

Can't make yourself throw away an old book? Up-cycle it. On Wednesday, April 18 from 3 to 4, join us to make a book safe. We will hollow out old books to create a hidden compartment. Your book could become a jewelry box, a change jar, or anything you'd like! Materials will be provided, but feel free to bring your own book to transform. Registration is required.

The Monumental Readers will meet from 10 to noon on Friday, April 20 to discuss *The Dressmaker* by Kate Alcott. All are welcome to attend this monthly

book group, and no registration is required.

The Monument Library Spinning Group will meet from 10 to 3:45 on Thursday, April 26 to explore the craft of hand spinning.

If you are interested in joining one of our discussion groups or working with others on writing your life story, come to the library for information.

On the walls of the library and in the display case will be art by students of Lewis-Palmer Middle School.

**Palmer Lake Library events**

The Palmer Lake Book Group meets at 9 a.m. on the first Friday of each month.

Toddler Time is each Friday at 10:30, Story Times are on Wednesdays at 10:30, and the Lego Build event is the first Saturday of each month at 10:30. We provide the Legos, you bring your imagination! Duplos are provided for young builders.

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*Palmer Lake Historical Society, Mar. 15*

**Mt. Manitou & Incline Railway story told**

*By Sigi Walker*

The Palmer Lake Historical Society drew a very appreciative standing-room-only crowd March 15 to hear Eric Swab present the history of the Mt. Manitou & Incline Railway. He told the story of the building of a rudimentary cable car system to transport materials to construct a pipeline from Ruxton Creek at the top of Mt. Manitou to the Pikes Peak Hydro-Electric Power Plant (still in operation today) at the base of the mountain. It began operation on Feb. 15, 1905.

Once built, it was thought the cable car system could be adapted to a tourist attraction, Swab said. Spurred by Dr. Newton Brumback, new track was laid and the road bed prepared; an upper station and power house were built at the top and a lower station at the bottom. The "Incline" opened for business on June 28, 1908, "but not many would venture to ride" that Sunday before the Fourth of July. "They were afraid," said Claude McKesson. "Then on July 4th we put on an 'excursion' and reduced the fare from \$1 to 50 cents. We had all the people we could carry. It was evident the people would risk their lives for 50 cents who would not do it for \$1."

This was the beginning of an 82-year history of one of the most beloved attractions in the Pikes Peak



**Above:** From left are presenter Eric Swab, Historical Society audio/visual Director Peter Blaney, and Historical Society President Tom Baker. *Photo by Doris Baker.*

region, offering an unparalleled view of the town and Eastern plains from the top.

Swab described the "concessions" that served the tourists at the top of the Incline: a restaurant, gift shop, and photography concession. The "Burro Line"

took people from the top of the Incline to the top of Pikes Peak. When a 1990 rock slide washed away 500 feet of ties and railbed, it was decided to close the Incline. There were petitions opposing the closure from people in the area but to no avail. And so, the tracks were taken up and buildings torn down.

The Incline then attracted hikers, who loved the extreme physical challenge of a one-mile climb that rises 2,000 feet in elevation. It was illegal to hike portions of the trail until spring 2013, when the Intergovernmental Agreement and Incline Plan were adopted.

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Mark your calendars for Thursday, April 19, when Victoria Miller of the Steelworks Museum of the West in Pueblo will host the film *Forging the West*. The story of Pueblo's Colorado Fuel and Iron Co., the film reveals the human side of an epic American story about the steel mill that fueled the development of the West—its railroads, people, politics, and to a large degree, its character. This program is free and open to all. The venue is the Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the program begins at 7. Light refreshments are served after the presentation. ■

*High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)*

**Companion planting, zombies, and slice of life gardening**

*By Janet Sellers*

The ancient polyculture method, aka lazy gardening, copies nature's forest culture, uses "chop and drop" in fall, with limited tilling and close planting. Polyculture optimizes planting support of soil, plants, and pollinators, maximizing solar access and friendly interspecies growth vs. monoculture that grows only one large crop.

Lazy gardening also takes heed to protect wild native plants and those mistaken for weeds that actually help the habitat and soil in many ways—it's vital to learn about them. Local native plants bring native pollinators and keep our local forests and wild-life thriving. Common dandelions bring nutrients topside via tap roots, build soil, make extraordinary health food, and are the vital first food available for our pollinators. Here's a local secret: Ponderosa pine needles as mulch keep weeds off garden paths and garden beds and hold moisture for the seeds we drop in the soil under them.

As promised, companion planting besties:

- Lettuce loves beets, corn, cukes, onions, peas, radishes, spinach, strawberries.
- Sunflowers love lettuce, cukes, corn.
- Beans love beets, carrots, celery, corn, cucumbers, peas, radishes, squash, strawberries, tomatoes.
- Basil loves peppers, radishes, tomatoes.
- Plant spearmint, (short) marigolds, and laven-

der to deter pests; nasturtium and dill, cosmos and yarrow attract good bugs.

**Organic produce zombies**

You can regrow organic produce. Using the rooty end, keep the bottom 3-4 inches of organic purchased veggies—celery, scallions, bok choy, romaine, garlic (separate cloves, rootlet intact)—and place in an inch of clean, cool water, and in a few days you should see some growth in the center. Upon sturdy roots in 2-3 weeks, plant in a pot, keep watered.

**Slice of life garden**

Take a 1-2-inch slice of tomato, melon or other ripe, seed-filled produce, seeds intact, and put it into the loose, fluffy compost soil of a pot or garden bed. It will grow well that way, likely due to the protection of the fruit part intact—it makes its own soil prep on the spot. Thin and transplant when plants are strong, usually 6-10 inches tall.

Find my local garden tips, movies, and more on the Monument Community Garden Facebook page.

*Janet Sellers is an avid "lazy gardener" champion of ethnoecology, aka accessing Mother Nature's wisdom to grow a high-altitude garden that includes flowers and food while protecting our vital forest habitat. Send your favorite tips to [janetsellers@ocn.me](mailto:janetsellers@ocn.me).*



**Above:** Volunteer gardeners Donna Wood, left, and Kimberly Rivera help prepare the soil at Monument Community Garden in early March, turning compost and marking out square-foot gardening aka highly prolific polyculture areas for planting in early April. The 2018 garden will demonstrate techniques including square-foot, vertical, and straw bale gardening, and using drought-resistant Olla watering systems. The public is invited to volunteer to help out or just enjoy watching the garden grow. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

*Art Matters*

**Plein air painting in April**



*By Janet Sellers*

*"And this our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in every thing."—in William Shakespeare's As You Like It, 1599.*

We find such powerful communication and inspiration being out in our forests and nature, especially starting in springtime when it's easier for artists going out into nature to paint. Plein air art, both painting and sculpture, is considered one of the most challenging—it demands the artist create entirely outdoors,

requiring superb art skills and the ability to work with dispatch, as the light or subject can move so quickly as to virtually disappear, be it wild animals or the fleeting light of day. And there is little to no room for error, so the work must be done impeccably.

For plein air artists, being outdoors, hiking to the ideal spot, and setting up are among the most arduous but satisfying experiences. Many artists admit they simply cannot do this demanding yet beautiful work. Painting outdoors relies on natural light—either bright sunlight or on a cloudy day with diffused

light—which allows one to experience true colors without harsh light and shade. Plein air painting also includes the night sky of moonlight, streetlights, and other night-time conditions. James M. Turner made nocturnes a legend in art, most famously with his nocturnes of fireworks and stars at night.

Local plein air art and classes will start up in April in our area. Keep an eye out for the local painters working in our beautiful scenery. I know I will be painting at Fox Run Park, Monument Preserve, Woodmoor scenic spots and Palmer Lake in good weather,