

## Estimated 300 walk down Bock family's memory lane

Some 300 people, many of them with past ties to the Bock family, flocked to the Old Colorado City History Center March 2 for an opportunity to share stories and look through mementoes.



Visitors to the "Bock Family Legacy Collection" open house browse through mementoes on a table in the Old Colorado City History Center during the free five-hour event March 2. Care was taken to shield sensitive documents from fingerprints (note the protective gloves).

Westside Pioneer photo

The Old Colorado City Historical Society (OCCHS), which owns and operates the center, set up the five-hour open house. Overseen by archivist Tom Daniels, the event featured various items belonging to the museum and long-time OCCHS member Dave Hughes, as well as recent donations by Richard Bock.

The Bocks owned Red Rock Canyon, off Highway 24, for about 80 years before selling the 789-acre parcel to the city in 2003 (to become an open space with the same name).

John G. Bock, a cowboy and World War I veteran, pieced the property together through multiple land purchases, and he is credited with improving the drainage in its parallel canyons. His sons, John S. and Richard, grew up there. Only Richard, born in 1923, survives. He lives now in Arizona.

At the open house, "people were very pleased to be able to handle artifacts and were generally very engaged," said OCCHS President Sharon Swint. As a caveat to her attendance estimate, she noted, "we stopped counting at 1 p.m. [two hours into the event]." They were "interesting attendees," she added.

Among those she talked to were:

- A "horse wrangler" who at age 14 worked for the elder Bock (John G.) for \$2 a day.
- A man who mowed the wild grass in the canyon.
- Three people who rented either houses or trailer space from the Bocks.
- An acquaintance of John S. Bock who was friends with Richard.
- A graphic artist who worked with the Bock sons on their presentation materials for the World Trade Center that never gained approval from local governments.

"There were some others," Swint said. "I only wish we had had a recorder. In general, I was surprised at how complimentary everyone was about three men who have been called secretive, angry, mysterious and greedy."

An attendee that the Westside Pioneer spoke with was Butch Kirkwood. Kirkwood's father had been a school classmate and friend of John S. Bock, so that young Butch felt accepted when they met in 1954. "He was a real good guy," Kirkwood recalled. The closeness paid off for John S. in the '90s when the tractor he was driving on the property rolled partially onto him and Butch was there to help.

But it was also true that the Bocks were zealous defenders of their property. When Butch was a boy and joined with friends to explore the canyon where the Bock home was, they were met with a warning to play elsewhere. And on the rocks



Butch Kirkwood studies a photo display at the Old Colorado City Historical Society's open house on the Bock Family March 2. When he was a teenager, Kirkwood did odd jobs at the Roundup Stables, owned by John G. Bock (upper left in display), located where the Safeway is now.

Westside Pioneer photo

along that ridge, "you could see where the rocks had been hit with a .44-40" [rifle]," Kirkwood said.

Butch had two horses when he was young, and had an arrangement with John G. Bock to keep them in a pasture near his Roundup Stables (located about where Safeway is today), in exchange for the boy doing cleanup work there. The elder Bock could be "ornery," Butch said. "No matter what I did, he was always on my case. He'd tell me my dad could pick up more [stuff] in 20 minutes than I could in four days."

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