

# Lone Pine Productions

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## **‘Strange But True, Colorado’ Project Seeks Higher Passion for History**

A small Colorado company west of Fort Collins has launched a statewide effort to improve the “historical literacy” of all Centennial State residents. Lone Pine Production president John Hafnor has this to say about the project, “Having lived in a large state (California), and a small state (South Dakota), I can tell you that Colorado is poised between the two, not just geographically, but also culturally. Rapid urban growth has most Californians feeling cut off from their historical roots ...people without a “sense of place” ...while most South Dakotans enjoy a strong interest in local history, and therefore a strong sense of place.”

Hafnor sees Coloradoans as drifting to a California state-of-mind characterized by dwindling connections to their home state’s rich history. In response, the “Strange But True, Colorado” Project offers a line of branded informational products, most of them free to the public. [WWW.strangecolorado.com](http://WWW.strangecolorado.com) sums up the project’s various offerings as follows:

Bimonthly *Strange But True, Colorado* e-Newsletter. (free)  
Website including puzzle games, unpublished historical tales. (free)  
Online gallery by artist Dale Crawford, illustrator of *Strange But True, Colorado*  
Speaker’s Bureau. (free)  
Strange Colorado History Blog. (free)  
Lesson plans and instructor guides for interested teachers. (free)  
Media Syndication.  
Free copies of the book *Strange But True, Colorado* to qualifying public libraries. (free)

In 1980, Hafnor undertook a similar project in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where he reached audiences by peddling that region’s most bizarre historical stories. “It struck me early in my study of history that a good true story was always more compelling than any fictionalization. Lord Byron was right when he said, ‘Tis strange- but true; for truth is always strange; stranger than fiction.” In those pre-Internet days, Hafnor got the word out via talks before various groups, his work as coordinator of the Newspaper-In-Education program of the *Rapid City Journal*, and eventually the publication of a collection of true tales under the title *Black Hills Belivables*. In like manner, the book *Strange But True, Colorado* is heavily illustrated, and designed to reach a broad audience that here-to-fore may have found history boring.

Examples of the 400-word tales available free to viewers at [www.strangecolorado.com](http://www.strangecolorado.com) include these vignettes:

[Sample thumbnail story] In 1880, a certain pioneer crossed the mighty San Juan Mountains of Colorado with a sheet iron stove strapped to his back. The plan was to reach Durango and start a restaurant to nourish hungry prospectors. His name was John Elicht, and his restaurant was soon a success. He later returned to Denver to start the famous Elicht Gardens restaurant and amusement park.

[Sample thumbnail story] In 1924, Colorado witnessed the infiltration of both major parties by the Ku Klux Klan. In that year's general elections, avowed Klan members were installed as the state's governor, lieutenant governor, U.S. senator, secretary of state, attorney general, and state supreme court justice. Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans and the Grand Dragons of several states arrived at Denver's Union Station. A parade of motorcars flanked by Denver police officers brought the "dignitaries" through downtown to the Brown Palace for festivities.

[Sample thumbnail story] The Wild West's most heroic defense against the odds wasn't by a familiar white figure such as Wild Bill Hickok, Wyatt Earp, or Buffalo Bill. This all-but-forgotten deputy sheriff once single-handedly withstood a siege by 80 heavily armed assailants, managing to dodge 4,000 rounds of ammunition aimed towards his position in a tiny adobe hut. His name and full story are revealed at [www.strangecolorado.com](http://www.strangecolorado.com).

The speaker's bureau for the Strange But True, Colorado Project continues to schedule a series of free talks around the state, a list that has grown to include stops in Fort Collins, Durango, Greeley, Denver and Breckenridge. Author and e-newsletter editor John Hafnor brings the message of the Strange But True Project to audiences at schools, history clubs, service clubs, bookstore associations, and homeowner's associations.

Hafnor was inspired by Paul Harvey's radio show, "The Rest of the Story" when seeking ways to make history lively. He hopes to soon announce plans for a series of video and audio public service announcements in conjunction with the Colorado Historical Society.

For more information on the Strange But True, Colorado Project or other news from Lone Pine Productions, contact John Hafnor 970-443-5211 or [jhafnor@aol.com](mailto:jhafnor@aol.com)