

The Newcomb House: A Celebrity Cottage?

By: The Town of Parker Historic Preservation Commission

The distinctive wooden house, located at 10965 S. Pikes Peak in Parker's town center, looks like it should be a historic landmark. It looks old, though well-kept, with an old picket fence and well-grown trees surrounding it. Indeed, not only does it look like a historic landmark, it *is* one. But why? Is the house "famous" simply because it looks old? Did local celebrities once live there? Perhaps some legendary event occurred in that house? Well, the house's age and its celebrity residents are a part of the landmark's story, but a legendary event having occurred there? Sorry, no.

Newcomb House

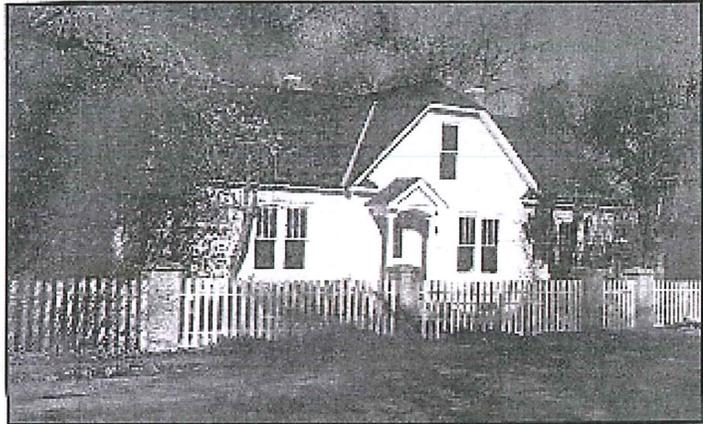


Photo 21. Newcomb house in 1998.

The house is almost one hundred years old. It is the only structure ever located on its Pikes Peak Drive site, a lot purchased originally for \$150 from George Parker in early 1911. After purchasing that property, James and Victoria Newcomb began and completed construction on the house in that same year. The original structure was only the center portion of the present house, the flanking wings being added in 1937. Interestingly, as part of the same project that added the wings, the house was rotated ninety degrees, its front door facing once south, now east. Though architectural historians like to point out the rare Greek Revival details existing with the cornice return roof at all the gables, most readers are probably more interested in that "celebrity residents" reference above. Fair enough.

James and Victoria Newcomb were significant contributors to the culture and history of Parker. James moved to Parker in March 1910 and opened the barber shop in the Rhode Island Hotel. He was not only a barber but a fine musician, too. He played and taught students the violin. Newcomb's Orchestra (later called the Parker Band), though not terribly clever in name, was a popular ensemble. They played at barn dances, local granges, the county fair, and even at Denver venues. In May 1926 the band played on a radio broadcast originating from Denver's Central Presbyterian Church. They were good, surprising many listeners with "splendid satisfaction" and receiving frequent notice in *Parker Post* newspaper articles. James married Victoria Stover in August 1910, scarcely five months after meeting her. But that's what celebrities do.

Victoria had been in Parker for two years, having arrived from New Jersey in 1908. Both she and her sister Laura were teachers at the Pine Grove School, but Victoria taught there only from 1908-1909. By all indications, she was a typical, early twentieth-century, rural Colorado, school teacher – a young single woman, possessing minimally an eighth-grade education, and able not only to corral children of all ages in one room and keep that room clean but live on \$40 a month.

The newlywed Newcombs were in a building frenzy in 1911. According to the *Post* newspaper, the cellar for their house was dug and cemented by 20 January, and the house "up and all closed in" twenty-one days later. In September, James began construction on his own store, located across the street from the