



OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 1

January 2007

OUR PAST—OUR PRESENT

Forward

Since our own Dave Hughes is the Colorado Springs native who is most credited with spearheading and shaping the revitalization of the Westside of Colorado Springs starting back in 1976 we have asked him to tell his story 30 years later.

The Rebirth of Colorado City

Dave Hughes

My involvement with the much needed revitalization of the Westside of Colorado Springs, including its Commercial District, now called 'Old Colorado City' started after I retired from a 27 year Army career in 1973.

Although a Springs native I did not grow up on the Westside. In fact my 'home of record' all my military career was 1225 Wood Avenue - the fine home of my Aunt and Uncle who helped get me educated and to West Point after my father died in 1935. As a boy I knew and loved downtown Colorado Springs, with its classic Antlers Hotel towers framing Pikes Peak, the great Burns Opera House, and the wonderful Chief Movie Theater. I only knew the 'westside' as the place one drove through to get to the mountains. It was also the blue collar side of town.

So you can imagine my dismay after buying my retirement house on the eastside in 1973, I went downtown

to see what the city leaders and businessmen had accomplished. In the name of progress they had destroyed - with clumsy Urban Renewal and Eminent Domain - all the historical buildings which had given Colorado Springs its prized visual



**The first Territory Day's
1976**

character dating back to 1871 and which I had grown up with in the 1930s and early 40s.

I realized that the dominant political leaders of my city did not value historic preservation except in the singular cases of places like the Broadmoor, Glen Eyre, and some homes of the old North End. Further they were even having trouble finding, by 1975, anyone willing to head up the coming 1976 American Bicentennial and Colorado's Centennial.

So I volunteered, and headed up the 'Pikes Peak or Bust by '76 Committee' that spanned the dual celebrations for both the City and the County the next two years. I had the apparently novel notion that Centennials can be more than just celebrations of endings, but also spark new beginnings.

During my looking into the roots of communities new and old in the Pikes Peak region, I became aware of the declining fortunes of the Westside of Colorado Springs where the private marketplace had pretty much written off both the residential and commercial areas. Banks had red lined the area. The city had to step in to do something to slow the deterioration, as the tax base was declining. And several westside men, among them Leroy Ellinwood and Luther McKnight, approached me, as the Centennial Chairman, to see whether I could help 'Old Town' get some deserved Centennial attention. I agreed, providing they would help educate me on its unique history. They and others did. And by 1978 I had published the first separately printed brief History of Colorado City and a caricature map of its history drawn by Jack Ekstrom.

In particular I was interested, not only in the untapped history, but in the potential of working with small scale enterprises and activities. I subscribed to the thought, that 'small is not only beautiful, but it works better.' Small business, not large. Small personal computers, not large institutional ones. Neighborhood and community historic preservation rather than replacement with big modernistic developments. And from my understanding of what many of those lured to Colorado Springs by the 1970s siren song of John Denver wanted, I knew that in this period of turbulent national change there was a rise in interest in entrepreneurship - the desire to own one's own business, not work for others. But I knew also this was a tough town for small business. It was capital short.

Thus when I discovered by late 1975, that the City of Colorado Springs was ready to spend Federal Community

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

WEST WORD

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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 | Ariene 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
 January 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>

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Picture taken in the back of the buildings at 2613 Colorado Avenue in 1976—the Westside was in trouble

Block Grant funds on the Westside, and looked like it was ready to repeat the mistakes of a razed Downtown I stepped in to offer a different vision. Combine historic preservation with community redevelopment, attract small businesses, even home businesses, restore community values, and keep all its data glued together on my small computer, in anticipation of the coming Information Age. I was ahead of the emergence of the first 'personal' computers by more than a year.

The city had already declared the westside blighted. That made it eligible for Block Grant funds for neighborhood and economic renovation. For, by January 1st, 1976 half of all 98 buildings between 24th and 27th Streets along West Colorado Avenue were vacant. Only 300 people worked in 32 businesses, half in the industrial laundry, retail sales were less than \$2.5 million, buildings could be purchased for \$10 a square foot, and rents were only \$2.50 a square foot. And they were a mishmash of old Victorian era buildings with no known names, and places with modern fronts overlaid or painted over, hiding history. Nearby homes - most needing work with residents growing older, were deteriorating. The Westside had half the average per capita income of the rest of the city. Unemployment was high. The westside was run down. Which is another way of saying it was ripe for resurgence. Against all warnings I sold my eastside home and bought one on 24th Street in the middle of the still declining Westside."

I pounded up and down the commercial area on West Colorado Avenue with all the empty store fronts, and talked to business and property owners. I wrote to the absentee landlords. I knew that unless there was some sort of organized response from business and property owners, the City planners would just come up with, and impose, their own lackluster plans with little attention to history.

So I proposed to the existing business and property owners, the City planners, media, our Councilman Leon

Young, those looking for opportunities, those looking for affordable homes, those looking for history – anyone who would listen - that if the city made it possible for small businesses to get affordable loans to buy the buildings, and if the unifying design theme would be built on the unique history of the original Colorado City, along with a residential counterpart program to make it attractive for middle and lower middle income people to buy and fix up the thousands of 1890's era 'carpenter Victorian' homes – that they could collectively do as the sum and product of individual investment, everything the city wanted done. Which at bottom was the elimination of slum and blight, an increase of the tax base and increase in jobs.

That was, in 1975, a pretty radical idea for this ultra conservative, often provincial, city, which routinely seeks big business, new developments, and large high tech enterprises. Many thought I was nuts with my enthusiasm.

I knew the vision would require an economic strategy which could make affordable loans to small businesses, cut costs by tax breaks, attract a variety of compatible, interesting, businesses and cultural attractions such as art galleries. And it would take novel promotional efforts to make the scorned district attractive to shop in, with an historic look and feel that was different from either Manitou or Colorado Springs.

The first thing was to get the State Legislature to enact the right kind of tax break for rehabbing old commercial buildings.

I used my hat as the Chairman of the 1976 Centennial/Bicentennial Committee and some of its funds, with Gene Brent's help to get State Legislators to adjourn and come down in buses to celebrate newly renamed 'Old' Colorado City as 'The First Capitol of 'Colorado Territory.' On April 30th, 1976, with lots of local and state lawmakers marching down Colorado Avenue in the first parade in perhaps 75 years, we got the tax law passed. That parade launched the first of 30 Territory Days.

Soon afterward Thayer Tutt who had saved the 1859 Garvin Cabin in 1929 buying it for \$400, agreed to fund a \$7,590 renovation of the same Cabin so long as the City improved the run down Bancroft Park around it. They did.

I flew to Washington, after getting a very skeptical City Council to endorse getting the 7 square blocks comprising 'Old Colorado City' named a National Historic District. That was approved to further cutting taxes for rehabbing buildings in the area, and further promoting the area nationally.

But the most important tool for the capital improvements within the district was the Small Business Administration's SBA502 Program. I found that obscure program in Denver run by a Jake Lance, SBA staff officer. It could guarantee 72% of 80% of the total bank loans needed to a would-be small businessman who otherwise would not qualify for such loans locally with his own credit and collateral. That is if he would buy one of the run-down commercial buildings, and agreed to occupy at least 51% of the first floor with his business, and if a local

Continued on page 5

December Treasurer's Report

Calendar year 2006 is ending in better financial shape than our budget predicted just a few months ago. We were headed for a budgeted deficit of over \$2,000 for the year from some large expenses.

Three late November and December wind-falls brought us into the black.

Our netting \$420 for the licensing of photographs from our Web site was the first unanticipated income.

Then, the December Bed and Breakfast Tour, which was projected at \$1,500 in ticket sales this year, jumped \$1,000 to \$2,500 actually sold! With less than \$100 in costs, we netted over \$2,400! Better promotion, and the singular efforts of Sallie Clark, County Commissioner who, with husband Welling owns the Holden House B&B on Pikes Peak Avenue, brought in \$955! She appeared on television, asked us for more tickets to sell, and she reported over 175 people went through her B&B! Way to go Sallie!

Finally, totally unexpectedly, our Society was the December recipient of an unsolicited \$750 grant from the Vanguard Charitable Endowment of Pennsylvania. This is the second time they choose us to be a beneficiary of their grant program. The first time was in late 2004. We still don't know who recommended us. Maybe we just live right!

With these three unexpected increases in revenue, we are ending 2006 with approximately \$625 annual 'profit' instead of a loss.

We also got the final \$800 surplus from Betsy's Bookstore account, bringing the total Bookstore earnings for the Society this year to \$1,675.

The Board will be able at its January meeting, when it approves a 2007 Budget, to decide how much to add to the fixed endowment from our earned interest and cash on hand beyond the \$2,280 already committed. It may be a substantial amount.

Dave Hughes, Treasurer

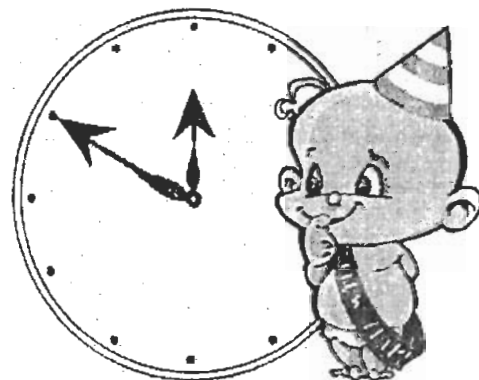
Presidents Message

We had one of the best turnouts in recent years for our 12th Annual B & B Holiday Tour. We were pleased and very grateful for \$2,500 in proceeds for our major fundraiser of the year. Increased marketing might have helped the turnout this year. The inn keepers did a lot of public relations. Sally Clark did many interviews with the media and she turned in \$995 of the proceeds.

We had many of our members involved. Don Ellis has for years cleverly designed our ticket and flyer. Eloise Wynne, Christine and Bob Heinich, Sharon Swint, Murine Dunkley, Anita Schimmel, Leslie Bergstrom, and Barbara Barbaro were hosts at some of the participating bed and breakfast inns. These bakers, Pat Ebersole, Marge Knorr, Betty Grout, Eunice Quinn, Vera Westcott, Anita Schimmel, Eleanor Messerschmidt, Dorothy Vidmar, Lucille Cunningham, Bev Patterson, Doris Hendrix, provided Christmas cookies for the people who came to our Center. Marge Knorr set up the table for these delicious cookies. Betsy Evans sold tour tickets and ran the bookstore. Kay Atteberry handled the table for our eleven door prizes and the drawing. Lucille Cunningham, Jack, Bev and Sherry Patterson were our hosts and greeters. All these volunteers helped make this such an outstanding and profitable event for our Society.

Thank you for your part in making this so successful!

Bev Disch, President



development company could put up 20% of the sum of the cost of the building, its renovation, and heavier equipment needs – like kitchen equipment, the total deal could be made. 100% capital improvements financing. Using his funds to run the business the first tough years.

Where was the 20% going to come from? I argued that it should come from the City's Community Development Federal Block Grant Program for the Westside – which legally could be used for economic development loans, not grants, or just for buying up and tearing down buildings. So those CDGB funds provided the 20% 'seed money' loan, required by the SBA, secured by a 2nd mortgage on the property. That had never been done in conjunction with SBA502 before. It became a national model.

But we needed a non-profit Development Company to administer the financing. So I contacted a man, Wes Colbrunn, whom I knew, who had been a small businessman in Gas Light Square, St Louis, valued historical preservation, had worked as

Patoni as the city's westside's project managers.

By 1978, a 'Guidelines for Redevelopment' of the Commercial district was finished by Barber & Yergensen under contract to the city. That was followed later by a broader 'Westside Plan' embracing not only the commercial district but also surrounding 8,000 residences. The total westside's infrastructure needs started to be addressed.

While all that was going on I undertook to revive the dormant Westside Colorado Springs Commercial Club – the historical Business Association that dated back to 1859 as the El Paso Claim Club. That 'Chamber of Commerce-like' organization would be needed to both attract new businesses, it could also lobby the City for its businessmen's view of appropriate street design and parking improvements to be made. I knew, under federal HUD programs, the city had to listen to those in affected neighborhoods. Locals such as Norm Clark longtime Service Station businessman, and Ed Schoch of Schoch's Hardware joined in. The Commercial

Club became the new and old business owner's voice for the area, with a shared vision of the future.

Since I had been working on this 'project' voluntarily the Commercial Club Board asked me to become their paid director to represent westside businesses. I agreed to do it for a few years.

I had already started 'promoting' the business opportunities in 'Old' Colorado City – reviving its historical name. I got articles, part historical, part City project, part financial incentives, published, included as inserts to the Colorado Springs Sun paper, and in Denver publications. The press was curious.

By 1978 I had bought one of the first Radio Shack Model I personal computers sold in the city, with Visicalc spread sheet to help small businessmen calculate their financial needs professionally. And I bought a very early 300 baud acoustic modem connected to

the first national dial up service, called The Source – before Compuserve, AOL, or the Internet. I used that to spread the exciting stories of Colorado City – far and wide. Like Rogers Frontier Bar's Rocky Mountain Oysters, and Prairie Dog O'Byrne's famous 1895 carriage pulled by antlered Elk named Thunder and Buttons, with Madame Laura Belle by his side.

My secret weapon for the revitalization of Old Colorado City was a new personal computer and telecommunications technologies. Over 700 would-be small businesspersons



In the mid 1970's many of the buildings were starting to deteriorate — three of the storefronts that sat empty across from Bancroft park.

a banker, and was looking around for a new opportunity. I showed him the SBA502 program, and explained my scheme to ask the city to loan the first 20% of each loan.

Wes said 'That can work.' I valued his business judgment. He valued my ability to get things done. We shared an interest in history. And had faith in small businesses, properly capitalized.

So we convinced the City of the program, which was finally run by Jim Ringe, the head of the City's Community Development Department, with first Peter Dobert, then Bob



**The historic Templeton Building now restored and a most viable addition to the very center of Old Colorado City at the intersection of Colorado Avenue and 25th Street.
Date unknown**

showed up over 3 years looking for an opportunity in 'Old Town.'

Wes Colbrunn meanwhile had formed the non-profit Old Colorado City Development Company, attracting a Board of Directors including Don Bates of Bates Insurance, and administered the loan program.

Banks started making the guaranteed loans. Eventually over 50 loans were made, 30 buildings changed hands and were upgraded, with almost \$8 million public and private money invested between 1977 and the late 1980s. No big business. Lots of small ones.

There was another trick. I didn't want to see a bunch of fake store front Fargo pizza parlors. So I persuaded Wes to require the borrower to come up with an Architectural elevation drawing that did justice to both the original Building, and the Historic District - as a condition for the loan. That worked too. Historical store fronts set the tone from 1977 onward. Private investors got on the bandwagon by themselves. The marketplace was working totally by itself by the late 1980s.

Today not a single business of the over 100 in Old Colorado City, with 1,000 employees has ownership outside Colorado. All are local owner or owner occupant. Sales were nearly \$20 million and some buildings have been sold for over \$1 million. The city never lost a penny from their original loans. I also got a "Maintenance and Security Tax District" started by petition to pay

for maintenance of decorative public improvements and free, but controlled, parking.

People, and the press, began to take notice, of the 'Historical' business district. People looking for affordable homes started taking an interest in the interesting 'Westside' that was adding historical preservation to housing rehabilitation through a parallel program to the commercial Development Company's - called the Neighborhood Housing Service, that was also seed monied with block grant funds together with some Savings and Loan companies' financing. Homes were bought and renovated. That spawned the Organization of Westside Neighbors as spokespersons for the Residential areas. I served on its first board, headed by Bob Traer.

The city starting getting what it wanted, small businesspersons and homeowners were getting what they wanted, historians got their historical preservation - forming in 1976 the Old Colorado City Historical Society, becoming tax exempt by 1985, and by 1992, owning its own History Center in an Historical Church. Schools, Churches and civic groups revived. Many cultural events were spawned, and still thrive.

By 1990 "Old" Colorado City and the Westside had become quite desirable places to live, work, shop, and play.

In the end, a growing number of movers and shakers had transformed run down and neglected 'Old Town' and 'Westside' into a vibrant and unique part of the larger Pikes Peak region. Today via the Historical Society's dynamic Internet web site its story has spread far and wide.

Maybe the vision wasn't as dumb as it once seemed.

*Your Old Colorado City
Board of Directors*

*wish you a most prosperous,
fulfilling and a very*

Happy New Year!

Remembering Paul Idleman

by Don Kallaus

With great sadness I announce the passing of Paul Idleman on the morning of Dec 20. Paul was the history center's first director. His untiring work and incredible enthusiasm in preparing the center for its debut in the spring of 1996 is still very evident today. His vision for the center was to place it on equal footing with the other local history institutions in our community, and that he did.

Not only was Paul dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of local, regional and state history, he also was a very fine photographer, writer, accomplished graphic artist and a publisher of local history books. When once contacted by an acquaintance, a Cripple Creek shop owner, regarding a large box of old glass plate negatives she had found, Paul launched into a decades long investigation into the life and history of local Pikes Peak region photographer William E. Hook. Paul's arduous research of those newly discovered photographic images, as well as known images by Hook, filled in much of the "lost history" of the life of the Manitou Springs photographer.

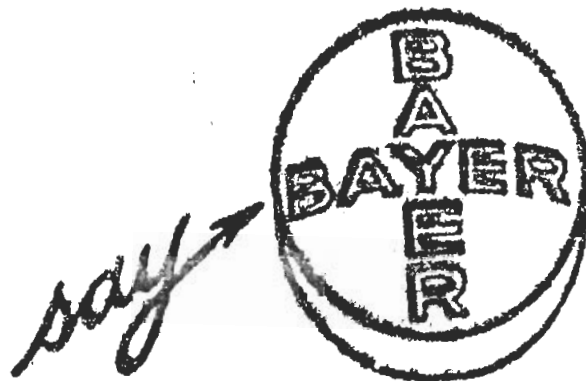
After almost 30 years in Colorado, in the year 2000 Paul and his family moved back to his native Illinois where he took a position as director of the Champaign-Urbana history museum.

Paul's battle with cancer was a very valiant and hard fought one. He, his gentle manner and wonderful sense of humor will be greatly missed by many. Paul leaves his wife of nearly 40 years, Sue, his son Brian, daughter Mindy, and grandchildren. He also leaves his father, Louis, Stepfather Chuck and mother, Mary. Many of you will remember both Chuck and Mary as they also gave much of their time and effort here at the history center, too.

A memorial contribution can be made to Old Colorado City Historical Society, and or, Sue Idleman 1307 East 2250 North Road, White Heath, Illinois 61884

The Colorado Springs Gazette Saturday, January 1, 1921 ADVERTISEMENT

Name "Bayer" on Genuine

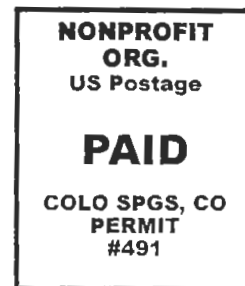


Take Aspirin only as told in each package of genuine Bayer Tablets of Aspirin. Then you will be following the directions and dosage worked out by physicians during 21 years, and proved safe by millions. Take no chances with substitutes. If you see the Bayer Cross on tables, you can take them without fear for Colds, Headache, Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Earache, Toothache, Lumbago, and for Pain. Handy tin boxes of twelve tables cost few cents. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid

From the Bayer Health Care internet site

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OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ONE SOUTH TWENTY-FOURTH STREET
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2007

REGULAR MEETING & PROGRAM

Friday, January 12th at 11 a.m. Bring your friends. Refreshments.

"The Story Behind the Clay" ~ Authors **Sharon Swint** and son, **David Swint, Jr.**, will present an illustrated program and a unique perspective of the history of Van Briggie Company art pottery and specialty pieces that were commissioned and are seldom seen. With this Westside business planning to move, more information will be available.