

HOW THAYER TUTT SAVED OUR CABIN

As everyone in the Society knows, the 1859 Cabin now in Bancroft Park was not originally placed there. In fact it resided in two previous locations. It has survived for 155 years in no small part because of the 1929 efforts of Broadmoor's Thayer Tutt to rescue it.

The Cabin, built by Melancothon Beach and Dr. James Garvin in August 1859 was originally erected at what today would be 2608 West Colorado Avenue – 3 doors west of today's Ice Cream store. It was first Dr. Garvin's home and doctor's office. Then, in 1868 it became the office of the El Paso County Recorder after Irving Howbert was elected to that office because it was warm enough in the winter that the ink would not freeze in the ink wells – as it did in his first office in the unheated back room of the frame Tappan Store at 2802 West Colorado.

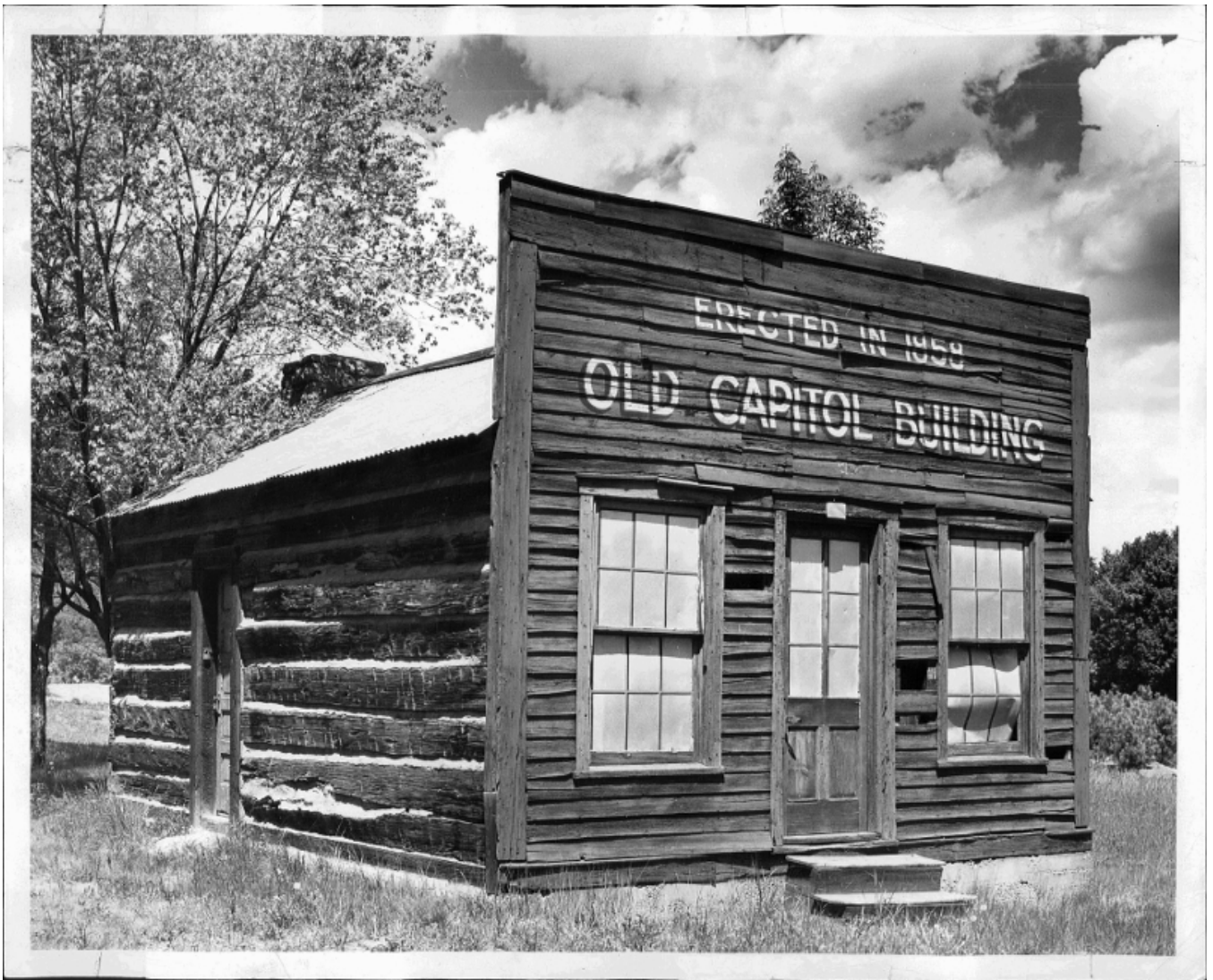


Original Cabin Location

But in the political flap of 1872, when new Colorado Springs organized to outvote Colorado City for the County Seat, the cabin was abandoned, for a hastily built masonry structure two blocks east.

The sturdy old log cabin was then used several times as a home, Sam Wah's Chinese Laundry (and opium den), and finally Mrs Hendee's Antique store. But by 1929 Colorado Springs wanted it torn down to make way for more modern structures. Forget history.

Enter Thayer Tutt, the grandson of senior Thayer Tutt, partner of Spencer Penrose. According to the younger Thayer – in his 60's by the time he told me this personally in 1976 - he saved it because his father, Charles Tutt had pointed out to him that Cabin was the most important surviving building in El Paso County. Tutt bought it for \$40 in 1929 to save it, had it dismantled and moved to a field on the Broadmoor Golf Course. I suddenly remembered seeing it in a copse of trees next to the 18th green, when I was a boy about 8 years old in the 1930s caddying for my Uncle Ed when he played. It was only used to store golf gardening tools. And it still supported the sign “Old Capitol Building” on its false front.



But then the story becomes more interesting. In 1976 I volunteered, when nobody else would do it, to be the Chairman of the Pikes Peak or Bust by '76 Centennial organization. And I started working to revive the history of the original Colorado City as one of many projects.

Thayer Tutt had been appointed a member of the Colorado State Centennial/Bicentennial Committee by Governor Richard Lamm, which committee visited numerous cities and towns to see if any of their historical projects were worthy of State Centennial grants.

Thayer hosted the state committee at the Broadmoor that year. As local city/county chairman, I was invited to attend his reception before their tour. During the clinking glasses he approached me and asked "Where are you taking us tomorrow morning?" I answered Miramont Castle, the trying-to-become Pioneers Museum in the old courthouse, and I just mentioned 'And drive through Old Colorado City' not sure he would know what I was referring to.

He brightened and said "I LIKE that project! My father told me how important that 1859 cabin was, and I saved it in 1929. I put it on our Golf Course. And I permitted it to be moved to Denver to sit on the Capitol Grounds during the 1959 Gold Rush Centennial. Then I gave it to the City of Colorado Springs when it came back, and they put it in the Park. "

"BUT" he went on "The damned City hasn't taken care of that cabin! Its run down in a run down park!"

I thought fast. I knew, from my work using federal Hud funds for business buildings on Colorado Avenue, that Bloc Grant funds cannot be used for upgrading parks – they are for economic development, curbs and gutters, and run down houses.

So I sprung it on him. "Thayer" I said " Will YOU take care of fixing up the Cabin if I get the City to fix up the park?"

He grabbed my hand and shook vigorously. "Yes. You got a deal!"

So I set out to do two things. Find a contractor to give me a bid for fixing up the cabin, with its water damage, worn framing, and faded paint. And then get the city to act.

As many who know me know I have no problem firing canons down Colorado Avenue to get the press and elected officials attention. But in this case I quietly went behind the scenes. I talked to Park Board members and several City Councilmen. I said "You have kicked a gift horse in the mouth. His name is Thayer Tutt. You know, El Pomar and all that!" And then I told them "Thayer is willing to pay for fixing up the Cabin if YOU pay out of the City Budget for fixing up Bancroft Park around it"

So it came to pass that, by December 15th 1976 the City Council had put \$60,000 in the Budget for the park, after having hired design specialists to make plans. I got National Park Service Historical specialists out of Denver to tick off what should be done while keeping the cabin authentic. Then I got the Park Department to give me a list of 'acceptable' contractors. I settled

on Lee Leiker Contractor who bid \$7,590 for the repairs, flagstones, flag pole, and painting.

As soon as City Council passed the budget, I fired off a grant request for the \$7,590, including the city budget resolution, to El Pomar on behalf of an Old Colorado City Historical Society which was barely formed, but had a bank account by then. I had a check in hand within two weeks.

I supervised the work, as the cabin was given another 100 years of life. I saved several of the 1859 lower logs which were rotted by splashing water and had to be replaced, stored them at my house, then later got them sawed up into thin slices, varnished, and with a certificate certifying their date and origin. OCCHS sold them for \$25 apiece., raising a little money for our society.

So that is how we got the Cabin restored, the separate Gazebo in the Park built, a much larger concrete surface put in the park center, and decent landscaping.

By the next year during Territory Days, older Thayer Tutt, pleased, stood on the porch of the Cabin, which then had the more historically accurate name – “County Pioneer Office” - painted on the false front. He then watched the parade which in the late 70s preceded the street fairs we have had for Territory Days ever since. His father and grandfather would have been pleased.