

from the **SUMMIT DAILY**: Letters to the Editor

October 20, 2017

DOES THE GORE RANGE REALLY NEED A NAME CHANGE?

Joe Kramarsic, Dillon

I read with interest in the Summit Daily about the current misguided effort to change the name of the Gore Range to the Shining Mountains because some politically correct people have their feelings hurt from a hunting trip by the Irish baronet Lord St. George Gore to the present states of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana in the 1850s. This proposal backed by the Summit County Commissioners prompts me to take a closer look at some of the other name changes we might consider in our fair county today.

In the southern part of our county is the town of Breckenridge and the ski resort of Breckenridge. The town is named in honor after John C. Breckinridge, the 14th Vice President of the United States 1857-1861 in the hopes of gaining a post office for the fledgling town site. Breckinridge was a Kentuckian and an advocate of a states rights position against the interference with slavery.

When the vice president went south as a general in the Confederate Army during the Civil War the pro-Union citizens of the town covered their tracks with a slight of hand by substituting an "e" for the first "i" in the name as the new spelling became Breckenridge.

The name has been something of a secret for years among the locals in the hopes none of the tourists will ever find out the real origin. But there are a lot of college kids that come to recreate in Breckenridge from campuses where the rage today is to change any name that smacks of slavery or confederacy.

In the event some of these snooty kids find out this secret we have got to be prepared. So I am assigning Mayor Eric Mamula of the town and resort COO John Buhler to come together for possible damage control.

Outside of Breckenridge, we have Barney Ford Hill formerly known as the "N-word Hill." It was named for an early black resident of Breckenridge who was swindled out of his claim by

October 31, 2017

RANGE RENAMING DIFFERENT FROM REST

Bill Betz, Pebble Creek

Joe Kramarsic is correct — efforts to rename places and monuments have increased; some would say they have gotten out of hand, with calls in Colorado to remove names like Evans, Byers, Pitkin, and more. Below, I would like to make the case that Gore's case is fundamentally different from all the others. While they each possessed strong positive traits that offset their flaws, Gore exhibited un-counterpoised badness.

It is not a simple situation. While ideologues make categorical declarations, from "rename nothing!" to "rename anything!" most people (including the U.S. Geological Survey Committee on Names) take a more sanguine view, and require that the pros and cons be weighed for each individual proposal. And generally, it's not enough for a man's (and they all seem to be men) character flaw to cancel entirely a career otherwise rich with accomplishment and service. On this basis, I think it's likely that Evans, Byers, Pitkin — nearly all of them — will see their namesakes persist. (Fortunately for them, their misdeeds did not sink to the level of treason, like the Confederate generals whose monuments are being removed.)

St. George Gore's case is completely different. I cannot find anything good about the man during his three year hunting rampage in the U.S. Sure, he paid his staff well, but even so, most of them turned against him in the end.

On the flip side, in the virtual absence of anything positive to say about the man, I ask myself: Just how bad was he? He wasn't the only person slaughtering buffalo (ultimately to within a whisker of extinction), but at least the other hunters took hides. Gore left most of his game to rot on the prairie. One naturally wonders if people even cared back then. While the environmental ethic was still a few decades out from explicit expression, it certainly existed in the way people lived in the more populous regions to the east (my ancestors in Iowa included); they would have condemned Gore for his wasteful

the fair miners of the town. The "N-word" name was changed in 1964 but is a reminder of the past bigotry in the Kingdom. Since this name is settled I am not assigning anyone to look further into this case.

Just west of the Eisenhower Tunnel we have a mountain in our county named Coon Hill. I have always wondered what sinister connotation that name represented. I have never had the time to research it myself so I am assigning that to Commissioner Karn Stiegelmeier, whose feelings have been hurt by the Lord Gore name. And Karn, if your research leads you into some deep, dark hole of past Summit County history, don't worry, as I've got your back covered.

Further north in the county we have a tributary of the Blue River named Squaw Creek. This name has been on the maps for quite awhile, being undetected through the feminist era, equal rights and glass ceiling conversations such that I wonder why nobody has been enraged by this one. Since I have Ms. Stiegelmeier assigned to the Coon Hill project, I am assigning another Lord Gore detractor, Leon Joseph Littlebird, to check into this one. I have heard Leon play his hurt feelings on his flute so I think my choice is a good one for this.

And as to those other Lord Gore detractors for the mountain range name itself, what are we going to do about all those other Lord Gore names? There is Gore Pass, Gore Creek, Gore Lake, Gore Canyon, the climber's Gore Thumb in the range and a whole telephone book full of Gore Range businesses. This one will be a huge effort, so I am assigning that to Commissioner Thomas Davidson, who seems to be a regular go to guy for these kinds of projects.

And speaking of businesses, how did the establishment of Pug Ryan's in Dillon ever get a liquor license? Don't people know this eatery is named for Summit County's baddest boy of all, an all-around outlaw, bank robber, steal-your-money-in-a-minute, shoot-you-on-the-spot kind of guy? Commissioner Dan Gibbs, if you are listening, I am assigning you to clean up this mess.

I am also aware that back in the day Summit County once stretched to the Utah line. As our current Commander in Chief might say, "there are a whole lot of bad-dude names on the map in that area." One of the baddest is the name of our state's second governor, Frederick Pitkin, whose rallying cry during the Ute uprisings was "The Utes must Go" or "they must necessarily be exterminated."

Before I could assign somebody for this one, Commissioner Greg Poschman of Pitkin County has

slaughter... had they known. The destruction of the buffalo, however, took place on the nearly uninhabited plains, where few (beyond plains Indians, deprived of their lifeblood) were aware of it, owing to the lack of effective communication. What Gore did was very bad, indeed, by the standard of any age.

There is another part of this story — deeply emotional, but resting on the arguments above — namely that it seems a small gesture to restore a bit of dignity to the land, and especially to the Ute Indians, whose successful stewardship of this, their homeland, reached back thousands of years, before they were forcefully removed from it in 1880.

Taken altogether, the case for renaming the Gore Range to honor the Utes seems irrefutable, irresistible.

Bill Betz
Pebble Creek

stepped up to the task and solved this problem himself before the Pitkin name really becomes a bigger issue. Poschman is quoted in an article in the Summit Daily that "there's a branding issue at play; from changing county letterheads to building titles, the list goes on." This is politician-ese for "we can pick and choose our name changes as long as it's not too much trouble and doesn't cost too much." We could use more problem solving commissioners like Mr. Poschman who doesn't have to be prompted by my assignments.

And finally, if we take these name changes to the state level we have a momentous problem with names associated with Colorado's second territorial governor John Evans, implicated in the Sand Creek Massacre. There's a ton of names associated with Governor Evans including the Fourteener, Mount Evans. This one is too tough for me to touch, so I am not assigning anyone less than Governor John Hickenlooper to tackle this one.

So to all those that I have made assignments for name changing let's get crack-in. In the meantime, I am going on a hike in the Gore Range. It's a name that suits me just fine.

Joe Kramarsic
Dillon