

One of Granny's True Tales, According to Jack

by Gaye Buzbee Jacobs

I know all about Monument Lake, although we locals down south in Colorado Springs always referred to it as "Monument Puddle."

Dad warned me never to go out there, especially when driving my rusty '49 Pontiac. When I asked why, he said it was no place for kids.

He predicted that my car would just not go that far. Because it was old. Well, I was young, and teenagers are not inclined to listen to dads, so I didn't. I drove out there to be with my friends at the Puddle, all that hot summer.



I grew up in Cragmor, which was then the north rim of Colorado Springs, a few blocks from the famous Tuberculosis Sanitarium at the foot of Rattlesnake Mountain. We were pretty sure that ours was the last house on the way to the village of Castle Rock when Dad built it in 1953. By the time I turned sixteen, I was thoroughly and extremely annoyed at being stuck in the wilds of Colorado. My friends and I talked about and dreamed of California. The warm, sandy beaches! The bikinis! The palm trees! Plus, all the boys were in love with Annette Funicello.

We could only imagine what California was like, because we had no beaches, no surfboards, and really, no summer fun. However, some of the boys found a good substitute a few miles away called Monument Lake, and they said it would just have to do. We cut off and fringed our jeans, kicked off our red Keds (those early "tennis shoes") and started saying things like "hang ten!" and "let's catch some rays!" We were determined to be hip and groovy, even though California was so far away. We found a secluded small beach near the back of the lake, and as long as we kept the noise down no one ever bothered us. We spread out our blankets, sipped lime cokes, and swam in the slightly muddy water, but it felt wonderful on those hot days.

Once it was dark and had cooled off, we sometimes built a small campfire and sang along with the Beatles' *"I Want to Hold Your Hand,"* Gale Garnet's *"We'll Sing in the Sunshine,"* and Mary Wells' *"My Guy,"* with the help of a transistor radio. A favorite was Dean Martin's song, *"Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime,"* when a few of the older kids would start holding hands and maybe smooch a little. They called it "making out." But that's another story, which I'd be glad to share at another time.

Little did we know that our California dreaming would soon come to an end, with tearful goodbyes to many of our boyfriends who were drafted, and quickly marched off to Viet Nam. Some never returned.

However, the highlight of those summer evenings was when Jack started getting wound up and telling his grandmother's stories about the Arapahoes and Cheyennes who once roamed around the lake and raided the early settlements. Sometimes he included too many violent scenes and we boomed until he moved his story along. But mostly he was quite the storyteller and he just loved to swear, using lots of bad and colorful words. Evidently his favorite grandmother smoked an old pipe and was really good at swearing, which is probably where Jack learned all the worst colorful words. It was great!

So, here is one of Jack's more memorable tales and one I've always remembered, even though I decided long ago that it was just not at all true. In fact, knowing him, it was likely just pure fiction. Yet, I was never really completely sure. I'm still not, all these years later. Possibly, Jack recited a fictionalized account of a true story in which lots of details were added and maybe some even lost in the telling? Darn, I don't quite remember all the bad words, either, so I've not included them in Jack's version here. Although, I may admit to using a few similar bad words now and then. Maybe accidentally in front of my book club. Luckily, my grandchildren are not aware of that fact.

So here goes, directly from Jack and his Granny ...

... Things were always quiet in the tiny village of Monument, Colorado in 1861. Not much ever happened that we remember, but on one particular day that year something happened which the local folks thought was quite funny, and which they never forgot. Even so many years later. I'll tell you all about it in a minute.

Only a few families lived along the rough, muddy road, but most lived on scattered farms in the area. There were a couple of stations on family ranches, which served as stage stops between old Colorado City and Denver. The drivers could rest their horses and the passengers might shake off the dust and stretch their legs. Sometimes a Station Master or his wife would offer cold drinks of water from the nearby creek. The next stop could have been the shabby log cabin along Monument Creek Gulch, where a woman and her eight children lived. This lady was dirty. Very dirty. Her cabin was a run-down shack, her property was a mess. Her children were dirty. Her house was extremely dirty as well, but possibly that's because her children brought all their animals inside, including cats, dogs, chickens, goats and who knows what else?

With a creek and the lake nearby, maybe she could have just tossed those kids into the water and cleaned them up a little. Possibly she did, once in awhile.

The mother appeared to be very poor, but tried to feed and clothe her family as best she could. She sometimes sold hot biscuits or cookies to soldiers or passers-by, in order to earn a meager income. Once, a lady traveler claimed she saw a dirty, harried woman trying to make butter by stomping in a vat of cream with her bare feet. Was she too poor to buy a churn? Anyway, if that story got around, it probably didn't help her sales to the stagecoach folks, at all.

A few old-timers think her name may have been Nancy Ann and she may have been a widow, but someone said her husband was actually just pursuing other interests up in Cripple Creek, so he didn't come around. Wait. He must have come around once in awhile, since this woman had eight children! Possibly she didn't have time to clean up. Or, maybe she was so worried about feeding her fatherless family, she didn't think dirt was all that bad. Or, maybe being dirty was really a bit calculated, because it would certainly discourage any male "admirers" from coming around with good (or bad) intentions, bothering an isolated, lone widow.

Eventually her reputation grew and grew, and no one could even remember her actual name, so to reflect her unfortunate plight, they began to call her "The Dirty Woman of Dirty Woman Gulch" and it stuck. The creek was then called "Dirty Woman Creek" and it stuck, too. There are lots of stories all these years later about the goings-on at Dirty Woman Creek, and some of them might be true. Or not.

But here's what I wanted to tell you about now. One true incident that Granny always talked about, and swore it was witnessed by a couple of Broadmoor ladies who happened by the shack and wrote about it later. For some odd reason these rather posh ladies had stopped by the creek, and peeked in the shack's front door, where they saw the Dirty Woman frantically smacking something with her broomstick. A pink pig had somehow gotten his whole head into a cream jar and could not pull it out! He was screeching and oinking in great distress, rolling and crashing around on the floor, trying mightily to escape. The ladies were awestruck. The poor pig!

All eight children were hopping around and screaming, and their mother was shouting out some very bad words with quite a lot of gusto. As she continued to pound on the jar, it rolled out the door with the little pig's head firmly inside. Finally, the jar hit a rock, cracked open, and released its victim. He scampered off down the gulch at a dead run, never to be seen again. The two (rather nosy) ladies who had stopped in to "visit" hastily departed this upsetting familial scene and never returned, either.

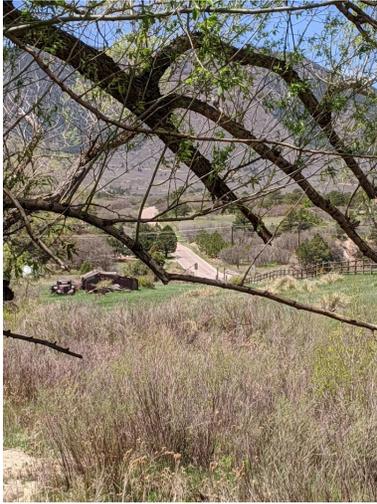
Sad to say, there is no record of whatever happened to the little pig. We also never learned whether the Dirty Woman's husband finally returned or if her dirty, unkempt family ever got a bath in Monument Lake.

But, two days later the butcher over at nearby Palmer Lake posted a notice in his window, announcing ...

"Fresh Pork—Good Prices!"

Author's Notes

Gaye Buzbee Jacobs 2020



This is Dirty Woman Creek in Monument, CO. Supposedly, the shack in the background is Nancy's, but there is no proof that I can find ... yet!

This is the Park on her property—named for her. **Why couldn't they just honor her with her own, proper name?** I guess that sometimes snarkiness survives into the next centuries.



Could this be the Dirty Woman?

In one local story years ago, a woman mentions that the dirty woman was named "Nancy Ann Roberts." So I started looking at Roberts families in that area and found only one Nancy and one Roberts family in Monument in the 1870 Territorial Census. Husband named Markus, a farmer, worth; \$2,000, Eight kids. Both buried in the Monument Cemetery. We wandered around and found a marker for the Old Stone Fort, which lists the Roberts family: Could this be Nancy's family ? It doesn't fit the tales of the Dirty Woman, though maybe it could? Who knows?



Nancy and Markus Roberts are buried in the Pioneer Cemetery in Monument.

Newspaper article in Colorado Springs Gazette, dated 1999 Unnamed author . We saw the site, but it's on private property, so we didn't access it.

David McShane

In 1860, David McShane and his wife, Catherine, were planning to farm in Kansas, but David caught "gold fever" and decided to try his hand at gold mining. He headed west, but by 1864, he had failed to get rich. He headed back to Iowa to be with his family, which included a son he had never met.

While searching for gold, he camped in Monument and thought it would be a good place to homestead. He bought 160 acres, built a home and started a ranch. It was west of Limbach Park and the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad tracks. He considered his land to be "the best grazing country on Earth," according to Lucille Lavelett in her book *Through the Years at Monument, Colorado*.

He built his home of stone with two-foot-thick walls. The doors were narrow and the windows were recessed deep with portholes. In the 1990s, the home was still original and was the oldest home in the area. David also built a fort on the property to protect his family and neighboring families from Arapahoe and Cheyenne Indians who occasionally raided the area. The fort was 12 feet in diameter with stone walls that were two feet thick. It had a log roof covered with earth to prevent Indians from setting the roof on fire.

There were four portholes with sliding stone blocks that could be closed. The fifth porthole, a window to watch for Indians. There was an underground tunnel which lead from the fort to the house. A man rode out every day to a hill north and west of the fort to watch for Indians. The hill was known as the "lookout" spot. If the lookout spotted Indians, he would alert everyone to go to the fort immediately. One of David's descendants, Dixie McShane Woodworth, related that at one time there were 40 people cramped into the fort. The fort was used from 1865 to 1868.



Most of these families are found on the 1870 Census, mostly farmers with quite a lot of wealth. See the name ROBERTS.