



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: Al Walter
- Vice-President: John Snyder
- Secretary: Maggie Williamson
- Treasurer: Barbara Arbuthnot
- Museum Director: Roger Davis
- Board Members at Large:
 - Georgia Follansbee
 - Pat McCarthy
 - Jack Anthony
 - Gary Coleman
- Editor: Dee Kirby
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- Mtn. Lion: "Old Disappearance"

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Helen Dowe: The Firewatcher

By Dee Kirby

Helen Dowe lived on the cutting edge of adventure for a woman of her time. Born Nov. 19, 1889, Dowe graduated from **Denver's West Side High School**. Her passion for camping and her love of horses led her to Palmer Lake where she became a riding instructor for several summers. In 1917, she joined the Rocky Mountain News as an editorial artist. In 1920, she made history when the U.S. Forest Service hired **her as the nation's first woman fire watcher.**

Dowe was assigned to oversee **the Devil's Head Lookout Tower** on the 9,748 foot summit of **Devil's Head Peak, about 20 miles north of Woodland Park** in the Pike National Forest. In 1991, the fire lookout was added to the National Register of Historic places.

Six to eight times a day, Dowe negotiated the steep, granite face by climbing 130 ladder steps, a series of 30-foot poles with lateral slats nailed every 10 inches. From the 10-foot-square, glass-enclosed observatory, Dowe could see the Spanish Peaks near Walsenburg, CO.; Kan., to the east, Wyoming to the north and the Continental Divide to the west. Dowe used field glasses to scan the horizon for signs of a smoke plume and used an Osborne Fire finder to pinpoint its location. In 1919, she discovered 16 fires. The next sum-

mer she spotted seven fires before June 26

Dowe was joined by Nina St. John of Ottawa, Kan., who was appointed assistant fire **watcher at Devil's head.** The women shared a 12-by-16 foot rustic log cabin 200 feet below the observatory. Drinking water came from a natural cistern on the summit or was hauled in bags from a quarter of a mile down the mountainside. They cut firewood to feed the cooking stove. Days began before sunrise and ended long after dark. The women slept outside

the cabin, rain or shine and enjoyed a phonograph that played a variety of music. **Dowe's daily wear was a red smock, riding breeches and a pair of heavy mountain boots.**

Dowe left Devil's Head Lookout in the summer of 1921 when she married John Burgess, a forest service surveyor, who later became a Denver Water Department engineer. She continued with the forest service as topographer and later as a draftsman for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.



What's New at the Museum

By: Roger Davis

In addition to upgrading several of our displays, we have added two new exhibits. The first being Ladies Fashion from the late 1800's to the Disco era of the 1980's. As Ralph Lauren said, "I don't design clothing, I design dreams." The second exhibit concerns the Depression era which lasted from 1929 until

1941 or thereabouts. You may view local photographs taken in Monument and Palmer Lake and a power point display of photographs from around the country showing life as it was in this important historical period.

We invite you to contact us if you would consider assuming the rewarding work of being the Vaile Museum Cura-

tor. This volunteer position is arguably the most important work to be done concerning the Museum. Your fellow Museum volunteers 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 559-0837.

History can only be well written only in a free country.

VOLTAIRE



A Message from the President

The Board of Directors and the Museum Director continue to identify programs, events, and activities that further our mission of historical preservation, protection, and education. We are also reviewing and modifying, where needed, our financial reporting system, the security of our museum, and the organization and preservation of Historical Society records.

In addition to our monthly programs, we have sponsored other events that have provided a glimpse into the past. In April, members of the Lewis Palmer History Honors Class read original letters from the Civil War battle of New Or-

leans that were written by a relative of Sally Green, a member of the Historical Society. These letters provided a firsthand glimpse of the daily life, fears, and thoughts of a young man serving on a ship during the Civil War.

In May, we held a fundraiser featuring the award-winning Native American music group Brule'. This demonstration of Native history and culture featured local Native dancers. In July, we sponsored our third annual Native American festival and powwow, which gave local residents the opportunity to learn about Native customs, purchase Native art and jewelry, and enjoy Native food.

In early August, we sponsored the fifth annual Return of the Rocky Mountain Chautauqua, which allowed residents to experience events similar to those experienced in Palmer Lake over 100 years ago. Finally, we are working with the Colorado Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation to have the Palmer Lake Star placed on the Colorado List of Historic Places. We will keep you updated on our progress.

Al Walter

PLHS Upcoming Events

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

PLHS upcoming events held at the Palmer Lake Town Hall on the 3rd Thursday of each month. All are welcomed free of charge. Doors open at 6:30 PM. The program begins at 7:00 PM. Refreshments are served.

September 13. **"Special Program."** Dan Edwards will present photos of Palmer Lake from the 1940s to 1975 and the early days of the Palmer Lake VFD. Event to

benefit the Volunteer Fire Department

September 20: **"Ponderosa Giants - How Old Is That Tree?"** Efforts to identify and determine the age and history of local area "giant" pines.

October 18: **"Railroads of the Pikes Peak Region."** A look at the different railroads that served this area - from Palmer Lake to Kelker.

November 15 **"Pioneer Weapons."** A display and discussion of weapons used by early inhabitants and settlers for hunting and protection.

No Meeting:
Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

November: Historical Personalities of the Academy Area

Text paraphrased from Bernard Minetti's article in Our Community News

Retired Air Force Col. Jack Anthony, past assistant professor of astronautics at the Academy, discussed the towns of Husted and Edgerton, which existed before the Academy was built. Some residents who lived on or near the site during the 1860s to the 1880s were William Burgess, who lived in a cabin, and his neighbors the Wilson, Blodgett, Lennox, Capps, Spurlock and Flegell families. The Burgess cabin was

dedicated by the Academy in 1960 and is preserved as a historical site on the Academy grounds.

Anthony noted that Cathedral Rock was a **"sign in" site for early settlers who passed** by the towering natural rock monument.

Their "signatures" can be viewed today.

The Lehman Ranch is now the soccer field on the Academy. The communities of East and West Husted were located just south **of the Academy's north entry gate.** The Husted operations of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad were located about one

mile south of the Academy's north entry gate.

One of the historic events that brought the era into perspective as the head-on railroad collision that occurred on Aug. 14, 1909, just north of the Husted station. Two passenger trains collided and eight of the 400 passengers were killed.

A book, *Pine Valley: A Window to the Early History of Colorado Springs and the U.S. Air Force Academy* details the residents of the Pine Valley section of the Academy.

February: Frank Lewis-Dale Jones Gang

Text paraphrased from Bernard Minetti's article in Our Community News

Retired Colorado Springs police officer, Dwight Haverkorn talked about the Frank Lewis-Dale Jones gang. On Friday, Sept. 13, Joseph F. Miller, Indiana regional superintendent of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, was searching for a gang of bank robbers who had moved from Kansas City to Denver. He located the gang at a house in Denver. Miller saw the gang members leave the house and drive off in a Buick touring car.

As they drove through Morrison, other gang members, driving a Marmon, joined them. Outside of Castle Rock, the Buick developed a flat. It was then that Lewis, the gang leader, spotted Miller. Dale Jones

and other gang members fled the Buick, hopped into the Marmon and sped south. The Buick returned to Denver with Miller in pursuit. There, Miller notified the Denver police before speeding south, again in pursuit of the rest of the gang.

In the vicinity of Colorado and Nevada Avenues, local police officers recognized the gang from fliers sent by the Kansas City police. A gun fight ensued but the gang made its get-a-way. Lewis was eventually captured and returned to Kansas authorities. As for Jones and his wife, Margie, one day two deputies spotted them at a filling station. A gun battle ensued. The couple was shot to death in California where **Jones' crime spree had begun.**

Haverkorn noted that information is still surfacing regarding this gang.



April: Trails to Interstate: Transportation Systems Across the Palmer Divide

Text paraphrased from Bernard Minetti's article in Our Community News

Lee Whiteley presented an overview of the Pikes Peak regional transportation systems and their origins and evolution.

The Palmer Divide, known as the Arkansas-Platte Divide, created challenges and demanded high levels of local expertise to overcome the pitfalls of transporting people and goods through the area. This transportation corridor is bordered on the west by the Rocky Mountain ranges and on the east by plains of what once was Kansas Territory.

Whitely said that early 1800 explorers came west on the Smoky Hill Trail from which they could observe Pikes Peak, named after Zebulon Pike, who first saw the peak in 1806, and James Peak, a



botanist with the Stephen Long expedition in 1820. I-70 generally follows some of the same route as the Smoky Hill Trail.

Around 1830 "Trapper's Trail" began in Pueblo's Arkansas River and meandered to the forts north of Denver, eventually terminating in Fort Laramie. A major commerce and transportation system of the region, it became the general foundation of the present day I-25.

Whitely and his wife are associate producers of the PBS documentary, *The National Park-to-Park Highway*.

Palmer Lake Historical Society
PO Box 662
66 Lower Glenway
Palmer Lake, CO
80133-0662

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Address Label

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

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

The Palmer Lake Weather Station, 1889-1891

By: Dan Edwards

Among the millions of documents preserved at the U.S. National Archives are monthly weather reports prepared at Palmer Lake beginning in April 1889. The Chief Signal Officer of the U.S. Army in Washington, DC collected this information.

The Palmer Lake reports were signed by Dr. Thomas Gaddes, a British dentist, who was director of the Palmer Lake Sanitarium at The Rocklands Hotel. Gaddes and Finley Thompson believed the invigorating climate of Palmer Lake was conducive to treating asthma and **“consumption” (tuberculosis)**. By gathering data on the weather at Palmer Lake, they could prove their case.

The weather station at The Rockland

Hotel contained a dry and wet thermometer, barometer, anemometer, rain and snow gauge. These instruments allowed Gaddes to record temperatures, dew points, precipitation, direction and force of the wind, relative humidity, cloud conditions, snowfall, as well as dates of frosts, thunderstorms, and hail.

Gaddes wrote that on May 25, 1889, **“...a tornado travelled in a N.N.W. direction and carried away trees & houses. The wheel of a windmill was torn off & afterwards found one mile away.”** [Sound like 1965?] That month 3.8 inches of snow fell; it hailed 5 days; and there were 139.5 hours of sunshine.

Dr. Gaddes’ last report covered March 1891. Dr. Thompson had left Palmer Lake the previous August and the

Sanitarium had failed. Gaddes became dean at the University of Denver’s **Dental School before returning** to England in 1892. Meanwhile, **anyone who believes that Palmer Lake’s** wonderful climate has changed over the years needs only to make detailed weather observations and compare them with those Dr. Gaddes recorded 122 years ago!