

## Knearl School History

Around the turn of the last century, Brush area farmers started raising sugar beets. This crop flourished and soon became the second leg of economic sustenance, along with cattle, for the region. In the years to follow, German migrant laborers needed to tend and harvest the massive sugar beet crops moved through the area. Soon, many of these families decided to call Brush home and most settled in the area of town to the south of the railroad tracks. Soon, it became evident that a school needed to be built to serve this new neighborhood.

William "Billy" Knearl, who was a merchant, post master and president of the school board, donated the land for this new school. Named for and dedicated in his honor in 1910, the Knearl School provided the educational needs of children in grades one through eight. As the community continued to grow, the school was restructured to house grades one through three. After 61 years of service, the school was closed in 1971 with the consolidation of the local school system. Since 1992, the Knearl School building has housed the Brush Area Museum and Cultural Center. A fitting use for the oldest surviving school building in Brush.

Knearl School is now surrounded by a large recreational complex that includes the Morgan County Fairgrounds, a city park, an RV park, picnic grounds, playground, recreational facilities and Doty Pond, a fishing hole enjoyed by the young and the young at heart. The Knearl School building is considered one of the last tangible links to the history of elementary education in Brush. It is also closely associated with the sugar beet laborers of, first, German, then Mexican decent who not only formed the backbone of the economic vitality in the area, but left a rich social legacy that makes Brush one of the most unique and colorful places in Northeast Colorado.



WILLIAM KNEARL



*Knearl School Building*

## Brush Museum History

Brush has always been a community that while keeping an eye on its future, maintains a pride in its past. In the early 1990's an effort was begun by a handful of Brush citizens to start a museum to help preserve its history. By 1992, the first Brush Area Museum board was formed and status as a not for profit tax exempt entity was achieved. Fundraising efforts and membership drives were being actively pursued, when, in Dec. 1994 the estate of former Brush resident Ada Cooper presented the museum with a check for \$100,000. These funds were instrumental in getting the museum project up and running.

In 1992, the City of Brush made a gift of the old Knearl School to the museum, about the same time that the designation of a national historic building was bestowed upon the structure. February 1998 marked the start of refurbishing the old school building with that work being completed in May 1999. The remodeling project consisted of new wiring, plumbing, heating, cooling and security systems being installed. The interior was also completely renovated including new handicap accessible restrooms for an elevator. Brush has had a long history of putting on a Fourth of July celebration and parade that has garnered national attention, so it was only natural to choose July 4th 1999 as the date for the dedication of Brush's newest attraction, the Brush Area Museum and Cultural Center.

In the years since that dedication, the museum has been active in the community, hosting a number of events and theme exhibits each year. Even though the museum has been the winner of many grants, including those awarded by El Pomar, Gill Family Gay & Lesbian Fund and the Anschutz Family Foundation, the real winners are the citizens of the Brush area who have a wonderful and dynamic historical resource that they can be proud of.

**Brush is located 90 miles NE of Denver on I-76**



## Brush Area Museum and Cultural Center



314 S. Clayton St.  
PO Box 341  
Brush, CO 80723

(970) 842-0382



# How you can become a museum supporter

## Please consider one of the following options:

- \$10 - Single Person annual support donation
- \$25 - Family annual support donation
- \$50 - Small business annual support donation
- \$100 - Large business annual support donation

Name:

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Phone:

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Knearl Alumnus?

Would you like to be on our volunteer list?

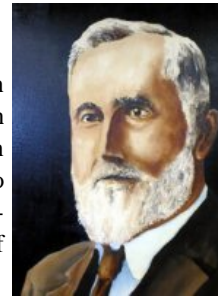
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Please fill out, tear off and return  
with your donation to:

Brush Area Museum & Cultural Center  
PO Box 341  
Brush, CO 80723

## Named for Brush

As with many western towns, Brush owes its conception to the railroad. In Brush's case it was where the Burlington railroad spur from McCook, Neb. To Denver crossed the path of the Texas-Montana cattle trail in the summer of 1882.



As the story goes, a telegraph operator at the local depot asked his boss what he should call the place and the answer was "Why don't you name it after that fellow who ships all those cattle from there.."

Jared L. Brush arrived in Colorado in 1859 and settled close to Greeley. By 1868 he was well on his way to running a 3,000 acre spread boasting 32,000 head of cattle. Elected Weld County sheriff, serving in the Colorado Legislature and twice as lieutenant governor, Brush was one of the state's most prominent citizens, and proudly lent his name to the bustling new community.

Serving as the railhead for the area, and receiving irrigation water from the newly completed Beaver Canal, Brush's chances of prosperity and growth were greater than many other railroad towns of the day. By the time it was incorporated in 1884, more than 100 people already called Brush home.

With the introduction of sugar beets as a cash crop in 1900, there was no turning back for Brush. By 1906, 5,000 acres of agricultural land were dedicated to the mighty beet and, in the fall of that year, a sugar factory was completed that could process 600 tons of sugar laden pulp a day. The mill was in production until 1955.

A hospital and nursing home that would one day garner international recognition, Eben-Ezer was incorporated in 1903 with Rev. Jens Madsen at the helm. Until his death in 1946, Rev. Madsen's driving force was the spiritual and physical healing that the Eben-Ezer institution still carries on today.

In the years leading up to the great depression the community prospered and grew. There were many achievements that heralded this growth, chief among them was a network of highways connecting Brush to the rest of the state. Also important was the purchase of property and equipment to create Memorial Park, which is still the area's major complex of recreational facilities and where the Brush Area Museum is now located.

The area survived its most damaging natural disaster in 1935

when Brush was hit by a flash flood and most of the town was covered by two to four feet of water. Thanks to an advance warning, only four people lost their lives.

The mid 30's also marked the beginning of a surge in cattle feeding operations that showed consistent growth that continued up to the mid 50's. Thanks to new technology, locally grown feed and the Brush Livestock Association, over 30,000 cattle could be fed simultaneously with area sales of up to 90,000 head per year.

Another unique aspect of Brush history is the town's involvement in horse racing. Area residents enjoyed casual racing since 1925, and, when pari-mutuel betting was made legal in 1949, Brush's Memorial Park track was the first in the state to hold sanctioned races. This sometimes controversial but popular sport continued to financially benefit the community until betting in Colorado was officially discontinued in 1964. Although not raised in Brush, Pat Day, one of racings most celebrated jockeys, was born here and maintains ties to the community and family members still in the area.

Black gold has been suspected to lurk below the plains of the area since about 1913. The first oil bearing well was drilled in 1931, but reportable production was not established until 1952. By 1953, one of the biggest producing wells in Colorado history was pumping 3,600 barrels a day. The oil boom sparked the largest surge of growth in the county's history.

The most controversial development in Brush history was the building of the 500 megawatt Pawnee Power Plant. Being a coal fired steam generation plant, water usage and pollution were the biggest concerns. Despite the controversy, license was granted to build and operate the power plant and on Dec. 6, 1981 the new 466.5 million dollar generation plant went online. Its addition to the area has been an economical shot in the arm.

The history of the community, however, is more than its economic base. It is also in great part the contribution of its people, institutions, government and organizations. Many outstanding families and individuals have contributed blood, sweat and tears to make the Brush area what it is today. With that in mind, it is the mission of the Brush Area Museum to, not only remember and give homage to the area's past, but to facilitate the building of a rich environment to empower future generations to continue on the path of progress that has been laid down by our area's pioneers.