

THE RED ROCK RAG

Volume 1, Number 5 News and Views on Red Rock Canyon September, 2000
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P. O. Box 2352, Colorado Springs, CO 80901-2352

CALENDAR

Meetings of Possible Interest:

- September 12 **Manitou Springs City Council**
work session
7:00 PM Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue
- September 13 **TOPS Working Committee**
4:00 PM Colorado Springs
Parks and Recreation Building
1401 Recreation Way
(just east of I-25, 2 blocks north
of Uintah)
- September 19 **Manitou Springs City Council**
7:00 PM Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue
- September 26 **Manitou Springs City Council**
work session
7:00 PM Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue
- September 27 **TOPS Working Committee**
7:30 AM Colorado Springs
Parks and Recreation Building
1401 Recreation Way
(just east of I-25, 2 blocks north
of Uintah)
- September 27 **Manitou Springs Open Space
Advisory Committee**
7:00 PM Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue
- October 3 **Manitou Springs City Council**
7:00 PM Manitou Springs City Hall
606 Manitou Avenue
- October 5 **Red Rock Canyon Committee**
7:00 PM Village at Skyline,
Primrose Room, Building No. 1
2305 Patriot Heights,
off Lower Gold Camp Road

NOTE: Scheduled meetings can be subject to change or cancellation. Agendas for the Manitou Springs City Council meetings are posted at Manitou Springs City Hall the Friday preceding the meeting.

"All is calm for now ..."

The Metro section of the August 31 *Gazette* featured a beautiful photo of a duck on one of the Bock lakes in Red Rock Canyon with the rock formations and mountains reflected in the gently rippling water. The caption read, "All is calm for now on the Red Rock Canyon property near U.S. Highway 24 and 31st Street."

In the accompanying article, Erin Randolph reported that Zydeco has still released no information on its proposed Red Rock Canyon development and that the concerns of Manitou residents about the development are yet to be addressed.

She quoted Zydeco spokesman Kyle Blakeley as saying that Zydeco would "have something in a couple of weeks," and that he believed Manitou residents would support the plan once they saw what the project was all about.

For now, however, Manitou residents concerned with the future of Red Rock Canyon are reported to remain skeptical.

Our Thanks

The Red Rock Canyon Committee wishes to express its appreciation to the following people who have made contributions for operating expenses during the past month:

Kay Arnold
Carol Benight
Chip Benight
Jo Cervone
Joe Fabeck
Laura Feldman
Della Garell
Rich Klompenhauer
Barbara Martin
Glenn Pressman
Jane Wilson

Hurrah for Mike!

Our special thanks to attorney Mike Duncan. Mike is preparing our Articles of Incorporation and By Laws as we move toward getting our 501(c3) designation. He's helping us at no charge.

Thank you Mike!

TIDBITS**The John G. Bock Story**

As a young man, John G. Bock came to Colorado from Philadelphia in 1907 with the hope of finding relatives with whom the family had lost contact.

His first Colorado adventure came just after his train left Limon on its way to Colorado Springs. The locomotive boiler exploded killing the engineer and fireman.

John didn't know where to look for his lost kinfolk, or even their names. But, he did know Charles Evans, a Philadelphia man who had become assistant manager of the Holly Sugar Company at Swink. In fact, John had saved Mr. Evans' two sons from drowning when Mr. Evans lived in Philadelphia.

So, John took the train from Colorado Springs to Rocky Ford and got a job weighing sugar beets.

In 1907 much of the land in southeastern Colorado was government owned and open to homesteading, but unclaimed because of the dry summers and harsh winters. So, it had remained open range - free range. For decades, one of the largest free range cattle operations in the region had been the JJ Ranch which had its headquarters 21 miles south of La Junta.

By late summer, 1907, 18 year old John G. Bock had quit his job weighing sugar beets and trudged down the road to the JJ Ranch, still with some hope of finding his kinfolk. He got a job at the JJ helping with a chuck wagon. The other JJ cowboys called him "Philadelphia".

When Philadelphia had been with the JJ Ranch a little over a year, the JJ cowboys went into La Junta for a "big blowout" after they finished loading their cattle into railroad cars at the stockyards west of town. When the cowboys had drunk their fill, they drifted back to camp. Philadelphia got into a rough fight with Tex. Tex rode back to the ranch to quit; and Philadelphia, too, soon left, leaving behind the land and the people he had come to love.

He had become infatuated with a girl at the ranch and was seeking the fortune which would help him woo her.

He went to New York and found it so lonesome.

At the start of 1909 he took the steamship *Creole* from New York to New Orleans. From New Orleans he moved to San Antonio and from San Antonio to Phoenix, seeking his fortune ever closer to Colorado where he wanted to be.

After he'd worked several months around Phoenix, Philadelphia had saved money to buy a pair of pack mules. And, in June 1909 he and his mules headed off into the Arizona desert and mountains to prospect for gold. Each day, he believed that the next day he would strike it rich. But as the weeks passed he lost faith in his imagined fortune. So, he headed north to Colorado to work at the JJ Ranch again.

Philadelphia had his eye on a place called Richard Canyon where he thought he might like to live. On November 23, 1910 he filed a homestead claim.

Homesteaders took land that had been free range. For that reason, they weren't regarded very kindly by the JJ outfit which called them "nesters". Philadelphia was immediately given his pay and discharged.

The first year on the homestead was a hard one. Then, things improved some when Philadelphia got some money and was able to buy some cattle. However, having cattle didn't improve his relation with his former employer, the JJ Ranch, which sent a couple of hired gunslingers to pay him a visit.

When the U. S. entered World War I, Philadelphia became a "draft evader". Finally, he was conscripted into the army in handcuffs and sent to the front lines. In the Fall of 1918 he was wounded in the battle of St. Mihiel and was hospitalized for six months. Twenty nine years later he was awarded the Purple Heart.

On May 10, 1919, Philadelphia was discharged from the army with exactly one year of service. Fortunately, Tom Tate had taken care of the homestead while Philadelphia was away. So, when Philadelphia returned the place was just like it had been when he left. But, it seemed very lonely.

Then, at the Fourth of July dance at the schoolhouse, Philadelphia met the girl he would marry. She was the daughter of "nesters" who had come from Kentucky. Her name was Sylvia. They were married on September 12, 1919 and lived on Philadelphia's homestead where they built a 4 room stone house, a barn and a corral.

On April 19, 1921 Sylvia Bock gave birth to a son who was named John. A second son, Richard, was born on the homestead July 21, 1923.

Before Richard was born, his father was diagnosed with tuberculosis and realized that he would need to give up ranching. He sold his livestock to Jim Hagen who had been a wagon boss for the JJ and leased the property to Jim for 5 years. Philadelphia bought a new Ford from Tom Tate; and the Bock family drove north toward their new life in Colorado Springs.

John G. Bock had traded cattle and horses. He thought he could trade real estate. He got a correspondence school diploma in real estate and went into the real estate business with D. V. Pruitt.

Mr. Bock purchased property at 3164 W. Colorado Avenue and built a tourist camp called the "Roundup Tourist Camp". Then, he bought property across the road at 3165 W. Colorado Avenue where he operated a spotted pony riding stables called the "Roundup Saddle Stables".

He bought the old City Hall of Colorado City which he used as a historical museum for several years. And, he bought property the other side of 26th Street which had been the "red light district". For a number of years, the Bock family made their home in the building which had been Laura Belle's "house" at 2612 W. Cucharas.

Mr. Bock leased property south of the Roundup Saddle Stables from the quarry owners so that he could use Red Rock Canyon for pony rides and pasture.

As property in the Red Rock Canyon area became available, Mr. Bock purchased it. His first purchase of Red Rock Canyon land was a 72 acre Gypsum Canyon parcel which he bought from Hattie Stewart for \$3 per acre. He bought 129 acres which had belonged to the Greenlee Stone Company for \$1,300, 45 acres that had belonged to Earth Products Company for \$500, 40 acres that had once belonged to the Colorado Stone Company for \$500, 200 acres that belonged to the Union Land and Cattle Company for \$4,000, the 87 acre Swope property for back taxes, and so on.

By 1938 John and Sylvia Bock owned most of the private land in Red Rock Canyon, Greenlee (Wild Horse) Canyon, Sand Canyon, and Gypsum Canyon, as well as a large part of the hogbacks, about 650 acres.

In the Spring of 1938, the Bock family took a vacation trip to the area where John and Sylvia had made their first home together.

They found a sign on the gate of the old JJ Ranch which said "For Sale. Denver Joint Bank, Denver, Colorado." The buildings were falling down; the big trees were gone; tenants occupied what was left of the ranch; and the bank held close to \$ 20,000 in mortgages against the property.

After getting backing from his friend Spencer Penrose and negotiating with the banker, Mr. Bock was able to buy the 720 acres that remained of the ranch along with 500 shares in stock of the Nine Mile Ditch Company, free and clear, for \$6,000. *Philadelphia* wanted revenge on the men who had ruined the JJ Ranch. He wanted to restore some of the way of life that had been lost there. After buying this 720 acres, he also bought other properties which had once been part of the JJ Ranch until he had put together a 3,000 acre holding and 514.25 shares of the Nine Mile Ditch Company.

Philadelphia reopened the dance hall at the JJ Ranch and held dances every Wednesday and Saturday night, and had a good time until bootleggers started to take over. He hoped to make the place a cowboy center with a rodeo ground, a hotel, and a sightseeing concession from Colorado Springs.

Then, the irrigation ditch went dry. *Philadelphia* thought that the ditch company wanted to stop him from raising a crop. To prevent the ditch company from getting an assessment against the ranch when there was no water in the ditch he tried to sell his ditch company shares and served notice on the ditch company to remove the unwanted ditch and keep their ditch riders off his property. He began packing a gun to guard against trespassing ditch riders. In time he came to feel that his gun was his only friend. Yet, when *Philadelphia* finally sold the ranch in 1946, he was very sad to leave.

Sylvia did not want to re-experience any of the hardships of homestead life. She and the boys never went to visit her husband's JJ holdings. And, she was very glad when he sold the ranch to a Texas banker.

Since the time that land in Red Rock Canyon was homesteaded in the 1860's and 1870's, there had been a public road into Red Rock Canyon, the Red Rock Canyon Road. When John and Sylvia Bock became owners of much of the Red Rock Canyon land, this road became their access route to their land. Then, in 1943 the Red Rock Canyon Road was closed by the owners of a trailer park. John and Sylvia needed the road for access and also wanted it to remain open as a public road. So, they filed suit against the trailer park owners, the city of Colorado Springs and the Midland Terminal Railway. Judge Miller ruled against the Bocks who then appealed the case and obtained a favorable ruling. The defendants then appealed the case to the Colorado Supreme Court which ruled in their favor and permanently closed the road.

The Bocks were forced to buy an additional piece of property and build a new road.

Mr. Bock blamed Sylvia's religion and her good neighbor attitude for the closing of the road.

He was sent to Fort Logan Mental Hospital for an examination; and the Veterans' Administration ordered a guardian appointed for him.

John G. Bock was outraged. He went to Phoenix where the Veterans' Administration did not agree with the finding and refused to comply with the Denver order.

He bought 40 acres of farm land just outside Scottsdale and spent the next ten years alone there in an old house trailer.

Scottsdale grew and annexed Mr. Bock's property which rose in value from \$500 an acre to \$25,000 an acre. By his own account, Mr. Bock had become a rich man. He kept part of the Scottsdale land for a new 10 x 40 foot trailer and hired a secretary to help him with his writings and to act as his chauffeur.

His secretary drove him on one last trip to the southeast Colorado country he had ridden as a cowboy some 50 years before.

John G. Bock spent \$73,000 of his Arizona fortune to buy the trailer park which had closed the Red Rock Canyon Road. Hoping he might get a road into Red Rock Canyon through another property, he also bought the undeveloped subdivision of East Manitou which had been platted in 1889 and which adjoined his Red Rock Canyon holdings on the west.

John G. Bock willed his property to his two sons, John and Richard.

Don Ellis

John G. Bock wrote two short autobiographies which were the source for the material in this article:

1. *In Canyon Land* (Vantage Press, New York, 1964)
2. *In Red Rock Canyon Land* (Privately published, undated)

Reprints of *In Red Rock Canyon Land* are available from:

Old Colorado City Historical Society
1 South 24th Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80904

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WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

Letters, articles, comments (and glossy photos) may be sent to:

Rag Editor
Red Rock Canyon Committee
P. O. Box 2352
Colorado Springs, CO 80901-2352

Electronic submissions may be sent to donellis@aex.net. Electronic text MUST be plain ASCII (.txt) format. **Word processor formats such as Microsoft Word (.doc) cannot be accepted!!!!** Digital images may be attached. 360 dpi bit map images at the size they will appear in the Rag will provide the best quality when reproduced.

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For more information, contact **Scott Flora** at the *Trails and Open Space Coalition* 633-6884

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