



The Games We Played: Childhood in Louisville's Little Italy

By Diane Marino, Historical Commission Member

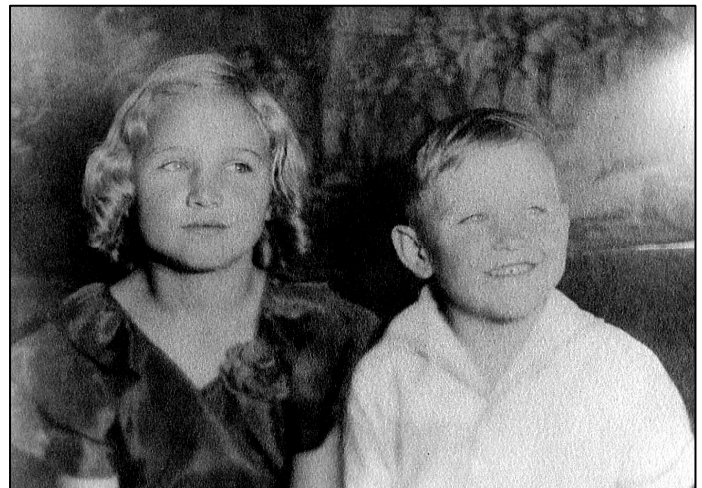
B*etty Ross Marino and Donald Ross, children of Pete and Ellanora Ross, grew up on Harper Street in the Little Italy area of Louisville during the Great Depression. They shared with Diane Marino, daughter of Betty and niece of Donald, what children in the neighborhood did to entertain themselves.*

Betty Ross Marino and Donald Ross regarded everyone in the small neighborhood of Little Italy as family, whether or not there was any actual family relationship. Neighbors on the block included the Carpenters, Milanos, Rizzis, Marnellis and Rapps. Family of Pete and Ella also lived in Little Italy. The children of the neighborhood played together on a daily basis, especially during the summer months. Parents, grandparents and friends sat out on their porches or stoops during the summer nights, sometimes lighting small fires to keep the insects at bay, while they watched the children play hide 'n seek, hopscotch, or kick-the-can under the dimly lit streetlights.

The girls of the neighborhood might be found jumping rope, playing jacks or "keeping house" with their play dishes and dolls. Most girls had a buggy for their dolls and clothing for the dolls was hand-made. Betty remembers her set of play dishes and the precious hand-made little kitchen cabinet with Mickey and Minnie Mouse on the front that she received as a present when she was five years old. Betty also had a child-size metal ironing board, electric iron and a metal stove. On Sundays, the girls cut out Tillie the Toiler paper dolls from the newspapers and Betty also had Shirley Temple paper dolls.

Homemade stilts, slingshots, marbles and mumblety peg were boy's games. During the summer months, boys played baseball in the vacant lot next to the Ross house with the one bat and ball in the neighborhood. Tag was also played, including a game of tag that involved using a tennis ball. In this game, holes were dug for each person playing. One person threw the ball in the hole and that person then had to chase the others and try to hit them with the tennis ball.

Girls and boys roller-skated with skates that clamped onto shoes. When Don received a bike for Christmas, it was the only bike in Little Italy for some time and was shared with all. Betty said that they liked to ride on what today is Highway 42 when that road was dirt and saw very few cars (as compared with the thousands of today). In the fields and lots around Little Italy, the boys would dig caves and make tunnels through the weeds. Girls made and "sold" mud pies. Betty remembers the children acting out the story of Snow White over and over after the movie came out in 1937.



Betty Ross Marino and Don Ross, sister and brother, are seen here in 1934 when they were 8 and 5 years old. The Ross family lived in Louisville's Little Italy.

Many families had pets and Corky, the dog, was the beloved pet of Don and Betty. Corky made a daily trip to the home of Jim and Mary Ross, Don and Betty's grandparents, for a leftover treat of meat. Corky knew not to make the trip on Fridays, as the Rosses, who were Catholic, did not eat meat on Friday. As for other animals in the neighborhood, Betty remembers that the kids were sometimes allowed to ride farmer's horses in the field behind Little Italy.

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Swimming was enjoyed, but not with the luxury of city pools. The Hecla Lake was a site for swimming in summer and ice-skating in winter. A more dangerous, but popular swimming area for boys was "the rat hole," in an irrigation ditch that ran from the top of South Boulder Road and continued on to Lafayette. Betty is still amazed no one was injured seriously or caught a disease from what was in that ditch.

Don remembers there were rattlesnakes and water dogs and other "critters" near "the rat hole," but that didn't stop them from swimming where the ditch dropped, creating a chute and a large pool area at the bottom. Don learned to swim when his cousin Arthur Ohanion threw him in and he had no choice but to swim or drown. During one outing, Don's dog, Corky, was nearly drowned when it tried to jump across the chute and was swept under. Luckily for Don, Corky surfaced and paddled safely to shore. When Little Italy kids joined the kids of Frenchtown for swimming, it was usually in Coal Creek where the railroad tracks cross it southeast of town.



Don's and Betty's dog Corky, shown here, was a frequent companion for their adventures in and around Little Italy.

During the fall and winter, indoor activities such as Chinese checkers, consulting the Ouija board and listening to the radio were enjoyed. Radio program favorites in the neighborhood included "Stella Dallas", "Fibber McGee and Molly," "Bob Hope," "Our Gal Sunday" and baseball games. It was not unusual for the radio reception to be disrupted, such as when someone on a nearby farm used their ham radio. Sledding on Highway 42 or on Grant Avenue "in town" was also a favorite activity. Betty and Don recall going to the movies on Sunday night (instead of church), and getting in trouble with the nuns on Monday at St. Louis School.

There were no organized sports such as Little League, so the boys of Little Italy faced off against the boys of Frenchtown. The big rival football game was held at either the Tovado or Franchini farm where the boys marked out a field. Don seemed to receive a cracked rib every summer during the game, requiring a visit to Dr. Cassidy to get taped up, with the pulling off of the tape hurting more than the cracked rib. Little Italy held boxing matches with contenders including Art Ohanion and the Carpenter, Tovado, and Kasenga boys.

Pulling pranks was one of the more popular occupations of Don and friends. The frequent trains provided a good opportunity to place penny nails on the tracks for the trains to squash. Don remembers tricking motorists along South Boulder Road by taking a tire and wrapping it in paper to make it look like a new tire. The boys would then attach a rope, bury the rope in the dirt of the road and wait for a car to stop when they saw the "new" tire. When the driver got out, the boys would yank the tire away. Another trick involved placing boys on each side of South Boulder Road and waiting for a car to come by. The boys would pretend to be pulling up a rope, which caused cars to slow down, thinking there was actually a rope going up. There were times when irate drivers actually chased the boys who made good use of Tovado's apple orchards (behind present day Fordyce Auto) to run and hide in.

Other pranks included placing a potato in the police car's tailpipe, which would cause the car to quit, or trying to knock out streetlights with rocks. One of the biggest pranks was the tipping over of outhouses during Halloween, including some that were still occupied. One year, Louisville Police Chief "Ring" Dionigi came into classrooms at Louisville High School to pull boys out of class and threatened to bar them from playing in the upcoming high school championship football game unless they returned all of the outhouses to their upright positions.

When Betty and Don speak of their childhood in Little Italy, it is always with great love and affection for the families and children of that small community. They both said that they never felt like they were deprived as children. There were always birthday cakes and handmade presents, homemade ice cream (made with canned milk and cranked out using the ice-cream freezer), trick or treating at Halloween with homemade popcorn balls, apples, oranges and hard candy and a bag of treats at Christmas time. But, foremost, and most importantly, was the gift of neighbors and relatives who made up the family that was Little Italy. For Betty and Don, this extended family enriched and defined their childhood experience.



Historical Museum Hours and Contact Information

The current hours of the Louisville Historical Museum are Wednesdays, Thursdays, and the first Saturday of the month from 10 to 3. Please call the Museum at 303.665.9048 for the latest information on hours or to schedule a tour.

Where is Louisville's Little Italy?

By Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator

Visitors to the Louisville Historical Museum and newer residents of Louisville sometimes express surprise to learn that during most of Louisville's history when its population was just above or just below 2,000 residents, it had ethnic neighborhoods like one might find in large cities.

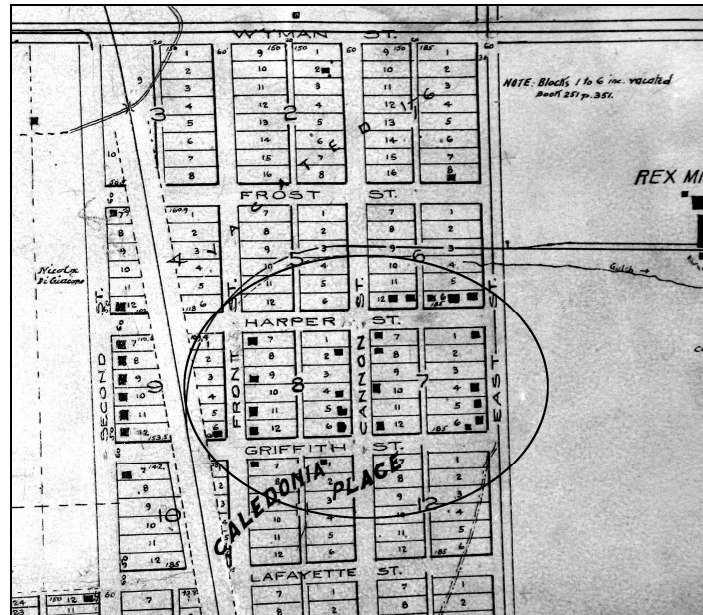
Frenchtown was on the south side of town in the vicinity of South Main Street, Rex, and Parkview and also encompassed the farms of French natives and their descendants that spread out from the southern edge of the town. The name of another neighborhood, Little Italy, suggests that it was the primary area where Italians lived, but in fact Italians made their homes not only in Little Italy but also throughout the rest of the town. In addition to Little Italy, another notable concentration of Italians (including those from northern Italy) lived in an area surrounding the intersection of South Street and La Farge Avenue. It is believed that there were other lesser known enclaves as well, such as one south of Miner's Field where some Bulgarian families congregated. "Kimbertown" was just west of Roosevelt and was settled by descendants of George Kimber, an immigrant from Cornwall.

Little Italy was located between the railroad tracks to the west and East Street, now Route 42, to the east. Its east-west streets were Harper and Griffith, with the cross streets being Front, Cannon, and East. The 1909 wall map of Louisville at the Museum (see photo) shows about twenty homes in the area of Little Italy, and about the same number of homes continued to make up the neighborhood for several decades to follow. The particularly high concentration of Italians in Little Italy and the separation of the neighborhood from the rest of the town due to the railroad tracks led to the formation of a close neighborhood and to cultural practices that endured for decades, such as winemaking using grapes that were delivered directly into the neighborhood by truck.

The reasons for living with one's countrymen are obvious. Families were close and their members wanted to live near one another. And in a town made up of a high proportion of immigrants, people could have neighbors who spoke the same language they did.

The existence of different ethnic neighborhoods served the purposes of the coal mine owners as well. New workers arriving from Europe were less likely to discuss

mining conditions or the union with miners from other places if they were staying in their own neighborhoods and not quickly learning English.



The circled area on this map shows the houses (shown as small black squares) that made up Little Italy in 1909. Other interesting aspects of this map are that South Boulder Road, at the top, is called Wyman Street; just south of Wyman, there is a Frost Street that appears to never have been developed; a railroad spur is shown going off the main line just north of Little Italy over to the Rex No. 1 Mine to the east; and there were several houses situated in a row on the east side of Main Street, called "Second" Street on this map. (This image was taken from the 1909 Drumm's Wall Map of Louisville that hangs at the Historical Museum.)

Exhibit on Italians in Denver Holds Meaning for Louisville

By Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator

The Colorado History Museum in downtown Denver is currently showing an exhibit, *The Italians of Denver*, which is both entertaining and informative and which extends beyond the Denver area to illustrate the lives and contributions of Italians in other parts of Colorado as well. This outstanding exhibit opened in April and is scheduled to continue well into 2008.

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According to the exhibit's notes, Italians made up almost fourteen percent of the state's population in 1910. Many of these recent immigrants lived in colonies such as Louisville and worked in industries such as coal mining. The exhibit touches on many themes of Italian life in Colorado, including the role of the Catholic Church, Colorado's use of Italian stonemasons, the practice of winemaking, and why peddling fruit and vegetables was a good choice of occupation for new Italian immigrants (it was familiar work, it required little investment, and it was potentially profitable).

Included in the exhibit is a photograph showing saloonkeeper Anthony Fabrizio in front of his saloon which was located on the west side of Front Street in Louisville. The exhibit uses this particular photo to illustrate how saloons were important social centers for Italians. At Italian-run saloons, new Italian-speaking arrivals could get help with such things as finding jobs and housing.

The photo of the Fabrizio saloon, which is also part of the collection of the Louisville Historical Museum, holds particular interest for Louisville residents because of what is shown in the photo's background. The view is from Front Street toward the west and shows the brick Miners Trading Co. building that once stood at the northwest corner of Main and Pine. Take a look at the empty space between the photographer and that building. That space is today occupied by the Huckleberry Restaurant building at 700 Main, Henry's Bar and Grill, and the parking area of Louisville Gas & Grocery. Based on available maps and records, this photo of the Fabrizio Saloon is believed to have been taken in the early 1890s. (Later, Anthony Fabrizio became a carpenter and the Fabrizio family became known for constructing many of Louisville's downtown buildings.)

The Colorado History Museum exhibit provides a welcome context for Louisville's Italian heritage, evidence of which we continue to see today.

Louisville Historical Commission

Sally Burlingame	Alice Koerner
Elle Cabbage	Diane Marino
Virginia Caranci	Daniel Mellish
Robert Enrietto	Donald Ross
David Ferguson	Patricia Seader
Donna Hauswald	Aline Steinbaugh
Colleen Vandendriessche	



Anthony Fabrizio, proprietor of the Fabrizio saloon, is identified as standing third from the right in this photo that is currently on display at the Colorado History Museum as part of the exhibit "The Italians of Denver." See the accompanying article for more information about what is shown in the background of the photo.

Young People Worked

By Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator

People who spent their childhoods in Louisville remember it as a place that offered typical childhood experiences as well as its own memorable possibilities for exploration and play. But as a coal mining town, it was also a place where many boys went to work in the coal mines at a young age. Until federal law brought an end to the practice in the 1930s, it was not uncommon for boys to start working in mines in and around Louisville by the age of 10 to help support their families. Not surprisingly, it usually led to an end of formal education for these boys.

Boys working in the mines were likely to start out doing tasks such as coupling and uncoupling the coal cars, picking up coal that had fallen off the cars, or helping care for the mules stabled underground. Sometimes their lunch pails dragged on the ground as they walked to and from the mines due to the boys' not yet having reached their adult height.

For many families, there was also a need for daughters to work in the house starting at a young age. Such chores went far beyond what would be typically expected of young people today.

Child labor laws brought an end to young boys working in the coal mines, but young people in Louisville for a

long time have been able to find odd jobs to do in order to make a little money.

According to today's residents who grew up in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, work for boys included:

- Cleaning out chicken coops or ash pits
- Dusting the seats at the Rex Theatre (you'd get to see the movies for free)
- Working in stores or filling stations
- Delivering groceries from one of the neighborhood stores
- Working on farms in the area
- Trapping muskrats in nearby lakes and selling them for their skins
- Hunting pheasants or catching fish and selling them
- Driving the hearse for Henning Mortuary (this was for older boys)
- Selling junk (after finding some first)
- Cutting and watering lawns, or spading gardens
- Working as a substitute for men when it was time to work their annual "male tax" (also called "poll tax") obligation to the town by doing such work as cleaning out the curbs and gutters. This paid about \$.50 an hour, or about \$3 a day.

Not surprisingly, girls didn't have as many options as boys did when it came to jobs. However, some were possible, such as working in stores; housecleaning; babysitting; and working in restaurants, not only in Louisville but also in Boulder.

Louisville's close neighborhoods likely made it easier for young people to find out what odd jobs were available and who needed help, and for business owners and homeowners, there was usually a steady supply of young people eager to earn a little money.



In this photo dated 1925, Louisville young people are dressed in costumes for Halloween. The two boys on the right appear to be dressed as coal miners, as they are both wearing miner's caps and one is carrying a shovel while the other is holding a miner's lunch pail.

Images of Childhood in Louisville



Lois Goodhue poses on her porch with her dog, Razzle, and a doll in the early 1920s. Her family's home is now called the Austin-Niehoff House and it contains the offices of the Land Management Department at 717 Main Street.

The porch pillar on the right of the photo looks much the same today as it did then.



In this recently donated photo from 1918, a teenage Edna Carveth stands in what is believed to have been her yard at Pine and Lincoln. In the background, one can see the back of the building that used to be the Baptist Church at Pine and Grant.



Brothers John and Richard Franchini seemed to be enjoying their ride in this photo. In 1930, which is the date on the cart's "license plate," John would have been about 5 years old and Dick would have been about 3. (Sadly, both brothers passed away in 2006.)

How Well Do You Know Louisville?

1. In the lead article of the last issue of *The Louisville Historian*, Harry Mayor described spending time by the “minney ditch” in Louisville as a child. What is a minney ditch?
2. The last working coal mines in Louisville were closing in the early 1950s. What facility that was built on the northwest side of Denver at about the same time gave work to Louisville’s population and boosted its economy?
3. This building at the northeast corner of Pine and Front Streets (see photo) was once one of Front Street’s many saloons. What brand of beer was associated with this saloon?

Answers appear on page 9.



Jefferson County Historical Society to Present Program

The Jefferson County Historical Society is planning an entertaining and educational day on Saturday, September 22nd with local authors of Front Range history, to be held at the Mt. Vernon Country Club in Golden from 9:30 to 2:00.

Ben Fogelberg and Steve Grinstead of the Colorado Historical Society will speak about their book, *Walking Into Colorado’s Past: 50 Front Range History Hikes*. Mike Strunk will speak about his book, *Portraits of Preservation*, about old-time families in the mountains west of Denver and how they have preserved their land and our western heritage. Debra Faulkner will speak about her biography, *Touching Tomorrow: The Emily Griffith Story*, her forthcoming biography of Mary Elitch Long, and a history book that she recently co-authored with Thomas Noel, *Colorado: An Illustrated History of the Highest State*. Please call 303.674.9639 for reservations and more information. \$35 per person includes author programs and luncheon.

Taste of Louisville



Historical Commission members Aline Steinbaugh, Virginia Caranci, and Pat Seader made delicious pizzelles to hand out in front of the Historical Museum during June’s Taste of Louisville event.

The Museum Corner ***By Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator***



Because of the date that the last issue of *The Louisville Historian* went to press, I was not able to acknowledge volunteer historical researcher Bill Cohen and his insightful April presentation on the 1936 Monarch Mine Explosion. Due to exceptionally high interest by the community, it was a standing-room-only event with the best attendance yet for a Louisville Historical Society program. I would like to thank everyone in the audience for their patience with respect to the space constraints. As Bill Cohen was speaking about and showing photos from the interesting lives of the eight local miners who died, many members of their families could be seen in the audience. I know that I am not alone in hoping that a book will emerge from Bill’s extensive research and findings.

In the last issue, I highlighted two antique postcards of Louisville scenes from circa 1908 and 1909 that are in the Museum’s collection. I am pleased to announce that from a suggestion by volunteer Mary Kay Knorr, the Historical Commission is now selling framed posters, unframed posters, and postcards of these colorful images. Look for these at the Commission tables at upcoming events such as the Labor Day Fall Festival.

The Museum recently received some visitors who reestablished connections to our city that had been lost. Jan Touslee and her husband, Randy, visited from Montrose, Colorado and wondered if the Museum had information about the Louisville experiences of Jan's father, Dr. Walter Boyd, who many residents remember. He had his home and medical offices at 641 Main Street, now the location of the dessert shop A Grande Finale, from about 1936 to 1942. In fact, Jan recognized the decorative woodwork in the interior of A Grand Finale from an old photo showing her mother, Marion, sitting inside by that window. Dr. Boyd married Jan's mother in 1941. He delivered many babies in Louisville and, according to Jan, was sometimes asked to name them (perhaps including some of the readers of *The Louisville Historian!*).

Another recent visitor was Anthony Romeo and members of his family from the Denver area. Anthony's father, Tony C.V. Romeo, built the family's home in Louisville in the early 1900s out of blocks of stone that he hauled from the Marshall area using a buckboard and a mule. Located at the northwest corner of Pine and Garfield, the home was one of the houses on the 2005 Holiday Home Tour and its exterior looks much the same as it did when it was built. It was great to exchange information and photographs with the Romeo family. Other recent visitors include Kelly McHugh of Louisville's McHugh family, visiting from Arizona, and members of the DiPilla/DiGiacomo family who started off their family reunion with a tour of the Historical Museum.

These recent visitors and others have been wonderful resources for information, photographs, and artifacts related to Louisville's history. They are a reminder of the extent to which the Museum often benefits very directly from visitors, not just the other way around.

The Historical Commission and I are sorry to announce that two of its members are leaving the Commission. Thank you to Bill Unrau and to Stuart Pritchard for all of their contributions over the years! Also, thank you so much to Mona Lee-Doersam, Mary Kay Knorr, Gail Wetrogan, Bill Cohen, Bill Buffo, Betty Buffo, Duke Damiana, Jean Morgan, and Artie Sabeti for their volunteer work on behalf of the Museum. Many thanks also go to the Boulder County Youth Corps, who worked in hot weather to install another phase of perennial landscaping at the Museum campus.

Last, to add to other recent national recognition of Louisville as a great place to live and raise a family, *Money* magazine has listed Louisville as third best over all and "Best in the West" on its annual "Best Places to

Live" list that looked at towns and cities with populations of 7,500 to 50,000. The press coverage conveyed a good understanding of what makes Louisville special, emphasizing as it did our historic downtown, sense of community, festivals, outdoor life, and mining history.

Museum Wish List



The Louisville Historical Museum would like to add to its collection the items described below. If you would be willing to donate any of the described items, please call us at 303.665.9048. If you would prefer not to part with an original photo, please contact us about whether it can be scanned on our photo scanner. All donations to the museum, a non-profit institution, are tax deductible. Thank you for your support!

- Centaurus High School Yearbooks: 1973 to 2000
- Photographs of Louisville High School's graduating classes:
 - All classes before 1937 except for 1909, 1915, 1921, 1923, and 1925
 - The classes of 1954, 1955, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, and 1964 through 1971
- Copies of the *Louisville Times*, or pages of it, dated before 1942. (The *Louisville Times* was published beginning in 1913, but the paper has past issues going back only to 1942.)
- Coal mine photos and ledgers
- An old wooden bench for use as part of the Summer Kitchen display
- Historic photos of homes and businesses in the old town part of Louisville (with or without people in the photos). Specific buildings need not be identified so long as the photos were taken in Louisville.

New Requests:

Photos of the interior or exterior of Redman Hall; scenes showing Louisville's Little Italy or Frenchtown; and interiors and exteriors of Louisville's saloons and pool halls.



Memorial Donations

Donations have been made to the Museum in memory of:

Tom Mayer (1951-2007)

Museum Donations

The Louisville Historical Museum has accessioned the following donations during the months of May through July. We sincerely appreciate these recent donations.

Virginia Caranci – photos showing the Jordinelli House and Summer Kitchen being moved to the Museum site in 2001

Robert Enrietto – slides of Louisville relating to its history; a book, Out of the Depths by Barron B. Beshoar about the Ludlow Massacre and coal mining in Colorado; and an abstract of title showing the location of the Acme Mine buildings

Jean Morgan – photos of the champion magnolia tree at the Caranci home on Main Street

Jan Touslee – scan of a photo of her mother, Marion Boyd, taken at 641 Main Street (location of the medical practice of her father, Dr. Walter Boyd)

Monarch High School – yearbook for 2006-2007

Jim Ensign – Knights of Pythias pin that belonged to John T. Sidle of Louisville

Verla Magruder – scan of a photo showing her working at Louisville's telephone switchboard in 1949

Diane Marino – scans of photos of Betty Ross Marino and Don Ross and Don's dog, Corky (the photos appear in this issue)

Aline Steinbaugh – newspapers and artifacts relating to Steinbaugh's Store, and booklets and materials on local history

Rich Franchini – a muskrat trap, yard tools, and coal mining tools used by his family

Virginia DiPilla Lane – binder containing photos and the family history of the DiPilla/DiGiacomo family, presented at the family's reunion in June at the Museum

Anthony C. Romeo – scans of photos from the Romeo family that built the stone house at Pine and Garfield in the early 1900s (one of the photos, that of Edna Carveth on Pine Street, appears in this issue)

John Madonna – cash register from the Bugdust Pool Hall which he operated on Main Street from 1948 to 1953

Donald Ross & Art Ohanion – World War I army clothing of Louisville resident Arthur Ohanion

Join the Louisville Historical Society

Membership in the Louisville Historical Society is a must for those interested in Louisville's unique history and cultural character. Members receive the quarterly Louisville Historian and an invitation to the annual Historical Society Program.

A yearly membership is only \$15.00 for an individual and \$25.00 for a family. A yearly business sponsorship is \$100.00.

Visit our web site at www.ci.louisville.co.us/museum.htm for a membership form or call the Museum at 303-665-9048. You may also write to us at Louisville Historical Museum, 749 Main Street, Louisville, Colorado, 80027. Please make checks payable to the Louisville Historical Society.

Photos of Louisville's Saloons and Pool Halls Being Sought

The Historical Museum is seeking historic photos of Louisville's saloons and pool halls for an upcoming exhibit. Both interior and exterior views are welcome.

In particular, any old photos of the building at 1006 Pine Street that was Lackner's Tavern, which was later known as the Track Inn and Pine Street Junction and which is now Casa Alegre, would be greatly appreciated.

Please contact the Historical Museum at 303.665.9048 if you have photos to donate and to find out if the Museum already has them in its collection. For donors who would prefer not to give up original photos, copies would be welcome or the Museum photo scanner can be used to make copies.



Answers To How Well Do You Know Louisville?

1. A minney (or minnie) ditch is a ditch where minnows are caught to be used for fishing. One such ditch in Louisville that was used to catch minnows is the one that still runs north and west of Louisville Middle School, formerly Louisville High School. (Thank you to Historical Commission member Dave Ferguson for this information.)
2. Rocky Flats is the facility between Boulder and Golden where, beginning in 1952, workers made nuclear weapon parts. Many out-of-work coal miners and their family members found employment there as the coal mines were closing in the Louisville area at about the same time.
3. The brand of beer is Coors, as the building was known as the Coors Saloon. It is believed to have been built circa 1890 and was a one-story building for most of its history. Purchased in 1892 by Adolph Coors himself, it was the first of several properties that he acquired in Boulder County (which in itself suggests that Louisville must have been a desirable market). County records indicate that the property was sold by the Adolph Coors Company in 1938.

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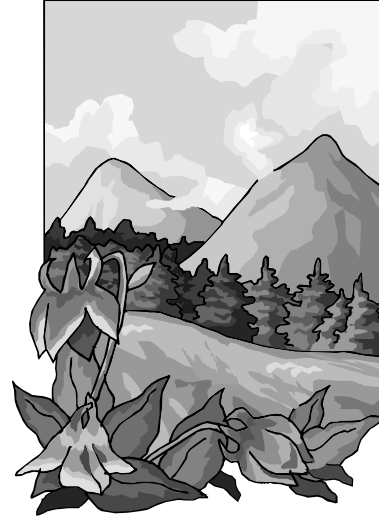
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