

WEST WOOD

Old Colorado City Historical Society

proud member of the Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums

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November, 2014

Camp Vessey in Bear Creek Canyon

By Don Ellis

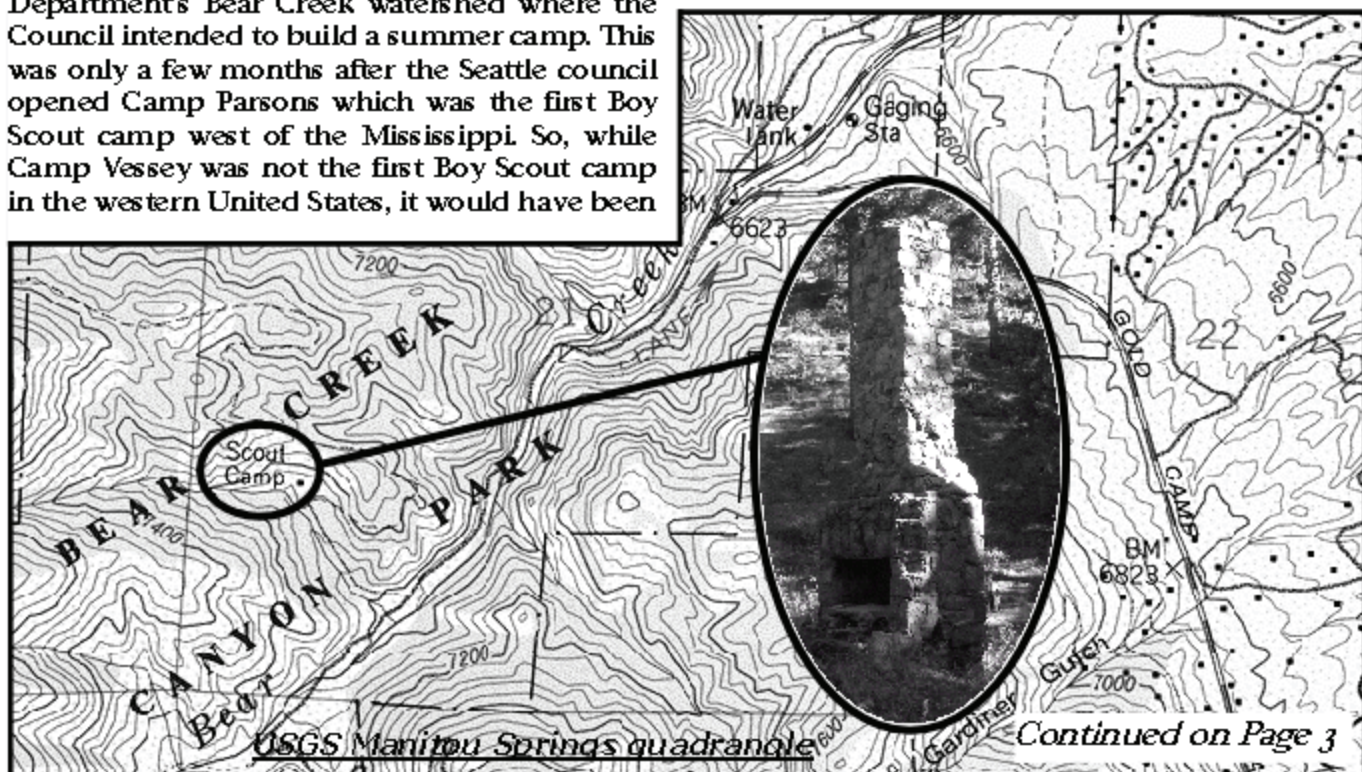
A number of maps show a "Scout Camp" in Bear Creek Canyon just off the High Drive near the start of the Palmer Trail. If you go there today you will find the chimney from a burned cabin and a few remains of the former camp. This was once Camp Vessey.

The Colorado Springs Council of the Boy Scouts of America was established in 1916 and was one of the first three councils in Colorado. (The other two were the Denver Council formed in 1915 and the Greeley Council established in 1916.) In December, 1919 the Colorado Springs Council applied to the city of Colorado Springs for a grant of a tract of land in the Water Department's Bear Creek watershed where the Council intended to build a summer camp. This was only a few months after the Seattle council opened Camp Parsons which was the first Boy Scout camp west of the Mississippi. So, while Camp Vessey was not the first Boy Scout camp in the western United States, it would have been

among the earliest. An article in the December 18, 1919 Colorado Springs Gazette described the proposed camp:

"The site is on a broad, level area, which is well wooded with pine trees. It is near a point where a small mountain stream submerges, and a good water supply is available, altho the open stream does not flow thru the camp. It is easily accessible from the Canon car and for that reason would be valuable as a week-end camp.

Plans for a bunkhouse, cook shanty, and the shelters necessary for a permanent camp are being drawn up, ..."



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

WEST WORD

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SUBMISSIONS CAN BE DELIVERED OR MAILED TO:

WEST WORD Editor c/o OCCHS

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		
Family	\$ 35	Lifetime	\$250

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

Co-President	Betty Baker	636-1225
Co-President	Kathy McBride	636-1225
Vice President	Joanne Karlson	475-2574
Secretary	Brian Copeland	954-551-3677
Treasurer	Suzanne Schorsch	331-1786
	Bev Disch	636-1225
	Sandy Hanzlian	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 10:30 A.M. on the day of the meeting for refreshments and visitation. Everyone welcome.

WELCOME TO OCCHS! ~ NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Pat Bogart

Robert K. Charles

Brian Lee Copeland

Jim & Carolyn Engquist

Helene Jacoby

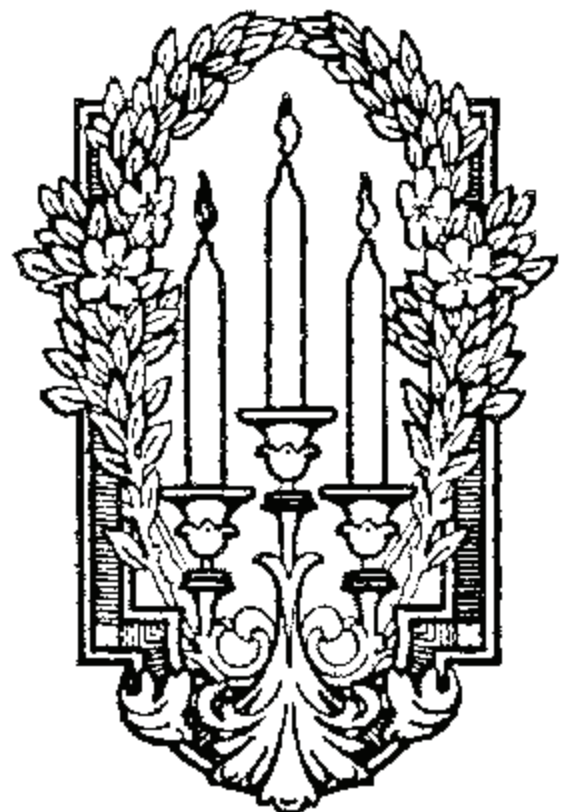
Richard Jamison

Barbara Kafka

Janet Rose Lyons

Robert and Iris Trumbull

Jeff and Sandy Warner



Camp Vessey continued from Page 1

The bunkhouse which was constructed had wooden bunks along the walls and was heated by a stone fireplace. There is still evidence of one smaller building which had hot water pipes in the floor for heating and drains near one wall. In the 1950's there was no evidence that other shelters had ever been built. Water for the camp was supplied by a small cast iron pipe which carried water from the small stream a short distance up the canyon.



Camp Vessey in the 1950's

Camp Vessey was built by the Rotary Club and named for well-known singer Bernard Vessey. Mr. Vessey was a Rotarian who gained prominence in the organization and was later elected to be the Rotary Club's District Governor. He was also involved in Scouting and had become a scout commissioner by 1929. So, it is almost certain that Bernard Vessey was instrumental in bringing the Scout camp into existence.

The time when the camp was actually built seems somewhat uncertain. A July 8, 1922 story in the *Hutchinson News* describes plans for Hutchinson, Kansas Troop 1 to spend a week at



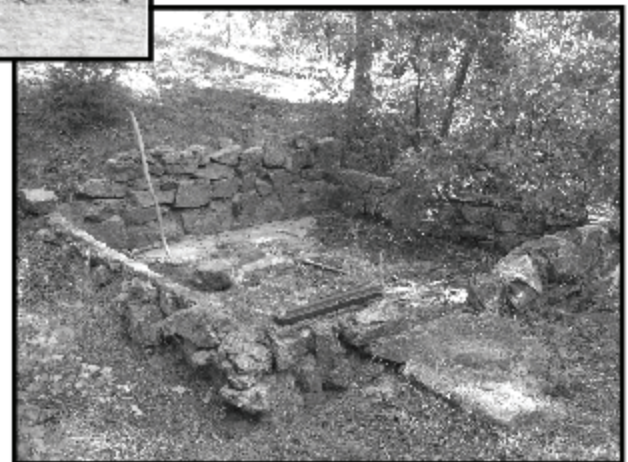
Cracked pipe from the Camp Vessey Water System.

Camp Vessey. So, it seems that Camp Vessey had been built before the summer of 1922. Much more recent stories claim that it was built in 1923.

In 1925 the Colorado Springs Council merged with the El Paso and Teller Counties Council to become the Pikes Peak Council. The Pikes Peak Council seemingly continued to use Camp Vessey as a council camp until 1946 when Camp Alexander was given to the Pikes Peak Council by J. Don Alexander of the Alexander Film Company. After 1946, Camp Vessey continued to be used by various scout troops, mainly for weekend outings.

By the early 1950's, the camp's water system had long been abandoned, probably because its shallow pipes had frozen and split.

At 6:15 in the evening on Saturday, April 7, 1962 the Sheriff's Office received a call reporting a fire at Camp Vessey. By the time crews arrived the cabin had been destroyed. Firemen from the Ivywild-Cheyenne Canon Volunteer Fire Department stayed at the scene to prevent the fire from spreading to the surrounding forest.



Remnants of small building with pipes in the floor for radiant heating and drains near one wall.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Eric Swab for providing some of the references used here and for encouraging my further study.

Don Ellis

Bernard Vessey

Bernard Vessey was born in Washington Springs, South Dakota on September 28, 1890.

During the time that his uncle, Robert S. Vessey, was Governor young Bernard served as a page boy. Subsequently, he became a member of the South Dakota Fish and Game Department.

Somewhat later, he was a singer in a team of traveling evangelists.

Bernard Vessey moved to Colorado Springs in 1918 to become the Director of Music and Treasurer for the First Methodist Church. Here, he organized the Glee Club and Temple Quartet, in which he sang.

Several solo recordings of Mr. Vessey's singing were produced by Victor during the 1920's, including "Little Mother of Mine", "The Man of Galilee", "At the Cross", and "Moonlight and Roses". Bernard Vessey frequently sang "Open the Gates of the Temple" at Easter Sunrise services in the Garden of the Gods. He also sang at meetings of numerous organizations, as well as at many funerals.

In 1936, following the 1935 death of David F. Law, Bernard Vessey purchased a half interest in the Law Mortuary which was located at 116 N. Nevada Avenue. In 1941 he served as President of the Colorado Funeral Directors Association.

Bernard Vessey was a prominent Rotarian. In 1937 he served as the District Governor for the Rotary Club's newly reclassified District 113. A note in the November 1948 issue of *The Rotarian* stated, "Rotarians over the world are familiar with ROTARIAN VESSEY's voice, for he has appeared on the program at many Rotary Conventions and other meetings."

He had been a patron of Glen Eyrie Chapter No. 8, Order of the Eastern Star and was also a member of several organizations in addition to the Rotary Club: the YMCA, Masonic Lodge No. 104, the Southern Colorado Consistory, Pikes Peak Commandery, Knights Templar, the Odd Fellows, and the Winter Nights Club.

In the later years of Mr. Vessey's life, he and his wife Lucy traveled extensively, even taking a trip around the world on which they took pictures of many little known places. In response to frequent requests, they presented slide shows of their travels on various occasions.

In the early morning of Saturday, May 30, 1964, seventy three year old Bernard Vessey died in his sleep after having been hospitalized for two or three days at a local hospital for a checkup on his health. Funeral services were held at the First Methodist Church; and Bernard Vessey was buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

References:

"Scouts After Grant in Bear Creek Canon" *Colorado Springs Gazette* December 18, 1919

"Boy Scouts to go to the Mountains" *Hutchinson News*, Hutchinson, Kansas July 8, 1922

"Will Mobilize Boy Scouts of Region" *Colorado Springs Gazette* February 6, 1929

"Fire Destroys Bear Creek Canon Scout Cabin" *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph* April 8, 1962

"Boy Scout Cabin At Upper Bear Creek Burned" *Colorado Springs Free Press* April 9, 1962

"Scouting in Colorado"
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scouting_in_Colorado

<http://scoutcamp.org/oldestcamps.asp>

"Vessey Honored" *The Rotarian*, November 1948

"Bernard Vessey, Noted Springs Leader, Dies" *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph* May 32, 1964

Front Range Research Associates, Inc., *Historical and Architectural Survey of Downtown Colorado Springs*, 2003 - 04 (Law Mortuary)

(List of Vessey recordings in UCSB collection)
<http://adpl.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/talent/detail/23615>

(Presidents of the Colorado Funeral Directors Association)
<http://www.cofda.org/Resources/Documents/Past%20Presidents%20of%20the%20Colorado%20Funeral%20Directors%20Association.pdf>

(Rotary Club District Governor)
<http://www.rotaryfirst100.org/districts/districts/5450.htm>

20th ANNUAL HOLIDAY TOUR
"THE HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS"

Sunday, December 7, 2014
1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

2014 is a special year to celebrate highlighted holiday traditions at each site as well as their history. Start with a Victorian Tea and live music at the Old Colorado City History Center, 1 South 24th St. Doors will open at noon. Deposit your ticket for the drawing later that afternoon (no need to be present).

Then use your map to visit other historic sites including the following. (include reference to any photos)

- Onaledge B and B (1912 Craftsman estate)
- 2 South Wine Bar (Templeton House)
- Lorig's Western Wear (Jacob Schmidt's Saloon)
- NEW Old Colorado City Welcome Center (1800s private residence)
- Rockledge Country Inn (Arts and Crafts Estate)
- The Avenue Hotel B and B (1886 Queen Anne carriage house and main house)
- Old Town Guest House (site of old jail and city hall)
- Red Crags B and B (1800s Wellness Clinic)

Purchase \$15 early bird tickets until December 1. Tickets are \$20 starting December 2. Call the History Center at 636-1225 for credit card sales or pick up tickets at 1 South 24th Street (History Center). Hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Center will open at 12 noon the day of the event.

Bring your friends and neighbors to this major fundraiser for OCCHS! We have kept the price down to encourage a large attendance, however this event is not for small children. It is our 20th year and "new" sites have been added. Don't miss out on this opportunity to enjoy the spirit of the holidays!

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Local Historian Discovers Story of the Frank Lewis - Dale Jones Gang

Wanted bandits armed to the teeth speeding through Colorado; no this isn't a story about the Dougherty siblings but rather the Frank Lewis-Dale Jones gang.

In September of 1918, this gang of mostly family members were involved in a deadly shootout with Colorado Springs Police officers at a gas station at the corner of S. Nevada Avenue and Colorado Avenue downtown.

Retired police investigator and historian Dwight Haverkorn has spent years researching the history of the city's police department. He says there are many similarities between the Lewis-Jones gang and modern crimes, for example what were they stealing. "Remember, this was during the first World War or just previous to it, and during a time when they were having trouble like we are now, they were stealing copper wire," Haverkorn said.

The group may not be as well known as other gangsters of the era such as John Dillinger, Bonnie and Clyde or Baby Face Nelson, but Haverkorn says they were certainly notorious. As many as 9 officers were killed by the Lewis-Jones gang members and several others were wounded. "The reason we don't talk about them was nobody knows about them," Haverkorn said.

Lewis was arrested in Colorado Springs shortly after the shootout and died of pneumonia in jail. Jones made it to California where in November of 1918 he and his wife Marge were killed in another shootout with police.

Haverkorn says history gives us many examples of why Colorado isn't a place for fugitives to visit. "Typical of gangs who shouldn't come here, there was a group called the Texas 7; guess who didn't leave," Haverkorn joked. "This is just not a place for bad guys to come."

Dwight Haverkorn will give a presentation about the history of the Frank Lewis-Dale Jones Gang on Friday, November 14, 2014 at the Old Colorado City History Center, 1 South 24th Street, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80904. The presentation begins at 11:00 a.m. The doors open at 10:30 a.m. Members of OCCHS attend free, non-members pay \$5. Light refreshments will be served.



At the top (left)—John Babb, stepfather of Frank Lewis, believed by the police to be singleleader of the robber outfit. Middle (upper)—Mrs. Frank Lewis; Mrs. John Babb, mother of Lewis; and Harry Lane, Denver city detective, who was wounded and narrowly escaped death while engaged in a duel with the outlaws. Lower (left)—Eva De Morris, sister of Frank Lewis; and Frank Lewis, Roy Sherrill and Dale Jones, believed to be outlaw trio.

Presidents' Letter

The holiday season is approaching. Consider joining in and sharing the spirit. Plans are being made to decorate the Center on November 25th and 26th. Please come join us.

On December 7th, we'll celebrate our 20th annual Holiday Tour with nine stops along the way. Chairwoman Joanne Karlson has added new locations this year. Each location will feature a different holiday tradition and theme. The Center itself will open at noon to purchase tickets and the tour will begin at 1. The Center is serving a Victorian Tea with traditional treats accompanied by historic music. Tickets for this event will be available at the Center until December 1st for \$15.00. After that time, tickets will be \$20.00. Bring your friends and spend the day kicking off the holiday season. Four locations are here in Old Colorado City. Don't miss it!

The annual meeting is in January. New board members will be selected at that time. Think about making a commitment and become a member of our board. If you'd like to be a part of the board, just call the History Center at: 636-1225.

Your co-presidents,
Betty Baker and Kathy McBride

Treasurer's Report October 2014

Total Operating Account	\$ 19,398.54
Endowment Account	\$103,440.82
Savings Accounts	\$ 17,795.67
Bookstore Account	\$ 4,212.59
Total All Accounts	\$144,847.32

Remember, one way to really help the Historical Society is not only financially but through your volunteer time. Elections for new members on Board of Directors are right around the corner. If you would be interested in serving, please contact any of our officers and let them know.

Serving on the Board requires that you attend one monthly Board meeting, be active in one of our fund raisers and support our Mission Statement. New members on the Board bring fresh new perspectives!

Thank you

Suzanne Schorsch,
Treasurer

The Old Colorado City Historical Society's Board of Directors meets regularly on the third Monday of each 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 meetings will be November 17
at 1:00 P.M. at the *Old Colorado City History Center*

OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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November/December Calendar

Friday, November 14
11:00 A.M.

Program: "Frank Lewis - Dale Jones Gang" presented by Dwight Haverkorn. The program will take us back to between 1913 and 1918, when the Frank Lewis-Dale Jones Gang was responsible for the death of 5 police officers in Missouri, Kansas, Colorado and California. On Friday, September 13, 1918, the Frank Lewis-Dale Jones Gang became involved in the shooting death of chief of detectives, John Rowan, and the wounding of Detective John Dolan Riley in Colorado Springs.

OCCHS Members FREE. Non-members \$5

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1:00 - 5:00 P.M.
(History Center open
at noon)

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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.