

on Friday, Feb. 17 to discuss *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. All patrons are welcome to attend this monthly book group.

On Friday, Feb. 24 from 2 to 3, Colorado Springs fiber artist and author Mary Madison will tell stories of Southern plantation slave weavers. She'll include a slide presentation and oral histories taken from former slaves. Copies of her book *Plantation Slave Weavers* will be available for sale. No registration is necessary.

On Friday, March 3 from 10:30 to noon there will be a program about the basics of acupuncture. Randy Johnson, certified Seitai Shinpo practitioner from the

Manitou Springs Clinic of Acupuncture will explain basic techniques, show equipment, and answer questions. No registration required.

On the walls and in the display cabinet during February will be art work by Lewis-Palmer high School students.

Palmer Lake Library events

The Palmer Lake Library book group meets on the first Friday of each month at 9 a.m. Call the library at 481-2587 for the current title. All patrons are welcome to attend.

On Saturday, Feb. 18 at 10:30 join the Young Rembrandts for a free program. Registration is required for this program so that sufficient materials will be available for all. Young Rembrandt's elementary-age curriculum is designed to teach basic to advanced drawing skills, art techniques, and vocabulary. This program promotes and encourages creative expression.

Please note that all Pikes Peak Library District libraries will be closed on Monday, Feb. 20 for Presidents' Day.

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Palmer Lake Historical Society, Jan. 19

2016 presentations recalled at annual meeting

By Sigi Walker

On Jan. 19, the Palmer Lake Historical Society's (PLHS) Annual Potluck and Membership Meeting was held at the Palmer Lake Town Hall. The PLHS furnished the ham, rolls, coffee, and tea. Attendees brought a wide array of salads, side dishes, and desserts. Local artist Joe Bohler entertained with his magical honky-tonk piano.

Following the election of 2017 officers, PLHS President Tom Baker used a slide presentation to recap the 2016 activities and accomplishments of the society. In retrospect, it is quite an impressive list. Programs informed us about boys who were Civil War soldiers, early autos, races, and traffic rules in the Pikes Peak area, the importance of spinning in the West, Spencer and Julie Penrose, Charles Goodnight and his legacy, Colorado inventors and their inventions, Juan Bautista de Anza and Comanche Chief Cuerno Verde, and the "tale" of East and West Husted. We sponsored three events: A Walking Tour of the Monument Tree Nursery Site, the Annual Fathers' Day Ice Cream Social, and the Annual Return of the Rocky Mountain Chautauqua. All were free and open to all who wanted to participate.

Education and outreach activities included the PLHS Newsletter, published three times a year; the maintenance of the PLHS website and Facebook page; support of the Coalition of Pikes Historical Museums;

provision of content (through research by PLHS member Jack Anthony) for the Aspen Grove sculpture signage; support for Jim Sawatzki's new film, *Star on Sundance*; support for the Western Museum of Mining & Industry "Restoration Day"; and presence of a PLHS information table at Parker Day and museum summer programs.

The 2017 programs and events schedule was available for attendees to pick up. The 2017 Tri-Lakes Historical Calendar, featuring a cover painting by Joe Bohler, and supported by our advertisers, was also available at the meeting.

Mark your calendars for Thursday, Feb. 16, when Mike and Sigi Walker will tell the story of a 19th-century "robber baron." He was one of the nation's wealthiest but least known entrepreneurs, a peer of the likes of Aster, Carnegie, Mellon, Rockefeller, and Stanford, and he made his money from Colorado coal! Find out who John Cleveland Osgood was, what his relationship to Pueblo's Colorado Fuel & Iron (CF&I) was, and how he was connected to the Ludlow Massacre. You'll get a glimpse of his legacy: the town of Redstone, Colo., the line of brick and cinder block "huts" along Highway 133, and the 42-room Tudor mansion just south of the town.

This program is free and open to all. Venue is the Palmer Lake Town Hall. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the



Above (L to R): Alaina Bohler, Joe Bohler, and PLHS past President Phyllis Bonser are pictured at the annual meeting, where Joe Bohler played his unique style of honky-tonk piano. The Bohlers are longtime members of the society. *Photo by Doris Baker.*

program begins at 7. Light refreshments are served after the presentation. ■

High Altitude Natural Gardening

Forest habitat: It's why we are here

By Janet Sellers

Most of us moved to the Tri-Lakes area for the natural beauty of the forests and mountains. These natural attractions have taken many millions of years to develop, and we love their grandeur. But for the home gardener, not all soils are created equal, and sometimes the transplanted humans can have a hard time making friends and planting flowers and food with the native soil.

There is a very good reason for this. The forest eco-system evolved to support itself, not tomatoes and carrots. It has wonderful vegetation and life and decay cycles specific to its needs and its future. That said, invasive species (European settlers) have brought in all manner of attempts to change that eco-system.

Now my question is, are we killing our forests? I have a confession to make. For the last few years, I've touted worm towers and using composting worms to make great vegetable and flower garden soil, but only for contained, raised food production and flower beds to amend soil for that purpose. Worms work great to break down our kitchen organic matter for that, but only in a raised bed or indoor container situation because it is dangerous to our forests! The composting idea using kitchen scraps makes soil related to the nutrients for those common market-type vegetables (invasive species, by the way) that people eat, but it can destroy our forests. As invasive species, the worms destroy the natural local decaying organic matter that our local forests depend on for nutrients for their life cycle.

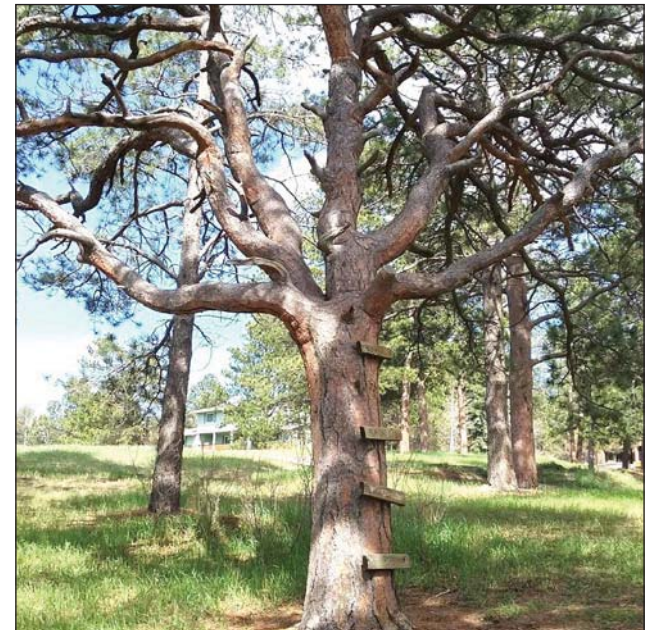
According to Peter Groffman, a microbial ecologist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, when earthworms colonize forest floors, they destroy the rich layer of organic matter that sustains forest plants and animals. He said, "You can go out to these forests where these earthworms are and you can see basically bare mineral soil and some earthworm castes on the surface. There's great concern that this is a fundamental change in forests, making them more susceptible to erosion, reducing their ability to store carbon and nitrogen from the atmosphere, and then having a negative effect on biodiversity—especially these spring ephemeral plants like trillium and trout lily, and salamanders."

Conventional wisdom is that earthworms improve soil by aerating it, so their establishment might seem like a non-issue. But forest soils are already well-aerated, and with earthworms, "Within about three to five years, the forest floor just disappears."

For the sake of our forests, we need to keep any composting we look to do as far away from our forested areas as possible. Earthworms have been touted for decades as beneficial, but it depends on where they reside, and many were imported (by accident) from Europe and proliferated. In the Pacific Northwest, there are no native earthworms. They all vanished with the glaciers, and any found now are not only foreign but dangerous to the ecosystem to the tune of obliterating the forests. The forests are well-aerated by their own ecosystems, and when fishermen dump out their worms on the shore near the forests, within three to five years, the forest floor just disappears.

This is not to say that forests don't support food for humans and animals. Historically, in foraging culture, there are many fruit and vegetable-type edible plants throughout the Rocky Mountain forests, but most of us don't know about those edible plants. I wrote about the foraging delicacies here for fun in the past few years, but now we need to be vigilant and really seek out the native edibles. Many of these are similar to familiar foods, if we just know what to look for. I have it on good authority from foraging experts, such as the Colorado Mycological Society that offers hikes, and various groups in the mushroom science boom, that the morel mushrooms of the Front Range are amazing, and there are native edibles that eat like spinach, celery, asparagus (steamed early cattail stalks), and more.

Forest immersion, aka forest bathing, is as ancient as the Native American life in our region, and currently is a popular activity in our area, and we know instinctively that our pine forests are important to our overall health. We are the ones lucky enough to live so near to them, to benefit our health with a walk in the forest and enjoy the air and hear the sounds of nature as well as be filled with the forests' health giving treasures of all kinds.



Above: A Native American culturally modified ponderosa pine tree in Woodmoor shows that the ancient Americans were involved in forestry long ago. They created culturally modified forms within a grand scheme of forestry with knowledge that has been passed down through the ages to the Native American families that cared diligently for the special Culturally Modified Trees in our area. This Native American modified tree has ligature marks and a variety of modifications exemplifying an extremely advanced understanding of arboriculture and forestry management. (The ladder steps are obviously an addition of very recent inhabitants in the last 25 years or so). *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

I recently saw the details for herbal supplements touting the benefits of pine bark extract.

The package indicates benefits of the pine bark that the Ute have known and used for millennia. The extract contains free radical scavenging OPC's and supports healthy insulin function, blood vessel and cardiovascular health, healthy cholesterol levels, and skin, eye, and hair