

Volume 16 Number 3
December 2022 through March 2023
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Palmer Lake Historical Society

2022 Board of Directors

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Museum Director - Rogers Davis

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Program & Events Information: December 2022 – March 2023

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

**Note: This is a Town of Palmer Lake event; there is no PLHS program in December.*

January 19, 2023, 6:30 PM – Annual Members Meeting and Potluck Supper

February 16, 2023, 7:00 PM - "Saving Palmer Lake's Lake" - Awake the Lake Panel

March 16, 2023, 7:00 PM - "The KKK in the Greater Denver Area" – Shaun Boyd

April 20, 2023, 7:00 PM - "A Treasure Trove of Local History" – Brett Lobello

Did You Know?



Jeremiah Mouse, *left*, is part of the Vaile Museum's "Mouse Mania" collection of porcelain mice.

"Jeremiah Mouse Adventures," delightful story books as well as coloring books, tell "tails" of Jeremiah Mouse's adventures, some in the local area. The author, Grace Best, was a beloved teacher in the Palmer Divide area. The books and coloring books are illustrated by Tricia Cedarleaf.

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

The Story of Palmer Lake Weather: Floods, Tornados, Snow and Wind Storms, and a 'Bomb Cyclone'

The Tornado and 100-Year Flood of 1965

The afternoon of June 16, 1965 was most memorable, weatherwise, to which longtime Palmer Lake resident and former PLHS board member Rodger Voelker can personally attest. A little before 1 o'clock that day, the sky got so dark that the streetlights came on. His late wife Judy remembered "there was a terrible hollow feeling, and then the roof started lifting off. It peeled off like a roll top desk." A tornado had ripped through the small town of Palmer Lake, peeling the roof off of thirty houses. Rodger and Judy Voelker had only recently moved from Wisconsin to Palmer Lake.

North of Palmer Lake, fourteen inches of rain fell on Dawson Butte in four hours. "Creeks overflowed, roads became rivers, and fields became lakes—all in a matter of minutes," wrote flood watcher H. F. Mattai in a report to the US Geological Survey.

After the tornado, it was unsafe to drive anywhere because of exposed wires and debris. Hailstorms, high winds, and torrential rains – what would later be identified as a 100-year flood – followed all afternoon, then there came another terrible roar. A wall of water came out of the canyon at the top of High Street, demolishing homes, and filling others with water. Rodger remembers helping rescue some of his neighbors.

What caused the flood of 1965? Colorado Springs records show May and June of 1965 as among the wettest on record with eight inches falling in May of that year and one to two inches of rain and hail falling for 15 days straight from June 7 to June 21. Torrential rain began falling starting June 14, 1965, claiming a total of twenty-four lives statewide. It was one of the worst floods, and because of extensive property loss in the Denver metro area (\$4.4 billion in 2019 dollars), the most expensive flood in Colorado history.

Palmer Lake Snowstorms

Anyone who has lived for a while in the Tri-Lakes area has a story or two about a memorable snowstorm. We know, however, that there were more and bigger storms during the early settlers' days. The pioneer missionary, Sheldon Jackson, founder of the Monument Community Presbyterian Church in 1874, described one such storm that trapped his train in Palmer Lake one winter night (*The following has been excerpted from PLHS Newsletter Vol 11 No 1 April 2017*).

Jackson wrote for a newspaper that a Denver and Rio Grande train, pulled by an engine nicknamed "Ouray," got stuck in high drifts in Palmer Lake. The passengers made the best of it by making themselves a formal organization. Jackson was elected secretary, and we can see that he knew how to have a good time. He wrote a report as follows: "Pursuant to a call previously published, the passengers on Car Denver came to order at 7 o'clock p.m., December 23, ten feet deep in a drift on the Divide. After much discussion it was decided that the name of the association should be and hereby is 'The Divide Snowbound Association.' It was objected that the association did not seem to be *bound* anywhere just now. The chairman could not see the *drift* of that remark but was only *railed* at for saying so. (Loud laughter by the passengers and howling by the wolves outside.)"

Jackson continued: "The chairman then produced a poem entitled *Drifting*, which was respectfully dedicated to the Denver and Rio Grande narrow gauge railway."

After two passengers ventured into the storm to find a little food from a Palmer Lake family, the group settled in for the long night. Before that, however, they adopted the following statement: "*Resolved*, that the thanks of the association be tendered to the officers and employees of the narrow-gauge for the efficient manner in which they propelled the train into the several snowbanks and the persistent manner in which they kept us there all night, and their final success in digging us out the next day."

In recent times: On October 24-26 of 1997, a major blizzard in southeast Colorado caused power outages, stranded thousands, cost lives, and cost millions. Snow totals, impacted by strong winds and below zero temperatures, included:

Palmer Lake – 52" with 15' drifts; Monument – 48" with 6'-10' drifts; and Colorado Springs (Briargate): 18-24" with 6' drifts.

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President's Message



Greetings, All!

As we near the close of our 66th year as a historical society, we're still at the helm, interpreting and preserving our Front Range/Palmer Divide History.

Thanks to everyone in the Society, we've managed to reawaken from the pandemic years to move forward again. We'll soon be delivering our popular history calendar for 2023. Thanks to all our sponsors and terrific efforts from our board of directors and Vaile Museum Director Rogers Davis.

We have been researching and writing the history of our nearby Monument Tree Nursery, dating back to 1907, which today is known as the Monument Preserve. We hope to publish this unique story sometime in '23.

This past August we celebrated the return of our historic Chautauqua era with all day activities centered around the newly refurbished Town Hall and on the Village Green. We had plein air artists painting away, with the sounds of a 19th century quartet ensconced in the Gazebo, while The Friends of the Library furnished free ice cream. Two walking tours also added to the daylong event. *Doris Baker photos*



Next year programs will include some special events around the Tri-Lakes area, so stay tuned for these locations.

Finally, we hope to see more of you next year. Please renew or consider a PLHS membership and volunteering if you can.

Enjoy the upcoming Holidays and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year.

Your President, Jim Sawatzki



Palmer Lake Star at Christmastime



Left: 1921 photo entitled "A Rio Grande snowplow at work at Palmer Lake" from *A Century of Rail-roading at Palmer Lake, 1871-1971* by PLHS member Dan Edwards
Vaile Museum photo



Right: In *The Communities of the Palmer Divide*, a PLHS 2011 publication, this photo is described as follows:
Several unidentified people stand on a 20-foot snowdrift in front of Higby's store [in Monument] after a 1913 storm that struck in early December.
Vaile Museum photo

PALMER DIVIDE NOTABLE WEATHER PHOTOS: THEN AND NOW



Left: The day after the March 13, 2019, bomb cyclone, ad hoc teams cleared multiple 4-foot drifts and dug out stranded cars on Harness Road, making the road somewhat passable before El Paso County crews were freed up from clearing Priority One and Two roads to plow this Priority Three road.

Photo by Lisa Hatfield, courtesy of Our Community News Vol 19 No 4 April 6, 2019.



Above: Abandoned Cars in Arapahoe County, March 2019
Photo courtesy of Arapahoe County Sheriff

Upcoming PLHS Programs and Events December 2022 through April 2023

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

Sunday, December 11, 2022, 1:00 PM

Annual Palmer Lake Yule Log Hunt and Ceremony



Note: This is a Town of Palmer Lake event and will take place in the Palmer Lake Town Hall.

"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

Yule Log History from the November 10, 1946 issue of the Colorado Springs Gazette:

"Grandparents, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters and all of the 350 residents of Palmer Lake this week begin preparations for an event which attracts visitors from all over the United States to the community Sunday, Dec. 21. The Palmer Lake residents are resuming the annual Yule Log ceremony, discontinued since 1941 due to the stress of the war. They are hoping for double the 1,500 visitors that attended in 1941."

Thursday, January 19, 2023, 6:00 PM

SPECIAL EVENT

Annual Membership Meeting and Potluck



Don't miss this event! Bring a vegetable, salad, or dessert to share - the PLHS will provide the baked ham, rolls, coffee, and tea. The evening's activities will include an overview of the Society's activities followed by a short business meeting and election of 2023 officers, concluding with Jim Sawatzki's 30-minute documentary, "Divide Country" about the early days of settlement in the Palmer Divide area. Attendees are encouraged to renew their 2023 PLHS memberships - or join if they're not PLHS members.

The annual PLHS "history" calendar, supported by the 2023 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 his contributions.

Thursday, February 16, 2023

"Saving Palmer Lake's Lake"

Presenters: Awake the Lake Panel



Gary Atkins photo

Hear the story of the successful effort to restore the town's disappearing landmark, *the highest natural spring fed lake in the continental United States*. The "Awake the Lake" committee's mission was: To salvage, restore and recreate the lake's natural majesty. To prevent any future significant water dissipation due to drought and other natural causes. To enhance and update surrounding recreation areas.

The "determined-to-succeed" Awake the Lake panel members, including Jeannine Engel, Rock House, and Jeff Hulsmann, O'Malley's Pub, along with other committee members will present their recollections of the committee's work and then open the program to questions.

Thursday, March 16, 2023

"The Ku Klux Klan in the Greater Denver Area"

Presenter: Shaun Boyd



History Colorado holds two Ku Klux Klan membership books containing nearly 30,000 entries across more than 1,300 pages dating from around 1924 through 1926, the peak of the Klan's influence in Colorado. The books record the names and other personal details, such as home and business addresses, of people affiliated with the KKK in the Greater Denver area and beyond.

Shaun Boyd has been Curator of Archives at History Colorado since 2018 and serves on the Colorado Historic Records Advisory Board. Prior to joining History Colorado, Shaun was archivist and head of the local history collection at the Philip S. Miller Library in Castle Rock. In addition to Colorado History, Shaun is particularly interested in Women's History, the Progressive Era, the History of Newspapers, genealogy, and cemeteries.

Thursday, April 20, 2023

"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.

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The 2019 ‘Bomb Cyclone’ – a Hurricane-level Winter Storm – paralyzed the Front Range

On Wednesday, March 13th, 2019, an extremely powerful low-pressure system, which officially met the criteria of a ‘bomb cyclone,’ developed over southern Colorado. The storm created widespread blizzard conditions across northeast Colorado, the Palmer Divide and over El Paso County. Winds gusted from 60 to 80 mph, with a record 96 mph recorded at the Colorado Springs Airport. In addition, one to three feet of snow fell across the mountains.

To be considered a bomb cyclone, barometric pressure drops at least 24 millibars in 24 hours and produces winds of 74 to 95 mph. As an upper-level low pressure system moves off the mountains onto the plains, it begins to spin and gain strength quickly as it travels to the ground, intensifying over areas of temperature change. The storm becomes a bomb cyclone when two areas of low pressure in the sky merge, generating damaging winds and repetitive bands of snow.

The Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District rescue crews were stretched to the extreme. Ironically, two days prior to the event, an Incident Action Plan had been created. It doubled staffing, moved command to the Monument Town Hall (which had a reliable generator), and called for extra checks of all vehicles. Crews responded to 126 calls within a 48-hour period, mostly by stranded motorists, and logged 85 miles in the 1987 Sno-Cat in an 18-hour period assisting on-foot rescues. Most of the 162 people rescued were sheltered in Monument at St. Peter Catholic School or Kilmer Elementary School, in conjunction with the local Red Cross.

Some of the impacts in the area included:

- 5000 passengers had to spend the night at Denver International Airport
- All major highways and interstates were closed, including I-76, I-70, and I-25
- Multiple multi-car accidents occurred, and numerous travelers were stranded in cars and at rest stops over northeast Colorado and the Palmer Divide. There were 1,500 people stranded over northern El Paso County alone. Search and rescue operations numbered over 100.
- Power poles and trees were blown down, causing at one point 445,000 customers to be without power.

Right: House nearly buried by bomb cyclone snowfall at the intersection of SH-94 and Yoder Rd in El Paso County



Windstorms over the years in local newspapers

“Every day about 3 o’clock a violent wind comes up, causing ... trouble and sometimes brings a shower... .” *Rocky Mountain News, June 18, 1881*

“A windstorm which attained a velocity of seventy-five miles an hour caused ... considerable damage here yesterday afternoon and last night. Reports from Monument are to the effect that the ice houses there, valued at \$10,000 and owned by W.E. Doyle of this city, were entirely destroyed by the terrific winds which prevailed in that vicinity.” *Denver Post, January 1, 1910*

“The town of Monument was badly hit by [yesterday’s] windstorm ...” The Monument icehouse, a number of houses, and barns were unroofed. “Several Denver & Rio Grande boxcars were blown off the tracks and badly damaged.” *Colorado Springs Gazette, January 5, 1916*

Above compiled by Dan Edwards; see PLHS website “Area History/News Snippets”.

The PLHS: *Making History more than a Memory!*

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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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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

Lucretia Vaile Museum Hours:

Wednesday 1:00 – 4:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Tours: Call 559-0837 and leave a message

Contributing to this issue:

Doris Baker Jim Sawatzki
Vaile Museum Mike & Sigi Walker
Thanks to all who reviewed/commented!

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 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:

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