

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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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 **Chili** 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, Tornadoes, Snow and Wind Storms, and a Bomb Cyclone

The Tornado and Flood of 1965

The afternoon of June 16, 1965, was 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 roofs off 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."

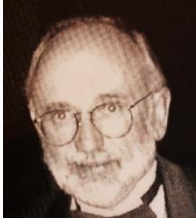
After two passengers ventured into the storm to find a little food from a Palmer Lake family, the group settled in for the long night. Before that, however, they adopted the following statement: "*Resolved*, that the thanks of the association be tendered to the officers and employees of the narrow-gauge 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.

(continued on page 4)

President's Message



Another year has almost come to an end. I hope it was a happy and healthy one!

We've been readying the museum for re-opening, hopefully by the first of 2022. The ramp to the library upstairs is nearing completion, so when it's finished, we'll be able to open again to the public. Watch for information on our website:

<https://palmerdividehistory.org>.

Since Christmas isn't far away, we have some nice gift items on our website; check out the store! You can order and pay for them with a credit card. You can also renew your membership online.

If you're shopping on Amazon, please take a moment and choose Palmer Lake Historical Society as the non-profit that you want to support. A small portion of your purchase will go to the Society, and, best of all, it doesn't cost you a thing!

On January 20 we will hold our membership meeting. It will be a bit different this year. We'll hold it in the Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce in Monument, and we will serve a chili supper instead of our traditional potluck.

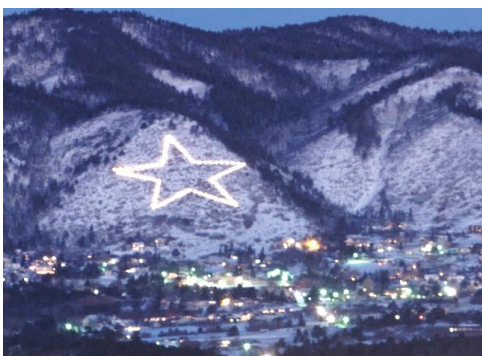
I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season, and all the best in 2023.

Your President, Jim Sawatzki

(Note: The above was copied from a prior Nov/Dec newsletter to allocate the necessary space. If the Chautauqua is mentioned in the president's column, I'll insert the two Doris Baker photos below into the column.)



Above: Did you miss the August 2022 Chautauqua?



Palmer Lake Star at Christmastime



Left: PLHS member Dan Edwards' book, *A Century of Rail-roading at Palmer Lake, 1871-1971*, contains this 1921 photo entitled "A Rio Grande snow-plow at work at Palmer Lake." Vaile Museum photo

Right: In *The Communities of the Palmer Divide*, 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 fall.

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

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 Chili Supper

Don't miss this event! The PLHS will provide the chili, cornbread, and drinks. Just bring a yummy potluck dessert. Supper will be followed by a short business meeting and election of 2023 officers. Attendees will be encouraged to renew their PLHS memberships for 2023 - or to join if they're not PLHS members.

The 2023 PLHS "history" calendar will be available at the meeting. Renowned local artist Joe Bohler has again donated his wonderful artwork for the calendar's cover.



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 include Jeannine Engel, owner of Rock House Ice Cream, and TBD names.

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.

(continued from page 1)

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., 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.



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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

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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PO Box 662
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