

WEST WOOD

Old Colorado City Historical Society

proud member of the Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums

Volume 28, Number 6

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EXACTLY WHAT IS BRENT'S PATH

PEOPLE PROFILE – Gene Brent

by Suzanne Schorsch

This past year Old Colorado City Historical Society's Mission Statement changed. Previously OCCHS's mission was to preserve history of Colorado City 1859 to 1917 and provide education regarding that history. The new Mission Statement now includes preservation of, and education regarding, the history of the Westside Community past, present and future. This opens a whole new area in which the Historical Society is working to preserve: the revitalization of the west side, the Centennial/Bi-Centennial celebration of 1976, the starting of the Historical Society, the beginnings of the West Colorado Springs Commercial Club, memories of our community through the Great Depression, two World Wars, urban "blight" and "renewal" not to mention the people who made up our wonderful community. With this new missions in mind, recently Sharon Swint, Tom Daniels and I were lucky to meet with Gene Brent, who was instrumental in starting the West Colorado Springs Commercial Club where he served as an officer in the 70's and 80's.

We met with Gene in his home, a place full of wonderful memories of a very full life. We were surrounded by Native American art, photographs from early movie Westerns and items from Gene's family and his world travels. Gene told us of his many jobs: the Navy during WWII, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Walt Disney employee, stuntman and movie actor, real estate, retail sales manager, gun store owner ... but the thing I felt he was most passionate about was "Fighting City Hall" to help preserve and improve our own Westside.

Gene was adopted as an infant and named Harlan Eugene Bernstein. His parents Lillian and Jacob were from Minnesota, where his father worked for the post office. At age 17 Gene went into the Navy, like many young men did, to fight for their country during WWII. He was discharged in 1946 as a "Ships Service Man B - Third Class".

After service Gene finished school through the US Armed Forces Institute and took a training course to work for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in 1951. Gene had worked with the Sheriff's office for 18 months when he was spotted by Johnny Carpenter while riding horseback through a park. Johnny Carpenter (Jasper Carpenter 1914-2003) started as a stunt man for B rated movie Westerns and worked his way up to acting and directing Westerns.

(Carpenter was the stunt rider for Mickey Rooney in *National Velvet* in 1944) Carpenter asked Gene if he wanted to be in one of his pictures and would later teach him the art of stunt fighting, horse falls and the use of the whip. Harlan Eugene Bernstein changed his name to Gene Brent, an easier name for the



Gene Brent
as the law at
Disney Land's
Frontier Land

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Old Colorado City Historical Society

'Preserving the past for the future'

1 South 24th Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319
http://www.occhs.org (719) 636-1225

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1 South 24th Street

Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319

or Don Ellis - spiderwort@pcsys.net

SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS THE 15th OF EACH MONTH

MISSION

Revised August 2012

The Old Colorado City Historical Society is a nonprofit volunteer organization established to recognize the historical significance and unique culture of original Old Colorado City and early El Paso County which includes the present and future history of today's greater Westside neighborhood.

This organization perpetuates the preservation and display of artifacts and archival materials, encouragement of research, education of the children and the community, through the membership and the operation of the Old Colorado City 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:

Student	\$15	Business	\$75
Individual	\$25	Lifetime	\$250
Family	\$35	Life plus one	\$300

Funds from a Lifetime membership are placed into an Endowment Fund to be used only for projects 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	Sharon Swint	630-8384
Vice President	Betty Baker	636-1225
Secretary	Brian Copeland	954-551-3677
Treasurer	Suzanne Schorsch	488-0256
	Janice deChadenades	598-7183
	Bev Disch	636-1225
	Sandy Hanzilan	636-1225
	Kathy McBride	636-1225

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. Everyone welcome.

WELCOME TO OCCHS!

~ NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Bill Arnold

Dr & Mrs. Best

Bon Ton's Café

Betty Jo Cardona

Lois Carr

Art Crawford

Richard Jamison

Barbara Johnson

Pat Kissinger

Leo and Miki Knudson

Jeanne Marsh

John McKenna

Mary Owen

Pikes Peak National Bank

Robert Robertson

Margaret Smith



Brent continued from Page 1

movie industry. "Son of the Outlaw" was Gene's first picture and then others followed: "Badman's Gold", and "The Cattle Queen". Gene worked in various capacities for the movies, including actor and stunt man. Gene also was in various TV shows.

John Carpenter (Gene's intro into movies) would also be known for running the Heaven on Earth Ranch. It was a make believe ranch and western town that allowed handicapped children to get a taste of the old west. The ranch was in business from the 40's to 1994, when it was closed so that the land could be used for a housing development. The ranch had many supporters that were friends of John Carpenter - one supporter, President Ronald Regan.

From 1957 to 1959 Gene worked with Phil Cantonwine of Bengal Pictures. When Phil died, Bengal Productions closed. At the same time Gene was working for Disneyland which opened in 1955. Gene worked from 1957 to 1964 in Frontierland where he ended up as Sheriff and the Director of Events. For 14 years Gene juggled working in pictures, for Disney and other theatre productions. He needed some rest! Western movies were losing their popularity so Gene tried other fields.

Gene went to work for a cousin in Kentucky starting in 1965 for Globe Master (hand tools) and then studied retail management and real estate. He even took on the job as a "Bouncer". He ended in Colorado Springs managing the large department store "Arlens" in the 70's. Soon he had purchased a store for himself.

Gene always had a love for guns and started the 1st Fast Draw Club & Association in California. Gene opened Brent Arms at 2516 West Colorado Avenue which sold guns and Indian jewelry and gifts. Gene remembers Pearl Price Scott, known as Scotty, who owned the building Gene purchased for his store for over 60 years. Scotty turned 96 in 1976 when Old Colorado City was in the process of revitalization. He would sit with Gene and tell stories of the old days when he ran a professional decorating business that worked with rodeos and parades all over the

U.S. During this time Gene became involved in the Westside community.

According to the Gazette Telegraph in 1975 "The West Colorado Springs Commercial Club descended from the El Paso Claims Club, the first business organization in the state, and was revived from its dormancy in the mid 70's by businessman Gene Brent, of Brent Arms." The goal of the 70 plus members was to re-establish Colorado City as a first-rate community and with that in mind the officers of the Commercial Club hired Dave Hughes to be a Director to work on the behalf of the Club. The club according to Brent in the Gazette article was "to succeed in a free enterprise system and learned that with mutual cooperation we can arrive at a solution, work within the system and receive great results" The "System" was work between three mutually supporting organizations, the Old Colorado City Development Corp, which screened prospective businesses that wished to move to the area and help with financial assistance, The Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Effort (CURE) which provided planning and program services and funneled money to the Development Corporation and the West Colorado Springs Commercial Club, which acted as an advisory group. Up to 10% of money necessary for a business to re-design the exterior and improve buildings in the style of the Pre-Civil War west was made available. Michael Garman Studios relocated to the Westside from Manitou at this time. Garman liked Manitou, but needed more space and Gene Brent helped him find it on the



Westside.

Gene remembers that the West Colorado Springs Commercial Club hired Dave Hughes to "get things done" as most members were busy running their businesses. He had met Dave Hughes when Dave was Chairman of the Pikes Peak or Bust by '76 Centennial-Bicentennial Committee. This Committee had given funds to Gene Brent of the West Colorado Springs Commercial Club to promote the area. When Dave was through with the Centennial/Bicentennial, the West Colorado Springs Commercial Club was just the fit. Gene stated that Dave "worked his you know what to the bone." The first President of the Commercial Club was Norman Clark. Gene served as Vice President and then later President.

Gene loves his community, but told us that many times you have to fight to make things good. He fought for better parking, to get rid of pornography shops, to bring Territory Days to Colorado City, to preserve history and helped make Old Colorado City the community it is today.

And, next time you drive down Colorado Avenue, look for Brent's Path. It is one of the remaining old horse alleys of Colorado City and was right next door to Gene's store of many years.



The Old Colorado City Historical Society
presents the 16th Annual

FAIRVIEW CEMETERY CRAWL

Saturday, September 14
10 A.M. to 2 P.M. (last tour starts at 2:00)

Meet

Anthony Bott
Blanche Burton
Laura Belle McDaniel
Jacob & Bertha Schmidt
Birdie Stapleman
David Moore
Rev. Duncan & Katherine Lamont



\$8.00 (\$10.00 at the gate) Children 12 and under free.
Get tickets at the Old Colorado City History Center or by calling 636-1225 with your credit card

Our thanks to Blanches Place (www.blanchesplace.com) for helping to sponsor this year's Cemetery Crawl.

Mayor Bach presents Dave Hughes with "Inspirational Leader" award

At a ceremony held at the History Center on July 1, Mayor Steve Bach presented Dave Hughes with the City's "Inspirational Leader" award. Dave was the first person to be honored with this newly created award.

In presenting the award, Mayor Bach especially praised Dave Hughes' contributions to the revitalization of historic Old Colorado City during the 1970's and 80's.

Dave recalled that it was Leroy Ellinwood and Luther McKnight who had first introduced him to Colorado City History and asked him to "Do something for Old Town." And, Dave acknowledged a number of people who had helped him do just that, Norm Clark, Bob Spear, Ed Schoch, Tim Scanlon, Lucille Cunningham, Bob Traer, and former Mayor Bob Isaac.

Besides his involvement in

revitalizing Old Colorado City, Dave was instrumental in the establishment of the Old Colorado City Historical Society and was a long time member of our Board.



Program:

Ute Indian Prayer Trees of the Pikes Peak Region

Presented by John Wesley Anderson

September 13th

Ute Indian Prayer trees are fascinating living artifacts that serve as a link back in time to the Ute Indians who lived in the Pikes Peak Region and cultivated these amazing trees, primarily for spiritual and navigational purposes. The presentation will focus on how to identify the five known types of Ute Culturally Scarred Trees and where these Ute Indian Prayer Trees can still be found today throughout the Pikes Peak Region.

OCCHS Members FREE Non-members \$5.00

September 21: John Wesley Anderson will lead a hike to see some of these trees in Fox Run Park.

Cost \$5.00 -- Reservations required
(contact our bookstore)

Founders Day

Saturday, August 10

celebrating the 154th. anniversary
of the founding of the original
Colorado City

- ◆ **10:30 A.M.** Historic walking tour of the original Colorado City led by the knowledgeable Old Colorado City Carnegie Library staff. The tour starts at the Library, is free and all ages are welcome. Contact the Library at 634-1698 if you will be participating with a large group.

◆ *At the History Center* ◆

- ◆ **11:30 A.M.** Performance by The Colorado Frontier Army Band, of Denver. ~ Music of the 19th century played on period instruments. The band will appear in costume representing a Northern Army band from the Civil War era, but play both Northern and Southern pieces.
- ◆ **12:30 P.M.** Col. (Ret) Dave Hughes, local historian and Society member, will present an illustrated program on the formation and actions of the 1st Colorado Infantry Volunteer Regiment which defeated the Texas Confederate Army at the Battle of Glorieta Pass and returned to Colorado to become the 1st Colorado Cavalry Regiment at Colorado City.
- ◆ **1:00 P.M.** Performance by The Colorado Frontier Army Band.

*Activities are free and sponsored by the Old Colorado City
Historical Society and the Pikes Peak National Bank.*

*For more information contact the History Center at
(719) 636-1225 or visit the Society's new website,
www.occhs.org.*

President's Letter

Dear Friends:

In the past we have taken a long summer break from programming to allow our volunteers to get ready for Founder's Day and Cemetery Crawl but a few years back Joanne Karlson, then president, came up with the idea of Tuesday Nights In July--a series of related programs in one month. This year we programmed 4 movies that were tied to Colorado/Colorado Springs. Superman--Tom Daniels, our archivist, selected the movies, added shorts, newsreels and historically accurate related cartoons. He made sure that MGM features played only with MGM cartoons, etc. He researched the locations of the filming, checked what sites were still in existence; found the old movie posters for each film to use for publicity and so much more. Tom has worked hard to set up the room properly so the sound is correct, the lighting was decreased and we were comfortable. I could go on and on but suffice to say that Tom is a superstar and assisted by Susie Schorsch, has done a wonderful job of putting together this fund raiser. THANK YOU IS JUST NOT ENOUGH!!

Hope to see you all at the Founders Day events--the Colorado Frontier Army Band presenting 2 musical programs, Dave Hughes speaking plus a new major donation arriving at OCCHC. Saturday, August 10, from 11 to 2.

Sharon Swint

Treasurer's Report

Opportunity to Support Historic Preservation of the Ute Prayer Trees -

Suzanne Schorsch

This week I was able to walk with John Anderson through the historic Ute Prayer Trees of Fox Run Park. Not only was the hike beautiful (difficulty - easy) it was very informative. The weekend after John makes his presentation on Ute Prayer Trees, OCCHS will be offering this same hike. The hike will be on Saturday, September 21. It takes about 1 1/2 hours (mostly learning about the history and looking at samples - not a long distance). We will open the hike to only 30 people and will charge \$5.00 per person. All proceeds from this event will go toward the publishing cost the OCCHS will incur publishing John's book.

Join us in supporting the OCCHS bookstore and it's endeavor to preserve our local history the supporting local historic "member" authors.

For more information regarding this hike, or to make reservations, call the bookstore during business hours.

All financial information for the Society is available upon request. Please never hesitate to call and talk to Suzanne Schorsch.

The Old Colorado City Historical Society's Board of Directors meets regularly on the third Monday of the month at 1:00 P.M. at the

Old Colorado City History Center, unless otherwise announced.

Interested visitors are always welcome at the Board meetings.



**The next Board meeting will be Monday, August 19
at 1:00 P.M. at the *Old Colorado City History Center***

OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ONE SOUTH TWENTY-FOURTH STREET
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August/September Calendar

Saturday August 10

11 A.M. to 2 P.M.

Founders Day celebration at the Old Colorado City History Center: 1st Colorado Infantry Volunteer Regiment presentation, music by the Colorado Frontier Army Band, cake and punch, major donation arriving at the History Center.

FREE family fun

Friday, September 13

11 A.M.

(Doors open at 10:30)

Program: **Ute Indian Prayer Trees of the Pikes Peak Region** presented by John Wesley Anderson. Ute Indian Prayer trees are living artifacts that link back to the Ute Indians who lived in the Pikes Peak Region. The presentation will focus on how to identify the five known types of Ute Culturally Scarred Trees and where these Ute Indian Prayer Trees can still be found today throughout the Pikes Peak Region.

OCCHS Members FREE. Non-members \$5.00

Saturday, September 14

10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

(last tour begins at 2 P.M.)

Fairview Cemetery Crawl - Meet interesting characters from Colorado City's colorful past

Adults \$8.00 (\$10.00 at the gate)

Children 12 and under FREE

Saturday, September 21

9:00 A.M.

Hike: **Ute Indian Prayer Trees** in Fox Run Park led by John Wesley Anderson.

\$5.00 Reservations required (Contact our bookstore for reservations.)

Old Colorado City History Center

1 S. 24th Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80904 - (719) 636-1225 - <http://www.occhs.org>

Museum Hours: Tues. thru Sat. 11 - 4 Free Admission. Donations greatly appreciated.