

## Meet Papa Holzwarth

In Germany in 1865, John Gottlieb Holzwarth was born to Johan and Christina Holzwarth of Rudersberg, Germany in Bavaria – they lived at Zum Hof.

Johnnie's words: "My father came to this country in '78; in other words it was shortly after the Franco-Prussian war. My uncle was old enough to be conscripted into the army, and the parents didn't want him to go. My father was 14 years of age. They were bakers to the king, in this little area where the prince was, and they had enough money to send their older boy to America. But my father, his passage was paid for by a St. Louis baker. He was "bound in" to pay this passage. But he was only 14 years of age. He arrived at St. Louis and went to work for this man and I don't know how long, it wasn't too many months, he abused my father, he'd play tricks on him. In those days they had a paddle, you know, to pull the bread out, and he'd take that hot paddle and pat my father with it, you know. And of course he didn't have socks or shoes. And it finally made my dad mad, and he just run away."

"And from St. Louis, I don't know exactly how, he wound up in Texas. My father in his day saw 28 men killed in fights. Shot. He said kid life was anything you could get, each town you went into, the saloon was the place you went to. There was no such thing as kids or anything like that. But anyhow, he went to this saloon, and there got to be a heck of a fight, and they grabbed him because he saw the treachery of it, but he got out of it."

"I don't know where he was, but anyhow he met up with this old guy. He could hardly speak English. The guy said, "Can you ride a horse?" and he said, "Sure, sure," "Can you break a horse?" Sure, oh sure," but he couldn't do a damn thing. This fella had stole a hundred head of horses in the eastern area and he was moving them across the plains. Of course my dad was to get \$25 a month and his keep. They started driving these horses. One experience was - there was a mother, daughter and a son and the old man. I guess they'd been a month on the road when the old man said, "Now you told me you could break horses and you could ride horses. Now I want you to ride that horse there." And the horse bucked him right off a number of times. And he said, "Now, I'm going to teach you how to ride." And my father became quite a bronc rider. But anyway he had to trail these horses, driving these horses at the tail all the time, you know, and keep these horses moving ahead. Somewhere across the area, they were getting across the plains, here come a cloud of dust. I can remember my father saying, "the old man come a'riding in and the boy come a riding in, he and the father did the scouting all the time, and they got their guns out." My dad said they give him a gun that hardly worked, and my dad said he can still see this woman sitting on the wagon, smoking her pipe, waiting for the Indians to come."

"So he picked up his chaps and walked down to this ranch which was about 10 or 15 miles. Of course he hadn't eaten and everything like that, and he walked into this sheep camp and told them he wanted a job. He could hardly speak English and everything. So they give him a job, and it was one of these Mexicans, out on the border of New Mexico and Texas, it must have been near Clayton or in that area. Anyway, my father got this job and they gave him the job of a cook. They taught him how to cook. And every day he had to shoot a sheep, in this sheep camp. They'd run the sheep by him and this is where my father learned to shoot. He said, "And believe, me, they'd give me hell if I messed up the meat." My father was a good shot. And I can always remember, as a young man, my father said, "Now look, I've been a mighty good shot and I want you to be a better one." I'm not sure that I got to be a better one, but I got to be a might good shot in my day. It was one of the camps that Billy the Kid would ride into, he knew this foreman. He worked for this sheep camp, I think it was almost a year."

"After he left his sheep camp, he went to Texas and became a Texas Ranger for three months. He'd tell the story, he had a set of pack burros, he'd have to go out in the woods when they'd make camp, and get a bunch of wood and pack it into camp, and that was their wood to cook with instead of having to

use cow chips. He was down in this gully chopping wood, when all of a sudden, ooooo, here were these six big Comanche braves sittin' on their horses above, and they decided to have some fun with my father. They drew back the axe like this, and it pretty near scared him to death to see that." Papa is listed in the Cowboy Hall of Fame in a card index of those who rode with the Texas Rangers.

"And while he was in there, Geronimo had robbed this reservation of about 80 bucks. And they sent a detail of about 12 men to go out scouting to see if they could find him. And they came up to this old adobe shack, and what they found on this scouting trip was a miner that had been killed with his own hammer, they'd bashed his head in, and four men at a ranch they'd butchered them up and burned them and then they'd come upon a Mexican family and they mutilated and killed the whole family and hung them around the room. When they got on to the Indians, the Indians jumped them and they had a running fight across the prairie about 10 miles, but their horses were fatter and stronger and they outrun the Indians. And they got away from them, but my father got hit. He got hit in the leg, it was just a flesh wound, and another fella got hit in the shoulder. You talk about suffering pain, and not dying. My father said that man was loaded in a wagon and hauled three hundred miles with hardly any attention at all, no medicine or anything, he must have been unconscious most of the way. My father was hit in the leg. You think about how now you have any little scratch and you have to have a shot of novocaine to be taken care of. When he went to get on his horse he fell down. He just collapsed. So they just took him over to the crick and took a stick and tied a rag on it and made some salt water and two guys on his legs and they slipped that think down into his leg and bandaged it up. He hobbled around a couple of weeks and got well."

"When he left the Texas Rangers, he met an old Indian. My father and this Indian rode together for about six months, and this Indian always thought my father would marry one of his daughters. When they were driving cattle, they came a riding through some brush and here was a buzzard and here was a mound of dirt. They kicked off this dirt and there were two men in there that had been killed, murdered, and one of them had a big knife right in his chest. My father said he just pulled the knife out and hung it on his saddle, but it stunk so bad, after a few days he throwed it away. All they found on these two men was a checkbook from New York. That's all the identification. This is how people disappear. And through this Indian, why this is when he lived with the Indians for about 90 days and learned to tan and to kill buffalo and stuff like that."

"This is what amazes me: How did he ever find out where his brother was? Somehow or another the mail caught up with him, and his brother was driving a stage between Georgetown and Hot Sulphur Springs. So my father had acquired enough money to get a horse and move up there. This was in 1881. He rode up there to Granby, and got a job taking care of the mail stage up where Idlewild is now. He worked there all summer. He said it's a wonder he didn't get killed."

"The mail stage horses were gone one time, and he was riding bareback, and he was swarthy, he was a very dark-complected man and he looked like a Mexican, and he could speak Mexican fluently; he learned to speak Mexican in that Mexican camp. Later on he met Billy the Kid in that camp, and he said Billy the Kid was nothing but a dirty....Billy the Kid would practice shooting, and you could throw a can up in the air and he could hit it with a six-gun."

"Somehow or another when he left the Indians and this sheep camp he went to work for John Jenkins (?) which was the greatest cattleman in the country at that time, he owned about 80,000 head of cattle. My father was hired to break horses and look after the fences."

"He got in on the deal where he had to help bury these men in the Lincoln County War. Billy the Kid caught two of the other side and told them he was going to bring them in, and brought them up to this gate, and he told them to open the gate and come on through, and the one guy, he was getting off his

horse, and he shot the other guy in the back and then shot the one that was trying to get off his horse, and killed him. My dad had to help bury them.”

“He came to stay in Grand County in '83. My dad was one of these guys that got in on things but never was the cause of them. He got to Grand County in 1883 and then the Commissioners were killed and he got in on helping try to bury them. He was never a man that was the head of something. He was one of the best bronc riders Grand County had. I remember some of the old timers telling me about it.”

“And then there was another interesting thing in there. He worked down there on the Lehmann place on the South Fork, now its out in the middle of the Granby Reservoir. They had a horse named Jim. You can take this with a grain of salt if you want. This horse was kept by Henry Lehmann, and he was a tough, mean bronc. His endurance was tremendous. This horse could be rode from the South Fork to Denver and back in the course of 24 to 26 or 28 hours. And my dad said this horse would just as soon kill you as look at you. And they finally used him as a livery horse in Grand Lake and Jake Young told me about this horse. Jake Young was born in Grand Lake, one of the old timers. Now that's about 125 to 130 miles that that horse could make in a day. This horse was used mainly for up in there, if you wanted to put out a homestead and beat the other guy to it, you'd pay Henry Lehmann \$25 for a man to ride that horse and put your claim, for a mine and so forth.” (end of Johnnie’s words)

When Papa was about 25 (approximately 1890) he said to this lady, "I'll give you a horse if you'll teach me how to dance."

Papa was raised a Lutheran. The following letter was enclosed in a German hymnbook dated 1874.

*Dear Gottlieb!*

*With this I am sending your hymnbook. I enjoyed it with all my heart that you asked for it. It is happiness to me that you have not forgotten your promise to God to be true. We have.....the nice hours..... (rest not readable)*

*We are looking for the Heaven, where we all shall meet again. We only walk a short time on this earth.*

*So, I thank you a thousand times for the great love you have shown me.*

*Say hello to everybody with lots of love, also to Target(?) and his family.*

With the silver panic of 1893 and the decline of silver prices, John left the Colorado valley for Denver and relinquished his homestead claim to a Mr. Johnson who continued development of the ranch. John renewed ties with his German past, attending Turnverein, the focus of social activities for the German ethnic community. He worked as a bottling foreman at Tivoli Brewing Company where Frank Lebfromm was a co-worker and introduced John to his sister at a dance. John’s brother David also moved to Denver and operated a saloon until 1925.

John married Sophia Lebfromm on May 19, 1894, the same year the Grand Ditch was begun. Their wedding pictures hang above the bed in the first room at Mama cabin.



John had typhoid fever in 1896 and sold off interest in homestead near Stillwater and all remaining property-saddles and other equestrian equipment for \$600. After recovery, John leased a saloon from Neff Brewery and built it into a thriving business. The Holzwarth's operated the saloon and a boarding house in Denver – "The Old Corner" at 19<sup>th</sup> and Julian (now Santa Fe). They also owned two double houses in the neighborhood of the saloon.

In 1906 Papa went to Germany to visit aging parents at Rudersberg near Stuttgart. (Rudersberg translates to Rutabaga Hill). His passport is framed on the bedroom wall which gives a written description of him rather than a photograph. The wall plaque on the sitting room wall in hand-carved frame containing eidelweiss was a present to Mama from Papa from their 1906 trip to Germany.



### **Holzwarth Café-1913**

Left to right:

Marie, Louise (Mama's friend), Mama, Mr. Drusty & son (a widower clling on Julia), John H, Sr., John H, Jr., Julia, Waldo & Otto (boarders), & Sophia

The Dome Rock ashtray dated August 27, 1910 is located in the sitting room. Dome Rock was on the old train route up from Waterton. The train was used by tourists in summer and to bring ice down in winter. They boarded the train in Denver, loaded down with picnic baskets and the ever-popular Brownie box cameras. The ride was a leisurely one. At length, the train drew to a halt at the water tank opposite Dome Rock. Passengers lost no time getting off and crossing a footbridge to a grassy area under the trees. After lunch the men would fish while the women visited and crocheted and tried to keep the children from falling into the river. Meanwhile the train that had brought them moved on to a western destination. Papa had the ashtray made from a large burl he found there. Johnnie remembers the day they took the train ride, it was a saloon keepers picnic. He was eight years old and everyone was remarking about how much fried chicken he could eat.

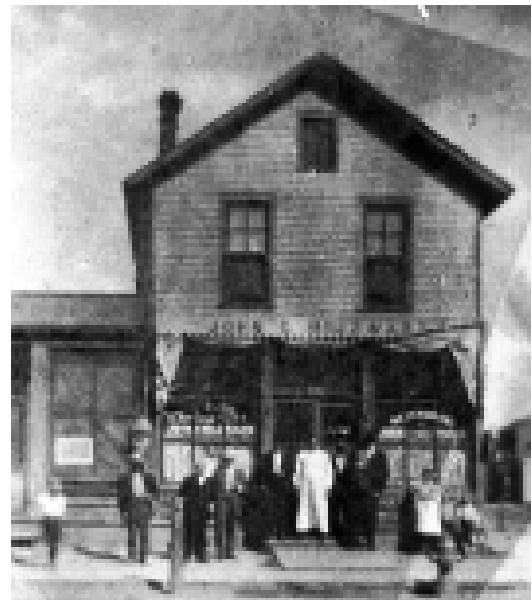
A framed Bund certificate from 1914 was given to Papa in appreciation for money he donated for the German women's and orphan's fund. This donation was prior to the U.S. entry into the war. Many German publications of the day ran advertisements requesting money to aid the Germans. The certificate was awarded as an Iron Cross but was from an American German organization and not the German government. Inside a book is a newspaper clipping regarding Food Supply Offerings to Germany after W.W.I. This relates to the Order of the Iron Cross Certificate framed and hanging on the wall of Mama cabin.

Translation of the certificate reads "*Legion of Iron Cross – To German patriots in America for support of survivors of German heroes, who gave their life for the fatherland. In thankful appreciation to John G. Holzwarth, of his voluntary gift for easing the needs of war He was named a member of the Order given at the time of The World War in the year of our Lord, 1914-1915.*"  
*Signed by the President, Secretary, and Treasurer.*

Prohibition in Colorado began January 1, 1916 which closed the saloon. Papa ran a grocery business in the former saloon for a year but because of the anti-German sentiment during World War I, business was not successful. At the age of 53, Papa was forced to make a change in his life and start a new career. A teenage son also added to the frustration with pranks and joy rides around Denver. With memories of his years homesteading in the mountains during the 1880-90's, Papa dreamed of a cattle ranch and Mama dreamed of a country inn not unlike those she knew of in Germany.

In the summer of 1917, Papa Holzwarth and Johnnie built a one-room cabin with a sod roof along the Grand River north of Grand Lake. Papa also purchased Fleshuts place for \$2,000 in 1918. The homestead entry was filed on March 11, 1919. Patent received in 1923 signed by President Harding.

Papa sold the furnishings from the Denver grocery store for about \$1,200 and sold two duplexes for \$2,000. He paid \$1,000 as final payment on Fleshut's land and cabin and had the rest for living expenses 'til their dream ranch started to produce. They got \$45/month from duplex he still owned in Denver, which he sold in the late 20's on advice of Julia for \$3,000. Their Denver home (1/2 of remaining duplex) was near 10<sup>th</sup> and Inca. They had chickens, eggs were a source of income, and a vegetable garden.



“One day I came home from Squeaky Bob's to find my father alone in the cabin, sitting at a table. His hand was in a wash pan and was cut from the first knuckle clear up past the wrist. He had been hewing logs with a hand ax, and the ax had slipped and cut him. This happened when they were working on the addition to Mama cabin (1921-22) and he was trimming the floor joists. He had a needle and thread all ready, and he was soaking his hand in this pan of water. When I came in he just held his hand over and said, "Been wondering when you was goin' to get here. Sew me up." And I sewed him up. He gritted his teeth and that was it.”

### Onahu Creek Bridge - 1922

A 1915 Model T pickup was brought with the Holzwarth family from Denver. In 1921 they traded the pickup for two cows and a calf and in 1923 they bought another Model T.



John Holzwarth Sr. had a taste for alcohol. One weekend his Denver friends came out to go fishing. They also brought along a jug of moonshine. Shortly after they arrived, Papa and his friends got busy with the jug which lasted all weekend and they never did go fishing. Sunday came and they began to worry about not having any fish to carry home with them and how it would look to their families. Papa asked Johnnie if he would run down to the river and catch his friends some fish before they left for Denver. Johnnie was gone about two hours and came back with 60 nice trout. He placed the catch on the pine straw in front of papa's friends and before you knew it they were having a big fight over how they would divide the fish. This irritated Johnny no end and he went to Mama and complained about all the work they were having to do and getting nothing for it. Mama agreed with him and the two then made a decision that from then on every one who came to the ranch would have to pay, if they stayed over night. Papa was informed of this decision and he didn't like it at all and he had quite a bit to say about it but in the end he was outnumbered and finally gave in. This was the beginning of the Holzwarth guest ranch business.

### Squeaky Bob's – Hotel de Hard Scrabble



First guests were the Carman family from Estes Park and Mr. Pond, a business associate, who drove over Flattop and expected to stay at Squeaky Bob's; but a group from Elkhorn Lodge rode in from Milner Pass and took up all of Bob's space. With much profanity Bob informed the Carman's that there was no room available but that perhaps the Holzwarth's would take them in. Miss Carman recalled that “they shoved over and we got in.” Mrs. Holzwarth ran to the window and shouted to Johnnie, who was shoeing a horse, “Zhonnie, run and catch a mess of fish.” As Johnnie remembers it the women slept in the house and the men in the barn.

At times springs and mattresses were spread on the ground and guests used canvas to protect themselves from the weather. The going price was \$2.00 per night or \$11 for the week, meals included. The opening of Fall River Road increased the traffic and guest ranch visitors.

All the hay was irrigated from the 11 second-foot water right. Though the first ditches were dug in 1921, according to Johnnie, the rights were not filed until the 1950's. However, the Land Files show a water right filed as early as October 15, 1918 and show that the Holzwarth Ditches, with a capacity of 11.55 cfs, were filed on June 1, 1920, and additional right was filed on June 21, 1923. Ralph Wescott helped put in the headgates.

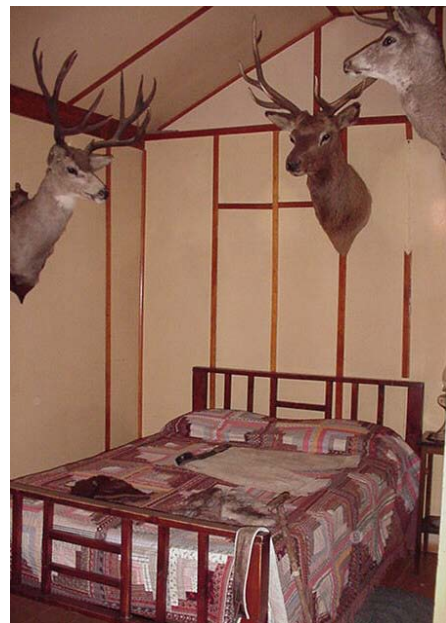
In 1921 Papa and Morris (Morse) Colville (Cowgill) rented an emigrant car on the train to bring things up from Denver, they hauled cows and saddles on the train and then by wagon from Granby, they hooked the cows to the wagon.

Papa made his own whiskey, two quarts every two weeks. The copper still in the kitchen was a registered still and it was legal to make alcohol for your own consumption. The coil is not the original – made from old copper pipe and does not fit the still. A 10 gallon wood barrel was in the back for storage of mash. Mash was dried fruit – raisins and prunes, mostly, some apples. If cherries were used Kirschwasser was the result. Papa used to age his whiskey in charred oak casks that he put up in the trees outside. The wind would sway the trees and the swaying action aged the whiskey. Papa weighed 200 lbs., 5' 10" tall. He once made a bet he could carry a 250 pound barrel of beer a block.

“Father was crippled in 1919. He didn't break his legs but his hip was hurt pretty badly. He was always in pain afterwards and it was hard for him to work. One leg was very much shorter than the other was when he died. The two horses who crippled him were Buster and Nellie. It happened right down at the bottom of the hill from Mama Cabin by the big spruce tree,” recalled Johnnie. The hip brace and cane Papa used are on display in the Mama cabin bedroom. Even after the accident Papa still tried to help with work of building cabins or cutting and gathering hay and was known to clear five acres of meadow by hand. Papa was more restricted in his activities due to his crippled legs. He spent his time perfecting his taxidermy and furniture-making skills, occasionally taking a nip from his jars of homemade brandy, which always stood on top of the wardrobe in the living room. Johnnie remembers Papa could scarcely go a week, let alone a whole winter, without his "spiritual" fortification.

In 1923 tents were erected to house the dining room, kitchen, tourist rooms, and construction began on permanent facilities – the rec hall. On a holiday weekend in the summer it was not at all unusual to have 100 people sleeping around the ranch, sprawled on the ground or huddled under trees. The girls' house was built in 1924 and the skunk in 1925, but the ranch began to take shape with the construction of the main lodge in 1929 (Holzwarth Ranch, next to the road.

Papa received his diploma from Northwestern Taxidermy School, Omaha, NE in 1924 – the diploma is in the Taxidermy Shop. The life size deer there was undoubtedly one of the final projects. The birds were one of the first lessons and the mounted deer and elk heads throughout the house were done by Papa during the late 1920's. He also created the hoof stool, coat and gun racks, and a pen and ink holder made from a hoof. Someone has unknowingly filled the ink stand with a candle. Milton F. Jennings from Phoenix, Arizona, a visitor to the ranch, reported that Papa made a rug from a bobcat skin that his dog killed at the Grand Lake Lodge.



A little dog that Johnnie had took Papa's glasses. He mounted 26 heads that year and their eyes were all off. He got new glasses in March. He saw the head he'd done for a fellow named Harvey and said, "Harvey, the ears aren't quite right, let me take it back and fix them." So without mentioning the eyes to Harvey, he got them fixed. The dog booties on the bookcase were made by Papa from deerskin for Johnnie's dog Whimper so the dog could walk on snow without breaking the crust.



**Papa - @1932**

Papa built the kitchen table and two wooden kitchen chairs. The surface was covered with light sheet metal. A bench provided seating space at the table for Johnnie.

The egg carton in the kitchen was bought by Papa from a stage company when it quit running. It was made from the springs of old seats. Papa thought it would be a good addition to their pack trip equipment and was used for carrying eggs on trail rides.

Papa raised goats for one year (about thought it would be a good addition to their pack trip equipment and was used for carrying 1928 or 1932) but got rid of them because they were too much trouble. He paid 50 cents each for them. They had rabbits one year only and got their first dozen chickens from Squeaky Bob. They chopped up muskrats for feed. Papa chopped off the top of one of the chicken's beak accidentally when the chicken grabbed some of the muskrat meat off the chopping block. Papa just trimmed down the lower beak part to match and the chicken just went on eating as if nothing was wrong.

Johnnie and his father read many Zane Grey novels by kerosene lamp on winter evenings.



**Whimper**

Papa's workbench was under and attached to a tree near the back door. A bench-vise was permanently attached during summer months. In winter the taxidermy shop was where he worked.

The Remington M-30 Sporting Rifle on the wall of the living room has a special grade 24 inch barrel, 30-06 5 shot box magazine, about 8 lbs., #48 receiver sight, beat front sight, special high comb stock with long, full forearm, checkered. The gun was made from 1930 to 1940 and sold for \$325. The stock was carved by Papa from an Army rifle stock. It doesn't exactly fit the barrel and mechanism. Johnnie said it has killed 30 elk and 50 deer.



In 1929 Julia helped finance the building of the Holzwarth's Trout Lodge.

The business officially moved to the location next to the road through the park because Papa felt they needed to be closer to the people.



Here also were built the barns for the livestock – cattle and horses.



Papa tanned a yearling deer for \$2.50, a process which took three months. First he buried it in the swamp so hair would slip. Fleshed it on a board. Little saw was used to scrape off inner skin. They saved brains of any slaughtered animals and smeared these on hide. Then it was hung over a fence for 3 weeks, until it was parchment colored. Then it was soaked and softened over a little flat stove that was slightly warm-pulled back and forth 'til dry. If not soft enough, the process was repeated up to three times. Then the skin was rolled and worked soft. They used a circular drum run off a model T, and inside were 2 or 3 croquet ball size rocks, wooden balls and sawdust. Then the skins were smoked with herbs to an orange color. Skins of muskrats, marten and beaver were tanned. Johnnie said, "All my women had a beaver coat."

Charlene (granddaughter) remembers Grandpa in the kitchen making butter, she in her baby swing in the middle of the kitchen, and every time she swung over to him he gave her a pat of butter. That's why she always has loved butter.

A niece, Frances Lebfromm (married Mama's brother Herman's son) said, "Papa was more easygoing than Mama. He was not as ambitious as she. He liked to drink. He was very close to Frank Lebfromm."

"Father collapsed on Labor Day 1932. The accident caused the bone marrow to crystallize and dry up and his leg just collapsed and he fell down. I drove him to Denver and he died on Christmas Day, 1932." (Johnnie) Papa joined the Catholic church just prior to his death to please Mama. He was buried in Denver.





### Meet Mama Holzwarth

Sophia Lebfromm was born December 17, 1870 to Joseph and Klodhilde Lebfromm of Nussback County of Oberkirch, State of Baden (Southwest Germany). She was from Black Forest region of Germany, close to Dusseldorf. Mama used to say that on a clear day you could see the steeples of Strasbourg. Sophia was baptized December 18, 1870. Her Namesday was May 15, 1871 and Patenkind of Mrs. Holzwarth is a Gebhard Schwartz in Denver.

Sophia came to the US in 1890 – age 20 – and worked in Denver as domestic servant for prominent Denver families to pay her way here. Among them was the Gates family who later established the Gates Rubber Company. The trunk in the Taxidermy shop she brought with her from Germany in 1890. Lebfromm is printed on side. It was later made into toolbox by Papa. Johnnie remembered, “When Mama came to this country in the late 1800's she worked as a house servant in Gates home in Denver. Her pay was \$20.00 per month, and she had to work 14 hours a day for it, which went to pay for her passage from Germany to America. In later years when she was running the Homestead by herself she would only pay the help \$20 per month because she thought that if that was what she made, she shouldn't pay more.” Johnnie had an agreement with the help. They would take Mama's \$20 and then go over to the big ranch and he would pay them the remainder of their wages.

Sophia sent for her brother Frank after she came over. He worked in Denver at the Tivoli Brewery where he worked with John Holzwarth and introduced him to his sister at a dance. Frank Lebfromm in 1928 built a cabin ½ mile north of Fleshuts cabin. There is a picture of him in the living room with a hunting catch and dog. Sophia had at least three sisters and a brother, Herman, who stayed in Germany.

John Holzwarth and Sophia Lebfromm were married on May 19, 1894 in the Elizabeth Church in Denver by Father Pins.



John and Sophia had five children. The first, Christina, was born June 26, 1895. She died on December 8<sup>th</sup> that same year. A little over a year later on September 4, 1896, Julia Holzwarth was born. This same year her father had typhoid fever. Two years later, July 2, 1898 Maria Anna Holzwarth was born followed by Sophia on September 16, 1900 and finally a son, John, Jr. on November 7, 1902. Four children under six years of age.

Mama took Sophia, 6 and 4 year old Johnnie on a trip of several months in 1906 to Germany - Father joined them later. Julia, 10 and Maria, 8 years old, did not go on the trip – probably they were in school. This was a visit planned to see aging parents and other family members whom Sophia had not seen for 16 years and John for 27 years. Sophia was the oldest daughter in her family and there was at least one sister born after she left Germany.

Johnnie said Mama could knit – after she was six years old she had to learn to knit, and as she became older, she knit a wool sock a night. A visitor to the ranch on July 26, 1981 said that Mama and the visitor were attending a knitting class in Denver and the visitor was knitting a green sweater for her husband. As the ladies progressed with their pieces Mama remarked, "After you use the sweater for awhile, it may fade in some areas, and when it does you should dye it black."

Family  
1909



John and Sophia were operating a small saloon and boarding house in Denver so Mama was quite busy with raising her children and paying attention to their businesses. With the war, flu epidemic and family concerns, perhaps an escape to the mountains would be a welcome relief for Mama. “It was Mama's idea to move to the mountains. She loved the mountains. They reminded her of the Black Forest. Papa came first, then Mama. She had a dream of opening a country inn along with Papa’s desire to start a cattle ranch. Everything was so wild up here. Sometimes it took three days to get here from Denver, what with getting stuck, etc. Transportation was so difficult. It was more work than they had thought it would be. It was slow going at first. Just for fishermen at first, then they decided to open a hotel.” (comments by niece, Frances Lebffrom).

The summer of 1917 Papa and Johnnie spent in Grand County building a rather primitive two-room cabin. In 1918 they returned to the homestead with Mama and the news that Sophia was getting married to Andrew Geeck. This joyful event was also followed by the end of World War I in November.

The following year had to be very difficult for Mama. On July 1, 1919 the day before her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, Maria died. She had a tumor (Geschwur) on her forehead and had been sick for three months and very sick for the last three days. In the family Bible Mama wrote "She was a very good child and liked to work. The Lord may give her peace and may the .... light be with her."

The tent cabin was built that summer and they first started renting cabins to tourists. People came to fish, the limit was twenty pounds which was about 50-60 fish. Mama cooked for the guests and being busy helped to ease the pain. This summer Johnnie and Papa built the horse barn, worked the ranch and returned to Denver for the winter.

The family moved permanently to the ranch in June of 1920 and the note on the Fleshut property was paid. This summer they added a room to the west of the original cabin and a porch to the south and built the ice house. On the back porch there was a bench with basin and bucket of water, mirror above. Papa expected everyone to wash up before coming into the house. The icebox was on back porch. A raw wood dresser stored clothing and linens and stood next to wash counter. Montgomery Wards churn was used outside the back door of the porch.

On the back porch Mama did the washing. She presoaked clothes in copper lined tub then placed in tub and boiled for an hour in strong soapy water and washed on washboard or in hand operated wash machine. Finally hung out to dry on lines strung between trees near back door. Mama washed every two to three weeks. Later the guest laundry was sent to Denver.



"Admiral Blue", the kitchen range was purchased from Montgomery Ward in 1920-23 for about \$40 and freighted to the homestead. It has a self-cleaning top (spills burned right off), infinite heat control – move pans around on the top, hot water reservoir on side, warming ovens above and an oven thermometer. Mama must have been very proud of her new range where she spent a good deal of her time.

Johnnie dug a hole in the kitchen floor to get water into Mama's kitchen by the pump from a well. This well filled in quickly with sand and Mama still had to carry water. In the years before electricity, young Johnnie figured out a method to get running water into Mama's kitchen. He boxed in a spring out behind the Homestead and laid some large galvanized pipes on top of the ground to the Mama Cabin and put a faucet at the sink so the water could be turned off and on. Everything worked just fine and Mama had running water in her kitchen. When summer time came, the sun would heat the water in the pipes that lay on top of the ground. Every time Johnnie came around Mama would be fussing about her water being too hot. Each time he would explain that if she would turn on the faucet just for a couple of minutes the water would get cool. This continued several times until he finally asked her, "Mama, why can't you turn on the faucet and let the water run a little white?" Her answer was, "Son, I can't do that. It would wear out my pipes."

"Whatever Mama did, she did well. Ambitious, proud, clean. She would give anything to you. But at the same time she expected you to work. Always had baked goods for her guests. Couldn't sit still. Good humor, talkative. Liked to talk about the old days. She had courage to move up here to the mountains." These comments came from Mama's niece who worked for her in 1938-39.

Johnnie said, “The only things we could raise was radishes, pansies, and hell! We also could raise parsley, parsnips and spinach. We were not able to raise any cabbage or cauliflower. And very seldom could we get any sweet peas to grow, never no potatoes. Carrots you could grow but they'd only get about as big as your thumb. The garden spot we had is all growed up. It's over across the little marsh, northwest of the house. I haven't been over there in years and I'm sure that the colony of beavers has flooded it all out and so forth.”



**Holzwarth Family**



Mama cooked for the guests at the ranch and served three meals a day in the dining room. About 1923 a separate dining room was built next to the road and a second cook, Barney McCoy was hired. Food was trout and roast-whatever meat was found. Due to lack of transportation, meat had to be gotten locally: fish, deer, and elk. First elk was in 1938. They were scarce back then. They ate pine squirrels. They kept 4-6 pigs at a time, made their own bacon, ham, scrapple, sausage, head cheese, blood sausage. They

smoked sheep meat. They preserved eggs in the spring when they were plentiful. They bought "water glass" and put eggs in it and they would keep until they were used. When they cleaned hogs, they dipped them in hot water and ashes before scraping them down. A pig's ear sandwich was Johnnie's favorite lunch. They pickled their pork in brine for three weeks before they smoked it. The brine was made with salt, allspice, pepper, bay leaf, cloves and brown sugar. A typical menu for guests was freshly caught fish, Mama always had some soup stock on, wilted dandelion greens (bacon, vinegar, sugar), beef roast was always deer, mostly biscuits for bread, boiled potatoes. Johnnie says we got \$1.50 for a meal and we were getting rich.

There were many cabbage or vegetable soups; thick items, meat roasts – especially deer meat, sourdough bread was famous. Mama made liver dumplings, spaetzels and sauerbraten with rabbits (Hazenpfeffer). A typical breakfast consisted of mush. Suppers were stews or roasts. Potatoes, carrots, rutabagas, apples, etc. were kept in the root cellar. A schmear case – a milk sack for making curds was hung up beside Rose Cabin on a tree.

Mama made Hutzeltrot (pear bread) for Christmas; it contained nuts, citron and raisins and was the color of light rye. She also made plum kuchen, her own rye bread with caraway, stewed kidneys and noodles, lederknodel, potato pancakes, a thin pancake with lots of egg the size of a dinner plate, a cereal-type dish of cut up pancake batter.

Mama clipped recipes. Newspaper clippings in German for three layered white, chocolate and spice cakes with different icings were found in the kitchen.

After Papa died at Christmas of 1932, Mama cooked meals at Johnnie's ranch and the guests at the Trout Lodge had cooking stoves in the cabins. Fran (Johnnie's youngest daughter) said Grandma was an excellent cook. Her specialties were liver dumplings, omelets and baked goods. Fran has the recipe for liver dumplings and it is the only way she'll eat liver.

Mama always had a dog, Waldmann (Waldo) a German shepherd mixed dog. A visitor told the following story: "I used to go mushroom picking with Mama, she showed me the difference between mushrooms and toadstools, but I still had a hard time getting the right kind. So one day I asked Mama, "How can you be sure you get the right mushrooms?" She answered, "Well, I cook up a big batch and then I give the first bowl to Voldo!"



“Mama was 5' tall and I (Johnnie) can remember her wearing a gingham dress and an apron with a sunbonnet. She would walk around with her wagon into the woods and pick up pieces of wood and put them in her apron or the wagon and would pile it on the east side of the shop.” Wood was of small size like kindling which she could use in her kitchen range.







Mama said American women have no posture. She used to put a 6-8 qt. pot on her head and waltz around the kitchen. Mama had an alto voice and Johnnie sang duets with her – one of their favorites was "Whispering Hope". Mama had a battery powered RCA radio, table model, sitting in her sitting room (middle room) she could receive three stations. Johnnie bought her a battery each year for \$25.00. Some of her favorite songs were "Irish Lullaby" and "Whispering Hope". Mama and Johnnie used to sing German songs together.

On September 7, 1995 Charlene Geeck came in to Kawuneeche Visitor Center and donated a Birdseye Maple Rocker. It came from the Mama cabin at Holzwarth's Trout Ranch. She believes it to be about 70 years old. She remembers it located in the living room of the Mama cabin. It has been reupholstered and the arm fixed with an angle brace. Charlene acquired it from her mother, Sophia Holzwarth Geeck who got it from the ranch when Grandma Holzwarth passed away. It has been in the Geeck family since then.

A visitor reported that Mama always moved her rocking chair around to where ever she was going to be busy – on the porch, front or back, wherever. Mama, Papa, Johnnie and guests sat on porch in summer. Chairs were brought out from house. One or two tree stumps were always there for sitting or used as tables.

Mama's hands were always busy. The gray quilt was made from material scraps which were discards from Denver casket factory. Johnnie worked there putting handles on caskets after flu epidemic 1918-1919. Mama and Papa's bed had a silk taffeta bedspread made by mama from these scraps. Pillows were made from chicken feathers and Mama made sheets of flannel outing. They also used some cotton sheets and wool blankets purchased in Denver. Mama braided rugs and embroidered dresser scarves and pillows. She made many table covers and doilies for the cabin.

Mama was pro-German; she spoke German to Johnnie until she died.

A visitor to the ranch said that Mama had the spring box clean and the brook area cleaned, always. It was neatly trimmed up to the brook, and the area around the shop was also cleaned.

Charlene (granddaughter) remembers if people stayed even just one night they had to tear the cabins apart to clean them.

Mama thought that gentlemen should have a diamond ring and a sharp pocketknife. That's the only reason that Johnnie has his diamond ring.

Mama's life changed in 1931 when her son married Caroline Pratt and then the following year Papa died. She lost much of her reason for living. Mama had grandchildren, two granddaughters by Sophia and Andrew Geeck in Denver and John and Caroline had a son in 1933 and a daughter in 1935 and the last granddaughter in 1945.

In 1933 Mama's daughter Julia paid for a trip to Germany for Mama. She sailed on the Europa, beginning her diary November 1 enroute. She arrived in Germany where she visited her brothers and sisters, celebrating many family birthdays, her 63<sup>rd</sup> in December, attended family funerals and enjoyed her homeland. Sisters: (Fanny (birthday May 19 - 43 years old in 1934), Luise (birthday April 4, 1885 - 49 in 1934), Anna (birthday March 17), Karoline, and a brother (Hermann) in Germany (Hermann's wife died March 3, 1934, buried March 6) (also mentions Joseph and Erwin in Germany - maybe brothers in law) - although Joseph's wife celebrated 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday Feb 18, 1934.

Mama grew up with wine. In the Black Forest area, everyone had apple trees and made apple wine. It was a way to keep apples. Mama recorded in her journal that they drank a lot of wine and ate lots of good food.

"While reading her diary I got the following picture of her: She was a very religious woman. She went to church a lot. She must have been Catholic since she goes to confession and holy mass. She liked to talk to people and thoroughly enjoyed a good conversation about old times. She was impressed when she met important or higher educated people. She always watched her money and cared about the prices of items. She belonged to a club (Bruderschaft) which she visited often. She loved to travel and visit. She cared a whole lot about good food and wine. She wrote down several recipes in her diary. She enjoyed flowers, parks, and also cemeteries. She visited graves of relatives frequently, especially her parents." Translated from German by Sigi McConnell, August 1976

She kept accurate records of the cost of everything she did. This trip was when Frances Lebfromm (who was still in Germany) met Mama for the first time. "It was a small town and we all knew each other." Mama mentions Election Day, November 5, 1933 - it was very one-sided. She visited an air ship Graf Zeppelin (Airship)

Feb. 11 Sunday I went to church. In the afternoon we went to prayer hour. Then we went to Oberkirch. Saw a Persian, Chinese and a group from Venice. We had coffee, cake and wine. Was interesting. In the evening we went to church again.

Feb. 12 Mardi Gras Monday

Feb. 13 Mardi Gras Tuesday - Saw the masked parade and went to the masked ball in the "Schwane". Mr. Schindler, Luise, Anna, Joseph and I drank 3 liters of the best wine. Music was \$6.50.

May 20 Saw three airplanes at take off without any sails or motor? This was at Mummelsee. She went for dinner and had to wait for two hours. She comments: Thousands of people here wanting to eat. Super business. People spend more money for food in Germany than they do in America.

Mama left Germany on the Breman in June 22, 1934 and returned to Colorado.





When Mama returned from Germany the cabins were changed to housekeeping cabins with wood-burning cook stoves and Mama cooked for Johnnie at the dude ranch. Laundry was sent to Denver. Guests at Mama's could chop their own wood and many loved to do it. Sophia came to help Mama with the cabins and her husband helped with the repair work that needed to be done. Sophia lived in a home – **Hilltop Manor**, just up the hill from Mama's cabin.



Fran (Johnnie's youngest daughter) remembers going to Grandma's to take naps. Her parents would put her on a horse after the noon meal and send a little bottle of milk with her and off she'd go to Grandma's. She says, "Can you imagine trying to go to sleep on the bed with all those heads of deer looking at you?"

Mama stayed in Mama cabin until right before Christmas, and then Big Johnnie and Little John III would hook up the team and go get her, pack up her things and bring her to the main house. John III said Mama would give his dad "holy hell" all the way home about his driving. She would take the train to Denver where she stayed with Julia mostly and for a couple years with Sophia. "Mama saved garbage in Denver for the pigs at the Homestead. She'd tie it all up and package it. Here was a 14 or 15 year old John III getting on the Trailways bus with his package of garbage," recalled Johnnie.

"Mama was alone for so many years. About 1938 she started going to Denver to Julia's in the winter. She stayed alone from September until Christmas, then went to Julia's. Then she came back in May. She loved it here and it was hard for her to leave," remembered Frances Lebfromm.

Mama was in the hospital in Denver just before she died. Johnnie went to visit her on his way to deliver a speech. From her hospital bed Mama said, "Let me see your hands." After inspection she admonished, "They're dirty, go wash." Mama died on Thursday, October 15, 1954 at the age of 84. She is buried at Mount Olive Cemetery in Denver. She was a devout Catholic.

## Meet Julia Katherine Holzwarth



Julia Katherine Holzwarth the daughter of Sophie and John was born in Denver September 4, 1896.

Julia attended Barnes School of Business in Denver where she learned accounting and bookkeeping. She worked with Gates Rubber Company and Schrader Trunk Company (Samsonite Luggage) for \$3/week

Julia joined Hilb Company in Denver, a wholesaler in ready-to-wear and notions and worked there for 50 years. She became credit manager and treasurer. According to Avalon , her niece, Julia worked 15-17 hr/day, seven days a week. She saved and invested wisely and was the financial anchor for family. In 1928 Julia loaned \$13,500 for the establishment of the Holzwarth Dude Ranch and deeded 1 acre of land at the center of the main lodge to her mother. She also purchased Hilltop Manor, cabin on the homestead, for her sister Sophia in 1928. Julia paid for her mother's second trip to Germany in 1933.

Julia never married. Mama stayed with Julia in Denver during cold winters. Julia has a beaver coat from Johnnie's trap lines.

Information from Mr. Ed Goode who worked with Julia at Hilb and Co. – July 1, 1981:

Julia was determined, had a mind of her own, hard working, would come to work about 11 a.m. in a cab and would stay late into the night. She maybe never had a car. Never had a TV until late in life. She was very spry, talked fast, intelligent. She was protective of the girls that worked in the office – a mother hen. One time a man who worked at Hilb and Co. had some business he had to discuss with Julia. He was apprehensive about talking to her. Finally he said, "Maybe I'll just write her a note." Hilb and Co. is 75 years old, Julia worked there 50 years. She was presented with a diamond pin in the hospital. She worked as long as she could. The company moved in 1966 and she moved with them but never got to set up an office. She became ill and died of cancer. She was about 70 at the time.

Julia Holzwarth died January 4, 1967. Johnnie said she was worth \$400,000 at her death. Johnnie and Sophia received some \$30,000 each from her estate



## Meet Sophia Katherine Holzwarth



Sophia Katherine Holzwarth was born on September 16, 1900.

Sophia married Andrew W. Geeck, Sr. of Denver in 1918. They had two children. Avalon J. Clark went to business school, married and had two children, Howard A. Clarke and Joan Clarke. Charlene M. Geeck was Sister Marie Jeanne of Carmelite Monastery in Littleton. After leaving the convent she went to Loretta Heights, received a teaching degree and taught in the ghetto area of Chicago. Charlene operated a gift shop in Grand Lake and now lives in Grand Lake.

After Papa died, Sophia added a room to her house in Denver for Mama for one or two years. She and her husband spent summers during 1930's and 1940's living at Hilltop Manor and worked at the Holzwarth Ranch. According to Avalon they cooked for 50-60 people over an 8' coal stove 16-17 hrs/day. Sophia helped run tourist cabins at the Homestead. Andy contributed his labor to the Homestead in form of repair work

Sophia (Johnnie's sister) was ambitious, according to Frances Lebfromm. She cooked at the hotel for years, before and during the war. Hilltop was hers. She had a gift shop in Englewood and came up on weekends and helped her mother. She started the gift shop that Charlene ran in Grand Lake.

Sophia died March 22, 1971. She was 70 years old.



## Meet John Gottlieb Holzwarth, Jr.

John was born November 7, 1902. He attended school in Denver and as a teenager was “borrowing” cars to go for joy rides. Papa and Mama decided to move him to the mountains to keep him busy. He helped build the Mama cabin in 1917 at the age of fifteen.

Johnnie attended parochial schools in Denver through the eighth grade. Johnnie took a class in ballroom dancing in Denver when he was 15 or 16 years old. He drove a Vim delivery truck and worked for a casket maker during flu epidemic where he screwed handles on caskets.

He also worked as a plumbers' helper at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital and at Hilb and Company.



“First night I spent on this ranch was right where the corner of that building is (Mama Cabin). I laid down on a spring and a mattress with a tent and rain in my face to boot, after falling in the creek!” remembered Johnnie.

Johnnie came up in 1919 and his first night slept out in the rain. He stayed for three weeks and then moved back to Denver. Johnnie wrecked his motorcycle in Denver and then decided to move back to the mountains. He moved permanently to ranch in 1919.

Johnnie always kept a fishing pole over the kitchen door. Fishing bait was a sort of salamander like creature that resembles a bullhead catfish. Johnnie used to look for them under rocks in the river. He waded in, used stick to turn over the rocks, then speared them with a kitchen fork. “In 1916 the brooks got into the beaver ponds and established themselves, and the natives stayed in the ponds I would say off and on for about 8 or 9 years. Somewheres around in the 30's the cutthroats were gone.”

“I used to be able to catch them fish an average of three a minute; they were so plentiful. And this actually is what got me in the dude business. A bunch of men, friends of my father's came up, and one Sunday afternoon I caught 25 fish from my bridge up to where the Timber Creek campground is. ( 60 fish in another version and yet again - “One Sunday afternoon I caught 150 fish for friends of my father.”) I brought them home two baskets full. And my father said, "Here give him a five dollar bill, somebody." And if I remember right the man's name was Zolk. He gave me a five-dollar bill and he and the other men got in an argument over how they were going to divide the fish. And my father had gotten sick and puked all over everybody and my mother had to clean it up. So she and I decided we were going to get in the dude business. We were going to make a charge. And we talked this over a good bit. We talked it over with my sister. We came up with the idea of charging \$2 a day and \$11 a week, and this included a horse, board and room and lodging. And my father said, (German accent), "You are not going to charge my friends to stay here, they are my friends!" And my mother said, "I'm not cleaning up for nobody anymore," and I said, "I'm not catching any fish anymore until I get paid for it properly." And from then on I began to charge pretty well for my services. When I got up to be about 25 I asked \$10 a day to be a guide and furnished my own horse and that was a 24-hour deal, not just a few hours.



When Johnnie turned 21, his uncle gave him \$20 and said, "You're a man now – take care of yourself." In 1923 Johnnie went with Barney McCoy and a Dick someone to California on the Burn. He spent a few months "on the road" as handyman and laborer to California and back.

Barney McCoy came to NSR as an extra cook in 1926. He worked with Johnnie several years. McCoy taught Johnnie about trapping and the habits of animals. Barney was also a good teacher about plumbing. He also helped build the Lodge in 1929. Johnnie learned McCoy was wanted for robbery in Wyoming and for murder of bank teller in Utah. McCoy feared Dirty Bill Lemmon who shot him for the theft of some beaver hides. Bill Lemmon taught Johnnie all about the habits and trapping of beaver.

In November of 1920, Johnnie and his father discussed their finances and decided they needed \$125 to get through the winter. Johnnie became a trapper and had up to 100 miles of trap lines extending over into North Park. They trapped for marten and beaver primarily. Most animals trapped in the Park were trapped with Park Service approval as predators, however, some differences of opinion existed as to the definition of a predator. Beaver and ermine netted Johnnie several hundred dollars per winter during the 1920's. The most beaver I ever caught, I caught 28 beaver in 31 days, just about a hundred yards above the bridge.

In the spring of the year I used to have a fishing pole stashed up by Timber Creek which was a good place to catch mink. I caught 15 great big mink one spring up there. The only thing I could catch them mink with was fresh fish. So every day I'd walk up there and replenish my traps. The trap I had was the simplest thing in the world. It was up by a steep bank where a little trickle of water came down on the left of it, and I'd take a fish and take a stick and poke it into this bank to hold the fish up 14 or 15 inches high above the water. And I just put the trap against the bank right there. The mink would come a swimming along and they'd see that, and the water wasn't very deep and there they were. I'd catch em by the hind feet, or sometimes by the front feet, you could never tell. If I'd catch it by the front feet it was then they climbed into the trap, but if I'd catch em by the hind feet it was when they raised up to try to get the fish.

Johnnie used to make wooden rabbit traps. Once he reached in one and out ran a white weasel which had already killed the rabbit. Johnnie made \$1,000 in 1933 trapping. He got 300 to 400 muskrats that year. Johnnie had trap lines in a circle. He was great at skinning and stretching skins. The record for skinning a muskrat was 15 seconds. Johnnie could skin as fast as John III could stretch. The only kids that would associate with them were trappers; they smelled so bad.

1928 – Johnnie bought a truck and began to freight grain from Loveland to Grand Lake. The truck was rated at 3500 pounds, 50 sacks of grain, but sometimes he would "cheat" a little and try to get over the top with 55 sacks. If the wind were particularly fierce, they would often have to stop a half-mile below Fall River Pass and carry the 5 sacks over the pass by hand. It was worth the chance since each sack represented \$1 in profit.

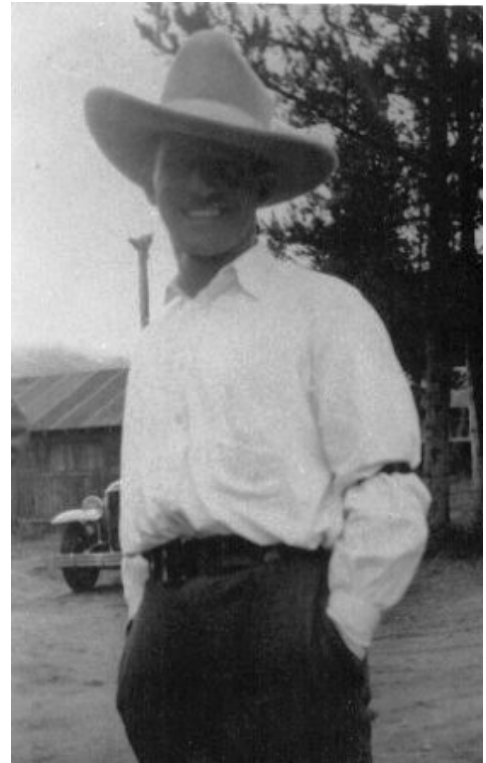
"When I came into the country it was about the end of free range of cattle roaming all over the country. The ..... used to bring cattle from Ft Collins over the hill, over Poudre Pass and down into our

valley. And they had to give it up because many of the cattle at that time, they was just beginning to wake up to what it was, it was ..... disease, the cattle couldn't stand the altitude. When I came into the country Morris Cowgill had a herd of registered Hereford cattle, which was bought for his brother which was killed in WWI. He leased the school lands which was part of Pontiac's and part of my ranch, and he had 640 acres there to graze these cattle on. And there was about 20 or 30 head of horses that run up and down the canyon, belonging to the Harbisons and everybody else. Most of them were colts. The Harbison's cattle were all over the place, anywhere from where headquarters is now, into Grand Lake, down to Columbine, and almost up to Green Mountain Ranch. They were always lost half the time.”

“We soon got into quality Holstein cattle. We'd get these little calves from one of our first customers that also was a dairyman. We always had probably the best milk cows in the valley, which we would sell or trade. We'd usually get two cows for a mature cow because she'd give three times as much milk as one of them mountain cows. We made all our own butter, we made some cheese, and talk about good cottage cheese! That is a thing that will have to be there, the milk in a little like a flour sack would be hanging on one of the trees out in the yard where the water would drain out of the cottage cheese. You mix that up with caraway seed and cress seeds and you had something to eat!”

Johnnie hid a whiskey barrel in the woods one time. He rode up to check it and to get some whiskey for a dance and it was empty. A chipmunk had eaten the cork out of the barrel. Johnnie worked hard at the ranch but he also played hard. He was known to be a rabble rouser in Grand Lake. Although he wasn't a musician he regularly attended the neighborhood dances. His daughter said he'd been known to ride to Hot Sulphur or Kremmling, dance all night, and return in time for chores the next morning.

The Holzwarths started with five head of horses in the early 20's and the number gradually increased until 100 head wintered at the ranch. Johnnie felt the horses were stronger if they stayed here.





Johnnie ran a little woodpecker sawmill which averaged around 300,000 board feet a year. “I bought a sawmill in 1923 which was my first sawmill. I didn't know nothing about timberwork or sawmilling. I paid \$600 for it. I paid off half of it with furs...., and I paid off the other half with lumber I sold for \$20 a thousand. That's the way I paid off that little ole sawmill. Many of those first old buildings were built from that sawmill, and the logs were cut right there at the ranch.”

“Every building that is on this ranch, I cut the logs in the woods and saw-milled them, and nailed them. Most of them together, myself, and then I hired finished carpenters – I never was a good finished carpenter, but I was a good rough carpenter. And three of those buildings I built before my men came to work in the morning. I was a man that smoked, see, and ah, I went to bed just to get up to smoke. And I would get up at 3 o'clock in the morning and dress, go out, and with a lantern, and lay a log or two before it was time to milk the cows, Smoke cigarettes. I got up to where I was smoking 4 packs a day. And I wish to God I'd never had, built the houses or smoked the cigarettes, cause that's what's making me move from the country.”

His second sawmill was near the Holzwarth campground, south of the ranch, across the river, moved from the original homestead about 1948 – 49.. Johnnie sawed over 5 million feet of lumber here. They stopped running the sawmill about 1966.



## Ice cutting:

Johnnie remembers clearly that the "absolutely hardest" work he ever did in his life was when he cut ice and loaded it at Grand Lake.

"Ice plow – Rocky Garber gave us and it once belonged to Harry Harbison."

"Every year about Christmas time, when lakes were frozen, we hitched up the team and took the ice cutter and saws and set off to Grand Lake to cut ice –125 - 100-pound blocks of ice were stored in the icehouse. Packed in sawdust, the ice would last all summer. Workers were paid 4 cents for cutting a block of ice, 5 cents if they took it out of the water. Blocks measured 20" x 20" and as thick as the ice was, weighed 100 lbs. A good man could cut 125 blocks a day."

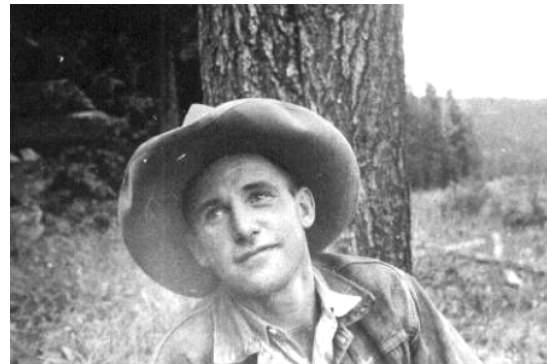
"For many years we cut ice off the beaver ponds, and then we went to hauling it in the truck from Grand Lake. I worked for the Lodge putting up over 2000 cakes of ice. I got paid three dollars and a half for taking care of six head of horses and having them ready before 6 o'clock. And at 7 o'clock we were hitched up and drove to town to haul ice. We could haul about 21-28 cakes to a load, and we'd make three loads a day with one team of horses. I remember when I finished that job, the Grand Lake Lodge bought a brand new sled, which was certainly a mighty fine thing, and the next year they threw four horses on it and I drove a couple of days for them, and they were hauling about 40 cakes to a load. It was a mighty fine sled compared to what we used when we first started. That was all sawed by hand. The ice saw is still at the ranch. I can honestly tell you that the hardest work that there is to do is saw ice."

"There was a great big stout guy, Clint DeWitt, and we took on the job of sawing ice for five cents a cake and pulling them out. Sun Valley was part of his homestead. He was one of the first men I met, and Morris Cowgill, and Al Hause, and Harry Harbison, and old Jim Cairns. There was a lot of talk about old Jim Cairns, all he knew and what he did. But anyway he certainly made sufficient money to take care of the Cairns people. He acquired quite a bit of land."



Johnnie was married on September 25, 1931 to Caroline Elizabeth Lyman Pratt at Pratt's summer cottage at Grand Lake – Johnnie age 29, Caroline 24. Johnnie said “She married me because I had two saddle horses.” They honeymooned on an eight day pack trip through Never Summer Range and over Continental Divide to Estes Park.

Johnnie and Caroline lived in a small cabin with extra rooms added as more children were born, until 1951 when they moved into the house Johnnie occupied at the time of the sale to the park. Daughter Fran remembered hearing that Caroline told Johnnie when they were married that she was never going to chop a stick of wood.



Johnnie killed three sheep before he killed a deer. He killed a deer in 1920. Johnnie killed 25 deer in one year for guests. Johnnie is on record for having shot the 12<sup>th</sup> ranked elk in the United States in the 1958-59 Boone and Crockett Club competition , mounted head was so large an 8 year old could stand upright under it. Antlers of Johnnie's 7<sup>th</sup> largest elk weighed 53 pounds – killed "out of the park". Johnnie had the antlers displayed on the circle and a park ranger came by and commented on their size. That's when he sent the information in and got registered on the Boone and Crockett register. The antlers were stolen in 1962. A few years later all the antlers had been stolen.

### Neversummer Ranch 1959



"I always chose my piece of meat that I'd like to kill. I took my time and deliberately, whether I had a doe or cow license made little difference, but I always liked to pick a nice animal to eat what would start our winter off. It was almost the end of the season when I hadn't shot any elk at all. I had a small haystack which meant a tremendous lot to me, and it was just north of the cabins there up in that meadow. It was in the evening and I had just got my buckets ready to go out and milk the cow, and I looked up there several hundred yards and I saw this big elk come down and look at the haystack. We had a buck fence, and he just took his horns and locked them under the fence and give it a big yank and turned over 5 panels of fence! And it made me mad because that hay was really precious to me. I said to John, who was tagging along, I was going to go milk the cow, "John, you go get an axe and a saw," and I went to the house and got my gun. I said, "I'm going to kill that elk." So I walked up to this haystack, which was in the Park at the time, and legitimately, the elk could get between me and the stack and run west across the river. So I just walked to the river, crossed the bridge and come down in the willows. He was in the willows, and all of a sudden he started up in front of me and I shot him. It turned out to be a record animal. At the time he was recorded, he was the 7<sup>th</sup> largest elk in the world. But when I looked at him and cleaned him I knew that I couldn't eat any of that damn strong meat. But in my business I must have something to tell to my guests, you know, about animals, so I told this story that this elk was so old and tough that when my wife cooked him she had to grind the gravy just so you could get a fork in it, he was so strong that you could smell him three days before you cooked him, and then after I ate any of him, I walked outside and if there was a blonde within 10 blocks, I started bugling!"

"Have you heard the story of where I shot the horns off the elk? This is true. In other words, I had bought these two big race horse colts. I mean, I paid premium money for them. And John had a good quarter horse mare. About that time I had gone to Denver and I had bought a couple of ton of alfalfa, and I had opened up the back door: in the back of the barn, the corral still runs that way, there's a ring there on the east side of this cow barn about 4 feet wide and then it turns at the south end of the barn and its about 6 feet wide. And there's a back door, which is now the boys' bunkhouse. I opened that back door just enough so the cats could get in and out. And this was real bright, nice alfalfa. One day walkin' in to look over this hay I opened up the door, and here was a little ole porcupine, a little bit of a fella, up there on top of this alfalfa. He didn't try to scramble away, and I decided I was going to try and feed him, you know, get him kind of tame. So I got to bringing out every morning some apple. I had just gotten this little ole fella so I could scratch the top of his head, when one day I went to my milk cow, which I was keeping in my horse barn at the time, and her whole face was full of these little ole quills. And I



said, "That's the end of my little porcupine." So I killed my little porcupine. And about that time I figured I'd better close the door. And when I got to the back of the barn, the door had a hole in it where at least 8 or 9 bales of hay were eaten. I didn't think anything and I shoved it shut. About the time I shoved it shut, the next day one of these colts was dead. I wondered what in the world. About two days later here was this other colt, but this colt was all scratched up. And then I begin to check up and I realized it was an elk that was coming back to get into that alfalfa. So I said, "I'll fix Mr. Elk." So I hung a lariat on part of the fence and part of the building, and the next morning I went out there and I had Mr. Elk. I've got some movies of this. I had him around the horns.

When I came out to milk, which was just getting' daylight, that elk was standin' in this runway that goes N & S along the barn about 4 feet, and man he just, whew! right over the top of the fence and that rope just caught him in midair. Threw him end over end. Joe Bloder (Onahu Ranch) and I think the Gills (Kawuneeche Ranch) were there then, and I called Fred McLaren, and John and I. I roped this elk again and pulled his head up against the fence, and

we got the other rope off of him, but that elk wouldn't go. Regardless of what we'd do we couldn't get that elk to move. I can see Fred McLaren quick trying to get him with a whip, and I can see Joe kicking some snow off of the haystack into his face, and John shaking some bells in his face, and so forth like that. He was standing right out back of that door. I went and got a bell and shook it in his face like this; and boy he would strike at it and everything, and somehow I dropped it. Some way or another I couldn't reach it. I stuck my head out that door and he struck me or hit me on the head with his horns, but it didn't hurt me. We tried for three hours to make that elk move, but it wouldn't go. It was right around Christmastime so the whole bunch of us went over, we decided we'd better have a little ole drink, so we drank a quart of rum. Then we decided we were ready to chase the elk, but we still couldn't get him out. I prodded him with a pitchfork and everything but we still couldn't make that elk move. Now this is the way I finally moved that elk. I got a long board and I laid it on the fence and I kept poking him in the face with it. He kept backing up, and all of a sudden he got past the area where the rope wouldn't hold him anymore, and with that he jumped over the fence and I have a picture of him running around through the yard. About a week later he scored up this quarter horse of John's, he just cut it right across the butt. So I called Fred and I said, "I'm going to kill him." He said, "OK, I'll be up." The elk was standing in the little hay pen. Fred and I stood in the barn. I had snared him again, and the rope had caught him around the base of the horse. I said, "I'm going to de-horn that elk." Fred said, "How are you going to do it?" I says, "Fred, I'm going to shoot his horns off." I took my 30-06, which I have with me right now, and I took 10 steel-jacket bullets, and this one of the most interesting things I've ever done in my life as far as shooting is concerned. Not that there was any distance at all, the first shot that elk stood there, he never moved, he never wiggled a horn, or anything like that. He never even blinked an eye. I took five shots and I shot the horn right off his head. Now then, the second horn I did a little better job, and this is what I call the interesting part. The 4<sup>th</sup> shot, the elk was standing there, I mean he never moved, and on the 4<sup>th</sup> shot the second horn began to move, begin to turn down like this, begin to come alongside his face, and he started to shake his head or something....."(tape ran out, darn)

For several years Fred McLaren was the only Park Ranger on the West Side of the Park. One of his primary duties was to prevent poaching the National Park. Johnnie Holzwarth was a past master at spreading rumors and he was always bragging about the numbers and kinds of animals he was taking from the park, most of the time it would be out of season. These stories would immediately get back to Fred McLaren. This went on for quite some time and a cat and mouse game developed. One spring Johnnie was in the Never Summer Range, which was outside the park at that time, and shot and killed a large Bighorn Ram. He brought it down to the Homestead and began butchering it out behind the cabins. The sound of horse steps coming across the valley got his attention so he ran down to the Mama Cabin just as Fred McLaren came around the curve. He dismounted and the two of them stood around and talked about various things, and after a half hour or so Fred got on his horse and left. After he had gone around the curve Johnnie went back to butcher the Bighorn. No sooner had he started until he heard the sound of a horse running across the valley. He again ran down to the Mama Cabin and just in time to see Fred McLaren coming around the curve again. He rode up to Johnnie, got off the horse without saying a word and walked over to him, picked a hair off his shoulder, and said, "Johnnie, if I didn't know better I would swear this hair was a bighorn sheep hair." He got on his horse and left without saying anything else.

**Holzwarth Ranch – 1942>**



John Holzwarth was loaded with stories, “and some of ‘em are true.”

“It was part of my job to sit at the table and you tell a story and another guy tells one, and it reminds you of another one, see, he'll tell his own story and of course you try to outshine the guy. But you're not a good dude rancher unless you can tell a story, and keep your guests entertained.”

Johnnie built his 800-acre ranch "from scratch, with an axe, a fishin' pole, and a gun."



We stayed here regardless of the good days, the bad days and all. One year in 1943 when we were just partially open during the War – I borrowed money to have myself a couple hundred head of cattle and I borrowed money to put up hay and I lost \$1,400 plus all my work! Then I had an accident and cut this boy's arm off and hit him across the chest and I thought my whole place was gone. But I made it, came out of it and just by hard work. I went to work in the tunnel for a dollar an hour and milked for what averaged about 35 cents an hour, but I worked 20 hours a day. I worked to pull us out of the hole.

Johnnie's last fist fight took place on the site of construction for the Colorado Big Thompson Project at Lake Granby.

“I owned about 1200 acres of land down there at the time, and they never asked me permission to be digging on it, and they had a house built and so forth. Old Jim Harvey was running the government crew down there, and I went down to my place in the Granby reservoir. We went over there and this big government man came over and got ahold of me and said, 'Get the hell out of here.' About that time I started going up in the air. He was a fellow about 6'3" and weighed about 225 pounds, and I got him by the necktie and said, 'You son of a bitch, I own as high as you can see and as deep as you can dig, and if you think I am getting out you better start thinking.' (The fight begins) "And I walked around and kicked him in the ass and said, You son of a bitch, you crawl out of my sight or I'll kill you,' and so he crawled about 30 feet and then got up and run!"

## Meet Caroline Elizabeth Pratt

Caroline Elizabeth Pratt was born Sept 15, 1907 to Henry R. Pratt and Frances Lee Pratt. She was brought from Kansas City to Grand Lake in a basket in 1908 or 1909 by her parents and grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Lee who always vacationed in this area and had a summer home on the shore of Grand Lake. Caroline spent summers swimming, boating, horseback riding, and picnicking. The standard picnic menu was remembered to be baked beans and pickles.

She attended the University of Missouri at Columbia and earned master's degree in philosophy and music Caroline graduated Phi Beta Kappa and was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority.



Caroline married John Holzwarth in Grand Lake on September 25, 1931.

## Neversummer Ranch - 1959





The following was written by Caroline Holzwarth after she rode a horse to Grand Lake at night to play bridge with friends.

### **Caroline's trip to town – 1932 – by Caroline Pratt**

It was a perfect day, and fortunately there was an excuse for going to town, an excuse which could easily be exaggerated into a duty to relieve my domestic conscience of the burden of keeping the home fires burning. For three days snow had been falling, with so little accompanying wind that most of the fluffy whiteness had lain undisturbed wherever a tree, log, fence, stump, or even a telephone wire had interrupted its gentle fall from the skies; and the ground, even the road, was covered with its soft new blanket, unbroken except by an occasional squirrel's dainty little tracks, or the sweeping path of a porcupine, or the sturdy prints of a coyote's paws. The day was cloudy, with the kind mildness in the air that pearly gray skies seem to betoken when the winds are at rest and the forests are still. For three miles I rode through a land of silent whiteness, each tiny branch of each little jack pine holding its puff of snow, each broad branch of each tall, strong, graceful spruce bearing its mound of white. Sometimes the mounds looked like crouching cats, like the handkerchief rabbits Grandmother used to make and bounce off her hand to amuse us children; and sometimes the trees were dainty ladies of many generations ago, wearing hoopskirts and dresses of countless fluffy lacy ruffles. I lived in a fairyland that day. Yes, more than that. Surely if heaven were tangible, it would be like this in its silent purity.

Three miles from home live our next-door neighbors. Promptly after a storm, they plow the road out, so from there on the road was no longer mine alone; but still it was white, and after all, one family using a road doesn't spoil its solitude. In fact, that bit of life and industry only heightened my consciousness of the remoteness of our home and the simplicity of mountain life. The next seven miles were no less enjoyable than the first three.

I wonder which is more beautiful, starting out in a land made new and enchanting over night, or coming home in the evening through the same enchanting land you've become familiar with on the way down. By evening the clouds had broken just enough to make the sunset gorgeous – blue and pink and gold and silver and radiant. And then came twilight, and the closing of the clouds once more, as if a curtain had been parted only long enough to show the glory of a winter sunset, and then the gray half-dark of night in a land of snow. The stillness was more quiet than silence itself. The only sounds in my world were hardly sounds at all, but I could hear, or feel in some way, the soft crunching of the horse's hoofs in the loose snow and the rhythmic creaking of the saddle, and perhaps the faint falling of snow on snow as the horse's trotting feet sprayed it out from beneath them.

I sang a little bit – a hymn, a Negro song, a baby's lullaby – because song comes unbidden when the heart is exultant and at peace. My songs didn't even break the silence, for song and silence and night and whiteness and I were all one. Soon I passed a house, with its cozy lights telling me of warmth and home – joys and happy lives; and one more house, a house surrounded by snow-laden trees which sparkled on the border of the path of light from the windows. I thought of a shining-faced baby peeping out of a wooly hood as I looked at the house with its halo of fleecy snow.

Three more miles now, up a hill, through thick pine woods, across a flat – Suddenly there came the weird howl and sharp ki-yi-yi-yip-yip of a coyote, of a pack of coyotes, no, of a single coyote alone in the wilderness across the meadow from me. It is a sound that belongs to winter nights and sends tremors down your back, not shivers of terror, but thrills of intimacy with the mountain wilds, of awareness of life that we can't experience, of the loneliness of existence in a cold, harsh winter land.

Across a flat, then two more miles. The horse took a new interest in the trip as we started up the last hill, through the last tall spruces. The quiet thud, thud, thud, thud quickened slightly and told of more effortless progress as we came within scent of the barn. Perhaps I unconsciously hurried her a little more as I anticipated coming around the last bend in the road. Ah, yes! There it was – home, with its warm lights flung through the small-paned windows onto the snowy ground, and the odor of wood smoke coming from the chimney. At that moment the day and the night were sweeter, gentler, more friendly than at any time during my happy ride.



John and Caroline had a son, John G. Holzwarth, III born in Denver, December 1, 1933. On March 5, 1935 Virginia Lyman Holzwarth was born and ten years later, October 10, 1945, another daughter, Mary Frances Holzwarth. With each addition to the family, rooms were added to the house and in 1951 a new home was built west of the Colorado River.



Little John went off to college at CSU.



Virginia had many illnesses. Her arm was broken in 1942, she knocked cartilage loose in her knee in 1947 and had to wear a cast a month then had a tumor operation in 1947, and later strained her hip skiing.

Mary Holzwarth, wife of John III told Leslie Hamilton , RMNP, that when Virginia had the trouble with her knee that started the cancer. When Virginia was older, one leg was shorter than the other. On March 10, 1952 Virginia Lyman Holzwarth died when she was a senior in High School. She had cancer (Hodgkins) in her leg and her parents had the choice of cutting off her leg or trying to cure it. They decided to try the cure, but lost the gamble. Lyman was Herb (Caroline's brother) and Caroline's grandmother's maiden name, Agnes Lyman Lee.



John III married Mary Louise Blythe in 1954. John met Mary in California and she came to Grand Lake to work at the ranch. They had four children: Stephen Henry, John Carl-JC, Howard, and Julia Blythe. The boys live in Grand County. John worked with his father in ranching and the sawmill and ran the camping operation in the Kawuneeche Valley until the land was sold to the park. On June 12, 1977 John was injured in a motorcycle accident and was paralyzed. He presently lives in Grand Junction, Colorado and returns to the ranch about once a year.



Mary Frances (Fran) went to school at American University in Washington, D. C. and married William Needham on February 1, 1969 at Trinity in the Pines in Grand Lake. The Needhams operated the Neversummer Ranch in 1973-74 before it was dismantled. They have two children: Captain William A. Needham, III who is a nurse and spent five months in Kosovo and Caroline Elizabeth who lives in Phoenix and works in finance. They both graduated from Middle Park High School. Bill and Fran Needham lived in Granby where Fran has a bookkeeping business and Bill Needham owned Alpine Office Supply. Bill died in 2009 and Fran lives in Arizona.

Mr. and Mrs. John G. Holzwarth were honored Citizens of the Year at Middle Park Fair in 1964

Caroline was past president of Music Club and Women's Club of Grand Lake, past president of Middle Park YWCA, secretary of the local school board for nine years before reorganization.

Caroline Holzwarth died on November 21, 1965, Thanksgiving Day. She was 58 years old. Caroline's death (according to Patience Kemp) was sudden and unexpected. She had a massive stroke after a busy day at an ice cream social and after taking care of grandchildren, etc. The doctor had told her she had high blood pressure.

Johnnie also had Caroline's horse killed as he had saddled the horse for Caroline every day. The Holzwarth family had a tradition of burying the bridles along with the body.



Virginia and Caroline's graves – Grand Lake Cemetery



John Holzwarth, II was active in the Grand Lake community. He was an Arapaho National Forest Counselor for 27 years, member and past president Grand Lake Rotary Club, member and past president Chamber of Commerce, member Colorado Dude Ranch Association, member and past president Grand County Pioneer Society, chairman of committee researching a book of Grand County called Island in Rockies, and originator of the idea for a ski tow for Grand Lake School ski hill, and secured money to install it.

On December 24, 1971, Christmas Eve at midnight at the Trinity Church of the Pines in Grand Lake – minister James C. Kenney married Johnnie Holzwarth and Wanda V. (Beck) Fiechter.

Wanda told on June 12, 1977 how she met Johnnie. She's from Longmont and had been divorced fifteen years before she met him. She was raising a daughter by working at Safeway and had been transferred to a Denver store. She didn't usually work at the checkout lanes, but on one particular day she was. She was checking and saw this guy in ski clothes pacing around impatiently with his basket. She figured he was in a hurry so she went out and got his basket to check. There wasn't any real food in it, just junk or party food, so she asked him if he was having a party. "Yes, do you want to come?" "Where is it?" "Grand Lake." "Where's Grand Lake" He told her, and she said, "Why would anyone want to go clear up there this time of year?" "If you don't want to go up to Grand Lake, how about going to the Stock Show with me?" She hemmed and stalled, and finally said she'd go if he'd pick her up at her sisters. She wanted her sister's approval; after all she'd only just met him at Safeway? That evening she went to her sisters; she waited and waited and he never came. "Here I haven't had a date in fifteen years and now I've been stood up!" Finally she went home. But, all along, he'd been in the right apartment building looking for her, but he'd lost the apartment number and forgot her sister's name! He called her the next day and told her what had happened. Instead of being mad she laughed and laughed, and they knew right away they'd hit it off. And so they went to the Stock Show that night and eventually were married.

In 1974 the Homestead was purchased by the Nature Conservancy and held for transfer to the National Park Service after Congress approved the funds and purchase of the land. Tours were given by the Nature Association at the ranch in 1974 followed by ten years of Living History by park interpreters.

### **John Holzwarth and RMNP Supt. Contor**

#### **John supervising Porgy & Bess - 1974**





Wanda says, "Johnnie is a very unusual man..." John had stroke in 1974. Wanda and Johnnie lived a year in Mama cabin. They'd cook breakfast on Admiral Blue. She grew a garden behind the shop – lettuce mostly. They stay in Denver so they can be close to medical care. Wanda and Johnnie still travel often. In 1977 they did the Civil War, a 6,000 mile trip to Georgia and south. Wanda drives the big camper and even drove it all the way to Alaska a few years ago. This summer, 1977, they plan to fly to Alaska for two weeks to visit Wanda's daughter and family Suzanne Jones, who lived there.

In 1971 they bought an apartment in Littleton and a hunting cabin near Springfield. There he made a private hunting preserve and during the last five years he raised race horses. They made an annual trip to the Kentucky Derby and hunting trips in the fall. In the fall of 1982 Johnnie killed two birds in one shot despite a stroke that had left one arm almost totally useless.

Wouldn't he have loved to tell this story around the campfire?

Johnnie was sometimes ornery and often stubborn, sometimes bigoted and sometimes sympathetic. He is remembered as not the kind of man people feel neutral about – either you liked him or you didn't like him. (from obituary by Allen Best in Winter Park Manifest)

John G. Holzwarth died Friday, April 1, 1983 at Swedish Medical Center. He was 80 years old. Memorial services were held at 2 p.m., Wednesday, April 6 at Trinity Church of Pines, Grand Lake. Memorial contributions went to the Grand Lake Historical Society. His ashes were scattered in his hay field on the ranch.