

This is the 2nd in a series from The Cherry Hills Land Preserve, Inc, which is writing a complete history of Cherry Hills Village to be presented to the Cherry Hills Community in 2007. The following excerpt is another preview of that history. Look for more excerpts in future Criers



Cherry Hills
Land Preserve, Inc.

THE STORY OF THE VILLAGE CENTER

by Councilmember Klasina VanderWerf

A Village Center (the physical building which would house and centralize the City's government functions, maintenance, and security needs) was probably anticipated from the time of Cherry Hills' incorporation. The first zoning map of Cherry Hills Village, submitted by its Planning and Zoning Commission in the fall of 1945, includes a C-1 zoning, a Community Center District which allowed for public libraries and museums, a Post Office, and government buildings. Curiously, though other documents indicate that the early framers eschewed all commercial development, the C-1 zoning also allowed for "other community uses primarily devoted to local shopping centers serving Cherry Hills Village." And with the Village's first land use Master Plan submitted to the City in 1950 by S.R. DeBoer, noted City Planner and landscape architect, (yes the same De Boer whose name has been in the *Denver Post* recently for his design of Denver's City Park), this theme is reiterated. DeBoer's plan speaks to a Community Center District in the Village's geographic center "which allows for those approved community commercial uses which have a definite Village character and which is laid out as a rural center rather than a City District. Both plans show that center as being in the Village's center, at the corner of Quincy Avenue and University Boulevard, across from what was then known as the Schoolhouse."

But in 1945, the vision and the reality were still worlds apart.



Martha Morse holds one of the Suffolk lambs she raised in the early days of the Village.

The first priority for the citizens who had successfully pulled off the incorporation which kept their small enclave out of Denver's hands and in their control was to work furiously to put the necessary city services into place. It would be another year before the City would be able to assess taxes and even then, with a total assessment value for the Village of a little over \$900,000 and a mill levy of five mills, the first annual budget would consist of the total sum of \$4,500.

As is characteristic of our community from the time of its inception until now, numerous citizens stepped up to the plate. J.D. Nicholson, an official of the Mine & Smelter Company, was the first treasurer; though, as Joe Little points out in his history of Cherry Hills Village, "He had

no money to count." Leonard DeLue, owner of an armored car service whose home was located on the 13th green of the Cherry Hills Country Club where the Club's riding stables had been, qualified himself as Marshal by saying, "I have a deputy sheriff's badge and a large police flashlight. I'll be the policeman until we can afford one." It would be another four years before Jess Briddle would be hired as the Town's Chief Marshal. Peter Dominick, a bright and promising young attorney who would be elected to the U.S. Senate from Colorado in 1962, volunteered to serve as the Town's first attorney. Meetings were held in one of the Schoolhouse's classrooms.

The property the zoning plan had targeted for its Community Center District was owned by John Meade, a man who, depending on whom one talked to, was either an irascible farmer, or a gentleman salesman. He lived in a Dutch Colonial house. A few neighbors kept their horses at the stables on his property.

Village Center Story continued on the next two pages (6,7).



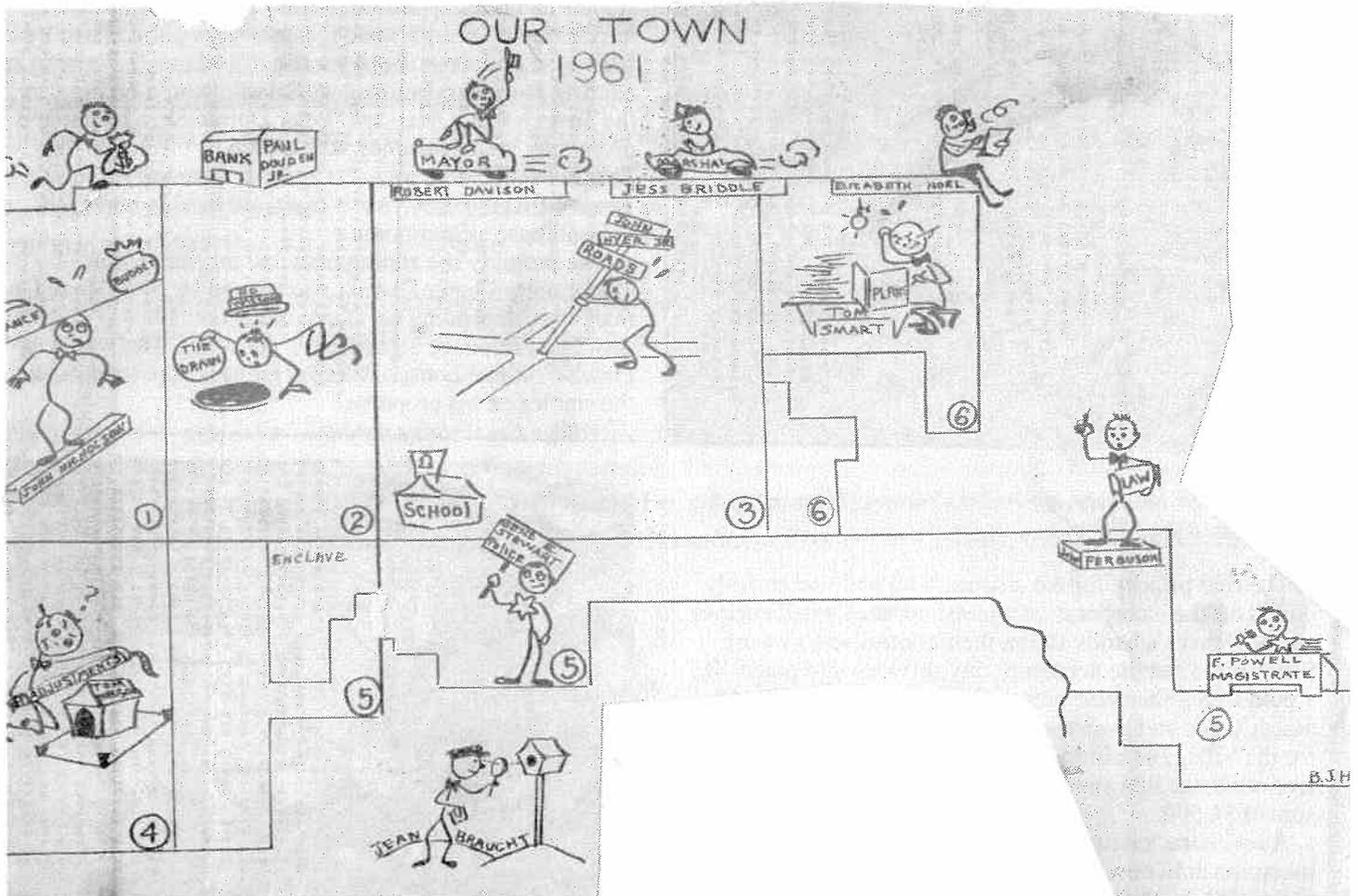
Stanley Morse, the architect for the original Village Center, is shown here building his wife, Martha, a barn for her sheep.

THE STORY OF THE VILLAGE CENTER CONTINUED...

City business functioned well enough catch as catch can for a time, and the Town developed what Joe Little refers to as "a personality all its own." The City Clerks - first, Louesa Bromfield, and then, Woodie Noel - ran the town from their homes. Jess Biddle handled police business from his car. And Judge Fred Powell held court in an office on his back porch.

Fast forward to 1961, 16 years after incorporation in the form of a statutory town rule and five years before Cherry Hills Village would change its governance status to that of home rule. Bob Davison, who served as the Town's attorney for five years before being elected mayor, presided over the period from 1960 - 1966, a time of tremendous growth. The population increased from 1,931 to 3,154, a jump of over 60%, some of which was the result of the annexation of Cherryridge, Mansfield, and part of Charlou. The Town responded by establishing a full-time road department and expanding the police force to seven officers. A second elementary school, Village heights, was added during these years. Stasia Davison, Bob's dynamic wife, is still a Village resident. She remembers the long hours Davison put in as Mayor. She had served as his campaign manager for his first two terms as Mayor, but remembers telling him, perhaps only half-jokingly, "If you run again, I'll circulate a petition against you."

In 1961, when John Meade offered the Village the four acres the Village Center now sits on for \$20,000, a price below market value, the Town jumped at the chance to purchase the property. Because this expense had not been anticipated or budgeted for, the Trustees passed an ordinance which would allow for this expenditure in excess of the annual budget based upon what the Trustees deemed was "an emergency due to an unforeseen contingency..." The November 23rd issue of *The Crier* that year carried the notice of this ordinance with a hand drawn map showing the property's location and a headline that read: "We have a site for our Village Center and it is even a proper shape!"



This artwork by "BJH" was published in *The Crier* in February, 1961. The artist is B.J. Helmstaedter (Mrs. C.A.).

The land was then leased to Edwin Kassler, Jr. who arranged to have the Village Center built by Blackinton and Decker, Inc. Building and grounds were then subleased back to the Village until a municipal election in 1964 authorized \$75,000 in bonds, the proceeds from which were used to buy Kassler's interest in the building.

The architect who designed the original structure in 1962 was Stanley E. Morse. Martha Morse, who still lives in the City, recently reflected on her husband's work, the Village Center and the larger body of his work as well. Morse came to the job with impressive credentials. While with the architectural firm of Burnham and Hoyt, he had done the architectural drawings and supervision for the design for the Red Rocks Amphitheater. And though it is Burnham Hoyt's name that gets associated with Red Rocks, it was Stanley Morse who actually did all the heavy lifting when it came to the design of that architectural masterpiece.

Martha doesn't remember whether the octagonal shape her husband used as the focal point for the Village Center's design was because that sort of shape provided for a friendlier town hall gathering kind of atmosphere where residents could come and share ideas. She does, however, cite a couple of principles that guided much of her husband's work. One was simplicity - clean lines. The other is a principle that is clearly in evidence in Martha's home which Stanley designed as well. Martha hesitated when she sought to describe this principle, then finally settled on saying that her husband was always conscious of "how the structure would fit in with the land."

Looking at some of the other buildings Stanley Morse designed, Jefferson County schools, several buildings on what was then the Colorado Women's College campus, including Whatley chapel, the campuses chapel, this notion becomes clearer. Morse's designs give us more than a building; they give us a structure that is one with its surroundings. He frequently seems to adhere to the goal that the landscape shouldn't be altered to fit the design; rather, the design should be influenced by its surroundings. Like so much of what we surround ourselves with today, he didn't design buildings that come across with an announced bravura so much as ones that rethink the relationship between built space and the natural world.

The Center was dedicated in October 1963. The dedication day flowers were provided by resident George Calkins and by the builder Blackington and Decker. Master gardener and first editor of *The Crier*, Persis Owen, supervised the landscaping for the Village Center.

By 1982, Cherry Hills Village had outgrown its building. In its sixth bond election, the City Council asked the electorate to approve a general obligation bond in the amount of \$450,000 to expand and remodel the existing structure to accommodate the expanded police department and the municipal court. A fact sheet that went out said, "Existing space is very cramped, and additional space is required so that we may serve you in a more dignified and efficient manner." The bond issue passed and, with that, we came to have the Village Center which serves us today.



Mayor Davis outside the then new Village Center in 1963.



The interior of the Village Center before remodel in 1982.

CALL FOR PHOTOS If you have some good photos which show the Village in its early stages or of early Village residents and are willing to let us duplicate them for the history project, please call either Lori Autterson at **303-781-7733** or Klasina VanderWerf at **303-694-4586**.