

Volume XIII Number 3
December 2019 through March 2020
Website: www.palmerdividehistory.org
Email: plhs@palmerdividehistory.org
Museum: 719-559-0837



Palmer Lake Historical Society

Board of Directors 2019

President – Michele Lawrie-Munro
Vice President - Su Ketchmark
Secretary – Patricia Atkins
Treasurer – Jean Boddy
Museum Director - Rogers Davis

Directors-at-Large

Susan Kuehster
J. Patrick McCarthy
Barbara Morehead
Rodger Voelker

Mark your 2020 Calendars!

Thursday, January 16, 2020

6:30 PM

ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING AND POTLUCK

Program and Events Schedule: December 2019 – April 2020

November 30, 2019, 4:00 PM – Chili Supper and 7:00 PM Star Lighting*

December 15, 2019, 1:00 PM – Yule Log Hunt and Wassail Ceremony*

January 16, 2020, 6:30 PM – Annual Members Meeting and Potluck

February 20, 2020, 7:00 PM - "A Brief History of Radio and its Unknown Pioneers" – Wayne Russert

March 19, 2020, 7:00 PM - "Pikes Peak Trolleys" – John Haney

April 16, 2020, 7:00 PM – "A Treasure Trove of Local History" – Brett Lobello

*Note: Starred events are Town of Palmer Lake; there is no PLHS program in December.

Contributing to this issue:

Dan Edwards Michele Lawrie-Munro
Mike & Sigi Walker

Thanks to all who reviewed and commented!

A Newsletter of the Palmer Lake Historical Society and the *Lucretia Vaile Museum*

2020: The 200th Anniversary of the Long Expedition

Longs Peak near Longmont is a mountain in the Colorado Rockies named in honor of Major Stephen Harriman Long. One of 13 children, he was born in Hopkinton, New Hampshire on Dec. 30, 1784, and received Bachelor's and Master's degrees in engineering from Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. In 1814 he was commissioned as a second lieutenant of engineers in the U.S. Army. Long taught mathematics for two years at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point before being appointed Major in the Corps of Topographical Engineers on April 16, 1816, serving for nearly fifty years.

In July 1819, he joined General Henry W. Atkinson's "Yellowstone Expedition" bound from St. Louis to the Rocky Mountains aboard the U.S. Steamboat *Western Engineer*. Designed by Major Long, **it was the first steamboat to travel up the Missouri River into Louisiana Purchase territory. It was also the first with a stern paddle wheel.** At 75' long and belching smoke through a black figurehead resembling a serpent, it was equipped with three brass cannons. On September 17, the shallow-draft steamboat arrived at Fort Lisa, a trading fort of the Missouri Fur Company, near today's Omaha, Nebraska. The *Western Engineer*, however, was unable to navigate the vicious, snag-filled, silt-choked current of the Missouri River and bogged down at the mouth of the Platte.

By October 1819, camp was set up, and in early 1820 Major Long returned to the east coast. The following May, he returned with orders from the Secretary of War to cease work along the Missouri and instead begin exploring the Platte River and its sources. President James Monroe felt such an expedition was important since John Quincy Adams had just signed a treaty with Spain which drew a new border to the Pacific Ocean. The expedition left their quarters on June 6, 1820.

Long set out west from the Missouri River with 19 men including soldiers, artists, naturalists, a zoologist, and a physician. The men ascended the Platte River and its south fork heading to the Colorado Rocky Mountains where they discovered and named Longs Peak. On July 5, the party reached modern day Denver, and on July 12, they reached Colorado Springs.

First Europeans in the Area and Discovery of the Columbine Flower

Dr. Edwin James, very knowledgeable in geology and botany, was a surgeon, linguist, and all-around Renaissance man. He signed on to the Long Expedition after its first botanist became ill and soon after leaving died. On July 14, 1820 he led the first successful ascent of Pikes Peak with two other members of the expedition. **James is recognized as the first white man to reach the peak.** (While named after Zebulon Pike, Pike did not make it to the peak.)

Aquilegia caerulea, more commonly known as the **Colorado Blue Columbine**, **was discovered in July 1820 by Edwin James near Palmer Lake.** In his four-volume chronicles which provide a descriptive history of the expedition, he describes the flower as inhabiting "shady woods of pine and spruce within the mountains, rising sometimes to the height of three feet."

The explorers brought back specimens of plants and animals, as well as new geographic information about the Central Plains. Their report and maps clearly labeled the region as desert. When taken with similar comments from Zebulon Pike, Long's descriptions persuaded many that the Central Plains were unfit for agriculture. For a while, it was known as the "Great American Desert."

An important result of the expedition was a very accurate description of Indian customs and Indian life as they existed among the Omaha, Otoes, and Pawnees.

Following an 1823 expedition, Major Long's duties shifted to planning railroads and clearing obstructions from some of America's larger rivers. His army career ended in 1863, and he died on September 4th the next year at Alton, Illinois.

President's Message



At this most special time of the year, I want to express my gratitude to PLHS' exceptional Board, museum volunteers, and key members who have helped accomplish so much in 2019 (and made it fun doing so)!

Outside of continuing our renowned programs and events, they rose to the challenge of keeping PLHS and the Lucretia Vaile Museum vibrant, sustainable assets serving the Palmer Divide. Here are details on just a few of the many accomplishments we'll share at January's Annual Member meeting. We hope you are able to join us for great food and fellowship, as well as the election of new officers. Please let us know if you have an interest in joining this outstanding group of volunteers!

- Just in time for gift-giving, we are reprinting the flagship book that started it all *Palmer Lake: A Historical Narrative*. Thanks especially to Museum Director, Roger Davis, for the many hours enhancing this edition.
- Accolades are also due to Jack Anthony and team for getting the Palmer Lake Town Hall to join the "Star" on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties (see News Alert! below).

This is a truly extraordinary organization in a truly unique part of Colorado. We hope to see you January 16th or at one of our other 2020 Third Thursday talks listed in this newsletter. And, if you have questions or ideas to share, you can reach me at PLHSPresident@gmail.com. In the meantime, all the best to you and yours for the Holiday Season!

Michele Lawrie-Munro

NEWS ALERT!

Palmer Lake Town Hall added to Colorado Register of Historic Properties

Built at a cost of about \$1,600 around 1914 and in continuous use since that time, the Palmer Lake Town Hall celebrated its 100th "birthday" in 2014 - quite an achievement. It was added to the Register on September 20, 2019, with a ribbon cutting on November 5th.



Mike Walker photo

THEN AND NOW: Palmer Divide Photos Past and Present

This description of Palmer Lake was written in **February 1929**, by Walker S. Edwards (the father of PLHS member and author, Dan Edwards) when he was a freshman student in an English class at the University of Denver. Walker spent his first summer at the Edwards' cottage in Glen Park in 1911 and his last there in 1997.

A Colorado Village

The little mountain town which I shall describe appears to doze peacefully amid its beautiful natural surroundings, perhaps dreaming of its better days in the past. Lying at the edge of one of Colorado's large mountain valleys, almost surrounded by snow-covered peaks, it fails utterly to be worthy of such a picturesque location.

From the road on the hill north of town the traveler first gains an impression of about twenty houses in various stages of disrepair and scattered about in disorderly fashion as though dropped there by some careless hand. There are five streets, three running parallel to the highway and two crossing it, and all are merely wide expanses of mud, deserted most of the time. On the main thoroughfare stand two general stores and a dilapidated-looking filling station, while a block to the west one sees the only brick building in the village, the old station, built in a day when gold seekers flocked in on every train. The huge red water tank is really the most imposing-looking structure in the whole place, but even it has caught the sleepy air of its surroundings, and its sagging roof and sides give it the appearance of being too weary to stand straight.

To the east a tiny white schoolhouse somewhat improves the appearance of the village, although the yard around is filled with tall weeds. The uplifting influence of the school is marred, however, by two large barns across the street from it which are covered with gaudy advertisements of chewing tobacco. Except for an occasional automobile and the daily train, nothing disturbs this little town's tranquility, and even the inhabitants, occasionally seen walking leisurely to the store or post office, seem reluctant to break the silence.

Below: Palmer Lake ca 1930 from Dan Edwards' photo collection



What is the Palmer Divide?

- It is a geological ridge running from Palmer Lake eastward, separating the Denver metropolitan area from the Pikes Peak area.
- It separates the Platte River drainage to the north and the Arkansas River drainage to the south and creates its own weather patterns.

Where is the Town of Palmer Lake located?

- Bordered by the Greenland Open Space Preserve to the north,
- Pike National Forest to the west,
- Monument to the south, and
- Ben Lomond and the I-25 corridor to the east.

Upcoming PLHS Programs and Events December 2019 through April 2020

Social Hour at 6:30 PM, Presentations begin at 7:00 PM in the Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent Street

Note: The following two events are Town of Palmer Lake events and will take place in the Palmer Lake Town Hall.



Saturday, November 30, 2019 – Annual Palmer Lake Chili Supper and Star Lighting
Supper starts at 4:00 PM; Star Lighting is at 7:00 PM

Support the Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department while enjoying homemade chili, potato soup, fresh-baked cinnamon rolls, and more. Join in the many activities until it's time to light the Star!



Sunday, December 15, 2019, 1:00 PM – Annual Palmer Lake Yule Log Hunt and Ceremony

"The Winner-Finder of the log rides it back to the Town Hall along with other children. The Hider and the Finder then saw the log in half. Half will be burned in the Town Hall fireplace during the Wassail Ceremony, and the other half will be used for next year's kindling."
Rodger Voelker

Thursday, January 16, 2020, 6:30 PM

SPECIAL EVENT

Annual Members Meeting and Potluck



Don't miss this event! Bring a vegetable, salad, or dessert to share - the PLHS will provide the baked ham, coffee, and tea. We begin the evening's activities with an overview of the Society's activities followed by a short business meeting and election of 2020 officers. Attendees will be encouraged to renew their 2020 PLHS memberships - or to join if they're not PLHS members.

The annual PLHS "history" calendar, supported by the 2020 calendar advertisers, will be available. Renowned local artist Joe Bohler has again donated his artwork for the calendar's cover. The PLHS is most appreciative of all of these contributions.

Thursday, February 20, 2020 – "A Brief History of Radio and its Unknown Pioneers"

Presenter: Wayne Russert



In the 1920s, a high-end parlor radio cost more than a brand-new Model T Ford. Learn the reasons why people went to such lengths to purchase or build a radio only able to receive a few stations. Learn who the early radio pioneers were; some well-known, a few unknown. Radios from early on to the plastic era, magazines, postcards, advertising, and other radio ephemera will be on display.

Wayne Russert was raised on a Minnesota dairy farm and went on to study electrical engineering in Minnesota. He has worked at the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Honeywell, D&RG RR, and Lockheed Martin. He is a Civil Air Patrol pilot and, in his own words, "a collector of everything."

Thursday, March 19, 2020 – "Pikes Peak Trolleys"

Presenter: John A. Haney



The Colorado Springs area was blessed to have one of the best streetcar systems anywhere. This was largely due to Winfield Scott Stratton, who became the owner of the Colorado Springs Rapid Transit Company. This presentation will include the history of Colorado Springs streetcar service pre- and post-Stratton, the effect on residents' lives, what became of it, and what the current street railway plans are.

John Haney is a Colorado Springs native, a graduate of Colorado College with an MA in Urban Planning from the University of Arizona. He has co-authored three books on streetcar histories and is a co-founder of the Pikes Peak Trolley Museum and Restoration Shop.

Thursday, April 16, 2020 – "A Treasure Trove of Local History"

Presenter: Brett Lobello



This presentation will include a brief overview of the scope of historic material held by the Pikes Peak Library District. Brett will provide both general information about Special Collections as well as highlight stories and material from specific collections. These collections will illustrate the breadth and possibilities of this regional history treasure trove.

Brett Lobello is originally from the Midwest and became Director of Regional History and Genealogy at the Pikes Peak Library District in September 2018. Previously, he held positions in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Kenosha, Wisconsin, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Beloit, Wisconsin.

PALMER LAKE AND MONUMENT "FIRSTS"



- **Discovery of the Colorado Blue Columbine** flower by Dr. Edwin James while in the Palmer Lake area in July of 1820 Columbine, state flower of Colorado
- From the 11-17-2013 "Back Pages" of Colorado Springs *Gazette*: "In 1913 [11-17]: Palmer Lake enjoys the distinction of having the **first postmaster in Colorado** to be appointed under civil service regulation for postmasters of the fourth class. Robert Bruce Willis of that town was appointed to the position Saturday. He will assume his duties at once."
- From the Oct. 13, 1938, Leadville *The Herald Defender*: "Monument, Colo. Is First Town to Finish Project Under WPA. To Monument, Colo., small Rocky mountain town five miles south of Palmer Lake, goes the honor of having **the first [WPA] completed project in the nation** under the vast new program of the public works administration. The application for school repairs was one of the smallest filed under PWA's new program. It called for a grant of \$585 for re-roofing a gymnasium and the purchase of additional equipment, the total cost of which was \$1,300. The PWA allotment for the Monument project was announced August 18, and the project was completed September 12." The project was financed under the 1938 PWA appropriation. (Citation provided by PLHS author Dan Edwards)
- Palmer Lake **first community west of the Mississippi to host a Chautauqua** in 1887
- Palmer Lake, at 7,250 feet, is said to be **the highest spring-fed lake in the continental U.S.**
- David McShane is the **first postmaster in Monument** in 1869 D&RG Depot 1882
- **First Monument hotel**, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ford, built on Front Street in 1870
- **First D&RG train arrives in Palmer Lake** in 1871; **service begins** January 1, 1872
- Caroline Limbach's baby is purported to be the first white baby seen by area Native Americans – approx. 1874
- Henry Limbach **first mayor of Monument** in 1880 and second postmaster from March 1871 to December 1880
- Dr. William F. Thompson elected **first mayor of the newly incorporated town of Palmer Lake** in 1889
- **First icehouse in Monument** built in 1901, operations continued until 1947
- **First auto garage in Monument** opened in 1914
- Edna Bennett is the **first teacher at Pine Grove** in 1915
- **First fire engine acquired by Palmer Lake** in 1921; Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department formed in March 1937
- **Palmer Lake Star - largest of its kind in the U.S.** – completed in mid-December of 1935



The Palmer Lake/Monument area has a remarkable history, including events associated with the "Wild West" — raids, scalplings, and saloon shootings. Law enforcement apprehended and even executed murderers here. The "McShane Fort" (located just off Highway 105) was one of several area forts offering refuge to settlers or travelers until trouble passed. The area was also home to five prospective gold mines, although gold was never found.

Ice was harvested from Palmer Lake and Monument Lake, from which it continued as late as 1947. Historic industries in the area included fox farms, sawmills, angora rabbit farming, and dry-land grain and potato farming. In 1894 over 20,000 acres were under cultivation. A potato blight infected the soil in 1895, and potato farming eventually stopped. At that time, Monument was famous for its annual fall "Potato Bake," a free feast held just across the train tracks from Front and Second Streets.

Lucretia Vaile Museum Hours:

Saturday 10 AM–2 PM all year
 Wednesday 1–3 PM September–May
 Wednesday 1–4 PM June–August
 1st Thursday of month: 10 AM–noon
 Tours: Call 559-0837 and leave message

Do you have any other "firsts" to add? We'd really like to know about them!

Sources: Vaile Museum, Dan Edwards, Colorado Springs Gazette, various internet searches

 Like us on Facebook

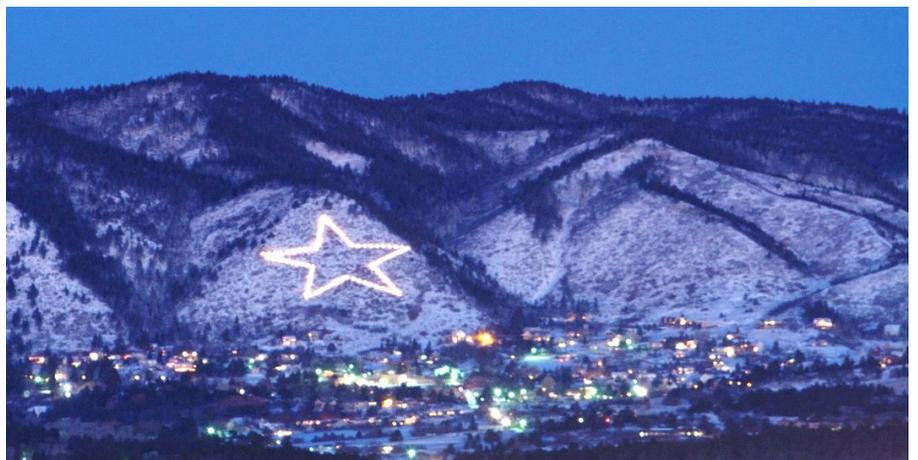
Visit the PLHS website by scanning our QR code with your smart phone.



Palmer Lake Historical Society
 publishes this newsletter at
 PO Box 662
 66 Lower Glenway
 Palmer Lake CO 80133-0662

Layout and Editing: Sigi Walker

Note: All submissions may be edited for content, grammar, and space allocations, and become the property of the Palmer Lake Historical Society unless other arrangements have been made. Digital word submissions in .doc or .docx, photos in .jpg format, please. Submit pieces and photos to Editor at mikensigi@comcast.net



**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
 to our PLHS Members and Friends**