



Old Colorado City Historical Society

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 4

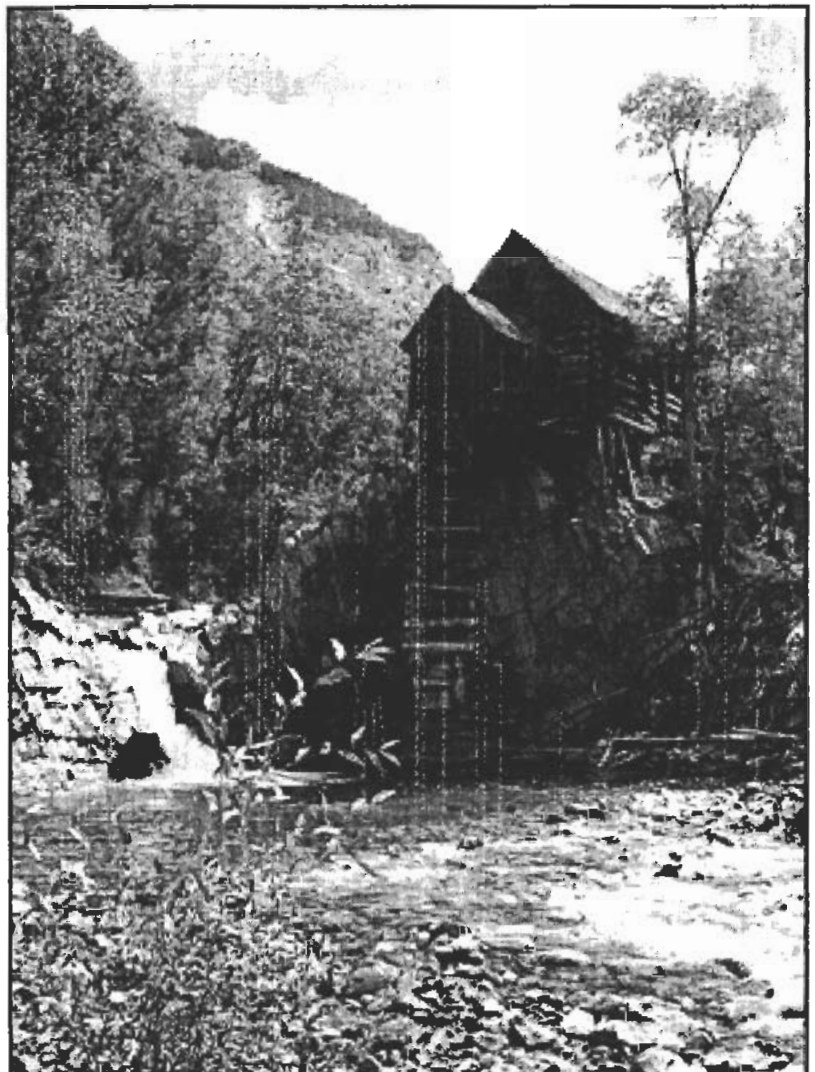
April 2007

A RICH HERITAGE

Chasing Ghosts: An Iowan's Odyssey Through Colorado's Ghost Towns By Phil McDonald

This article is different from most of the others that have graced the pages of our newsletter. First, as the title suggests, it is written by a relative newcomer to Colorado Springs. I have spent most of my sixty one years in Iowa where I was a high school history and government teacher and have been a Colorado resident for a scant six of them. Second, I have written a highly personal account of my visits to four of the more than eighty ghost towns in seventeen counties that I have visited.

My quest actually began before my wife Elaine and I moved to Colorado in June of 2001. As a U.S. history teacher I nurtured a highly romanticized vision of the mining frontier in the old west. In my mind's eye this vision included a stereotypical rustic ghost town. Like most folks, I was vaguely aware that many of these abandoned towns still existed and that many are located in Colorado. When we moved here, I was determined to find them. My first challenge was to locate them on a map. In this mission I was assisted by a wonderful book that I found when I was working at the Garden of the Gods Visitor Center. Ghost Towns of Colorado by Philip Varney and John Drew has been my single most indispensable resource. Among other virtues, Varney and



Crystal Mill

Drew's book includes detailed instructions on how to find the towns.

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

WEST WORD

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 THE OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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LETTERS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTIFACTS AND STORIES CAN BE DELIVERED
 TO THE OCCHS CENTER OR MAILED TO:

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 1 South 24th Street
 Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319
 Or Merv Casey - westsider1@comcast.net

SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS THE 15th OF EACH MONTH

MISSION
 Revised April 2004

The Old Colorado City Historical Society was founded as a volunteer organization to recognize the historical significance and unique culture of original Old Colorado City and early El Paso County. This spirit is perpetuated through the preservation of artifacts and archival materials, encouragement of research, education of the children and the community, through the membership and the operation of the History Center at 1 South 24th Street, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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	Tom Hendrix	719-633-7392
Secretary	Arlene Casey	719-634-2356
Treasurer	David Hughes	719-636-2040
	Kay Atteberry	719-599-3187
	Eloise Wynn	719-633-9137
	Mel McFarland	719-533-1311
	Leland Feritz	719-229-8066
	Joanne Karlson	719-475-2574

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
April 13, 2007
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

Visit our web site for even more history!

<http://history.oldcolo.com>

- stories
- documents
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- photographs
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e-mail us at: history@oldcolo.com

After thoughtful consideration of more than eighty ghost towns, I have selected my four favorites, Ashcroft, Independence, Crystal and St. Elmo. Each of these sites has been the beneficiary of multiple visits by the McDonalds.

The delightful and highly accessible ghost town of Ashcroft lived three separate lives. As a silver mining community, it died in infancy. Founded in 1880, it was virtually abandoned by 1885 when superior and more accessible silver deposits were discovered in Aspen. During the WWII years, it was the site of a proposed ski resort that never materialized as well as a training base for the 10th Mountain Division. Finally, it was used as the setting for a popular 1950s TV show, Sergeant Preston of the Yukon.

Because of its proximity (12 miles) to Aspen, finding Ashcroft is quite easy. It is located 10.8 miles beyond Aspen on Castle Creek Road. The Ashcroft site consists of approximately fifteen buildings, the most interesting of which is the rustic old hotel. The structures are lovingly protected by the Aspen historical society which maintains its headquarters in an old saloon adjacent to the parking lot. Numerous explanatory signs provide historical information about many of the buildings. With its gorgeous mountain backdrop and lush grasses and plants, Ashcroft is a visual delight to behold.

Located 15.5 miles southeast of Aspen just off Independence Pass is the site of Independence. Founded in 1879 and all but deserted by 1888, the



St. Elmo

life of this old mining town and stagecoach layover was short. Harsh weather conditions and meager ore deposits contributed to its demise. Interestingly, the last contingent of hardy miners to inhabit Independence made their escape from the snow-bound community by dismantling some buildings, making skis from the wood, and racing off to Aspen!

Parking is available off the side of the road on Independence Pass. Just follow the steps down from the parking area and you'll see one of the most authentic ghost towns in Colorado. Thirty to forty structures in varying states of disrepair can be seen and explored. Like Ashcroft, Independence is maintained by the Aspen Historical Society.

When I worked at the GOG Visitor Center, we sold a poster that depicted a rustic log cabin structure that was precariously perched on a rock outcropping overlooking the turbulent Crystal River. Attached to the cabin was a make-shift rickety wooden ladder that descended to the river below. I was instantly awestruck. I

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Treasurer's Report

Since our \$80,000 'Fixed Endowment' CD, which earns over 5% interest monthly matured on March 1st, Bev Disch and I marched into the Pikes Peak Bank and renewed it for another year. In accordance with the Board's wishes at the beginning of the year, kicked it up to \$85,000. So our fixed endowment slowly grows. That leaves us with \$8,000 in our 'earned interest' endowment in the form of a federal T-Bill. Between the both of them we should gain almost \$5,500 in interest over the remainder of 2007. That represents a fourth of our annual budget income.

We have paid all of the costs for publishing the Irving Howbert book, which should arrive by mid April. The total cost was \$2,137, or about \$7.12 a copy. We are selling it for \$19.95. It cost a little more than I reported last month, because we had to purchase for \$294 a minimum of ten ISBN blanks — by which our books can be registered nationally. We only needed one for now— for the Howbert book. If we reprint up to 9 other of our books, we will not have to pay again.

Since January I have deposited \$720 for new and renewed memberships, 16 Individual, 10 family, and 3 business. Good start for the year.

Two \$100 commemorative Bricks were purchased, one for departed Paul Idleman, the other in the name of a current member's family.

We got a \$50 donation for some copies of our I on Cheney newsletter. That was a popular program! And people wanted to read more.

For the first time we had to pay the quarterly 'Stormwater Fee' to the City. \$27 on top of our \$521 February Utility Bill. January was cold!

Our Liability Insurance, both for coverage of our Building and furnishings, and Director's Liability comes to \$2,140 a year. We pay that on a monthly basis.

Our usual \$42 a month security alarm, and \$50 a month telephone charge (the alarms have to use a phone line, as does Betsy's Credit Card machine, and our Copier Lease, at \$135 a month round out our recurring charges.

The only exceptional charge was \$88 to repair the window in our foyer that was broken into by thieves who pilfered two antique dolls from a plastic cabinet — without setting off our alarms.

We seem to be on track so far this year with our an-

nual budget projections.

2006 ended better than the Board had forecast a year ago. Instead of making \$2,000 less than we took in over the year, with \$16,074 expected revenue, we ended up getting \$23,664 in total revenue, and lower corresponding costs. Additionally we earned \$3,346 interest from our \$80,000 CD during the year while Federal rates were rising above 5%, and another \$1,327 was interest earned on the Federal T Bill we started with our 2005 carry-over cash in hand.

Profits over costs from our 7 events — Victorian Tea, Garden Fair, Cemetery Crawl, Founder's Day, Patio Sales, Taste of Colorado City, the Bed and Breakfast Tour netted us \$6,471, and even our Bake Sales added another \$1,045. Additionally our Book Store was able to transfer \$2,574 of its profits to our general account. We ended up well in the black.

So our total cash assets over the year rose from \$97,720, to \$105,107.

Now we are in the new year of 2007.

On January 15th your Board approved the 2007 Society budget. It modestly forecasts 2007 revenue of \$18, 849, with expenses of \$17,482 — or an operational surplus of \$1,607.

However our 2005 and 2006 decisions to put our Endowment funds and most of our Cash on hand into variable rate CDs and Fed T Bills promise a nice year on top of that expected surplus. Unless national Interest rates fall, your society will earn over \$5,500 in interest alone in 2007. That is over a fourth of our entire budget!

Now on March 1st our \$80,000 Fixed Endowment CD matures and we have to renew. So we are adding the \$2,290 in 2006 Memorials and new Lifetime Memberships into the Fixed Endowment new CD which our Bylaws call for. But additionally your Board decided to add another \$2,710 to that sum, so the 2007 Fixed Endowment Fund CD will be for \$85,000, instead of \$80,000 which should then earn \$4,888 in interest. And our cash in our checking account above the \$5,000 we need to start the year's operations, put in a Fed T Bill should earn another \$750.

If all goes well, and interest rates stay constant, we will end 2007 with as much as \$113,413 in all our liquid asset funds, \$7,000 more than last year. We may be able to get serious about repainting our History Center!

Next month I will tell members about an exciting historical book reprinting project that may also become a financial winner.

Dave Hughes
Treasurer

For those that may be interested: through the acquisition of adelphia cable and internet provider, Comcast is now the cable and internet provider. This has caused a change in my email name and IP address. I am now

westsider@comcast.net

Please make any appropriate change in you address book. Merv Casey, editor West Word

April showers bring May flowers

knew after looking at this peculiar building in the beautiful mountain setting, that I had to find it. To my surprise I learned that the building was the most photographed structure in Colorado and was called the Crystal Mill.

Since I first gazed at the poster in 2001, I have made two pilgrimages to this awesome structure. The instructions on how to find the Crystal Mill sounded straightforward enough. Simply proceed 5.9 miles from Marble on Road 314. What I didn't know was that Road 314 is arguably the worst and scariest road in Colorado. It is a narrow boulder strewn path carved out along a 500 foot precipice! Prudently, I hired a jeep to take me on my mission. The bone-jarring and intestine scrambling journey was harrowing. After bouncing along the boulder field for about an hour, I looked to my right and there it was, the famous Crystal Mill! The driver told me that the Crystal Mill was not a mill at all, but rather a hydroelectric generating plant. No matter what it was, it was absolutely awesome and I took scores of photos. On our return trip, the most unlikely of events occurred. We got in a traffic jam when we encountered a fleet

of fifteen or so ATVs. The jeep was forced to back up toward the precipice to allow them to proceed. When I looked to the back of the vehicle, I saw that we were about six inches from tumbling 500 feet into the canyon. I was absolutely terrified! Needless to say, I survived and lived to tell the story.

The final nominee for McDonald's favorite ghost towns is St. Elmo. This delightful little town, founded in 1880, is located about 16 miles west of Nathrop at the end of Road 162. Originally called Forest City, this nicely preserved ghost town was forced to change its name when informed by postal authorities that a Forest City already existed in California. Thus the town adopted the identity of St. Elmo, the namesake of a popular 1866 novel. When silver and gold was discovered in the Chalk Creek Mining District, St. Elmo was developed as a supply center for the Mary Murphy and other nearby mines. After the DSP&P railroad was completed to the town, St. Elmo prospered. However, like many silver mining communities, the fortunes of the small town took a nosedive when Congress repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1893. One calamity

followed another as the mines closed, the railroad pulled up stakes and most folks deserted the town.

Today St. Elmo is one of the most popular ghost towns in Colorado. Many of the original buildings remain and they are jealously protected by a small number of area residents. During our last visit to St. Elmo in the summer of 2006, the town's residents sponsored a delightful and educational fundraiser. The town folk, dressed in 1880 period costumes, performed a series of historical re-enactments based on actual characters that had populated St. Elmo

So, there you have it. Phil

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Independence



Ashcroft



McDonald's nominees for best ghost towns and historic ruins in Colorado. All of these sites, with the exception of the Crystal Mill, are easily accessible in any vehicle. I hope that I have piqued your curiosity sufficiently to inspire your own visits to these relics of Colorado history.

Catherine Ella Brown Henderson

Catherine a life member of OCCHS died February 24, 2007. She and her husband Bill were graduates of Colorado Collage where they met. They were long time residents of Colorado Springs, Bill having served as Mayor in the 1950's. Bill was President of Pikes Peak National Bank. A beautiful, large, framed, painting was given to him and after his death Catherine donated it to the History Center. Memorial Contributions in Catherine's name can be made to OCCHS

OCCHS Meeting & Program

Friday, April 13th at 11 a.m. "Union Printers Home: 1892 to the Present"

This historic facility was a pioneer in the treatment of tuberculosis in the U.S. and a leader in the development of extended nursing home care for its union members. Come see this pictorial history presentation by **Rebecca Clark**, Assistant Administrator of the Union Printers Home and a longtime Westside resident. Learn about the first years of "modern" medical care welcomed in this treeless "little settlement of Colorado Springs".

The History Center opens at 10:15 for coffee and museum visitation. Bring your friends.

OCCHS WISH LIST

For the museum, Native American Indian artifacts (especially the Utes). We have a very small collection and would appreciate your donations. Contact Liz Geiss at the History Center.

For the 6th Annual Victorian Tea, small glass punch cups...either by donation or a loan. We need a total of 10 dozen (120 cups) and can store them to use for other events.

This year there will be two seatings. We don't want to wash cups between the seatings! Contact Eloise Wynne, Muriel Dunkley or the History Center.

For the History Center gardens and outside maintenance, volunteers with a "green thumb" who like to water, rake and prune! Contact Tom Hendrix, Bev Disch or the History Center.

2007 NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Nominating Committee of Joanne Karlson, Elinor Messerschmidt, and Sharon Swint presented the following slate of Board of Director nominees for a two-year term. The Board has accepted their report. *The election will be held at the next annual business meeting which is Friday, May 11, 2007 at 11 a.m.* Those Board members whose terms are expiring are Kay Atteberry, Leland Feitz, Dave Hughes, and Mel McFarland. The nominees are:

Dick Eustice – archives volunteer – designs and prepares museum displays – artist – hiker – past volunteer at Bear Creek Nature Center and Cheyenne Mt. Zoo – retired technical illustrator

Dave Hughes – incumbent Board member, current Treasurer – Old Colorado City historian – OWN board member – wireless technology expert – author – retired military

Phil McDonald – bookstore volunteer – Cemetery Crawl portrayal – local Pillar instructor – speaker to local groups on a variety of subjects – retired high school history teacher

Mel McFarland – incumbent Board member – Pikes Peak Railway conductor – railroad historian, speaker and author – retired middle school teacher

OOPS!

In the last issue of West Word we listed with thanks the names of our volunteer Telephone Callers. I neglected to include the name of ELINOR MESSERSCHMIDT. It is with my apology and thanks identifying her here. Sorry Elinor.

Eloise Wynne

2007 SPRING & SUMMER – Programs & Fundraisers

MAY 12th Annual Victorian Tea

Chair: Joanne & Co: Sharon S.

Committee: Eloise Wynne, Muriel Dunkley, Arlene Casey, Barbara Barbero, Betty Baker, Marge Knorr?, Kay Atteberry

MAY Territory Days

Booth – street Chair: TBD
Cabin – bake sale Chair: TBD

JUNE 23rd Garden Fair – Art & Crafts

in the Park Chair: Jo Cervone

Committee: Joanne K. (planning)

JULY Tuesdays in July

Co Chair: Joanne & Sharon Swint

July 10-July 17- July 24-July 31

AUGUST 11th Founders Day Celebration

AUGUST 12th Annual Cemetery Crawl

Co Chair: Kay Atteberry & Jo Cervone

Art & Crafts in Bancroft Park

June 23 - Our Second Fundraiser of the Year

We will be renting spaces to local crafters in conjunction with the Farmer's Market.

You can help by:

Donating your extra bulbs, daylilies, iris, herbs, succulents, house plants or perennials. Also, garden pots in good condition.

Tell your crafter friends - application forms are at the Center.

Questions? Call Jo Cervone at 266-9096 or jocervone@aol.com

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* *IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT* *
* Your society's long anticipated Reprint of Irving Howbert's landmark "Memories of a Lifetime in the Pikes Peak Region" will soon arrive. Accordingly there will be a Book signing, reception, and special program at 2PM Saturday, April 28th at our Center. The 91 year old grandson Irving Howbert will be a guest, and has agreed to make a few remarks and perhaps sign some of the books. Betsy Shoup, immediate past president of the El Paso County Pioneers will give a short program telling the story of that historic organization which Irving Howbert himself helped establish in 1895. That organization can be credited with first preserving the history and memories of the Pioneers of Colorado City, Colorado Springs, and early El Paso County. There will be refreshments. Members should either call, or visit the Center and reserve one of the rare, 300 page books - \$17.96 for members.
*
