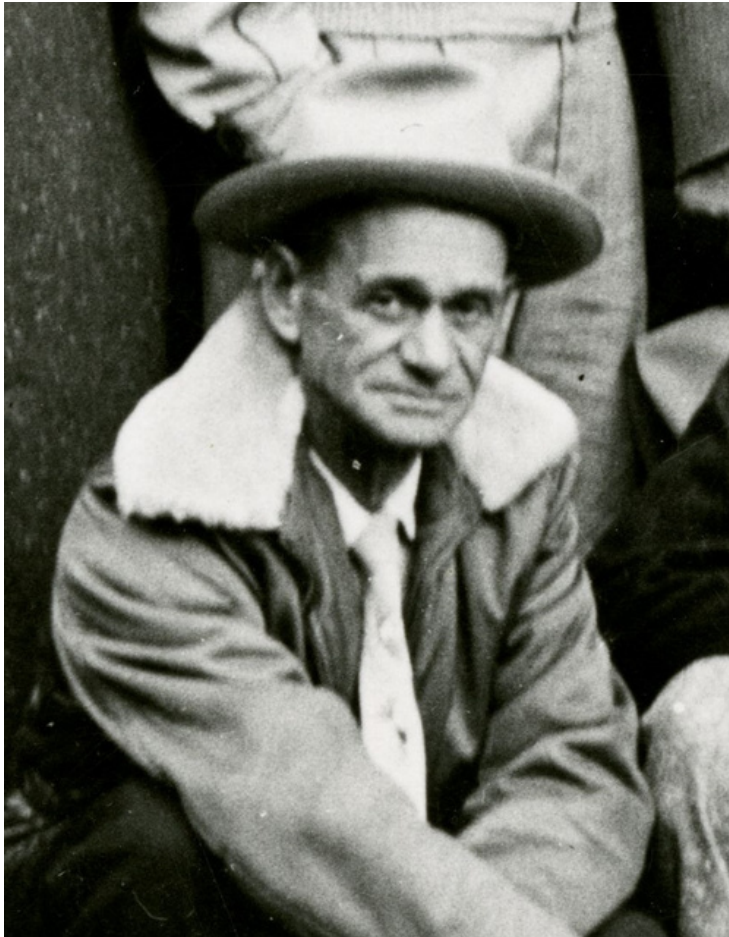


Pioneer Award

JOHN "RING" DIONIGI
1989



BORN APRIL 12, 1897 IN LOUISVILLE, COLORADO
DIED MAY 12, 1966 IN LOUISVILLE, COLORADO

The Historical Commission selected John "Ring" Dionigi to receive the 1989 Pioneer Award. It was noted that when his posthumous award was presented at the annual banquet of the Chamber of Commerce that year, the announcement of his selection brought many smiles to the people who attended as they remembered either the contact they had with him through his many generous actions, or through a "brush with the law" since he served as the entire police force for years. As an avid sportsman, Dionigi loved boxing, which was one of the explanations of how he got his nickname of "Ring."

Ring started his career in the coal mines of Louisville, but that didn't last long since he liked dealing with people, and soon he was working in several grocery stores. It was noted during his Pioneer Award presentation that even though he never went farther than the eighth grade in school, he became fluent in six languages and even learned a smattering of Japanese, Chinese, and Greek so that he could deal with the many customers he met as a butcher.

In the early 1930s, Ring went to work for the town of Louisville as the town clerk, police chief, water plant operator, sewer operator, court recorder, and justice of the peace. During the polio epidemics of the late 1940s and early 1950s, he served as the local chairman of the March of Dimes and worked tirelessly to raise money from the community to fight polio. He was one of the few employees of the town in the 1950s when the streets were first paved, the water system modernized, the sewer system installed, gas lines installed, curb and gutters laid, and the town began to grow in population. He was known for his generosity, giving food and clothing to the needy, and for giving out wedding rings as the justice of the peace. He even gave his wife's ring to a couple, and although he bought her another, she finally told him to buy some cheap ones to keep on hand, so he kept a bowl for rings on his dresser.

Ring lived for Louisville and the people in it, and at his funeral in 1966 the crowd was so large that it overflowed from the St. Louis Catholic Church to the street as over 2,000 residents, fellow officers, and friends attended his service.