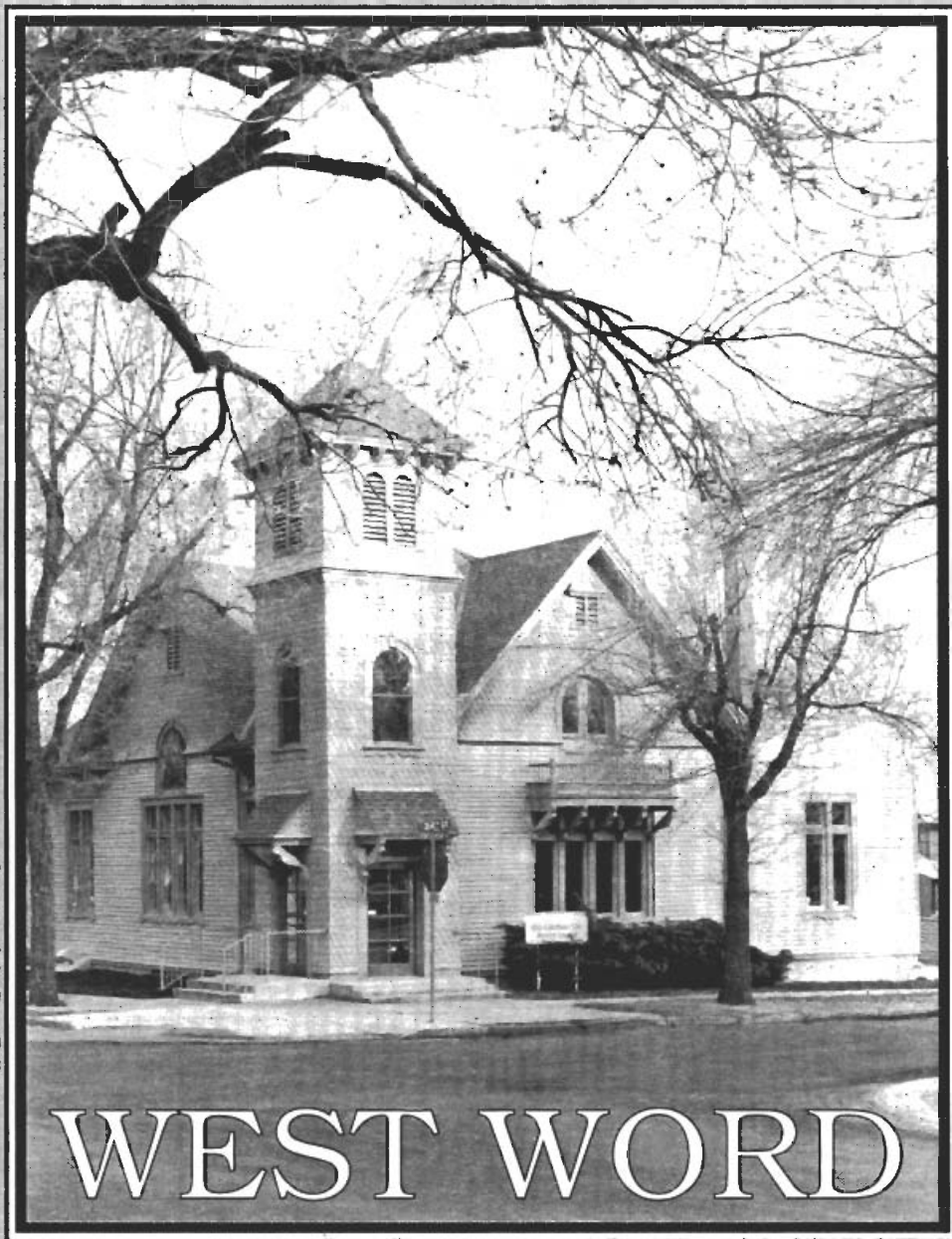


PIONEER EDITION



photograph by Don Kalhaus

WEST WORD

**Special History Center Grand Opening Issue
August 13, 1997**

Old Colorado City Historical Society

1 South 24th Street Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319
(719)636-1225

website at <http://history.oldcolo.com>

WEST WORD

VOLUME 12 AUGUST 1997 NUMBER 7

PUBLISHED THE FIRST OF ALMOST EVERY MONTH BY THE
OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A NONPROFIT CORPORATION
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LETTERS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTICLES AND STORIES CAN BE DELIVERED
TO THE OCCHS HISTORY CENTER OR MAILED TO THE EDITOR:

PAUL IDLEMAN c/o OCCHS
1 South 24th Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319

SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS THE 15th DAY OF EACH MONTH.

MISSION

The Old Colorado City Historical Society was formed to maintain the memory of Colorado City (1859-1917), to encourage research, preserve pictures, and keep alive the unique culture and spirit of West Side Colorado Springs through education of children and the community and through the eventual establishment of a History Center at One South 24th Street.

MEMBERSHIPS

Memberships are welcome at any time. Renewal Memberships are due on the anniversary date of the initial Membership. Members receive the *West Word* newsletter, local meetings and programs.

Annual memberships classifications are as follows:

Individual	\$20	Business	\$50
Family	\$25	Corporate	\$250
Lifetime	\$150		

Funds from a Lifetime Membership are placed into a Perpetuity/Endowment Fund to be used only for projects which have been approved by two-thirds of the membership. Only the interest will be used for current expenses. We welcome gifts to this fund, which will be credited to the donor or as a memorial.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Robert Heinich	448-9001
Vice President	Dave Hughes	636-2040
Secretary	Jan Knox	689-2355
Treasurer	Don Kallaus	630-0322
	Beverley Disch	634-5023
	Betsy Evans	635-4782
	Christine Heinich	448-9001
	Patricia Joy	685-4483
	Orville Kenelly	471-0551
	Mel McFarland	533-1311
	Leon Young	633-2621

MEETINGS

Meetings are held at 11:00 a.m. on the second Friday of each month, except during June, July and August.

Reservations ARE required for the luncheon following the meeting. Luncheon cost is usually \$5 per person.

Please phone Margaret Gould at 390-8960 by the Wednesday prior to the meeting. If you find you cannot attend, be sure to cancel before 5:00 PM Wednesday or send someone in your place, as you will be charged for the luncheon reservation.

NEXT MEETING - September 12, 1997
at Trinity Methodist Church

OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORY CENTER SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

August 16 — Founders' Day Celebration
Bancroft Park
Craft Fair/events/food/programs

August 17 — Founders' Day Celebration
Bancroft Park
Craft Fair/events/food/programs

August 28 — Free Evening Program
Tim Scanlon
"How To Research Your Home"
Old Colorado City History Center
7:00 P.M.

September 12 — Program Meeting/Lunch
Paul Idleman
"Challenges on Pikes Peak"
Trinity United Methodist Church
11:00 A.M.
Reservation & \$5 required for lunch

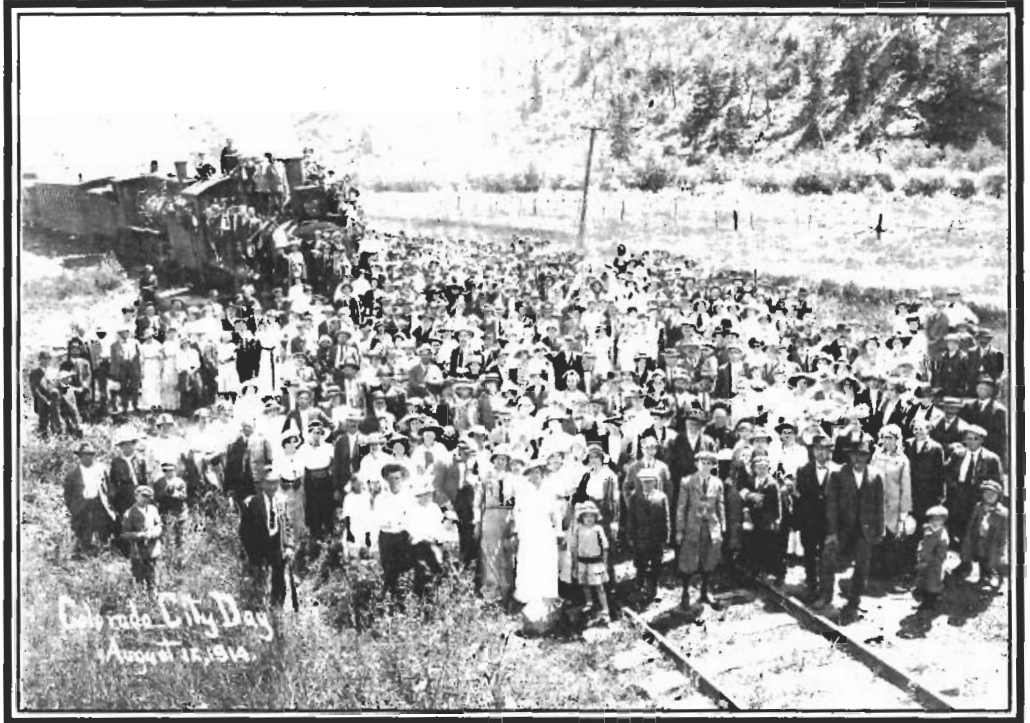
September 20 — Craft Fair/Treasure Sale
Bancroft Park/Center Parking Lot

September 25 — Free Evening Program
Old Colorado City History Center
7:00 P.M.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, COLORADO CITY

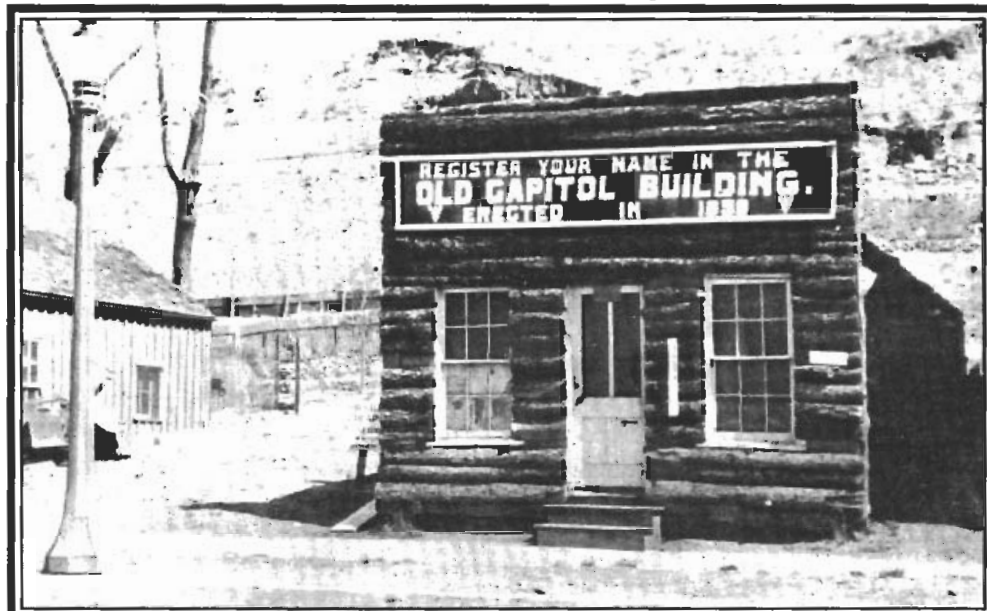
Back when Colorado City was still its own town, the loyal residents would gather at the Colorado City station of the Midland Terminal Railroad in late summer. It had become the tradition of the residents to take the railroad's "Flower Excursion" train in mid-August, even though the peak of the season was almost over. The Midland Terminal carried its hometown neighbors as part of the celebration to remember the founding of Colorado City on August 13, 1859.



The force that held this little community tightly together in 1859 is still alive in Old Colorado City today. Old Colorado City was a town notorious for its ups and downs; the tendency to slip from fame to obscurity and back again. It was the town's spirit brought here with its pioneers and maintained by its long-time devoted residents that kept Colorado City from taking the final count. That same spirit continues in Old Colorado City to the present day. Now there is a place to celebrate that history and spirit

at the Old Colorado City History Center. Like the pioneers of Old Town, the members and volunteers of the Old Colorado City Historical Society have worked long and hard to build this museum and research center, dedicated to preserving a history that might have disappeared altogether if they hadn't taken the initiative. The pieces of this misunderstood history are coming together, providing the evidence that Old Colorado City was not the town doing the wrong things, in the wrong place, at the wrong times, as Marshall Sprague said in his book, *Newport in the Rockies*.

Where did this Historical Society and museum come from? This issue of West Word is devoted to answering those questions by letting our own pioneers tell their story. There isn't a way to let everyone involved tell their story, so we can't claim that this is the complete history of our beginnings. That will take time and dedication. It's taken Old Colorado City 138 years to tell its story.



This cabin was many things, but probably never really the first State Capitol. It's now a shrine and tourist stop in Bancroft Park. *photos in the OCCHS Archives*

THE BEGINNINGS

of the

OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

as narrated by David R. Hughes

Just as Colorado City grew out of the Pike Peak or Bust gold rush of 1859, the Old Colorado City Historical Society grew out of the Pikes Peak or Bust '76 Bicentennial Celebration, started in 1976.

That Celebration was, of course, county-wide and involved the State of Colorado Centennial and nation's Bicentennial. In the early stages of that large festival (where we ended up with 250 projects and raised \$300,000), some elderly gentlemen ...**Leroy Ellingwood**, **Luther McKnight**, and **Bob Ellis**, came to me as chairman of that celebration. They were, of course, Westsiders and asked me if I could do something during this celebration for "Old Town". Now, I'm a native of this area so I knew what they were talking about, but I didn't know its history in much depth. So I said yes, if they would educate me a great deal about it. They took me around and filled a lot of gaps in my knowledge of Old Colorado City's origins.

So what we did was make it one of the 250 projects of the Centennial-Bicentennial Celebration. Thus, the commercial revitalization of Old Colorado City, from 1976 to the mid 1980's, was based upon historical themes that came from its earliest roots.

Like all Centennial celebrations, the Pikes Peak or Bust organization eventually came to its natural end. The revitalization of Old Colorado City was fully underway and there was a great deal of interest in history. What happened was, as the Pikes Peak or Bust for '76 committee folded its tent (about 1980), a very small group, including **Gene Brent**, **Vera Chambon**, and as I recall, my daughter **Becky Hughes**, met in a restaurant and began the genesis of the Old Colorado City Historical Society. We met several times

fitfully, like all historical societies. By 1981, I had personally hired a woman (who has since passed on) named **Helen Erb** as an assistant. I had a lot of files, a lot of knowledge of history, plus a lot of historical documents (many were Pikes Peak or Bust documents) that pertained to Old Colorado City. Consequently, she got a lot of those together. She located **Raymon Castillo** who became the first president of the organization (1981-1982) which was still a very informal organization. We met up at the restaurant that is now the Mason Jar. Ray was in real estate and we came close to sticking our necks out and saving a very old frame building that was in the middle of the 2600 block, on the south side of the street, that was close to the old antique store. It was very run down — a true relic of the 1870's — but, we decided it would hardly make much of a museum. So the meetings went on, meeting where we could, but never too highly attended (maybe 7-10 people) with few programs.

In 1982 I took over as president of the society and I was still very, very busy in both businesses, as I still am. With the revitalization of Old Colorado City, I couldn't devote my full time and attention to it, but we met throughout the year and had programs. About that time **Ralph Conner**, who was retiring as a history teacher, came aboard and brought good credentials to it: historical, with interest, and time. It was just really the typical little society that just had programs, did a few things, were in a parade or two (like the Territory Days parade), functioning separately, but uniquely ... the only westside historical society around since the Centennial finally had faded away totally. Some of the people that were involved with the Pioneer's Museum, like **Florabell Hull** and **Joyce Johns** were showing interest in it. They knew what the Pioneer's Museum had of that history so it just became a kind of a catalyst for those who had some interest and credentials.

I was president for 4 years, 1982-1986. By 1986 a very able person, **Agnes Johnson**, stepped forward as president and the society grew, providing monthly programs with more participation in some of the activities, particularly during the summer months.

She was followed by **John Keller** in 1987-1989. By this time, Colorado City had become so revitalized and so well-known and so dynamic with the (Bancroft) park and cabin renovation with the help of El Pomar funds. **Thayer Tutt**

also assisted in funding. So, by participating in the cabin every year, people got to know not only the history, but it also recruited some members. As I recall, **Jan Knox** was one of the people who learned more about this organization through the cabin and became involved.

It grew much more slowly and modestly than did the Ute Pass Society Museum, which grew rapidly, got a big museum, and flamed out later. There were just a number of people who were constant such as the **Chilcotts**. The Chilcotts were from way back ... the first ditch in El Paso County was the Chilcott Ditch. And **Leon Young**, a city councilman, who joined the organization and has been a loyal member of the society since. It is within his district, so he was one of the charter members along with **Agnes Johnson, Isabel Mosely, Barbara Keller, Lucille de Marco** from the art gallery, **Arati Artists, Virginia Cox** was a very loyal member, of course, **Ralph Conner, Vera Chambon, Sally Brawner, Margaret Wolfencamp, and Kay Arnold**.

Following John Keller was **Joyce Johns** as president for four years. Things vamped up when we found a meeting home up at the Trinity Methodist Church on the Westside where the ladies of the church would serve a meal for a small fee for church income. So the programs were at the church once a month, quite consistently done, followed with a meal, and 25 to 30 people then began attending every single month.

And about then, 1990 (don't remember the exact date), **Luther McKnight** approached me and said he was so pleased with what had been done for "Old Town". He said he was looking for a west side lawyer and that, because he had no close family, wanted to leave us some things. I referred him to **Orville Kenelly** (attorney), whom I knew. I knew Luther had quite a collection of photographs. Once I went to his home, I became concerned that when Luther passed on, as he would before many of us, we would not be able to identify a lot of the things he seemed to be inclined to let the society have. So I introduced him to **Ralph Conner** so that someone could follow up systematically. The most interesting thing is that we were standing in front of the old Baptist Church at Pikes Peak and 24th Street (now our museum) when I had this initial discussion with Luther.

Luther was not a joiner, he did not come to meetings, although, back about 1976, I had recorded about 100 hours of old-timers, including him. Every time he came to the Commercial Club office, I would pull out a tape recorder and record his voice. He was very observant and so pleased with what we were doing. He had in the back of his mind that we were doing good things - something that was important to him. And so it was, even before he passed on (and it was with great surprise), that he left the society over \$90,000 in CDs. The society was able to wisely invest the CDs until it grew to almost \$150,000 in the early 90's, and it was then possible to start looking for an honest-to-goodness museum.

And that kind of fell into our laps in one respect when the pastor, **Reverend Mertzweiller**, of an Emmanuel Mission church group that was very small (only 7 people in

the congregation) had the old 1890 Baptist church (very run down) in Old Colorado City at 1 South 24th Street. He approached me wanting me to help them sell the property so they could get a smaller building somewhere. I was not that familiar with the building inside. It wasn't too impressive upstairs, but when I saw that there was a concrete floor basement almost as large as the upstairs (museums have to have a lot of storage) I realized that this would make a splendid museum. I introduced this to the society and its officers. but nothing was pursued for awhile because they were investigating another opportunity to buy a building on the main avenue. It turned to be out of our reach - costing an enormous amount of money. This was the old beer hall ... the Jacob Schmidt beer hall that was a nice brick building, but it was too much in the commercial area. It was made of brick, but it would have been a tremendous burden, even if it had been purchased with the greatest intentions.

By this time the society had grown substantially and had a newsletter. **Ralph Conner** did a great job putting out "*West Word*". The newsletter was printed in his shop for years, so it always had great history. And the body of the society just simply grew over about ten years to be quite solid, though still small and not very well endowed. Then here came the \$90,000. When the real estate possibility did not pan out on the Avenue, the society turned to look seriously at the church building. By this time, **Lucille Cunningham** was on the scene, pretty active in real estate, and knew the value of these things. By the time she became the president in 1993 (for 4 years) she was able to see and could carry out (with the pro-bono assistance of her real estate company and her son) the acquisition of the original Baptist Church of Colorado City as a history center.

The rest of the story is pretty well known from 1990-91 'til 1997. First acquiring it (the building) with that money - the endowment. Then, as luck would have it, the State of Colorado started giving substantial grants (ironically for a Baptist Church being revitalized) to societies from gambling taxes. So we managed to land a \$100,000 grant from the **Colorado Historical Society** for true restoration of the outside of the building. I had the only photograph of that era to guide the architects.

The building restoration, with the combination of Luther McKnight's money and the \$100,000 Colorado Historical Society grant, encouraged **El Pomar, Gates, and the Boettcher Foundation** to contribute more grants, nearly, \$100,000. So the society, then very solidly, was able to carry off its prime operation which is the acquisition and creation of the Old Colorado City History Center, which has over \$300,000 into the structure itself. The Center now has substantial donations of artifacts from the McKnight estate, from **Lucille Ellis**, things from **Catherine Henderson**, wife of **Bill Henderson** (once the president of the Pikes Peak National Bank and mayor of the town), and my own collection, so we were able to start the thing.

And to my surprise, even when I wasn't on the board,

con't on page 15

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

begins with

LUTHER McKNIGHT'S LOVE OF COLORADO CITY

by Ralph Conner

Martin Luther McKnight was not yet five years old when he arrived in Colorado City in 1899 with his mother and father. For 87 years Luther grew with Colorado City and Westside Colorado Springs, until his death in 1986.

His local roots were planted even earlier when his grandfather, Asbury McKnight worked a mining claim on south Cheyenne Creek in 1860 and enlisted in the Union Army in 1861.

Luther's father, E.C. McKnight, was employed at the Standard gold reduction mill, (15 cents an hour, twelve hours a day) and as a foreman at the Golden Cycle mill, until retirement in 1940. The McKnight family, father and son, was active in the Methodist Church, the Masonic Order, and local music during their respective lives.

Luther experienced Colorado City's years of conflict between bawdy frontier village and the genteel, church-going payroll town of mills, manufacturing, merchants and the Midland railroad.

Luther McKnight knew milk at five cents a quart, streetcars, a fire bell announcing curfew nightly at 9, the poll tax, wooden sidewalks and muddy streets, the Midland Band, School District. #1, spectacular fires and train wrecks, rock quarries, paint factory and glassworks. Luther was here, and often actively participated with the arrival of electricity, movies, motor vehicles, prohibition and radio.

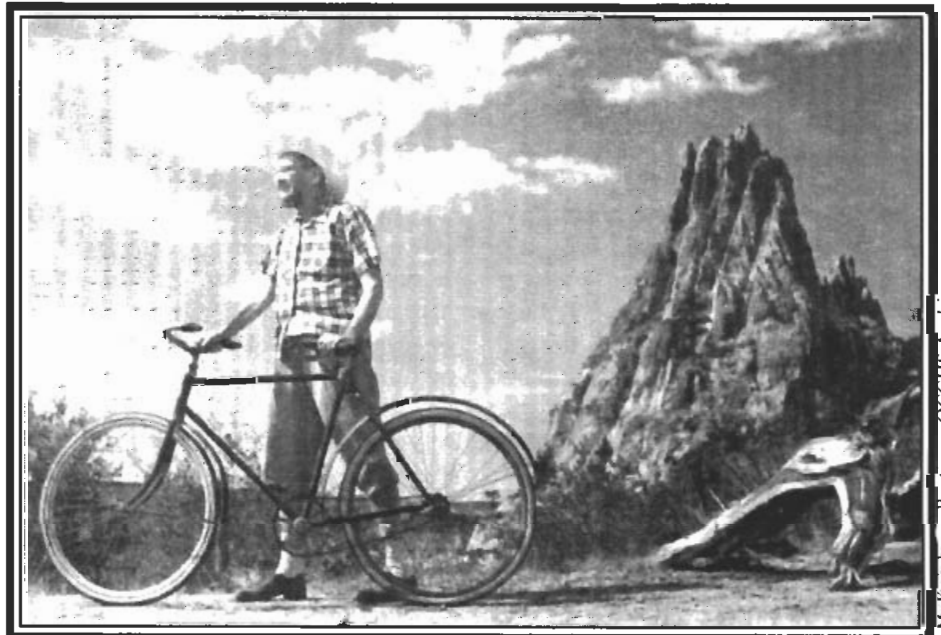
He spent summers on Pikes Peak photographing tourists on the Cog train or at Glen Cove, spending idle time exploring geology, plant life and electrical phenomenon on the Peak to the point that scientists sought his guidance to crystals, rock formations or wildflowers.

He called himself a "handyman", and reflecting the times of his life, his income was modest (fifty cents an hour as tourist photographer and as electrician at the Golden Cycle mill). But he lived frugally and saved his money.

At Luther's invitation, I met weekly to discuss the region's history and ambitions of the Old Colorado City Historical Society to establish a museum.

One day Luther handed me a savings and loan account book and asked me to have the principle made payable to the Old Colorado City Historical Society on his death. I glanced at the balance and protested, "But this is for \$50,000!"

"Oh, that's not up to date; with interest it's more than that," Luther replied. In fact, his accounts to which OCCHS was made beneficiary totaled \$100,000. In addition, Luther deeded personal collections of historic memorabilia accumulated over a lifetime. Luther's family and his personal



Luther McKnight

McKnight Collection - OCCHS Archives

LUTHER McKNIGHT - con't from previous page

representative, **Leslie Atkins**, cooperated generously in passing this on to the Society.

Liliane Ross and **Joyce Johns**, experienced workers at the Colorado Springs Pioneers' Museum, with help from **Dorothy McGlasson**, **Virginia Cox**, and **Paul Idleman**, initiated the accessioning of this rich trove at a location that I supplied. Once the building was purchased, the accumulation from Luther and other contributors was moved to the present museum. Luther's many historic items, from street-car tokens to photographs, form an important nucleus of the Society's collection.

Meanwhile, with careful financial management, the cash bequest grew to \$150,000 by the time the Society was ready to buy the former First Baptist Church of Colorado City, at 24th Street and Pikes Peak Avenue that now houses the History Center. That sum gave credibility to the Society's fund-raising efforts and supplied a major share of the purchase price (of the building).

Luther's passion for the community and its residents grew as he lived his life here; and his desire to honor Colorado City is being met thanks to his generous foresight and generosity.

FOUNDER'S DAY — 1910

From the Colorado Springs Gazette — August 12, 1910

On the evening of August 12, 1859, as the sun was sinking beyond the Rockies, M.S. Beach, now of Colorado Springs, and R.E. Cable drove the first stake in the original townsite of the Colorado City Town company, claiming title to 1,280 acres.

Two hours later a squad of five men rode up to the camp of Beach and Cable, and asserted their claim to the same ground for another town company. After a heated discussion the quintet left and located "Red Rock City" where the Rock Island shops now stand at Roswell.

One of the most interesting features of Mr. Beach's story is his assertion that the Chinese laundry on Colorado avenue, Colorado City, which is pointed out to tourists as the first capital building, was never used for that purpose. Mr. Beach says that the first legislative assembly was held in Dr. James Garvin's office, or what is probably the site of the Templeton block, in the summer of 1860. Beach was El Paso County's first representative. Mr. Beach tells the following interesting story of the founding of Colorado City.

"On August 11, 1859, ten men met in Dick Whitsitt's office in Denver and formed the Colorado City Land Co. A board of directors was chosen; James A Winchester was elected president, and Lewis N. Tappan, formerly of Boston, was made secretary. R.E. Cable and I were authorized to locate a townsite near Manitou Springs.

"We left Denver at 2 p.m. on horseback, equipped with the inevitable coffee pot, frying pan, and a supply of coffee, three loaves of bread and a small piece of bacon. We arrived at what is now Castle Rock at dark, and camped for the night. At day-light we were again in the saddle, and at 2 p.m. arrived at Camp creek, where we made our camp in the remains of an old hunter's cabin which had been erected the winter before.

"Leaving our horses, we cut a stake and nailed our small board sign to it. The stake was erected near the camp. Two hours later a party of five men rode up and asserted their claim to the same ground in behalf of another land company. They ordered us to leave, and after a heated argument, decided to leave us in possession and thus avoid trouble.

"This was the first actual settlement in El Paso county. Three days later eight other members of the town company arrived, and were much pleased with the site. Charles Persall, my partner, and I erected a cabin, 18 by 26 feet, the logs of which were cut from the lower slope of Cheyenne mountain, just west of Broadmoor. They were hauled to the townsite with oxen teams. This was the first habitable house erected in the county.

"At that time El Paso county had no legal existence. All the land in this region was still a part of the western Kansas, and was known as Arapahoe county. Shortly after Colorado City was founded, William Young took up a ranch claim on Fountain creek, 25 miles from Colorado City, and erected an adobe hut with the aid of some Mexicans. This was the second cabin."

For three years Mr. Beach was secretary and general manager of the Colorado City Town company. In 1860 the city had 300 inhabitants. A short time later this had increased to 800. Mr Beach entered McLain's Independent artillery, serving 14 months as a private. Then "because of bravery or for political reasons," as he jokingly puts it, he was made lieutenant. He took part in three Indian battles, in one of which Chief Black Kettle, leader of the Cheyennes, was killed.

For several years Mr. Beach remained in western Kansas, and by so doing lost title to a number of his 110 lots in Colorado City. At the present time he owns no property there. He returned to Colorado in 1876 and took up mining in the San Juan district, where he still has extensive interests.

Colorado City was first incorporated in 1859, by records in the self-constituted claim club of the pioneers. Later, when it was made the county seat of El Paso county, the papers were refiled so as to legalize the incorporation.

Anthony Bott, who still lives in Colorado City, came here in 1859, and A.Z. Sheldon, another of the earliest arrivals, also lives there now. G.A. Butte, who died some time ago in South America, came shortly after Bott. Irving Howbert came to El Paso county in 1860 or 1861, and his father came the preceding year.

Mr Beach lives at 405 Cheyenne road, Ivywild.

THE EARLY DAYS *of the* OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

by Agnes Johnson

I have been asked to recall events pertaining to the formation of the Old Colorado City Historical Society from 1981 to 1987.

I have tried to select what I think are the highlights in the progression of the Old Colorado City Historical Society from the time I became interested in the group until the end of my presidency. If I have made errors, I hope someone will amend them for above all else, historians should be accurate.

It was during a meeting of the Friends of the Old Colorado City Library, chaired by librarian **Betsy Evans**, that I learned the Old Colorado City Historical Society was being formed and was asked to attend their meeting the following week. We met at Thunder and Buttons for lunch. One of the people present was the dynamic **Dave Hughes**, a "spark plug" aiding the revitalization of Old Colorado City and with a dream of forming a historical society, entailing the glories, past and present of Old Colorado City and disseminating that knowledge for the world to know through the magic of the computer age. We discussed how to apply for a charter from the state, the wording of by-laws and other aspects to submit for approval.

We met at various restaurants after that until we secured a table for our monthly meetings at what is now the Mason Jar. Membership gradually began to increase. I think the publication of West Word by **Ralph Connor** helped immensely to spread the word.

Dave and His daughter had taken extensive oral interviews of "old timers" of Old Colorado City and it was suggested that Ralph and I continue this practice. Thus, began the contact of Ralph with **Luther McKnight**, a long-time resident of Old Colorado City.

Luther had many photos and artifacts of historic value of the area and through time he and Ralph became friends. They were most compatible in their interests for Ralph had taught history at Coronado High School until his retire-

ment. The end result of this association being that Luther willed his monies and artifacts to the OCCHS.

After his death, Ralph and I met frequently with Luther's nephew and his wife, they being Luther's closest relatives. They were sincere and caring people whose concern was that monies left not be squandered or frittered away, and that the artifacts and photos be housed in a suitable area until such time as the society could display them in their own building.

Ralph stored most of this in a warehouse he used, while Betsy stored some records from the town of Ramona and, later, they allowed us to display some of the material in one of the cases at the library.

As knowledge of our society became better known, the head of the Community Development office for the City of Colorado Springs asked for our input and expertise. **Kay Arnold**, Ralph and I attended those meetings. The historic district and Colorado Avenue were the main concerns. Restoration of old buildings or new construction that conformed to the architecture of the district were judged each year by the OCCHS. Beautiful plaques were given to the winners on behalf of the OCCHS and paid for by the city. Presentation of plaques occurred at the Bancroft Cabin, Medallion West and other locations. Television and newspapers covered the events and pictures of the buildings or houses were in the newspapers. The restoration of the first City Hall was an outstanding example of the caliber of the winners.

The beautification of bus stops was another topic. After much discussion and bids, lovely new benches without logos on the sides and backs and without commercial advertising were installed after upgrading the downtown area.

The OCCHS board's concerns at this time dealt with how best to invest the monies from Luther's estate, ways to increase membership, application and acceptance of the charter and by-laws, and the search for a suitable historical and affordable site for the society.

While members of the board dealt with the first three problems, Ralph and I began to research available housing. We found most were too expensive or not enough room to house artifacts, or not a good location. We had eyed the First Baptist Church at Pikes Peak and 24th Street. Dave made

contact with the pastor and arranged for an inspection of the building. We were impressed with the spaciousness and the history of the building, and asked for a meeting to discuss the possibility of purchasing.

At an evening meeting, with elders of the church coming from Denver, we discovered that they wanted us to find and purchase another church for them before they would sell. After looking at several properties and finding nothing that would suit their needs or ours, the matter was put on hold.

Another historic event occurred with the opening of the only alley of its kind. One of the merchants who owned a gun store on the avenue had enclosed an alley in his building. He allowed that portion of the building to be removed, leaving an access from Colorado Avenue to the alley behind the building once more, as in the olden days. There was a colorful ceremony dedicating the alley that had been refurbished. "A Lady To Forget" (as she called herself) wore a Victorian dress and rode her horse from the alley to Colorado Avenue. I think there was music. The plaque, given and paid for by the OCCHS, was unveiled. Alas, the plaque was stolen and the society was asked to donate another. It was voted on by the membership after assurances were made that this one could not be remove. Another \$100 was approved by the treasury.

During this time, I began to compile the history and architecture of the buildings and some of the tales of its occupants, and began giving walking tours to various groups. When I left, I gave that material to Ralph. I don't know whether it is still used today.

I obtained a key to the cabin from the City Parks and Recreation and we used the cabin for special occasions such

as Territory Days. Dave brought many of his "treasures", Ralph set up displays, I swept before and after use, and many volunteers manned the cabin. John Keller whittled, Kay kept the cookies and lemonade department. The cash register was a cigar box. Business was good on a hot sunny day — but woe if it rained! When Jan Knox joined our society and assumed the role of program chairman, my pitiful attempts to recruit speakers stopped. She's still doing a wonderful job.

I have related the success of Ralph's interviews with Luther. Now I'd like to relate a story from an interview of my own. I finally persuaded Vera Chambon to talk with me. Vera had been very generous in her donation to us of display cases and was a charter member on our board for many years. One day a large truck dumped a load of shoes on their front lawn. To Vera and her husband's dismay, they discovered they were not in pairs, so they labored for days and days and days sorting and matching up the shoes. That was the beginning of Surplus City!

I know I have left out people who gave many hours of their time to further the society. It's been a long time since I was president and I held that office only a short time. Dave, I think, holds the record for length of service and is, of course, still very much involved. I am so pleased to return to the city to find how large the society has grown and now has this perfectly beautiful restored and historical building.

My congratulations to all those who made this memorable day possible and from those of us who had the "dream" early on we say, "Well Done" and "Keep up the Good Work"!

THANK YOU, JAN AND SANDY KNOX

The success of the Old Colorado City Historical Society is due to the dedication and hard work of its members. Without a doubt, two of our members, Jan and Sandy Knox, have devoted an enormous amount of time, money and talent to insure our Society's and the History Center's growth. Owen "Sandy" Knox took on the huge responsibility of writing most of the grants we've received to accomplish our goals. Writing grant requests is not an easy task, but Sandy's abilities succeeded in getting over \$200,000 in awarded grants. He was recently honored for his efforts by the Colorado Springs City Council. Sandy also rebuilt the 'unrepairable' frames for our stain glass windows and handled our patio, hand railing and iron fence projects to completion, doing much of the work himself.

In addition to holding several Board positions, Jan Knox has been the driving force behind our programs and most of the Society's fund-raising functions. Jan's excellent research talents provide us with *West Word's* popular "Westside Memories" every issue plus the many program and historical articles. Jan handled the accumulation of our excellent Book & Gift shop inventory as our Book Store chairperson. Jan and Sandy have purchased or donated thousands of dollars worth of needed items without seeking recognition or reimbursement. We thank both Jan and Sandy for their devotion and caring about the success of OCCHS.



photo by Paul Idleman

LUTHER McKNIGHT

and the

BACKGROUND ON THE PURCHASE OF THE CHURCH

as narrated by Orville Kenelly

When I first became aware of the Old Colorado City Historical Society, I had a law office in Colorado Springs on the Westside in the Old Town Plaza Condominium Association.

I was informed that there was a gentleman living on the Westside who wanted to have his last will and testament written and that he wanted a Westside lawyer to do it. Well, I think at the time, I was the only lawyer on the west side of Colorado Springs - certainly the only lawyer in Old Colorado City. And so, I was invited to go to the home of **Luther McKnight** to discuss writing his will. Luther was terminally ill at the time and was confined to his home, almost bed-ridden. He did not want to go to the hospital. He did not want to go to hospice. He wanted to take care of himself, and with the aid of visiting nurses, he was able to do just that. My biggest concern was if, at that stage in his life, Mr. McKnight was competent to do a will. After talking with him on two different occasions, it became perfectly clear to me that Luther McKnight was competent. In fact, I was so impressed with his competency that I didn't even pursue a medical opinion on that.

Luther explained to me what he wanted done with his estate and I crafted a will, a rough draft, and took it to him. We polished some of the terms, and finally, we got it to his liking. It wasn't too long after that Luther died.

His nephew, **Leslie Atkins**, lives down in Waxahachi, Texas and came up to take care of Luther's estate. In fact, Leslie came to take care of Luther's affairs even before Luther died. So then, when Luther died, Leslie became executor of the estate, or as they called it at the time, "the personal representative". It turned out that the OCCHS was the prime beneficiary of the Luther McKnight estate. **Ralph Conner** deserves an overwhelming share of credit

for assisting with the Luther McKnight collection and estate.

Well, at the time of Luther's death and the transfer of money from his estate to the OCCHS, discussion began as to who in the society wanted to be responsible for the management of what amounted to just under a shade of \$100,000. I think it was \$95,000 or \$96,000, which, at the time, was a princely sum and certainly a lot more money than the Old Colorado City Historical Society had ever contemplated having in their bank account.

I joined the society and was elected its treasurer. It fell to me to invest this money the best I could. I remember that the interest rates were quite volatile at that time. I remember going from one savings and loan association and one financial institution to another, moving the money around to get the best return possible. I like to believe that I did a good job. The money grew rather rapidly because of the high interest rates that the institutions were paying then.

Well, then, the dream of having a museum started to take form - which is what we now call our History Center. There were a lot of discussions that took place as to what it would be, where it would be, and how it would come to be.

The OCCHS group started looking around at different buildings that could house a museum. One of the buildings that we looked at was the Baptist Church. It was the **Emmanuel Missionary Church** at the time and on the corner of 24th and Pikes Peak Avenue, right across the street from Bancroft Park. As it turned out, that is the one we bought and that is where our History Center is now located. The congregation of the Emmanuel Missionary Church was, as I recall, about eight people - certainly less than twenty. The preacher actually lived in the building with his family. As I recall, the living quarters were about where the computer room is now. There was some stuff down in the basement, but I don't think anyone lived down there. They may have had a Sunday School class down there. The family lived upstairs. The sanctuary is, of course, where the main room of the museum is now. Another party that was interested in looking at the building was the Simpich character dolls people. They had not yet built their show theater and their son, David, was performing with his puppets.

I don't know what happened, but neither the OCCHS nor the Simpich family bought the church. The missionary

people remained there for the time being. One of the things they wanted to do was to move to a smaller building. I remember going over to a church building on a corner (somewhere between the History Center and 19th and Uintah) to see if we could buy it to trade properties with the missionary church. At that time, the missionary people were in the mood to sell the building for \$65,000.

For whatever the reasons, the OCCHS decided to look elsewhere for a building. One of the buildings I personally looked at was the old Westside medical building in the 2800 block of West Colorado Avenue, on the north side of the street (right next door to what is now the Blue Star restaurant). There is an Indian artifacts retail store in there. It was a big building, 10,000 square feet and had an elevator. It was owned by **Donald LaMora**. He had bought it from **Dr. Kenneth Gloss'** widow, **Clara Gloss**, when the medical center decided to build their new building down by Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 2020 W. Colorado Avenue. It had had multiple uses and I talked personally to Donald LaMora. He was willing to do almost anything to help us get into the building because he could afford to take a significant tax deduction for a contribution to the OCCHS. We would have had to agree to pay, let's say, \$400,000 for the building and only come up with \$200,000. It was too big a building and too much money for us to be foolin' with it at that time. It might have turned out to be one of the best deals we could have come up with because it has all that parking off the back side of it, along Pikes Peak Avenue,

which could have been sold off to get the extra money. But those are things that didn't happen.

Then the OCCHS took a look at the Jacob Schmidt building on the 2600 block of West Colorado Avenue. It now houses an art museum called "Thunderstruck". In fact, they signed a contract to buy that building, put some earnest money down and hired an architect to give them an assessment of what it would cost to remodel that building like a museum. As it turned out, OCCHS decided not to go through with the deal, losing its earnest money and fees it paid the architect. It was a real interesting building. Down in the basement was the old ice chest where they would put big chunks of ice every winter and the ice would last through the summer. The walls were 3 ft. thick and it was a fascinating building. The reason that I know so much about that building is that I was one of a group of investors who tried to buy the building for \$82,000. As it turned out, I'm glad we didn't because the gentleman who did buy it spent about \$350,000 to bring the building up to code for commercial use.

After that, I think **John Croff** came on as treasurer and I don't know how the Historical Society went from the Jacob Schmidt building to acquiring the present History Center building from the missionary church people. I do know that the Old Colorado City Historical Society bought a building over in the Calvert subdivision near the Fairview Cemetery. They had to buy that church for about \$105,000 and then the trade was made to come into this building.

MANY BENEFACTORS HELPED TO CREATE OCCHS ARCHIVES

The collections in the Old Colorado City Archives are the result of many donations. The majority of our photographs have come from two primary sources, **Luther McKnight** and **Carl Mathews**. Carl Mathews was born in Elbert County on July 27, 1885 and passed away August 14, 1968. Much of his collection of photographs, books and artifacts then went to the care of his sister, **Lucille Ellis**. Lucille was a devoted member of the Old Colorado City Historical Society and saw to it that Carl's collections, and some of her own, was placed in our care upon her death under the direction of her son, **Don Ellis**. Carl Mathews was an avid historian and his influence remains through his collections and organizations he helped pioneer, such as the Ghost Town Club, Colorado Springs which survives to this day. This photo of Carl by the weathered, carved posts of Montgomery's Graveyard was taken by J.J. Lipsey of Colorado Springs on September 23, 1945.

Our photograph collection continues to grow through the generosity of many members and visitors. We are always thrilled when a photo package arrives from member, **Ira Current**. **LaRue Ebersole**, **Enid Kennis**, **Ed and Nancy Bathke**, **Paul Idleman** and **Don Kallaus** are among the photograph enthusiast who have generously contributed to our photograph archives.



THE STORY OF PHASE II

of our

SOCIETY AND THE HISTORY CENTER

as narrated by Lucille Cunningham

I've always looked at major projects in phases and the Old Colorado City Historical Society projects were major. Phase I was the organization of the Society, beginning the collecting of the historical artifacts and information of the early history here, in the county and on the Westside. Then came the question of where this information and these artifacts, photos and research would be stored.

In our mist was a gentleman, **Martin Luther McKnight**. He was extremely interested in history, especially of the immediate area. After studying our integrity and ability to use his money wisely, Mr. McKnight chose to give the Society the bulk of his estate. (According to his nephew, **Leslie Atkins**, Mr. McKnight was very impressed with a member, **Ralph Conner**, who he felt would diligently watch over the spending of the estate monies he was about to bequeath to the Society.) Several buildings were looked at which might be able to serve as a History Center or Museum on the Westside. Most did not prove to be affordable in various ways - either buying them or maintaining and operating them.

I had joined the Board shortly after joining the Society. I was assigned to look again for a building to serve as a History Center. It had been mentioned that at one time the



First Baptist Church had been approached to see if they would sell. As some of you know, sometimes it isn't just a simple matter of exchanging funds for a piece of property. Much more is usually involved. Another property had to be located to house the congregation located at 1 South 24th Street. The property had to be obtained in a manner as to not create a tax liability. This would need to be done through an exchange. This method of acquiring a property is very time consuming, and must be done very, very carefully. This procedure was accomplished by **Mark Cunningham** of the West One Group who also waived his fees and commission which would have been due from the Society.

This purchase was completed on the last day of the year in 1992 for \$99,900, approximately the same amount the Society had received from the McKnight estate. An architect, **Michael Collins**, was then hired by the Society through the then president, **Joyce Johns**. The Society was on the way to having a Center!

Phase II began as I became president of the Society in May of 1993. There was much to be done for now the Society had a building. It would take approximately \$200,000 to renovate the building IF all went well. That is if nothing else beyond the obvious was found to be in need of repair or needed to be replaced. What a challenge! Money had to be raised to do the job. Once that was done, the renovation had to be further planned and initiated. There still was, however, the president's job to guide and direct all the other activities of the Society. The Society's membership was growing by leaps and bounds. During this time our membership grew from approximately 180 to 360 members.

To pay for the renovation about to take place, it was decided that someone in the Society must write for grants. The grant writing task was done by **Owen "Sandy" Knox** who had expertise in this area. Through the help of **Murphy Constructors**, a grant of \$100,000 was obtained from the **Colorado State Historical Society**. Through the meetings with the Colorado State Historical Society, they determined our Society had people in place with the expertise to properly guide the renovation of a building and would use the \$100,000 they were about to grant to us in the most professional manner. This grant was given to renovate the exterior. Again Murphy Construction worked carefully with us to keep the cost within the grant amount.

Meanwhile, Sandy Knox was writing grants to various places to try to secure money for renovating the interior. The **El Pomar Foundation** granted the Society \$20,000. I was impressed with how the Foundation made sure before giving us the grant that the Society was capable of doing the job and that the Society would use due diligence in carrying out their contract rules. More grants were written by Sandy to the **Boettcher** and **Gates Foundation**. From the Boettcher Foundation, the Society received \$20,000 and \$18,000 from the Gates Foundation. However, these were challenge grants, meaning the Society had to put in a like amount. How could the Society come up with \$38,000? Believe me I spent some sleepless nights! What action would the Society take? Surely the members would want to pay for a square foot of their History Center. Approximately twenty eight square feet were sold at \$50.00 a square foot to members as well as other individuals. Pavers for the Patio were sold to help raise money for the renovation. Again, about forty were sold. Our members were eager to help where they could. Earlier **Lucille Ellis** had given us \$2,000 to help repair or pay for the roof of the History Center. **Catherine Henderson** gave \$5,000, which helped pay for the final building payment due in 1993, and **Joyce Johns** payed for items like insurance when the Society was trying to meet other building expenses. I gave \$3,000 to pay for the renovation of the bell tower. We were blessed when several people sponsored a stained glass window. Catherine Henderson sponsored the largest window for \$5,000. **Pikes Peak National Bank**, through the efforts of **Dennis Richie**, sponsored the smaller double window for \$3,000, Joyce Johns sponsored a window for \$2,000 and I

also sponsored a window for \$2,000. (More windows remain to be sponsored if a person is inclined to do so.) With the sponsorship of the windows and various other efforts, the Society had raised enough money by the deadline, November 1, 1995, to qualify for the challenge grants.

Meanwhile many things had to be done. All the forms to the various grant benefactors had to be filled out by the president at the various stages of building completion. I was asked to give talks to many groups and organizations about the Old Colorado City Historical Society and the upcoming opening of the History Center. The artifacts were moved to the completed basement of the History Center in order that the Society would comply with grant benefactors requests and insurance coverage demands.

We had many committees being organized to help carry on the work of the organization and the renovating of the building. The accessioning committee was working every Tuesday at the office of Ralph Conner on 21st Street. I feel the members of the Society should be aware that the storage and working space cost Ralph Conner well over \$20,000 for the period of time he rented it. This was part of his donation to our Society.

Jan Knox worked very hard at earning money to keep the Society operating during this building period. She held many "Treasure Sales" and money making events to help earn money for the building fund. All this, as well as providing exceptional programs for the general meetings. This was a challenging time! We were going from a small Society to a larger organization. Many committees were enforced to carry on the work.

"Did everything go smoothly or fall right into place?", one might ask. Absolutely not! Revision of the by-laws had to be done to govern the larger organization. Provisions had to be made to provide for the rapidly expanding OCCHS membership. One person could no longer do so much of the workload as Ralph Conner had done in the past. Many more people and committees had to be organized to get the work done. Meanwhile it was mandatory that the building application be completed to place the building on the tax-exempt list so the Society would not be required to pay property taxes, which I was able to accomplish. The grant benefactors specified that grants would only be given to organizations with buildings listed on a "Historic Designation" list. The paperwork was started by Ralph Conner and researched, completed and overseen by Jan Knox.

The building code of the city had changed since the Society first had the plans drawn up by the architect, **Michael Collins**. The city now required that any public building had to have two handicapped accessible rest rooms. More plans had to be done. The uni-sex rest room would not suffice. To our shock and dismay other things needed to be replaced or renovated as the project progressed. The furnace element cracked, so new furnaces were put in. It was discovered that the old plaster was not

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WEST SIDE MEMORIES

TURNING BACK THE CLOCK ON LOCAL EVENTS

compiled by Jan Knox

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO August 1897

At the town board meeting on Monday evening, Chairman Borst of the committee on public buildings, submitted a plan for an addition to the town hall, said building to be used for storage and stable. The proposed plans call for a one-story building 40x42 feet in size. On motion the clerk was authorized to advertise for bids on said building. Hon. A. L. Humphrey, president of the school board, appeared before the board and asked that the school board be allowed to repair the old town hall and use the same for a school building for a term of years. On motion the town attorney was instructed to prepare a contract with the school district to use the building for a term of five years in consideration of making valuable improvements on the building and keep the same in repair.

On the eighth day of September at 12 o'clock noon, George W. Ristine, Receiver, will sell at public auction, at the Colorado City depot, all the property and assets of the Colorado Midland railroad.

Tuesday evening hail fell on the head of Camp creek to the depth of several inches. The hills looked white as snow. The hail stayed on until afternoon of the next day. The severe storm stopped the street cars for two hours. Considerable damage was done in Colorado Springs by rain and lightning.

Now comes Spencer Penrose, donor of the famous Penrose trophy awarded each year to the winner of the Pikes Peak hill climb classic, and enters a car for the big race that will make some of the fast entries from the eastern factories look to their laurels when the race is run Labor day. The big Pierce Arrow car which has been used by Mr. Penrose for the last year or two will be stripped and cut down for the race. It will be piloted by Harry McMillan, who has been the Penrose chauffeur for many

years. McMillan is an experienced driver and thoroughly familiar with the grades on the peak. Another last minute entry that came in yesterday, was from H. J. West of Denver, who is to drive his own Lincoln in the big event of the day for cars of more than 300 cubic inches displacement. This is the first Lincoln car to be entered in the Pikes Peak race, and the fans are going to watch its performance with considerable interest.

Marshal Allen discovered fire in the Anheuser-Busch bottling establishment, located at the corner of Washington avenue and Sixth street, about 10 o'clock Thursday night. The fire started near the boiler furnace and was extinguished before serious damage was done. The fire alarm was not sounded.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO August 1922

Special interest to the local police department of the cleanup of a ring of 33 confidence men in Denver is attached to the fact that one of the con men, Adolph Duff, 54 years old, operated in this city nearly 20 years ago when Colorado City was in its hey-day as a "touch town." In those days, Duff worked his confidence games on the trains between La Junta and Denver, and also did a bit of pickpocketing around the Colorado Springs depots, and in Colorado City, it is said. Duff and his gang were eventually chased out of town during the administration of W. S. Reynolds as chief of police, and although he was said to have moved to Montana and there "gone straight.", his arrest in Denver indicates that he soon resumed his former trade.

Thousands of spectators watched the throng of masked and costumed dancers at the annual Shan Kive of the Pikes Peak region held on Nevada avenue and surrounding streets.

Retired U. S. Marshal W. J. Snively or

"Happy Baldwin" as he was called has returned to the region to pass his last few years under the shadow of the peak. At the time of his first visit here in 1870, he came at the head of a gang of deputies, looking for desperadoes, masquerading under the guise of Indians and committing all their crimes in the name of the Redskins. At the time of his visit here there were half a dozen shacks in Manitou and a great many Indians in the hills. There were 2,500 people in Denver and 17 families in Pueblo. Snively had the district extending from Canada to the Mexican border to look after, with 950 deputies to help him.

FIFTY YEARS AGO August 1947

The move of the El Paso County Pioneer Society to place a marker in the Colorado City cemetery south of the Mesa road, near the old Brewer home, has caused renewed interest in the place where early residents were laid away. Just when the marker will be placed is not known. The old cemetery is a deserted place. Not a tombstone or marker is left, though there are numerous places where such were. A few stone bases where there were tombstones are still there. Some of the marble markers have been broken off where they fit into the stone base. The cemetery comprises a few acres and is fenced with barbed wire. There are four rows of abandoned graves running north and south along the east side of the plot. Most of those are merely depressions, where bodies have been removed or the ground has caved in through neglect. The only flowers are wild ones, the same being in regard to shrubbery. There are some other graves outside the four rows, but they are scattered. Cattle used to roam over the old cemetery, but do not now, as evidenced by the large number of yucca plants that are undisturbed. It is said that stock will eat the pretty wild flowers, regardless of the sharp pointed blades.

active participation) a computer room, figuring I was going to do something with it. And, yes, timing was just right. Just as there was money to do the building from the state, the Internet came swinging along and we landed a \$20,000 **National Science Foundation** grant to help connect the History Center to the rest of the world. You know, as I affectionately say, "The little old ladies in the tennis shoes not only have a swingin' history center, but also a very high-tech way to distribute Colorado City's history around the world!"

And, so, the society, which has now grown to, the neighborhood of, 300 active members just by people walking in the door, is bound to grow in the future. And with younger people coming in, and with programs that can be in the center itself, in that atmosphere, in that classic building, and then its activities, and its history, and its booklets, and so on, things that have been written can be distributed world wide through the Internet. Younger generations will now become interested in local history via technology.

That brings us up to July 1997 and it is very obvious that the historical society, with its modest, slow and rather conservative growth and roots, and with no single person to get credit for it, has had some very able people to lead it at very key times. Some generous donations were made as well as money and artifacts that have brought us to the state of a very solid, independent historical society that owns a magnificent property, right next to Bancroft Park. The History Center is a capstone, in my opinion, in the entire revitalization of the historic district of what was once Colorado City ... "the first capital of the territory".

Your membership in the Old Colorado City Historical Society supports the operation of the Old Colorado City History Center

Most of our operational expenses are paid with member dues. All members receive our *West Word* newsletter monthly except June and December. Members also receive a 10% discount in the History Center Book & Gift Shop and for special programs.*

The Old Colorado City History Center is open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, except Mondays.

Museum Tours, Walking Tours, Research Facilities and Other Services are available.

Call 636-1225 for more information.

stable enough to be left in place, it had to be removed, and replaced as well as finished. All the extras came to over \$21,000. That did not include our refinishing our hardwood floors. Again, thanks to Catherine Henderson, that was made possible through a donation of \$1,000.

Another grant had been written by Sandy Knox to obtain the funds to replace the historic balcony the Baptist Church originally had that served as a choir loft. Many thought the balcony would be overpowering, but it has proved to be a very attractive addition and also very useful in our Center. With West One's expertise in building, we tried very hard to get the Society's moneys worth. With the help of Murphy Constructors, I feel we did.

I enjoyed being the president of the Society very much. What a joy it was to greet so many members at our general meetings. Thanks for the many compliments you bestowed upon me. Thanks, also, to the Board of Directors who served while I was president. You were so appreciated. You went the extra mile to help ease the extremely heavy load of being president of a growing organization and helping oversee the renovation project daily. You will long be remembered.

With my own very busy business schedule it is impossible to give over eight hours a day to any other organization as I did most days during my presidency. I felt I had given to the Society in the area of my expertise. Now as we prepare for and open the Center, I hope to see people serve in the various positions who have expertise in museum work. This represents Phase III.

**OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Membership Application**

New Membership Renewal Gift from _____

Individual (\$20) Family (\$25) Business (\$50)

Lifetime (\$150) Corporate (\$250)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Phone (____) _____ ZIP _____

email address _____

Make checks payable to:

**Old Colorado City Historical Society
Membership Chairman
1 South 24th Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319**

OLD COLORADO CITY IS 138 YEARS OLD

In July 1858, members of the Lawrence, Kansas prospecting party, which included Frank M. Cobb, founded the town site of Saint Charles on the east side of Cherry Creek, the present site of Denver. The founders left a man at the town site while they returned to Kansas to seek approval from the Kansas legislature. During the same time, members from the Greene Russell's Georgia party founded the town site of Auroria on the west side of Cherry Creek. However, in November 1858, General Larimer, which included Richard (Dick) Ed Whitsitt, led a party of men from Kansas to the Cherry Creek area and gained control of the Saint Charles town site. They renamed it Denver City.

Also in the year 1858, various town promoters and speculators founded Arapahoe City, Fountain City near the Old Fort Pueblo site, El Paso on the present site of Colorado Springs, and El Dorado on the present site of Colorado City. Frank M. Cobb, a member of the Lawrence party, did not mention platting the site of El Paso. However, Anthony Bott, a member of the Westport party indicated that members from the Lawrence party founded El Paso in June 1858. Bott and others from his party staked El Dorado in the latter part of 1858.

In 1859, besides establishing various mining camps, town promoters founded Golden City, Canon City, and Anthony Bott and his party returned to Eldorado, renaming it Colorado City.

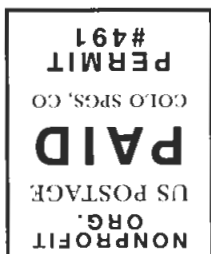
compiled by LaDonna Gunn

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