



Louisville Historical Museum  
December 2008

**Louisville Holiday Home Tour 2008**

**824 La Farge Avenue  
Home to the Zarini (Zarina) Family**

This property is believed to have been the first property in Louisville owned by an Italian. Obviously, many more Italian born people began to acquire lots and homes in Louisville after the purchase of this home in 1890, given Louisville's strong Italian heritage and the fact that it was a colony for Italians in Colorado. The current owners have put on a two story addition to the south and were able to save the original house and incorporate it into the design.

***Zarini Family, Owners 1890-1965***

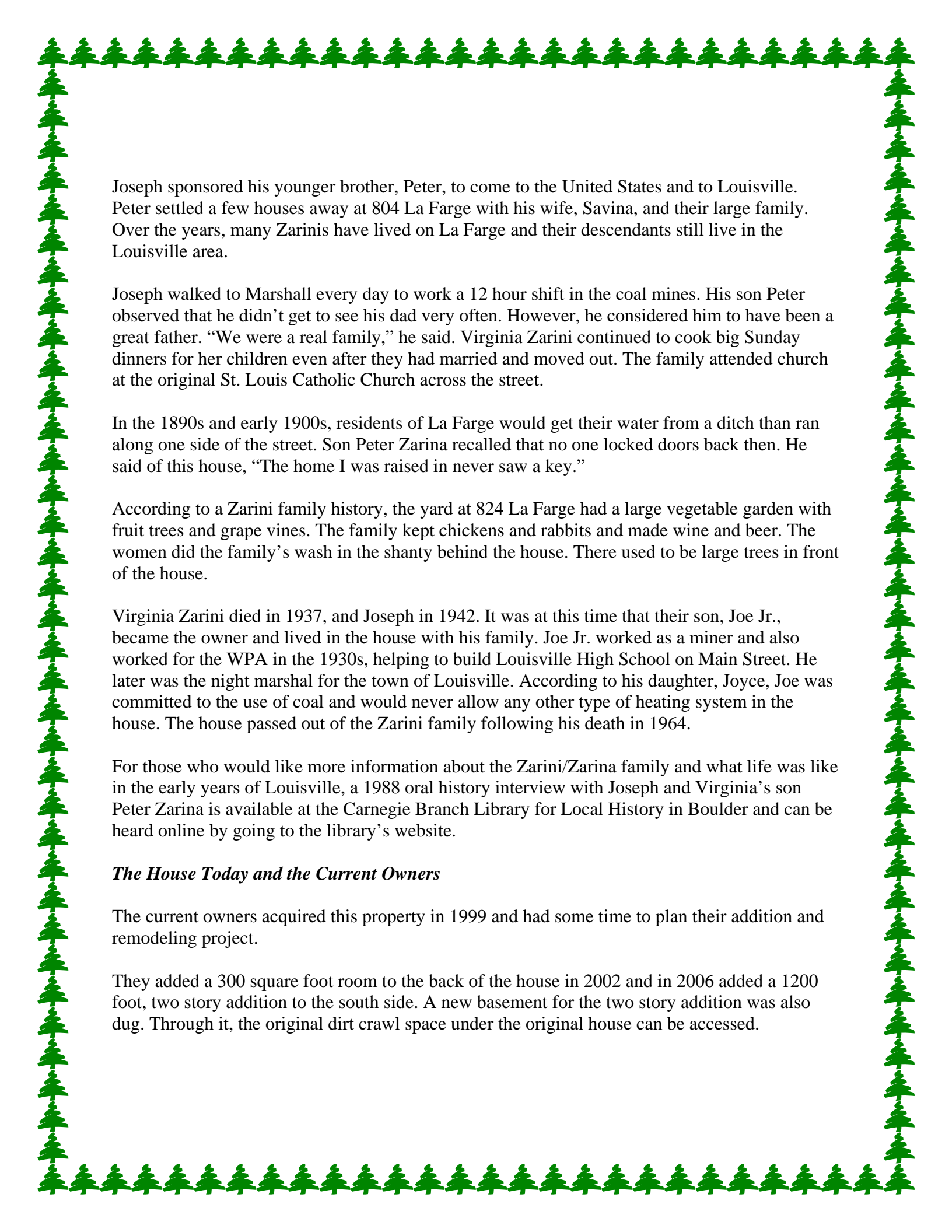
The subdivision in which 824 La Farge is located was Jefferson Place and began to be developed in 1880 by Charles Welch, a prominent Colorado businessman who played a large role in the founding of Louisville and the opening of its first coal mine. The owners of this property from 1883 to 1890 were Josef and Theresa Unterasner.

The real story of this home, however, begins with Joseph and Virginia Zarini. Living in a poor small town (called Villa Dozia or Dozio in Lombardy in northern Italy) the young couple had a very hard life. Later, Joseph would use the Italian word "miseria" – poverty, misery – to describe their reason for coming to America. In 1884, at the age of about 28, Joseph emigrated, settled in Marshall, and sent for Virginia and their daughter. Joseph found work in the many coal mines in Marshall. They had two more children in Marshall.

It is believed that Joseph Zarini had a house constructed for his growing family soon after he acquired the property in 1890. Boulder County records suggest 1904 as the date of construction, but it is likely that this was actually the year that an even earlier house was remodeled. The resulting house is considered to have been a wood frame gabled L dwelling.

Joseph and Virginia had five more children, for a total of eight: Edith; Charles; Henry (Rico); Joe Jr.; Marie; Peter; Flora; and William (Beb). These ten people lived together in this house of about 863 square feet. In fact, the 1900 census shows twelve members of the Zarini family living here.

Sadly, Joseph and Virginia's youngest son, William Zarini, was killed at age 21 in the Interurban Wreck of 1920 near Globeville. The train was carrying a lot of people from Louisville to Denver to watch a baseball game on Labor Day. Son Peter was also on the train, but was able to jump free.



Joseph sponsored his younger brother, Peter, to come to the United States and to Louisville. Peter settled a few houses away at 804 La Farge with his wife, Savina, and their large family. Over the years, many Zarinis have lived on La Farge and their descendants still live in the Louisville area.

Joseph walked to Marshall every day to work a 12 hour shift in the coal mines. His son Peter observed that he didn't get to see his dad very often. However, he considered him to have been a great father. "We were a real family," he said. Virginia Zarini continued to cook big Sunday dinners for her children even after they had married and moved out. The family attended church at the original St. Louis Catholic Church across the street.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, residents of La Farge would get their water from a ditch than ran along one side of the street. Son Peter Zarina recalled that no one locked doors back then. He said of this house, "The home I was raised in never saw a key."

According to a Zarini family history, the yard at 824 La Farge had a large vegetable garden with fruit trees and grape vines. The family kept chickens and rabbits and made wine and beer. The women did the family's wash in the shanty behind the house. There used to be large trees in front of the house.

Virginia Zarini died in 1937, and Joseph in 1942. It was at this time that their son, Joe Jr., became the owner and lived in the house with his family. Joe Jr. worked as a miner and also worked for the WPA in the 1930s, helping to build Louisville High School on Main Street. He later was the night marshal for the town of Louisville. According to his daughter, Joyce, Joe was committed to the use of coal and would never allow any other type of heating system in the house. The house passed out of the Zarini family following his death in 1964.

For those who would like more information about the Zarini/Zarina family and what life was like in the early years of Louisville, a 1988 oral history interview with Joseph and Virginia's son Peter Zarina is available at the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History in Boulder and can be heard online by going to the library's website.

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

The current owners acquired this property in 1999 and had some time to plan their addition and remodeling project.

They added a 300 square foot room to the back of the house in 2002 and in 2006 added a 1200 foot, two story addition to the south side. A new basement for the two story addition was also dug. Through it, the original dirt crawl space under the original house can be accessed.



From the original house, they took off the porch posts, which they plan to reuse, and the concrete slab porch. What had been a bedroom in the old house is now a dining room; the arch in the dining room was the site of the window that faced La Farge and that can be seen in old photos. The wooden floor in the bedroom on the first floor is original.

The owners added bead board in the old front living room and hall to reflect a traditional look. Traditional crown moulding, baseboards, and lighting were also used to maintain the historic character of the house. Cherry wood and glass cabinets that they found in a dumpster on Main Street now have a home in the house.

The biggest challenges they encountered were working with the stacked stone foundation and the uneven floor due to settling over the years.

A 100 year old Granny Smith apple tree in the back yard continues to be a favorite aspect of the house and yard.

Another example of the involvement of the current owners in Louisville is their organization of the Louisville Farmers Market. They brought the idea of a Farmers Market to the City and became its organizers. In its first year, it ran on Saturdays from May to October 2008 on Front Street in historic downtown Louisville. The Market immediately became a favorite community event and featured foods from local Colorado farms and growers including vegetables, fruits, cut flowers, herbs, teas, bread, wine, and other local products.

*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.*