



## Old Colorado City Historical Society

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 5

May-June 2007

# A SUPER ENGINE

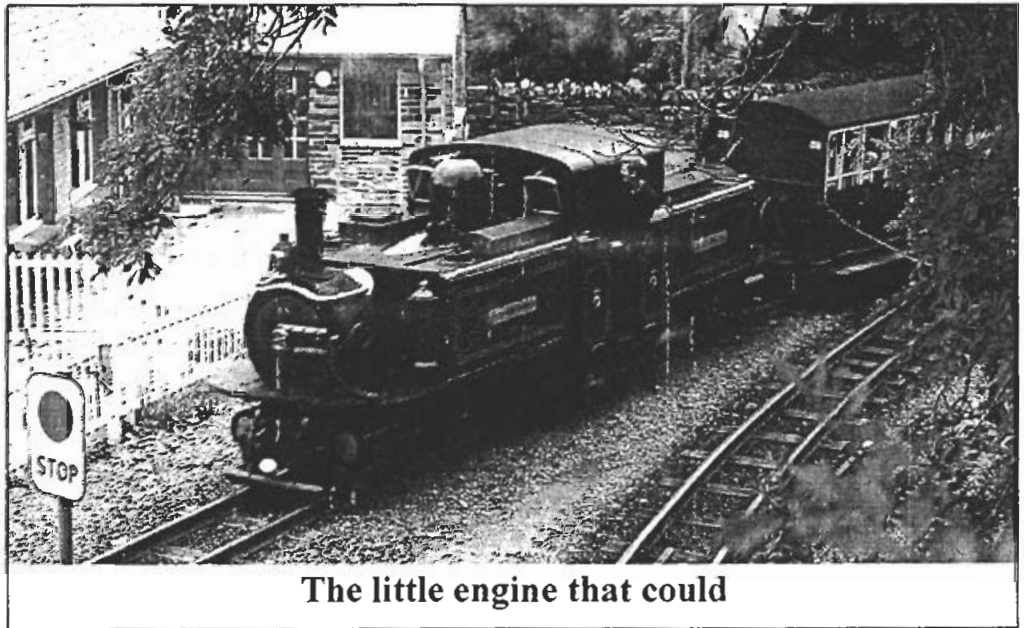
### INSPIRATION FOR GENERAL PALMER'S RAILWAY?

By Mel McFarland

William Jackson Palmer had served a surveyor's apprenticeship with the Hempfield Railroad in western Pennsylvania in 1853. The young farm boy became acquainted with J. Edgar Thomson, of the Pennsylvania Central. In 1855 he traveled with Thomson to England and France studying railroads and coal mines. Upon his return to the United States in 1856 he went to work for Westmoreland Coal.

In 1857 he joined Thomson at the Pennsylvania Railroad, as his personal secretary. During this time he learned railroad management while traveling with Thompson, including visits to Europe. He was assigned to a company sponsored evaluation program. At the time steam locomotives primarily used wood as fuel. With an abundance of coal available in the state, could steam locomotives use it? Palmer spend considerable time on the project. He even wrote a book on the subject. The development of coal as locomotive fuel in America centered on the results of his findings.

In 1861 he went off to the war. After the Civil War Palmer went west to work on the Union



**The little engine that could**

Pacific, Eastern Division Railroad and surveyed a line from Kansas City to California, visiting Colorado City on the way. The railroad's plans changed and he left the company to start his own railroad.

In November 7, 1870 Palmer married and on his honeymoon sailed to England. While in England the Palmers stayed at his friend Dr. William A. Bell's home near London. Palmer and Bell searched for investors and additional ideas during this time. Palmer and Bell sought information on the Welsh narrow gauge railroads. George E. Spooner, enterprising owner of the Festiniog Railway invited them to examine his operation. While the two were guests at the Welsh railway, Palmer made extensive notes on the equipment and operation of the little line. It was an industrial railway, hauling slate from mines high in the mountains, down the ships that took it all

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**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  
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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 - 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.

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President	Beverley Disch	719-634-5023
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### 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**  
**September 14, 2007**  
**at the History Center**



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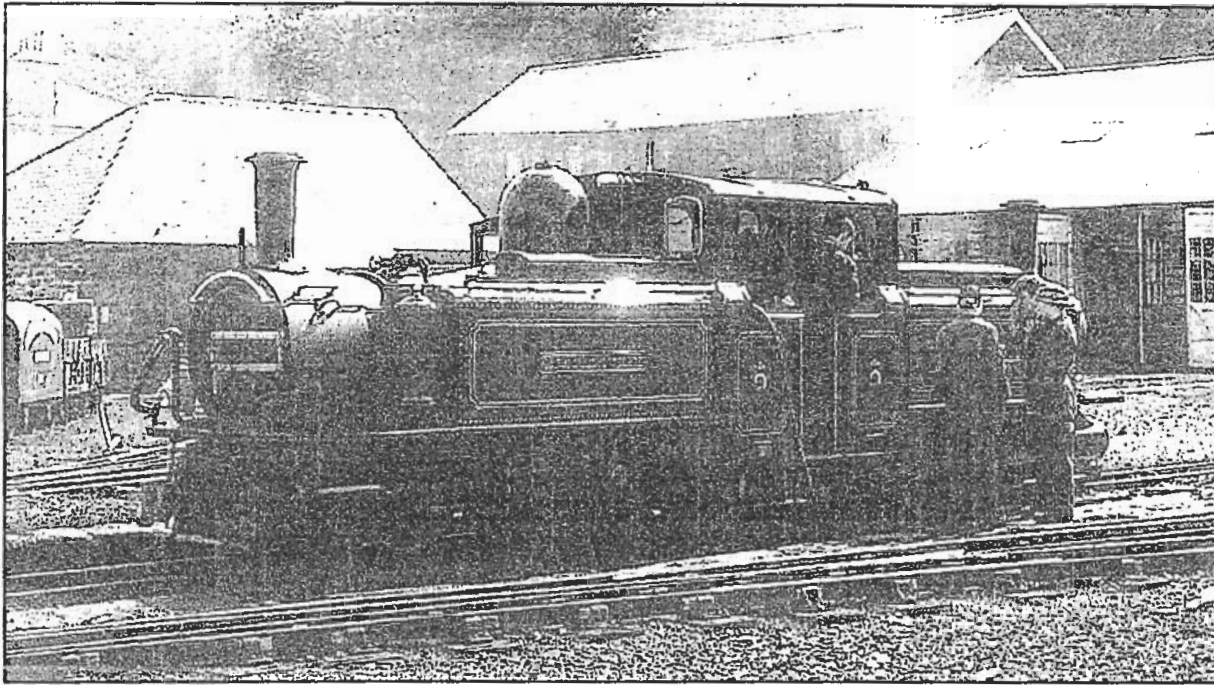
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A restored Fairlie locomotive at Boston Lodge, near Porthmadog in Wales on the Festiniog Railway much as General Palmer and Dr. Bell might have seen almost 150 years ago. This photo, however, was taken in 2001. The double ended locomotive was unique in that it got the work of two engines with only one crew. Photo by Mel McFarland

over the world. He felt the Welsh two foot gauge was too narrow, but perhaps something about twice the size would do better.

Palmer and Bell sought a meeting with Robert F. Fairlie. He was one of England's most vocal proponents of the world wide use of narrow gauge. Palmer and Bell were granted a meeting. In addition to working with Spooner's narrow gauge, he was marketing a unique locomotive which was mainly designed for the narrow gauge. At Boston Lodge, main shop on the Festiniog, he introduced them to a proposal he was about to send to India that was quite similar to what they had in mind. The two were convinced, largely by Fairlie's influence, that narrow gauge would be the most practical in Colorado's unpredictable terrain. The line would bring to America a novel railroading system. The wider gauge would still be able to negotiate mountain curves and slopes. It would carry higher loading than the Welsh trains. It definitely would be less expensive, and quicker to build than the wider (standard) gauge. Palmer made extensive studies of the Welsh equipment and made adaptations of American standards. He had grander dreams than even Fairlie. He wanted his railroad to travel faster

than the 4 mph Festiniog with higher freight and passenger loading. The three foot gauge would enable them to meet his expectations.

Palmer and Bell wanted the railroad to use British style stations, operations, and names patterned after the best or what they observed. Palmer insisted upon an American style center isle and end platforms in his passenger cars, even if they had a similar look to the tiny Festiniog coaches. Light 30 pound (to the yard) iron rail was ordered in England, to be shipped to the D&RG at Denver. Due to the different American profile, as well as the size of the order it was over a year before it was ready for production. Barron Steel rolled the first rails in early 1871. It was a month before it arrived in Colorado. The initial order for locomotives was made with Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia upon their return to America. The little locomotives would each carry a name, as well as their number in typical English tradition. It was not, however, an idea unique to the D&RG, but unique Colorado based names chosen were. One of Robert Fairlie's unique little double boiler locomotives was ordered for trial. The passenger and freight cars showed the influence of Welsh and English standards. Freight cars were ordered from Billmeyer and

*Continued on page 4*

Smith of York, Pennsylvania. Passenger cars, however, were ordered in four and eight wheeled pattern.

Once the railroad was built, many of the Welsh and English ideas were dropped. The odd Fairlie locomotive was abandoned; however the design was used in Central and South America well into the Twentieth Century. The Festiniog railway still operates, much as the Durango and Silverton, as the premier Welsh narrow gauge tourist railway. The railroad still operates with the few surviving Fairlie design locomotives. I have visited this railway many times, and often pause to wonder what General Palmer thought as he watched the fascinating little Welsh trains wind up and around the steep and rocky mountains. Not far away is the lone cog railway up the highest mountain in Wales, but that is a story for a different time.

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#### Treasurer's Report

The biggest news with financial implications this month has been the delivery of the Howbert Reprint – not just the 300 we ordered, but as per the contract with Morris Publishing that permits a 10% variation, but 330! Which makes the cost per copy only \$6.36. Hoping for one third sales at the full \$19.95 price, one third to members with a 10% discount price, and one third bought by resellers – book stores, libraries and museums, at 40% discount for 5 or more copies, we may net over \$3,000.

We had to store the 10 heavy boxes of these fat 320 page books, on the stairwell going to our loft. But we expect they will thin out soon, as already over 50 books have been reserved and ordered, and we hope we will have a good turnout on Saturday the 28<sup>th</sup>, when 91 year old Irving Howbert will appear to speak and sign some books. Order yours, either at the Center over the counter, or by telephone with credit card, or go to our web site and order one by secure Paypal with your credit card shipped to you or as a gift. It is a classic history every member should read, so you can speak with authority about Historic Colorado City!

We got one donation we did not expect. \$100 from the Pike Family with nice letters to all who helped with their reunion at our Center.

We have gotten \$670 in memberships so far in April, one of them a Lifetime Membership - \$150. Which of course goes into our fixed endowment fund – which is happily accruing Interest every day.

There are no unusual expenditures to report. The gas bill dropped to \$356 from \$521 last month.

Its spring!

Dave Hughes, Treasurer

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#### Caboodle Wish List -

Kerosene Table Lamp with glass chimney 1907  
 Gramophone with Horn c.1902  
 Carpet Beat  
 China Wash Bowl and Pitcher  
 Ice Cream Maker Tub with Handle  
 Glass Squeezer for Oranges  
 Four Sided Flame Bread Toaster  
 Mustache Drinking Cup  
 Anybody that has one or more of these items and would like to donate them to the History Center it would be greatly appreciated.  
 Thanks Liz

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

February 23, 2007

Dear Mrs Geiss

The Board of Directors would like to express their appreciation to you for your tireless and outstanding work over the past two years creating and rotating the exhibits in the main room of our Visitor's Center. You have shown imagination and taste, using few resources, in portraying, through the artifact and document displays, our unique Colorado City and related History.

We know other volunteers assist you, and we would appreciate it if you would pass on our thanks to them as well. For we know it has been a team effort.

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Beverly Disch, President

**CALLING ALL MEMBERS!**Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup>**OCCHS Annual Business Meeting & Program  
11 a.m.****"Biffies, Loos, & Bonnickers" ~  
*an obscure bit of history***

The program will be presented by **Martha Simons**, an OCCHS life member and retired English teacher. A short annual business meeting with election of four OCCHS Board members will precede the program. And, OCCHS members will introduce "hot-off-the-press" books published by OCCHS! Come early for coffee and goodies. Public welcome.

**CALLING ALL LADIES!***Make a date with your daughter,  
mom, or girlfriends to attend the***Sixth Annual Victorian Tea***as part of your Mother's Day weekend  
on Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup> at the Old Colo-  
rado City History Center, 1 South 24<sup>th</sup>  
St. (across from Bancroft Park).**Enjoy delicious Victorian refresh-  
ments while being entertained with an  
award-winning program on Victorian  
life, homes and fashions, presented by  
Margie Desmormeaux. The Garden of  
the Gods Gourmet will cater.**Because of the popularity of this  
event, you have a choice of two seat-  
ings, either 12:30 p.m. or 3 p.m. Tickets  
are \$19 purchased in advance at 636-  
1225. Limited seating. - Call today!***President's Report**

Gordon Gray's committee, Dave Hughes, and I received thank you letters from the Pike Family. They were so pleased with our reception we held last summer for them. They enjoyed the food and interaction they had with their families and us in such a congenial place. In my letter was enclosed a donation of \$100 in their appreciation to our Society.

We operate our History center with a very small budget. This is possible because we have so many dedicated volunteers. At our Annual Meeting on Friday May 11, I will present a Resolution to Betsy Evans from our board for her tireless work and the time she has devoted to the bookstore. We will then elect four board members for a two year term. Dave Hughes will give the annual Treasurer's Report. He has prepared an excellent three page spread sheet treasurer's report for the Board's approval every month. The program will be an amusing presentation of Biffies, Loos, and Bonnickers by OCCHS life member, Martha Simons.

This Mother's Day weekend we will be having our **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Victorian Tea, Saturday May 12<sup>th</sup>**. We had such a good response to last year's tea that we decided to have two sittings this year. Joanne Karlson's committee is working very hard to make this the best tea ever. It will take more of our members help serving all these tables. It is so gratifying having our members so willing to volunteer where ever they are needed. A heart felt thank you to each and every one of you.

Bev Disch  
President

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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 memo-  
\* ries 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 re-  
\* serve one of the rare, 300 page books - \$17.96 for members.  
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