

Volume 16 Number 1

April 2022 through July 2022

Website: [www.palmerdividehistory.org](http://www.palmerdividehistory.org)

Email: [plhs@palmerdividehistory.org](mailto:plhs@palmerdividehistory.org)

Museum: 719-559-0837



## Palmer Lake Historical Society

### 2022 Board of Directors

President – Jim Sawatzki

Vice President – Doris Baker

Secretary – Patricia Atkins

Treasurer – Doug Lang

Museum Director - Rogers Davis

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Susan Kuehster

Barbara Morehead

Wayne Russert

Don Rutherford

Su Ketchmark – Social Media

Peter Blaney – Audio-Visual

## April–August 2022 Program/Event Schedule

Thursday, April 21, 2022, 7:00 PM

"The Bad Old Days of Colorado" – Randi Samuelson-Brown

Thursday, May 19, 2022, 7:00 PM

"Helen Hunt Jackson: The Colorado Years"  
– Doris McGraw

Sunday, June 19, 2022, 2:00-4:00 PM  
**FATHERS' DAY ICE CREAM SOCIAL**

Palmer Lake Village Green

Free pie and ice cream, music, and private vintage car show. Bring a chair or blanket.

Thursday, July 21, 2022\*

Guided Walking Tours of Palmer Lake

Sunday, August 7, 2022, 2:00-7:00 PM\*

Return of the Rocky Mountain Chautauqua

\*For details on these events, please visit

<https://palmerdividehistory.org> or

Facebook @PalmerLakeHistory

*Palmer Lake Historical Society –  
Making History more than a Memory!*

### Contributing to this issue:

Gary & Patricia Atkins Doris Baker

Jim Sawatzki Mike & Sigi Walker

Thanks to all who reviewed and commented!

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

## A Look at "Our Lake" – Palmer Lake

*It's had several names, it's been virtually bone dry,  
but now it's a "gem" attracting local and area visitors*

Native Americans tribes, including the Utes, Arapahos, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Comanche, had established a travel route along the base of the Rocky Mountains long before the arrival of Europeans. The route included a natural spring-fed lake, incidentally the highest natural spring fed lake in the continental United States, providing a clean water supply available on a year-round basis, while the grassland around it served as a temporary camp site.

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the lake was a convenient stop for traders and fur trappers traveling through the area, often following trails forged by Native Americans.

The Long Expedition was organized to survey the Platte River's path and, to the south, the Arkansas River along with its tributaries. The lake was surely a welcome respite when they arrived on July 11<sup>th</sup> of 1820. It was during their travels along the foothills of the Front Range that Dr. Edwin James discovered the Colorado Blue Columbine, now our state flower, near present day Palmer Lake.

Fifteen years later, in July of 1835, Col. Henry Dodge led three companies of Dragoons along a route which included present day Palmer Lake. A map that accompanied the Dodge report of the journey shows a body of water with a stream called "Crystal Creek" flowing out of the lake to the north while a second stream called "Fontaine qui Bouille" (Boiling Fountain) is shown flowing southward. While no open streams are known to have flowed out of the lake, seepages can be traced in the soil north and south of the lake. In one account, the lake is described as "perfectly clear and full of fish."

To the southeast of Palmer Lake, Monument Creek flows into Fountain Creek, which is a major tributary of the Arkansas River.

The Fremont Expedition was the next to reach the Palmer Divide area, passing near the lake and the future town of Palmer Lake in 1843. After that, there is no historic record of significant activity in the area until the 1860s.

Not surprisingly, with the discovery of gold in the mountains west of Denver in 1858-1859, people began flocking to the Front Range by the thousands. (While it was called the Pikes Peak Gold Rush, gold mining on Pikes Peak did not begin until the 1890s with Winfield Scott Stratton's Cripple Creek strike.)

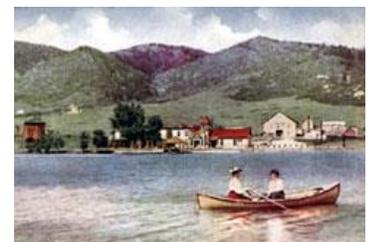
The first settlement began with a grist mill and barn, built near the north end of the lake in 1869 and later followed by a cabin and other ranch buildings which would become the Ben Lomond Ranch. These plus a few railroad shanties constituted the entire settlement in 1871. The town did not really begin until the railroad arrived.

In 1871, Gen. Wm. J. Palmer, founder of Colorado Springs, began building his Denver & Rio Grande Railroad from Denver down through the Palmer Divide to Colorado Springs. The first D&RG train reached Palmer Lake that fall. The lake was the primary source of water for the railroad, a necessary stop for the narrow gauge steam engines which had to take on water after climbing the Palmer Divide.

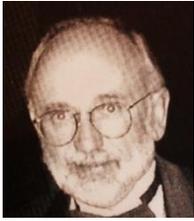
The Town of Palmer Lake was founded by dental surgeon William Finley Thompson in 1882, although Gen. Palmer is often credited with that distinction.

Prior names for the lake included Summit Lake, a name given by the Dodge Expedition, Divide Lake, Loch Lomond, and Lake Palmer before the name officially became Palmer Lake.

The lake has never been the Town of Palmer Lake's source of municipal water. That source consists of two wells and the town's upper and lower reservoirs. The lake is purely for recreational use: fishing, kayaking, and paddleboarding in summer and ice skating and ice hockey in winter.



**President’s Message**



Hello, everyone. I’m Jim Sawatzki, your new president. Some of you may know me as a documentary film producer who has captured the stories of our Pikes Peak Region. Now it’s my privilege to guide our society through the next couple of years, continuing to focus on our unique Palmer Divide Region. Consequently, that is the mission of this society - to preserve and interpret this region’s historical past.

After these difficult times, we are getting back to our normal pursuits, including: our monthly programs and reproducing our highly popular historical calendar for 2023, thanks to our returning sponsors. So, please continue to further our cause by participating in our events and programs as we return to our newly refurbished Palmer Lake Town Hall and our Lucretia Vaile Museum, which proudly serves as the main repository for Tri Lakes history.

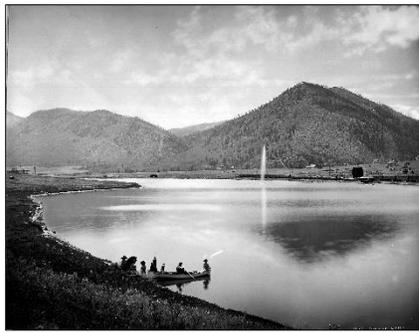
Volunteers always needed!

Jim Sawatzki, PLHS President

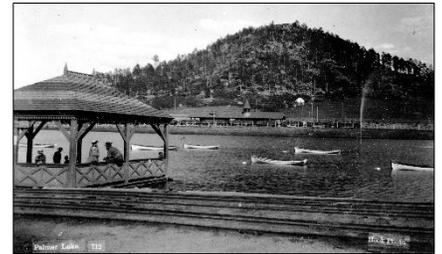
Great News! The PPLD Palmer Lake Library re-opened on March 3<sup>rd</sup> following the completion of the new handicapped access ramp. The Vaile Museum will re-open following completion of interior cleaning, check-out of the security system, and updated docent schedules.



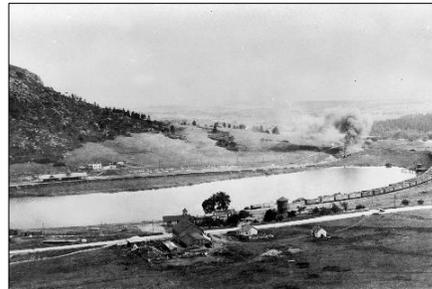
Patricia Atkins photo



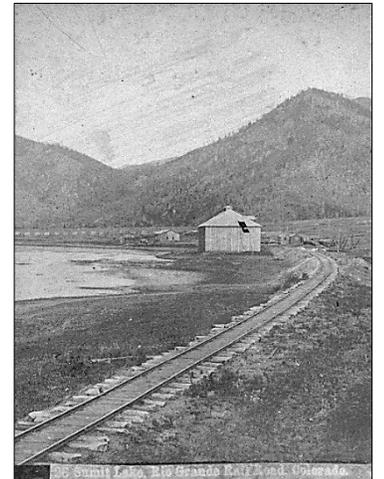
Left: Famous Jackson print ca 1889 looking from west to east across the lake



Above right: Boathouse on west side of lake, looking east across to Santa Fe depot



Above: D&RG RR depot on west side of lake and Santa Fe buildings on east side with steam locomotive approaching from the south



Right: Summit Lake and Icehouse, ca 1873, with D&RG tracks running along the west side of the lake

**Palmer Lake’s Lake – Then and Now**



Trains still operate through Palmer Lake on former D&RG RR right-of-way. Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Union Pacific (UP) trains are familiar sights on the “Joint Line,” the track shared by these railroads. Many a railfan is drawn to watch BNSF and UP activity up close and personal.



A warm, sunny summer day will find many visitors of all ages from Palmer Lake and nearby areas fishing, kayaking, or paddle boarding on the lake as well as enjoying the park area and surrounding trails.

Gary Atkins photo

Lewis Palmer HS boys’ varsity hockey team playing Cheyenne Mountain HS in an exhibition match played on a frozen Palmer Lake – a first for a high school competition – on January 4, 2022

Photo right: Our Community News



## Upcoming PLHS Programs and Events April 2022 through August 2022

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

### Thursday, April 21, 2022 – "The Bad Old Days of Colorado"

**Presenter: Randi Samuelson-Brown**



The road to Colorado was long and arduous, and it was no picnic when settlers and adventurers got here! Join us for an evening filled with dangerous trails, bad whiskey recipes, and tales of a territory where young men outnumbered women 34-to-1.

Randi Samuelson-Brown was born in Denver and grew up in Golden. She writes historical fiction and has always enjoyed uncovering strange and obscure historical facts and details. *The Bad Old Days of Colorado: Untold Stories of the Wild West* is her first non-fiction book.

### Thursday, May 19, 2022 – "Helen (Hunt) Jackson: The Colorado Years"

**Presenter: Doris McCraw**



In 1873 Helen Hunt arrived in Colorado Springs. Many of her well-known works were written during her time here. What may have been the reason this occurred? What happened during those years? What part of her early life may have contributed to her growth as a writer? Well-known during her lifetime, this program aims to answer some of these questions.

Doris McCraw is an author, speaker, and historian specializing in Colorado and Women's History; she has presented at three Pikes Peak Library District History Symposia. She "grew up on history" in west central Illinois and since moving to Colorado has traveled the state "soaking up its history."

### Sunday, June 19, 2022, 2:00 – 4:00 PM

#### SPECIAL EVENT

#### Annual Father's Day Ice Cream Social



We continue a decades-old tradition. The Palmer Lake Historical Society, with donations from the Rock House Ice Cream Shop and the Village Inn restaurant, invites Dads and their families from the local area to join us in this annual event. Free pie and ice cream. Live music, and especially for Dad, a private vintage car show: Model T's, Model A's, Corvairs, and more. Bring a lawn chair or blanket and relax on the green.



### Thursday, July 21, 2022

#### SPECIAL EVENT

#### Guided Walking Tours of Palmer Lake



Local history experts invite you to join in an informative walking tour of the town. The event starts at the Village Green and includes the Palmer Lake Town Hall, a stop at Estemere, several historical buildings in the town, and ends at the Rock House Ice Cream Shop. Tours will last approximately 45 minutes and tour groups are limited to 12 participants. Additional details will be posted on the PLHS website, [www.palmerdividehistory.org](http://www.palmerdividehistory.org).



### Sunday, August 7, 2022, 2:00 – 7:00 PM

#### SPECIAL EVENT

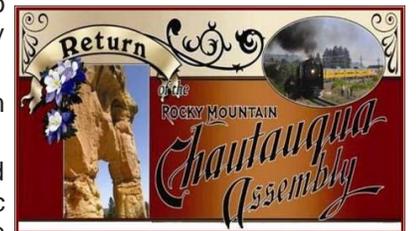
#### "Return of the Rocky Mountain Chautauqua"

Join us for an afternoon on the Village Green celebrating our historic Chautauqua with museum tours, entertainments, working artists with displays, music, and film presentations. Also walking tours of Glen Park and Old Town Historical homes. A variety of food vendors will be available as well.



Don't miss the Friends of the Tri-Lakes Library annual ice cream social in early afternoon.

Chautauquas began in New York state in 1874 and spread throughout rural America until the mid-1920's. Many authentic Chautauquas became famous, including the Rocky Mountain



Assembly, the first in Colorado, which held its first assembly in Palmer Lake in 1887 and continued for almost 20 years. "The Return of the Rocky Mountain Chautauqua" brings back this event to where it began in Colorado - in Palmer Lake.

## Awake the Lake – A Successful Community Effort to Restore Palmer Lake

Awake the Lake Mission: To salvage, restore and recreate the natural majesty of the namesake of our town. To prevent any future significant water dissipation due to drought and other natural causes. To enhance and update surrounding recreation areas.

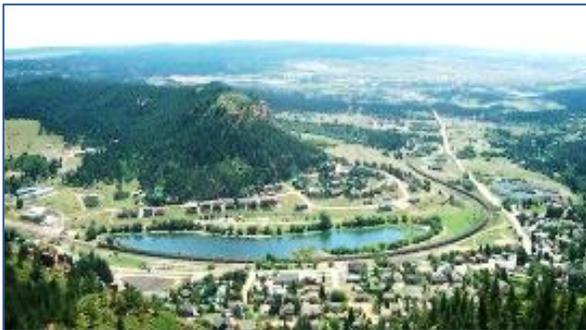


As the town’s namesake, Palmer Lake has seen many people and types of wildlife come and go. It is a glacially formed lake – *the highest natural spring fed lake in the continental United States*. While fed by four springs, drought, development, and expansion at the southern end caused some of the lake’s natural resources to diminish or to be cut off completely. By 2013, the lake had completely dried up. This was the reason for the Awake Palmer Lake committee. It was their goal to return the lake to its former glory – the pride of the Town of Palmer Lake.

In 2013, working with the Town staff and the Town’s water attorneys, Awake the Lake volunteers legally changed certain water rights owned by the Town to create a viable source of supplemental fill for the lake. Volunteers also

- conducted grassroots fundraising efforts,
- supported geotechnical, geologic, hydrogeologic, and engineering studies of the lake,
- removed non-native soils and silts built up at the lake bottom before the lake was refilled, and
- restored the lake to its original smaller footprint, filling in a portion of the southern part of the lake.

During the restoration process, it was discovered that the lake is filled from shallow spring water inflows *only on the northwestern edges of the lake*. The railroad blocked the lone surface water inflow at the northwest corner of the lake 30 years ago to diminish track flooding.



With a smaller, deeper lake, warming and evaporation were reduced. In 2015, the lake was restocked with fish by CO Dept. of Wildlife.

Above: Aerial view of Town of Palmer Lake, looking from west to east

Text source: <http://awakepalmerlake.org>

### Palmer Lake Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

Annual membership in the Palmer Lake Historical Society is available in the following categories:

- |                          |            |          |
|--------------------------|------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual | \$ 20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family     | \$ 30.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Student    | \$ 8.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Supporting | \$ 35.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Benefactor | \$ 50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Curator    | \$ 75.00 |

**YES**, I would like to support the PLHS. My payment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.    \_\_\_ New    \_\_\_ Renewing

**Method of payment:**

Cash            \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Name as you wish it to appear on your membership card (please PRINT):**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this completed form with your payment to:**

Palmer Lake Historical Society  
PO Box 662  
Palmer Lake CO 80133-0662

**Lucretia Vaile Museum Hours:**

Open Saturday 10:00 – 2:00

Open Wednesday 1:00 – 4:00

Tours: Call 719- 559-0837; leave message



**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](mailto:mikensigi@comcast.net)

**The new handicapped access to the Palmer Lake Library and the Vaile Museum is now complete. Opening day of the library was Wednesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Check out our website or Facebook page for re-opening date of the Vaile Museum.**

Below: Wayne Russert and Gary Atkins have just finished hanging the new Vaile Museum sign.

