



# DENVER POLICE MUSEUM

FALL 2012, Volume 1, Issue 1

## *THEN AND NOW*

# New Denver Crime Lab Now Open

**D**enver city officials celebrated the completion of the Denver Crime Laboratory (DCL) in early June. The DCL, funded by the voter approved Better Denver Bond program of 2007, is both a highly functioning and breathtaking structure, which will provide the Denver Police Department (DPD) with ample space and leading-edge technology to solve crimes committed in Denver.

The new state of the art crime lab is the direct descendant of the first crime lab located in a single room in the Denver Police Headquarters Building at 1313 Champa Street established in 1947 when Captain Joe Moomaw used his own funds to purchase a comparison microscope for the examination of bullets and shell casings.

The importance of science in solving crimes continued to develop throughout the 50's and 60's when Denver policemen docu-

*Please see **CRIME LAB**, page 4*



**Above:** The new Denver Crime Lab. **Below:** Capt. Joe Moomaw (center) and the Denver Crime Lab staff in 1947.



## Message from the Board

September 1, 2012

**T**his is the first newsletter produced by the Denver Police Law Enforcement Museum (DPLEM). You are reading Issue I, Volume I of the publication we plan to mail quarterly to keep friends and supporters up-to-date on the progress being made to establish the museum. We received a tremendous response to our first communication, a letter sent in May to nearly 1,000 people, including retired officers, widows, donors, city officials and others we felt would want to know what's happening. We heard back from many people excited about this special project to preserve the unique history of the Denver Police Department. Responses included

many offers to give oral histories, to contribute Denver Police Department artifacts and memorabilia, to volunteer at the museum and more than \$8,000 in donations.

Needless to say, the Board was overwhelmed. Thank you for your interest! Please let us know what you think of the newsletter. Give us your feedback and your suggestions for future stories, especially including those that have a link to the history of the department, which we will put under the recurring column called "*Then and Now.*" Be sure to read the story above about the Denver Crime Lab.

We still want to know if you would like to give your oral history, volunteer to help or wish to add an artifact to the museum's collection. We would greatly appreciate your consideration of a tax-deductible financial contribution. Thank you so much.

# Denver Police Law Enforcement Museum Donors

We are so appreciative of those who, very early on, believed this project is not only possible, but essential.  
We gratefully acknowledge your contributions. Together we can build a great museum!

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North Denver Police Station, circa 1922

Contact us at  
[www.denverpolicemuseum.org](http://www.denverpolicemuseum.org)

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Retired officers, widows and other family members have been offering artifacts to the museum. Left: Mrs. Mary Ann McKelvy, widow of Officer Donald McKelvy, examines some of her late husband's mementos with Officer Dean Christopherson. Right: Officer Donald McKelvy at work at his radio at the DPD.

## Why Does It Matter?

Why is a museum dedicated to uncovering and preserving the history of the Denver Police Department important for the City of Denver and all of its citizens?

Why in these days of video reality and instant internet access is it still a thrill to hold a 100-year-old tin policeman's badge in your hands?

Dean Christopherson, the Denver police officer who has put countless hours into uncovering the hidden and sometimes forgotten history of the department knows that to remember is to honor and that to be able to tell the story is a tribute not only to those who served but also to those who are serving now and those who will serve tomorrow.

The recent loss of Officer Celena Hollis highlighted the purpose of establishing the museum, according to Christopherson. "I hope that one day her young daughter will be able to visit a state of the art, interactive museum, and have the opportunity to gain some insight into the type of work, tools of the trade and technology her mom used in her daily

work and appreciate her sacrifice to help keep her city safe."

Officer Christopherson has been laboring to patch together the stories of Denver officers killed in the line of duty since the department's founding in 1859 and it hasn't always been easy, he says. "Sometimes a single entry handwritten in a logbook will note, "killed, line of duty." One particular log book from 1937 would have been lost to history had it not been salvaged from a dumpster behind a stationhouse in the 1970's. That logbook was the only record of fallen officer Forrest Sawyer and Officer Jacob Benner who was wounded and died subsequently from his injuries."

Christopherson's detective work has meant that that several previously unknown fallen officers are now eligible for consideration in the National Police Memorial, the State Memorial or our own Denver Police Department Memorial.

Those working to establish the Denver Police Law Enforcement Museum hope it will be a living reminder of the human beings who attempted to keep the peace as our wild west city grew up, the animals who helped them, the tools they used and the relationships they developed with their fellow peacekeepers and the citizens of Denver.

*Fallen Officer Jacob Benner died from complications from injuries sustained during a raid on Nov. 6, 1937. Officer Benner and two other officers raided a North Denver home where gambling was reported. He jumped on a table during the raid and his left foot went through the table. Although his injuries did not seem to be life threatening at the time, he died of blood poisoning, at Saint Anthony's hospital on February 13, 1938. He was 28 years old.*



# Common Goals, Common Passion...

## A Pathway for Success!

The Denver Police Law Enforcement Museum was ably represented by Board Member Judith Tennant at the 2nd Annual National Police Museum Conference hosted by the New York Police Museum in March

This two-day conference, attended by more than 20 participants representing 14 different Law Enforcement museums from coast to coast, was both inspiring and empowering, Mrs. Tennant said. Those represented included well established museums such as The New York City Police Museum ([nycpm.org](http://nycpm.org)) and Los Angeles Police Museum ([laphs.org](http://laphs.org)) as well as many others in various stages of establishment, including the National Law Enforcement Museum ([www.nleomf.org](http://www.nleomf.org)) in Washington DC slated to open in 2013.

The 2012 meeting was hosted and facilitated by Julie Bose, Executive Director of the New York City Po-

lice Museum. The speakers were top notch experts on such topics Fundraising, Marketing/Communication, Partnerships with Retailers, Education Programs incorporating local schools "standards of learning" and Collection Management Policies.



A powerful message that came out of the meeting was everyone's commitment to helping interested cities becoming successful in establishing powerful, informative and engaging museums in their communities. "The networking opportunity to share successful strategies was phenomenal. This conference reinforced the importance of our project here in Denver. I know with everyone's support, we can make the museum a reality for our community to enjoy, learn and engage in the fascinating history of Denver through the eyes of law enforcement," according to Mrs. Tennant.

### CRIME LAB, from page 1

mented and recorded crime scenes with black and white photography and investigators struggled to prove the validity of their blood alcohol measurements through the use of the breathalyzer when results were challenged in the courts. One early trial featured officers actually drinking alcohol and measuring their own reactions to prove the machine's accuracy.

As science became more important in criminal investigations, police recruit classes were routinely instructed in fingerprinting, firearms, crime scene preservation and blood alcohol determinations. Capt. Moomaw himself was featured in a 1960 article in *The Denver Post* demonstrating how to handle a revolver to avoid damage to fingerprints

With 46,000 more square feet than the previous lab, the new 60,000 square foot facility allows for the current volume of work and provides for future growth in an environment featuring cutting edge forensic practice and equipment. Costing \$36 million, the building connects to the Police Administration Complex, providing a secure passage from the laboratory to the Denver Property and Evidence Bureau.

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#### You can support the Denver Police Law Enforcement Museum in the following ways:

- I want to volunteer for the museum.
- I want to share my story about the Denver Police Department.
- I want to donate an artifact to the museum.
- I want to to underwrite an Oral History segment.
- I want to make a contribution to the museum.



Enclosed is my contribution of:  
 \$25  \$50  \$100  \$250 Other \_\_\_\_\_

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Contribute online at [www.denverpolicemuseum.org](http://www.denverpolicemuseum.org)  
 or mail to PO Box 9140, Denver, CO 80209.