



THE QUILL

CHERRY CREEK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Founded in 1975

Volume XXXXI, No. 4

November, 2015

This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society

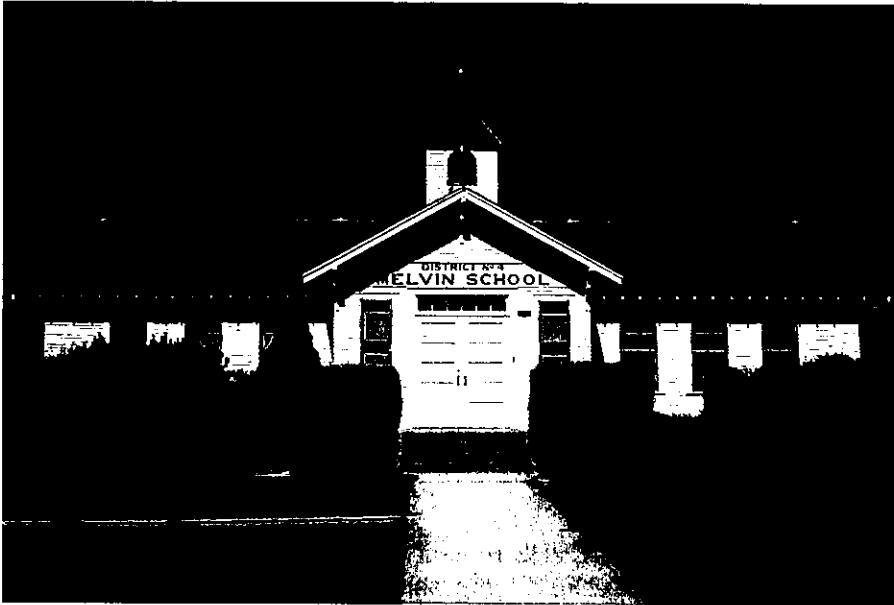
CCVHS IS 40 YEARS OLD!



This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society. A lot has happened since 1975. The big movie of 1975 was Jaws; Bruce Springsteen entered the music scene. The cost of mailing a letter rose from a dime to thirteen cents; Saturday Night Live debuted. And on March 21, 1975, five local citizens incorporated the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

The initial goal of the Society was to save the historic Melvin Schoolhouse from demolition. The overall purposes of CCVHS were to "study, record, preserve, and display the history of the Cherry Creek Valley." The five people (photo, left to right) were Russ Rountree, Rozella Hodge, Don Goe, Clarice Crowle, and Art Wallace. These five constituted CCVHS's initial Board of Directors, and they chose the name of the Society after determining that the Cherry Creek Valley needed its own historical society. Clarice Crowle was chosen as the first president. The first general meeting of the Society was held on September 16, 1975 at the Cherry Creek Grange hall (since torn down). The motto of the Society still remains: "You can help make history: Collect the past – Preserve the present – Plan for the future." And because it has been pictured in our newsletter and many brochures, the wagon wheel has become the symbol of the Society. The current CCVHS Board voted unanimously to present Don Goe with an honorary Life Membership in recognition of his 40 years of service to the Society.

CCVHS Charter Members	
ANDERSON, HILDA	MARVIN, LYNN
ARNOLD, HAZEL CUMMINGS	MATTHEWS, TERRY & ANNE
BAISEL, RICHARD & MARILYN	MAYFIELD, SUSANNA HAWKEY
BEELER, RAY & SVEA	McDANAL, DICK & EILEENE
BLESER , RICHARD, BETH, & ALAN	MEE, JIM & MARY LOU
BRANDEBERY, EMMA	MEE, RICK
BRENT, TERRY, SANDRA, & FAMILY	MEE, TOM, LILLIAN, & DAVID
BRITTON, MARION & SYBIL	MILLS, CLEONA
BUCHER, MONA	MURDOCK, ADELE
CARY, DON, MARTY, & FAMILY	MURDOCK, DAN
CLEARY, MILDRED	MUSSELWHITE, BILLIE, KAROL, & FAMILY
CORBRIDGE, DORIS	NANNEY, DAN
CRATER, ELIZABETH ROTH	PETERSON, NANCY
CROWLE, A.C. & HAZEL	PINO, EDWARD C.
CROWLE, CINDY	PRICE, EVELYN
CROWLE, FRED & CLARICE	QUICK, CALVIN & PAT
CUMMINGS, CHARLES	QUICK, KATIE
CUSHNER, GARY & MARION	RACE, ROBERT
DAVIDSON, JOE & HAZEL	REEF, WALLIS MELVIN
DEEM, JOAN	RHUDY, DERALD, MARGARET & BECKY
DRAPER, JANET	ROSS, RUTH
DUNNING, ANNABELLE	ROUNTREE, RUSS & RHODA
EAST, JUSTIN & MARY	ROUSE, REGINA ROTH
FARLEY, TOM & BETTY	ROWE, OLIVER & THELMA
FOSTER, BILLY & VIRGINIA	RUGGLES, FLORENCE
FRITTS, GLENN, BARBARA, & FAMILY	SADLER, TED & ROBERTA
FUTRELLE, BETTY	SCHLEICHER, ED & ELEANOR
GEDDES, GRETCHEN	SHIVLEY, HELEN
GIESEL, VELMA	SIDES, ROY & CAROL
GOE, DON, FRAN, & FAMILY	SIEBERT, VERA ROWLEY
GRAVES, MARGARET	SMITH, DAWN
GRIFFIN, GLORIA	STEELE, RUTH ANN
GUTHRIE, RUTH	STUTLER, CLARK & NELL
HODGE, ROZELLA McKIMMIE	TEPPER, EUGENE
HOLE, DONNA	THOMPSON, CISSY
HOLIDAY, JUDITH	TORGAS, GRACE
HOLLAND, MIKE	UNITT, JACK & KATHERINE
INNESS, GLADYS	VIANZON, FELIPE
JACKIEWICZ, SHARON	WALLACE, ART
LANSAW, ROBERTA	WHEELER, HUGH & ANITA
LA TRONICO, ANNE	WICKHAM, RUTH
LEWIS, MARTHA	WILL, DAREL & HARRIET
LEYTON, ANDY	WILSON, BOB & CATIY
LEYTON, DONNI & FAMILY	WILSON, HOLLY
LLOYD, CHRISTY	WILSON, SUE
MacLEAN, CHARLES & MARIE	WINTERS, JOHN & MABEL



The Melvin Schoolhouse was built in 1922 a short distance south of where the Cherry Creek Reservoir is now. It was moved to the southwest corner of Parker & Quincy in the early 1950s to become the original Emerald Isle tavern. The owner wanted to build a new tavern and told CCVHS that he would donate the building to the Society if the structure were moved to another location. Don Goe, who was the Assistant Superintendent of the Cherry Creek School District, was able to secure a new location on the campus of Smoky Hill High School. The building was moved on December 14, 1976 to its

current site between the high school and Laredo Middle School. The School District paid for the move and the new foundation. It was then up to the Historical Society, spearheaded by Clarice Crowle, to restore the schoolhouse. With the volunteer work of CCVHS members, students, teachers, and community personnel, this monumental effort took five years. The restored building was dedicated on September 23, 1982 ("by the community, for the community"). In May 1984 CCVHS held a "Project Mail Bag" ceremony at Melvin School to mark the 125th anniversary of the first stagecoach into Denver. Melvin was one of the stops on the Kansas-to-Denver re-enactment trek. Melvin School was entered in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1984 and was named Aurora Historic Landmark Number 1 in 1988. The Melvin Schoolhouse Museum-Library was the recipient of the 1991 Rosenstock Western History Award from the Denver Posse of Westerners for "outstanding contributions to Colorado history." This \$1,000 award was used to upgrade Melvin's exhibits and library. In 2010 the school's library was renamed the Clarice and Fred Crowle Memorial Library. We celebrated the 90th anniversary of the school in November 2012. Over the years CCVHS has hosted numerous programs at Melvin for students of the Cherry Creek, Denver, and other school districts. Students were able to experience education as it was conducted in the 1930s and 1940s. Melvin's most popular programs have featured classes taught by an old-time "schoolmarm" in period dress. In addition, Melvin has also served as an overflow classroom for Laredo and a quiet place for Cherry Creek teachers to conduct testing. Under the guidance of Nita McKnight, CCVHS now hosts periodic open houses at the schoolhouse.

The Smoky Hill Trail has been a major focus of CCVHS from the beginning. (Clarice suggested the name Smoky Hill for the high school because it lies right on the old trail.) The Society documented trail ruts, monuments and markers, forts, stage stations, and mile houses in this effort. Preserving these vestiges of the Trail was the purpose of CCVHS's "Save our Smoky" project. Because the Trail was significant in the Colorado Gold Rush and in our nation's westward expansion, CCVHS has tried to have the Smoky recognized as a National Historic Trail; we were not successful in accomplishing this. In addition, the Society determined that the last remaining segment of the Smoky Hill Trail that existed near the final destination of Denver consisted of about 100 feet of wagon-wheel ruts lying along Smoky Hill Road near the Southlands Mall in Aurora. Our request to have these ruts put on the 2004 "Most Endangered" list of Colorado Preservation Inc. was denied, however, and these ruts were obliterated when the road was widened. A sign was placed near the location of the ruts, and many of our members were present at its dedication.

Having saved the Melvin School, the Historical Society turned its attention to saving another building, the 17 Mile House. This structure was one of the waystations that led to Denver on the Smoky Hill/Cherokee Trails during the 1859-1860 Colorado Gold Rush. Again led by Clarice Crowle, CCVHS petitioned the county commissioners and engaged in a letter-writing and newspaper campaign that kept developers from demolishing the building and erecting a modern structure in its place. Through the efforts of CCVHS, 17 Mile House achieved NRHP status in 1983. The property was saved when it was bought by the Trust for Public Land in the year 2000 and sold to Arapahoe County in 2001. The 17 Mile House Farm Park opened to the public in 2012, and CCVHS has been entrusted by Arapahoe County Open Spaces as the agency responsible for interpreting and disseminating the site's history. Under the supervision of Karen Sear, CCVHS now hosts an open house each month at this historic jewel.



Photo courtesy Vonnie C deBaca

Under the supervision of Karen Sear, CCVHS now hosts an open house each month at this historic jewel.

The historic Melvin-Lewis Cemetery has been another CCVHS project (albeit a project that requires more research and attention). When the area was being developed into part of the parking lot for the Pioneer Hills shopping center along Parker Road near Chambers Street, the Society was successful in lobbying the developer to construct a handsome fence around the cemetery and a stately gate. But since little is known about the burials, it is hoped that we can eventually learn more about those buried here.

As with any public organization that has existed for 40 years, the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society has experienced its share of hard times and adversity. But each time that our membership has been polled as to the future of the organization, the response from nearly every member has been a resounding "continue on." It is hoped that the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society can "continue on" for another 40 years.

CCVHS needs your comments and opinions (positive and negative). The Society solicits your suggestions concerning the Quill's format as well as future programs, field trips, and projects. We are here to serve you, the members of our Historical Society. So let us know by calling me (Garry) at 303-751-3140 or e-mailing me at gohara46@aol.com.

And by the way: CCVHS salutes our fellow history buffs of the Aurora Historical Society, which is also observing its 40th anniversary this year.

MELVIN SCHOOLHOUSE NEWS

We have had quite a bit of activity at Melvin School the past quarter. Our "work days" have seen several members working on the maps; others have been working on inventory and making certain that all articles/books are accounted for. We appreciate the ladies from DAR who came on October 11th to give us so much help with these projects. And we cannot express enough gratitude to Gary Wolf and Herb McKnight for their restoration of the wall map of Cherry Creek Valley in the Melvin Schoolhouse. This painstaking effort took several weeks and is much appreciated. Kevin Sear did a fine job of gleaning inventory records and other data from the old computer at Melvin this summer. This huge effort will greatly help our archiving of documents, photographs, and artifacts.

Open houses have welcomed a number of visitors. We had one "school" session for a group of 4 homeschoolers. We will take a break for November and December and look forward to getting back to work on the first Tuesday of January--time TBA. Thanks to everyone who has worked so diligently at Melvin!

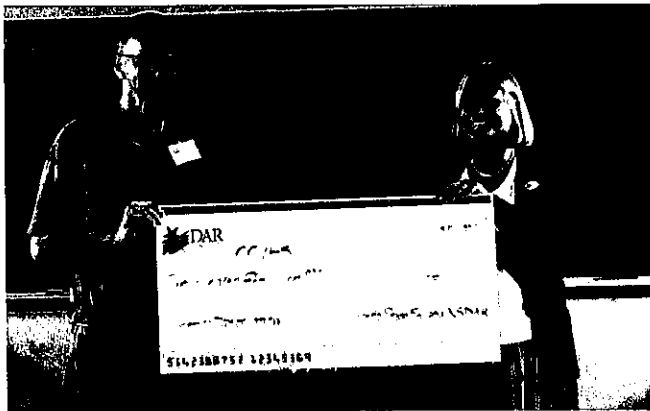
17 MILE HOUSE NEWS

The Arapahoe County Open Spaces 5th annual Fall Festival was held at 17 Mile House Farm Park on October 17th. It was a great success with an estimated attendance of more than 4,000 visitors on a perfect autumn day. We thank the 17 Mile House Volunteers for their help: Garry O'Hara, Bonnie Bowman, Carol Epps, Vonnie C'deBaca, Shirley Miller, Kathy Okon, Karen and Kevin Sear, Katherine Plym, Will Sear, Ruth Dolan, Jack Race, Hannah Sear, Wynne Shaw, Denice Dirks and family, and the Kastens family – Charles, Paige, Emily, and Jackson.



The volunteers also hosted two group tours this fall. Garry O'Hara provided a tour for the "Red Hat Society" group of ladies with Barb Becker on September 25th. On November 13th families with the homeschool program ColoradoEd, toured the house and grounds. We are so grateful to Casey Davenhill and Raylene Owen with the Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners for providing the outdoor nature lessons and hikes along the Cherry Creek to our school groups. Thanks very much to Bonnie Bowman, Paige Kastens, Jackson Kastens, Emily Kastens, Karen Sear, and Estee Fraitag (our newest volunteer providing spinning demonstrations) for giving your time for this group of students and their families.

MEMBER NEWS



Wynne Shaw presenting \$250 grant to Garry O'Hara.

We are glad to report that Wynne Shaw has not only joined CCVHS but has become a life member of our organization. She is the Regent of the Piney Creek Chapter of the National Society – Daughters of the American Revolution, with whom CCVHS is proud to have developed a working relationship.

CCVHS gives its condolences to the Sear family on the death of Kevin's brother Conrad on September 14.

We thank Peter Faris, Shirley Miller and Carl Sandburg, and Lee and Jane Whiteley for representing our Society at the October 10th meeting of the Eastern Colorado Museums & Historical

Societies at the historic Russell Gates building in Elbert.

We welcome our new members, Christina Leonard-Breth and Norman Breth.

CCVHS's PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PINEY CREEK DAR

We sincerely thank the Piney Creek chapter of the DAR for the two \$50 donations it presented to CCVHS at its regular meeting of September 16th. These donations will go a long way toward supporting our efforts to enhance the study and display of local history.



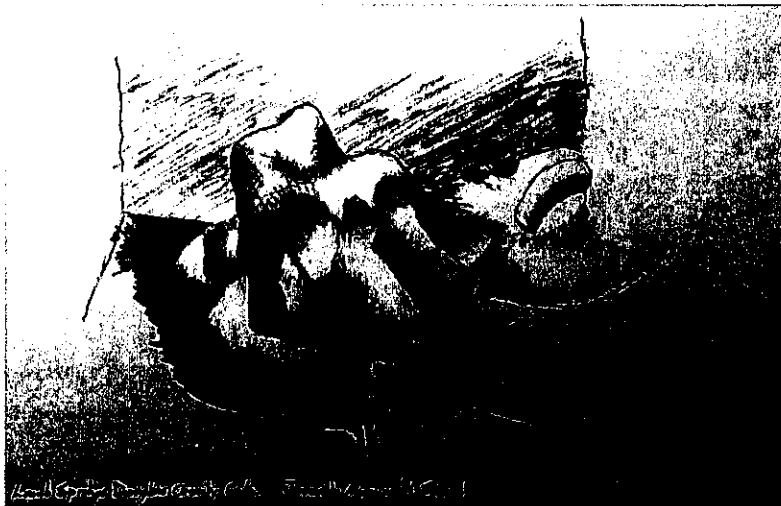
And we are very appreciative of the Piney Creek DAR members who volunteered on the weekend of October 10-11 to work at the 17 Mile House and Melvin School. This "Day of Service" (actually two days) was an opportunity to "give back to the community" to commemorate the DAR's 125th anniversary. Piney Creek women devoted Saturday the 10th primarily to planting flower bulbs around the exterior of 17 Mile House and getting it ready for the October 17th Fall Festival. We also thank the Sear family, Ruth Race Dolan, and other CCVHS members for donating bulbs from their own gardens, and the Arapahoe County Open Spaces staff Bill Bauer and Derwin Milton

for preparing the flower beds along the house and parking area. A big thanks goes to Bruce and Marcy Leonard for their donation of a gift card to help in this effort.

The DAR devoted Sunday the 11th to doing needed archiving work at Melvin and updating and labeling our inventories of maps and books. Our sincere appreciation goes to Piney Creek members Wynne Shaw, Karen Vrabels, Milesa Quraini, Debbie Wein, Paula Lasky, Liz and Doug Gaudeau, Becky Halvorsen, and chapter historian Denice Dirks for making the "Days of Service" so beneficial to our Society. And we thank all the CCVHS members who volunteered their time at these Days of Service.

OUR FIELD TRIP TO THE ROXBOROUGH AREA

On August 22nd we teamed up with the Roxborough Area Historical Society to visit two historically significant sites in northern Douglas County: the Lamb Spring archeological preserve and the Miksch-Helmer log cabin.



Our Lamb Spring guide, archeologist and author Jack Warner, was most knowledgeable. At this archeological preserve we viewed the area where the bones of over 30 mammoths and other ancient mammals were discovered about 50 years ago. Because early man was known to hunt these animals, for a while in the 1960s this site was considered the earliest evidence of human habitation in the United States (since disproven). The excavation pits have been backfilled and will stay covered up until a working museum can be built to enclose the site. We did see a replica of the skull of a juvenile mammoth that was found here in

2001. Our Vice-President Peter Faris made the sketch of this skull (shown here).

Five minutes from Lamb Spring was the Miksch-Helmer log cabin. Our tour guide there was CCVHS life member and former Roxborough State Park manager Susie Trumble. The 18'x21' cabin was built by Amos Miksch (1839-92), who homesteaded on 160 acres here in the early 1870s. Miksch was born in Ohio and was a corporal in the First Colorado Cavalry during the Civil War; he became a prominent resident of Douglas County. Austria-born Franz (Frank) Helmer occupied the cabin from 1883 to 1888, and John Helmer and his descendants then lived in the cabin and owned the property until 1990. For 145 years the cabin has remained intact and in its original location. Douglas County acquired it in 2013.



We thank Jack and Susie for giving us such interesting tours of these important places.

THE FLOOD OF 1965



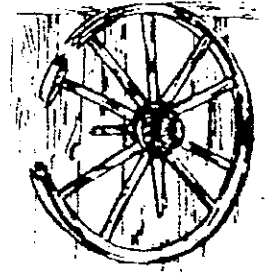
This year marks the 50th anniversary of the costliest and most widespread flood Colorado has ever experienced. The great flood of June 1965 was not as deadly as the Pueblo flood of 1921 or the Big Thompson flood of 1976, but it caused more damage and affected a wider area (27 counties) in only a four-day period. Tornadoes from Loveland to Palmer Lake, hail described as "epic," and torrential rain pounded eastern Colorado. The South Platte River flowed at over 40 times its usual rate, cresting 25 feet above normal. About 14 inches of rain battered the Castle Rock area in one afternoon.

The flooding caused the deaths of 21 people and the destruction or damaging of over 5,000 houses, trailers, and farm buildings and about 6,700 small businesses.

Littleton and other south suburbs of Denver were especially hard hit. Sixteen bridges in Denver were washed away by debris-laden floodwaters. The monetary cost was set at \$543 million (or more than \$4 billion in today's dollars). Cherry Creek overflowed its banks, and the reservoir depth increased as much as 16 feet, but Cherry Creek Dam held.

Tom Browning, deputy director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, said, "I think that the 1965 floods acted as a huge eye-opener for communities and floodplain managers. It really started the era of floodplain management in Colorado." And former state historian Bill Convery was quoted, "So much of the development along the South Platte today came out of planning that took place in the immediate aftermath of that flood." Among measures taken were the construction of Chatfield Dam and the creation of the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District.

The above story is based on John Aguilar's article "Watershed" in The Denver Post of June 14, 2015 and Alan Prendergast's article "What We Lost in the Flood" in the April 30-May 6, 2015 Westword.



Address Correction Requested

Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society
16100 East Smoky Hill Road
Aurora, Colorado 80015

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE MELVIN SCHOOL

1922 - The Melvin School was built in the NW1/4 of Section 13, T5S, R67W, Arapahoe County, Colorado on land donated by Hans Dransfeldt. The DeBoer brothers built the school for \$4,450. The original site was at the junction of Belleview Avenue and the old Sullivan Road (now Jordan Road) in Cherry Creek State Park. The school opened in September of 1922.

1949 - Families in the community of Melvin received condemnation papers telling them to move from the area in preparation for the building of the dam. The school was included in this area, and it closed its doors in June of 1949. The building was sold to J. Edwin Stout for \$1,500. He sold it to William Minshall who had it moved to the southwest corner of the intersection of Parker Road and Quincy Avenue (Section 12, T5S, R67W).

1953 - After extensive remodeling, the former schoolhouse opened as the Emerald Isle Tavern on Saint Patrick's Day. Glenn Barrier managed it as Glenn's Emerald Isle Tavern until 1970.

1975 - Five area residents who were interested in local history and in saving the old Melvin School incorporated and became the first Board of Directors of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, Inc. They persuaded Mr. Silverberg to donate the building to the Society in trade for their moving it elsewhere and leveling the site after the moving of the building. The Society's purpose was to restore the old Melvin School and to use it as a classroom-museum-library for the study and collection of local historical information.

1976 - Cherry Creek School District offered a site on the campus of Smoky Hill High School. It was moved on December 14, 1976.

1977-1981 - With the help of the community, the school district, and the historical society, the Melvin School was restored. The exterior was authentically restored as was one classroom. The second classroom, the one which originally had a stage, was adaptively restored into a museum and a library. A plaque which honors those who helped in the restoration has been engraved with the slogan: "Restored by the Community - For the Community."

1984 - The Melvin School was put on the National Register of Historic Places.

1988 - The City of Aurora honored the Melvin School as Aurora Historic Landmark #1.

The Quill is the quarterly newsletter of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society (CCVHS). The purposes of the Society are to study, record, preserve, and display the history of the Cherry Creek Valley and surrounding areas. Membership is open to anyone interested in this history. Quarterly general meetings are usually held at the Melvin Schoolhouse, 4950 S. Laredo St. (between Smoky Hill High School and Laredo Middle School) in Aurora, Colo. Correspondence concerning *The Quill* should be directed to Garry O'Hara, editor, at (303) 751-3140.

YOU CAN HELP MAKE HISTORY

Collect the past

Preserve the present

Plan for the future