

WEST WORD

Old Colorado City Historical Society

VOLUME 23 ISSUE 2

February 2008

Bloody Bridles

DAVIS H. WAITE and
Colorado's Experiment With Populism

By
Phil McDonald



DAVIS H. WAITE

2008 Democratic presidential hopeful John Edwards was born more than fifty years after Colorado Governor Davis H. Waite died. I doubt that

Edwards has ever heard of Governor Waite. Despite the fact that these men lived in different eras of American history, they shared a common vision of the country they loved. John Edwards speaks of "two Americas." According to Edwards, one America is ruled by wealthy and powerful corporate interests while the other is the province of the poor, down-trodden and dispossessed. It is the second of these two Americas for which Edwards and Governor Waite purported to speak. Both men are exemplars of a powerful tradition in American politics, that of populism.

Populism, as a movement, articulates the belief that America is a country beset by divisions of its population along class and income lines; rich vs. poor and haves vs. have-nots. It is, and is likely to remain, an enduring theme of American politics as long as such conditions are perceived to exist.

According to author Marshall Sprague, the populist movement of the 1890s was based on a widespread protest against the unrestrained power of concentrated wealth. Historically, the stage was set for the emergence of populism by the Grange, Farmers Alliances, and Greenback movements. These three organizations purported to speak to the grievances of small farmers suffering from the money crunch of the 1870s and '80s. By the early 1890s these groups coalesced with laboring and mining interests to form the Populist or People's Party. While the life of the Populist Party was short (1892-1896), its impact was monumental. Championing such issues as "free silver", a progressive income tax, the secret ballot, an 8-hour workday, government owner-

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

WEST WORD

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 TO THE OCCHS CENTER OR MAILED TO:

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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	Arlene Casey	719-634-2356
Treasurer	David Hughes	719-636-2040
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	Joanne Karlson	719-475-2574
	Sharon Swint	719-630-8384
	Barb Barbaro	719-748-3483

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 8, 2008
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
 (September - June)

TUES—SAT 11 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Closed Sunday & Monday

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ship of railroads and communications, direct election of the President and U.S. Senators, direct democracy and women's suffrage, the populist movement inspired later generations of reformers. The Democratic Party of William Jennings Bryan, the Progressive Movement of the early 1900s, and the New Deal all borrowed liberally from populist ideology.

In no state was populism more attractive than in Colorado. Beset by falling silver prices and a depressed economy in the early 1890s, the remedies proposed by the Populists proved irresistible. By the 1892 general election, Colorado Populists fielded a full national slate. They succeeded in electing two Congressmen, John C. Bell and Lafe Pence and 53,584 Coloradans voted for presidential candidate, James B. Weaver. This total was sufficient to deliver Colorado's four electoral votes to the firebrand Iowan.

Swept into office on this tide of anger and resentment was the Populist candidate for Governor, Davis H. Waite. Described by Sprague as a "sixty-seven year old Moses with a flowing beard and a voice like Rocky Mountain thunder", Waite brought to the office an impressive political resume'. Born in Jamestown, New York on April 9, 1825, Waite, an attorney by trade, had served in state legislatures in both Wisconsin and Kansas. In 1879, he and his family moved to Leadville. Following the death of his wife he moved to Aspen where he founded a radical weekly newspaper, the Aspen Union Era and also served as secretary of the local chapter of the Knights of Labor. An apparent political gadfly who was a Republican and Democrat at different times, Waite served as Pitkin County's first superintendent of schools and later, as Justice of the Peace.

By 1892, he had become a thoroughgoing reformer and committed Populist who was in atten-

dance at both the St. Louis and Omaha party conventions. While he wholeheartedly supported the party's "radical" platform, he consistently opposed full-blown socialism. He was equally opposed to the so-called "fusionist" movement, which by 1896 sought to merge the Populists into the Democratic Party.

Governor Waite's single term as Colorado's governor proved to be divisive to say the least. Nick-named "Bloody Bridies" because of a phrase he had uttered in a rousing speech in defense of civil liberties, Waite horrified such prominent Colorado icons as Irving Howbert and J.J. Hagerman.

Unfortunately for Governor Waite, his term of office coincided with one of the worst financial disasters in the history of the U.S., the Panic of 1893. The causes of this depression were many and varied, and it was clear that no state suffered more than Colorado. Silver prices plummeted, banks closed, real estate values fell and

unemployment skyrocketed. To make matters worse even Mother Nature conspired by creating the worst drought in memory.

A convenient scapegoat for this financial debacle was at hand, the



Disgruntled Miners

Sherman Silver Purchase Act.

Passed at the behest of cheap money interests, this ill-advised law required the federal government to buy and mint huge quantities of silver. Congress acted swiftly to repeal the Sherman Act. The effects in Colorado were immediate and devastating. The economy tanked as thousands of miners lost their jobs and scores of businesses closed. Mining towns literally were abandoned overnight.

FEBRUARY PROGRAMS

Friday, February 8

"A Tuskegee Airman History – As I See It."
11 a.m.

Frank Macon, a veteran of World War II, tells some of his personal story as a member of this military group of men. The positive experience, the outstanding record of accomplishment and the superb behavior of black airmen during World War II, and after, were important factors in the initiation of the historic social change to achieve racial equality in America.

Saturday, February 16

"The Railroads, Mills and Quarries of Old Colorado City"
2 p.m.

A new program looks at the industrial side of Colorado City from the 1870s up to the 20th century. The quarries were first, then the railroads, then the mills. Don't miss this presentation by **Mel McFarland**, well-known Midland Railway historian and speaker. Visualize what this area was like before more recent developments. Seating is limited.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I had several meetings with Karen Earley, the new Marketing and Events Director of the Old Colorado City Associates to which we belong. She comes with twelve years of experience in this area. She and her husband have joined our Society. She was to be introduced to our board meeting on Monday January 21st. She has an ad for a guide book which includes a picture of our History Center. In her article in the OCCA newsletter she wants the Associates to partner with us. She is going to help publish our coming fundraisers and she has given several copies of her book about saloons in Colorado to us. Karen will give her program, "Noteworthy Pubs, Taverns and Saloons", at our general meeting in September in Costume. We are delighted to welcome Karen to our Society.

Bev Disch, President

In Memory

G. Thomas "Thom" Jamison passed away December 13, 2007. He was a member of the "Over the Hill Gang" for the Pikes Peak Hill Climb. He donated over 100 pictures of the Cog Railway to our Society. We also have these pictures on our website.

**With elections on the horizon here is
 food for Thought**

The next time you hear a politician use the word "**billion**" in a casual manner, think about whether you want the "politicians" spending **YOUR** tax money.

A billion is a difficult number to comprehend, but one advertising agency did a good job of putting that figure into some perspective in one of its releases.

- A. A billion seconds ago it was 1959.
- B. A billion minutes ago Jesus was alive.
- C. A billion hours ago our ancestors were living in the Stone Age.
- D. A billion days ago no-one walked on the earth on two feet.
- E. A billion dollars ago was only 8 hours and 20 minutes, at the rate our government is spending it. While this thought is still fresh in our brain, let's take a look at New Orleans It's amazing what you can learn with some simple division . .

Louisiana Senator, Mary Landrieu (D), is presently asking the Congress for **\$250 BILLION** to rebuild New Orleans. Interesting number, what does it mean?

- A. Well, if you are one of 484,674 residents of New Orleans (every man, woman, child), you each get \$516,528.
- B. Or, if you have one of the 188,251 homes in New Orleans , your home gets \$1,329,787.
- C. Or, if you are a family of four, your family gets \$2,066,012.

Governor Waite's response to this catastrophe was imaginative, if not very practical. He proposed that the state of Colorado should buy silver and then ship it to Mexico to be minted. These new coins, derisively called "fandango dollars" would be circulated statewide as a medium of exchange.

The hapless governor also managed to become embroiled in a fiasco known as the Denver City Hall War. Before the days of home rule, the governor was overseer of the Denver municipal fire and police boards. Waite decided to fire two members of the boards. The only problem was that they refused to be fired and blockaded themselves in City Hall! The embarrassed and outraged governor summoned the militia to evict them, but ultimately lost the courage to actually order their forced removal. Ultimately the situation was peacefully resolved, but not before the governor became a laughingstock.

It is for good reason that Marshall Sprague referred to the governor as a "good and brave man,

by president John Calderwood, demanded restoration of the \$3 wage for an 8-hour day. Predictably, the owners refused and the strike was on.

In many respects, the events that unfolded followed a rather predictable course for such labor disputes. An injunction was issued, scabs were hired, spies were employed, blacklists were posted, property was destroyed and violent clashes between striking miners and the forces of law and order occurred. The strikers, intent upon doing battle against the owners, established their base camp at Altman. The ensuing fracas, known as the "Battle of Bull Hill", was a confusing melee in which three separate "armies" ultimately confronted one another. At the mine owner's behest Governor Waite dispatched the state militia, commanded by Adjutant General T. J. Tarsney, to Cripple Creek. Upon arrival Tarsney found a tense, but generally peaceful situation and the militia was recalled. When negotiations between the Federation and mine owners broke down, violence erupted. The frustrated and angry mine owners recruited Sheriff M.F. Bowers to raise a private army of "deputies" to defend their interests. Bowers found legions of eager recruits among cops and firemen who had locked horns with Waite during the Denver City Hall debacle. Sensing that the Cripple Creek situation was getting out of control, Waite once again dispatched the militia to the mining camp. The warring factions were both ordered to disband their armies and the parties were brought together in Colorado Springs to seek a resolution to the impasse. For a thoroughly colorful and exciting rendition of these events, I highly recommend the incomparable Marshall Sprague's book, *Money Mountain*.

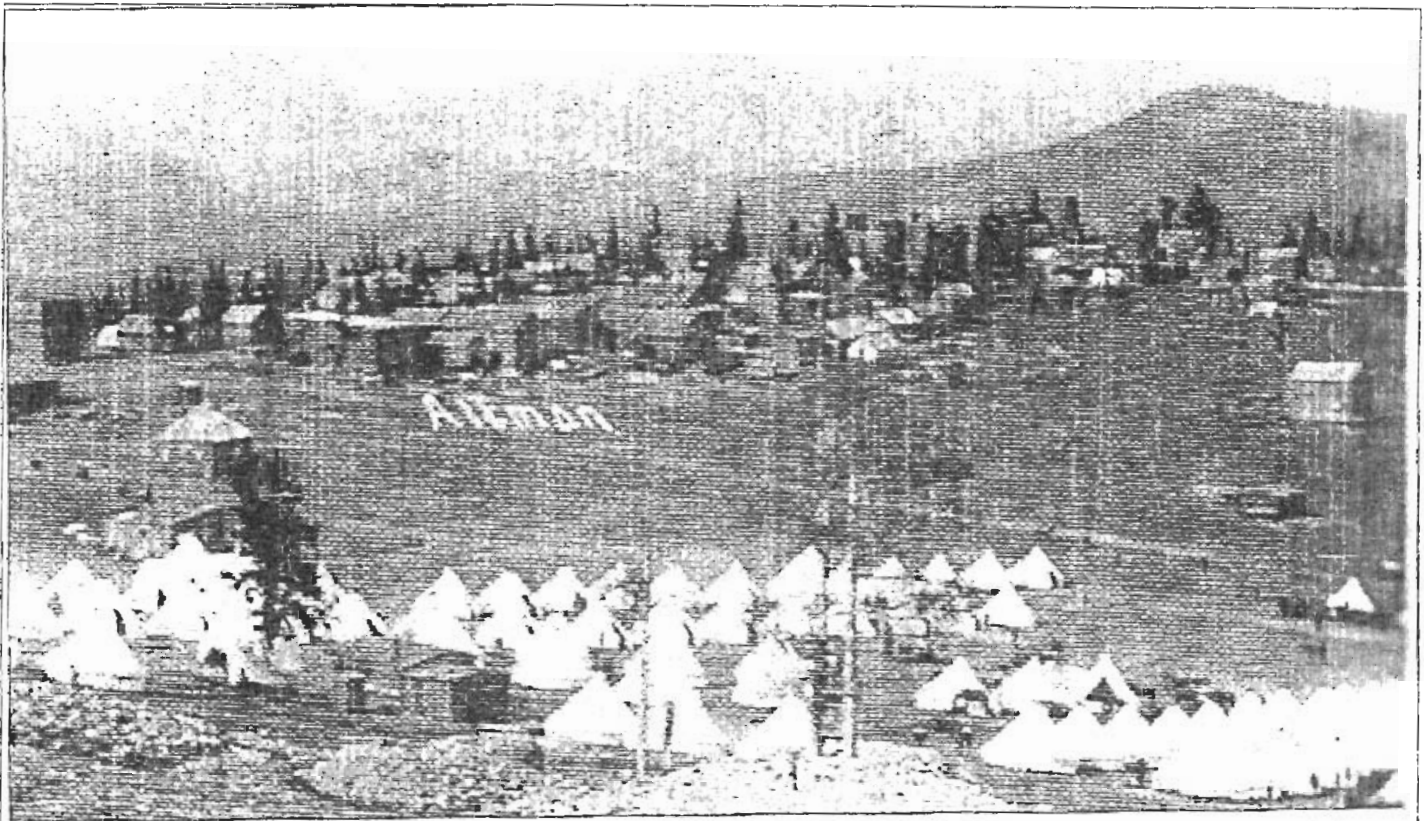
While in many ways typical of labor disputes of this era, the Cripple Creek strike of 1894 was different in at least three respects. Sprague describes the conflict as a cleavage between "Irish Catholic rednecks and the Episcopalian mine owners of Colorado Springs." This characterization may be generally accurate. However, the mine owners did not advance on a united front. While Hagerman, Moffat, and Sam Altman were determined to hold the line against the striking miners at



Militia Tent Camp—June 12, 1894

but not smart." Waite's bravery was put to the test during the signature event of his administration, the Cripple Creek miners' strike of 1894.

With the collapse of the silver mining industry, unemployed miners flocked to Cripple Creek in hopes of finding work in the thriving gold fields. By 1894, the resultant labor surplus encouraged some thrifty (greedy?) mine owners like J.J. Hagerman, David Moffat and Eben Smith to increase the work day from 8 to 10 hours while maintaining the daily wage at \$3. Such an action was deemed unacceptable to the Western Federation of Miners. The union, led



Altman Miners Fort

any cost, other owners thought and behaved differently. W.S. Stratton and Jimmie Burns, perhaps because of their working class backgrounds, managed to reach an accommodation with workers at their mines.

Second, the behavior of Governor Waite was decidedly atypical. Rather than throwing the weight of the state on the side of the mine owners, the governor supported the Western Federation of Miners. This was certainly one of the rare instances in U.S. history when the power of a government militia was employed to support striking workers.

The Cripple Creek Strike of 1894 lasted 130 days and \$3 million was lost in production and wages. If it can be said that there are winners and losers in strikes, this strike can be chalked up as a victory for the miners since they were successful in restoring the status quo ante, \$3 a day for 8 hours labor.

By any standard, Colorado's experiment

with Populist governance produced a mixed record. Some may argue that the Governor should be lauded for redressing an egregious imbalance between labor and management in his handling of the Cripple Creek miners' strike. He also deserves credit for his support of women's suffrage in Colorado. On the other hand, his handling of the "Denver City Hall War" was certainly less than adroit and his fandango dollar proposal was nothing short of flakey.

The Populist governor paid the price for his ineptitude at the polls in 1894 when he was soundly defeated for reelection. Interestingly, a bitter Davis Waite came to regret his support of women's suffrage as the fair sex joined their male brethren in rejecting him at the polls.

After his forced retirement from politics, Waite continued to speak and write passionately on progressive topics. The former Populist governor was silenced only when he suffered a heart attack while peeling apples for his 1901 Thanksgiving dinner.

Treasurers Report

The Year 2007 was pretty good for our History Society and 2008 promises to do well.

On 2007 Income of \$24,340 we had costs of \$19,992 or a net 'profit' of \$4,383. Additionally our variable interest rate 'investments' in our \$85,000 Endowment CD and our T-Bill earned us \$5,430.86 more.

Part of our success came from the decision to republish the 1925 Irving Howbert Memories book in April. That 'cost' us \$2,197 out of our T-Bill reserve, but that permitted our separately accounting Book Store to transfer \$3,500 to us in December 2007 Book Store profits which added to our bottom line, and there are still \$2,000 worth (100) of the Howbert Books on hand which will sell over time.

We had a profit from our events: the Victorian Tea \$908, Territory Days \$908, Craft Fair \$775, Founder's Day \$1019, Cemetery Crawl \$749, and Bed and Breakfast Tour \$1,690.

We ended 2007 and are starting 2008 with \$16,958 in our T-Bill account, \$11,391 in our general fund, and the \$159 balance left in the end of year (after transferring the year's profits) Bookstore Account. Or \$28,508 in unencumbered liquid assets. This does not include the \$85,000 Endowment CD, \$8,825 left in the Shirley Bond's (\$3,825) and beginning Digitization grant fund (\$5,000), or the \$5,000 El Pomar Painting Fund account all of which are restricted in their uses.

Your Board has already reviewed my proposed 2008 Budget, which will be finalized at the February Board Meeting. With interest rates way down we cannot expect to earn more than \$3,000 for a future CD and T-Bill this year.

That 2008 Budget projects income of \$17,695 (with very conservative estimates of our event, member-

ships, and bookstore income during the coming recession) costs of \$15,465, for a projected profit, nevertheless by the end of 2008 of \$2,220. This does not include the cost of Painting our building in the spring, for which we have a bid the Board is considering, of \$11,800. (We had 3 higher bids) The money to pay for it will come, first of all from the \$5,000 El Pomar Grant they awarded us for that project, and \$6,800 from our T-Bill reserves.

We still should be able to raise our fixed untouchable Endowment from \$85,000 to \$90,000 when the CD matures March 1st, using \$5,000 earned 2007 interest from the both last year's CD and the T-Bill earnings. With national interest rates so volatile we may not sign up for another variable rate CD. The Board is also preparing grant requests from 7 area banks to fund needed projects and building improvements.

Next month's Treasurer's report will expand on the economics of the long range Digitization plan which the Board approved last month.

Dave Hughes, Treasurer

BORED???JOIN THE BOARD

The Old Colorado city History Center nominating committee has begun work on a slate of candidates for 2008. 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 five (5) 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.

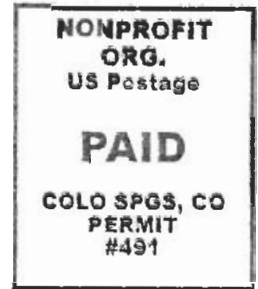
For questions concerning serving on the OCCHC Board or more information on this opportunity please call:

Sharon Swint - 630-8384

Elinore Messerschmidt - 473-3642

Betsy Evans - 635-4782

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



Visitors Welcome

During the summer months, visitors from 39 states signed our guest book. We had 36 guests from Arkansas, and 28 from Missouri. Twenty-one came from Texas, 19 from Kansas, 16 from Indiana and 15 each from Iowa and California. Thirteen Oklahomans came to visit us.

Hundreds of Colorado people came by and then there was a guy from Alaska! Also, a couple from Honolulu.

We also had visitors from England, France, Germany, Japan, Canada and Puerto Rico.

Leland Feitz

Prisoners of War during WWII

Camp, now Fort, Carson was one of the many POW camp established in the USA to house German Prisoners of war. I am interested in writing an article about same.

If anybody knows a person that was housed in the camp, or was in anyway connected with the camp during the war I would be very appreciative of having them contact me.

Merv Casey

Editor of West Word

westsider@comcast.net

Or write to Old Colorado City Historical Society

1 South 24th Street

(the corner of Pikes Peak & 24th Streets)

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