



Colorado Biographies



General William Jackson Palmer 1836-1909

Photo courtesy Special Collections, PPLD

- General Palmer was born in Delaware in 1836 and raised in Philadelphia as a Quaker.
- At 17, he worked for a Pennsylvania railroad; later, he studied railroads and other industries in Europe.
- At 25, Palmer led a volunteer cavalry regiment which fought successfully throughout the Civil War. By the end of the war he was a General and a Medal of Honor recipient.
- After the war, Palmer led a survey team for the Kansas Pacific Railroad from Kansas to San Francisco.
- In 1869, while in charge of the construction of the Kansas Pacific Railroad into Denver, Palmer traveled south and found a beautiful area at the foot of Pikes Peak to live.
- In 1870, Palmer decided to build his own railroad from Denver to Mexico. He called his railroad company the Denver-Rio Grande
- He married Mary Lincoln “Queen” Mel- len in 1870 and brought her to Foun- tain Colony (Colorado Springs). He built Glen Eyrie for Queen and his three daughters.
- Colorado Springs, nicknamed “Little Lon- don”, was founded in 1871.
- The Denver-Rio Grande ended up going west to Durango instead of south to the Rio Grande River as Palmer had planned.
- Palmer died in 1909, two years after he broke his neck in a horseback riding acci- dent at Glen Eyrie.

Great Resources on General Palmer

- Ayer, Eleanor. *Colorado Chronicles : Famous Colorado Men*. Frederick, CO: Jende-Hagen Bookcorp, c1980, pp. 15-17.
- Black, Celeste. *Queen of Glen Eyrie*. Colorado Springs, BlackBear Publishing, c1999.
- Lohse, Joyce B. *General William Palmer : Railroad Pioneer*. Palmer Lake, CO : Filter, c2009.
- Sprague, Marshall. *One Hundred Plus : a Centennial Story of Colorado Springs*. Colorado Springs : Colorado Springs Centennial, Inc., c1971, pp. 1-8.