

Two Langmeyer homesteads

By Don Ellis

A prominent building in the 1862 photo of Colorado City which is displayed in the History Center is the 'Heisdick Building'. The 'Heisdick Building' may have been the first stone building in Colorado City. Today, as part of the building which houses Old Colorado City Surplus, it is the oldest building in El Paso County which is still on its original foundation. The 'Heisdick Building' was built of light yellowish colored sandstone whose ironstone concretions indicate that it probably came from the hogback of Dakota sandstone southwest of Colorado City. Colorado City founder Anthony Bott was in the building stone business quarrying that stone. It is likely that stone for the 'Heisdick Building' was quarried from the northern part of the hogback close to town. But, later, the most extensive quarrying on the Dakota hogback was farther south near Bear Creek, partly on Mr. Bott's property and partly on the adjacent Langmeyer property.

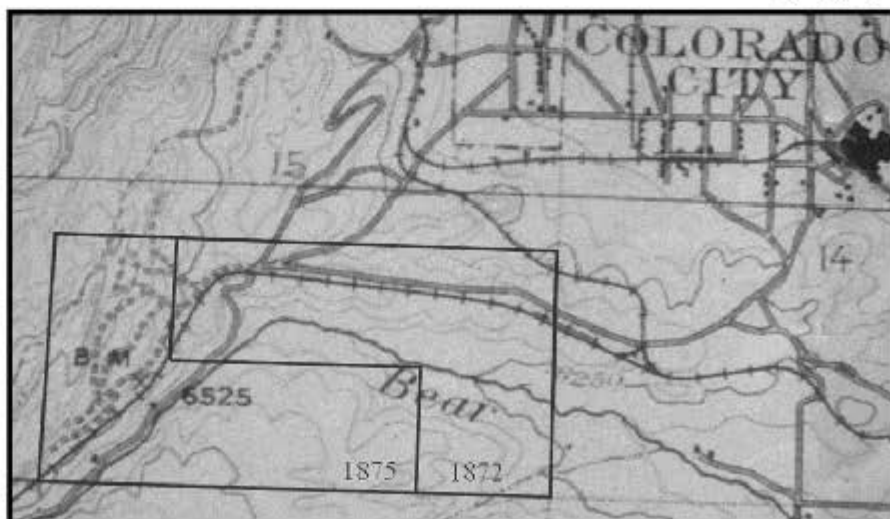
The 1880 census lists John Langmeyer's occupation as miner. However, at other times, he also worked as a carpenter and farm laborer (1). John was associated with Anthony Bott in the business 'Bott and Langmeyer Building Stone'.

Like Anthony Bott, John Langmeyer had come to Colorado from New York state. John's wife, Frederika Beatrice Langmeyer was Anthony Bott's sister. The 1870 census showed John Langmeyer, his wife,

Belois (very likely a misspelling of Beatrice), and their daughter, Isabella living in Colorado City with Anthony Bott (2). The 1870 census also showed their 10 year old daughter, Isabella, as having been born in Colorado. But, the 1860 census showed John living in Buffalo, New York. So, we can infer that John and his wife probably moved to Colorado in the latter part of 1860.

John Langmeyer was able to homestead along Bear Creek in Section 15, patenting one homestead in 1872 and a second in 1875. Together, these two homesteads encompassed 320 acres, the entire south half of Section 15, Township 14 South, Range 67 West. The second of the two Langmeyer homesteads included half a mile of the Dakota hogback above Bear Creek which became a source of stone for Bott and

Continued on page 3



*John Langmeyer's homesteads
patented 1872 and 1875*

Homesteads continued from page 1

Langmeyer Building Stone". On October 16, 1874, even before he had obtained the patent on his second homestead, John Langmeyer sold both of these homesteads to Anthony Bott for \$5,000.

Later, on January 14, 1878 Anthony Bott sold 420 acres of land, including John Langmeyer's original homesteads, to John Langmeyer and Frederika Beatrice Langmeyer, his wife, for \$5,000.

John Langmeyer was in Leadville, possibly engaged in mining, when he was shot and killed by a friend on June 20, 1880 (3). John's estate passed to his wife, F. Beatrice Langmeyer, as his sole heir.

In November of 1880, Mrs. Langmeyer leased 40 acres in the northwest corner of the Langmeyer homesteads, along with other land she owned, to four miners for mining "such gold, silver, copper and lead ores as may be found". The lease was for ten years, as long as work continued, but terminated at any time work was stopped for a period of 30 days. Predictably, the sandstones, shales, and limestone did not contain economic deposits of gold, silver, copper, or lead.

Ten years later, in 1890, the city of Colorado Springs obtained a right of way across the Langmeyer property and across Anthony Bott's property immediately to the north for a pipeline to carry water from Bear Creek to Colorado Springs. In consideration for the right of way across her property, Colorado Springs paid Mrs. Langmeyer \$1 and "the right to use water from the system ... by any assignee of said Langmeyer of any portion of the lands herein after mentioned under the same restrictions and at the same rates as given to citizens of Colorado Springs." As well as granting a right of way for the pipeline, the right of way grant also provided a reservoir site to the City of Colorado Springs with the condition that their respective parts of the reservoir site would revert to Anthony Bott and Frederika Langmeyer if the reservoir had not been built within 5 years. The reservoir site included the gully extending south from what is now the lower switchback on South 26th Street. No reservoir was ever built there. So, the site reverted back to Mr. Bott and Mrs. Langmeyer.

Although the City of Colorado Springs secured the right of way for its pipeline, it failed to secure the water rights for the water which was to flow through the pipe. Farmers who had homesteaded along Bear Creek east of the Langmeyer property had already established senior water rights for all of Bear Creek's water.

Water from Bear Creek had first been claimed for the ditch built in 1861 by Root and White; and by 1890 several other diversions had established claims accounting for much more water than actually flowed in Bear Creek. The first legal challenge to the City's appropriation of Bear Creek water was a suit filed by Martha Steuart in 1895 from which she received substantial compensation. It was not until 1988 that Colorado Springs finally secured all of the Bear Creek Water rights (4).

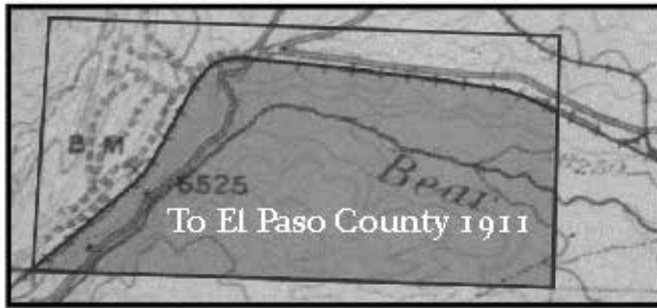
On January 4, 1900 Mrs. Langmeyer granted a 100 foot wide right of way across her property for the Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek District Railway. And, the part of the railroad over that right of way was completed the same year. Despite its initial success, the CS&CCD Railway eventually failed several years after having been sold to the Colorado and Southern. In 1922 the failed railway was sold at auction to W. D. Corley who converted the roadbed to a toll road, the Corley Mountain Highway. The road effectively became a public road when Corley's lease on the right of way through Pike National Forest expired in 1939; and in 1940 the road was renamed the "Goldcamp Road." In the late 1940's and early 1950's, it was also Colorado State Highway 336.

Mrs. Langmeyer died on April 29, 1904 without a will. Her next of kin were identified as three brothers, a sister, a nephew, and two nieces. Daughter Isabella was not named among the next of kin. The 1900 census indicated that Mrs. Langmeyer, who at that time was living with Anthony Bott and his wife Octavia, had no living children. So, it is likely that Isabella had died at a relatively young age. Before Mrs. Langmeyer's estate had been settled, Mrs. Langmeyer's sister, Mary Amba, also died; and her share of the estate then went to her children. In 1906 and 1907 Anthony Bott purchased the other heirs' interests in the Langmeyer property.

In 1910, El Paso County leased that portion of the Langmeyer homesteads south and east of the right of way of the Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek District Railway from Anthony Bott, with an option to purchase the property. And, in 1911 the county exercised its option and purchased this property as an extension of the El Paso County Farm (the "Poor Farm"). Over the years between 1911 and 1950, El Paso County sold small tracts along the western edge of the County Farm, but retained the major portion of this land.

For a number of years, beginning in the late 1940's or early 1950's, El Paso County operated an

Continued on page 6

Homesteads continued from page 3

asphalt paving plant just south and east of the intersection of Bear Creek Road and the CS&CCD right of way, which by that time had become a county road. The paving plant used gravel mined on site, lowering the level of the road in the process.



In 1971 El Paso County voters approved the creation of a County Parks and Recreation District by a 4 to 1 margin. Acquisition of the 414 acre County Farm by the County Parks and Recreation District was considered to have been the District's most significant accomplishment during its first year.

El Paso County Parks developed several nature trail loops and built the Solar Trails Center, a combined nature center and solar energy demonstration project, on land which was once part of the Langmeyer homesteads. The Bear Creek Nature Center has replaced the original, smaller Solar Trails Center.

Eighty year old Anthony Bott died in 1917. At some time, the western part of the Langmeyer homestead, which included the former Bott and Langmeyer stone quarries, was divided into two parcels. By the early 1940's the smaller southern

parcel was owned by Andy Heckers, a local barber; and the larger northern parcel was owned by Cloe and Pearl White.

Andy Heckers blasted a cut through the Dakota sandstone near a low point in the ridge, built a road to the ridge crest, and built the only house on the Dakota hogback. Alas, Mrs. Heckers refused to live there. So, Andy sold the property and built another house on a lot in Bear Creek Canyon.

Cloe and Pearl White, who lived in Bear Creek Canyon, used their land as pasture for their horses and mule. In 1955, they built a new house at the corner of Gold Camp Road and Bear Creek Road. The heir to the White's estate donated the land and house to the Bethany Baptist Church which gave the property the name "White Acres" and used it for outdoor worship and youth activities. In the past three and a half years all of White Acres, except a 2-1/2 acre lot with the house on it, has been purchased by the Colorado Springs TOPS program as public open space.

NOTES:

- 1) The author acknowledges with gratitude Jan Knox' research efforts in locating census records.
- 2) It is not entirely clear that Frederika Beatrice Langmeyer and Belois Langmeyer were the same person. The fact that John Langmeyer and his wife, 'Belois', were living with Anthony Bott in 1870 supports this interpretation.
- 3) The author acknowledges with gratitude Jo Cervone's efforts in finding information about John Langmeyer's death.
- 4) The doctoral dissertation, 'A HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF PRIOR APPROPRIATION: THE EMERGENCE OF APPROPRIATIVE WATER RIGHTS IN COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO' (University of Minnesota, 1989) by Curt Arthur Poulton, offers an extensive study of Bear Creek water rights. The History Center has a copy in its library.

