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"GHOSTS OF THE WEST"

DOCUMENTARY DRAWS 90 TO ALMA

History told through photos, narration

By Laura Van Dusen, Correspondent

The applause was long and loud after the credits rolled on Ethan Knightchilde's film, "Ghosts of the West: The End of the Bonanza Trail."



Movie makers

Ethan Knightchilde, (left), writer/director, and Todd Prescott, producer, of "Ghosts of the West" pause in front of the movie poster at a reception before the showing of the film to an Alma audience on Sept. 14. (Photo by Laura Van Dusen/The Flume)

Knightchilde and movie producer Todd Prescott presented the documentary to a full house of 90 people at the Alma Town Hall on Sept. 14.

The film was shot in California, Montana, Wyoming, Arizona, Utah and primarily Colorado, and it included historic and contemporary photos of ghost towns throughout the West.

Dubbed over the photography one hears narration and original music and sees interviews with Tom Noel, history professor and director of Public History, Preservation and Colorado Studies at the University of Colorado Denver, and Ron Ruhoff.

The narration and photos begin with the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill; it started the 1849 California gold rush.

During the film, one learns about laws established in the Old West; one town banned lawyers because town members thought lawyers "caused more trouble than they solved," according to Noel in the movie.

For minor offenses, a man might be shaved on one half of his head and one half of his beard and thrown out of camp.

In Yellowstone City, Mont., there were only three offenses that were punishable by hanging: murder, theft, and insulting a woman.

These and other tidbits of interesting history were interspersed throughout the black-and-white 57-minute film.



Shared Laughter

Before the "Ghosts of the West" showing on Sept. 14 in Alma, laughter is shared between the movie makers and local residents. From left to right are Ann Lukacs, Carmella Schweer, Todd Prescott, Carol Davis and Ethan Knightchilde. (Photo by Laura Van Dusen/The Flume)

During a question-and-answer session after the film, a member of the audience asked Knightchilde and Prescott which locations

were their favorites to shoot in the 10 years of production. Prescott had an answer right away – Vulture, Ariz.

He said the town is well-preserved, probably because it is protected and only open to tours by appointment. He described the location as having "gold everywhere." The mines closed down in 1942, Prescott said, but not because the gold ran out. It was shut down by the federal government when all resources were diverted to World War II. Several buildings are still standing today like it is "frozen in time," he said.

Knightchilde said his favorite site to film was South Park City, a statement that earned loud applause and cheers. There were several still photos shown from the Fairplay museum and a full minute of film was shot along the South Park City street and inside some of its buildings.



Last T-shirt

Minette Doss of Alma and a member of the Alma town board is thrilled that she got the only crew T-shirt left from the filming of "Ghosts of the West." "I bought their last T-shirt. No one else in the world will have this T-Shirt," she said. (Photo by Laura Van Dusen/The Flume)

In the film narration, Ruhoff said this about South Park City: "It's a fascinating museum to visit today because each of those structures has been refurbished as it might

have been during the days when it was in use. And you can read about the history and see what that building actually looked like in its original location."

A raffle followed the question-and-answer period for prizes such as a copy of the soundtrack on CD, a photo from the movie, and a miniature version of the movie poster. Following that, DVDs of the movie, CD soundtracks and refrigerator magnets were for sale.

Good show

Audience members were polled at random and their comments were complimentary.

"I thought it was beautiful," said Alma town board member Minette Doss.

"It made it all worthwhile working there to see South Park City [in the film]," said Norma Cochran, a volunteer at the museum.

Jane Junge of Denver, who was in Alma with friends, said, "I thought it was really good; I bought two copies of the DVD for Christmas presents."

And Mark Dowaliby, Park County commissioner and resident of Alma, said, "I loved it. Our heritage is what makes this a great place to visit and what makes us different from everyone else."

The film will be shown again at the Esquire Theatre in Denver on Sept. 26 and the Lyric Cinema Cafe in Fort Collins on Oct. 13.

Details are posted at

www.ghostsofthewestmovie.com.