

# The Advocate

**Newsletter for the Aurora Historical Society**

**Volume 39 Number 3 May 2015**



## **Aurora Historical President's Letter May 2015**

Our meeting on March 31 at Building 500 on Fitzsimons campus proved to be a rousing success, greatly enjoyed by all who were able to attend. Many thanks to Neil Krauss, Director of Administration, U of CO Anschutz Campus and Ken Neerer, Manager, Infrastructure Development U of CO, Anschutz Campus who made the wonderfully informative evening possible.

The Aurora Historical Society, in partnership with the City of Aurora, celebrated Aurora's 124th birthday with a cake cutting in the Aurora Municipal Center on April 30. Thank you so very much Mayor Hogan for cutting the cake. The two giant cakes disappeared in short order as many stopped by to celebrate with us. A special thank you to members Lynne Evans, Dolly Gray and Ruth Fountain for serving the group and Dexter Harding, Larry Wilterdink, and Hugh Sweeney for keeping the conversations going and to Nadine Caldwell arranging for the two beautiful cakes. Thank you Robin Feller, from the City Council office for taking care of the tables and table settings for the event. I would be remiss if thanks did not go out to King Soopers for the beautiful flower arrangements they donated to the event. Thank you all, it was great fun. Please look for pictures of the event elsewhere in this newsletter.

Our May meeting on May 26 will be held at the Aurora Fox Theatre, 9900 E Colfax Ave. Jennifer Kuehner, Executive Director of the Aurora History Museum will give us a brief talk on the history of the Fox, with historic images, and details about the architecture and info on the mid-1980's renovation. We will also meet Charles Packard, Executive Producer of the Fox, he will be discussing the Fox's upcoming season and current events. There will be free parking behind the Fox, to the east and west of the building and behind the MLK library. All are welcome, look forward to seeing you there.

Look for news of our summer picnic surprise shortly, we are in the planning process of somewhere new and exciting - with a new venue. The ice cream social in July will also be announced soon. *Stay tuned.*

Congratulations to Nadine Caldwell. She will be receiving the Elizabeth Johnson award for her many contributions to the City of Aurora on May 9.

Many thanks go to Jennifer Kuehner and the AHS board, for helping with the planning for the coming year, what a great partnership we have with the Aurora History Museum.

Sandy Sweeney, President Aurora Historical Society

## **The Next Aurora Historical Society Meeting will be on Tuesday, May 26, 2015 at 7:00PM @ the Aurora Fox Arts Center.**

Free Parking is available behind the Fox, to the east and west of the building, and behind the MLK Library.



**Please join us for an interesting program presented by Jennifer Kuehner, Executive Director of the Aurora History Museum. She will give us a brief history of the Aurora Fox with historic images, details about the architect, and information about the mid-1980's renovations.**

## **(Fox Continued)**

**Special Guest Charles Packard, Executive Producer of the Aurora Fox, will welcome the group and discuss the Fox's upcoming season and current events.**

**All are welcome.**

### **“Operation “DIG”**

Do you remember the story of Jessica McClure who became famous at the age of 18 months after falling into a well in her aunt's backyard in Midland, Texas, on October 14, 1987? Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16th, rescuers worked for 58 hours to free her from the eight-inch well casing 22 feet below the ground. The story gained worldwide attention

Aurora has a similar story in its history. The headline in the *Aurora Advocate* stated, “City goes all out for boy in the well.” David Mark Counterman, age 23 months fell into a well his father had been digging in their back yard at 995 Nile Street. He was lodged 18 feet down sitting on an auger rod in a ten-inch well shaft. His ordeal, however, was only 4 hours not 58 hours as Jessica’s had been, but both ended well.

Davey and his brother were playing in the back yard with their dog, Duchess. Their father, Charles Counterman was spending his spare time drilling a well for lawn irrigation. At about 3:50PM on Saturday afternoon April 16, 1955, after admonishing the boys to stay well away from the hole, he turned around to set up a ladder beside the hole so he could set up extensions for the auger. Almost immediately he heard Davey Crying. Counterman turned around quickly and his son Gary said, “Davey fell down the hole.” Gary was told to run to the house and tell his mother to call the firemen; Charles Counterman then started yelling for help. The neighbors came out of their house, and when told the problem called the Fire Department. Charles got a flashlight to look down the hole, Davey was jammed between the auger rod and the dirt wall of the hole, crying. His father told him they would get him out. Neighbors soon arrived with shovels. Next came Dr. W.W. Miles in response to a call from the Fire Department. A fire rescue truck arrived and a pick up truck full of Street Department employees. Fire Chief George Moorehead was in charge of the operation.

Volunteers were directed to start digging a

trench alongside the well leaving enough of a dirt wall to prevent the collapse of the well, which might crush Davey. Volunteers dug about three feet and then the street crew brought in a big power shovel with a back-holer. The fence had to be removed to get the equipment into the yard. Two men, Leon Simmons and Eugene Davis, took turns running the power shovel.

Meanwhile a mirror was held to reflect light into the hole, and Dr. Miles and the firemen lowered an oxygen tube into the well to keep Davey from suffocating. They also got a cord looped around Davey’s upraised arm and tugged on it so Davey would know they were there in efforts to keep him from crying.

The shovel dug to a depth of 15 feet, which was about its limit. The telephone company then brought in a power driven post-hole digger, which loosened the dirt so the shovel could go back to work. This brought the hole down to 16 feet. At 7:39 floodlights were brought in. Firemen with picks and shovels then took over the digging. When 19 feet was reached Chief Moorehead was at the bottom and he had men dig directly into the wall and slightly downward so they would come into the well below Davey’s position.

Fireman Frank Brumer made the first break-through into the well. Then he and Chief Moorehead used only their hands to remove the dirt wall so Davey could be reached. They broke through just below Davey’s hips, and found that his legs were hanging free but his head and body were wedged tight. Luckily he remained out of the water and was fairly dry.

Carefully, Chief Moorehead removed the dirt around Davey while the crowd stood silently waiting. When the two men reached Davey’s head they found two cigars resting on it. The cigars had fallen out of Dr. Miles’s pocket when he bent over the well. Chief Moorehead tossed the cigars up to Dr. Miles, and Miles yelled, “They’ve got him!” “These are my cigars!”

At 8:01 Chief Moorehead’s arm went up and a victory shout went up from all there. Chief Moorehead was pulled up with a blanket wrapped Davey held tightly in his arms. Dr. Miles briefly examined Davey, and then put him and his parents in an ambulance for a trip to Children’s Hospital. At the hospital, Davey was cleaned up and treated. He had a stitch taken in a wound in his swollen head and other bruises were dressed.

You may be wondering what Davey's parents were doing through the ordeal. Charles Counterman remained at the well hole talking to his son and trying to keep him calm. Gary, Davey's four-year-old brother was picked up and taken to his grandparent's house. The boxer, Duchess paced the house, and Patricia Counterman remained in her house surrounded by neighbor women. Dr. Miles had advised her to remain indoors since she was expecting another child in about 2 months. The women kept her updated on progress and Reverend Dean Shaw, the minister of Burns Memorial Church dropped in to sit and pray with Patricia Counterman.

The neighbor women provided coffee and sandwiches for the workers. The Red Cross also sent sandwiches, and the Aurora Fire Department sent coffee. The whole community turned out to help. The Aurora Police and fire Departments helped. Service men from Lowry Field, Fitzsimons Hospital, and Buckley Field sent men to help police stretch ropes and keep back the crowd, which reached almost 2,000. People had come to both see and help. Lowry also sent oxygen resuscitator equipment to supplement what the Aurora Firemen had brought. Lowry provided a truck with powerful lights to illuminate the scene. Both Lowry and Fitzsimons held ambulances in readiness, neither knowing that Dr. Miles had summoned one from Denver.

(Picture from Denver Post Article April 1955)

Provost Marshall John Maier lent his booming voice to the crowd control efforts of his Fitzsimons MP's. General Joseph Moffitt of the Colorado Air National Guard came from Buckley Filed to see if he could supply any additional equipment or men. Aurora Street Department employees sped to the scene with picks and shovels and later brought their power shovel. The Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company supplied a large power post-hole digger. Squad 2 of the Denver Fire Department arrived with a rescue truck and strong lighting equipment.

While the Countermands were at the hospital, another transformation occurred in their yard. The street crew that dug up the yard stayed behind with the heavy equipment and filled in the excavation, and Henry Anderies, Mrs. Counterman's father, asked them to fill in the well too.

The next morning while the Counterman's visited Davey in the hospital the neighbors came over and smoothed out the backyard put the clothesline poles and line back up and restored the fence. The Aurora Hardware Company presented the Counterman's with 10 pounds of new seed to grow a new back lawn. "People have just been so wonderful that we don't know how we can thank them" Counterman said.



Here are some Pictures from Aurora's 124<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party. The Aurora Historical Society hosted the event in the Aurora Municipal Building's Lobby at 11:30 on April 30<sup>th</sup>. Special Thanks to Nadine Caldwell and Robin Feller, Aurora's Council Support Specialist, for organizing the event.



Sam's Club made the cake.



Mayor Hogan cuts the cake with the help of Sandy Sweeney and Ruth Fountain.



Aurora is 124 years old



Shout out to King Soopers who donated the beautiful flowers and Brian Molitoris Photography for the great pictures.



The cake cutters: Dexter Harding, Ruth Fountain, Dolly Gray, and Lynne Evans.

*Thank  
You*

## **Aurora History Museum Exhibits & Events**

Through August 2015

### **EXHIBITS GROWING HOME**

#### **Now Open**

See highlights of the 124 year history of Aurora through stories, objects, and more than 100 historic photographs. Interactive elements invite visitors to build their own city choosing the pieces and parts important to them and go on a scavenger hunt to find pieces of Aurora history. The dramatic finale of the exhibit is the fully restored 1913 historic Trolley Trailer No. 610. This brightly painted yellow and red trolley trailer sits in the center of the Ruth Fountain Gallery and invites visitors to enter it and experience what it might have been like to ride down Colfax. A large wall mural looking east down Colfax Avenue at twilight helps to set the scene. *Growing Home* offers a glimpse at Aurora's unique, exciting, and often untold past with color, texture, creativity, and thoughtful moments of great storytelling.

### **THE WAY WE WORKED**

#### **Apr 3- May 10**

What would life be like without teachers, doctors, or firefighters? Every day Americans are hard at work on farms, factories, in homes, or at desks keeping our communities thriving. Explore the professions and the people that sustain American society in this Smithsonian Institution exhibit, in cooperation with the Colorado Humanities Council.

### **BEHIND THE BADGE: PUBLIC SAFETY IN AURORA**

#### **May 27 – Sept 13**

Tasked with keeping a growing city safe, Aurora's Fire & Police Departments strive for excellence & community service. For this exhibit, current & former department members collaborated with the Museum to provide stories that shaped the histories of these two agencies.

### **Community Gallery**

#### **THE ART OF TEA**

#### **Apr 14 - Jul 19**

Celestial Seasonings tea company commissions new artwork for each flavor of tea. Come view a selection of the original art & see how the style has changed over the years.

### **SCENES FROM "THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN PROJECT"**

#### **July 21 – Sept 18**

American photographer Edward Curtis devoted 30 years of his life to capturing the culture, clothing, dwellings, & ceremonies of Native Americans in the West for his "North American Indian Project." See 30 of his photographs, taken between 1900-1930, from the Curtis Collection at the Library of Congress.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

#### **Sunday, May 3**

**2pm - 3pm**

### **AURORA WORKS!**

Minks, sugar beets and marijuana help tell the tale of Aurora's continued growth. In conjunction with the Smithsonian traveling exhibit, *The Way We Worked*, Jay Fell, history professor at the University of Colorado - Denver and co-author of *Aurora: Gateway to the Rockies*, will address the diverse businesses that put Aurora to work past and present. Aurora Works! features rarely seen photos from the museum's collection.

### **FAMILY DAYS**

#### **Sat., June 6**

**10 a.m. to 6 p.m.**

### **KIDSPREE**

This zany and fun festival for kids is held just outside the Museum as well as in the Museum. It draws thousands of kids and parents each year in June. Activities, performances, and attractions, offers the ideal mix for families. The event is hosted by the city of Aurora, and entices both local residents and visitors with fantastic food, crafts, booths/vendors, pony rides, live performances, face painting and so much more.

**FREE**

#### **Sat., June 27**

**2-4 p.m.**

### **CELESTIAL SEASONINGS TEA TASTING**

*Ages 8 to adult.* Learn about how Celestial Seasonings creates & test their tea blends. Taste a variety of teas & enjoy an afternoon of treats.

\$26 (\$20 Resident)

#### **Sat., July 4**

**4-8 p.m.**

### **FOURTH OF JULY**

Tour the Museum while you wait for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Spectacular Fireworks! Try a gallery scavenger hunt & win a prize. Create a patriotic craft. Free

**Sat., July 8**

**9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

**CELESTIAL TRAVELS**

Enjoy a leisurely bus trip to the home of Celestial Seasonings in Boulder. Tour the factory & enjoy a delectable lunch in their on-site café. Lunch included. \$34 (\$26 Resident)

**Sat., Aug 1**

**2-4 p.m.**

**TEA WITH NANCY RUSSELL**

Ages 8 to adult. Nancy Cooper Russell, wife of western artist Charles M. Russell, was the reason for his success. Who was this remarkable woman behind the man? Meet and learn about this her story while enjoying afternoon tea.

\$26 (\$20 Resident)

**Sat., Aug 22**

**2-8 p.m.**

**GLOBAL FEST**

Visit the Museum on a day of cultural celebration!

Free

**SUMMER CAMPS**

**PIONEER CAMP**

**Session 1: June 22-26**

**Session 2: July 13-17**

Mon.-Fri., 9 am – noon

The Museum Summer Camp is a weeklong, half day camp designed to engage your kids with their past. Campers cook on a woodstove, hop on the historic Trolley and fight for water rights as they discover Aurora through the lives of those who shaped our community.

*Ages 8-12. Wear sunscreen & closed-toe shoes.*

**\$110 (\$90 Resident)**

Location: DeLaney Farm Historic Site, 170 S. Chambers Road

**BROWN BAG & WHITE LINEN LECTURE**

**SERIES**

Wed., 12-1 p.m.

Aurora History Museum

\$4 (\$3 Resident)

Bring your lunch.

**May 20**

**Mid-Century Polynesian Culture in Aurora**

Take a look back at the heyday of Mid-Century Polynesian Pop culture and how exotic fantasies of the South Seas influenced it with local expert Mike Skinner.

**June 17**

**Food & Migration in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Migration & globalization have brought foods & food cultures to the U.S. from across the globe. Learn about the changing taste of food with Dr. Laresh Jayasanker, Metropolitan State University of Denver.

**July 15**

**Picture Me Here**

*Picture Me Here* is a photographic, digital storytelling program for refugees in Aurora & Denver. Listen to the history & stories of this project with Brigid McAuliffe, Co-Founder & Director.

**August 19**

**Celebrating & Promoting Diversity**

The New American School at Lowry serves students from more than 40 countries receiving their high school education. Join Principal Amy Trujillo to learn about the school's unique community, celebrating values & promoting diversity.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAMS**

**Sat., May 2, June 6, July 4, Aug. 1, Sept. 5**

**1-4 p.m.**

**CENTENNIAL HOUSE OPEN DAYS**

Visit the oldest home on Galena Street, built in 1890, during our summertime open house days. Location: 1671 Galena Street

FREE

**Sat., May 9, June 13, July 11, Aug. 8, Sept. 12**

**1-4 p.m.**

**DELANEY FARM OPEN DAY WITH LIVE MUSIC**

Tour DeLaney Farm historic buildings, try a craft, and enjoy music of the late 19th and early 20th century from the porch of Gully Homestead House. (May 9: performance by banjo player John Mumford. from 1:30-3:30 p.m.)

Location: 170 S. Chambers Road

**Sat., May 16**

**9-11 a.m.**

**CLEAN UP DAY AT DELANEY FARM**

**Must Register:** Call Liz Boyer, 303-739-6661

It's spring cleaning time at DeLaney Farm!

Come out and support the Historic District, make sure to bring your elbow grease.

Location: 170 S. Chambers Road

## Our Corporate Sponsors



### Aurora Historical Society Officers

President: Sandy Sweeney (303-854-4249)

Vice President: Nadine Caldwell

Secretary: Dolly Gray

Treasurer: Michael Lockwood

Directors: Dexter Harding, Carolyn

Brassell

Program:

Membership: Larry Wilterdink

Hospitality: Nadine Caldwell

Historian: Lyn Eckhardt

Education:

Newsletter, Website, & Publicity: Lynne Evans 303-671-0874

**We still need a program director and Education Director for our board. If anyone is interested, please contact Sandy Sweeney @ 303-854-4249 or [Livelyline@aol.com](mailto:Livelyline@aol.com)**

If anyone would like to receive the newsletter by email and let the Aurora Historical Society save the postage, Please contact Lynne Evans at 303-671-0874 or [lyevans@comcast.net](mailto:lyevans@comcast.net) Also-If you have questions, comments, or suggestions about the newsletter you can contact me as well.

Please check out the AHS Website:  
<http://auroracohistoricalsociety.org>

If anyone would like to write an article for the newsletter, I would be happy to have it. Just contact me at the number above.



Brian Molitoris Photographer

Enjoying Cake and the Mayor speaks about Aurora's past and future.



Brian Molitoris Photographer