

The Advocate Newsletter

Volume 41; Number 5; September 2017

Aurora Historical Society

Aurora, Colorado



Embrace your city, your past

President's Letter September 2017

Welcome Back – It's been quite a summer, most unusual weather since I've lived in Colorado (1952).

Your planning committee has planned and are in the process of preparing some interesting programs and tours as we continue with "Where are we in Colorado" for this this coming year. I would again like to thank our most creative program committee: Mike Lockwood, Dolly Gray, Caroline Brassell, Lynne Evans, and I help a bit. The programs already confirmed are on September 16, we will have a tour of 17 mile house at 2pm, Our Nov program will be about the "Wings over the Rockies" Museum. March 27th "The Seamy Side of Denver City" presented by Jack Stone, Author, Actor and Western Historian will really bring some surprises. Our programs for November, January and March will be at the Aurora History Museum. There are several others still in the planning stages. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. I think you'll really enjoy them.

Also at the Aurora History Museum they have some wonderful exhibits that are must see, and AHS sponsors the Brown Bag lunches for the upcoming season.

Do hope we will see you all in September.

Sandy Sweeney, President Aurora Historical Society

Historical Society Officers

President: Sandy Sweeney (303-854-4249)

Vice President: Nadine Caldwell

Secretary: Dolly Gray

Treasurer: Michael Lockwood

Directors: Dexter Harding, Carolyn Brassell

Membership: Larry Wilterdink

Hospitality: Caroline Brassell

Historian: Michael Lockwood

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

Program Committee: Dolly Gray, Lynne Evans, Sandy Sweeney, Carolyn Brassell

Education- Vacant

If anyone is interested, please contact Sandy Sweeney @ 303-854-4249 or Livelyline@aol.com

Rescheduled Tour of 17 Mile House

Tour of 17 Mile House on Saturday, September 16, 2017 at 2:00 pm.

Garry O'Hara will be leading the tour and there will be plenty of time for questions and discussion. 17- Mile house is located at 8181 S. Parker Road, Centennial, CO 80016. 17 Mile House is a 155 -year old farm which served as an important resting stop for pioneers traveling on the Cherokee/Smoky Hill wagon trails in the 1860's.





IT'S TIME TO PAY YOUR 2017 MEMBERSHIP DUES

On January 1, 2017, it is time to send your dues payments for year 2017 to Michael Lockwood, 1629 Galena St., Aurora, CO 80010. Our membership dues come due in January each year now and with the New Year arriving please send your dues payment.

	Memberships
Family	\$15.00
Contributing	\$30.00
Business/Corporate	\$200.00
Life	\$200.00
Newsletter mailing	\$5.00

Because of the increased costs of postage and printing, we are asking that you add \$5.00 to your membership cost if you wish to have the newsletter mailed to you.



Remembering Aurora

Michael Lockwood, Aurora Historical Society

An Aurora native, a graduate of the Aurora Public Schools (Vaughn Elementary, North Middle School & Aurora Central High School) and still living less than 2 miles from where I grew up, Aurora has been a big part of my life ever since I was born. Having grown up here, I have several memories that I'd love to provide for your reading pleasure via The Advocate newsletter. For those of you who have Aurora connections that go back as far as the 1950's the recollections presented may bring back waves of nostalgia. And while I have 60 years of memories to relate, if you have some stories you'd like to share, please feel free to contact us at the Aurora Historical web site: www.auroracohistoricalsociety.org

REMEMBERING: Hugh M Woods



Long before there was a Home Depot or a Lowe's, there was Hugh M Woods. Hugh M Woods started out as a demolition firm, evolved into selling salvaged materials from their demolitions and then, in 1946, into a building and lumber supply store. The business

was owned by James Woods, Jr. and his brother Hugh. At its peak Hugh M Woods had 18 stores throughout Colorado. It was eventually sold to Payless Cashways in 1984.

The Hugh M Woods that my Dad would go to, as well as the one I frequented, was on Colfax and Potomac. What I remember most about the place was how friendly everyone was. They really made you feel like you were the most important customer they had ever seen. And while Hugh M Woods disappeared right about the time I bought my first house (and could have really used them for all the renovating), for my early married life whenever there was a small project at our rental house, I always checked at Hugh M Woods first for what I needed. This was a true Mom and Pop business, albeit with 18 stores. Thinking of Hugh M Woods brought to mind Builders Square. Builders Square was a subsidiary company of Kmart and started up in 1984 before being sold in 1997, finally going bankrupt in 1999. What I remember about Builders Square is that they were partially responsible for the demise of Hugh M Woods. The smaller Hugh M Woods had a hard time competing with the big box retail chain. The irony there is that Builders Square then couldn't compete with the even bigger box retail stores of Home Depot and Lowe's.

Time waits for no man and our history eventually becomes shared memories of people and places. Preservation can help keep those memories a little more tangible so that we can share with future generations.



- September 16, 2017 @ 2pm**, 17-Mile House Tour, 8181 S. Parker Road
- November 28, 2017 @ 7pm**, "Wings over the Rockies" Program location: Aurora History Museum
- January 30, 2018** Potluck Dinner meeting speaker TBA, location: Aurora History Museum
- March 27, 2018 @ 7pm**, Program: "The Seamy Side of Denver City" presented by Jack Stone, Author, Actor and Western Historian, location: Aurora History Museum
- May 2018 TBA**: Plains Conservation Center Tour and Hayride



Spotlight on the Mayors of Aurora

Did you know that the Town of Fletcher/City of Aurora have had 42 Mayors since its beginnings back in 1891? Starting with this issue of the Advocate Newsletter we'll take a quick look at each of them. Special thanks to Carolyn Brassell for her research and assistance

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MAYOR #5 W. H. Murphy

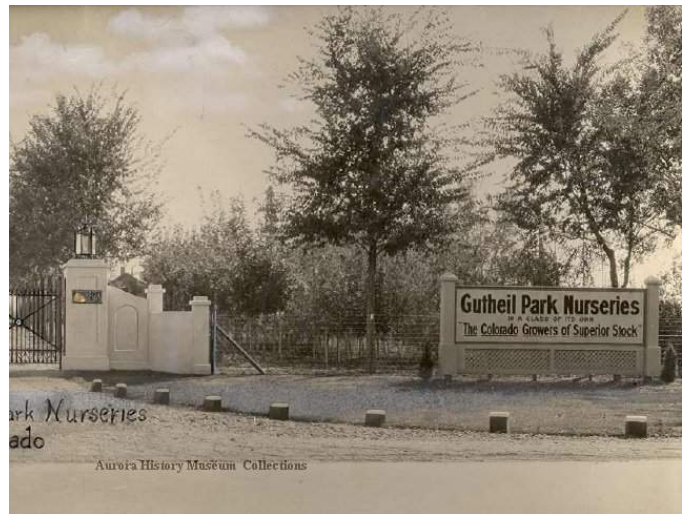
- Served from 1899 – 1901
- Born in November 1856 in Indiana
- Married Carobell Tyson circa 1888
- His oldest son Ernest was born in Kansas in 1889
- Worked for the Denver Watch and Diamond Club in 1890
- Living at 2803 Lawrence in Denver in 1890
- His occupation is listed as real estate agent in 1900, 1910 and 1920
- He would have been 43 years old when he became Mayor
- Colorado Governors at the time he was Mayor were Charles Spalding Thomas and James Bradley Orman
- By 1910 the family had moved to Steamboat Springs
- He died on August 27, 1926 at the age of 69 and is buried in Steamboat Springs, CO
- While he was in office:
 - Colorado Telephone Company granted a franchise and customers were online by the end of 1900
 - Population of Aurora has soared to 202
 - Construction for sidewalks approved along parts of Colfax
 - Dairy farming around Fletcher has become very popular
 - Ordinance 35 – prevents and prohibits bathing in any of the lakes within the corporate limits of Fletcher

Aurora: 1917-1927 The First Growth Spurt *Reprinted from the July 1989 Advocate*

The boom was on!

The beginning of the Army Recuperation Camp, just east of the Aurora town limits, signaled the beginning of Aurora's first real growth spurt. Prior to this time, Aurora was a small town whose economy was largely dependent upon agriculture.

In February of 1918, the Denver area was selected as the site for a military facility for the treatment of respiratory diseases.



In March, Gutheil Gardens was purchased, and the first ground was broken in April. On October 17, just eight short months after the project began, United States Army Hospital #21 officially opened, and was partially occupied.

On July 5, 1920, the name was changed to Fitzsimons General Hospital.

This institution provided employment for some residents, and Aurora became the home town for many patients and their families. The latter caused such an influx of people in a few short years, that the population doubled, and then tripled. Every attic, shed, and chicken coop in the town was converted into living quarters to accommodate these new residents.



Heliotherapy Ward at Fitzsimons c. 1925-picture Aurora History Museum

A group of individuals started the first church of Aurora in 1907, when their congregation began meeting in a tent before building a church on 17th and Elmira Street. By 1925, however, with the population expanding, the former meeting place was too small. The members then launched an aggressive campaign to secure a new site and a new building for the Aurora Community Church. The location at Colfax and Fulton Street was selected and the new church was completed on June 8, 1924. It was officially dedicated on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1925. (A comprehensive history of the First Presbyterian Church can be found in the Aurora Historical Society Newsletter of March 1982, Vol. 7, No.2.)

In 1923, Mr. W. H. Hawkins called a meeting of all interested persons to begin a Christian Church Congregation in Aurora. The first meeting of this group was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rife on 16th and Dallas Street. They chose a site on 16th and Dayton, and the First Christian Church of Aurora is at that same place

today.

In March of 1925, the first shovel of dirt was turned, and construction began on a 40x40 foot basement. Many of the townspeople, members of the congregation or not, joined in the effort to complete the job. Coal stoves were installed on either side of the church to provide warmth. There was no water or lavatory facilities inside, but electric lights were provided. To meet operating expenses, the church held suppers. The food had to be prepared at home, and carried to the church to be served. This small church thrived, and continued to meet in its basement quarters for over twenty years. This venerable Aurora institution was started, and nurtured, by 46 faithful members.

Services for Aurora residents or the Catholic faith were held either in the St. James Parish house, at Sable, or at St. James Church in Montclair. As far back as the summer of 1915, the Novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy had occupied a large site on Dallas Street at 14th Ave. In 1922, the Novitiate moved into Denver, and the property was sold. In 1926, it was announced that there was to be a Catholic Church in Aurora with Father Henry Geisert as the parish priest. The property at 14th and Dallas was repurchased by the Church, and St. Therese began, deeply in debt.

It fell upon the ladies of the Altar and Rosary Society to help pay off this indebtedness. They did this by giving suppers. There was not enough room in the buildings of the old Novitiate, so the dinners were held in the repair shops of various garages. This meant that food had to be prepared at home, and taken to the garages to be served. The usual charge for such home-cooked meals was 50 cents. In one memorable instance, \$500.00 was cleared on a dinner held in Murphy's Garage.

It was during this time of early growth that many fraternal orders began in Aurora. These groups had as their basic purpose, to help one another. This not only was the spirit of the times, but also a stepping stone to building a great Aurora.

The Aurora Masonic Lodge #56 AF & AM operated under a dispensation from April 7, 1922, until September 20 of that year, when its charter was granted. The first Master of the Lodge was John R. Edwards, who was a chaplain at Fitzsimons.

The Order of the Eastern Star, Dawn Chapter #125, held its first meeting under dispensation on June 2, 1925. The charter for this group was granted September 17, 1925, and the first Worthy Matron was Peale A. Hart.

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) was instituted in March of 1923. They held all their meetings in the Town Hall. In the fall of that year they held a minstrel show to raise funds. The crowd was so great, that many had to be turned away for lack of space in the Town Hall.

A short time later, the companion group, the Aurora Rebekah Lodge was formed. Mable Jordan was its first Nobel Grand.

In the immediate post-World War I years, two serious fires occurred in Aurora. The first one was on April 4, 1918, when the offices of the Aurora Democrat were destroyed by arson. It was rumored, but never proved, that

the fire was started by the Ku Klux Klan. Mr. Raphael Newman Gwynn, the editor and publisher of the paper, was an outspoken advocate of many causes. He therefore, had many friends and some enemies. The business of the newspaper had to be conducted from the editor's home at 1296 Iola Street until it was possible to resume publication on Colfax.

On February 22, 1919, the schoolhouse at 16th and Fulton Street, that was built back in the Fletcher days, burned. Fire protection was inadequate to save the building, although there was a volunteer fire department and a hose cart. The dream of every reluctant schoolboy was short-lived, however, because, immediately, classes were resumed in the Town Hall.



Aurora Town Hall c.1930

Construction of the new school was begun on Florence Street and north of the former site. This building was ready for occupancy for the fall term in 1919. Classes for grades one through twelve were held under one roof. This was the only school building in Aurora until 1931.



Fire protection was a concern of the Town Trustees from the very beginning. Water pressure, for firefighting, was often at a premium, and manpower was dependent upon volunteers. It was difficult to obtain continuity, as each mayor appointed a fire chief of his choice, with little regard to the chief's firefighting ability.

All this changed in 1924, when the Aurora Volunteer

Fire Department was organized. John O’Kane was selected from the ranks to become the first fire chief under this organization. He provided the Town of Aurora with a first-class fire department. The manpower for this department continued to be volunteers, but a new rigorous training program was started, and equipment was updated and well-maintained. The men, volunteers all, had jobs in shops throughout the town; but they left customers standing when the fire siren sounded, and they rushed off to prevent serious destruction. Every able-bodied man in Aurora was a dedicated firefighter with this new leadership and organization. The Aurora Volunteer Fire Department served Aurora for nearly 30 years, and became one of the most highly-respected and influential groups in the town.

Entertainment was centered around the home, the school, and the churches. Column after column in the Aurora Democrat told about who entertained who. Every bride had a shower, which was duly reported, as was every birthday party. In November of 1924, Mr. M. W. Kessy, of Victor, opened the Hollywood Theater on East Colfax at Emporia Street.

Mail was delivered to the Aurora Post Office at 9am and 3pm. Only homes that were located east of Joliet Street received home-delivery on what was considered a rural route. Most Aurora residents walked to the post office, and picked up their mail. This was a pleasant activity, as it was then that the townspeople met and exchanged local news and gossip. Mrs. Catherine E. Mells served as the postmistress until 1921, when she moved into Denver. She was replaced by Mrs. Lydia Cleaves until Frank Shedd was appointed.

There was an Aurora Camping Ground just ½ block west of the Town Hall. Now, there were many people in transition, and temporary camping facilities were a necessity (motels had yet to be invented). Hotels were too expensive. This camping ground offered water which was piped from the Town Hall, a streetlight and improved grounds. Some members of early Aurora families reported staying at the camping ground, in a tent, until suitable housing could be found. This camping ground was good for Aurora Businesses, and signs showing mileage into Aurora were placed at intervals along Colfax. It was also, about this same time, that Colfax became U. S. Highway 40, a link between the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts.



Colfax Avenue c 1921

City elections were conducted on a bipartisan basis, the Independent and the Citizens Parties. These elections, held every two years, were hard-fought, with long-term results. Once in 1920, the Independent Party wanted Aurora to be declared a wide-open town. The ladies of the Citizens Party launched a vigorous campaign opposition, so that the Citizens Party came out victorious, and the clean image of the town was preserved.

This was the time of growth, and some growing pains, for the small town of Aurora. The local newspaper, however, proudly hailed it as “Aurora: Denver’s Finest Suburb.” The main thing, that was agreed upon by one and all, was that Aurora was a fine place to live, and bring up children.



Welcome to our newest members:

Garry O’Hara
Diane Rich

Aurora History Museum Exhibits & Events

Fall 2017

PROGRAMS

Tea at the Aurora History Museum

Sept. 30; 2-3:30 p.m.

\$33 (\$25 Resident)

Lose yourself in the old frontier as author and re-enactor “Gunny” Jeff Norman guides you down the untamed trail of Buffalo Bill Cody’s life in his nationally acclaimed one-man play!

Food by Miette et Chocolat. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Call 303.739.6660 or buy tickets online.

REGISTRATION CLOSSES SEPT. 26 at 4 p.m.

6th Annual Parol Lantern Making Workshop

Nov. 4

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

\$12/Lantern (materials provided)

Learn how to make this delicate and beautiful holiday decoration from the Philippines and decorate your home with a traditional star-shaped lantern made by you.

Ages 7 to adult. Anyone under 14 must be accompanied by an adult.

Polynesian Arts and Culture Days

Sept. 16, Oct. 21, Nov. 18, FREE

11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Explore Polynesian arts and history. Drop in activities include hula dancing, talk story and ukulele lessons. Recommended for ages 8 and up.

Typical Program Schedule (times may vary slightly)
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Hula Dance Lesson
1:00-1:30 p.m. Talk Story
1:30-2:15 p.m. Beginner Ukulele Workshop
2:15-3:30 p.m. Intermediate Ukulele Workshop

MUSEUM FOUNDATION

Antique Appraisal Fair

Sept. 23, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Hosted by the Aurora Museum Foundation. Local appraisers evaluate your antiques and collectibles. Call 303.739.6705 for an entrance time. No walk-ins accepted. \$5/ item; 5 item limit. Aurora Museum Foundation members receive one free appraisal.

LOCATION: Aurora Public Library Central Branch, Community Room, 14949 E. Alameda Pkwy
Sponsored by the [Aurora Museum Foundation](#).

Sponsor a Wreath

The Aurora Museum Foundation's annual "Festival of Wreaths" raises funds to support exhibits and education programs. Visit our website or call 303.739.6660 to learn more about sponsoring a wreath.

BROWN BAG LECTURE SERIES

Chaco Canyon and Mayan Trade

Sept. 20
Dr. Annabeth Headrick, Associate Professor of Mesoamerican and Native North American Art at the University of Denver.

Southern Colorado Trade

Oct. 18
A representative from the El Pueblo Museum discusses trade in southwestern Colorado.

Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA)

Nov. 15
As Executive Director of the CCIA and Ute Mountain Ute tribal member, Ernest House facilitates communication between the Southern Ute Indian and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribes and other American Indian organizations, state agencies and affiliated groups.

EXHIBITS

Picture Me Here: Stories of Hope and Resilience by Refugees and Immigrants

July 11 – Sept. 22
Features work by displaced and marginalized communities that promotes self-expression, social engagement, community building, integration and leadership.

Write Our World: Crawford Elementary School

Aug. 8 – Sept. 20

Crawford Elementary refugee and immigrant students share their journey to the United States through a special writing project. Crawford staff and the non-profit group *Write Our World* helped students share their experiences with our community. This exhibit showcases their stories.

23rd Annual Gateway to the Rockies Art Show

Sept. 27 – Nov. 11

View a juried exhibit of paintings, photography and miniatures. Presented by the Aurora Artists Guild. Artwork is for sale.

Awards Reception

Oct. 6, 5 – 7:30 p.m. Awards at 6 p.m.

18th Annual Festival of Wreaths

Nov. 14 – Dec. 8

See festive wreaths sponsored and beautifully decorated by local businesses, organizations and individuals. Organized as an annual fundraiser for the Aurora Museum Foundation, each wreath is sold through an online auction. Proceeds support exhibits and educational programs. To sponsor a wreath, call 303.739.6660.

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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

Also-If you have questions, comments, or suggestions about the newsletter, you can contact me as well.