

## Louisville Holiday Home Tour 2008

### 801 Lincoln Avenue Home to the Willis Family

The owners of this lovely historic home put on an addition and remodeled it in such a way as to keep the historic character of the house. It was built in approximately 1904.

#### *Early Owners*

The subdivision in which this house is located, the Pleasant Hill Addition, started to be developed in 1894. Amelia and Charles Niehoff were the first purchasers of these three lots. The Niehoffs were early German settlers of Louisville in the 1870s. Their home was elsewhere in Louisville, however. During the seven years from 1896 to 1903 that the Niehoffs owned this property, it is believed that there was no house on the site.

It was the next owner, Frank Taylor, who appears to have had the house constructed. He owned it between 1903 and 1907. He was a coal miner; his wife was Margaret. Unfortunately, little is known of the couple at this time.

#### *Stecker/Kerr Family, Owners 1907-1945*

Anna Stecker first acquired this property in 1907 when she was about 24. She married Robert Kerr in 1909; he had been a blacksmith for Steinbaugh's and later owned a Ford garage on Main Street. When Anne died in 1931, the property passed to Robert and to their daughters, Alma Kerr (later Brennan) and Bertha Kerr. Both were teachers.

Anna and Robert Kerr made their home in Anna's family home on La Farge Avenue, not in this home at 801 Lincoln. The 1940 directory for Louisville shows a Mrs. Hazel Kerr residing at this home. It is possible that the house was lived in by relatives or used as a rental.

#### *Willis Family, Owners 1945-1988*

Robert Willis and Nelle Wolfer Willis acquired this home and began to live here in 1945 when they were in their middle age. He was 54 and she was 53. They were both from Louisville families. Robert's father, a native of England, worked as a miner in this area until he retired at the age of 70. Robert himself was a coal miner for thirty years and had to retire due to illness, then worked for a motor company. (As a young man, Robert fractured his leg in the Interurban Train Wreck that occurred north of Denver in 1920 and killed six Louisville men.)

Nelle Wolfer was the daughter of a prominent doctor in town, Dr. Charles Wolfer. In later years, she remembered attending school in the brick building that is now the Louisville Center for the Arts at 801 Grant. Nelle grew up with her three sisters in the Wolfer family home which was located on the current site of the State Mercantile Building. Her father was a real estate developer in addition to being a physician, and he had the State Mercantile Building constructed.

Nelle became a teacher and started out by teaching fifth grade in Louisville. She also taught in Superior and at the Whittier School in Boulder. Nelle and Robert married in 1922. Their daughter, Mary Kathryn Willis, was born in 1924. Nelle taught many more years in Louisville schools, retiring in 1940.

After Robert died in 1956, Nelle and daughter Mary Kathryn continued to live at 801 Lincoln. Mary Kathryn worked as a secretary for Mountain Bell and for Rocky Flats. Nelle died in 1976 and Mary Kathryn died in 1987. At that time, the property was transferred to a new owner who sold it to the current owners in 1998.

### ***The House Today and Current Owners***

The current owners were familiar with Louisville because of having helped their son remodel two houses in Old Town. They were attracted to Louisville's small town atmosphere and wanted to be close to their family, so they were happy to find a one-story house on a corner lot. The fact that it needed some remodeling was appealing to them. They purchased the house in 1998 with the plan that they would leave their home in Four Mile Canyon west of Boulder and move here when they retired. They followed through with this plan in 2007.

The addition that they put on the house in 2007 added about 450 square feet to the preexisting 950 or so square feet in the original house (not including the dug basement). The addition consists of a bedroom and small study.

The remodeling involved removing a porch, moving basement steps, enlarging the kitchen, turning one bedroom into a hallway and two bathrooms, raising the ceilings back to their original 9 foot height, adding new windows, and adding more doors. The bay windows were retained, and were enlarged and strengthened.

The current owners did several things to blend the old and the new parts of the house. The original wood floors of the old house were sanded and blended with new wood throughout. Also, they took the design of the arch between the dining room and living room and duplicated it in other areas.

In the course of the project, a surprise came when they encountered an old well which is now under a portion of the addition.

The owners are pleased with their efforts to mix the best parts of the old house with the comfort and brightness of the new addition. They especially like the new kitchen and the windows and French doors that bring lots of light into the house.

*Many thanks to the homeowners for generously allowing their home to be on this year's Holiday Home Tour and for providing information about the home.*

*If you have additional information about the history of this home or its past residents, please contact the Louisville Historical Museum at 303-665-9048.*