



*Dan Schweitzer*

Everyone that has camped alone at Boreas Pass on New Year's Eve has heard ghostly whispers about the great square dance of 1900.

(Background: Boreas Pass, elevation nearly 11,500 feet, is east of Breckenridge and was, back then, the main RR route from Denver to Leadville for miners, supplies, and entertainers.)

As the tale goes, snows were heavy at the end of the 19th century. So heavy, that the last west-bound train barely made it into the snow shed at the top of the pass.

The section crew was exhausted from clearing the route up. Everyone on the train was cold and tired. Clearly, further travel was over for the night.

Fortunately, the pass had a sizable community back then, with plenty of room for guests. The train passengers included several young ladies. The cargo included 3 cases of Tennessee Whiskey. And, Old Ned, the crew chief, played a mean fiddle.

Young Albert, the newest member of the section crew, forgot his frozen limbs when he saw a certain blonde and hollered, "Why don't we have a square dance?"

Purists might take offense with the circumstances. None of the dancers had freshly bathed. Most could only guess at even basic Mainstream calls. All three cases of Tennessee Whiskey evaporated into the night. And, Old Ned could play only 3 different tunes. Still the evening was legendary. The first and probably best-ever square dance in Summit County (excepting, of course the upcoming TT New Year's Eve dance with Scot Byars).

The evening inspired madame LaRue to invent men's cologne, and she became quite wealthy.

By that Spring, young Albert and blonde Blanche were married and settled in Breckenridge. Their youngest son, Mark, the area's first ski bum, would have been a renowned ski instructor, except for the problem of being 50 years ahead of the industry.

Old Ned learned 15 more songs and brought square dancing to San Francisco.

A debate about renaming the pass to Tennessee lasted until the name went elsewhere.

If the RR route over Boreas Pass had not closed down in 1937, the Timberline Toppers would be only the second highest square dance club in the world.

Check out the tale yourself. Camp alone up at Boreas this New Year's Eve. Listen carefully to the whispers in the wind. Of course it would be lots more fun (and warmer) to dance with the Timberline Toppers that evening.