



The Louisville Historian

Issue #113

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Louisville History Foundation, and Louisville Historical Commission*

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The Fifties: Louisville's Transformative Decade

By Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator

Edward Affolter was a man who was completely invested in Louisville's future. He not only represented Boulder County as an elected state senator in the Colorado legislature, but he also served for a long time as the town attorney and had a law practice located in the back of what is now the Huckleberry Restaurant building. Moreover, he bought and sold property in Louisville and raised his family in a home on McKinley Avenue. So he was expressing his sincere concern about the ability of the town to survive when he said, "If anything ever happens to the mines, weeds will grow in the main street of Louisville."

Affolter died in 1952, at a time when having weeds growing on the streets was actually a very likely possibility, as Louisville's streets were still unpaved in the early 1950s and most of the area mines had already closed. The *Louisville Times* newspaper reprinted Affolter's quote in 1961 and noted, "By all rights, Louisville should have followed the course of numerous mining towns in the state," pointing out that once their mining economies died, the towns headed "straight downward."

The 1950s represented a boom decade for many communities in the United States, but this was especially the case in Louisville. The changes

that took place in this town during this time, particularly with respect to infrastructure, are astonishing. At the beginning of the decade, when most of the mines were closing or had already closed, Louisville homes still had outhouses and the town lacked a sewage system; homes were heated with coal; streets were unpaved and lacked curbs and gutters; the telephone system used operators and hand-cranked telephones; the streets were not well connected with highways and other towns in the area; and there had been no significant growth for decades. People grew concerned that Louisville would not be able to survive without taking many steps forward, including taking action to ensure a good and continuous supply of water.



In 1956, a 12-mile pipeline to bring water to Louisville was completed. This photo shows the dedication, believed to be in Eldorado Canyon, with men ready to turn the valve. Kneeling, L to R: Town Clerk Ring Dionigi and Mayor Henry McHugh; standing, L to R: Town Trustee Andy Deborski; Town Attorney Joe Morrato; and Trustees Ray Caranci, Frank Rizzi, Lloyd "Bud" Brown, and Gene Madonna.

There was also the problem of the aging Louisville grade school at Spruce and Jefferson. It had been built about 80 years earlier, in the first years of the town's existence, and was in poor condition. Some have described how the two-story wood frame building would sway on windy days.

It required a lot of planning and decisions about town spending and priorities for these changes to come about. No doubt many Louisville residents anxious about the survival of the town debated these decisions at their kitchen tables, and some were sad to see certain practices, such as the telephone operator

system, disappear. The changes also required leadership by such people as Anthony “Joe” Madonna, whom the Louisville Historical Commission selected to receive this year’s Pioneer Award in recognition of his hard work and contributions. (See elsewhere in this issue of *The Louisville Historian* for more information about the Pioneer Award.) Many of those who were active in these efforts, including Madonna, had served in World War II and returned to Louisville with the skills and desire to improve conditions. There was also luck involved, as Louisville benefitted from other employers coming to the area at roughly the same time that the mines closed, with the last mine (the Crown Mine) closing in 1955. In particular, Rocky Flats opened in 1952 and became a major employer for the Denver area.



Women working at the Blue Parrot, 1958. Shown, L to R, are: Mena Tesone, Louise Deborski, and Katherine Stangier in the back row and Susie DiGiacomo and Nellie Inama in the front row.

By the end of the 1950s, the ways in which Louisville residents led their lives on a daily basis had been greatly altered. Voters approved a bond issue to pay for a sewage system that the town otherwise would not have been able to fund, and people began to add bathrooms to their homes. Natural gas, which had been feared as a threat to the coal economy, came in and received a favorable community response. The telephone company, Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph, switched to dial telephones in Louisville on March 19, 1955. Efforts to bring more water came to fruition with the 1956 opening of a twelve-mile-long pipeline from Eldorado Springs. And there was hope for the construction of a new school, but with the realization that the Louisville school district would likely have to lose its independence and become part of the Boulder Valley School District. A committee was formed to look into possible locations for the new school after it was determined that the parcel

at Spruce and Jefferson would not be large enough for it. Committee members entered into discussions with local farmers to determine their receptiveness to selling. (Louisville Elementary School was eventually built on the former Nicholas & Josephine Stout farm.)

Volunteerism played a significant role. The curb and gutter program is believed to have been brought about to a significant extent by volunteer members of the community.

Many who had grown up in Louisville could not stay in their hometown as adults because of a housing shortage. Local men started two new subdivisions that would help alleviate the shortage. These were Bella Vista, south of downtown, and Scenic Heights, just to the north. Bella Vista advertisements from the time promoted its paved streets, sanitation system, and pure mountain water.

As Louisville became a more attractive place to live and the population increased, the town turned its attention to creating transportation options and linking Louisville with other thoroughfares. Highway 36 from Denver to Boulder had been opened in 1952 without a Louisville/Superior interchange, but the Chamber of Commerce strongly advocated for it and it was eventually added.



The First State Bank of Louisville held its opening in 1953. It was built at what is now the parking lot for Chase Bank at 833 Main. This photo shows the Mossoni House, which is now the Bittersweet Café, across the street in the background.

As Coloradans began to enjoy more prosperity in the fifties and were able to buy cars, Louisville became the beneficiary. Denverites would drive regularly to Louisville to eat Italian spaghetti at the Blue Parrot and at Colacci’s Restaurant, which opened in 1955.

According to the *Louisville Times* in 1961, “spaghetti is the largest economic force in the community,” with the number of meals served approaching 3,000 on individual days. (In the 1960s, even more spaghetti restaurants opened, capitalizing on Louisville’s reputation for Italian food.) The growing numbers of cars and the ability to drive longer distances in the 1950s also helped support Louisville’s gambling establishments such as the Bugdust Pool Hall, which counted among its customers businessmen from Denver and beyond.



In 1957, a new town hall opened on the site of the current City Hall at 749 Main.

The look of Main Street changed to some extent, too. The new First State Bank of Louisville opened in 1953 where the Chase Bank parking lot is currently located; Colacci’s iconic neon sign and remodeled building brought a modern fifties vibe to this former mining town; the new, one-story Town Hall was dedicated in 1957 on the site of the current City Hall; and the Public Service Company moved into a building where it would be located for many years, a symbol of the change from coal to natural gas.

Edward Affolter would have been relieved to know that that town took seriously his warning that grass would grow on Main Street if the mines closed. If not for residents and town leaders taking action in the 1950s to make necessary improvements that most other American towns already enjoyed, Louisville’s fate as a former coal mine town might have been very different.



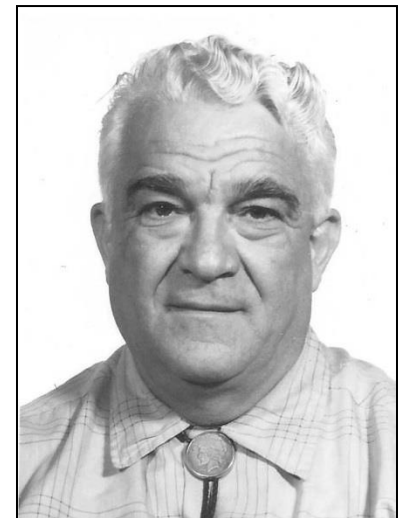
The Steinbaugh family had a hardware and lumber business with different locations on Front St. This 1948 photo shows the lumber business at Front and Spruce. Today, this is the corner of the Louisville Public Library.

2017 Pioneer Award Recipient: Anthony Joseph “Joe” Madonna

***Presented by Paula Elrod,
Louisville Historical Commission***

The Louisville Historical Commission is pleased to announce that Anthony Joseph “Joe” Madonna is this year’s recipient of the Pioneer Award. This award is presented annually to a person or persons who have contributed to the welfare and interest of the Louisville community. Paula Elrod presented the award to Joe’s wife, Paddy, and their family on January 25th at the Louisville Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet.

Anthony Joseph Madonna known as “Joe Madonna” was born in Louisville, Colorado; his parents were Gennaro Madonna and Aldovina Martella Madonna. Joe lived and grew up in his family’s home at 421 County Road with his brother, Jimmy, and two sisters, Lois and Viola. His father, Gennaro



Madonna, was a coal miner born in Italy who immigrated to the United States and settled in Louisville in the early 1900s. His mother, also born in Italy, immigrated to the United States through Argentina.

After graduating from Louisville High School in 1936, Joe began working in the mines as his father had done. In December 1940, Joe became an apprentice carpenter for Petry Construction in Denver until entering the Army in August of 1941. He served in the 397th Army Engineers during World War II and was stationed about 18 miles from Worcester England, where he met his wife Irene Barbara “Paddy” Denning. Joe gave her the nickname “Paddy” as well as “Irish” after her temper – even though she was English. They were married in 1945. Shortly after they were married, Joe was sent back to the states. Paddy came to the United States after the war in 1946 on the USS Washington battleship with other war brides. When they first returned to Louisville, they lived with Joe’s parents, his brother Jimmy and his wife and his sister Viola and her husband in his parents’ house for four years. Joe built their family home at 929 Parkview

Street where they raised their four boys, Daniel, Victor, Michael and Gordon. Joe passed away in 1984.

Joe was very instrumental in developing Louisville into the community it is today. In 1958, he helped to establish the Louisville Planning Commission, on which he served until 1968. He was also chairman for several years in the late 1950s and early 1960s. During his time on the Planning Commission, he provided leadership in making recommendations to the Town Board with respect to, among others:

- Division of the town into three wards
- Subdivision regulations; these included:
 - Street width regulations for new subdivisions
 - Plat filing requirements
 - Requirement to donate a percentage of land for public use and to provide park space
- Zoning and building requirements
- Land use plans, which included:
 - Planning for an industrial park to be added to the east side of Louisville
 - Planning for transportation, particularly to connect Louisville with other communities, such as the extension of Pine Street to the west and an attempt to have McCaslin Blvd go all the way from Jefferson County to Niwot and the Diagonal.
- Annexation Code
- Water taps and utilities

As Chair of the Planning Commission, he was one of the only Louisville representatives at the 1961 signing by the governor for Louisville to become a City of the Second Class under Colorado law.

He was elected to the newly created Sanitation District in 1951 (due to the need for Louisville to install a sewage system at a time when residents still used outhouses) and he worked on the following:

- Bond Election
- Found a bond company
- Bids for the sewer construction contract
- Found land for the sewage plant
- Dealt with delays and potential problems, such as a shortage of pipe due to the Korean War
- Adopted regulations

Joe was one of the local businessmen who established the first Louisville Chamber of Commerce in 1954 and was Secretary of the Chamber for many years:

- He promoted Louisville in order to get businesses to establish here
- He worked on Louisville getting access to the Toll Road/Boulder-Denver Turnpike/US 36, which was successful when the McCaslin interchange opened
- He presided over a public meeting to inform residents that there was a plan initiated by the state to reorganize Boulder County schools into a new school district, bringing an end to the Louisville School District

He served on the Louisville Citizens Committee in the early 1960s:

- He helped determine that the location of the old grade school, which is now Memory Square Park, would not provide enough space for a new elementary school at that location
- He worked with property owners and helped find the location for Louisville Elementary School

He also worked to increase Louisville's water supply, street paving, and sewage and storm water systems.

He went into a financial partnership with his brother-in-law, James McDaniel, along with Herb and Glenn Steinbaugh, and they became the developers of the Bella Vista Subdivision, which was started in 1957. This subdivision helped people who had grown up in Louisville be able to stay in Louisville, as there was a housing shortage in the 1950s and 1960s. The streets in Bella Vista were named after the wives of the developers, with Barbara Street being named for Joe's wife. In 1963 Joe helped to build the home I grew up in in Bella Vista and my family still owns today.

As a contractor, he took two old Main Street buildings, which were Boney LaSalle's pool hall and a barber shop, and remodeled them into Colacci's Restaurant, which opened in 1955 and which is now the Empire Restaurant building. He also worked on remodeling and building an addition to St. Louis Catholic School on Grant Avenue.

It is my distinct honor and privilege as a member of the Louisville Historical Commission to present the 2017 Pioneer Award to Mrs. Joe Madonna, her sons, Daniel, Victor, Michael, and Gordon Madonna, and their families.



Our Louisville Curtain is Significant to Colorado History!

In 2016, the Museum's Rex Theatre curtain was nominated for a contest called Colorado's 2016 Top Ten Most Significant Artifacts. The theatre curtain hangs in our Jacoe Store and was recently professionally restored. Public voting on the nominated artifacts lasted through part of December and as of January, we found out that the curtain won a spot in the Top Ten! Thank you to all who voted, and stop by the Museum to see one of Colorado's most significant artifacts.



Don't Miss an Issue of The Louisville Historian!

Membership in the Louisville History Foundation is a must for those interested in Louisville's unique history and cultural character! Members receive the quarterly *Louisville Historian* with substantive articles about Louisville history.

A yearly membership is \$15.00 for an individual and \$25.00 for a family. A yearly Business Sponsorship is \$100.00.

You may pick up a membership form at the Historical Museum, visit the Museum website at www.louisville-library.org to print out a membership form, or call the Museum at 303-335-4850 for assistance. Please make checks payable to the Louisville History Foundation, Inc. You may also join and renew online at www.louisvillehistoryfoundation.org.

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Historical Museum Contact Information and Hours

The Louisville Historical Museum is open during these times:

Tuesdays	10:00-3:00
Wednesdays	10:00-3:00
Fridays	10:00-3:00
Saturdays	10:00-3:00

The Museum is also open from 6 PM to 8 PM during the First Friday Art Walks! See the programming information in this issue to see what we have planned for the Art Walks.

An appointment is necessary if you are seeking specific research assistance. The Museum Coordinator may also schedule appointments and tours outside of the normal open hours. The Museum Coordinator can be reached at museum@louisvilleco.gov or 303-335-4850.

The Louisville Historical Museum is owned and operated by the City of Louisville as part of the Department of Library & Museum Services. It is located at 1001 Main Street. Its mailing address is 749 Main Street, Louisville, CO 80027

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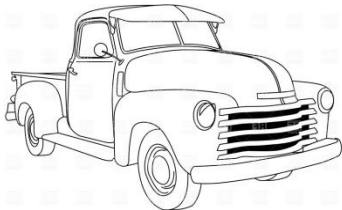
Upcoming Programs

The public is invited to join us for our upcoming programs! For more information, please visit www.louisville-library.org; email museum@louisvilleco.gov; or call the Museum at 303-335-4850.

“The 1950s: Louisville’s Transformative Decade,” Brown Bag Presentation and Discussion, Thursday, March 2, Noon to 1 PM

Museum Coordinator Bridget Bacon will discuss the changes that Louisville experienced in the 1950s and show photos from the Museum’s collection. Bring your memories of the 1950s to share, or come to find out what the 1950s were like for others!

Participants are welcome to bring their lunches.
Location: first floor meeting room of the Louisville Public Library, 951 Spruce Street.



First Friday Art Walks at the Museum

Stop by the Museum to learn about hidden and interesting aspects of Louisville history and to tour the historic buildings on our Museum campus from 6 to 8 PM during Louisville’s 2017 First Friday Art Walks! We will have a different historical topic to explore at each monthly Art Walk.

- The topic on Friday, March 3rd will be “What’s Your Call Sign?: Boulder County Amateur Radio, Then and Now.” Come meet members of a local amateur radio club and learn more about this interesting part of Boulder County history.

Look for Other Upcoming Programs This Year

Look for more historical programs from the Museum this year! We’ll offer our quarterly Brown Bag presentations, a selection of evening programs, and summer downtown walking tours.



The Treat Bag Tradition! By Megan Huelman, Museum Technician

Our last Art Walk of 2016 was a big success. The Museum had a busy night with the combination of Art Walk and the Parade of Lights. Due to the several hundred people that visited the Museum that evening, we were constantly busy giving tours and handing out treat bags. We brought back the Louisville Christmas tradition of providing children with brown paper bags filled with ribbon candy, a piece of fruit, and nuts in the shell. From the 1920s to the 1980s, local organizations provided “Santa” these bags to hand out to the local children on Main Street.



We appreciate the help of the Louisville History Foundation, King Soopers, and Assorted Goods and Candy for providing items and funds for the treat bag tradition, with a special thanks to volunteer Memory Delforge for her help!

The First Friday Art Walk in November focused on Louisville’s saloon history. We showed visitors photographs of the drinking establishments that filled Front Street at a time when Main Street was reserved for more family-friendly businesses. Check out our great saloon photographs on our Online Collections Database accessible through the Museum’s website.

The Museum Corner
Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator



Some of our readers who live outside of the Louisville and Denver area may not have heard the news that a Louisville institution, the Blue Parrot Restaurant, closed in January 2017 after 98 years in business. Thank you to Carlton Stoiber for giving the Museum the accompanying drawing, which expresses what many are feeling about the closure. He also shared the following: “Our families have loved the Blue Parrot for six generations. The Carltons, Stoibers, Fairhursts, Hebers, Webbers, Demoulins, Hunters, Coxes, McCarthies, Allans – to name only the “regulars” – have enjoyed the friendliest atmosphere and great Italian cucina since the earliest days of the Colacci family’s creation of the restaurant. Just this September we came out from our home in Washington, DC to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary at the Blue Parrot with family and friends. We are so sorry to lose this important part of our family history.”

The Louisville Historical Commission has four new members: Nancy Allen, Dave Hooley, Keith Keller, and Joe Teasdale, and a returning member, Jon Ferris, whom City Council reappointed to the Commission. Congratulations and welcome! Thank you to Marilyn Hunt for her three years of service on the Louisville

History Foundation, and welcome to new Foundation director Jessica Spanarella.

Thank you so much to Museum volunteers Mona Lee Doersam, Deborah Fahey, Kate Gerard, Rebecca Harney, Carolyn Conarroe, Karen Dropps, Christine Gray, Mary Ann Colacci, Memory Delforge, Carol Williams, Dave Hooley, Samantha Mat, Keith Keller, Jessica Spanarella, Mary Kay Knorr, Patricia Murphy, and Ardeshir Sabeti. Thank you so much to the team of volunteers who have been working on the Museum’s Oral History Program: Barbara Gigone, Jean Morgan, Noelle Gatto, Dustin Sagrillo, Betty Solek, Ady Kupfner, and Barbara Hesson.

We’re looking for volunteers to help with the Oral History Program and volunteers to come in weekly or monthly to give tours and perform office work. Please get in touch with me at museum@louisvilleco.gov for more information!

Thank you for people who contributed information about Louisville history. In the past few months, these people have included Vern Zurick, who called with information about Louisville’s Eastern European heritage.

The City has approved funding to digitize past issues of the *Louisville Times* that were donated to the Museum so that they can be preserved and made accessible online. The issues cover roughly 1942-2007. More information to come!

The Louisville City Council approved the Louisville Historical Museum Campus Master Plan on January 17th, 2017. The Master Plan can be viewed online at the Museum website, part of the City website. I’m excited to have an approved Master Plan for the Museum Campus and I’m grateful to all who gave input into it!

Last, we are sorry to say goodbye to John Ross, who passed away in 2016. John was born in 1921 and grew up in the Museum’s Tomeo House as one of the members of the Rossi family that rented the house from



the early 1920s to the early 1940s. He married Martha Coet of Louisville. In 2005, he and Martha (shown in the accompanying photo) visited the Tomeo House with their children

and grandchildren, and he told of where he and mother and five siblings all slept in the house and how the different rooms were used when they lived there. We continue to use information that he gave the Museum about the Tomeo House with visitors, and we'll think of him often.

History Book Club – Upcoming Topics By Anne Robinson

The History Book Club meets from 6:00 to 7:45 PM on the first Thursday of each month from September to May in the second floor Board Room of the Louisville Public Library. Unlike most book clubs in which members all read the same book, in this book club we select a topic and everyone reads what they wish on the topic. Participants read books or articles and we discuss what we learned with the group. Members of the public are welcome to join us, and newcomers should feel free to come and observe.

March Topic: Colorado Governors and/or Their Wives
Thursday, March 2, 2017

April Topic: Early frontier/pioneer/miner journals
Thursday, April 6, 2017

May Topic: Railroad Towns
Thursday, May 4, 2017

Memorial Donations

Thank you so much for these recent memorial donations. Donations received after this issue goes to print will be shown in the next issue.

In Memory of John Hafner (1925-1989)

Cynthia Hafner Clark

In Memory of Donald Buffo (1951-2016)

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In Memory of Lois Regnier Waneka (1924-2016)

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In Memory of Victor Slavec (1917-2016)

Jean Morgan

***In Memory of Noboru Takemoto (1928-2013)
& Kazuko “Kaye” Takemoto (1931-2015)***

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Beverly Like
Kathy Takemoto

In Memory of John Ross (1921-2016)

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Marcelee Gralapp

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In Memory of Eugene "Gene" DiCarlo (1930-2016)

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Donations to the Museum's Collection and Records

The Louisville Historical Museum accepted the following donations during the months of November through January. The City sincerely appreciates these recent donations!

Gayle Dantes – warranty deed from the papers of John Madonna, Sr.

Carolyn Conarroe – 80th anniversary Blue Parrot key chain.

Jim Lastoka – digital image of aerial photo of the Harney Farm.

Mary Colacci Guyer – pizzelle iron of Mary Colacci's and photos and documents relating to Colacci's Restaurant, the Blue Parrot, the Colacci family, and Louisville.

David Ferguson – 1889 marriage certificate of his grandparents, Robert Ferguson and Jeannie Boyd.

Leo Deborski – items relating to Louisville, including warranty deeds, 1948 football program, 1955-56 telephone directory, business receipts, and other documents.

Carolyn Butterfield – quilt made in the 1930s by her mother, Betty Lu Snair Keyes, who grew up in Louisville.

Gordon Madonna – framed photo of Louisville train depot; papers from his father, Anthony “Joe” Madonna, including Chamber of Commerce meeting minutes from when the Chamber was first established in 1954; digital photos of his parents.

Jessica Spanarella – digital image (seen below) of a photo of her grandfather, Fiori Tesone, in his barber shop at 906 Main St. in 1963.



Lafayette Miners Museum – framed photo of the Louisville High School Class of 1937, left anonymously at the Lafayette Miners Museum.

Larry Martella – documents relating to Louisville, including a receipt book from the City Market store and copies of the organizational papers of the Coal Creek Midget Football League; two swizzle sticks from the Twin Light Tavern.

Carol Purfurst – Eleven photos from the 1980s showing Louisville Public Library programs when the Library was located at City Hall; clippings relating to the Library.

Dolores Barzler – Eighteen original photos showing members of the Parbois and Jenkins family of Louisville. The donor's grandparents were Millie Parbois Jenkins and William Jenkins.

Tom Gormley – a used Blackberry phone, donated as part of the Education Collection for the Museum to use in programs.

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Regrets

We extend our sincere sympathy to the families of regular members Eugene DiCarlo and Robert Varra.



Main Street in the 1940s & 1950s

The following two photos from the collection of the Louisville Historical Museum show Main Street in the late 1940s and the mid-1950s. The first, taken in 1948-49, shows Main Street looking south from the 900 block. The second photo, taken in 1957, shows Celeste Romano's at 809 Main, Mossoni Appliances at 813 Main, the Rex Theatre at 817 Main, and Louisville Liquors at 821 Main.



*Louisville Historical Museum
749 Main Street
Louisville, CO 80027*

Return Service Requested

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