



## OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 2

February 2007

# A NATIVE SON

## The Man of a Thousand Faces

By Leland Feitz

From 1913, when he made his first film, until 1930 when he made his last, Lon Chaney was featured in more than 150 movies. All were silent films except "The Unholy Three", his last film and his only talkie.



**A mature and thoughtful  
Lon Chaney**

Hollywood studios, he is best remembered for two pictures.

In 1923 he played Quasimodo in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame". The following year, he starred in "Phantom of the Opera". In both of these films, as

During the 1928 and 1929 he was the number one box office attraction. While most Chaney films attracted big audiences and made handsome profits for MGM, Universal and other

in so many of his pictures, Chaney appeared as a grotesque character actor in heavy make-up he applied himself.



It took him over **Young and on his way in Hollywood** three hours each production day to apply the make-up for the part of Quasimodo. Once when he was interviewed about the hours he spent on make-up, Chaney said, "It is an art."

Lon Chaney was born, Leonidas Frank Chaney, in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1883 to deaf parents. Chaney spent much of his boyhood on the west side at 509 West Bijou Street in a house that still stands. Even before he was born, his maternal grandparents founded the Colorado School for the deaf and Blind.

When Chaney was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, his mother took

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

**WEST WORD**

PUBLISHED EVERY MONTH BY  
 THE OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 A NONPROFIT CORPORATION  
 ©2007 OCCHS

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**  
 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
	Mei 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**  
**February 12, 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  
 manuscript photographs  
 interviews biographies  
 Book & Gift Shop online

e-mail us at: [history@oldcolo.com](mailto:history@oldcolo.com)



**One of his most famous roles as the Phantom of the Opera**

sick and was bed-ridden for the rest of her life. He dropped out of school to help his father, a barber, take care of her. It was then he began to develop his pantomime skills as he attempted to communicate with a mother that could not hear.

By the time he was 15, Chaney had a job as a Pikes Peak Region tour guide and part-time job at the Colorado Springs Opera House as a prop boy. Later he worked for Brown's Wallpaper and Paint Company. While there, he was involved in hanging paper and laying carpet in General Palmer's twin-towered Antlers Hotel.

The young man also found work installing seats in the Empress Theatre on Pikes Peak Avenue. In less than 15 years, Colorado Springs audiences filled those seats to see their very own movie star in action on the big screen.

In 1902, Chaney became a full time employee of the

Colorado Springs Opera House and in that year made his first stage appearance in a show there called, "The Little Tycoon."

Soon, he joined up with a company known as The Columbia Opera Company and made a mid-west tour that ended in Oklahoma City. There, in 1905, he left that group and found work in a furniture store.



**Lon Chaney, Jr. made his own way as the Wolfman**

Three years later, he returned to Colorado Springs with a new wife and baby son who grew up to be the actor Lon Chaney, Jr. Stage appearances followed at Denver Tabor Grand Opera House, in Chicago and Los Angeles for both Chaney and his wife.

In 1910 the family moved to Los Angeles. Except for vacation trips that was the last Colorado Springs saw of the budding young actor. California was to be his home from that time on.

After more than 60 silent movies, Chaney was, in 1922, first called "The Man with a Thousand Faces". From that time on almost as much was written about his make-up artistry as his fine acting.

Hollywood was good to the Colorado Springs native. His weekly salary there started at \$45 and increased to \$4000. Chaney lived well in a smart Beverley Hills home. Weekends and vacations were spent in a second home in the Sierra Nevada Mountains where Chaney hiked and fished, something he had enjoyed as a boy in the Pikes Peak region.

In 1923, Chaney and his second wife visited his hometown spending several days with an old friend, Harry Hughes at 2122 North Tejon Street. Later he presented a special screening of "The

*Continued on page 5*

## That was the way it was

By Leland Feitz

When I saw Old Colorado City for the first time back in the early 1940's, it looked like a typical small western town. No art galleries then and only one gift shop. The businesses along Colorado Avenue between 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Streets catered to the needs of the west side's working people.

Then, there were 21 grocery stores between downtown Colorado Springs and the 3100 block, west. Two of the largest ones were in the 2500 block, the Sanitary and the Quality. Another large Colorado city market was at 23 27 W. Colorado Ave. – Garrison and Sons. There were two bakeries in the 2400 block. Lynn's and the Kitchen Maid were across the street from each other.

The Cole and Osborn Drug Stores were in the 2400 block and 2500 block and they both had cigar stores for neighbors. The Blue Lantern Café was at 2413 W. Colorado and in the next block west, there were five restaurants. Roger's was the last to collapse.

Jenkie's at 2436 sold ladies hats and dresses. There was a dressmaker and tailor one block away. Poynter's was the only store in Colorado City selling new shoes, but there were two places in the 2500 block that repaired shoes. Fink's a variety store was located at the corner of Colorado and 25<sup>th</sup> Street.

Westiders bought their furniture at the West Furniture Company at 2432. Glen's sold hardware in the same block, and, there were two second hand stores.

There were two service stations just west of 26<sup>th</sup> Street on Colorado Ave and their gas didn't sell for \$2.25 a gallon. In the same block, McDonald and Huff sold coal.

Colorado City's only dry cleaner and laundry was at 2325. One dentist had his office in Colorado City. There were three chiropractors. There was only one lawyer, but there were four places where

men could get a haircut.

A Post Office? Yes, one in the 2500 block.

---



---

### A general thought

Leland's piece on old Colorado City brought back many fond memories from my childhood of both the West Side and Colorado Springs. I came to Colorado Springs a little before Leland, about three o'clock in the morning of August 6th 1937.

The 21 grocery stores in particular held a great deal of nostalgia for me. I grew up on the then far east side of town, near the corner of Cache LaPoudre and Institute. I suspect now it would be considered the near west side for those that live on the east side of Powers Blvd, or north in Briargate.

Our area also had a plethora of grocery stores. Within three blocks from our house were no less than four stores. And another five within a mile. Britt's grocery was my parents store of choice although from time to time they shopped at Platte Avenue grocery (Platte and Institute) and down town at the Piggly Wiggly (SE corner of Pikes Peak and Weber) which was a supermarket compared to Britt's. Those were the days before credit cards and Mr. Britt had a very unique way of extending credit. As our neighborhood was rather settled, the kids I grew up with and went to school with all still lived in the same house when we eventually graduated from high school so, I suspect, Mr. Britt extended credit to many of our neighbors.

Behind the counter of this one room store that measured probably twenty by thirty-five feet was an old safe from which the door had been removed. The safe was divided with wooden cubby holes that contained a standard small book of receipts. When mom would send one of us down to Britt's for a loaf of bread or some such Mr. Britt would note the purchase in the book and give us the carbon copy to take home. Although I don't know this for sure I rather imagine that once a month or when the bill added up to fifty or so dollars mom would pay it.

Of the dozen or stores that were in the general neighborhood most now have been converted to a family home. But one has survived and is still a grocery/sandwich/coffee house. It still looks like it did when I was in grade school, Junior High and then in High School. I know because I still go there from time to time to grab a great sandwich and then slowly cruise around the old neighborhood and remember the "good ol' days", and my friends that are scattered to the four winds. And a childhood that my children and grandchildren will never know because the world we live in has no room for neighborhood stores and is so much different, and I suspect no better for the changes. Merv Casey

Phantom of the Opera”, for the students of the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. He was in fact a frequent visitor to Colorado Springs after becoming a famous movie star.

Chaney died in Los Angeles in 1930 at the age of 47 and was buried next to his father in Forest Lawn Cemetery. His mother was buried years earlier in Colorado Springs’ Evergreen Cemetery.

There are no streets in Colorado Springs named for its most famous movie

*Continued on page 6*



Carrying the huge weight of the hump and the diabolical make-up Lon Chaney was Quasimodo

## **BORED?? JOIN THE BOARD!!**

**The Old Colorado City History Center nominating committee has begun work on a slate of candidates for 2007. If you have a heart for Westside history; some time to give to a good cause; and, like getting to know people with similar interests give the committee a call.**

**There are four (4) board positions that need to be filled this year. Board members serve for two (2) years. They need to attend monthly meetings in order to plan day to day and long range activities for the OCCHC.**

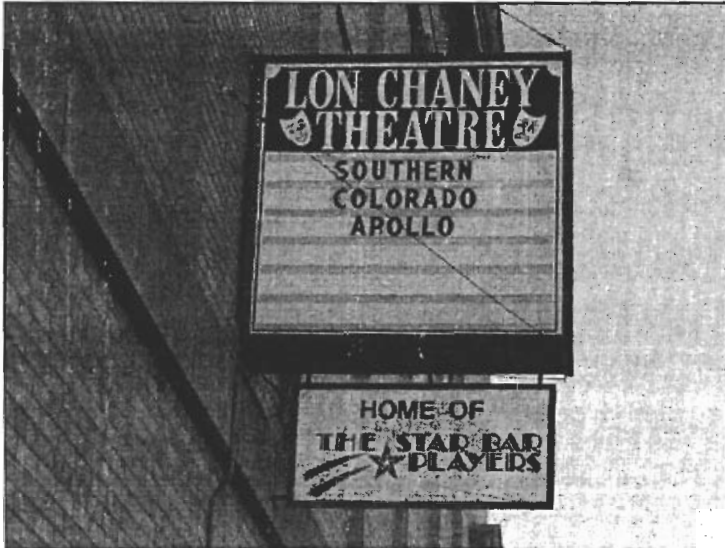
**For questions concerning serving on the OCCHC Board or more information on this opportunity please call:**

**Joanne Karlson - 475-2574**

**Elinore Messerschmidt -  
473-3642**

**Sharon Swint - 630-8384**

star, no parks. But, in 1986, the little theatre in the City Auditorium was named the Lon Chaney theater. A sign hangs over the Weber Street entrance and the lobby is decorated with photographs made during his brilliant 17 year Hollywood career.



**The Lon Chaney Theatre**  
 A small theater located on the East side of the Historic City Auditorium in down town Colorado Springs



**Subject:**  
 Blizzard of 1913

Lots of people are bragging about the blizzard in Denver this year. Well, how about the snow of 1913, which was so deep along West Colorado Avenue, according to Leroy Ellingwood, the kids had to tunnel through the snow to get to the other side to the grocery stores!

### Lon Chaney an interesting man

Chaney played halfback with a Colorado Springs team when he was a young man.

Before he became a Hollywood star, he was a "song and dance man" touring the mid-west. He was once seen on the stage with Cripple Creek's Texas Guinan. Another time with Fatty Arbuckle another famous movie star of the era.

During his 6 years at Universal Studios, he starred in over 100 movies. He often played dual roles, as was the practice at the time.

He said his make-up kit held a box full of faces.

His body was strapped into painful shapes in order for him to play cripples which he often did.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame played at New York's Astor Theater for 21 weeks.

In "The Un-Holy Three", he played the part of an old lady. It was his only talking picture.

He laid the foundation for Hollywood horror movies.

During his long career, he received thousands of fan letters. He answered only those coming from convicts.

Though he made over 150 movies, he was "camera shy and did not enjoy the attention of the press. Once, he told a reporter, "My personal life is none of your business."

James Cagney played Lon Chaney in a Universal feature film with the title "Man of A Thousand Faces".

Famous for his faces, Chaney was also a remarkable fine actor.

All Hollywood production stopped for one day after Chaney's death.

He was one of a kind and he was from Colorado Springs.

Edward J. Chonka age 92, a lifelong resident of the Westside of Colorado Springs passed away January 5, 2007. He was a former member of OCCHS. He was one of the founding members of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and active in several community service programs in the area. He was a retired printer and a free lance photographer and a train buff having chased and photographed them. We may have one of his photos in our center.

## Treasurer's Report

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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 exiting historical book reprinting project that may also become a financial winner.

Dave Hughes  
Treasurer

## WINTER 2007 PROGRAMS & EVENTS

*History Center opens one hour before event for museum visitation and coffee.*

**Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>**  
**Regular OCCHS Meeting & Program 11 a.m.**

"Five in a Bed" – Tales of Early Colorado Hotels"  
The title comes from a posted list of rules of the house in an old hotel....one of the proper Victorian hostleries. Program will be **presented by Mary Humphreys**, a volunteer at McAllister House Museum, Pikes Peak Museum in Florissant, and Fountain Creek Nature Center.

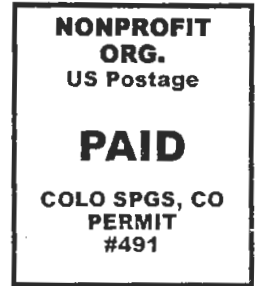
**Saturday, February 24<sup>th</sup>**  
**"Pike's Peak by Postcard" 1 p.m.**  
**Presented by Mel McFarland**

A well-known local railroad historian, McFarland will illustrate this fourth program in a popular series of his talks about Colorado's historic railroads. He will take everyone on a train ride trip using vintage post cards, some of which do not actually represent reality! Most of the views are from the very early days of post cards, a century ago. Public is welcome.

**Friday, March 9th**  
**Regular OCCHS Meeting & Program 11 a.m.**  
**"Film & Westside History:**  
**Remembering Lon Cheney"**

Born and raised on the Westside, Lon Cheney became a silent film megastar... "The Man with 1000 Faces", "Phantom of the Opera" and hundreds of other films. Enjoy the big screen video and stay for discussion. The program will last until about 12:30 so you are welcome to bring a lunch if you are on a tight noon schedule. Beverages available. Bring a guest. Suggested program donation \$2.

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



## WONDERFUL 2006 VOLUNTEERS!

For all your time and efforts spent for the bookstore, fundraisers, programs, host & hostesses at special events, landscaping, maintenance, creating posters, writing for the *Westword*, baking cookies, exhibits, collections, and more, we "thank you"! Our apologies if we missed recognizing you in this list of volunteers. **Jackie & Bob Aker, Kay Atteberry, Betty Baker, Barbara Barbaro, Deanna Bean, Leslie Bergstrom, Janice Billingsly, Georgia Blanco, Larry Blasgen, Dee Breitenfeld, Lorena Bymaster, Merrilyn Caduff, Bernideen Canfield, Arlene & Merv Casey, Jo & Dan Cervone, Becky Clark, Jennifer Clark, Sallie & Welling Clark, Rod Cooley, Art Crawford, Linda Day, Georgia Croff, Lucille Cunningham, Martha Curry, Lucille & Bob Damico, Janice deChadenades, Beverley Disch, Muriel Dunkley, Pat Ebersole & LaRue, Merle & Don Ellis, Cindy Estes, Dick Eustice, Betsy & Carolyn Evans, Leland Feitz, Pat & Andy Fejedelem, Brittany Furlong, Liz Geiss, Nadine Gilman, Adalbert Goertz, Becky & Gordon Gray, Betty Grout, Melanie Goldman, Sandy Hanzlian, Christine & Bob Heinich, Doris & Tom Hendrix, Ed Hershiser, Patsy & David Hughes, Diana Hughes, Therese & Kenyon Jordan, Don Kallaus, Joanne & Werner Karlson, Marge & Joe Knorr, Nadine Keaney, Jan & Sandy Knox, Mary Leahy, Martha Lee, Jay Lowery, Betty Magninie, Kathy McBride, Phil McDonald, Mel McFarland, Elinor Messerschmidt, Nancy & Phil Micelli, Martha E. Miller & Curtis, Alma Moser, John Patrick M Murphy, Charlie Paterson & crew, Tom Palmedo, Bev & Jack Patterson & Sherry, Roy Pike, Eunice Quinn, Jim Rogers, Anita Schimmel, Sharon Swint, Frank Tucker, Kristine & Larry Van Wert, Dorothy Vidmar, Marty Walker, Vera Westcott, Eloise Wynne...and our program speakers, the many businesses who made donations, the Bed & Breakfast Innkeepers...**

a BIG "thank you"!!