

THE CHRONICLE

The Official Newsletter of the Highlands Ranch Historical Society

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HOLIDAY CELEBRATION AT THE HIGHLANDS RANCH MANSION

Members of the Highlands Ranch Historical Society were on hand as tour guides when Mission Viejo in cooperation with the Highlands Ranch Metropolitan Districts and the Highlands Ranch Communities Association held a Holiday Celebration at the Highlands Ranch Mansion on Saturday and Sunday, December 7th and 8th. Residents boarded Jingle Bell Busses that departed every 15 minutes from two Highlands Ranch locations and were transported to the gates of the Mansion where Santa greeted the children and carols were performed by The Highlands Ranch Community Chorus. All attendees were invited to stroll amidst the Victorian buildings of yesteryear, and take a guided tour of the mansion, listen to vintage stories in the mansion library, and take a hayride around the beautiful grounds.

The free 40-minute mansion tours departed from the entry at 15-minute intervals beginning at 1:00 p.m. Each tour had a minimum of 26 adults accompanied sometimes by 25 or more excited children. There were so many people wishing to see this historic 22,000-square-foot structure that by the last tour at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, three tours at a time were wending their ways through the many unique rooms.

The mansion building itself has 14 bedrooms, 11 bathrooms, five remaining fire places, balconies, porches, terraces, and walkways. The property has a one-lane bowling alley and tennis courts, and once had swimming pool. The mansion rests on a concrete and stone foundation and the

exterior walls are of moss rock, native stone from south of the property, and stucco. The gable-and-hip style roof is wood shingled, the double windows are wood framed, the interior walls are hardwood or lath-and-plaster, and the flooring is hardwood, softwood, terrazzo, and marble over a wood subfloor supported by wood joists.

In 1540, Spain claimed of the property that would one day become Highlands Ranch. Ownership see-sawed back and forth between Spain and France until during the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon sold the property to the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. During the 1800s, expeditions under the commands of Zebulon Pike, Maj. Stephen Long, Col. Henry Dodge, and John C. Fremont passed the area. In 1867, David Gregory acquired an 80-acre homestead on the property in January, 1867, and between 1867 and 1910 a total of 189 filings were made.

In 1870s, John W.

Springer, a former member of the Illinois House of Representatives and son of a prominent Illinois attorney and banker, moved to the high, dry mountain plains of Colorado for the sake of his wife Eliza's health. Eliza was the daughter of Col. William E. Hughes, president of the International Trust Co. of St. Louis. Springer purchased about 160 acres of the property from one of the original homesteaders, Mary Burkard, to build a ranch where he promised the finest horses in the country would be raised. In 1891, he started the main building of what he called his "Cross Country Ranch."



HIGHLANDS RANCH MANSION

There, Eliza and John had a daughter, Anne Clifton Springer. In 1904, Eliza died unexpectedly, throwing Springer into despair. Springer was now a single father, but he held on to the ranch. In 1909, Springer married a beautiful, saucy, recently-divorced St. Louis woman, Isabel "Sassy" Patterson, over the strong disapproval of Colonel Hughes. He renamed the ranch home "Castle Isabel" in her honor. In 1911, however, Springer became the innocent outsider in Isabel's love triangle. Her infidelity resulted in a murder between her two alleged lovers at the Brown Palace Hotel's bar. Five days later, Springer filed for divorce. Isabel "lapsed into abject poverty" and in 1917 she died a narcotics victim in New York City at the age of thirty-six. Meanwhile, Springer had sold the ranch to his father-in-law, Col. Hughes.

Col. William E. Hughes, whom the Denver Times had said was "one of the wealthiest and most prominent citizens of the west," purchased the ranch

from his son-in-law in 1913. It is said that at one time Hughes stabled horses in the ranch house, but it is not known for sure if Hughes ever resided in the mansion.

Waite Phillips, one of the brothers who founded Phillips Petroleum Company, bought the ranch in 1920.

Frank Kistler, president of Wolhurst Stock Farms, bought the property in 1926, converting it into cattle range and calling it the Diamond K. Kistler raised Angus cattle, sheep, hogs, and chickens. He also hired architect J. B. Benedict to add the remaining 40 percent of the mansion in classic Tudor style. Kistler added six fireplaces, nine bedrooms, hardwood floors, and two secret passages, one of which has a secret passage.

When Kistler ran into financial difficulties during the depression,

Lawrence C. Phipps Jr., a businessman and rancher, became owner of the mansion when he purchased the ranch in 1937. He renamed it Highland Ranch. Phipps Jr. had been instrumental in forming the Arapahoe Hunt Club on the southern portion of the Diamond K back in 1929. He was one of the three sons of millionaire and philanthropist Sen. Lawrence Cowle Phipps. Phipps Jr. had the mansion redecorated, but a year later, his wife Bertha moved out with the three children. In 1945, Phipps Jr. married Elaine Oakes. Mrs. Phipps hand-painted the mansion's bathrooms in various themes. Phipps Jr. sold several of the ranch's peripheral parcels and

added lands from the East Ranch and the Cheese Ranch between 1937 and 1976. He continued to assemble the ranch's land-holdings which eventually totalled 22,009 acres. By 1976, Phipps Jr. was very ill and the first-floor library had been converted to a bedroom for him.

Elaine arranged for the couple to move to a condominium in metro Denver but Phipps Jr. was determined to die in his mansion. He did . . . just two days before the intended move.

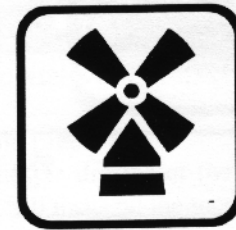
The Phipps family sold the ranch in 1977 to Marvin Davis of the Highland Venturers Corporation who then optioned the land in 1978 to the Mission Viejo Company, a subsidiary of the Phillip Morris tobacco company. In 1980, Mission Viejo began construction of the New Town of Highlands Ranch, and in 1981 the Phil and Kay Scott family was the first to move into the affluent Denver suburb.

While the mansion currently is not available for private rentals, the Mission Viejo Company intends to preserve and maintain the mansion for public benefit.



Isabel Springer, from a 1946 Rocky Mountain News

Highlands Ranch Historical Society



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The Highlands Ranch Historical Society incorporated in 1991 as a nonprofit, tax exempt organization to bring together those people interested in the history of Highlands Ranch. We are involved in many projects, including collecting artifacts, photographs, oral histories, and biographies; researching and documenting land grants of original homesteaders; compiling site surveys of historical home locations in our area; conducting tours of the historic Highlands Ranch mansion; and making presentations to schools and to the community.

Please join us at 7:00 p.m. on the last Wednesday of the month at the Library Conference Room, 48 W. Springer Drive, Highlands Ranch. Call ahead to confirm.

For more information about the Highlands Ranch Historical Society, please call (303) 791-3438.

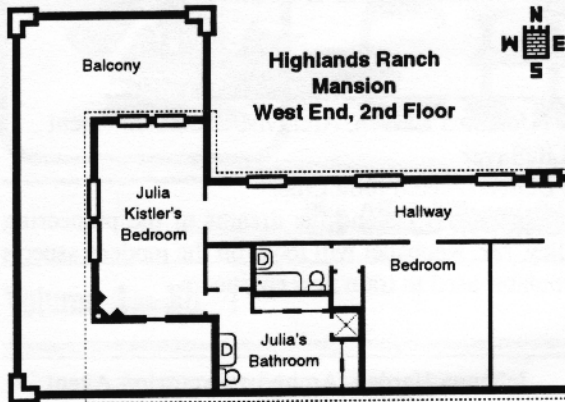
Membership in the Highlands Ranch Historical Society is available to interested individuals, families, and corporations.

Individual: \$15.00
Senior: \$10.00
Family: \$20.00
Corporate: \$50.00

Mail your tax-deductible check today to:

Highlands Ranch Historical Society
520 Fox Hunt Circle
Highlands Ranch, CO 80126

The Haunting of a Mansion



When oil baron Frank Kistler and his wife Florence moved in to their new country ranch home south of Denver in 1926, they gutted and renovated the interior. The Kistler home was actually a mansion, the final wing of which Kistler added in 1929 and 1930. This west wing was built in an English Tudor style of wood and stucco, quite a different look from the stone feudal baronial castle style of the first 60 percent of the mansion that had been built by John W. Springer in the early 1890s. Frank called his new property the "Diamond K Ranch." The Diamond K had previously been known as "Springer's Cross Country Ranch" then "Castle Isabel," and would later become "Phipps Highland Ranch."

The Kistler's four children kept busy riding horseback up the hill south of the mansion to the reservoir of drinking water where, against the wishes of their parents, they would go swimming. Daughter Frances was a tomboy, and it was not uncommon for her to frighten the butler or nanny by putting a frog in one of their pockets. But although Frances preferred her tomboyish ways, she and her sister Julia could still dress up in when they wanted to in their pink confirmation dresses.

But Frank and Florence were having marital problems, and following a hurry-up Mexican divorce in 1929, Frank married a beautiful younger woman in Hawaii, Leana Antonides, widow of Denver oil man and investment broker Ralph Antonides. Florence moved out of the mansion taking two daughters and a son with her. Julia stayed behind to live with the father she loved, along with her new stepmother and two stepbrothers. When she was 11 or 12 years old, she moved into the bedroom on the upper floor at the far end of the new west wing. The bedroom had its own large bathroom, a fireplace, delicately molded walls, ceiling heater plates, a surrounding private balcony, and a wondrous view through the double windows across the tennis courts to the shining mountains.

Julia thought she would remain the center of her father's attention, "the apple of his eye," her sister Frances later said. But it didn't turn out that way. Increasingly, Frank began to dote on his two stepsons, taking them riding across the hills and leaving a saddened Julia behind. With a breaking heart, Julia would cry in her bedroom.

When Frank pursued an idea of piping his Producers & Refining Company's natural gas from Wyoming to Denver, Chicago, and the east, the company couldn't handle the \$120 million cost. Frank had taken a gamble and lost. In an effort to salvage the situation, he merged his company with Prairie Gas and Oil Company. But the depression hit, and Frank was out when his company became part of the Sinclair Company. In 1937 he was forced to sell his ranch and mansion to Lawrence C. Phipps Jr. Julia would never again live in her beautiful mansion bedroom.

Years later, following Julia's death, strange sightings have been made at the far west end of the mansion in a bedroom that was once a little brown-haired girl's. For example, during a day-long retreat at the mansion, nurse Mary Hastogolas and another nurse hurried down the stairway to the rest of their group. Her companion exclaimed, "I saw a little girl. I saw a little girl with dark hair. The little girl was in the far west bedroom by the balcony, and she was wearing a pink dress!" They went to find the caretaker who told them it wasn't the first time that someone had told him that.

They then went to the first floor game room at the end of the west wing. The low crystal chandelier caught their eye because one, and only one, of the crystal clusters was shaking. The cluster continued shaking for a minute or two, and then stopped. Thinking that it was kind of "funny," they tried to get it to shake again by jumping up and down and opening and closing the door, all to no avail. They then left the room, and ascended the outside stairs to balcony of the room directly above—Julia Kistler's room. They saw a basketball-size mass of fog with a quarter-sized black nucleus hanging in the air at chest level. After fleeing in fear down the stairs, they collected their wits and went back up. The apparition was still there. The nurse felt she was getting an impression from the "mass" of an adolescent girl who was "trapped there and wanted to get help to release her." When they asked the "mass" questions, it bobbed up and down for "yes" and back and forth for "no."

Sometime later, Denver resident Melanie Major was at the mansion for a special wedding reception. Standing alone in the white ballroom in the west wing, she heard a child's voice say, "Melanie, it's time to leave." She said she turned to see who had spoken, but no one was there. After a while, she went into the upper bedroom at the end of the west wing. Outside, beyond the balcony, she thought she saw a young girl, about 11 or 12 years old. Melanie said she was wearing a dress with pink on it and was "tossing flowers" into a flower bed. She said, "I thought it was kind of strange." Then the girl disappeared.

In another sighting, a banquet caterer for a polo match that was being held on the mansion grounds said he had seen a "female face" in a second-floor window in the west wing.

Julia's sister, Mrs. Frances Parfet, in an interview said Julia considered that bedroom to be her special retreat, and that whenever "her heart was broken, she would run and hide" there. Frances thought that the image of the little girl seen in the upstairs bedroom at the end of the Highlands Ranch Mansion's west wing must have been the unhappy ghost of Julia Kistler.

Upcoming Events

Begins: December 13, 1996 10:00 a.m. (303) 866-3682 Peg Ekstrand, Public Relations Director
Exhibit: Cheyenne Dog Soldiers
Location: Colorado History Museum, 13th & Broadway, Denver, Colorado 80203



Date/Time: Sunday, January 12, 1997. 2:00 p.m. (303) 814-0795 Johanna Harden, Archivist/Excursion Agent
Excursion: **Then and Now: Railroading in this Decade, and Operation LifeSaver**
Guide: Steve Neubauer, Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Engineer on the Denver-Pueblo Joint Line.
Précis: Railroad history is NOW! We have long trains powered by equipment far beyond the dreams of the pioneering railroaders who laid the tracks through the East Plum Creek Valley. Mr. Neubauer will focus on the modern aspects of railroading, different types of engines, and the locomotive simulator used to train new engineers.
Station: Kirk Hall, Douglas County Fairgrounds, Castle Rock, Colorado

Date/Time: Sunday, February 9, 1997. 2:00 p.m. (303) 814-0795 Johanna Harden, Archivist/Excursion Agent
Excursion: **Two Miles Above Sea-Level: The Life and Legacy of David Moffat**
Guide: Steve Patterson, Santa Fe Engineer
Précis: In 1902, at the age of 63, mining speculator David Moffat began building the Denver, Northwestern & Pacific Railroad. He, along with William Jackson Palmer, had a great impact on Colorado railroad expansion and therefore the economic development of the state of Colorado.
Station: Kirk Hall, Douglas County Fairgrounds, Castle Rock, Colorado

HIGHLANDS RANCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY: PRESERVING OUR PAST FOR THE FUTURE



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