

# Garden of the Gods Becomes a City Park

## How Did the Park Get Its Name?

In 1859 at the very beginning of the Pikes Peak or Bust Gold Rush, two surveyors rode their horses south from Denver to look for a suitable location for a new supply town to meet the needs of prospectors and miners. When they reached the eastern foothills of Pikes Peak, they came upon red rock spires and cliffs that framed the towering mountain. To **Malancthon Beach**, the view conjured up an image of an elaborate European beer garden and he exclaimed, "This would be a capital place for a beer garden!" Young, poetic **Rufus Cable** replied, "A beer garden indeed, this is a place fit for the Gods to assemble! We shall call it the Garden of the Gods."

In addition to naming the Garden of the Gods, Beach and Cable were also successful in establishing a supply town. With several other men, they organized a town company and established Colorado City in 1859. This was 12 years before Colorado Springs was founded, 13 years before Manitou Springs was established, and 17 years before Colorado became a state. Although Colorado City was annexed by Colorado Springs in 1917, it retains many of its historic buildings and is now known as "Old Colorado City."

## A Grand Christmas Present

In 1879, General William Jackson Palmer, founder of Colorado Springs and the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, convinced his good friend **Charles Elliott Perkins** to buy 240 acres of unusual red rock cliffs known as the Garden of the Gods. Perkins was the president of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad and lived in Iowa. He never built a home on his Colorado land and, recognizing the popularity of the red rock formations, he allowed everyone to enjoy his privately owned Garden of the Gods.

A few years later, Perkins bought 240 additional acres and wrote to Palmer of his intention to donate his entire 480-acre Garden of the Gods property to the city of Colorado Springs. Perkins undoubtedly was influenced by the fact that Palmer had already donated over 1,000 acres of land to the city of Colorado Springs for public city parks.

Perkins died in 1907 before he had officially arranged for the Garden of the Gods to become a public park. Fortunately, Perkins' children, knowing their father's wish, deeded the beloved land to the city of Colorado Springs on December 22, 1909, with the stipulation that it would remain "forever free."

The deed to Garden of the Gods Park also required that the Park be forever known as Garden of the Gods; that no intoxicating liquors could be manufactured or sold in the Park; and that no buildings could be erected within the deeded 480 acres except those necessary to maintain the Park. Thanks to the Perkins heirs, and to the friendship between Palmer and Perkins, citizens and visitors from around the world continue to enjoy this special Park and contemplate its sheer beauty.

*Colorado Springs residents gathered to celebrate the dedication of Garden of the Gods as a city park. Note the unveiling of the large bronze plaque (now over 100 years old). It reads "The Garden of the Gods given to the City of Colorado Springs in 1909 by the children of Charles Elliott Perkins in fulfillment of his wish that it be kept forever free to the public."*

Pikes Peak Library  
District photo

