it's true.

Richard Burleigh Kimball, immortalized in this canvas on the dining room wall, lived at the time of the Civil War. This lawyer, author, land prospector and relative of our dear Tweet had happened upon forecasts pointing to Waco Texas as a future boom area, yet Richard was happy living north of the Mason-Dixon Line. So he made a deal with a surveyor friend, the southerner would do the legwork and the northerner would finance the deal.

The arrangement was immediately jeopardized when the Civil War erupted in 1861, but as the states fought, the men cooperated. Kimball and his partner drafted two deeds, each naming one man owner of the land. If the south had won the war, the surveyor would have produced his deed. Instead, four years of fighting culminated when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, ending the war and slavery in this country.

Richard Kimball lay claim to the land, and gifted the friend his share of the bargain – a half-million acres in the United States of America.

Next, the Churchill Room.

HOMESITE 52

CHURCHILL – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-TWO

Hold this simply-framed photograph in your hands. Careful, it's extremely valuable, as you can surmise from the signature, Yousuf Karsh. The subject is unmistakable – Winston Churchill, standing, with a look of utter challenge on his face – it's said the photographer, Karsh as he was known to the world, had snatched the cigar from Churchill's hand just moments before the shutter was activated. And this was the result.

The photo was taken while Churchill was in Fulton, Missouri where he received an honorary degree during graduation ceremonies at Westminster College. He was introduced by Missouri resident and famous American, President Harry S. Truman, before presenting a cautionary speech entitled *Sinews of Peace*, an oratory many now refer to as the Iron Curtain Speech since it included the first mention of the phrase, which, from that point forward defined the Soviet Union and the countries it sought to influence.

"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow."

Days later, Joseph Stalin replied to Mr. Churchill's speech in challenging fashion, essentially comparing Churchill's remarks to Hitler's views. According to many historians, this exchange marked the beginning of the Cold War.

HOMESITE 53

CONSERVATORY – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-THREE

Most of us need only hear the word, conservatory, to conjure a perfect mental picture – a room with a glass roof and walls, used as a sun parlor, a place for growing things. And did you know; the familiar English word is rooted in another with a slightly different meaning, conservatorium, from *conservare*, or "to preserve."

We wonder if Tweet's Latin was fluent enough to distill the subtlety – you might think so when you view *Awesome Lament*, a bronze sculpture by Tweet's friend and fellow nature lover, Bill Duncan. The piece captures a moment between two coyotes – some of Tweet's favorite animals – as one howls and the other rests.

Bill Duncan sculpted many pieces you'll find in the castle, either commissioned by Tweet or given to her. This one is here, in the Conservatory, as a faithful reminder.

Remember the wildlife. Remember the wildlife.

It was Tweet's mantra, as it is ours. Which reminds us and all the people who visit this castle, whether for a tour or a memorable wedding or some other festive gathering – this whole place really is a conservatory in the original meaning of the word.

HOMESITE 54

MOTHER'S DAY – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-FOUR

Tweet and her mother were one name apart from one another – mother was Mildred Montague, daughter was Mildred Montague Genevieve. And that was about all that separated them. The two were extremely close, and the elder Mrs. Kimball lived here, in her suite, in her daughter's castle, surrounded by generations' worth of memorabilia.

In the bedroom, should you visit, you'll find an homage to Mildred's husband, Tweet's father, Richard Huntington Kimball. As you may recall, Mr. Kimball was a member of the West Point Class of 1907. Along with a fine portrait of the man, painted in 1947 by Peter Cook, you'll find the cavalry saber, pats, flask and other items used by the young officer.

A mother would want memories of her daughter's wedding close by as well. In the small niches of her bedroom walls, sit two Chinese Ivory figures. They were given to Tweet and Merritt on their wedding day by one of Tweet's bridesmaids, and her roommate at Bryn Mawr, Betsy Pillsbury.

There's a portrait of Tweet, which captured the then twenty-six year-old resident of Richmond. And photos of mother and daughter.

Inside the Venetian gold leaf, glass top table, treasures from the mid-eighteen hundreds, which belonged to Tweet's mother's mother – A silver chatelaine from 1844, complete with three small cases and two potpourri holders. If you take a tour of the castle, your docent will describe this as an 1844 version of the fanny pack.

Don't be surprised if, when you leave this part of the castle, you feel compelled to remember your own mother.

HOMESITE 55

CHARLES II – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-FIVE

Charles slept here. Charles II, King of England, King of Scots and King of Ireland retired in this very bed, designed and built in 1674 and given to Tweet some centuries later, by a friend whose ancestors had commissioned the lovely and royal piece of furniture.

You'll notice several interesting attributes – first, the length, or rather lack thereof. Yet Charles was known to stand 6' 2". The explanation is simple – and seemingly strange – enough. Back in the late seventeenth century, Charles would have slept nearly sitting up, leaning back against the bolsters. What could have been the reason? Attempting to avoid digestive problems after typically late and heavy meals? Not wanting to lie horizontally, assuming the posture of the dead? Simple habit? Opinions differ, but it seems the practice was as natural to them as sleeping with a pillow is to us.

Let your eyes drift up to the top of the headboard, a flashlight might come in handy as well as you glance the hand-carved date, "1674."

Finally, you might wonder about all the pineapples, worked into the curtains surrounding the bed. It was somewhat of a royal fruit back in the day – notoriously difficult to grow in Europe, therefore prized. So much so Charles posed for a painting in 1675 as the Royal Gardener, John Rose presented him with the first pineapple grown in England.

HOMESITE 56

SCOTTY – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-FOUR

In the little hallway, just past the powder room, you'll notice dogs, quite a few dogs. Specifically, Scotty dogs. Their frenetic energy momentarily halted in the etchings by Marguerite Kirnsy. Although Tweet had many dogs during her decades at the castle, the Scotties were her favorites. She'd befriended a breeder back east and always had two Scotties at a time – the black ones always had two names. The first, an individual name and the second was a name, which each black version of the breed shared with all the others, past and future. Well, we may as well say it; it was Witchy Bitchy.

Tweet treated her Scotties – all twenty-four cumulatively, as though they were family. This meant, while people in the castle may have had to mind the furniture, the Scotties minded nearly nothing. They sat – and shed where they pleased. In fact, the story goes that one of Tweet's white Scotties had a fondness for a very comfortable chair in the Churchill Room. So she sat there often. Then, one evening, as Tweet was playing host to a very formal gathering, Meg Anderson, Tweet's long-time personal caterer (see story #49) noticed a woman, rising from the very chair, her black gown covered in white Scotty hair. Perhaps, we think, that particular white dog was looking to earn a colorful name herself.

HOMESITE 57

TROPHY – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-SEVEN

There's one room in the homes of most people, which occupies a special place in the owner's heart. To a passionate cook, that room might be the kitchen. To an Oenologist, the wine cellar would be the certain favorite. An amateur filmmaker could almost certainly be frequently found in his or her home theater.

A breeder of champion beef cattle could quite possibly call this favorite room, as Tweet Kimball did, the Ranch Room. It isn't as large as many of the other rooms in the castle. It isn't named after a celebrated political figure or member of the Royal Family, such as the Churchill or Charles II Room. But to Tweet, this room did commemorate celebrities. Their names, among others were Minotaur, Little Governor and Tallahassee. And in the cattle world, they were indeed royalty – Santa Gertrudis – the name even has a monarchical quality. In fact, Tweet's Santa Gertrudis started life on the King Ranch situated in the South Texas brush country.

The Ranch Room was special to Tweet, not simply because she introduced the Santa Gertrudis to Colorado – but also due to the fact that she introduced prize-winning Santa Gertrudis to Colorado, as evidenced by the floor to ceiling awards earned at the National Western Stock Show.

These cattle were a part of Tweet's life for forty-five years. And as such, generated more than a their share of stories, several of which we'll share with you here.

HOMESITE 58

CATTLE – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-EIGHT

If you had been there, on Tweet's Cherokee Ranch, one fine, sunny day in the late 1950s (one seems to know the exact date, but we're assuming it was sunny), you might have thought, for a little while, that the Santa Gertrudis were not actually ever going to arrive. Point of fact, they had technically arrived – twenty-nine cows and two bulls, hand selected by Tweet, loaded up and shipped straight to the ranch. Where, had you been there, you'd have found them. Still on the truck. You'd have seen the ranch foreman standing there, hands likely on his hips, head likely shaking from one side to the other – that's because he was frustrated and scared out of his wits.

He was afraid of the Santa Gertrudis. He told Tweet unloading them would be a death sentence. And he was right, in a way. But it was his job's life that ended that day – Tweet fired him on the spot. Then, she strode up to the castle and informed her butler at the time, an Italian gentleman whose name has also been lost to history – although we're certain his disposition was sunny, to get on his jeans.

And so he and Tweet unloaded the cattle themselves.

Had you been there, you'd have been able to report that thankfully, no one died getting the job done

And so it began.

HOMESITE 59

STORM – STORY NUMBER FIFTY-NINE

Any sentence that ends "...of biblical proportions" makes quite an impressive statement. "A locust swarm of biblical proportions," "A fire of biblical proportions," "A storm of biblical proportions."

We'll expound on that last one.

The year was 1965 when it hit Douglas County. A storm of incredible ferocity. It destroyed four major bridges as the tumult deposited debris everywhere. Twelve feet of topsoil was flushed from the fields. We'll give you a moment to grieve, from the floor of wherever you happen to be sitting, up twelve feet in the air, as you attempt to visualize just how much instant erosion must have occurred.

Right next door to Cherokee Ranch, one of Tweet's neighbors lost forty cows and every one of their calves to the storm. But here, high on a hilltop, safe from the raging waters, stood the Santa Gertrudis. Certainly annoyed, but not at risk. How?

The Santa Gertrudis were smart. The bulls, each of whom commanded single sire herds, shepherded their cows and offspring up to higher ground as the storm took its toll. And they kept ascending as the water did, until the rain finally stopped and the creek receded.

In the end, with not a bit of help from any human, not a single head was lost.

HOMESITE 60

REIGN – STORY NUMBER SIXTY

Neither Mother Nature nor the haranguing of naysayers could dampen Tweet's enthusiastic stewardship of the Santa Gertrudis. Indeed, she was the northern queen of the breed. As you'll remember, the Santa Gertrudis originated in the brush country of south Texas, where the air was warm and the native grasses grew thick and sweet. The critics said the cattle couldn't be successfully introduced into Colorado's colder climate, but Tweet's bulls and cows didn't really have time to listen to such negatives – they were too busy adding to their numbers.

Tweet founded the Rocky Mountain Santa Gertrudis Breeder's Association and exported her indirect progeny all over the world – Taiwan, Australia, South America, South Africa and Canada are all Santa Gertrudis country – and countries, thanks to Tweet.

She had a little help along the way – from the cattle themselves. Minotaur, Little Governor and Tallahassee – two bulls and a cow, were Tweet's favorites. They're memorialized alongside the drive up to the castle, where a huge boulder and bronze plaque mark the spot of their burial.

Fifty years after their ancestors first terrorized Tweet's former ranch foreman, the most current generations of Santa Gertrudis roam Cherokee Ranch. Today, the herd serves to bolster the ranch's educational outreach activities and continue Queen Tweet's cattle monarchy.

HOMESITE 61

MASTER – STORY NUMBER SIXTY-ONE

As we leave the Ranch Room, have a look through the glass door into the octagonal library. You'll notice Tweet had a fondness for art of the literary sort as well as painting and sculpture – there are 2,000 volumes housed here, nearly all of which are first editions, authored by Charles Dickens, John James Audubon, William Shakespeare and many others.

In Tweet's sitting room, you'll discover thirteen original drawings by Sir Christopher Wren. He was the seventeenth century's greatest English architect, in addition to being quite an accomplished designer and astronomer.

That secretary was built in 1690, during the reign of William III and Mary II, King and Queen of England. Interestingly, theirs was the only reign in British history in which both husband and wife had equal powers. Before, and after, the generally powerless spouse of the monarch was simply referred to as a conso.

Which brings us to the Master Bedroom, the place where Tweet slept and doubtless dreamed – of grand cattle and adventures, of centuries of art and antiquities, of every one of her twenty-four Scotties and of course, of the people who visited this place over more than four decades.

Let's meet some of them, shall we?

HOMESITE 62

GUEST LIST- STORY NUMBER SIXTY-TWO

Let's imagine Tweet had one last party at her beloved castle. And the following represented the guest list. All these people had dined and danced, laughed and conversed here before. And now, they're getting back together again, to raise their glasses to this amazing woman and her incredible legacy. Oh you're invited as well. Feel free to mingle, see whom you know and whom you would enjoy having the pleasure of meeting.

- Crown Prince of Nepal, The Duke of Argyll HH Prince Gyanendra, now the King
- Colorado Governors Roy Romer & Richard Lamb
- Sir John Miller
- Dr. Marjorie McIntosh, CU Professor
- Harold and Wei Mandel
- Diarmid Campbell
- Ms. Leslie Oldfield, Mayor of Alice Springs Australia
- Katie, Joanne and Bill Sinclair
- Winthrop Rockefeller
- Nat Merrill & Louise Sherman of Opera Colorado
- Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands
- Douglas Johnson, the artist who painted many pastels of Tweet
- Joe & Elizabeth Blake of Mission Viejo
- Australian Ambassador Dalrymple
- Lawrence Phipps III
- Ranch Foreman Will Duran - he and his wife were married here
- Christopher Plummer & Tammie Grimes also married here
- Lord and Lady Dodds - Parker
- Dan Ritchie
- Father Todd
- Arendt Hopeman & Ching from Hong Kong
- Milton Friedman
- Jim McDonald of Queensland Australia
- Lewis Sharp, Director of the Denver Art Museum
- Ambassadors of Yugoslavia and China
- Princess Anne & Princess Alexandra
- Rathbone Falk
- The Duke of Argyll

HOMESITE 63

FAREWELL, HELLO- STORY NUMBER SIXTY-THREE

Tweet Kimball believed in permanence. You could see it in the art she collected - some was hundreds of years old, some was thousands - and if properly cared for, all these treasures could last an indefinitely long time.

Her cattle, the Santa Gertrudis, offer up another fine example of Tweet's belief in the enduring. They've been here for fifty years, they'll stay here, generation after generation, as much a part of this land's history as John Blunt's homestead and the blue gamma grasses and all of nature's wonders.

Tweet was a wise woman. Wise enough to know that for a person to have permanence - at least a person's ideas and ideals - that person, herself in this case, would have to think ahead. And Tweet thought far, far ahead.

In 1996, three years before her death, Tweet Kimball created a conservation easement in cooperation with Douglas County in order to guarantee this land would be protected in perpetuity - a very formal synonym for permanently. In addition to the land, Tweet donated the castle and everything inside to the newly created entity, Cherokee Ranch & Castle Foundation.

In all, today there are nearly 3,200 acres of unspoiled land. It's inhabited by wild creatures and a very human dream - one that Tweet started and we all care for, now - and forever.

HOMESITE 64

SEQUEL-THE FINAL STORY...FOR NOW

This story began, appropriately enough, with a bang, thus beginning a thirty-six million year history. And counting.

Prehistoric people called this place their home - they lived and hunted and survived here. They gave way to the homesteaders, who put up houses and put down roots - to help hold firm against changing times.

A man and his wife continued the story and created a symbol here, atop the mountain, a castle built of imagination as much as stone. What they started, Tweet continued. She gave the tale color and an unlimited future.

And now it's your turn. Which is why we've left the last page of this book blank, a place for your story. What brought you? What did you hope to find? What do you see when you think of tomorrows spent here, on ancient land you now call your own?

This is truly your place now - as in the physical, the rocks, the trees, the limitless views. It's also your place in history, beside John Craig and Marquis Victor. You'll build here, as John Blunt and John Flower did. You'll gaze up at Charles and Alice Johnson's castle and think of it as partly yours. You may even entertain your own guests there, as Tweet did, in such style for so many years.

You'll leave your mark. On paper. On time. And we look very much forward to that. Welcome.





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