



# LOUISVILLE HISTORIAN

A publication of the Louisville Historical Commission & Society  
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## MUSEUM CORNER

The members of the Louisville Historical Commission have been busy trying to complete several projects which we have undertaken. The purchase of a fire-proof filing cabinet and its installation will enable the public to have easier access to our photographs and printed materials, as well as newspapers and newspaper clippings. Copies will be made of the written documents on file in the Public Library enabling us to have these papers available in our museum also.

We have received another monetary gift from the Ladies Elks of the Tri-City Lodge. They have always been very supportive of our work, and we appreciate their generosity. We would also like to express our thanks to those who make donations in memory of their families and friends.

May is designated as national history month. Historical artifacts will be placed on exhibit at the Public Library and in the lobby of the Recreation Center commemorating this month.

We are in the process of setting up some different exhibits in the museum and we have received many favorable comments about the displays in the windows of the store museum.

The museums continue to be open on Thursday afternoon 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Special tours through the buildings can be arranged by contacting one of the commission members.



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## THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

One of the members of the Historical Society recently found the classified ads section of the Denver Post dated February 9, 1964. Some of the ads were almost unbelievable. One full-page advertisement for homes in the Eldorado Hills subdivision surprised everyone. Homes were priced from \$14,250 and came equipped with RCA Whirlpool appliances including dishwasher, range, hood, disposal; fiberglass insulation; full basements; 220 volt receptacle in the utility room. A brand new 1964 Chevrolet automobile was included in the low down payment of \$500.00. Some of the other features of these particular homes were: fifteen minutes to downtown Denver, the subdivision adjoined the Valley Highway and the Boulder Turnpike, and VA and FHA financing were available.

Another ad found in the paper offered homes priced within the range of \$16,000 to \$23,000 with \$75.00 closing costs. For the price of \$12,039 a house with three bedrooms (1205 square feet, plus 600 square feet garden level and double garage) could be purchased with VA or FHA financing.

It seems almost impossible that such offers could have been commonplace less than thirty years ago.

In checking the advertisement section further the following positions and monthly salaries were being advertised:

Administrative Assistant .....	\$400.00
Top Executive Secretary .....	\$375.00
Billing machine expert .....	\$260.00
Legal secretaries .....	\$300.00
File clerk .....	\$235.00
Assistant office manager .....	\$400.00
Bartenders .....	\$250.00

Although the "good old days" seem to appeal to many, the ads found above prove that the same "old" problems prevailed then as now, even though prices were lower, salaries were comparable.

## MEMORIAL DONATIONS

- In Memory of  
 Marian Thirlaway  
 Russell Chambers  
 George Bosko  
 Bertha Bowes  
 Helen (Fotis) Turpin  
 George Heyburn

## 1001 MAIN STREET TOMEIO HOUSE

The house was built in 1904 by Felix Tomeo, a coal miner, who raised six children—three sons, Gene, Dom, Joe, and two daughters—Rose and Irene. Another child passed away at the age of five.

The back room, the kitchen area, was added sometime after the two front rooms. This house was built to be practical and functional, as is evidenced by the lack of decorative moulding throughout. However, the front door is identical to the Petrelli-Ashe House, 1016 Main Street (across the street). The front door might have been replaced at some point, and since the Petrelli-Ashe House is a Sears Catalogue House, this is quite possible.

The front steps were added when the house was renovated by the Louisville Historical Commission. It is interesting to note that there was no evidence on the facade of any steps existing before, even though the door is very high from the ground.

The original color of the interior was a brown stain, as we discovered during the renovation. The brown stain was typical of the era.

The house was bought by the City of Louisville in 1983 from the Ross Family. The house is now operated as a museum by the Louisville Historical Commission.

The information on this house is very sketchy, should anyone have anything to contribute (i.e. memories of previous residents, appearance of the house at different times, etc.), please contact the Louisville Historical Museum—665-9048 or any member of the Historical Commission.

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## THE HECLA MINE

On April 2, 1992, the new K-mart store in Louisville held its grand opening. The store is located at the intersection of South Boulder Road and Highway 42 which is where the Hecla Mine originally stood. Many long-time residents of Louisville recall the trouble that erupted there during the "long" strike of 1910-1915.

During the early months of the strike the mine operators built stockades around the mines to prevent an attack by the miners. Powerful searchlights and machine guns were installed. As news of the events that had taken place in the southern coal fields of Colorado at Ludlow near Trinidad were reported in the Denver newspapers, the miners began to arm themselves in order to protect their families. The papers were criticized for their first accounts of the events at Ludlow; but as more information was received it was found that, although the reports were quite sensationally written, they were, in fact, true.

S.T. Buster, a farmer who resided one and a half miles northwest of Hygiene, was elected sheriff of Boulder County on January 14, 1913. Whenever the opportunity arose he tried to assure the members of the union and the mine operators that he had not been elected to serve individuals or special groups, but had been put in office to serve all the people and that he intended to preserve peace and order for everyone. The sheriff appointed nine deputies from the various towns in the county, hoping that they would be able to maintain order. Shooting broke out at different mines from time to time and on April 27, 1913, one week after the Ludlow incident Sheriff Buster was ordered by Governor Ammons to collect all the searchlights and machine guns

from the mines operated by the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company. The mines involved were the Simpson, the Standard, the Hecla, the Industrial and the Gorham. Later that evening as Buster met with the miners to inform them of the governor's orders, the strikers showed concern that the sheriff and his deputies might be overpowered by the mine owners and the machine guns would be used against the strikers. After the meeting, as the sheriff continued to talk with the union leaders, the whistle at the Vulcan Mine sounded and gunfire was heard coming from that area. Sheriff Buster decided to go to the Hecla mine and started in that direction—walking along the railroad tracks. As he drew near the Hecla he could hear gunfire, as well as the ringing of the fire bell in Louisville. At this signal, the miners went to their homes, gathered their rifles and began to walk toward the Hecla. Shooting erupted from all sections of the town. There was some controversy as to who fired the first shots—the miners or the Hecla guards. Soon the sound of the machine gun fire could be heard from the Hecla. At one point Buster went to one of the houses nearby and made a telephone call to the Hecla "bullpen" instructing the guards to stop shooting into the town. The residents of "Little Italy" and those living in the houses along Front Street were huddled in the cellars of their homes to protect themselves from the machine gun fire. Many of these families had already sent their children to stay with relatives living in other locations until the dangers of the strike had passed. A group of miners were working their way down a dry irrigation ditch, hoping to overpower the guards inside the stockade, when a farmer opened the headgate of Hecla Lake, flooding the ditch. The strikers were forced to leave the ditch and to seek safety behind a straw stack in the field.

The shooting finally stopped shortly after noon the next day. Sheriff Buster called Dr. Wolfer, who was the company doctor at the Hecla, to come to administer aid to the wounded, but the doctor feared for his life and refused to enter the stockade. Several men lay wounded and the following account of the situation was written by Sheriff Buster:

"The condition of Hecla was one of the saddest sights I have ever seen: The boarding house was practically all shot to pieces and had blood all over; the women and children were in the basement hysterical and crying; and down at the Bulgarian headquarters the poor Bulgarian lying shot and dying. The people were stampeding, wanting to know if I couldn't get them out. About that time Harold T. Martin, Deputy District Attorney, Jack Clark, Sam Greenwood, County Commissioners, and Mr. Tedrow, County Attorney, in company with Louis Eberharter, Mayor of Louisville arrived on the scene.

I took them over the battle ground and showed them the sights. First to the Bulgarian headquarters, showing them Pete Steinoff shot through the head lying there dying; then to the boarding house and into the basement, showing them one workman with his jaw practically shot off, another with a shot through his hand lying there on some old quilts; the basement was filled with women and children. I then took them up into the washroom in the boarding house; then through the boarding house, showing them the conditions. They said it certainly "got their goat."

...Taken from Rocky Mountain Fuel Company papers

On April 28, 128 members of the state militia were dispatched from Canon City through Denver to Louisville. The train crews were reluctant to carry the military men into the area of gun fire. Several miners shot at the train and two groups of the militia jumped from the running train to round up the strikers. Some of the miners ran to Coal Creek and submerged themselves in the water.

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## WOMEN IN HISTORY

March is known as "Women in History" month. Women have always played an important role in the history of Louisville as they stood beside their men keeping the family together during the strikes and other crises connected with the coal mining industry. During the early days of the community most of the responsibilities of raising the children were assumed by the wives of the miners, but it was not unusual to see the women taking part in union rallies and other activities affecting their husbands outside the home. They were always there for each other during times of trouble to lend a helping hand when friends and relatives were faced with problems.

In addition to the courageous wives and mothers of the miners, there were also some well-known women who became a part of Louisville history. Two such ladies were Mary Harris Jones and Josephine Roche who became very important to the miners and their families as good friends and firm supporters.

Mary Harris was born near Cork, Ireland in 1830. When famine swept the country shortly after her birth, her father, Richard Harris, came to the United States and established citizenship. In 1838, his wife and three children joined him in Toronto, Canada where his work with the railroad had taken him. Mary eventually became a teacher and secured a job in Memphis, Tennessee, where she married George Jones who worked as an iron molder.

Following an epidemic of yellow fever, which claimed the lives of her husband and four children, she traveled to Chicago where she became a dressmaker and was known as a champion of the garment workers in the East. It was here that she became known as "Mother Jones". Her seamstress business was destroyed by the great Chicago fire in 1871.

She was known for her direct manner of speaking and when a college professor, present at a union rally, referred to her as a "humanitarian", she corrected him saying that she was a "hell raiser" instead. Before the turn of the century she was involved in many labor conflicts centered in the East and South. She fought corruption and discrimination in all areas of labor, speaking out against "child slavery", and unsafe working conditions.

Mother Jones was a staunch supporter of the eight-hour working day. Instead of losing interest in the cause of the working man as she grew older, she became a more zealous supporter of the workers of America.

By 1901, relations between the miners and the mine operators in the coal mines of Colorado were becoming somewhat strained. Although most of Mother Jones's work in Colorado centered around Ludlow in the southern Colorado coal fields, she did appear in the northern fields as well. The miners were threatening to strike for the eight-hour work day, pay with money instead of scrip, and checkweighmen who were not controlled by the mine operators. In January 1901, without the sanction of the national organization, the members of United Mine Workers of America called a strike and for the first time stockades were built around some of the mines. After a short time some reforms were offered. Wages rose a little, miners were paid with money instead of scrip, and they paid less for blasting powder. Even though the union was not officially recognized by the miners the union organizers felt they had succeeded in assuring the miners' membership. In 1903, many miners feared they were losing the gains they had made just two years before.

Mother Jones, in spite of the reservations of John Mitchell, president of the U.M.W.A. decided to help with the task of further organizing the Colorado coal fields. She was described as being a sweet, grandmotherly, white-haired Irish lady who spoke the rough, undignified language of the working man. She had become known

as the "angel of the miners", after her work in helping organize unions in the eastern coal fields of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Mother Jones was reported to have visited Louisville on November 21, 1903. Many local people recall having been present when she spoke to a crowd of supporters and being very impressed by her manner of speech. On November 30, 1903, after she had returned to the East, the strikers voted to return to work. Years later she did return to Colorado as an organizer for the Industrial Worker of the World union.

Mother Mary Jones lived for one hundred years, quietly slipping away on November 30, 1930. A granite monument in Mt. Olive, Illinois was dedicated to her memory on October 18, 1936.

Josephine Roche, the daughter of John Roche who served as treasurer of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company and later went on to become president of the board of directors, was another woman who was dedicated to improving the working conditions of the miners. Although Miss Roche was born into a very wealthy family, studied at Vassar College and Columbia University, she became interested in the coal industry after her father moved his family to Denver so he could be closer to his work with the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company.

After John Roche died in 1927, Josephine inherited his financial interests in the fuel company. Miss Roche convinced the members of the board of the company to hire Merle D. Vincent, an attorney, as vice president of the board and general manager of the company. She and Vincent were very critical of the conditions under which the miners worked, but Miss Roche did not possess controlling shares in the company and had to defer major decisions in favor of the miners until she could gain control. In March 1928, Josephine Roche was able to purchase the holdings of a Denver business man, thus procuring 51 percent of the firm's stock. By June 28, three-fourths of the Northern coal fields had voted to accept the United Mine Workers as their union. A contract was signed with the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company which was to take effect on September 1. The miners working in mines operated by the company were granted several concessions. They would work eight-hour shifts, six days a week with eight paid holidays each year, and the daily wage was increased to \$7.00 which made them the highest paid miners in the state of Colorado. The company agreed to two payday's a month, a checkweighman at each mine and a grievance committee was formed to handle problems as they arose.

Soon the depression of the 1920's and 1930's was felt by everyone, including the miners and their families. Miss Roche, the company, and the miners seemed to do pretty well during the early years of the depression, but they were dealt quite a blow when C. F. and I. of southern Colorado received permission from the Industrial Commission to lower wages. This action caused a drop in the price of coal. By this time natural gas was being piped into Colorado and less coal was being used. In spite of the fact that Miss Roche was forced to lower the earnings of the men to \$5.25 per day, she took steps to ensure their jobs and homes. She ordered her stores to extend credit to all who were in need and supplied house paint and other materials needed to maintain their homes. For the next several years, she worked intermittently with the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company.

During the presidential term of Franklin D. Roosevelt, she served in several governmental positions. She was director of the National Youth Administration (NYA) at one point in her career. In 1937, she again took over management of the ailing fuel company and secured loans from John L. Lewis.

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## HECLA MINE

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After a few more days the shooting finally ceased permanently and on May 13, 1914, the Twelfth United States Cavalry from Fort Robinson, Nebraska, relieved the state militia of their posts. The people of the town were so pleased to be rid of the state troopers that a parade and a band concert were held to welcome the federal soldiers. A tent city, where the soldiers were to live, grew up near the baseball field (Miner's Field); but when the weather began to get cold they moved into the boardinghouses and other rooms in the homes of the townspeople. The strike continued for several months, but the strikers and the operators maintained a somewhat strained but peaceful relationship. The Union was in debt and indictments against several of its officers were handed down by a grand jury which investigated the events that had taken place at the Hecla Mine. Finally in November 1914, President Wilson called for federal intervention in the longest strike in Colorado mining history. The strike officially ended on December 10, 1914, but the representation of the miners by a strong union was delayed for several years. It was not until many years later that the unions became more effective in the coal fields of northern Colorado.

The site of the "Louisville Plaza" shopping center will always be remembered as the location of the "old" Hecla Mine.

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## WOMEN IN HISTORY

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president of the United Mine Workers Union, many of her friends, and she also sought aid from the federal government in an attempt to maintain the jobs and the well-being of the miners. The Rocky Mountain Fuel Company operated the Monarch Mine when an explosion occurred there on January 20, 1936. After a lengthy investigation into the cause of the accident, the company was found negligent.

In 1944, the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company declared bankruptcy. Josephine Roche became an assistant to John L. Lewis and in 1947 was made director of the United Mine Workers' pension fund. She remained in this position until her death in 1971 and she will always be remembered as one who showed concern and support for the coal miners and their families.

Several local women are remembered by many for their roles in the history of this area. In the book entitled "Once a Coal Miner", by Phyllis Smith, the author tells the story of Elizabeth Beranek, a Lafayette resident, who was a strong supporter of the miners. Each morning she appeared with her children at the head of the lines of people picketing the Columbine Mine

during the strike of 1927. She carried a large American flag. Mrs. Beranek, whose husband, Joe, was a miner, was the mother of seventeen children and her six sons eventually became coal miners. Because of her persistence on behalf of the miners, she was referred to as the "Amazon" by a Denver newspaper.

On January 23, 1932, the First State Bank in Louisville was robbed. The only person working in the bank at the time was Annie Varley, Assistant Cashier. Two young customers had entered during the robbery. Before the robbers left the bank, Annie Varley and the customers were locked in the vault. Because of an inside lock, the hostages were able to free themselves, and Annie was able to give a complete description of the robbers which resulted in their apprehension by the police. Mrs. Varley was commended for remaining calm and assisting the police.

Many women have been active in politics even when they were not able to vote themselves. Victoria Clafin Woodhull became the first woman in the United States to seek the office of president. She was born in Homer, Ohio, in 1838 into a very poor, eccentric family. Victoria married several times; although divorce was almost unheard of at that time, she was divorced at least three times. One of her husbands helped her and her sister to begin a stock brokerage business. This proved to be a quite successful venture and with their profits the sisters founded a women's rights and reform magazine known as the "Woodhull and Clafin Weekly". Victoria's ardent speeches on women's suffrage won her a place among the leaders of the movement. In May 1872, she organized a new political party and held a convention of the Equal Rights party. She accepted its nomination for president and the former slave, Frederick Douglass was selected to be on the ticket as her running mate. Douglass refused to take part in the campaign, but Victoria went to the polls and made a futile attempt to vote. After this defeat, she returned to writing and lecturing. She became involved in many scandals involving very prominent people. After her marriage to John Martin, a member of a very wealthy English banking family, she made her home in England. In 1892, she and her daughter began publishing a magazine, "The Humanitarian". During her many visits to the United States, she stirred up old scandals and became involved in some very unpleasant situations. Even though she became noted for her charitable works, she was never accepted by the socially elite in England where she died in 1927.

The designation of March as "Women in History" month is a fitting tribute to all women who continue to make many important and worthwhile contributions to history each day.

(Some of the information in this article was taken from the book entitled "Once a Coal Miner" by Phyllis Smith and from information found in *The Boulder Camera*.)

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