

John Steinle Slideshow Outline—Volunteers Creating Communities

1. Title slide

2. Volunteers of Mount Vernon Ladies Association save Mount Vernon, home of George Washington in 1858.

3. This volunteer organization still owns and maintains George Washington's home.

4. Another iconic American place, the Alamo, saved by volunteers in the daughters of the republic of Texas.

5. Let's go now to western Jefferson county 1877, in the new state of Colorado near the tiny recently named community of Evergreen, in the area known as Buffalo Park. Through their desire to give their children an education, several French Canadian ranching families decided to build their own school on a totally volunteer basis. The Roy, Vezina and Mallett families led the way and Antoine Roy, on the far right in this Roy family photo, and Selim Vezina built the log structure on the Vezina ranch.

6. The result was this building, a tiny log structure which often held as many as 22 students in its 10 by 12 foot space, warmed by a potbellied stove on winter days. As small and primitive as it was, along with churches and general stores, schools were among the basic building blocks of turning a place into a community.

Buffalo Park School was active until 1923, after a new brick school was built in Evergreen.

Mrs. Caroline Riel Vezina, daughter-in-law of Selim, recognized its historical value; and when the family ranch was sold in 1948, she had it moved log by log and placed next to her home, but with the stipulation that she retain ownership of the schoolhouse until such time as she could find someone to take it and guarantee its preservation.

7. The Evergreen Woman's Club requested this responsibility. Mrs. Vezina, herself a member of the club for many years, enthusiastically agreed, and the building was moved to the grounds of Wilmot Elementary School in 1967.

8. Nowadays, second grade students from around the Evergreen area visit our old schoolhouse as a part of their pioneer studies. Learning how important education was to Evergreen pioneers and how the school helped build a community.

9. Medlen school in tiny community of Medlen along South Turkey Creek. Volunteer residents built their own log school in 1886.

10. Later the school was moved across the road to escape flooding from the creek, and sided over with white clapboard. A small building called the teacherage but probably a coal storage shed was built, and in the 1930s two WPA Eleanor-style outhouses were added. It continued as a school until 1954.

11. When the Jefferson county schools were consolidated, the school district sold the school to the south turkey creek community center for \$1. For the next 38 years it continued to be used as a community center and the teacherage was the Medlen library. The community center later sold the property to the south turkey creek improvement association who deeded it to JCHS in 1992. JCHS renovated the building with a new foundation and was able to place it on the national register of historic places. Many other improvements and every summer the society holds day camps, run by volunteers, for children where they reenact the lives of one room school students in the 1920s.

12. Conifer Junction School was built by local residents in 1923 to replace the many ageing one-room schools in the area. Almost immediately it became a center for the community, as shown in this 1923 newspaper article describing the volunteer efforts to improve the school grounds.

13. Conifer Junction School was a beloved community focal point for many years, as shown in this 1953 photo of Phebe Granzella and her 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students. Part of the school became the local library, and then it was used as a kindergarten, where willie nelson's daughter attended.

14. In 2012 the school district closed the conifer school permanently and surplused the building, donating it to the newly formed volunteer group conifer historical society and museum.

15. Today volunteers from the Conifer Historical Society maintain the school and two other buildings and offer excellent historical programs which sell out virtually every time.

16. The building is now known as the Little White Schoolhouse and it continues to be a focal point for the conifer community.

17. Now I'm going to spread my net a bit wider and talk about a national volunteer preservation group – Historicorps. Historicorps was founded in 2009 as a cooperative program between the U.S. Forest Service and Colorado Preservation Inc. The group was modeled on the depression-era agency the Civilian Conservation Corps. Its first project was renovation of the ranger station and historic buildings on Main Street Saguache, Colorado.

18. Just in 2017 and this year, Historicorps completed 34 historic preservation projects all across the country. And I just learned that they are moving their regional headquarters from downtown Denver to right here in Jefferson county at the old CCC camp in Morrison. What more fitting place could they have chosen?

19. Locally, in 2014 the Historicorps volunteers renovated the original bell tower at the church of the transfiguration in evergreen, built by master builder Jock Spence in 1911 and previously renovated by the engineers to the Army Reserve in 1977.

20. Two other local restoration projects by Historicorps include recent work on the Well House at Little Park near Idledale to repair it and restore the original cupola, and renovation work on the original CCC camp buildings in Morrison, which will become the regional Historicorps headquarters.

21. Another volunteer group that has had a tremendous impact on preservation is the Mountain Area Land Trust, MALT. Concerned about population growth and development in the evergreen area, Linda Rockwell hosted a community meeting at Hiwan homestead museum in 1992 to discuss the possibility of a non-profit land stewardship group. MALT was incorporated the following year and MALT volunteers succeeded in raising more than \$200,000 in the Evergreen area to save Noble Meadow from development.

22. Today, though MALT has a small staff of eight people, much of its work in fundraising, community relations and other activities is done by – you guessed it – volunteers.

23. One of MALT's biggest achievements involved 15 years of effort and the raising of more than \$21 million dollars, and that was the preservation of the Beaver Brook Watershed. This project saved more than 6,000 pristine acres of wilderness west of Evergreen, now administered by the U.S. Forest service and Clear Creek County open space. The watershed area provides a wildlife corridor between Jeffco Open Space's Elk Meadow Park in Evergreen and Mount Evans, with populations of mountain lion, elk, deer, bear, and wild turkeys plus rare plant species. And this all grew from one small volunteer meeting at Hiwan Homestead Museum.

24. Finally, I would like to point out a group that ended up having possibly the most far-ranging effect of any comparable volunteer group in Jefferson county. That would be Plan Jeffco. Plan Jeffco began in Carol Karlin's living room in 1972 with a meeting of citizens who were concerned about the relentless spread of suburban growth throughout the county. They felt that something had to be done to save the remaining open lands before it was too late.

25. Joining with the League of Women Voters, Plan Jeffco put together a volunteer campaign to put a resolution on the ballot to create a county open space program funded by a one half of one percent sales tax to buy and preserve natural and cultural areas of value.

26. Volunteers for the campaign went door-t-door and also approached city officials with the plan, not always with positive results.

27. The plan was eventually approved by the voters, but even then the battle wasn't over. The photo is from 1978 when Plan Jeffco fought another battle, to keep open space funds from being diverted to other county projects, a time that veteran Jeffco Open Space employees refer to as the "dark days". That's Mike Moore leading the other Plan Jeffco volunteers in prayer in typically dramatic fashion.

28. The result of Plan Jeffco's efforts was the creation of Jefferson County Open Space, which now preserves more than 55,000 acres of precious natural beauty and culturally significant sites.

29. Besides the natural beauty of the Jefferson County landscape, open space also protects paleontological, archaeological and historic sites that illuminate the entire time span on the land and its people.

30. Open space was created by volunteers and in turn it fosters volunteerism. At last count more than 2,000 people volunteered their time to assist in open space programs and projects, many of them educational.

31. Jeffco Open Space hosts a large number of education programs, most of them presented by volunteers. Hiwan Homestead Museum on the left, Lookout Mountain Nature Center on the right.

32. Much of the work in constructing trails, monitoring wildlife, greeting and guiding visitors, and educating the public is done by volunteers for open space. Volunteerism stimulates and creates more volunteerism.

33. So the volunteer spirit that created, sustained, and preserved communities and the land and our history is still strong in Jefferson county. Just to prove my point, how many people here today are volunteers? There you have it!