

Volume 16 Number 2

August 2022 through November 2022

Website: www.palmerdividehistory.org

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Museum: 719-559-0837



2022 Board of Directors

President – Jim Sawatzki

Vice President – Doris Baker

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Museum Director - Rogers Davis

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Barbara Morehead

Wayne Russert

Program & Event Information:

August 2022 – December 2022

August 6, 2022, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
(Library Ice Cream Social at 1:00 PM)
Return of the Rocky Mountain
Chautauqua

September 15, 2022, 7:00 PM
"Elrey P. Jeppesen – Barnstormer and
Aviation Pioneer" – Flint Whitlock and
Terry Barnhart

October 21, 2022, 7:00 PM
"History of the Alexander Film Company"
– Steve Antonuccio

November 18, 2022, 7:00 PM
"Film: The Life and Times of Gen. Wm J.
Palmer" – Jim Sawatzki

November 26, 2022*, 4:00 PM Chili
Supper; 7:00 PM Star Lighting

December 11, 2022*, 1:00 PM
Annual Yule Log Hunt and Ceremony

*Town of Palmer Lake event



Above: Sears, Roebuck & Co. "Bandon"
model kit house in Pulaski, IL

Between 1908 and 1940, Sears shipped
70,000 kit houses across America in railroad
boxcars; many still survive today!

A Newsletter of the

Palmer Lake Historical Society

and the

Lucretia Vaile Museum

Many Western Towns Were Built on "THE GRID" - Meeting the Challenge of Connecting East and West

1880-1916 is considered the Golden Age of Railroading, a time when railroads were the largest employer in the nation. Railroad depots (built by the railroad and often enlarged as business grew) were a place for communities to gather, for riders to wait for the next train, to share gossip with the station agent, to send a telegram, or to warm up by the coal stove in the waiting room. Before two-way radios, the telegraph was *the way* to learn the latest news.

Steamboats started the rapid transportation of agricultural and manufactured goods – and people, and the result was a rapidly rising standard of living. What steamboats began, the railroads and telegraph finished. Most often built in tandem, they moved people, goods, and information at unprecedented speeds, all dramatically quickening the pace of life.

Eastern Railroads

Around 1860, the first railroad towns began to appear east of the Mississippi River, part of a new frontier of connectivity and communication. Supplies could be transported more easily, more quickly, and more efficiently across states than by horse and wagon, creating a multitude of new towns, especially in the West.

Further east of the Mississippi River, most track construction threaded its way through already-established towns and cities. The challenge here was to pin down the shortest, most direct, and economical routes, with the fewest geological obstacles, working around steep grades, waterways, etc. and adapting depot and station designs to blend with the town or city history and architectural style.

But West of the Mississippi -

Things changed when the U.S. Congress passed the Pacific Railroad Acts, a series of acts (1862-1866) and amendments that promoted the construction of a transcontinental railroad (the Pacific Railroad) in the United States.

The Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 was important because it began the federal government grant of lands *directly to corporations*. Previously, land grants were *made to the states* for the benefit of corporations (emphasis added). The 1862 Act aided in the construction of both railroad and telegraph lines from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean. Some of its provisions were subsequently modified or expanded by three additional amending Acts. The 1863 Act established 4' 8-½" as the standard gauge of track. In 1871, the Congress repealed the Pacific Railroad Acts.

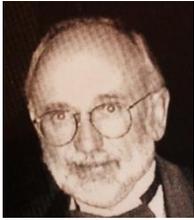
The Pacific Railroad Act granted the railroads one acre by 20 acres tracts of land alternating with federal land tracts of the same size, creating a checkerboard effect. When sketched on paper, it looked like – A Grid! Many railroad towns were created by the railroads themselves as a marketing technique to help drive populations to their railroad stops, helping make them money. Railroads also created towns near already existing cities, hoping the population would eventually shift into the railroad towns as they were more economically sound.

To save money, the railroads laid out the new communities through which they were building in almost identical ways. The same depot designs were used, there was a railroad avenue and a main street with crossroads of 1st, 2nd, 3rd streets and "A," "B," and "C" avenues – or something similar. Mail order catalogs offered the latest in goods, and railroad boxcars even brought in Sears "kit" houses, bringing "cookie-cutter" towns to the West! This became the system of settlement. The grid of wooden stakes poking up through the prairie grass was repeated many times in many places.

Along the Palmer Divide

Sometimes geological features distinguished new towns. The Town of Palmer Lake is one of those towns. But just down the road, in Monument, you will find First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Streets and a Santa Fe Avenue and a Front Street. The depots in both communities are both long gone; Monument's were converted to restaurants, torn down and burned while Palmer Lake's were moved to South Park.

President's Message



Dear PLHS members:
 At this time, I'd like to ask one and all to consider volunteering for a PLHS board position. We desperately need two "at large" directors. Here's your chance to make a difference and literally keep our Palmer Divide History alive. Please contact/call me.

Speaking of volunteerism, my dear mother, early on, got my brother and I started in this pursuit. She had us help elderly neighbors, and we were told to never accept any money for services. This led me on to many fulfilling experiences. Still a boy of 11, I volunteered to be an altar boy for six years. In high school I was the president of the Drama Club.

In my twenties I was a Palmer Lake Volunteer Fireman and became my HOA President at Spruce Mtn. I could go on. I've been actively volunteering all my life and it's been rewarding. So, if looking for a challenge and a chance to make a difference, call me at 719 481-3963.

I mentioned our Palmer Divide Region because of our mission to preserve, interpret, promote, and provide access to historical data for researching. Over the years, your historical society has enlarged our Lucretia Vaile Museum's artifacts collection and published numerous books on local history. We are currently producing a book on the Monument Tree Nursery, CCC Camp Eras.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at our next event, which is on Thursday July 21st on the Village Green from 1 PM to 4 PM. Visit our newly refurbished Town Hall for an interpretation of the large photo gallery. And take a leisurely walking tour up to the Estemere mansion and back down to the museum and lastly to the Rock House for refreshments. Come one and all.

Your President, Jim Sawatzki

Did You Know?

Today, there are two Class I railroads which travel "through" Palmer Lake but not "to" Palmer Lake. But, between 1872 and 1981, six different railroads provided service to Palmer Lake.

- D&RG: Fall 1872 – mid-1967
- Santa Fe: 1887 – 1879
- Colorado Midland: 1887 – 1918
- Missouri Pacific: 1888 – 1966
- Rock Island RR: 1888 – mid-1890s
- Colorado & Southern: 1899 – 1981



D&RG Depot and enlarged sign ca 1894



Santa Fe Depot and enlarged sign ca 1887

PALMER LAKE DEPOT SIGNS – THEN AND NOW



Dan Elders



Kurt Voelker, Rodger Voelker, and ? delivering sign

Photos by Gary Atkins

Longtime resident Dan Elders leaves a historical legacy for Palmer Lake

Dan Elders has lived in Palmer Lake for over 50 years. He knows the area, its history and the neighborhoods very well as owner of the Angry Squirrel. He trims trees, shrubs, and overgrown areas throughout the region. That is how he spotted the Palmer Lake sign and knew it was his mission to save it.

Dan was on a job in "The Glen" and had climbed a tree to begin his work. As he looked down from his 50-foot perch to make sure the area was clear of falling limbs, there in a nearby wood pile he saw what he immediately recognized from historical photos he had seen as the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad depot sign dating back to the late 1800's. It was warped, severely cracked, and missing the letter "P." Given permission to rescue the sign, his mission began.

Dan attempted to straighten the sign by watering and weighting it down. But a small part of the sign was missing. To repair it, he mounted a piece of plywood to the back of the sign, a piece of barnwood which matched as closely as possible the thickness and grain of the aged wood on the sign, extending the sign to a board length of 10 feet with room for the missing "P." The "P" was stenciled on using the "R" to match the size and font. From there it went to local artist Buzz Bloom to paint the trim and add the letter.

Elders had plans to mount the sign on the Vaile Museum/Library building. He knew Rodger Voelker was a docent at the museum and a member of the Palmer Lake Historical Society Board. He discussed it with him, and they decided to store it in Rodger's workshop until the right time and place could be decided on. The place became inside the Palmer Lake Town Hall above the front door. The timing was perfect as repairs were being completed to the Town Hall. Built in 1914, it is now on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places.

Palmer Lake can be proud and enjoy this incredible piece of history that Dan Elders made it his mission to "rescue," leaving a legacy to his hometown.

Patricia Atkins, Secretary, Palmer Lake Historical Society

Upcoming PLHS Programs and Events August 2022 through November 2022

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

Saturday, August 6, 2022 – 1:00 – 4:00 PM **SPECIAL EVENT** **“Return of the Rocky Mountain Chautauqua”**

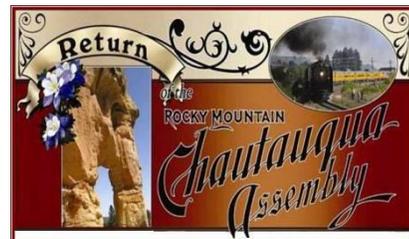


Join us for an afternoon on the Village Green celebrating our historic Chautauqua with museum tours, entertainments, working artists with displays, music, and film presentations. Also walking tours of Glen Park and Old Town Historical homes. A variety of food vendors will be available as well.

Don't miss the Friends of the Tri-Lakes Library annual ice cream social beginning at 1:00 PM.

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.



Thursday, September 15, 2022 – 7:00 PM

“Elrey P. Jeppesen – Barnstormer and Aviation Pioneer”

Presenters: Flint Whitlock and Terry Barnhart



Elrey Jeppesen learned to fly during the “Golden Age” of aviation, then went on to give flying lessons, become an early air-mail pilot, a daredevil barnstormer, survived crashes, was one of United Airlines' first pilots, and—most importantly—invented “aviation safety” because of his navigation charts, still in use and now digital. The terminal at Denver International Airport is named for him.

Flint Whitlock of Denver has authored 16 books including three biographies and a novel. He is a WWII battlefield tour guide for the Smithsonian, National Geographic, and other organizations, and has appeared in numerous documentaries and lectures on Viking Sea Cruises. Terry Barnhart is co-author of the authorized biography of Jeppesen, *Capt. Jepp and the Little Black Book: How Barnstormer and Aviation Pioneer Elrey B. Jeppesen Made the Skies Safer for Everyone*. He is a licensed pilot and owner of a Denver public relations firm.

Thursday, October 20, 2022 – 7:00 PM

“History of the Alexander Film Company”

Presenter: Steve Antonuccio



Established in Colorado Springs in 1927, The Alexander Film Company was the largest producer of advertising playlets for movie theaters in the country. They created the concept of the television commercial. At one time, the Alexander Film Company had 600 employees in Colorado Springs and manufactured the popular Alexander Eaglerock biplane until 1931. This program will include video clips of the Alexander Film Company's award-winning commercials and animations.

Steve Antonuccio is a Pikes Peak area writer, producer, and videographer. He was a 1991 Heartland Region Emmy nominee for "Everybody Welcome: The Story of Fannie Mae Duncan and the Cotton Club" and 2000 nominee for "The Treasure of the Cripple Creek Mining District." A retired librarian, he is the former director of Pikes Peak Library District's cable access channel.

Thursday, November 17, 2022 – 7:00 PM

“The Life and Times of Gen. Wm J. Palmer”

Presenter: Jim Sawatzki



In acknowledgment of Veteran's Day, Jim presents a program on General William J. Palmer, namesake of the town of Palmer Lake, Civil War Medal of Honor recipient, and builder of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. The program will feature a screening of “The Life and Times of General William Jackson Palmer,” a film written, directed, and produced by the presenter.

Telly Award winning and Emmy nominated producer/director Jim Sawatzki has been documenting Front Range Colorado history since 1992. His work has been featured on regional PBS affiliates and local cable channels and has been shown nationally on A&E's Biography channel. Jim is the current president of the Palmer Lake Historical Society Board and an active member of the Tri-Lakes arts community.

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

Saturday, November 26, 2022

**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 11, 2022, 1:00 PM

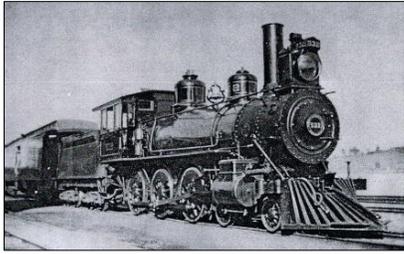
Annual Palmer Lake Yule Log Hunt and Ceremony

"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



HOW MANY PRESIDENTS RODE THE TRAIN THROUGH PALMER LAKE?



Surprisingly, seven U.S. presidents rode the train through Palmer Lake between 1875 and 1938, according to PLHS member and author Dan Edwards' book *A Century of Railroading at Palmer Lake, 1871-1971*. Surely, the presidents enjoyed the scenery!

Built as a narrow gauge railroad, the Denver & Rio Grande added a third rail to accommodate standard gauge trains in 1881. The Santa Fe did not build through Palmer Lake until 1887, thus only President U.S. Grant would have traveled on Gen. Wm. J. Palmer's narrow gauge railroad.

Left: Denver & Rio Grande ten-wheeler No. 532 shown at Palmer Lake in 1899. This standard gauge engine was used for fast inter-city passenger service.

1875: As the first presidential traveler, Ulysses S. Grant actually went by the then "Divide" Station twice, stopping on the way down to Pueblo from Denver on October 6th and also on the return trip the next day, when his train reached a speed of 30 miles an hour, "the fastest time ever made on the D&RG" at that time.

1891: President Benjamin Harrison's special train traveled over the D&RG from Grand Junction to Pueblo, reaching Palmer Lake on the way to Denver on May 12, 1891.

1899: Three-time Democrat presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, "free silver" advocate supported by many Republican businessmen, came through Palmer Lake while going north to Denver from Colorado Springs on July 12, 1899.

1903: President Theodore Roosevelt rode behind a Rio Grande engine when he left Denver bound for Pueblo on May 4th. Ahead of the presidential train, safety measures included running a "pilot" train consisting of an engine and several cars with a railroad superintendent on board about 20 minutes before the president's train was due to make sure the track was clear and in good condition. All freight trains were ordered off the main line and all passenger trains had to clear the right-of-way 30 minutes ahead of the presidential train.

1909: President William Howard Taft passed through Palmer Lake on September 22nd on his way to the Western Slope to formally open the Gunnison Tunnel.

1919: President Woodrow Wilson, departing from Denver, rode the rails through Palmer Lake on September 25th.

1923: A special 10-car train, pulled by a Santa Fe locomotive and carrying President Warren G. Harding, his wife, and government officials, left Colorado Springs on June 24th, passing through Palmer Lake on its way to Denver.

1938: The final "presidential visit" to Palmer Lake was made by Franklin D. Roosevelt when his special train made a brief stop at the Rio Grande water tank on October 12th.

Palmer Lake Historical Society 2022 Membership/Renewal Form

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

- Individual \$ 20.00
- Family \$ 30.00
- Student \$ 8.00
- Supporting \$ 35.00
- Benefactor \$ 50.00
- 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 in our membership files (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
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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

The Museum is NOW OPEN following a lengthy closure to install an accessible entry to the library and museum. Be sure to come and visit!

Contributing to this issue:

Gary & Patricia Atkins Doris Baker
Jim Sawatzki Mike & Sigi Walker

Palmer Lake Historical Society - Making History more than a Memory!