



## Old Colorado City Historical Society

VOLUME 20 ISSUE 10

December 2005

# Christmas Past

For some reason I associate Christmas with the Victorian Era. I suspect this association is because some of the first Christmases I remember were spent in the house of my grandparents, on a ranch south of Colorado Springs. This was long before electricity was available and my grandmother was surrounded by things Victorian as was appropriate for her place and time. Although I don't know for a fact I do however suspect that some of her Christmas decorations were garnered from her parents who would have brought them over from Ireland. I specifically remember a beautiful foil star that had been intricately folded from a single piece of material.

There was no electricity in their house so the decorations were without lights. Many were relics of the travels of some of my ancestors from "the ol' sod" as my grandfather used to say. They were paper, porcelain and tin candle holders. I wish I still had some of those decorations. In addition my grandmother was one of those Victorian looking women. In the way she dressed, her manners and in the subsequent years when I was growing up I realize she was Victorian in thought and demeanor. From what I have been able to remember she also decorated her house, at Christmas, with many things we now think of as Victorian.

I also suspect that it was grandma's influence that has given me such a great ap-

preciation for things Victorian and I have always admired many of the houses here on the Westside. Any number have been restored and at Christmas are decorated as they might have been in the early part of the last century. Many of the stops on this year's B&B Christmas tour that will be held on December 4<sup>th</sup> will be different shades of the Victorian style and era. So just what is a Victorian Christmas?

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert did not invent the custom of a decorated Christmas tree. However, we should give them credit for this grand tradition as it became popular world wide in the Christian community because of them. The evergreen tree as a Christmas icon was actually part of the season celebration in Europe during the Middle Ages and by the middle of the 17th century, the custom of cutting trees and decorating them with homemade trinkets, various fruits and sweets was prominent in Germany. By the early 19th century, German-style Christmas trees were decorated with apples, cookies and the gold & silver strands known as "angel's hair", which were found in many homes of the wealthy. At first small trees were used and set on a table in the entryway but gradually, the Christmas trees got larger through the years and could no longer fit on a table.



*A Victorian era  
Santa*

When I was a child we made garlands of popcorn, strung dried fruit and made

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

**WEST WORD**

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LETTERS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTIFACTS AND STORIES CAN BE DELIVERED  
 TO THE OCCHS CENTER OR MAILED TO:

WEST WORD Editor c/o OCCHS  
 1 South 24th Street  
 Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319  
 Or Merv Casey—thequill@adelphia.net

SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS THE 15th 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 establishment of a History Center.*

**MEMBERSHIPS**

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

Annual membership classifications are:

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

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	Beverley Disch	719-634-5023
Vice President	LaRue Ebersole	719-685-3265
Secretary	Joanne Karlson	719-475-2574
Treasurer	David Hughes	719-636-2040
	Kay Atteberry	719-599-3187
	Arlene Casey	719-634-2356
	Leland Feitz	719-
	Tom Hendrix	719-633-7392
	Mel McFarland	719-

**MEETINGS**

OCCHS Monthly Meeting & Program is held at 11 a.m. on the second Friday of each month, except during June, July, and August. The History Center opens at 10 a.m. on the day of the meeting for refreshments and visitation. The program begins at 11 a.m. This meeting is free and open to the public.

**Next Monthly Meeting**  
 December 9, 2005 at the History Center



*Explore the REAL History*  
 at the  
**OLD COLORADO CITY  
 HISTORY CENTER**

1 South 24th Street

(the corner of Pikes Peak & 24th Streets)

(719) 636-1225

**FREE ADMISSION**

Old Colorado City History Center encourages you to attend its events, meetings, and projects. Please call 636-1225 for information

Winter Hours

(June – September)

TUES—SAT 11 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Closed Sunday & Monday

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chains of colored paper to decorate our tree. Of course there were Christmas lights available to those folks that had electricity and the first tree with bright colored lights I can remember was after WWII. Due to the influence of the industrial revolution ornaments became commercialized after the Civil War. And now a hundred fifty years later the decorations available are simply spectacular.

For thousands of years people around the world have celebrated midwinter festivals. With the rise in Christianity in Europe, pagan festivals became mixed with Christmas celebrations. No era in history however, has influenced the way in which we celebrate Christmas, quite as much as the Victorians.

The wealth generated by the new factories and industries of the Victorian age allowed middle class families to take time off work and celebrate Christmas Day. Those new fangled inventions, the railways, allowed the country folk who had moved into the towns and cities in search of work to return home for a family Christmas.

At the start of Victoria's reign, children's toys tended to be handmade and hence expensive, generally restricting availability to those "rich folk" again. With factories however came mass production, which brought with it games, dolls, books and clockwork toys all at a more affordable price. Affordable that is to "middle class" children. In a "poor child's" Christmas stocking, which first became popular from around 1870, only an apple, orange and a few nuts could be found. This phe-



nomenon continues to today in our household as my wife always puts an orange and some nuts in all the stockings she hangs by the chimney with care. Of course now there is also a whole assortment of other goodies and presents.

Santa Claus normally associated with the bringer of gifts, is Father Christmas or St. Nicholas. The two are in fact two entirely separate stories. Father Christmas was originally part of an old English midwinter festival, normally dressed in green, a sign of the returning spring. The stories of St. Nicholas (Sinter Klaas in Holland) came via Dutch settlers to America in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. From the 1870's Sinter Klass became more commonly known as Santa Claus and with him came his unique gift and toy distribution system - reindeer and sleigh. And can now be found in malls and stores across America.

Although not part of the Victorian era, today one of the most widely know symbols of Christmas is Rudolph of the red nose. It started out for strictly commercial purposes but has endured as a symbol of Christmas.

The Chicago-based Montgomery Ward company, department store operators, had been purchasing and distributing children's coloring books as Christmas gifts for their customers for several years. In 1939, Montgomery Ward tapped one of their own employees to create a book for them, thus saving money. 34-year old copywriter Robert L. May wrote the story of Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer in 1939, and 2.4 million copies were handed out that year. Despite the wartime paper shortage, over 6 million copies had been distributed by 1946.

May drew in part on the story "The Ugly Duckling" and in part from his own experiences as an often taunted, small, frail youth to create the story of the misfit reindeer. Though Rollo and Reginald were considered, May settled on Rudolph as his reindeer's name. Writing in verse as a series of rhyming couplets, May tested the story as he went along on his 4-year old daughter Barbara, who loved the story.

Sadly, Robert May's wife died around the time he

was creating Rudolph, leaving May deeply in debt due to medical bills. However, he was able to persuade Sewell Avery, Montgomery Ward's corporate president, to turn the copyright over to him in January 1947, thus ensuring May's financial security.

May's story "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" was printed commercially in 1947 and in 1948 a nine-minute cartoon of the story was shown in theaters. When May's brother-in-law, songwriter Johnny Marks, wrote the lyrics and melody for the song "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer", the Rudolph phenomenon was born. Turned down by many musical artists afraid to contend with the legend of Santa Claus, the song was recorded by Gene Autry in 1949 at the urging of Autry's wife. The song sold two million copies that year, going on to become one of the best-selling songs of all time, second only to Bing Crosby's "White Christmas". The 1964 television special about Rudolph, narrated by Burl Ives, remains a holiday favorite to this day and Rudolph himself has become a much-loved Christmas icon.

The many things we now think of as the Christmas season came directly out of the Victorian era. The eating of a turkey, Christmas cards, of course the indoor tree and many of its symbolic decorations, the stockings hung by the chimney with care, the fruit in the stocking all became popular do to a straight laced lady that ruled over a vast empire.

Merv  
Casey



## Own a Piece of History

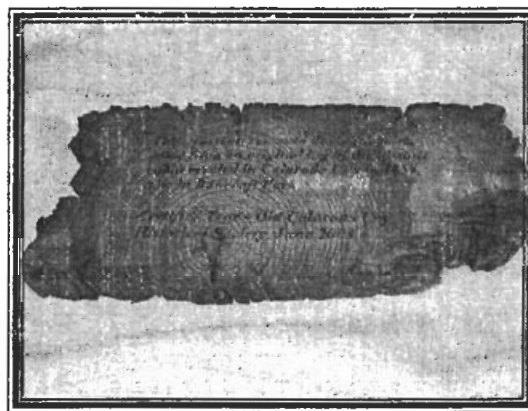
Wouldn't it be wonderful to own a piece of history that dates from the earliest days of Colorado City? Well, your Society is doing something that will make a piece of history available to you. The historic log cabin, now located in Bancroft Park, is the oldest structure from the Colorado City days. It dates back to 1859 and your Society has finished renovating the building with the help of a grant from the State Historical Society. During this renovation, and previous renovations, original logs from the building have been removed. We have taken two of these logs and sliced them into one-inch thick pieces. Each log cut is engraved with the following:

"This crosscut, removed during repairs, came from an original log of the historic cabin erected in Colorado City in 1859, now in Bancroft Park.

Certified True - Old Colorado City  
Historical Society, June 2003"

These log mementos are offered as a limited edition to members of the Society and other historians. The logs are numbered and will be issued in a limited set of 100. With each log, the purchaser will receive a parchment Certificate of Authenticity, signed by the President of the Old Colorado City Historical Society.

We are currently taking orders for the logs. The cost for each log is \$25 (no discounts), plus \$5, if the log is to be mailed.



## From the Book Store

By Agnes Johnson

Many books have been written about the lives of Artus and Anne Van Briggles. However in this book, *The Story Behind the Clay*, by Sharon and David Swint, the focus is different. They have concentrated on pieces that were made for special occasions, fraternal organizations and colleges. Also in the early 1900's the Van Briggles were influenced by the development of Colorado Springs and the influence of the association with Colorado College.

An early affiliation of Colorado College with Artus began when Prof. William H. Strieby provided a space for Artus to work in his laboratory. There he developed new glazes and brought artistic design to his pottery.

After his death from tuberculosis, Anne took charge. Eventually the company fell on hard times and Anne leased the company to Edmund DeForest Curtis around 1910 or 1912. Anne remarried and moved to Denver. The property was finally sold to Charles B. Lansing in 1915. Various phases of ownership continued the Van Briggles name but with the owners, I.F. Lewis and his brother J.H. Lewis, all artistic process and glazes were eliminated and they went strictly for profit. Only the Van Briggles School of Design gave potters the opportunity to develop glazes and to continue the artistic side.

After WW II, with the threat of I-25 going through the property, J.H. Lewis bought the roundhouse of the Midland RR where it continues to this day.

An interesting chapter about Bruin Inn recounts the purchase of the land by Colorado College. Architectural plans by Palmer made the Bruin Inn (upon completion) the most popular location for parties for the community and especially for the college stu-

dents. Even a song about Ole Bruin Inn is included in this book.

With the formation of the El Paso Club, Van Briggles made mugs, paper weights and other articles with the name of the prominent club available to members.

Of particular interest to Westsiders and Old Colorado City history buffs is the inclusion of the city voting to abolish liquor. Jim Langa a saloon operator wanted the town to vote "dry" so that he and his partners could form a new town and put all competitors out of business. This new town was to be built on land only the partners owned and would be named Ramona. A map of the platting for this new town is in this book. Our History Center has some material from that adventure.

Mugs made for Greek organizations at Colorado College and paper weights are pictured on pp 82-83

Other chapters such as "The Bells", odds and ends show the diversity of Van Briggles. A list of miscellaneous specialty items include the tiles made for the World arena and sold to the community as a promotion and funding. The remainder of the book has color plates or pictures of various Van Briggles articles with the history of each. This is a beautiful, well documented addition to the van Briggles story.



## November Treasurers Report

We gained a little and lost a little in November. Two groups which, in the past, rented our Center for their events, decided not to. So we failed to get \$500 in rental fees at this end of the year. But we had a new group ask at the last minute whether they could rent our space for two evening hours so they could hear a nation-wide speaker-phone telephone conference. Their members could not fit into one member's home for the occasion. It was a Democratic Party group from Pleasant Valley. We had to set up a telephone conference speaker in the main hall, and render some other technical support, but all went well. And they paid us \$150 – our normal \$75 an hour fee. So we recouped a bit from losing two other groups. Maybe we should invite other political party groups to meet in our hall! After all, Colorado City was the lively first, and very, political capitol of Colorado Territory way back in 1862!

Our Endowment CD is now earning 4.59% and our T-Bill is getting 3.98% - or a total of about \$330 a month in earned interest. We expect the Feds to raise national interest rates again.

We received \$295 in memberships and renewals in November.

Your Treasurer laid out for the Board, in detail, an analysis of just what we receive, and the associated costs for, each class of membership we have. The costs are mostly for the printing and mail-

ing our newsletter to all 264 of our members. Their main benefit.

Basically, it now costs us \$8.47 a member to print (\$1,900 a year) and mail (\$320 a year) 10 newsletters a year. So we get \$11.53 for our general treasury each \$20 Individual membership, \$16.53 per \$25 family membership, and \$41.53 for each \$50 business membership.

Or, we gain about \$2,700 for our general expenses, over our newsletter costs from our normal \$5,000 in membership dues a year.

We will end this year in good shape.

Some outsiders express astonishment that the Old Colorado City Historical Society, owning, operating, staffing its free Museum as well publish a newsletter, and host programs, can operate on less than \$20,000 in annual revenues. Well, its our great Corps of Volunteers, Successful Fund Raisers, and good Management by your Board of Directors!

Dave Hughes, Treasurer

### Our visitors

Since the first of the year people from 32 states have signed our guest book – We also had visitors from Japan, Russia, Puerto Rico, Panama, Israel, Sweden and Canada.

### Pre-Inventory Sale

25% discount in selected books and gifts. Buy yourself an early Christmas gift or for someone special on your gift list. The normal 10% members' discount will not apply on these sales. Sale will be held from the current date to December 31, 2005.

## President's Message

We have just finished our fall membership drive for our Society which ran from October 14<sup>th</sup> through November 12<sup>th</sup>. Our membership committee was chaired by Kay Atterberry with Jo Cerone and Joanne Karlson assisting her. We offered our memberships at a special rate and gave each a copy of our guide book as well.

Here is a list of new members:

Vel Fairburn

Barbara Barbaro

C.A. & M.M. Yowell

Roberta Robertson

Jay Lowery

Dick Eustice

Gerogia Blanco

Leslie Bergstrom

Joyce Schoen

Mike Smith & Rose Ann Goldbic

David & Sharon Swint

Clay Roehl

Amy & Scott Marcy

Phoebe Schmidt

Gordon Gray has updated the membership list. The following figures are current.

Lifetime members	46
Business members	10
Family members	63
Individual members	145
Total members	264

I would like to extend a big welcome to our new members and a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year to all of you.

Bev Disch, President

## Special Events

**December 4th Annual Bed and Breakfast Tour**—Local Bed & Breakfast Inns open their door for a holiday tour of their facilities. Tickets sold in advance and at the door. Help support this major fundraiser.

Jan 28, 2006 - 1pm "*Railroads of Cripple Creek*", presented by  
**Mel McFarland**

*a local railroad historian and author.*

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## 2006 Calendar of Programs & Events

### Friday, Jan. 13 - 11 a.m. Monthly meeting & program

Museum opens at 10 a.m. Come for coffee. Program to be announced. Call OCCHS Bookstore for information.

### Saturday, Jan. 14 - 10 a.m.

#### New OCCHS member coffee and orientation.

A time to learn more about the history of Old Colorado City and a behind-the-scenes tour the History Center's facilities.

All newer (and renewing!) members are invited to attend.

### Saturday, Jan. 28 - 1 p.m. "Railroads of Cripple Creek"

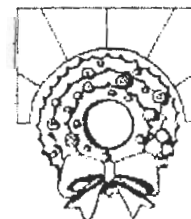
presented by Mel McFarland, local railroad historian, author, and OCCHS member. Bring your family and friends!

### Friday, Feb. 10 - 11 a.m. "The El Paso Canal - Then & Now"

presented by Gary Bostrom, Colorado Springs Utilities Dept.

Museum opens at 10 a.m. Come for coffee and find out more about this Westside landmark.

*Merry Christmas*



OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ONE SOUTH TWENTY-FOURTH STREET  
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80904-3319

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Last month there was a mistake in the West Word and I would like to apologize to the Clarks.

The picture published in West Word identified as the Clark's

**Holden House**

was incorrect and was in fact a picture of one of the other B&B's on this years tour.

The accompanying picture was the picture that should have appeared.

