NEXT MEETING:

Saturday February 2, 2014
1:30 PM to 4:00 PM
Smoky Hill Library
5430 S. Biscay Circle, Centennial 80015

Annual Meeting and Elections
for Secretary and Treasurer:

The speaker and election information
will be announced in the January 2014 Quill

The Quill next month will include a list of activities and speakers that have been proposed by CCVHS members for next year. These will be discussed at the February 2nd meeting, and we as a group will draft a tentative list of CCVHS activities for 2014. If you already have some programs or field trips in mind, please let Garry know (303-751-3140).

In addition to scheduling activities that the members want, we are also soliciting ideas for fundraising and ways of getting members more involved in committees. The committees that CCVHS still needs members to serve on are:

- Melvin School
- Archives
- Refreshments
- Publications
- 17 Mile House Volunteers

The January Quill will also include a treasurer’s report of CCVHS finances for the year.

See you on February 2nd!
OPEN BOARD POSITION

We will be holding elections to replace the Board Secretary position. Karen Sear has submitted here decision not to run for the Secretary position when it ends in December 2013. Below is her letter

To the CCVHS Board and members,

I will not be running for re-election for secretary at the end of my term in January 2014. I need to cut back on my time given to CCVHS and have decided to focus on 17 Mile House this coming year. I will continue to stay involved with the CCVHS archives, and all volunteer activities at 17 Mile House. It has been an amazing journey from the time Clarice convinced me to join several years ago. I am honored to have worked with truly dedicated and passionate board members. I encourage anyone to join the board to help guide the society during a very exciting time when so much progress has been made. However, there is so much more to do... so we need your help! The commitment includes attending approximately 3 board meetings a year, going to quarterly meetings when possible (and taking meeting minutes), and helping with any project for any amount of time. I look forward to working on the archives and at 17 Mile House, and am happy to help guide a new secretary through the transition.

Thank you,
Karen Sear

If you are considering or are interested in volunteering for the Secretary position please contact Kevin Sear at (303) 594-8626 or Karen Sear at (303) 514-2094 to discuss the duties and time commitment for this position. As a Board member you will get the satisfaction of helping to preserve the unique history of the Cherry Creek Valley.

MEMBER NEWS

We regret the loss of long-time member Helen Pustmueller, who died in August in Englewood having recently celebrating her 100th birthday.

From 1980 to 1996 she was Curator of Collections of the University of Denver’s Museum of Anthropology. An avid aviator and member of the Colorado Pilots Association, Helen flew in Powder Puff Derbies and Angel Derbies in the 1960s and participated in “fly yourself” safaris in many African and Pacific countries. Helen led a long, remarkable life.

CCVHS welcomes new members E. Michael Rosser of Aurora; Jody Zeman of WaKeeney, Kansas; Anne Hunting of Denver; and Suzanne Hunting of Denver.

AWARD OF MERIT TO CCVHS FROM THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL ASSOCIATION

At its recent conference, the Smoky Hill Trail Association (SmHTA) presented CCVHS with an Award of Merit for its 38 years of studying and promoting local history and, in particular, its work on the history of the Smoky Hill Trail.

The award citation reads, “Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society is dedicated to the history of the Cherry Creek Valley south of Denver. The society maintains a large collection of artifacts and books on the Smoky Hill Trail at the historic Melvin School, which sits directly on the Middle Branch of the Smoky Hill Trail. The school was saved from destruction and restored primarily through the efforts of Clarice Crowle. She was a Smoky Hill Trail scholar and received the Smoky Hill Trail...”
The CCVHS is an institutional member of the Smoky Hill Trail Association. We sincerely thank the SmHTA and its Awards Committee for this beautifully engraved plaque, and we thank former SmHTA director Lee Whiteley for nominating us for this honor.

At the 7th annual convention of the Smoky Hill Trail Association in Parker, CCVHS member Lee Whiteley spoke on “The Smoky Hill Trail along Cherry Creek: The Final Twenty Miles to Denver.” Lee also led the convention’s Parker-to-Denver bus tour, and he and Jane led the car caravan to Limon and the Elbert County Museum. At the same convention former CCVHS Vice-President Peter Faris gave a presentation on “Imagery of the Smoky Hill Trail.” Both Lee’s and Peter’s presentations were extremely well received, and one participant called Lee’s tour “the best bus tour he had ever been on.”

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FORM 17 MILE HOUSE**

We would like to thank Garry O’Hara, Vonnie C’deBaca, Karen Sear, Bill Bauer and the Arapahoe County Open space staff for their efforts to decorate 17 Mile House for the holidays. Please take some time and drive by and see the wonderful display that they were able to create.

**AUGUST MEETING**

Our meeting in August was on the “Past, Present, and Future of 17 Mile House.” Held at the house itself (on one of the few rainy days we had until that time), our principal speaker was CCVHS member Susie Trumble. Susie was the author of the 2012 book The History of the 17 Mile House Farm Park, a definitive history of the site that she wrote for Arapahoe County Open Spaces.

Other CCVHS members also gave presentations at this event. Lee Whiteley talked about the historic wagon trails that went through the property and the railroads and highways that followed. Kevin Sear discussed the farm’s 1881-1905 ownership by the Cummings family, who were his great-grandparents. Ruth Race Dolan told of her experiences growing up in the 17 Mile House as a member of the Race family that lived there from 1938 to 1976. Garry O’Hara recounted the 25-year battle to save the property from developers. And Casey Davenhill spoke on developments of Cherry Creek just west of the house.
SUMMARY OF CCVHS ACTIVITIES IN 2013

We thank all CCVHS members who participated in our events for 2013, which included:

**FEBRUARY**  Annual meeting with Michael W. Nearing’s program on “From Smoke to Text: What’s Next – A History of Telecommunications”

**APRIL**  Meeting of CCVHS committees - Eastern Colorado Museums & Historical Societies meeting in Burlington

**JULY**  CCVHS-hosted luncheon for Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners across Cherry Creek from 17 Mile House

**AUGUST**  Meeting at 17 Mile House for program on history of the house and adjacent farm park

**OCTOBER**  (October was a busy month for CCVHS. See the following.)

**NOVEMBER**  Sponsor at 15th annual Cherry Creek Watershed Conference in Parker

On October 5th we hosted the fall 2013 meeting of the Eastern Colorado Museums & Historical Societies (ECM&HS) at the Melvin Schoolhouse. The meeting was attended by 26 representatives from eight organizations. Our speaker was Adam Speirs, an archivist of the Douglas County History Research Center (DCHRC) in Castle Rock. The group was extremely interested in Adam’s presentation of the DCHRC’s endeavors in on-line publishing of eBooks, digitizing and accessioning of documents, and electronically disseminating information. A lively discussion followed Mr. Speirs’ talk. The founder of the ECM&HS association, Joe Martell of the Elbert County Museum and Historical Society, conducted the business portion of the meeting. The attendees greatly enjoyed our continental breakfast and buffet luncheon, and we sincerely thank Nita McKnight for “heading up” the food committee and to Sherrie and Gary Wolf, Joanie Mead, Will Sear, Kevin Sear, Lee and Jane Whiteley, Herb McKnight, Shirley Miller, Carl Sandberg, and Scotty Bauer for helping to make this meeting and luncheon successful.

On October 9 nineteen 5th graders from Mission Viejo School came to Melvin for a “School Day in 1948” from noon to 2:00PM. They were all members of teacher Sandy Zimmerman’s student council. Nita McKnight was the “school mar’m,” and words cannot properly express how superbly she conducted the class and handled the group’s activities. After the Pledge of Allegiance, the class was divided into thirds for an instruction period in which Nita taught about the Melvin Schoolhouse itself, Karen Sear taught about the 17 Mile House and other mile houses leading to Denver, and Garry O’Hara taught about the Smoky Hill Trail. Afterward the three groups presented what they learned to the whole class. The students were then challenged to think of types of plants and animals they might have seen (from A to Z) if they had traveled to Colorado in covered wagons 150 years ago. Throughout their “lessons” the students were reminded to follow the 1948 classroom rules: no talking (unless you raised your hand), no whispering, no note passing, and no disrespect to others.

Melvin School was again filled with people on October 12 when CCVHS hosted the Saturday
luncheon for the bus tour of the Smoky Hill Trail Association’s annual conference. Melvin was the first stop on this year’s SmHTA bus tour, and the participants were interested in all there was to see at Melvin. Garry O’Hara briefly spoke about the history of the schoolhouse and the contributions of CCVHS co-founder Clarice Crowle to the study of the Smoky Hill Trail. We have Nita Mc Knight (again!) and Karen Sear to thank for putting on another outstanding buffet luncheon and to the other CCVHS members who pitched in to make this an enjoyable part of the convention, especially to Sherrie and Gary Wolf, Will Sear, and Kevin Sear.

CCVHS members were again busy at Arapahoe County’s second annual Fall Festival at 17 Mile House. This year’s event was enhanced by the fact that the house was partially furnished with furniture donated by Ruth Dolan; Ruth grew up in 17 Mile House, and her donations were items that had been part of the house in the 1940s and 1950s. Garry, Will, Kevin, and Shirley manned the CCVHS table in the house while Vonnie C’deBaca greeted visitors and sold her beautiful paintings and notecards of 17 Mile House. Our thanks also goes to Gary and Sherrie Wolf and Herb McKnight. One of the festival’s most popular activities (certainly for younger visitors) was Karen Sear’s old-fashioned butter churning which she conducted on the back porch; she was ably assisted in this “herculean” endeavor by Nita Mc Knight. Karen also wrote descriptions of the rooms at 17 Mile House to assist visitors in self-guided house tours. In addition she has been working diligently on accessioning Ruth’s donations and developing a policy-and-procedures manual for accessioning future items.

THE BLIZZARD OF 1913

Our recent blast of cold weather reminds us that the biggest blizzard ever recorded in Denver occurred exactly 100 years ago. The snow started falling on December 1, 1913, and didn’t stop until several days later. That storm of “historic proportions” dumped over 45 inches of snow on the city and more than 60 inches of snow on other areas of Colorado and Wyoming. The town of Georgetown was hit the hardest, with over seven feet of snow. Supplies of coal, the heating fuel back then, began running out. Roads and railways were clogged and would not be reopened for weeks. Life came to a halt as food supplies ran out, thousands of people were stranded, businesses and schools closed, houses and other buildings collapsed under the weight of snow, and countless livestock were lost. Snow drifts were well over 20 feet high in some places, and cities were running out of places to dump all the shoveled snow.
According to Pat Mack in his Colorado Public Radio website of November 29th (“A century ago, Colorado’s Front Range was paralyzed by record snowfall”), “Despite the storm’s severity, only a few deaths were recorded. Relief efforts tried to get food and coal to people in need.

Denver police officers cared for abandoned horses as best they could.

A few thousand men were employed to shovel at double the normal wage…. Since the snow fell in December, it didn’t melt quickly, like a spring storm would have. In fact, the last of all the snow that was piled in Denver’s Civic Center Park reportedly didn’t melt until after the Fourth of July.”

SOME ITEMS ABOUT THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL

The following was written by Lee Whiteley in 2001.

“‘The California trail, which we had been following, crosses the South Platte here, just below the mouth of Cherry Creek…. This part of Kansas Territory was literally a ‘howling wilderness,’ with little indication of its having been occupied or traversed by white man, except the old wagon-road we had been traveling, with here and there a stump and a few chips by the roadside, as the mark of some California emigrant.’

Robert Peck, 1857

“Peck’s ‘howling wilderness’ is now Denver. He was following the Cherokee Trail, which passed through present-day Russellville, Franktown, and Parker in Douglas County. A year later, gold was discovered in the region, setting off the Colorado gold rush of 1859.

Gold seekers used three major routes to the new town of Denver: the South Platte River Trail, The Cherokee Trail, and the newly opened Smoky Hill Trail.

“The Smoky Hill Trail began at various towns along the Missouri River: Atchison and Leavenworth, Kansas; Kansas City and Westport in Missouri.

Several trail branches merged in Junction City, Kansas, then followed up the Smoky Hill River into present-day Colorado.

“West from the Limon, Colorado area, three branches of the trail would develop. The earliest branch, the Middle Branch (also known as the ‘Starvation Trail’), passed five miles north of Kiowa, then followed down present-day Smoky Hill Road to Cherry Creek at present-day Cherry Creek Reservoir State Park. Here it merged with the established Cherokee Trail and ran downstream to Denver.

“In 1865, David Butterfield established his Butterfield Overland Despatch (BOD), a stagecoach and freighting business. He used what would become known as the South Branch of the Smoky Hill Trail. From Limon, this branch ran west through Kiowa, then passed two miles north of Elizabeth and down present-day Hilltop Road to Parker. Here the trail merged with the Cherokee Trail.

“In 1866, a third branch of the trail was established. This North Branch of the Smoky Hill Trail followed closely present-day Interstate 70, entering Denver from the east. This route was used by Ben Holladay and Wells Fargo.

“In 1870 the Kansas Pacific Railroad completed its line to Denver, following closely the north branch of the Smoky Hill Trail. The coming of the railroad put an immediate end to long-distance freighting and stagecoach use on all branches of the Smoky Hill Trail.”

This passage is from Wayne C. Lee’s and Howard C. Raynesford’s excellent book Trails of the Smoky Hill: From Coronado to the Cow Towns (1980).

“As the passenger service between the Missouri River and Denver got under way in earnest on the B.O.D., the fare for one passenger, not counting meals, was $175. Generally the meals were good substantial food for the dust-covered, well-jostled travelers. Fried ham and bacon were the standard meals, with an ample supply of buffalo hump. At the eastern end of the line there were fresh eggs, chicken, and vegetables, along with butter, cream, and coffee. The farther west the traveler went, the less choice of food he had, and the cost of a meal went up from fifty
cents to a dollar. Nor was it always clean. One passenger complained about the dirty food, and the station master calmly told him, ‘I was taught long ago that we must eat a peck of dirt in our lifetime.’ The traveler shot back, ‘I am aware of that, sir, but I don’t like to eat mine all at once.’

“The standard pastry was dried apple pie. The drivers had to share this fare with the passengers on every trip. While the passengers had to put up with the meals on only one trip, the drivers were subjected to it again and again. They reached the point where they could barely look at a dried apple pie. One driver was quoted as saying, ‘It’s dried apple pies from Genesis to Revelations.’ Another put his feelings into verse that somehow was preserved and passed down for readers who never had to face the daily menu of dried apple pies:

“I loathe! Abhor! Detest! Despise!
Abominate dried apple pies;
I like good bread; I like good meat,
Or anything that’s good to eat;
But of all poor grub beneath the skies
The poorest is dried apple pies.
Give me a toothache or sore eyes
In preference to such kind of pies.

The farmer takes the gnarliest fruit,
‘Tis wormy, bitter, and hard, to boot;
They leave the hulls to make us cough,
And don’t take half the peelings off;
Then on a dirty cord they’re strung,
And from some chamber window hung;
And there they serve a roost for flies
Until they’re ready to make pies.
Tread on my corns, or tell me lies,
But don’t pass to me dried apple pies.”

THANKS FROM THE SOCIETY

Our appreciation goes to Nita McKnight’s sister Peg Schwartzkopf for making new curtains for the Melvin Schoolhouse. The new sheer eyelet-design curtains look great and are a big improvement over the original curtains that had become extremely fragile. A big “thank you,” Peg.

And we thank the entire Sear family for writing and producing two outstanding pamphlets: a list of significant milestones in the history of 17 Mile House and The History of 17 Mile House in Pictures. These were great additions to the recent programs at the 17 Mile House Farm Park and will be used to enhance future events at this historic site.

Ruth Race-Dolan generously donated a Piano and furniture that was original to 17 Mile House to Arapahoe County Open Space. These items will be on display in 17 Mile house and will help preserve the historical accuracy of 17 Mile house circa 1940.
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 Bellevue 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