

# WEST WOOD

Old Colorado City Historical Society

Volume 27, Number 5

June / July, 2012

## Pikes Peak Hill Climb ... a Look Back

Pikes Peak International Hill Climb Educational Museum

Commissioned by Thomas Jefferson to explore the Great Plains, Lt. Zebulon Pike first saw Pikes Peak from the eastern portion of today's Colorado. As he approached the magnificent peak, rising abruptly from the plains, Pike swore this 14,115 foot mountain would never be conquered by man. Indeed, Zebulon Pike never scaled the mountain which bears his name. Today Pikes Peak has been climbed by tourists from all over the world in cars, on horseback, on foot, and on motorcycles. All are overcome by its beauty, including Katherine Lee Bates, who conceived "America the Beautiful" from its summit.

Pike could have imagined neither motorcars nor the automobile racecourse which would conclude at the summit of his peak a little over a century later. By 1900 a carriage road had been built. On August 12, 1901, two Denver men named Yont and Felker were the first to drive to the top. Their trip in a two-cylinder Locomobile Steamer took just over 9 hours and was accomplished by pushing as well as driving their motorcar.

Spencer Penrose, one of Colorado Springs' major benefactors, realized the tourist potential of such a beautiful landmark. In 1915 Penrose finished converting the narrow carriage road into the Pikes Peak Highway. In order to publicize his adopted hometown and his new road he devised a simple plan: run an automobile race to the summit of Pikes Peak on the new highway.

The Pikes Peak Auto Hill Climb was first



*Felker's Locomobile on the Pikes Peak summit, August 12, 1901*

held on August 10, 11, and 12, 1916. Through the years the road has been widened and paved. Other than that, the course and race format have not changed significantly from the original. Drivers and cars come from all over the world to compete in one of the most grueling courses known to the world of racing. Consisting of 12.42 miles of road, the route winds over 156 twisting turns from the start line above Crystal Creek (9,402 feet above sea level) to the Peak's 14,115 foot summit. Drivers, then and now, are challenged by the torturous road and the rapidly changing weather. Starting out in sunshine, the driver could travel through sleet, thunderstorms, wind, hail, fog, or blinding snow before

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**Old Colorado City Historical Society**

1 South 24th Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319  
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LETTERS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTIFACTS AND STORIES CAN BE  
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**WEST WORD Editor c/o OCCHS**

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Colorado Springs, CO 80904-3319

or Don Ellis - [spiderwort@pcsysnet](mailto:spiderwort@pcsysnet)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS THE 15th OF EACH MONTH

**MISSION**

Revised April 2004

*The Old Colorado City Historical Society was founded as a volunteer organization to recognize the historical significance and unique culture of original Old Colorado City and early El Paso County. This spirit is perpetuated through the preservation of artifacts and archival materials, encouragement of research, education of the children and the community, through the membership and the operation of the History Center at 1 South 24th Street, Colorado Springs, Colorado*

**MEMBERSHIPS**

Memberships are welcome at any time. Membership renewals are due on the anniversary date of the initial membership. Members receive the *West Word* newsletter, discounts, local meetings and programs.

New membership classifications effective June 1:

Student	\$ 15	Business	\$ 75
Individual	\$ 25	Lifetime	\$ 250
Family	\$ 35	Life plus one	\$ 300

*Funds from a Lifetime membership are placed into a Perpetuity/Endowment Fund to be used only for projects which have been approved by two-thirds of the membership. Only the interest will be used for current expenses. We welcome gifts to this fund, which will be credited to the donor or as a memorial.*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President	Sharon Swint	630-8384
Vice President	Cathy Murphy	213-9141
Secretary	Jo Cervone	266-9096
Treasurer	Suzanne Schorsch	636-1225
	Betty Baker	636-1225
	Brian Copeland	636-1225
	Beverley Dlsch	636-1225
	Phil McDonald	636-1225

**MEETINGS**

OCCHS Monthly Meeting & Program is held at 11 a.m. on the second Friday of each month, except during June, July, and August. The History Center opens at 10 a.m. on the day of the meeting for refreshments and visitation. The program begins at 11 a.m. This meeting is free and open to the public.

## WELCOME TO OCCHS! ~ NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Jack Beal

Bon Ton's Cafe

Rhoda Cordry

Jo Anne Croff

Paul & Nancy Desilets

Betsy Evans

Laura Feldman

& Glenn Pressman

Louise Fosdick

Trini Garza

Liz Geiss

David and Roberta Hardy

Barbara Kafka

Arlene Lanman

Gennie and Mike Mayberry

Donna Phinizy

Al & Donna Rich

David Rickert

John & Lynn Rowsey

David and Carol Schell

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Swint Realty Company, LLC

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Vera M. Wescott

Denise Winter

Olivia Zanoni

*Hill Climb continued from page 1*

finishing, causing this breathtaking event to be called "The Race to the Clouds."

The first Pikes Peak Champion was 22-year old Rea Lentz from Washington. His Romano Demon Special was the smallest car entered; he was the youngest driver. His time was 20 minutes, 55.6 seconds. After his win, he was never heard from again by anyone associated with the race.

Among those entered in this first-ever event was crowd-pleaser Barney Oldfield. He drove a big Delage, and while he did not distinguish himself among the top drivers, spectators came to watch this famous man attack the Peak. Eddie Rickenbacker, later to become the famous World War I flying ace, was also registered to drive. Duesenberg automobiles were driven, as were Cadillacs, Hudsons and a Stutz. Entry fees were \$25 to \$50, depending on the event. First Prizes ranged from \$500 to \$2,000 cash, again depending upon which event the driver entered. To further encourage competition Penrose offered a 43 inch trophy covered in Colorado silver and gold, valued at \$10,000. The winners could keep the trophy for a year.

In the early races mechanics rode with drivers. Their presence was necessary due to the many mechanical malfunctions and breakdowns which happened on this near-wilderness route. Today's drivers fervently wish they could have mechanics at their side, for the ever-present mechanical and technical problems which are a part of this unique event. Initially, it may not have been specified that the driver must stay on the road, for there are accounts of short-cuts over the rough terrain.

Motorcycles were important in August of 1916. One of the most popular models was the Excelsior Motorcycle. Built by Ignaz Schwinn, these cycles were ridden by 19 out of the 29 entrants. Schwinn, in partnership with his son Frank, later produced the famous "Schwinn-built" bicycles.

While this first event was successful by all accounts, war disrupted the continuity of the Pikes Peak Hill Climb; it was not held again until 1920. The 1920 race emerged sanctioned by the American Automobile Association (AAA), and was won by Otto Loesche, of Indy 500 fame. He repeated his victory in 1924.



*Open wheel race cars in the Pikes Peak Hill Climb*

Glen Shultz was one of the premier hill climb drivers of the era. He captured seven Open Wheel Division titles: 1923, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1930, 1932, and 1933. He also won the Stock Car Division in 1929.

These early racers all drove Open Wheel cars. The Stock Car Division was added in 1929. This now famous class caused hot competition from a different breed of drivers, but unfortunately was dropped in 1935; it resumed again in 1956.

The Unser family, still the winningest family in Pikes Peak history, began racing up the hill in 1926. The three brothers, Louis, Jerry and Joe, had been the first to take a motorcycle and side car to the summit. Always a bridesmaid in the early years, Joe was consistently second. His brother Jerry competed in 1931. But in 1930 another brother participated in his first Race to the Clouds. Beginning in 1934 Louis won his first championship, and competed over and over until his last race at the age of 70. In his 71st year he returned once again as a mechanic.



*Louis Unser's car backwards across the finish line*

Contention was heated for years between Louis Unser and his arch-rival and close friend, Al Rogers. The two traded crowns consistently between 1934 and 1951. When Al Rogers retired his helmet he had 5 victories, 4 second and two third place wins. Louis Unser, after posting his fastest winning Open Wheel time in 1953 (15 minutes, 15.40 seconds) had a total winning record of 9 titles, three second and two third place finishes, which earned him the title "King of the Mountain."

1956 saw the second generation of Unsers taking their place along with their parents. Bobby Unser had his first Open Wheel win, with Cousin Jerry Unser, Jr, winning the Stock Car Division. Bobby Unser remains the Unser with the most titles. He has 8 Open Wheel championships, 2 stock car titles, and in 1986 held the over-all time in his Audi Sports Quattro of 11:09.22. Bobby also raced to

***Bobby Unser and Leonard Vahsholtz have raced head to head four times, with each competitor garnering two wins.***

victory in the short-lived Sports Car division. His winning time of 13 minutes, 19.1 second still stands as that division record. Brother, Al Unser, most noted for his four Indy Car wins, took the trophy for the Unsers in 1964 and 1965. Other Unsers drove in the Stock Car Division, with cousins Jerry Unser, Jr. and Louis J. Unser, Jr. both capturing titles.

The third generation of racing Unsers lined up at the start line in 1976. Bobby Jr. was the first rookie to set fast qualifying time, and he would do so several times. In 1978, during practice Bobby Jr. went off the peak at Blue Sky corner destroying the car his father had raced ten years earlier. A helicopter picked the car out of the tree line and less than 24 hours later the car was rebuilt and ready for more practice. In 1979, at the age of 17, Little Al was the youngest driver to challenge Pikes Peak. In 1982, Bobby Jr. set a qualifying record that would stand for five years. In 1983 Bobby Jr. teamed with cousin Little Al, both competing in the Open Wheelers. Little Al came out on top, and ever since has stuck to Indy Cars.

In 1987, Robby Unser won the Group A

Rally division as a rookie. From 1988 to 1994, Robby Unser won four open wheel titles, often challenging the overall record. In 1989, Robby Unser won the Unlimited Rally title and, in 1995 and 1996, he won Super Stock Truck titles, for a total of eight victories. Robby Unser still holds the Open Wheel division record which was just under two seconds slower than Rod Millen's course record.

Jerry Jr's son, Johnny, raced the Showroom Stock Division from 1991 to 1993. 1998 was the first year a female Unser competed. Bobby's youngest daughter, Jeri is the twelfth Unser to race Pikes Peak. She finished 6th in the Mini-Sprint Division. In 2003 Jeri returned to set a new record for an electric car. The Unser family has raced 113 times, and won the race 38 times.

The tried-and-true Open Wheel Division began to undergo major changes in the early 1970s. Low riding rear-engine Open Wheelers began to pose a serious threat to traditional upright, front-engine sprint cars which were standard fare for the division.

This division again underwent a drastic change in 1979 with the development of a new car, designed especially for racing on Pikes Peak. The Wells Coyote, created by John Wells of Green Mtn. Falls, Colorado, became the major force, claiming many Open Wheel victories since 1981.

Coloradans have virtually owned the Stock Car Division. From 1975 through 2006 all winners were local drivers except for Roger Mears, a Californian, who won in 1985.

The Vahsholtz family, of Woodland Park, Colorado has for many years been a major force to be reckoned with. Father and son team, Leonard and Clint, are close to matching the Unser family total wins, with 37 championship trophies between them. Leonard holds 7 titles in the Stock Car class, 10 in the Comp Truck SUV Division, 1 in the sprint class and 1 in the exhibition class. After capturing 3 Pro Bike victories on Pikes Peak, Clint has achieved an unprecedented record in the Stock Car Division with 11 consecutive Stock Car Division wins, 1996 through 2006, plus another string of 4 consecutive wins in 2008 through 2011. He currently holds the Stock Car record at 10:55.603.

Another popular father and son duo were Ralph and Chandler Bruning. Ralph began racing in 1966, and won the stock car division

8 times. His son, Chandler, followed in Ralph's footsteps in 1991 and entered his first Hill Climb. That year he was named "Rookie of the Year". Tragically, in 2001 Chandler was killed on Pikes Peak participating in the very event that he and his father loved so much.

The new Rally Division was added in 1981, creating great excitement. The Production and Open Rally divisions have brought international attention back to Pikes Peak. Production Rally champion John Crawford had an unbroken winning streak from 1982 to 1987, and won again in 1991. The Open Rally Division has spawned a number of related divisions and drawn a worldwide field of competitors.

The years have seen many changes on Pikes Peak, including women racers. In 1858 Mrs. Julia Holmes became the first "pale-face" woman to climb the Peak. The first female driver, Terry Ives, drove a Porsche in the Sports Car Division in 1952. Joyce Thompson entered in 1959; Bonnie McPherson and Marge Stork both drove in 1975. Nancy Reeder, in 1977, piloted a purple and pink racer, and Marie-Alaina Schneider raced in 1984. And, of course, who could forget the first female Division champion Michele Mouton. The "Flying Frenchwoman" drove her Open Rally Audi Sport Quattro to victory in both 1984 and 1985, breaking records in her wake. In the last twenty years the race has become even more popular with women drivers.

Pikes Peak is the best-known hill climb event in the world and the second oldest auto race in the United States. Only the Indianapolis 500, started in 1911, is older.

The 2011 "Race to the Clouds" established yet another milestone in this famous event. Nobuhiro Tajima, a Japanese driver nicknamed "Monster" for his large stature became the first driver to finish in under 10 minutes with a time of 09:51.278.

The 90th annual Pikes Peak Hill Climb will be run on Sunday, July 8, 2012.

### *Hill Climb Competitors ... all in the family*

*The Pikes Peak Hill Climb has tended to run in families. Here's a non-exhaustive list of some families that have competed in the event over the years:*

Bollman	Fred, Humphrey, Otto
Brady	Jerry Jr., Ken
Brazier	Malcom, Scott, Thelma
Bruning	Ralph, Mac, Chandler
Dallenbach	Wally Jr., Paul
Daniels	Al, Bill
Donner	Robert, Robert Jr., Robert III, David
Foltz	Clifford, Ted, Dick
Hammond	Bus, George, Jim
Hardman	Butch, Brian
Hoffpauir	Bud, David, Dan
Kanawyer	Gary Lee, Randy
Keeney	Jim, Vicki, Jimmy, Melissa
Kobilan	Darrell, Erroll
Lee	Chuck, Scott
Maxedon	Bill, Kenneth
McPherson	Bonnie, Jim
Mears	Rick, Roger, Bill, Roger Jr.
Medina	Richard, Anthony
Millen	Rod, Rhys, Shannon
Miller	Al, Chet
Nance	Bob, Orville, Everett, Tim (Eckert)
Overholser	Larry, Steve
Peterson	Frank, Brett, Robert
Register	Bobby, David
Rogers	Al, Johnnie
Sanborn	Nick, Frank, Don
Schranz	Randy, Layne
Stork	Bill, Marge
Tollett	Travis, Mike
Tracy	Gary, Greg
Unser	Jerry, Louis, Joe, Jerry Jr., Louie, Bobby, Al, Bobby Jr., Al Jr., Robby, Johnny, Jeri
Vahsholtz	Leonard, Clint
Whitfield	Bud, John
Woolf	Jon, Alan

**TUESDAY NIGHTS IN JULY**  
**The Old Colorado City Historical Society**  
**SALUTES THE ARTS**

*All programs at 6:30 P.M.*

July 10, Tuesday – *“Three Local Women Writers”*

... and their marvelous books.

Jan Peit – *Utes, The Mountain People*

Ruth Obee – *History in Stone*

Toni Hamill – *Images of America: Garden of the Gods*

Books will be available for sale that evening

July 17, Tuesday – *“Cowboy Poetry and Pie”*

Tom and Donna Hatton, award winning musicians and poets will present a tapestry of music and poetry. Donna is a top five Lady Cowboy Poet of the Academy of Western Artists and Tom was nominated for Male Cowboy Poet from the Academy of Western Artists. The Hatton's live the life of the American West, a heritage handed down from generations of other Hatton men and women whose lives were spent working the land. Their CDs will be available for sale. *Admission \$5*

July 24, Tuesday – *“A Night at the Movies”*

We will show the Walter Mattheu film *The Incident* set in 1944 and filmed in Old Colorado City. *\$5 Admission, and we provide the popcorn*

July 31, Tuesday – *“Conversation with Queen Palmer and Helen Hunt Jackson: Dispelling the Myths”*

Come enjoy tea and cookies with these two famous Colorado Springs founders. Their husbands established Colorado Springs and shared the same social groups. *Reenactment Admission \$5*

**Arts and Crafts**  
 on Pikes Peak Avenue  
 Farmers Market Saturdays



## President's Report

May is a busy time at OCCHS. Thanks to Mel McFarland, we drew a very large crowd for our annual meeting and elections. The extra treat was Mel's presentation on "Getting Around in the Pikes Peak Region".

The following board members were elected to two year terms per our bylaws: Brian Copeland; Cathy Murphy; Bev Disch; Betty Baker; Suzie Schorsch; and, Phil McDonald. Congratulations to all!! The new board then voted for their own officers as follows: Cathy Murphy as Vice President; Suzie Schorsch will continue as Treasurer; Jo Cervone will continue as Secretary and I will serve one more year as President. We have an exciting year ahead of us. You don't want to miss any of it.

June 14, 6:30 we will hold our first ever Town Hall Meeting—"A Vision for OCCHS". We want input from members, non-members, business people and anyone who cares about our unique Westside.

I look forward to some cool night events in July. Check the calendar for Tuesday Nights In July-OCCHS Salutes the Arts". See you there!

Sharon Swint, President  
OCCHS Board of Directors

## TREASURER'S REPORT May 1st

Suzanne Schorsch

Summer is right around the corner and the time when OCCHS raises most of the funds needed to maintain our beautiful building. As Treasurer I thank you ahead of time for your support for all our Summer Events - Territory Days, Tuesday Nights in July, Founders Day, Crafters, and Cemetery Crawl. We couldn't do it without all of our Volunteers!

Checking	\$ 9,696.57
Endowment	\$ 103,345.85
Savings Accounts	\$ 16,513.64
Bookstore/ Credit Card Account	\$ 4,039.42
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Total OCCHS Accounts	\$ 133,595.48



### "A NEW VISION FOR THE OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORY CENTER"

A lively discussion about the future of the organization, its activities and projects, and possibilities.

Come join us..

Thursday, June 14, at 6:30 p.m.

Refreshments

TOWN HALL MEETING FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF OCCHS  
a first ever event!

The Old Colorado City Historical Society's Board of Directors meets regularly on the third Thursday of the month.

Meetings are at 1:00 P.M. at the History Center, unless otherwise announced.

Interested visitors are always welcome at the Board meetings.

OLD COLORADO CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ONE SOUTH TWENTY-FOURTH STREET  
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80904-3319

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## June / July Calendar

- |  |   |
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| <b>Thursday, June 14</b><br>6:30 P.M.              | <b>Town Hall Meeting</b> "A new vision for the Old Colorado City History Center"<br>Free refreshments   |
| <b>Saturday, June 16</b><br>11:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. | <b>Rosemount Victorian Museum, Pueblo</b> <b><i>MEMBERS ONLY TOUR</i></b> Trip includes lunch. Adult: \$19. Child 8 - 18 \$7.50. Carpool from the History Center at 10:45 A.M. <b>Purchase tickets from the Bookstore at least a week in advance.</b>   |
| <b>Tuesday, July 10</b><br>6:30 P.M.               | <b>"Three Local Women Writers"</b> and their marvelous books (see Page 6) Books will be available for sale that evening   |
| <b>Saturday, July 14</b><br>9:30 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.  | <b>Cripple Creek Heritage Center and Outlaws and Lawmen Jail Museum, Cripple Creek</b> <b><i>MEMBERS ONLY TOUR</i></b> - Tour both museums. Lunch on your own. Adult: \$12. Child 8 - 18 \$6. Carpool from the History center at 8:30 A.M. <b>Purchase tickets from the Bookstore at least a week in advance.</b> |
| <b>Tuesday, July 17</b><br>6:30 P.M.               | <b>"Cowboy Poetry and Pie"</b> a tapestry of music and poetry with Tom and Donna Hatton. Their CDs will be available for sale. ... Admission \$5  |
| <b>Tuesday, July 24</b><br>6:30 P.M.               | <b>"A Night at the Movies"</b> join us for a movie filmed in Old Colorado City in 1990, starring Walter Matthau ... Admission \$5 - we provide the popcorn  |
| <b>Tuesday, July 31</b><br>6:30 P.M.               | <b>"Conversation with Queen Palmer and Helen Hunt Jackson: Dispelling the Myths"</b> Come enjoy tea and cookies with these two famous Colorado Springs women. ... Admission \$5   |

### Old Colorado City History Center

1 S. 24th Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80904 - (719) 636-1225 - <http://www.occhs.org>

Museum Hours: Tues. thru Sat. 11 - 4 Free Admission. Donations greatly appreciated.