



P. L. Historical Society

Serving The Palmer Divide Area Since 1956



In case you wanted to know:

- **Museum hours:** 10-2 PM Sat. and 1-4 PM Wed., June to Aug.
- PLHS President: Phyllis Bonser
- Vice-President: Al Walter
- Secretary: Maggie Williamson
- Treasurer: Victor Vaile
- Museum Director: Roger Davis
- Board Members at Large: Georgia Follansbee, Pat McCarthy, Judy Harrington, Rhetta Walter
- Editor: Dee Kirby
- Managing Editor: Cris Bonser
- Mountain Lion: "Old Disappearance"

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Warden Roy Best of Canon City

By: Dee Kirby

Roy Best, warden of the Colorado State Prison in Canon City, from 1932 to 1952-54, was called "Cowboy Warden," "Iron Boss," or "Prison Czar." He believed that prisoners were human beings and, if men acted respectfully and responsibly, they should be treated well.

Best was appointed by Governor Adams as "special deputy warden" of the penitentiary following a deadly prison riot in 1929. Convicts seized control of the prison and held twelve guards hostage. At the end of the siege, three cell-houses, the library and the chapel were in ruins. Six guards and six inmates died. The Governor charged Best to improve employee morale, prisoner discipline and upgrade the physical plant. Best elevated the morale of employees and gained control of the prisoners. They enjoyed a clean environment, single-cell occupancy and participated in a nationally respected just trust system. They worked outside the penitentiary walls in manufacturing and prison-farm-programs. Best eliminated the ball and chain but kept the rock pile. New arrivals, called the "fish" worked the rock pile for two weeks before assigned to permanent jobs.

Best patrolled the grounds of his "hotel" with two Doberman Pincers. An errant prisoner was tied to the saw horse, dubbed the "old gray mare." While all prisoners watched, Best flogged the convict with a wet leather strap. In 1950, Best was charged by the state grand jury in Canon City on five counts of embezzling state property that he supposedly used on his ranch. The town rallied behind Best by posting a \$10,000 bond on his behalf. He was acquitted. Two years later, a Denver grand jury indicted Best, his

former deputy warden, two guard captains, one lieutenant and four guards for brutal physical punishment and violation of prisoners' rights. The men were acquitted though Best admitted, "I laid the leather on all convicts flogged at the penitentiary, striking them with a flat strap just as hard as I could hit 'em." Best received a two year suspension for combining personal affairs with those of the prison. Before his reinstatement as warden, he died of a heart attack on May 27, 1954.



What's New at the Museum?

By: Roger Davis

The Honors History class at the Lewis-Palmer High School has prepared a series of projects for the Vaile Museum to include a full display/exhibit, an audio self-guided tour of the Museum and much more. The exhibit was opened on May 14, 2011. The class is guided and taught by Ms. Tana Lucido.

The Vaile Museum is a "hidden" gem and the repository of the collected history of the Palmer Divide area. We need to expand our volunteer base to provide services to the community. If you love history and have 4-6 hours a month to give, we would like to hear from you. Being a Docent/guide at the Museum is rewarding, easy and provides you an opportunity to

enjoy and learn more about the Palmer Divide Area. Many individual interests/skills are available to you as well.

Your fellow Docents are a genial group and we would very much like you to join us. Contact us by email at : plhs@palmerdividehistory.org or leave a message at 719-559-0837.

The challenge of history is to recover the past and introduce it to the present.

~David Thelen



A Message from the President

The Board of an organization guides the organization and fills in wherever and whenever they are needed. I would like to acknowledge and thank our members who have left the Board this year: Kim Braun, Hans Post Uiterweer, and Jim Sawatzki. They have all contributed of their talents in many ways as Board members. We will miss them, but know they continue to be there when and if we need them. We welcome our new members, Georgia Follansbee, Rhett Walter, and Maggie Williamson. They add new energy and new ideas to the Board. Thank you all.

Some of our membership recently had an opportunity to go on a field trip to a ranch in southern Douglas County which is being restored. Our guides were none other than Jerry Woldarek and Johnny Mulligan, restoration specialists for Douglas County. (Read more about them on page four). We plan more such field trips in Douglas County which has done a very aggressive job of preserving history for future generations, as well as in our own county. Jack Anthony led another field trip searching out the Schubarth Homestead on the Air Force Academy. Jack will be

our guest speaker in November. We walked around Cathedral Rock and read the names of early settlers scratched into the rock as long ago as the 1870s. Darren Schubarth, a member of our Society, found his great **grandfather's name on the Rock!** Perhaps we will be hired as History Detectives!

Please plan to join us on our field trips, our monthly meetings and our special events.

Phyllis V. Bonser

VOLUNTEERS: THANK YOU
ALL FOR HELPING IN OUR
VARIOUS PROJECTS!

PLHS Upcoming Events and Programs

Saturday, July 16: Join us lakeside in Centennial Park in Palmer Lake for a Native American Traditional Powwow. Enjoy Native history and culture during a day of Native dances, drums, songs, artists, and food beginning at 10:00AM and ending at 5:00PM. Grand Entry is at 11:00AM. Admission is free. Bring your own lawn chairs/blankets.

Thursday, July 21: Join us at Palmer Lake Town Hall at 7:00PM as Robert Keiss discusses "The Last of the Best - the Mule Pack at Fort Carson." Learn about the history

and contributions of the mules of Battery A, 4th Field Artillery (Pack). Admission is free. Refreshments will be served.

Friday- Sunday, August 5-7:

Join us as we turn the town of Palmer Lake back over 100 years as we celebrate the 2011 Return of the Rocky Mountain Chautauqua. Relive history during this three-day event, which includes portrayals of famous historical Colorado figures, an old-fashioned square dance, demonstrations of "how tos" such as chair caning and bee keeping,

an 1860s vintage baseball game, an old-fashioned church service, an 1890s cavalry encampment, a Native American teaching lodge, oxen and alpacas, and much more. All activities are free.

Thursday, August 18: Join us at Palmer Lake Town Hall at 7:00PM as Doris Baker guides us through Colorado's house museums in her presentation titled "The Walls Talk: Historic House Museums of Colorado." Admission is free. Refreshments will be served

Mark your calendars so you won't miss these upcoming programs and events.

“Communities of the Palmer Divide” A Pictorial History

By: Al Walter

In March 2011, the Palmer Lake Historical Society introduced its new book, “Communities of the Palmer Divide”. The book provides a pictorial history of the Divide from the time of early explorations in 1820 to the 1930s and chronicles the beginnings, struggles, successes, and failures of many of the communities and settlers that were part of the growth of this area. It is a journey through the past that will give every reader a renewed appreciation for the spirit and perseverance of those

who shaped the communities of the Palmer Divide.

In the fall of 2009, the Historical Society signed an agreement with Arcadia Publishing Company to provide the contents for a book, both pictures and text, on the history of the area served by the **Society**. The publisher’s requirements included constraints that limited the numbers of pages and photographs that could be included in the book, as well as the number of words we could use in the captions to describe each

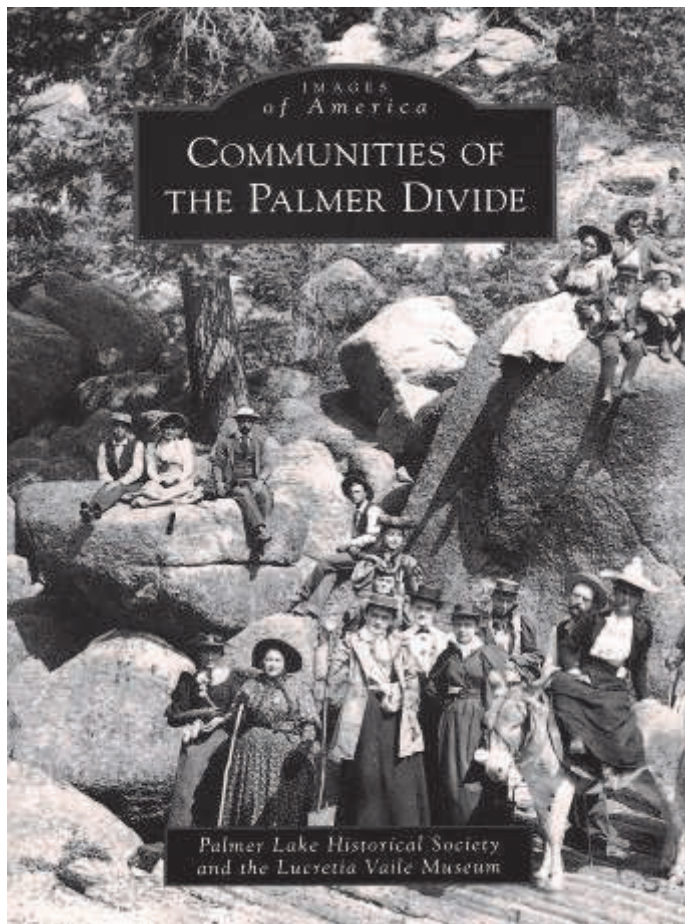
photograph. That presented a daunting challenge for us – what was the story we wanted to tell and which pictures should we use to tell the story? We started by gathering and reviewing every photograph of the area contained in the archives of the Lucretia Vaile Museum. Volunteers sorted through hundreds of photographs, books, journals, ledgers, and documents on the area to identify the highest quality and most representative pictures and photographs, while others gathered information for captions. Volunteers also interviewed long-time residents who graciously provided recollections of past events and photographs from their personal collections for use in the book.

We wanted our book to be more than a collection of photographs. We wanted it to tell a story. The most difficult tasks were to choose a title, identify a theme, and designate the major chapters. After reviewing the photographs and written history of the area, we noticed a basic theme of community spirit that carried throughout the birth, growth, and sometimes the failure of the settlements in the area. It was evident in the activities, events, and traditions that existed throughout the history of the Palmer Divide.

Through the years, the residents came together as a community to provide security from marauding Indians; to celebrate harvests, such as the annual potato harvest; to help each other during times of trouble, such as during train accidents and blizzards; and to establish and carry on traditions, such as the annual Yule Log Festival and the lighting of the Palmer Lake Star.

In honor of this spirit of community, we chose to title our book, “Communities of the Palmer Divide.” Although we could not include every photograph, settlement, family, and bit of history in our book, we attempted to provide the representative highlights of the beginnings, growth, successes and failures of the people and communities, as a way of honoring the memory of those that came before and created the community that we call home – the Palmer Divide. We are proud and privileged to tell their story.

This book is a must for those who have an interest in the people and events that shaped the communities of the Palmer Divide. Books are available at the Lucretia Vaile Museum, Historical Society events, Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce, the Rock House, and selected retailers in the area.



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Address Label

“History Should Be More Than a Memory.” (rmd)

Visit Us At: <http://www.PalmerDivideHistory.org>

Historical Restoration in Douglas County

Article paraphrased from Bernard L. Minetti's article in Our Community News.

At the March PLHS meeting, Jerry Woldarek and Johnny Mulligan, qualified as historical restoration specialists, discussed their project on Prairie Canyon Ranch which is one of the last operating ranches in the Cherry Valley area of Douglas County.

Woldarek's and Mulligan's primary interest is restoring the main barn on the ranch. Their project is precise for they must use the same type of lumber and nails from which the original structure was constructed. They said that no direct funds support the restoration effort, but they have been able to scrape together some

funds from various governmental agencies to continue with the project. The property was originally home-



steaded by Frederick Batruff and his family in 1873. It has been used as a working cattle ranch since that time. The collection of buildings illustrates significant advances in agricultural

and architectural technology from the 1870s to the 1930s. The landscape consists of rolling grasslands, mixed pine and Gambel oak forests, rocky outcrops, narrow canyons, riparian areas and lush hay meadows. The ranch has a diverse wildlife habitat such as hawks, pronghorn antelope, coyotes, deer, elk and great blue herons. Douglas County manages the property as a working cattle ranch. Access to the property is for organized groups including educational tours for school groups and horse rides.

Public access is by appointment. Contact Johnny Mulligan at 720-413-9970 for group tours and horse rides.