

City founder's memorial restored despite difficulties

What the City of Colorado Springs could not do has been accomplished instead by a funeral director.

When General William Jackson Palmer envisioned a new city at the foot of Pikes Peak, he planned a city of unusual beauty. The wide streets of the new town were lined with newly planted trees, and several parks were developed by the Civil War general. His donation of the large park that was east of town, and which now bears his name, was designed to preserve the natural rock outcroppings and native pines that seemed like an oasis in the surrounding prairie. He built his mansion home, Glen Eyrie, in an area of native rocks and trees.

Now General Palmer's name is seen on avenues, parks, civic buildings, a high school, and a high-rise building center downtown. Recently the downtown complex consisting of the Doubletree Antlers Hotel, United Bank Tower, and Holly Sugar Building was renamed the Palmer Center. All these locations recall the general's vision of landscaped neatness and natural beauty in the new city.

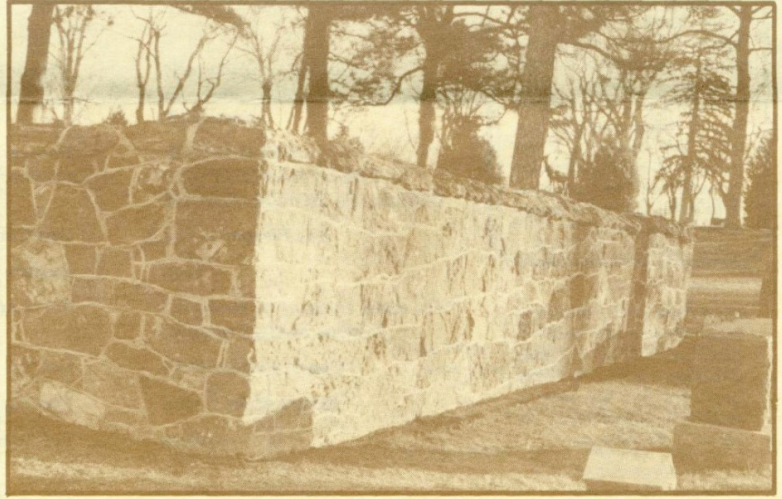
How sad it was to see that General Palmer's final resting place had deteriorated to a condition that was the opposite of the vision of outdoor beauty and careful attention that he planned for the city. His grave site in the city-owned Evergreen Cemetery was strategically located on a knoll to view Pikes Peak. But the naturally designed native rock embankment had fallen apart. Over the years, inattention to the cemetery plot had allowed vines and weeds to overgrow the beautiful location. The grass that surrounded the massive headstone boulder with bronze lettering had worn thin.

Several attempts had been made by groups to get the City to restore the 80-year-old plot. But the City said ordinances governing the cemetery would not allow the rules to be bent, not even for the City's Founder. According to City ordinance, the maintenance of memorials and above-ground structures remains the responsibility of the surviving family. General Palmer has no surviving family in the U.S. His

allow the final resting place of its founder to lie in overgrown shambles.

Rombocos had to first overcome City Hall bureaucracy to gain permission for his mausoleum and funeral home to work on the grave plot and perform the major rebuilding required to restore the site. City administration did not wish a privately-owned mausoleum owner, whom they view as competition, to become the custodian to restore and maintain the site. Earlier, the City declined to use any of the multi-million dollar cemetery endowment fund to restore and properly maintain the City Founder's grave.

Meanwhile, the surviving Palmer family



in England, Mrs. Nicholson and Mrs. Creed, had gladly given Costas Rombocos their permission to accomplish the restoration.

When the City's permission was finally granted, Rombocos use of his Shrine of Remembrance Mausoleum staff to immediately improve the landscape and remove weeds and years of vines around the site. Then two master masons began the tedious task of removing the hundreds of stones that form the retaining walls and the rock making the cap stone heading on the walls.

Each individual stone was hand scrubbed with muriatic acid to return it to its natural state. Most of the retaining walls stones had years of freezing and thawing damage, including vines that had grown throughout the wall. The true art of the master masons came into play as they handcrafted the stone in a puzzle-fitting fashion to rebuild the walls. Then fresh masonry concrete was molded to permanently reconstruct the walls.

The idea was not to do the most expeditious task of building a wall with new materials; instead Rombocos wanted to use the original pieces of stone to restore the historically significant plot to its original condition and naturally beautiful design.

Even though the wall is completed, Rombocos is still not content with the task of restoration. In the spring, new turf will make the grass the envy of even the local golf courses.

Also, a massive, heavy bronze memorial tablet will be mounted. This bronze tablet had been furnished by the U.S. Government but had been in a cemetery storage garage for years and never mounted. The plaque reads:

William Jackson Palmer

Medal of Honor

Brig. Gen. 15 PA CAV.

Civil War

Sept. 17, 1836-March 13, 1909

It is a memorial plaque seldom cast by the government, as it bears the emblem of the Medal of Honor winners, the nation's highest military award. The plaque reveals a little more of this great man that founded Colorado Springs.

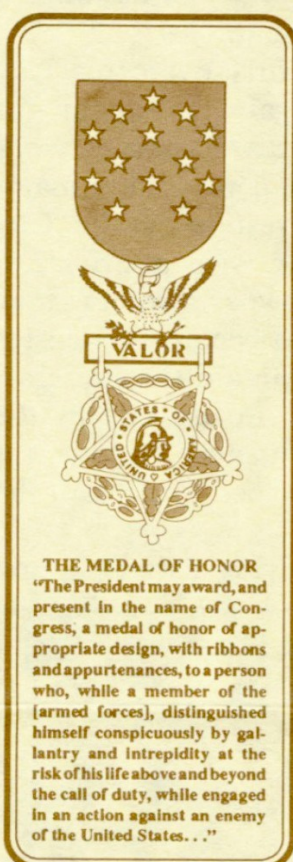


granddaughter, Mrs. Elsie Queen Nicholson, lives in London, and a great-granddaughter Mrs. Louisa Creed, lives in York in England. Both ladies continue to be interested in Colorado Springs, but they could not provide, let alone supervise the maintenance or restoration of a grave so far away.

The situation was quickly corrected by a Greek emigrant who knew the value of memorials, having been born among the white marble memorials and temples of ancient Greece. Costas Rombocos is now president and owner of the Shrine of Remembrance Mausoleums and Funeral Home. He could not understand why a city the size of Colorado Springs would

The Honorary Trustees of the Shrine of Remembrance Veterans Honor Court
 Cordially invite you to the Rededication of the Memorial Estate of
General William Jackson Palmer
 and the unveiling of his Medal of Honor Memorial Plaque
 by Major General Neal T. Jaco, United States Army
 on the Memorial Day holiday, Monday, the twenty-seventh of May
 Nineteen hundred and ninety-one, at one o'clock in the afternoon
 Evergreen Cemetery, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Inclement Weather: Shrine of Remembrance Chapel Mausoleum, 1730 East Fountain Blvd.



THE MEDAL OF HONOR
 "The President may award, and present in the name of Congress, a medal of honor of appropriate design, with ribbons and appurtenances, to a person who, while a member of the [armed forces], distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty, while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States..."

The Palmer Family Memorial Estate has recently been reconstructed with the gratitude of the Palmer families by Costas Rombocis, and will now be continually maintained by the Shrine of Remembrance.

PROGRAM

| | |
|--|--|
| Prelude | 4th Infantry Division Band Fort Carson |
| Welcoming Remarks | Colonel Jim Rix, USAF, Retired Director of Military and Veteran Affairs, Shrine of Remembrance |
| The Invocation | Chaplain (CPT) Dennis Nitschke 704th Main Support Battalion |
| Presentation of Colors | Fort Carson Color Guard |
| The National Anthem | Fort Carson Band |
| The Riderless Horse and Mounted Troop | 7th Illinois Cavalry Volunteers Major Rodney Cooley, Commanding |
| Presentation of the Historical Flags | Major James H. Coakley, USAF Retired Flag Historian and Narrator Color Guard, Ch. 1, The Retired Enlisted Assn. |
| General Palmer's Contributions to Colorado Springs | City Official |
| THE REDEDICATION ADDRESS | Major General Neil T. Jaco, U.S. Army Commanding General, 4th Infantry Division (Mech.) and of Fort Carson |
| Citation to Accompany the Award of the Medal of Honor (circa 1865) | Aide de Camp |
| UNVEILING OF THE MONUMENT AND MEDAL OF HONOR PLAQUE | General Jaco and the Fort Carson Honor Guard |
| The Weapon Salute | Fort Carson Battery |
| Taps | Buglers |
| "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" William Steffe, Composer | Fort Carson Band |
| Concluding Remarks | Colonel Jim Rix |
| Return of the Colors | Fort Carson Color Guard |
| Ushers | Boy Scout Troop #168 |

Shrine of Remembrance
VETERANS HONOR COURT
HONORARY TRUSTEES

- Brig. General Richard F. Abel**
U.S. Air Force Retired
Former Director of Public Affairs Hq. U.S. Air Force
Formerly Director of Legislative and Public Affairs,
U.S. Olympic Committee
President, Fellowship of Christian Athletes
- John H. Bickerton**
U.S. Marine Corps
Veteran of Vietnam
Disabled American Veterans Commander, Dept. of Colorado,
1984-1985
- Chief Master Sergeant George A. Carnes**
U.S. Air Force Retired
Former Chairman, Pikes Peak Veterans Council
National President of the Retired Enlisted Assn.
- Master Sergeant William J. Crawford**
U.S. Army Retired
Recipient of The Congressional Medal of Honor
- Colonel Lon R. Dickson**
U.S. Army Retired
Former Commander, VFW, Wm. H. Gill Pos.
- Tim Drago**
U.S. Army Veteran of Vietnam
Chairman, Colorado Tribute to Veterans Fund
- Colonel George Fleeson**
U.S. Army Retired, Infantry
President, Pikes Peak Chapter Retired Officers Assn.
1985 & 1986
- Lt. General John "Jack" Forrest**
U.S. Army Retired
Former Commanding General, Fort Carson
Former Vice Cmdr. in Chief U.S. Army, Europe
- Lt. Colonel William A. Gribble**
U.S. Air Force Retired
Career Missiler
- Hon. Joel Hefley**
United States Congressman
U.S. House of Representatives
- General James E. Hill**
U.S. Air Force Retired
Former Commander in Chief, NORAD
Former President, Colorado Springs
Chamber of Commerce
President, The Olive Company
- Harry W. Hoth**
U.S. Marine Corp. Veteran World War II
Former Mayor of Colorado Springs
Owner KRDO-TV and Radio
- Colonel Jim Irwin**
U.S. Air Force Retired
Apollo 15 Astronaut
High Flight Foundation
- Sergeant Major J. Harris LaRue**
U.S. Army Retired
Veteran of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam
Former Dir. of Community Service, El Paso County
Former Acting Director, Urban League
- Colonel John H. Madison, Jr.**
U.S. Army Retired
Last U.S. Army Officer to depart U.S. Embassy, Saigon
Past President, Fort Carson Retiree Council
Member, Chief of Staff of U.S. Army Retiree Council
Former President, Colorado Council of Chapters,
Retired Officers Association
- Lt. Colonel Ronny J. May**
U.S. Air Force Retired
Veteran of Korea and Vietnam
Colorado Springs City Council, 1981-1985
Chairman, Colorado Springs Airport Advisory Board
President, The May Corporation
- Peter M. Minahan**
U.S. Army Veteran of Vietnam
Former Colorado State Representative
- Will Perkins**
Chairman of the Board Perkins Chrysler-Plymouth
- Colonel James H. Rix**
U.S. Air Force Retired
Former Director of Administration NORAD
Founding Director of Administration, Space Cmd.
- Robert M. Sapp**
U.S. Army Special Forces Veteran
Former Member, Board of Education School District 11
Member, Colorado Springs Police Department
- Steve Schuck**
Chairman of the Board-The Schuck Corporation
- Colonel William D. Sinclair**
U.S. Air Force Retired
President, National Association of Church Business Administrators
Business Administrator, Sunrise Methodist Church
President, Colorado Springs Rotary Club,
1985-1986
Former Business Administrator First United
Methodist Church
- Lt. Colonel Ruth F. Taylor**
U.S. Army Retired
Women's Army Corps
- Colonel Frank R. Wisneski**
U.S. Air Force Retired
Former Inspector General, NORAD & Aerospace Defense
Command
President, Air Force Association, Sijan Chapter
- Leon Young**
U.S. Navy, Veteran World War II
Vice Mayor of Colorado Springs

"Colorado Springs was the dream of William Jackson Palmer, Civil War hero and [Architect] of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad.

As soon as General Palmer was assured that the Rio Grande line would be built to Colorado City, he began planning the city which became Colorado Springs . . . to raise capital to construct irrigation ditches, lay out streets, plant trees, and aid the building of a hotel in the new town. The company planned to sell the tracts and lots to new arrivals on small payments distributed over several years. . . .

The first stake was set in place 31 July 1871 at the southeast corner of Pikes Peak and Cascade avenues. The city plot contained seventy blocks, each 400 feet square.

Under the guiding hand of General Palmer an attractive city with broad avenues and ample streets developed. Trees were planted, and canals and a network of ditches were constructed to irrigate them. Palmer chose the site of Monument Valley Park and laid plans which gave the modern city a magnificent system of parks, drives, and mountain trails."

Excerpt from *Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak Country*
 by Rosemary Hetzler and John Hetzler



"William J. Palmer, philanthropist and founder of Colorado Springs, . . . died at his home at Glen Eyrie at 1:15 o'clock Saturday afternoon, March 13, 1909, at the age of 72. The end came peacefully, following a sinking spell of about 24 hours' duration. His body was taken to Denver to be cremated. . . .

. . . Death was caused by the general weakness and exhaustion of the system which followed the injuries sustained by a fall from his horse. The accident, which was directly responsible for his death, occurred shortly before noon on Saturday, October 27, 1906. The accident took place on the road leading from a gateway to the Garden of the Gods. . . .

He had a colorful career in the war and for brilliant services, Colonel Palmer was brevetted to Brigadier General Palmer. After the Union troops disbanded, General Palmer returned to the walks of civil life. . . ."

"It was figured that the dead philanthropist gave away upwards of \$4,000,000 during his lifetime, or nearly one-half of his entire estate. Colorado College was given at least \$500,000. Colorado Springs received boulevards, parks, etc., valued at \$1,000,000. General Palmer and his associates gave away more than \$1,000,000 to employees of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. His principal holdings . . . included the Antlers Hotel, then valued at \$1,000,000; Glen Eyrie, \$500,000 and the Gazette building and other buildings adjoining it on Pikes Peak Avenue, \$500,000.

Donations to Colorado Springs
 The following list of donations to Colorado Springs gives some idea of the magnificent manner in which he dealt with the city of which he was the founder. The value of the lands given for public benefit and the cost to General Palmer for beautifying and maintenance was enormous.

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Monument Valley Park | 753 acres |
| Palmer Park | 753 acres |
| Thomdale Park, West Colorado Springs | 4 acres |
| Bear Creek-North Cheyenne road and lands | |
| The Chamberlain (overlooking Seven Falls and the trail) | 40 acres |
| Public Library | 1 acre |
| Cragmor Sanatorium lands | 110 acres |
| Colorado College lands (original grant) | 100 acres |
| Lands to Deaf and Blind Institute | 5 acres |
| Cascade Avenue parking through college campus | |
| North, South and Antlers Parks | 10 acres |
| Total area of lands donated | 1,638 acres |
| Crystal Park Trail | 8 miles |
| Old Bear Creek road improved | 4 miles |
| Trail to Chamberlain Grant | 1 mile |
| Roads to Palmer Park | 8 miles |
| Mesa Road | 4 miles |
| Trails to Palmer Park | 8 miles |
| Boulevard and Paseo to Palmer Park | 4 miles |
| Manitou Boulevard | 4 miles |
| Trails up Cutler Mountain from North Cheyenne Canon | 1-1/2 miles |
| Total length of Boulevards, trails, drives, etc. | 85 miles |

Additionally, he donated land for each major church denomination."

Excerpts from *Gazette Telegraph*
 March 14, 1909 and March 10, 1924

" . . . The words chosen so carefully for the memorial tablets which honor this great American citizen should be especially familiar to those of us who live in, and who visit, the city that was so dear to him and for which he did so much:

"Union Cavalry General, pioneer railroad builder, prophet of Colorado's greatness. He mapped the routes of three transcontinental railways, supervised the building of the first road to Denver, organized and constructed the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, stimulated the state's industries, cherished its beauties, founded Colorado Springs, fostered Colorado College, and served our sister Republic of Mexico with sympathy and wisdom in developing its national railways."

Reprint from *Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak Country*