

February 14, 1986

## Bob Womack's Story Is Told; Reprinted For Our Members

Bob Womack, who believed in Pikes Peak gold after others had tried and failed to find it, and before rich strikes proved his faith well-founded, died poor and physically broken, we were told in January by member Janis Edwards Knox.

She made her talk available, and it is reprinted in this edition of our newsletter (page 2).

## Whittier Historians Ready with Reports

Fifth and sixth graders from Whittier School who are exploring Westside history in individual projects have enough information to share their research and will present the program at our March meeting.

In a program initiated by teacher Mrs. Barbara Carter, supported by principal Kenneth Bailey, and assisted by O.C.C.H.S. member Ralph Conner, seven students visit Penrose library once or twice a week to study newspapers, tapes and other historic sources. They have been contributing a column to the **Westside Story** describing events of 25, 50, 75 and 90 years ago.

Members voted in December to accept a voluntary "assessment of an additional fifty cents for each luncheon to cover the costs of seven or eight guests. Remaining costs will come from the treasury.

**Next meeting:**

**MAR. 14**

## A Westside Welcome to NEW MEMBERS

We're pleased to welcome six new members who joined at our last meeting or within the last month. Their support is welcome.

We might single out Janice Claire Chambon Billingsley who generously paid her dues, not only for the new year, but for the 1984-85 year coming to a close. She also expressed willingness to serve on certain committees.

The list of new members follows:

Janice C. C. Billingsley  
15 Studio Place  
Colorado Springs, CO. 80904  
634-6931

Lucile M. Ellis  
125 Gold Camp Rd.  
Colorado Springs, CO. 80906  
634-1117

Kathy Murray  
620 E. Del Norte  
Colorado Springs, CO. 80907  
634-3125

Proctor W. Nichols, Jr.  
2512 W. Pikes Peak  
Colorado Springs, CO. 80904  
635-5020

Arlene L. Rieger  
3007 W. Fontanero  
Colorado Springs, CO. 80904  
633-8226

Mr. and Mrs. Keith Trapp  
703 N. 30th St.  
Colorado Springs, CO. 80904  
632-2005

## Ed Berry Tells Us About Genealogy, and St. Valentine

Ed Berry is a man who loves history. He complains about efforts to occupy peoples' hands with crafts, when too little is done to occupy their minds.

He plans to spread enthusiasm for history and stimulate minds in his presentation to the Old Colorado City Historical Society today.

He'll explain the significance of the date and share results of his study of genealogy, including details of his great grandfather, Joseph Bainbridge Lafayette Doyle, who came to Colorado as a mountain man in the 1840's and developed trading posts and stores in Colorado and New Mexico, including Colorado City, and who at one time controlled the land occupied now by Manitou Springs.

## Seek Nominations of Improved Sites

Agnes Johnson, O.C.C.H.S. representative serving on the Colorado Avenue Commission, told members at our last meeting that the Commission wants to recognize those who improved westside properties in 1985.

Members should contact her (at 633-8040) if they're aware of historic buildings, commercial properties or homes where landscaping, lighting, signs or other improvements add to the attractiveness of Colorado Avenue. She and our other member-representative, Kay Arnold, will relay nominations to the Commission.



# Bob Womack: The Discoverer of Cripple Creek Gold?

*Transcript of talk given to the  
Old Colorado City Historical Society*

*January 10, 1986 by Janis Edwards Knox,  
genealogist/researcher and O.C.C.H.S. member*

An article in the weekly Gazette of Jan. 16, 1892, reassessed the Robert Womack story. It states, "Robert Womack is given the credit of discovering the Cripple Creek Mining district, but this is not exactly true. Last winter he found the first rich specimens of ore and brought them into notice, but long before that day the country including and surrounding Cripple Creek had been located in a mining district."

The article quotes a Robert H. Magee, mail carrier at the post office, saying that H. T. Wood passed through this section of the country in the 60's with the Hayden surveying party. "He understood something of minerology and one day picked up a piece of wonderfully rich quartz. He said nothing about it but in 1874 he returned to this country. Colorado Springs had then been founded and there was quite a little community. He told Mr. Magee and others about his find of years before and described the lay of the country. They were familiar with the area described and decided that he referred to the country now being mined.

"A company was formed to do some prospecting and several hundred dollars subscribed. Mr. Magee and others accompanied Wood with a good outfit on a prospecting tour. They got into the mountains from Fountain, up Rock Creek canyon, a route now being urged upon the county commissioners as suitable for a road. It was hard work and took a long time to get through, but prospecting was finally begun. Some rich samples of ore were sent to town and a mining excitement followed that was quite as fevered as any that has been known since, considering the population."

## First Mining District is Formed

The report refers to a September, 1874, Gazette article about a miner's meeting on August 13th, 1874, which organized a mining district called "Mount Pisgah District," including a set of laws similar to those used by miners in Cripple Creek camp at present [in 1892].

"Although there was quite a rush to the camp nothing ever came of the mining done. Mr. Magee has recently visited Cripple Creek and finds that it is the exact place where they prospected."

Mrs. Ida Womack, the wife of Bob's brother, William, always insisted that it was her husband who really found the gold. When the family had the Broken Box Ranch, Will and Ida lived in a small

cabin. "My husband was more interested in a sm. mine he had than he was in the cattle. He took some ore to Denver to be assayed, but was told it was only a small pocket he had found. He worked hard and long trying to determine where there were large deposits of it there. After about five years, we went back to Kentucky and while we were there we heard about the exciting discoveries."

Mrs. Womack refused to visit the Cripple Creek area for years as she was so upset over all the wealth that had come out of there to everyone except the Womack family. A granddaughter who lived in Cripple Creek finally convinced her to come and visit in 1938. Her husband, William, operated the Antlers livery for many years. He died in 1919.

## Too Many False Alarms?

From the many newspaper articles I discovered at Penrose Library while researching Bob Womack, I learned he was evidently like the "boy who cried wolf" too often. In the Colorado Springs Sun of Nov. 2, 1975, writer Doyle Trent "created" a newspaper article—based on information from historical sources—which he "dated" Oct. 21, 1890, demonstrating this image of Womack:

"A cowboy named Robert Womack created only mild excitement yesterday when he said he found gold near Cripple Creek on the south side of Pikes Peak.

"Womack was arrested for drunkenness and lodged in the city jail . . . He was later bonded out by a friend, James Burns.

"Burns said Womack, who lives in a shack on Poverty Gulch, has been searching for gold on the south side of Pikes Peak for years, ever since his family's "Broken Box" ranch was sold in 1884 to the Pikes Peak Cattle and Land Co.

"Womack, according to Burns, rode for several cattlemen in the area of Mt. Pisgah, and was always picking up rocks in hopes of finding gold.

"For about six years the cowboy worked a claim called the Chance, but never took any gold out of it.

"When Womack rode into Colorado Springs yesterday carrying a rock he said was sylvanite, few people paid any attention to him.

"Womack, it was said, was always carrying rocks to town, claiming he had found gold.

"He bought liquor . . . and soon became incoherent.



"A few citizens were interested enough in his latest find, however, that they took the rock to Professor Henry Lamb, a geologist at Colorado College. Lamb said only, 'Maybe.'

"Womack was too intoxicated yesterday to talk to newsmen. The prospect of gold on Pikes Peak has lured many Easterners and Midwesterners to Colorado. But no gold has been found in any quantity, and most of the would-be gold miners were forced to sell their belongings at a loss and return to their home towns, broke.

"Only a few never-do-wells like Womack kept looking.

"While newsmen were trying to question the cowboy, an unidentified man stepped up and offered to buy his claim. He offered \$500. Womack mumbled that he would consider the offer."

### Womack Family's Early History

In 1919, Bob Womack's father, Samuel Redd Womack, was interviewed for an article that appeared in the Gazette on Sunday, January 12th. At that time, Samuel Womack was 99 years and one month old. He told of how the Womack family came to settle in Colorado.

"I was born in Lexington, Kentucky and came to Colorado Springs for my health in 1860. I went to Idaho Springs and was so greatly benefited that I went for my son, Robert, who was only 15 years old. He was very sick with an affection of the legs and I thought that he would be benefited too. He reached Idaho Springs, traveling in a stagecoach, but the vehicle jolted so and gave him such a pain in his legs that he arrived all out of patience and a short time later, in resolving to go back to Kentucky, said that he would walk rather than ride in the thing again. There was a wagon going to Denver and I got him a ride in that, where he would have more room to stretch out his legs, and he went to Denver. But he was not satisfied there and did start out to walk back to Kentucky. In the meantime, I was returning by stagecoach and rail and just as I stopped at Atchison, Kansas, there was my son walking into town. He had walked all the way there from Denver. It took him 39 days to do it.

"Later I came back to Idaho Springs, bringing my family, consisting of my wife, two sons and a daughter."

Samuel Redd Womack also rates a place in Colorado history for himself. He discovered the first silver mine in Colorado, near Georgetown.

The Womacks relocated to a cattle ranch 14 miles south of Colorado Springs called Sun View. About 1876, they purchased the Welty homestead, which covered what is now the townsite of Cripple Creek. As time progressed, they acquired other

lands, notably the Requa townsite and the ground in the vicinity of Mount Pisgah, which were added to the ranch, known as the Broken Box ranch. Along in 1886, the Womacks, who had mortgaged the ranch to Bennet & Myers, found that they were unable to even pay the interest and the Denver firm foreclosed. The older Womack returned to the ranch near Colorado Springs and Bob stayed on, working for Bennet & Myers as a cowhand but spent a considerable amount of time in the hills searching for gold. The manager of the ranch, Mr. Carr, thought he was weak-minded on the subject of gold and complained that every hole he dug meant the loss of one steer. Bob told the owners that wasn't true and eventually convinced them of the gold possibilities in the region. Mr. Myers took a sack of rock to Denver from the Gold King mine. They'll never know whether the assayer threw the rock away or did the tests wrong but he failed to report a single trace of gold in what afterward turned out to be the richest ore ever found upon the American continent. The Bennet & Myers ranch eventually became the Cripple Creek townsite and the sale of it netted them a large fortune.

### A More Sympathetic Portrait

My favorite article about him is by Rufus L. Porter in the Gazette-Telegraph of May 21st, 1967, titled "He was a dreamer but his dreams came true for others." Mr. Porter refers to the many derogatory articles about Bob and says, "Few have written about the loving and beloved family man he actually was, although he never married nor had a family of his own. But he was dearly loved by the children of his brother, Will, and he loved them with all his heart. He was respected as a horseman and cowboy. There wasn't a better one in the west.

"Bob was an easy touch for a hard luck tale and would give up the shirt off his back when he was drunk. He did sell the El Paso Gold King claim for \$500. It later made several men very wealthy. He had also staked 30 to 40 claims for himself but gave them away to friends when they would come and ask him where to locate. He left the Cripple Creek District in failing health because so many were eager to buy the 'Father of Cripple Creek' a drink. He cooked for a boarding house his sister, Lida, ran at the corner of St. Vrain and Nevada Avenue. He eventually took the 'cure,' the famous 'Keely Cure for drunkenness.' Strangely, Mr. Keeley used the 'gold cure,' injecting his patients with gold chlorides. He had institutes in Colorado Springs and Denver. The cure worked on some and not on others. It did work on Bob. Sadly, the last 7 years of his life, he was paralyzed from a stroke. He died August 9th, 1909, and is buried in Evergreen Cemetery."

## Highlights and Sidelights

### from our last meeting:

Members discussed alternative activities to replace regular meetings through the summer. Trips, a buffet, or an evening get-together were considered.

By a voice vote, it was decided not to hold meetings at the church in June, July and August, although other possibilities remain open. David Hughes invites suggestions for programs.

President Dave Hughes says there should be a study of a community west of Red Rock Canyon and the stone quarries, south of Fountain Creek. He says roughly a four-block area, owned by the Michael Ament family, had a boarding house and—he believes—a post office.

## Out of Westside's Past:

### THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

"General Komoroff reports that in consequence of hostile manifestations by Afghans he was compelled to attack them."

Despite the modern sound of that item, it refers to a conflict in which Russians attacked 4,000 Afghans on March 30, 1885, reported in the very first issue of the **Manitou Springs Journal**, April 18th, 1885. The Afghans lost 500 men and 8 guns; the Russians had 13 men killed and 29 wounded.

### BUDGET MEALS

The **Argus** of Oct. 22, 1909, reports 308 meals were fed to prisoners in the Colorado City jail during September, at a cost of \$43.70—~~eleven~~ <sup>fourteen</sup> cents a meal!

### RAMONA'S SHORT/LONG LIFE

We're familiar with Ramona, established on north 24th in 1913 after Colorado City voted to go "dry." It died quickly when Colorado went dry in 1916, but records show that Ramona was not formally dissolved until 1947.

## Visitors and Guests:

Lorna Dairy was a guest of Ruth Kruse at our January 10th meeting.

Other visitors joined our Society during or after the meeting, and so, technically, ceased to be visitors, including **Mary Nell and Keith Trapp, Arlene Rieger, Kathy Murray and Lucile Ellis.**

We're always pleased to have friends and visitors attend.

## Mayor Responds to Letter on Museum

Mayor Robert M. Isaac formally acknowledged the letter sent to him and members of the City Council protesting the possible name change for the Pioneers' Museum. Our letter was printed in last month's issue of this newsletter.

The reply follows:

City of Colorado Springs  
January 9, 1986

Mr. Ralph Conner  
Old Colorado City Historical Society  
Post Office Box 6702  
Colorado Springs, CO 80934

Dear Mr. Conner:

Thank you for your recent letter expressing opposition of the Old Colorado City Historical Society to renaming of the Pioneers' Museum. This matter is under study at the present time and has not come to Council for any decision. Copies of your letter are being forwarded to City Council.

Thank you for taking the time to write and express your views.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Isaac  
Mayor

## Treasurer's Report:

	Current	Endow
Jan 10 balances	518.19	815.00
Mmbrshps & cash	+48.00	
Net bank chgs	+5.70	
1986 re-incorp	-5.00	
Feb 10 balances	566.89	815.00

## News Notes from Other Societies

James Bates will present a program on the Ad-A-mAn Club at 7 p.m., Feb. 19th, at the Ute Pass Historical Society, at the museum in Cascade.

Among exhibits now at the State Museum in Denver:

Antique quilts and coverlets.

American-made firearms.

Transportation-related artifacts displayed for children.

200 items interpreting Indian and white cultures.

In March: bridal gowns dating from 1860 to 1960.

### WEST WORD

February 14, 1986 Vol. 1, Nbr. 6

Published almost every month by  
The Old Colorado City Historical Society  
P. O. Box 6702, Colorado Springs, CO. 80934

The Old Colorado City Historical Society was formed to maintain the memory of Colorado City (1859-1917), to encourage research, to preserve historic buildings, mementos, pictures, and to keep alive the unique culture and spirit of Westside Colorado Springs.

### MEETINGS

Meetings are held the second Friday of each month (except, perhaps, in the summer) at 11 a. m., at Trinity United Methodist Church, 1920 Henderson Avenue—across 19th Street west of Uintah Gardens Shopping Center. The public is welcome at all meetings, and no reservation is needed for the program.

The program is followed by a luncheon, served by ladies of the church. Cost is \$4 per person. Reservations are required, and can be made by phoning O. C. C. H. S. secretary Ralph Conner, 634-0895. Deadline is normally the Wednesday before the meeting, although last-minute changes may be made up to 5 p. m. the Thursday before the meeting. Since we're responsible for all reservations made, please call the secretary to cancel if you find you can't attend.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Individual membership is \$5 a year; family membership is \$10. Renewal falls in April. Members receive our newsletter, and local members will usually be phoned before each meeting.

Also available is a Lifetime membership, for \$100. This amount is placed in our Perpetuity-Endowment fund, to be used for long-term projects which have been approved by two-thirds of the membership. Only the interest will be used for current expenses. Welcome gifts to this fund, which will be credited to the donor or as a memorial.

### OFFICERS

President: David Hughes 636-2040  
Secretary-Treasurer: Ralph Conner 634-0895