

Resource Number: 5BL 7998

Temporary Resource Number: 157508405008

Landscape or special setting description: Jefferson Place Subdivision is a historic residential neighborhood adjacent to downtown Louisville. The subdivision is laid out on a standard urban grid of narrow, deep lots with rear alleys. Houses are built to a fairly consistent setback line along the streets with small front lawns, deep rear yards and mature landscaping. Small, carefully maintained single-family residences predominate. Most of the houses are wood framed, one or one and one-half stories in height, featuring white or light-colored horizontal wood or steel siding, gabled or hipped asphalt shingled roofs and front porches. While many of the houses have been modified over the years, most of the historic character-defining features have been preserved.

917 La Farge is consistent with these patterns and blends well with the scale and character of the neighborhood. Set on a narrow mid-block lot, it has a shallow front yard and deep back yard. The front yard is landscaped. There is a concrete walk leading to the back yard along the south side of the house. The grassy back yard has a wood deck and a brick patio and is separated from the alley by a chicken wire fence.

9. Changes in Condition: None.

10. Changes to Location or Size Information: None.

11. Changes in Ownership: The property was sold to the Alidu family.

12. Other Changes, Additions, or Observations:

Further research has yielded new information about the history of 917 La Farge. The history of this house is very closely connected with the histories of 925 La Farge (5BL8000) and 928 La Farge (5BL918) across the street, as all three were the residences of Porta family members for several decades. In fact, 917 and 925 La Farge are so closely connected with one another that the available records about these properties do not always clearly distinguish between the two.

Boulder County gives 1891 as the year of construction for this house, and it is true that it appears on the 1893 Sanborn map (and on the 1900 and 1908 Sanborn maps, and on the 1909 Drumm's Wall Map of Louisville). The information on this house from the 2000 survey that was done calls the 1891 date "probably reliable" for this reason.

Although this house was the home of members of the Porta family for most of its history, new information has been located that shows that the Porta family was not the sole family that owned and occupied it for over 100 years. In its earliest years, Antonio (Charles) Damiana owned it and lived in it with his family.

Damiana acquired this property from Jefferson Place developer Charles Welch not later than 1898, according to online Boulder County property records showing recording dates. As documents were sometimes not officially recorded with the County for years in the late 1800s and early 1900s, it is possible that Damiana purchased this house even earlier. Charles Damiana was already living in Louisville by 1892, according to the directory for that year, and also appears in the 1896 and 1898 directories (these directories, however, do not indicate the locations of homes of those listed). As he was listed in the 1892 directory, he was among Louisville's earliest Italian settlers.

Charles Damiana worked as a blacksmith at coal mines in the Louisville area. One mine at which he was particularly known to have worked was the Rex Mine #1. He and his wife, Angela, were both born in Italy. According to the 1900 census, he was born in 1870 and came to the US in 1888. Angela was born in 1874 and came to the US in 1882. They were married in approximately 1890. (These dates are not consistent across all available federal census records for the Damiana family, however.)

The 1900 census, the 1904 directory for Louisville, and the 1910 census all place the Damiana family in this approximate location on La Farge. In fact, the 1910 census shows the Damiana family living next door to the Porta family that is believed to have been residing next door to 917 La Farge, at 925 La Farge.

The 1910 census shows that the Damiana family in Louisville included seven children: Mike, Joe, Rosa, Carrie, Mayme, Guy, and Della.

By the time of the 1920 census, the Damiana family had relocated from Louisville to Fort Lupton, and there were two additional children in the family. One possible reason for their move may have been the mine strike that took place in the Louisville area between 1910 and 1914. If Charles Damiana was dependent on coal mining for his job as a blacksmith, but if he was not a miner himself, he and his family may not have been eligible for family support payments from the United Mine Workers during the strike. In Fort Lupton, he became a farmer. Members of the

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Damiana family do not appear in the Louisville directories for 1916 or 1918, which are the only residential directories for Louisville for the period between 1910 and 1920.

A Damiana cousin, Carlo Damiana, also settled in Louisville. He stayed in the town, as did his descendants.

By 1921, and perhaps earlier, Damiana sold 917 La Farge to "Tony" Porta. Antonio Porta was the owner of 928 La Farge and resident of that house with his wife, Libra. Like the Damiana family, the Portas were among Louisville's earliest Italian residents. More can be read about them in the report on 928 La Farge.

Antonio and Libra Porta had four sons, and evidence suggests that Porta purchased both 917 La Farge and 925 La Farge for one of his sons and his son's descendants. At least two other sons would also live nearby, but not in Jefferson Place and not as close as across the street from where the parents lived.

Many current area residents of the Louisville area are descended from the Antonio and Libra Porta family and in particular from the Henry Sr. and Edith Porta family that was associated with 917 and 925 La Farge.

This property was inherited by Antonio and Libra Porta's son, Henry Porta Sr. This Henry Porta (1873-1954), married Edith (Ida) Zarini (1878-1960) in 1897. Both had been born in Italy. Like his father, Henry worked as a coal miner. Edith Zarini grew up just down the street at 824 La Farge (5BL7992) in Jefferson Place as the daughter of Joseph and Virginia Zarini. At the time of the 1900 census, Henry Jr. and Edith Zarini and their first two children were living with her family at 824 La Farge. An obituary from 1937 shows that Henry's mother, Libra Porta, and Edith's mother, Virginia Zarini, died close in time to one another, and there was a double funeral for them at the St. Louis Church, which at the time was located close to their homes, at 833 La Farge. The obituary goes on to state: "Both the Zarini and Porta families are very popular in the Louisville district where they had been residents for years."

The following photo from the Louisville Historical Museum shows Henry Porta Sr. on the left in the back row with his brother, John Porta, next to him and Santino Biella (owner of 825 La Farge in Jefferson Place) on the right in the back row (the two seated men are Nick DiFrancia and Celeste Romano):



Listings in the 1900 census indicate that the Henry and Edith Porta family was living at 925 La Farge, next to the Damiana family at 917 La Farge. It is believed that later, however, this branch of the Porta family also lived at 917 La Farge. By 1920, Henry and Edith had a number of children, but it cannot be determined which of the two houses they were living in; they could have lived in both.

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Based on available records, it was found that the nine children of Henry Sr. and Edith Porta were William, Della, Henry Jr., Lillian, Arthur, Charles, Albert, Virginia, Elaine, and Evelyn.

An address indicated in several directories as being that of the residence of the Porta family, and the only one on the west side of the 900 block of La Farge, was 426 La Farge (under Louisville's old address system). However, it appears that there may have been just one address used for both 917 La Farge and 925 La Farge. It is possible that this was because Porta family members may have resided in both houses that were right next to each other. Other addresses for the Portas on the west side of the 900 block of La Farge were 410 (in 1936) and 915 (starting in 1943). It was not until 1946 that two different addresses for 917 and 925 La Farge were given in the directories (and to add to the confusion, these two addresses were 915 and 917).

For many years, a son of Henry Sr. and Edith Porta lived at 917 La Farge with his wife and they took care of his parents; they then became the owners in 1960. This was Henry Porta Jr. (1903-1975) and his wife, Helen Mappin Porta (1912-1996), who had married in 1940. The following photo from the Louisville Historical Museum shows Henry Porta Jr., whose nickname was "Bin," with other Louisville men in the 1930s; he is identified in the photo as standing fifth from the left in the back row:



Henry Jr. and Helen Porta continued to make 917 La Farge their home, while Henry Jr.'s brother, Albert, lived next door at 925 La Farge. After being owned for a time by a relative of Helen Porta's in the 1990s, the property passed out of the Mappin/Porta family in 1997.

Sources of Information

Boulder County "Real Estate Appraisal Card – Urban Master," on file at the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History in Boulder, Colorado.

Boulder County Clerk & Recorder's Office and Assessor's Office public records, accessed through <http://recorder.bouldercounty.org>.

Directories of Louisville residents and businesses on file at the Louisville Historical Museum.

Census records and other records accessed through www.ancestry.com.

Drumm's Wall Map of Louisville, Colorado, 1909.

Sanborn Insurance Maps for Louisville, Colorado, 1893, 1900, and 1908.

Green Mountain Cemetery Index to Interment Books, 1904-1925, Boulder Genealogical Society, 2006.

Lafayette, Colorado cemetery records, accessed at <http://files.usgwarchives.org/co/boulder/cemeteries/lafcemqz.txt>.

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Archival materials on file at the Louisville Historical Museum.

Lafayette Leader, January 22, 1937, acquired at the Lafayette, Colorado Public Library.

Emailed information to Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator, from Dennis Braeutigam, son of Mayme Damiana, August 17 & 23, 2010.

13. National Register Eligibility Assessment:

Eligible Not eligible Need data

Explain: While the property has sufficient integrity and significance to be a local landmark, it lacks sufficient integrity and significance to be individually eligible to the National Register. The property has integrity of location, workmanship, feeling and association. Integrity of design is compromised by the modified window openings, the replacement porch columns and the addition connecting the Summer Kitchen to the house. Integrity of materials is compromised by the non-original asbestos siding. Integrity of setting is compromised by the close proximity of the 1970s modular home to the south at 914 LaFarge (5BL7997).

13A. Colorado State Register: Eligible Not Eligible

13B. Louisville Local Landmark: Eligible Not Eligible

The property is worthy of nomination as a Louisville Local Landmark due to its long association with the Damiana and Porta families, both of which were Italian immigrant coal-mining families.

13C. Historic District Potential: Jefferson Place is eligible as a State Register and local historic district. There is potential for a National Register historic district. This property is non-contributing.

Discuss: This building is being recorded as part of a 2010-2011 intensive-level historical and architectural survey of Jefferson Place, Louisville's first residential subdivision, platted in 1880. The purpose of the survey is to determine if there is potential for National Register, State Register or local historic districts. Jefferson Place is eligible as a State Register historic district under Criterion A, Ethnic Heritage, European, for its association with European immigrants who first lived here and whose descendants continued to live here for over fifty years. The period of significance for the State Register historic district is 1881 – 1980. Jefferson Place is potentially eligible as a National Register historic district under Criterion A, Ethnic Heritage, European. However it needs data to determine dates of some modifications, and to more definitely establish the significant impacts of various European ethnic groups on the local culture of Louisville. The period of significance of a National Register district is 1881 – 1963. Jefferson Place is eligible as a local Louisville historic district under local Criterion B, Social, as it exemplifies the cultural and social heritage of the community.

European immigrant families flocked to Colorado coal mining communities, including Louisville, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in search of economic opportunities they could not find in their own countries. Louisville's Welch Coal Mine, along with other mines in the area, recruited skilled workers from western Europe. In the early years before 1900, most of the miners who lived in Jefferson Place came from English-speaking countries.

Immigrants from England brought a strong tradition and expertise in coal mining. The English are widely credited with developing the techniques of coal mining that were used locally, and they taught these techniques to other miners. The British mining culture was instilled in the early Colorado coal mines. English immigrants also brought expertise in other necessary skills such as blacksmithing and chain forging.

Later Jefferson Place residents arrived from Italy, France, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia, among other places. The Italians eventually became the largest single ethnic group in Jefferson Place and in Louisville as a whole. About one-third of the houses in Jefferson Place were owned and occupied by Italian immigrants. Italian immigrants left their mark on Louisville in the food and beverage industries. To the present day, downtown Louisville is known throughout the Front Range for its tradition of Italian restaurants. The impacts of the heritage and customs of the other European ethnic groups could be significant, but are not well documented and need further investigation.

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14. Management Recommendations: The property is worthy of nomination as a Louisville Local Landmark.
15. Photograph Types and Numbers: 5BL7998_917LaFarge_01 through 5BL7998_917LaFarge_05.
16. Artifact and Field Documentation Storage Location: Electronic files of forms with embedded photos and maps at Colorado Historical Society. Electronic files of forms, and electronic files of photographs at City of Louisville, Colorado, Planning Department.

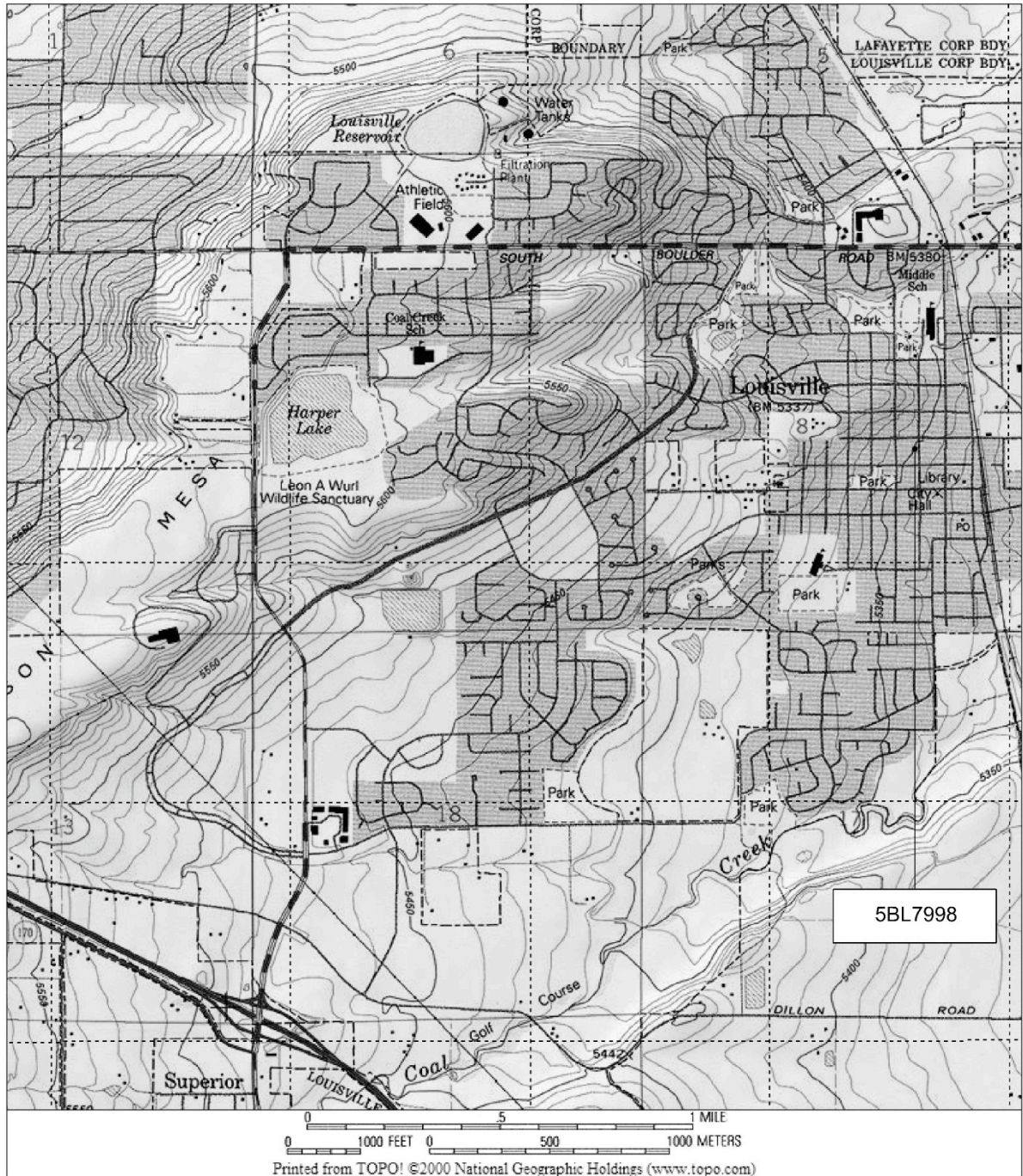
17. Report Title: Historical and Architectural Survey of Jefferson Place Subdivision, Louisville, Colorado
18. Recorder(s): Kathy and Leonard Lingo, and Bridget Bacon, City of Louisville 19. Date(s): 2013
20. Recorder Affiliation: Avenue L Architects, 3457 Ringsby Court Suite 317, Denver CO 80216 (303) 290-9930

Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation
1200 Broadway, Denver, CO 80203
303-866-3395

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Architectural Inventory Form
USGS Location Map



917 LaFarge Avenue, Louisville, Colorado

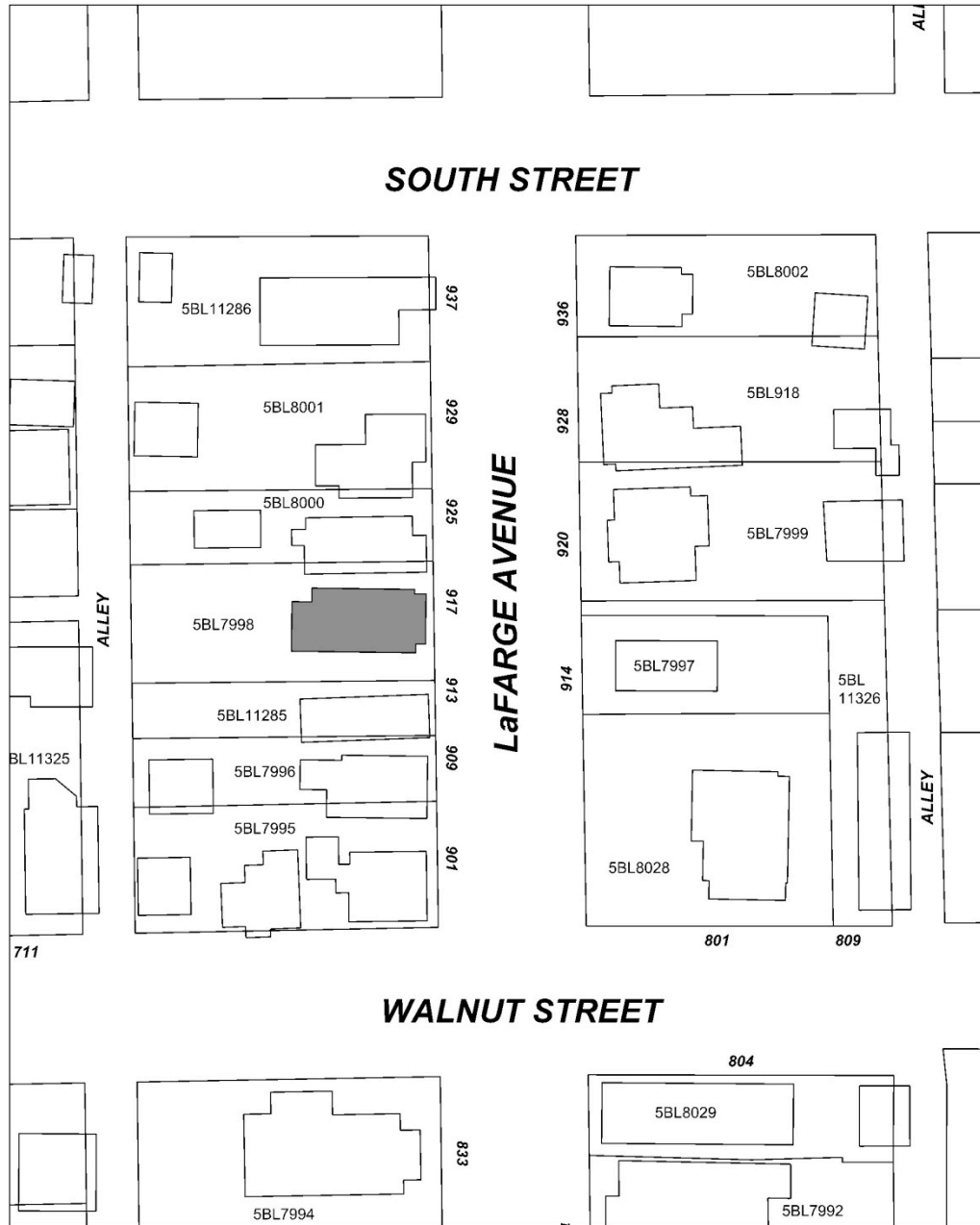
SOURCE: Extract of Louisville, Colorado
USGS map, 1994.



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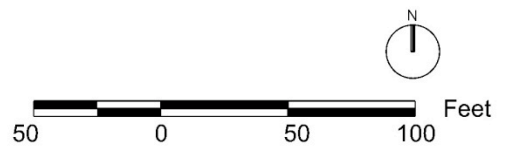
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Architectural Inventory Form
Site Location Map



917 LaFarge Avenue, Louisville, Colorado

SOURCE: City of Louisville, Colorado
GIS Files.



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5BL7998_917LaFarge_01 east



5BL7998_917LaFarge_02 northeast

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5BL7998_917LaFarge_03 southwest



5BL7998_917LaFarge_04 west

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5BL7998_917LaFarge_05 shed



917 La Farge. Boulder County Real Estate Appraisal card, 1948.