

# WEST WOOD

Old Colorado City Historical Society

proud member of the Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums

Volume 29, Number 8

October, 2014

## Lost History of Early El Paso County

By Diane Karlson

Have you used the dog park, nature trails or pavilions at Bear Creek Regional Park? If so, you would be walking through lost history. Long before there were picnic tables, volleyball pits and parking lots, the El Paso County Poor Farm and Small Pox hospital stood on what is known today as 21st Street and Rio Grande Street.

The first El Paso County Poor House was located on North El Paso Street between Boulder and St. Vrain Streets. Today that would be the 400 block of El Paso Street.

By 1900, the county built a new structure on the wagon road called Bear Creek Road,

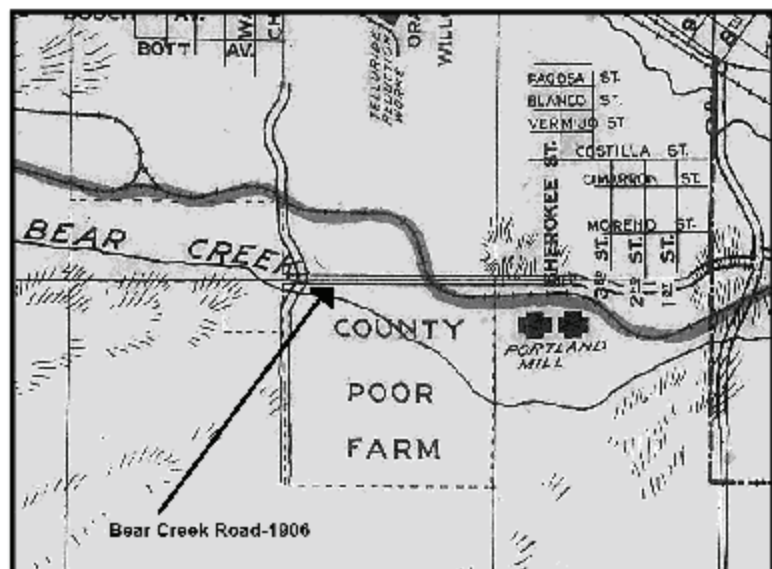
today known as Rio Grande Street, southwest of downtown Colorado Springs.

Dedicated on Oct. 10, 1900, the one single story hospital was made of pressed brick. The working farm was established to house those who were elderly without family to care for them as well as drug addicts, alcoholics, the mentally ill or disabled. The building was designed for a men's ward for 20 patients, a women's ward suitable for 10 patients as well as living quarters for nurses, hallways within the two wards, and a reading room for the residents to enjoy. The kitchen and dining areas were in a separate building. The house

was outfitted with a telephone. The facility was overseen by a superintendent and a matron. Each staff was paid a salary in addition to a private room and meals.

Built in during the next year, on the same property, was the El Paso County Small Pox Hospital. It was also known as the County Isolation Hospital or Pest House and used to isolate victims of smallpox. This building was phased out and ultimately abandoned in the 1920's when smallpox patients were transferred to a Memorial Hospital isolation unit. Sometimes the same superintendent oversaw the daily operations of the hospital and the farm, but not always.

For those who suffered from other ailments a new hospital wing was added in 1926, consisting of a two story building at an estimated cost of \$40,000. In today's



Map detail from the 1906 *Tourist Guide to Colorado Springs, Manitou, Colorado City and the Pike's Peak Region*

Courtesy of the Pikes Peak Library District

*Continued on Page 3*

## 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@pcsls.net](mailto:spiderwort@pcsls.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**

Charlease L. Bobo

Muriel F. Dunkley

Patricia Ebersole

Gordon Gray

Delores Gustafson

Evelyn Hurr

Helen R. Leonard

Donald McGilchrist

Betty Rapjack

John and Susan Rowley

Mark Schreder

Deborah Sheinman

Steve Shepard

Donald Hansen



*Poor Farm Continued from Page 1*

value this would cost just over half a million dollars. Attention to details included preparing the building for future expansion in case a third story was needed. This new area included sleeping porches for those with tuberculosis. Some of those who died while staying at the Poor House or the Isolation Hospital were buried in the Pauper's Cemetery located on the edge of the property.

By 1930, the Poor House complex had expanded to include a three story "Main building", a two story brick house for men, a one story building and dining room for special



*El Paso County Poor Farm  
image source not known*

attention men, four tent houses for tuberculosis patients, barns that held the dairy herd, horses, hogs, chickens and hay, a silo, a steam plant, and a tool shed plus a large garden plot. Inside the "Main building" were living quarters for the staff, the women residents and the dining area. Although the complex housed 58 men and 11 women residents, the superintendent at the time, James Grant Darby, stated the house was not at full capacity.

The superintendent was paid \$90 per month in 1936 while the matron received \$60 plus housing quarters on site and meals. Fast forward to 2014 and the salaries would equal \$1520 and \$1013 per month.

After World War II, the county was growing just like Colorado Springs. Several negative

aspects faced the county with maintaining the Poor Farm complex and the surrounding acres. In 1951, fire destroyed the corral and two of the out buildings. By 1960, the costs related to maintaining a herd of dairy cows and a herd of cattle in addition to the overall upkeep of the property, the county faced a negative profit. The heating costs alone using a wood converted furnace cost the county \$18,000 in 1984.

Most poor houses in the United States closed after World War II. The El Paso County Poor Farm officially closed its doors for good on February 29, 1984. Residents found new housing through the efforts of local charitable

organizations. Citizens fought to keep the neo-classical style building from being demolished, but ultimately it was too costly to renovate the building primarily due to the extensive asbestos used throughout. This Poor House was the last one to close in the state and one of the final ones to close across the nation.

The property still lives on. The original gardens that the residents of yesteryear cultivated are still going strong as part of The Charmaine Nymann Community Garden. Also, you can see the headstones in the Pauper's Cemetery located in the northeast corner of the dog park.

Headstone in  
Pauper's  
Cemetery  
Courtesy of  
Diane Karlson



Resources used to write this article came from:  
Pikes Peak Library District- Special Collections,  
Bear Creek Regional Park Nature Center,  
<http://bearcreekgardens.org/index.html>  
[www.dollartimes.com/inflation](http://www.dollartimes.com/inflation)

## *In Memoriam*

### *DORIS "DEE" BREITENFELD*

May 1937 - September 2014

*Dee was an active Old Colorado City Historical Society member who commuted from Woodland Park. She was a Ute Pass and early El Paso County historian who was known for her sunny smile and love of antiques.*

### *JANET HOWBERT*

October 1932 - August 2014

*Janet visited the History Center with her late husband, Irving Howbert. These visits were often followed by lunch at La Baguette where they had met. Janet was a retired nurse from Penrose/St. Francis Hospital and was a devoted care-giver and loving wife.*

### *JOYCE M. JOHNS*

March 1928 - August 2014

*Joyce was an early member of the Old Colorado City Historical Society and former president. She was a respected Colorado Historian, writer and lecturer who was also active in the Pikes Peak Posse of the Westerners and the El Paso County Pioneers Association. She was known for her quick wit and storytelling.*

*Our deepest sympathies to the many friends and family members who have been touched by the passing of their beloved ones.*

## **Famous Outlaw Gang to be the Topic of November Program**

The Frank Lewis-Dale Jones Gang was composed of Frank Lewis, 3 of his brothers, and one sister, along with Dale Jones and his wife. Between 1913 and 1918, they were responsible for the deaths of 5 police officers in Missouri, Kansas, Colorado and California. On Friday, September 13, 1918, Dale Jones, his wife, and Roscoe Lancaster were in Colorado Springs and became involved in a shooting in the death of chief of detectives, John Rowan, and the wounding of Detective John Dolan Riley. In our November 14 Dwight Haverkorn will offer an account of the exploits of the Frank Lewis - Dale Jones Gang.

Dwight Haverkorn is a retired Colorado Springs Police Investigator and serves as El Paso County Pioneers' Association President. Dwight graduated from Palmer High School (1964) and obtained a business degree from Regis College (1989). Dwight serves as a volunteer historian for the Colorado Springs Police Dept., and is a long-term volunteer at the Penrose Library's Special Collections.



## A Woman of Diverse Interests and Talents!

Charlease Elzenga is passionate about history, music, art and science. This combination of interests that has led to roads less traveled. She joined the Society for Creative Anachronism in the 1980's, began researching pre-1600's textiles and music, and started spinning and hand weaving. Soon after, she joined the Pioneer Fiber Workshop, a demonstration group that gave demonstrations in garb of the 1500's to 1900's. It was those demonstrations that resulted in two trips with the USAID Farmer-to-Farmer Program to teach spinning and natural dyeing in Kyrgyzstan in 1993 and 1994. In 2003, she joined the Chamber Orchestra of the Springs where

until lately she was a member of the second violin section and string personnel manager.

Charlease will be presenting our October program, "Spinning Traditions in the Western Regions" on October 10. The program will describe yarn spinning as a basic life skill since prehistoric times.

Even when the Industrial Age mechanized the process, spinning wheels still found their way to home and hearth.

The program will discuss and demonstrate the history of spinning from ancient times to the present, with a look at how spinning wheels were a part of westward migration.

Time permitting participants may have a chance to try their hand at spinning.



### *... at the 'Crawl'*



**EDITORIAL:**

# Keys to Our Future

This month we are saddened by the recent passing of three of our beloved members. Each contributed to the vitality of the Society in her own special way.

Joyce Johns' contributions are especially worth noting. Even before the Old Colorado City Historical Society was founded, Joyce Johns had become interested in the history of the original Colorado City. As a Pioneers Association volunteer working with the archives at the Pioneers Museum she located many documents and photographs of Colorado City people and buildings which undergirded the effort to revitalize Old Colorado City. With the background she had gained by working at the Pioneers Museum, Joyce Johns took on major responsibility for managing the Society's archives during the Society's early years. She also served as our president. Indeed, it is fair to say that Joyce was one of the Society's 'key people' 20 years ago.

In addition to the sadness which we may feel at the passing of one of our friends, the passing of any of our friends brings into clearer focus our own mortality.

A few of the Society's members are 'key people' today. And, I am concerned with how the Society would adapt if one of our 'key people' was suddenly taken from us. Who would have the background, the skills, and the familiarity with the Society's operation to fill the void? It could be very challenging!

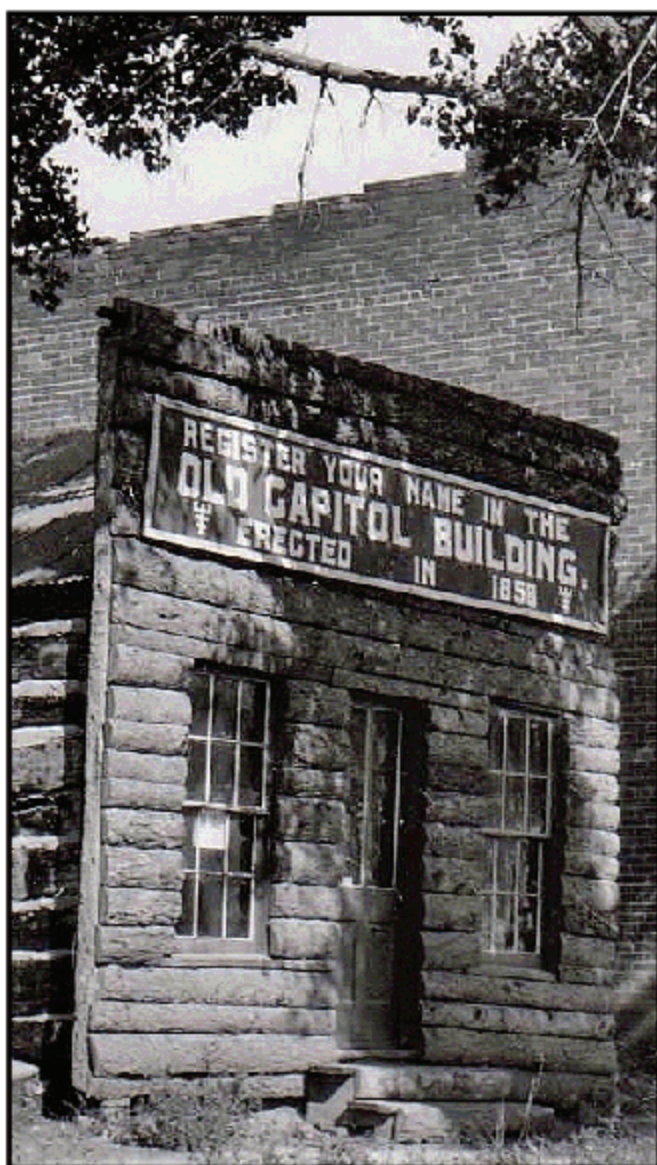
The best way to meet the challenges the Society would face with the loss of a key person would be to develop greater depth in all of our operations - to have at least one person who is the associate, assistant, or understudy to each of our 'key people'. Like most organizations, we do have a vice-president. But, where is our assistant treasurer? Where is our associate editor? Who would step in at the last minute to plan and organize any one of the Society's events?

In the past two years the Society has faced challenges of another sort: financial challenges resulting from unanticipated occurrences. Fortunately, our treasurer has prudently managed our budget so that there has been

some reserve. Even so, the Society has needed to solicit special contributions to meet unplanned expenses. Looking to the future, we need more reserves both in our operating budget and in our endowment. Contributions in memory of departed friends, and inclusion of the Society in one's own estate plans can help a great deal.

Ultimately, though, the key to our financial future rests in our ability to attract and retain new members. New members, especially younger members, are also the key to developing the 'human capital' to sustain the function and vitality of the Society. And, that 'human capital' is the key to the very survival of the Old Colorado City Historical Society.

Don Ellis  
West Word Editor



## Presidents' Letter

Another successful Cemetery Crawl was logged into the annals of the Old Colorado City Historical Society. There are so many members who made this event possible: Brian Copeland who was the chair, the Schorsch family who came to the cemetery early to set everything up, Bev Disch and Betsy Evans who sold and took tickets, Sharon and Dave Swint identified the actors and kept them hydrated, and finally Joanne and Werner Karlson who handled the final clean-up. Our volunteer guides were Jo Cervone, Jan de Chadenades, Kay Atteberry, Don Ellis, Anita Schimmel, Gennie and Mike Mayberry, Art Crawford, Shirley Ewing (who celebrated her birthday with us), Dave Murray, and Joanne Karlson. Of course this event would not have been possible without our actors. Roberta Hardy gave a whole new look to Laura Belle, Dave Hughes reprised his role of Anthony Bott, Werner Karlson and Sandy Hanzilan portrayed Jacob and Bertha Schmidt, Miki and Leo Knudson told the story of Duncan and Katherine Lamont, and Kathy McBride played the grandmother of tuberculosis patient Birdie Della Stapleman.

Our next major event is the Holiday Tour on December 7th. This won't be your same old tour. This year we'll offer an exciting new look for the event. Enthusiastic chairpersons Sharon Swint and Joanne Karlson will provide different themes at each location to present the history of many treasured holiday traditions. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more details!

If you haven't been to the History Center recently, you've missed some of our changing displays. Our new volunteer committee is working to keep displays fresh and current. A special thank you to Marilyn Lee for her thoughtful presentations. Halloween haunting is just waiting for you. Come in to see your museum.

Your co-presidents,  
Betty Baker and Kathy McBride

## Treasurer's Report September 2014

Thanks to all the members and workers that put together and supported the cemetery crawl. The crawl made \$800 for the event and another \$100 in books sales at the event for a total of \$900 dollars. And, we taught a lot of history in a very fun way.

As of the end of August, the accounts are as follows:

Total Operating Account	\$ 19,647.32
Endowment Account	\$104,268.30
Savings Accounts	\$ 16,566.01
Bookstore Account	\$ 4,797.70
<b>Total All Accounts</b>	<b>\$145,279.33</b>

Please, do not forget to support our 20th Anniversary Holiday Tour. We do have some new stops this year, and even if you have been many times before and can't attend.....buying tickets for someone makes a wonderful early Holiday gift.

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 October 20  
at 1:00 P.M. at the *Old Colorado City History Center***

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

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## October / November Calendar

Friday, October 10  
11:00 A.M.

Program: "Spinning Traditions in the Western Regions" presented by Charlease Elzenga. This program will describe yarn spinning as a basic life skill since prehistory and will discuss how spinning wheels were a part of western migration.

OCCHS Members FREE. Non-members \$5

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

### 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.