

# WEST WOOD



proud member of the Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums

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## *Skiing on Pikes Peak during and after World War II*

By The Don Gang (Don Sanborn, Don Kallaus, and Don Ellis)

### Pikes Peak Ski Club (Glen Cove during WWII)

With the advent of World War II, recreational skiing effectively came to a halt. Most young people were joining in the war effort and gas rations kept others from being able to drive to the ski area. However, the Glen Cove ski area was able to keep open to an extent. The ski area was turned over to Camp Carson and Peterson Field for their use as part of their recreation and physical fitness program in 1943. The engineers at Peterson Field took on the responsibility of keeping the road cleared to the ski area; and Col. Blunt of Camp Carson made arrangements for trucks to transport GIs up the mountain each weekend. It cost GIs 25 cents per day for use of the tow and rental of ski equipment. A hot lunch and refreshments were available for purchase at a nominal fee. The area served military men and women of Peterson Field, Camp Carson, and Second Army Air Force Headquarters, as well as naval and marine students of Colorado College.

In 1944 the first all military ski meet in history was held. The meet was sponsored by the Colorado Springs Junior Chamber of Commerce and brought competitors from several military installations including Camp Carson, Peterson Field, Camp Hale, and others.

The Signal Company of the 104th Division strung telephone wires from the top of the ski run to the finish line to aid in timing the race. Camp Hale's Toni Matt was crowned "Ski King" after taking top honors in the combined downhill and slalom races. The top nine places were taken by Camp

Hale men. Camp Hale near Leadville was the training facility for the famous 10th Mountain Division whose soldiers included many men who later became post war ski industry leaders. *Life Magazine* and the *Associated Press* were in attendance to record the first military meet for the rest of the country to witness.

Elk Park Ski Area

Under management of the Forest Service

*Continued on Page 3*

## CityWORKS

A PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW

Featuring the Photography of Glenn W. Murray

A Fundraiser for the Old Colorado City History Center

Sponsored by Pikes Peak Regional Building Department

Has been re-scheduled to:

**Friday May 30, 2014**

Opening 5:00 P.M.

The "Atrium" at Pikes Peak Regional Development Center  
2880 International Circle, Colorado Springs, Colorado

## 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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Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319

or Don Ellis - spiderwort@pcslsys.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		

*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
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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

Anna Ahern

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Swint Realty Company, LLC



*Skiing from Page 1*

and the Colorado State Highway System the Pikes Peak Highway slowly fell into disrepair due to a lack of funds. It became so bad that the Forest Service was ready to close and abandon it. On June 7, 1948, concerned that closing the Highway would severely hurt the tourism industry in the region, the City of Colorado Springs leased the Highway from the Forest Service and made it a toll road. Tolls helped pay for upkeep and improvements of the Highway. This now meant that any skiing activities would be at the behest of the City, which would be responsible for keeping the Highway open to the ski area and keeping skiers safe on their journey to and from the ski slopes.

Local ski organizers, including Don Lawrie (the new Pikes Peak Highway Administrator), Hans Wagner, Leon Wilmot, and Pop Sorensen, decided to look for a less windy location for the Pikes Peak ski area. With the use of an Army Weasel (a light, tracked transport vehicle for carrying commando troops across snow and over difficult terrain), they scouted the mountain sides around the North side of Pikes Peak and settled on a North facing slope below Elk Park and approximately three quarters of a mile below Glen Cove. The runs at the new "Elk Park Winter Sports Area" were initially cleared by the Pikes Peak Highway road crew when the crew could take time away from their normal duties. The work was finished by Don Lawrie, John Armstrong, and Willis Armstrong with the aid of volunteers including Colorado College students and Fort Carson personnel. Don Lawrie and the Armstrongs spent most summer weekends working at the new area and sleeping in sleeping bags under a tree on Saturday nights. An old CCC building was moved to the base of the new area to act as a warming house, and kitchen facilities were constructed.

The Pikes Peak Ski Club turned its Glen Cove rope tows over to the City of Colorado Springs for



*Soldiers skiing at Glen Cove*

## ***2nd Annual Used Book and Treasure Sale***

*(this year with collectibles)*

***April 26 & 27***

***11:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.***



***Old Colorado City History Center***

*1 S. 24th. Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80904 ~ (719) 636-1225*



"Main" at Elk Park Ski Area, March 1949

use at the Elk Park area; and, with the assistance of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the tows were installed to serve the new ski runs. The total length of all three tows was 2,400 feet.

Organizers tried several approaches to financing a modern chair lift to replace/augment the less desirable rope tows but were ultimately unsuccessful. In July of 1948 they tried to find a way for the City to pay for a lift directly, but found there was no legal way to do it. They then attempted to implement a plan whereby the Chamber of Commerce would put up \$120,000 for the lift and the City would then lease it from the Chamber and ultimately pay the Chamber back. It appears that the *Gazette Telegraph* getting wind of the plan, scuttled the deal. In a third attempt in 1948, they placed a bond issue on the City ballot that would have provided \$175,000 for improvements

to the Elk Park Ski Area. The citizens of Colorado Springs voted down the bond issue. Howard Yates, president of the Chamber; Chase Stone, V-P of First National Bank of Colorado Springs; and Senator Edwin C. Johnson made a case with the Washington Agriculture Secretary, Charles F. Brannon, for using \$200,000 from revenues received from the Pikes Peak Highway tolls for use on a ski lift. This request was ultimately denied.

The Elk Park area seemed to limp along with its antiquated rope tows and recurring poor snow conditions for the next few years. In 1950 Don Lawrie stated: "The days of rope tows are over - antiquated as horse and buggies. Skiers want modern chair lifts and the like, and would drive an extra 100 miles or so for them. They also want suitable chalets or some like place nearby." Though it appears there was some limited skiing from 1950 to 1954, the *Gazette Telegraph* stated in its March 5, 1954 edition: "Pikes Peak to open on Sunday, March 7, 1954 for first time in five years at Elk Park area." City Council had authorized skiing at the Elk Park area when there was sufficient snow. The highway charge was \$1.00 per person which included the rope tow fee.

A new non-profit Pikes Peak Ski Corporation (PPSC) was organized and incorporated on November 10, 1954 with the purpose of "assuming the forestry service permit to the Glen Cove Winter Sports Area and to improve the facilities there for the benefit of the skiers in the Pikes Peak region and visitors thereto." The term "Glen Cove Sports Area" was either a legacy name or aptly covered the larger area from Elk Park Ski Area up to 16 mile. The articles of Incorporation called for authorized capital stock of \$50,000 of which \$15,000 in shares of \$100 par value were offered to the public. Early investors included: J. D. Ackerman, Willis E. Armstrong, R. E. Edwards, Patrick J. Fitzgerald, Robert W. Hendee, Morton McGinley, Robert Mendenhall, Joseph A. Reich, Beryl Ritchey, H. Chase Stone, and Claude S. Thompson. Willis Armstrong was the President of the corporation.

With funds raised from the stock offering, PPSC ordered one of the first Poma lifts in the state to be installed on the Main ski run. This Poma lift pulled a skier up the hill by means of a disc or platter which was linked to a moving overhead cable by a spring-loaded pole. The pole was placed between the skier's legs so that the platter was behind the skier.

Once again, mention was made of plans to install a mile long chair lift to the top of Elk Mountain. And, once again, it didn't happen.

Willis Armstrong took responsibility for keeping the Poma lift operating. His Master's Degree in Physics apparently held him in good stead in that regard. In support of the Ski Club, Willis, who worked for Colorado Springs National Bank, often left work at noon on Friday to spend the night at the ski area in his sleeping bag so that he could prepare



Elk Park Ski Area from parking lot, April 1949

the ski lift for operational by 8 am on Saturday morning. It's been observed that he may well have been the only bank executive in the U.S. who could splice wire cable.

Ski races were revived in 1958 by the Sno-Jets Ski Club with assistance from the Jaycees and the Pikes Peak Ski Club. Buddy Werner of Steamboat Springs won the race and became the first name on the new Skimeister trophy. Winner of the women's race was Carol Izett. A new unclassified contest between Ski Club teams was held and turned out to be the largest unclassified race ever held in Colorado. The winner was the host Sno-Jet Ski Club. With good snow conditions, ski racing continued for a number of years. But, in the winter of 1963/64 the races were canceled due to a lack of snow (as mentioned before, a recurring issue on Pikes Peak).

A second small Poma lift was added on the beginner's hill; and the area operated with little change from around 1960 through 1980, except for the 1966/67 season when it was closed due, once again, to, you guessed it, lack of snow. Limited snow making equipment was installed in 1968 to allow the ski school to open earlier in the year. Uphill capacity was provided by the two Poma lifts, one rope tow and a ski truck. The ski truck ferried skiers up the road to access the Little Down Mountain Trail running from Glen Cove Lodge to the ski area, the Elk Park Trail, or so-called Racing Trail, running from the top of Elk Mountain down to the ski area and the "Expert's" Racing Trail from 1.6 mile to Glen Cove. In 1964 Dick Holliday headed the 25 member ski patrol. Mr. and Mrs. Sam Blean operated the lodge. Ski tickets were \$2.75 per day and the toll gate charged 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for kids.

In 1976 the Pikes Peak Ski Corp redeemed all outstanding preferred stock by paying shareholders \$100 per share and a \$4 dividend per share. Shareholders were also given a life-time ski pass for use as long as the ski area was operated by the Pikes Peak Ski Corporation. In 1977 plans for an expansion and a chair lift were once again proposed. William Moore had taken over the lease with the Forest Service and submitted plans for approval. It was projected to cost \$3 million for the expansion which would include a new lodge, a 4500 foot chairlift to the top of Elk Park Knoll, snowmaking equipment and expanded parking. Under the plan, the new improved ski area would be open four days a week as opposed to the historical weekend operation. In 1980/81 owners began working on the upgrade in earnest. Expansions were begun. The parking lot was expanded and a new Poma chairlift was purchased and installed. The new Poma lift provided access to higher terrain. However, immediately after installation the area had a poor year with sparse snow and poor attendance. With the new lift serving higher terrain, high winds plagued the ski operations (the reason the lower area was developed in the first place). In 1983 the Pikes Peak Ski Corp raised \$1.8 million in a stock sale to pay interest for a \$5 million industrial revenue bond they had proposed to finance further expansion. However, in mid-1983 Congress prohibited the use of bond money for recreational developments. When they couldn't raise additional funds required to finish the expansion project and they weren't making enough money to repay existing loans, the ski area had to close after the 1983/84 season. They owed Poma Corp of America \$700,000 for the chair lift they'd installed. Poma paid the taxes long enough to keep the assets from being sold at tax sale so that Poma could repossess the chair lift.



*Don Lawrie and Mary Sorensen, 1949*



*New Poma chairlift, 1983*



## Holiday Hills

It's worth mentioning that, aside from the historical thread of ski activity starting with Silver Spruce Ski Club, transitioning to the Pikes Peak Ski Club and eventually the Pikes Peak Ski Corporation, another ski operation was formed and operated between Edlowe and Catamount. Holiday Hills was started by Harlan and Kay Nimrod. The Nimrods moved to the area in 1959 and started a subdivision named Holiday Hills. In 1962/63, Harlan started a ski area on his property for his two sons and later opened it to the public on the weekends. The ski area operated until 1972 and often had 400-500 skier visits per weekend. Holiday Hills had a contract with the Air Force Academy to run a ski school for cadets. With a J-Bar, three rope tows, nine runs and an A-frame house from which hot dogs and chili were sold, the ski area provided a nice family area for those wishing to learn how to ski. The Nimrod's three children worked at the ski area, with the two boys operating the ski lifts and the daughter helping sell food and tickets inside. Ric Hermann also helped run the tow ropes. A tow ticket in 1965 was \$3 per day; and the area was open from 9 am to 4:40 pm. The Nimrods closed Holiday Hills after their sons had grown and left home. The high cost of insurance and inconsistent snow also factored into the decision to close.

## Continued unorganized skiing

With the demise of the Elk Park Ski Area, skiing on Pikes Peak returned to its roots with skiers taking advantage of the spring skiing opportunities accessible via the road. On spring days and when there's sufficient snow, one can still find a number of skiers hitchhiking or sharing a common truck and driver to get from the roadside just above Glen Cove up to Sixteen Mile or Devils Playground to ski The Bowl, The Three Little Pigs, The Chimney, and The Chute (Little Italy). Some of these have been declared "legally insane" on a level of difficulty scale. Even more adventurous skiers can be found skiing chutes on the North face of the mountain from the summit of Pikes Peak, an exercise that then requires a long hike back out of the Bottomless Pit (not to be confused with the money spent on the Pikes Peak Ski Area prior to its demise)!

## Ski Gear

In Colorado, Norwegian immigrant Thor Grosvold made many of the skis used in the 1930's. Early skis were made of wood with no metal edges. A simple leather strap over the foot or a metal toe plate with a leather strap around the heel were used to affix the ski to the skier's foot. Later metal edges were screwed onto the ski and provided better control. Ski bindings progressed through spring loaded cables around the heel and toe pieces that could release to the sides. Early ski poles were made of bamboo with leather handles and "baskets" made of smaller bamboo loops affixed to the base of the pole with leather straps. More durable metal loops were used for baskets and eventually the entire pole was made from aluminum with plastic baskets and grips.

As the only member of the Pikes Peak Ski Club with a store front, Don Lawrie was encouraged by other club members to turn his clock and jewelry store into a ski equipment, clock and jewelry store. Thus was born the first ski shop in Colorado Springs. The Ski Shack at 206 N. Tejon opened in 1938. Don carried a wide range of ski equipment, clothing and accessories including: Grosvold skis (\$5-\$22 a pair), St Croix Jackets (\$5.25-\$12.50), A. Sandler Co ski boots (\$5.50-\$10.50 a pair), Northland bindings (\$4.50-\$7.50), Hirsh-Weis ski pants (\$8.50-\$16.00), Sun Valley ski pants (\$10.25-\$13.50), Sigmund Werner, Inc. ski poles (\$7.25).

With the advent of World War II, skiing and the clock and jewelry business dried up. Don closed up shop and was asked to start the Post Exchange at Camp Carson. During and after the war he continued to ski but never went back to the ski shop business.

Opening in 1952, The Ski Shop, still in business at 1422 South Tejon, filled the void and need for a locally owned ski shop in Colorado Springs after the war. They carried a larger selection of ski gear than was normally available at some of the general sporting goods stores.



## President's Letter - April

What a wonderful start to this year! We've had exciting speakers, upgrades in the building's archival area, new ideas for fundraising, and new members.

There is even more to come with changing exhibits, newly created displays, and areas re-arranged to accommodate the ever-increasing attendance at our Friday programs. (Thank you to Sandy Hanzlian for organizing the outstanding presentations.) We apologize for having to turn away interested persons, but we've been filled to standing room only capacity.

The maintenance committee is up and running making repairs after last year's flood. Thank you to everyone who donated much needed funds so these repairs could be completed.

The shop that previously printed *West Word* has closed. A new one has been found at an affordable cost. Mailings will continue for the time being, but the Board is researching the possibility of e-mailing the newsletter in the future.

The Historical Society has been awarded a CAP grant from Colorado Historic Preservation. Colorado museum professionals will assess our building and the collections to give us recommendations for projects and actions. This is the first step toward qualifying for additional grants. Thanks to the committee for their efforts in securing this grant.

Volunteers are needed and welcome in all areas of the society. Consider being an active member. Bring your new ideas.

We're looking forward to a great and productive summer. Take a look at your *West Word*. There is a section each month telling you about every presentation. Know the history of Old Colorado City and its historic time period.

Betty and Kathy

## Treasurer's Report April 2014

Last month I gave you the complete year end report of 2013, how our money was received and spent. As always, the first few months of the year operations of OCCHS run in the 'red' till we enter our fundraising period that starts in the summer. Each year we have a 'reserve' set aside so that we can pay our expenses until that fundraising time.

So instead of talking numbers, I want to talk about something that is worth more. Another unsung HERO of OCCHS, that of Sandy Hanzlian. Sandy serves on the Board in the capacity of our Programs Director. She is the person who keeps her nose to the grindstone all year, attending meetings around the state, talking to other organizations, attending book releases, etc., etc., etc. and FOR ONE PURPOSE. Sandy is the person who is in charge of finding the monthly programs that members and non-members alike enjoy attending. She is assisted by Kay Atteberry (Yes the same Kay that brings you the goody table during our monthly meetings AND processes the bulk mailing of our newsletter).

These two ladies are the front runners in getting new members. Each month that our programs are advertised to the public non-members come to us because they want to see the program. It only takes a couple "excellent" programs and they become members!!! Six new members have joined from the last couple programs.

Next time you see either of these ladies, thank them for all the work they do.

Respectfully,

Suzanne Schorsch  
Treasurer



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, April 21 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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## April Calendar

**Friday, April 11**  
11:00 AM

Program: **"Baseball in Colorado Springs"** Presented by Roger P. Hadix, author of a book by the same name, baseball historian who plays in the Labor Day Old Tyme Baseball game at Rockledge Ranch each year. The program covers History of Baseball played in Pikes Peak Region 1874 - Present day and includes both non professional and professional baseball.  
OCCHS Members FREE. Non-members \$5.00

**Saturday, April 26**  
11:00 AM - 4:00 P.M.  
**Sunday, April 27**  
11:00 AM - 4:00 P.M.

**Old Colorado City Historical Society  
Used Book and Treasure Sale**

### **Old Colorado City History Center**

*1 S. 24th Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80904 - (719) 636-1225 - <http://www.occhs.org>  
Museum Hours: Thurs. thru Sat. 11 - 2 Free Admission. Donations greatly appreciated.*