

# WESTWARD



proud member of the Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums

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May, 2014

## Mesa Cemetery and Pioneer Park

By Shirley Ewing

In the 1800's, Reverend William Howbert, a Methodist minister, donated 20 acres to Colorado City with nine acres designated as a cemetery. Located on a mesa, this cemetery was the third in the western area and called Colorado City Cemetery, Old Mesa or Mesa Cemetery. The adjoining fifteen acres was given to the Masons and today is the location of the Masonic Temple on Panorama Drive. Originally the land between the cemetery and the Masonic area was considered as one and had a single fence.

Burials in Mesa Cemetery were random; and many early graves were marked only with slabs of wood painted white, lettered with black ink and enclosed by a small white picket fence. The ink soon washed off, the fences fell and graves were left unmarked and alone. Epitaphs on marble headstones were obliterated by frost and sandstorms; and cattle added to the devastation by knocking down headstones and trampling on broken pieces. Mesa Cemetery became desolate and abandoned.

### *A Neglected "God's Acre" in the Mesa*

Pioneer Cemetery on Mesa, Now in Ruins,  
to Be Repaired and Kept Up by the City;  
Many Citizens of '70s Are Buried There



*"The indecipherable stones, the silence, the bareness, represents a picture of fulfillment of the prophetic description abomination of desolation."*

*A "cemetery of pathos"*

*(Colorado Springs Weekly Gazette, October 19, 1903)*

In 1932, a movement was started to improve the Mesa Cemetery. A reporter and a photographer were told by the city on June 19 that the City Council would fence in the tract to keep off grazing cattle and would landscape the spot, thus giving it the care a cemetery should have. However, no more was heard about that plan. That same year, the Works in Progress Administration (WPA)

*Colorado Springs Gazette & Telegraph, June 19, 1932*

*Continued on Page 3*

Summer Hours starting May 1:  
**Museum and Bookstore Schedule**  
Tuesday through Saturday 11:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

## 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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**The Old Colorado City Historical Society**

A NONPROFIT CORPORATION

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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**

Dorothy Boyd

Richard Dailey

Paul &amp; Nancy Desilets

Dennis and Karen Dosch

Betsy Evans

Ed Hershiser

Mary Jean and Fred Nelson

Ruth Obee

Donald and Betty Peterson

Glenn Pressman

Maloa Read

Eric Swab

Stephanie Waters

*In Memoriam***Joseph Knorr**

October 22, 1921 - April 18, 2014

Joe served in the Navy in WWII, and pursued a career as a design draftsman. After Joe's retirement he and his wife Marge moved to Colorado Springs. They have been members of the Old Colorado City Historical Society for quite some time. A devoted husband, Joe Knorr has always accompanied our faithful and much loved Thursday bookstore volunteer, Marge. Joe will be greatly missed by all who have known him.

He is survived by his wife, Marge, his sons, Kirk and Brian, and daughters, Mary Knorr and Karen Crumbaker.

We offer our deepest sympathy to Joe Knorr's family and friends.

### *Cemetery from Page 1*

workers did research at the Mesa Cemetery and removed all remaining grave stones with the promise they would be returned. They were not.

The first known burial in Mesa probably took place in 1861 when H. D. Morse brought his wife Melvina to Colorado City from Charter Oak Ranch. Others followed as diseases wiped out whole families, accidents took their toll, and there were suicides and murders. Pioneers living in the 1940s recall that Indians killed by pioneers were buried in a mass grave. After the last legal burial in 1907, scores of bodies were removed and reburied elsewhere.

A 1939 WPA project to identify veterans graves found eight unnamed veterans of Sand Creek. Results of all surveys showed that the number of those buried in Mesa range from 87 to more than 140!

### *Monument History*

A slab of pink Salida granite donated by Evergreen Memorial Company stands more than 7' tall and 32" wide and is partially surrounded by a 31" low stone wall. Etched in the top of the monument is a covered wagon pulled by two oxen with the dates 1858-1903. Below the wagon is the inscription "Memorial to El Paso County Early Pioneers." After an exhaustive search and positive verification by family members of the deceased, a final list of 45 names was engraved on the monument. This commemorative marker was dedicated on September 20, 1949 under the auspices of the El Paso

County Pioneers Association; thus, in a sense, restoring the neglected cemetery.



Nonetheless, the cemetery's problems were not over.

In 1950, Colorado Springs acquired Mesa Cemetery when it annexed Pleasant Valley. It was considered to be an "abandoned cemetery" and was soon to be turned into Pioneer Park which would have a ball diamond and small play area for children.

In March 1955, vandalism occurred and the memorial was defaced by 57 indentations. Today, indentations are not noticeable but signs of mischievous actions are apparent.

In response to many locals who were displeased with the prospect of the cemetery becoming a playground, a June 26, 1962 Resolution stated: "Now therefore be it resolved that the area known as Mesa Cemetery be permanently reserved as a Pioneer Memorial under the administration of the Park and Recreation Advisory Board."

However, in 1969, council agreed to develop it into a park to serve the fast growing residential community that surrounds it.



**CEMETERY MONUMENT UNVEILED** — A monument dedicated to early pioneers buried in Mesa cemetery northwest of Colorado Springs was unveiled Tuesday in a ceremony by the El Paso County Pioneers association. Looking at the monument are Arthur Perkins, who spoke in behalf of El Paso lodge No. 13, AF & AM; Mrs. Frederic Shaw, who presided, and Mrs. Kitty Paster Fryhofer, principal speaker.

*Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph, September 21, 1949*



### *Rest in Peace? Not in Old Mesa Cemetery*

This headline appeared in the *Gazette*, October 10, 1976 and reflect the growing discontent of many citizens. The article included the following comments:

"Unless something is done now to restore the 8.5 acre tract to a cemetery and a Pioneer's memorial and to remove all the remains to Evergreen Cemetery, the final chapter will become one of the saddest tales ever in the history of Colorado Springs."

"What concerns me most," continued another local citizen, "is the disrespect shown by authorities. The irony of the whole thing is the seeking to desecrate the graves of pioneers in a year when we are celebrating our Colorado Centennial and the centennial of our country. Are we not supposed to honor and respect our pioneer ancestors?" Another resident said that this is, "The sickest situation I have ever seen. If we have come to where we have no respect for the dead, we have become a sick society indeed."



In 1976, a funeral director was hired to do forensic research to discover whatever records still existed regarding burials. Metal detectors were used to try to discover how many bodies were under the park because metal had been used for

casket handles, ladies brooches, and buttons on veterans jackets.

According to a January, 19, 1977 article in the *Gazette* this controversial park had been shown on county records as a cemetery since 1871. Then, unknown person or persons changed the entry in the City Owned Property Book from cemetery to read Pioneer Park. This book also shows the property as tax-exempt cemetery land.

Joe Nolan, owner of a local funeral home reported to the advisory board that "according to the Land Reclamation Act, cemetery ground cannot be reclaimed without peaceful settlement and removal of the bodies. There has been no "peaceful settlement" nor removal of the bodies from the site."

Dismay was expressed by the Cemetery Board while the Pioneers Association objected to having the park developed over what was set aside as memorial land and a cemetery in 1962.

In 1969, without facts and documented evidence, the area took on the characteristics of a park.

### *City may face law suit over Mesa cemetery*

*(Gazette, February 22, 1977)*

There is a "strong risk" that the city of Colorado Springs would find itself the defendant in a plethora of lawsuits unless city council stands by a 1962 resolution stating that Mesa Cemetery "be permanently reserved as a Pioneer Memorial under the administration of the Park and Recreation Board," according to a report of the City Advisory Board. Mike Pike, chairman of the Cemetery Board, stated "a mistake has been made (by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board) in determining that

memorial means Park and includes playground equipment." One citizen commented that he has relatives in other Colorado cemeteries and said, "I would not appreciate having children and dogs playing on their graves."

Administrator of Parks and Recreation Advisory Board stated, "Mesa Cemetery in its entirety should remain a memorial and playground equipment should be removed." Mike Pike, chairman of the cemetery board agreed. However, citizens of area told the council that the park is badly needed for recreation and they believed reserving the eastern third as a "living memorial" is not a desecration of a cemetery.

A decision was made NOT to relocate all the buried bodies since few could be positively identified and, finally, a compromise was reached and decided upon: Under its terms, no fence will be erected except for a low barrier on the east side to prohibit motorcycle traffic; and if any graves are discovered in the western two-thirds, they will be moved to Fairview cemetery at city expense.

Councilman, Brown moved to accept the compromise and said: "I hope this once and for all settles the issue."



## Notable Deaths

1861

William Lee, froze to death

1867

Robert Douglas, age 9, fell from the roof of a house he was helping his father build at a ranch near Glen Eyrie

September 11, 1868

Charles Everhart, 17, mounted on a small pony, went out to check on his father's cattle grazing on a plain near Colorado Springs. He knew there were Arapahoe Indians about so he was being extremely cautious. He was probably as far east as Tejon Street when the Indians came into view to the north of him. He tried to head home but he was no match for the Indians. When he reached near Platte and Cascade Avenues, a shot caused him to fall. One Indian then ran a spear through his body and scalped him, taking all the hair from his head except a small fringe around the back part. This event was witnessed by several people. About an hour later a party went out (after the Indians had left) and brought his mutilated body to Colorado Springs.

(*Indians of the Pike's Peak Region* by Irving Howbert, 1914)

September 11, 1868

A band of Indians came upon two small boys, sons of Thomas H. Robbins, who lived on the south side of Fountain. Franklin Robbins, age 8, and George Robbins, age 10 to 12, were tending their father's cattle, they tried to escape but were caught. One boy fell to his knees and with hands lifted up, begging to be spared but the savages never heeded. Two Indians reached down, each seized a boy by the hair, held him up with one hand, and using a revolver, shot him with the other and flung the lifeless body to the ground. Later, the bodies of the boys were brought into town.

(*Indians of the Pike's Peak Region* by Irving Howbert, 1914)

1881

Edward Turner Colton, spent a fortune "trying to make the Ute Pass road a paying proposition."

1882

Andrew Starr, gunshot wound

1890

Deacon Moore, age 21, suicide



Be an  
**Old Colorado City  
History Detective!**

Know a little of early Old Colorado City History, but not how it fits together?

Join us for a "fast-paced" variety of speakers  
plus

Tours of the museum and research library.

Hosted by: Old Colorado City Historical Society Board and Membership Committee.

**Make reservations at the Bookstore.**

OCCHS MEMBERS ONLY.

**Saturday, May 3**

10 A.M. until Noon  
Snacks 9:30 A.M.

# CityWORKS

A Photography Show

Featuring the photography of Glenn W. Murray who photographed local building, commercial construction and street works in the Pikes Peak region from the 1930s through the 1960s.



Center Remotes, Colorado Springs City Light & Gas, 1931

**Friday, May 30, 2014**

Opening Reception 5:00 p.m.

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

**A Fundraiser for Old Colorado City History Center**

Sponsored by Pike Peak Regional Building Department



**RSVP by Friday, May 23**

[linda@pprbd.org](mailto:linda@pprbd.org)

or

(719) 327-2989

## "Woven Across Time: Colorado's Hispanic Textile Traditions"

Presented by Katie Gardner

Rio Grande weaving in the southwest and Colorado differs from Pueblo and Navajo weaving and has a fascinating history. The presentation will feature Hispanic-made pieces from early Mexican products to nineteenth century Rio Grande blankets, to more modern Chiricahua examples. Katie has many books, weaving tools, and Hispanic Rio Grande blanket samples for all to enjoy.

In her 30 year career as a museum curator Katie has worked at the Fine Arts Center, the Colorado Historical Society's museum, and the Pioneer's Museum. She is currently curating a private collection as well as assisting internationally recognized author and screen writing consultant Linda Seger.

**May 9 at 11:00 A.M.**

OCCHS Members FREE. Non-members \$5.00

## What's New

\* New exhibits

\* New BIG screen for programs

\* Renovation and painting in the basement archives

\* Look ahead to Tuesday Nights in July movies!

## President's Letter - May

It's Spring at the History Center and time for new events and happenings. On May 1st, we'll be returning to our regular museum hours of 11-4 Tuesday through Saturday.

Our most exciting news concerns our recent award of the CAP grant of \$7,000 which will be divided to assess both our collections and the building's architecture. The assessors have been certified by Historic Preservation to complete this work. Local expert Victoria Ryan will evaluate our collections and Jane Crisler a noted Denver preservation architect will take a look at our historic building. Both were interviewed and hired by Joanne Karlson. The on-site project will occur on July 24 and 25. The work will be completed in its entirety by October 24, 2014. Not only will this help to expand our historic knowledge, but it will help us for future grants.

All members are invited to participate in the Old Colorado City History Detectives Program on May 3 from 9:30 until noon. MEMBERS ONLY will learn our OCC history, tour the museum, and find out what's in the research library.

Don't forget Territory Days. The Historical Society will once again be participating in the May 24, 25, and 26 planned activities along with the Old Colorado City merchants.

We'll have volunteers in the cabin and at the Center.

With all of these exciting events, you'll all find something that will pique your interests. And you'll have a chance to volunteer and participate with YOUR society.

Betty and Kathy

### Children's Reading Day with Colorado Children's Authors

Coming Saturday, June 14  
11 A.M. to 4 P.M.

## Treasurer's Report April 2015

This month has been a lot of paperwork. All paperwork regarding the OCCHS tax return went in the first of January and this year we will have our taxes done by our independent accounting firm by the due date in May.

Quarterly sales tax for both city and state are done in April along with our Annual Report for Exemption of Property tax.

Our first major Fund Raiser is our 2nd Annual Book Sale. This year we have added a few "treasures" to make it even more exciting. Thank you for all the books that have been donated.

April is when I get all the paper work lined up to start our "Crafters" for the summer during Farmer's Market. This year letters went out to our previous crafters and a few new ones. One crafter, who has sold for many years with us, has been recruiting new crafters to keep us full this year. She will also be helping with managing the crafters this summer. We try to provide a very affordable way for local crafters to sell their goods, and in the process this is a wonderful fund raiser for OCCHS. So always support these people in any way you can.

We had 100 more copies of Memories of a Lifetime in the Pikes Peak Region printed this month. This book, by Irving Howbert, is one the Historical Society has taken on the responsibility to assure that it stays available to the public.

We are still working on getting all the proper credits given to the photographs in Mel McFarland's updated book about the Midland, along with getting permission to publish all the photographs that are not owned by Mel or OCCHS. This is a timely process and has taken more time than I thought.

If, as a member, you ever wish to discuss the finances of OCCHS or look at our bookkeeping, please feel free to contact me and I will meet with you. This is your Historical Society and we appreciate any interest. We are happy to say our Endowment Account is growing nicely through the highly rated and insured Bonds we carry.

Thank you for all your support!

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, May 19  
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

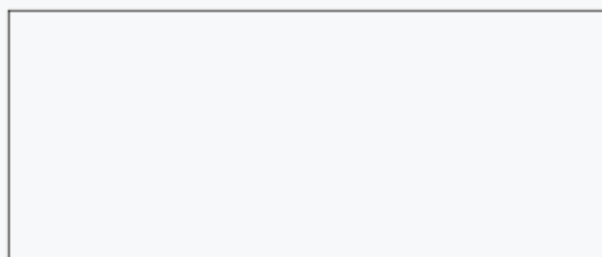
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## May Calendar

Saturday, May 3  
10:00 A.M. - Noon

Be an Old Colorado City History Detective! - Know a little of early Old Colorado City History, but not how it fits together? This program will have a "fast-paced" variety of speakers, plus tours of the museum and the research library.

OCCHS Members only - make reservations at the Bookstore

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OCCHS Members FREE. Non-members \$5.00

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CityWORKS - a photography show in the "Atrium" at Pikes Peak Regional Building Department featuring the photography of Glenn W. Murray

- A fundraiser for the Old Colorado City Historical Society

### 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.