



Issue #73

# The Louisville Historian

*A Publication of the Louisville Historical Commission and Society*

Winter 2007

## **RICHARD LA SALLE: PERFORMER, COMPOSER, AND LOUISVILLE NATIVE SON** *Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator*

Several familiar elements mark the history of Louisville, making it a continuous source of interest to area residents and others. These include its dangerous coal mining industry, a largely immigrant work force with a strong Italian presence, a love of baseball, an inviting historic downtown and Main Street, and a tight knit community.

Some may be surprised to learn that Louisville also has a connection to Hollywood movies and television through its native son, musician Richard W. La Salle. Far from being an anomaly in Louisville's history, La Salle was actually very much a product of his environment.

Richard La Salle came from a nonmusical family, but he clearly was born with a remarkable talent that was nourished in a community that, though small and working class, had strong musical traditions. Following years of having his own orchestra and developing a national reputation through the 1940s and 1950s, La Salle turned to composing for movies and television in the 1960s and 1970s and ultimately scored, by his count, over four hundred movies and television shows. Most significantly, he wrote the score for Martin Scorsese's 1974 film, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, which was nominated for three Academy Awards.

Now 89, La Salle was recently contacted at his California home. Echoing the views of many Louisville natives, he wrote that he has wonderful memories of growing up in Louisville.

La Salle, born in 1918, was the only child of Antonio (Toney) and Katherine (Kitty). Toney worked as a coal miner as a young man and played semi-professional baseball until a leg injury in a car accident brought an end to his sports career. He began to sell radios and developed this line of work into a popular Main Street furniture and appliance store where he sold everything "from mattresses to toasters," according to one Louisville resident.

When there was an explosion at the nearby Monarch Mine in 1936, Toney La Salle helped with rescue efforts. The extended La Salle family was devastated by the news that



*Dick La Salle is shown here in about 1970 conducting a score for an NBC television movie.*

Toney's sister's husband, Tony De Santis, was one of the eight miners killed.

An early memory of Richard La Salle's was that when his grandmother babysat him, she would play music on the Victrola to help him go to sleep. He began to pick out the records that he wanted to hear. His father bought him an accordion, and along with Vic Caranci he began to take lessons from Eliseo Jacoe ("the Professor"), who owned and operated the Jacoe Store that is now one of the four buildings that make up the Louisville Historical Museum. Jacoe had become a musician in his native Italy and played in bands in Louisville, Boulder, and Denver. As La Salle learned the accordion, he began to play for his father's friends and for his family. He may have been an only child, but as a member of the big La Salle family in Louisville, he had many aunts, uncles, and cousins who lived nearby.

One of La Salle's teachers when he attended school in Louisville in the late 1920s and early 1930s was Violette McKenzie, who helped give direction to the obvious natural talents of La Salle and of his close friends, Vincent Damiana, Fred Nesbit, and Arnold Biella (whose parents operated the

*Continued on page 2*

Richard La Salle continued from page 1

Rex movie theatre on Main Street). By the time La Salle was 13, he was playing in an orchestra, and amazingly, at age 15 he was playing lead on the accordion with his own nine piece orchestra. His father was the Louisville dealer for Maytag, the sponsor of his first orchestra.

La Salle kept busy performing music while attending Louisville High School, and he even was put on the staff of the NBC radio station in Denver. At age 16, in an empty radio studio, he used his knowledge from playing an accordion keyboard to teach himself to play the piano. At school, he was a member of the boys' chorus, mixed chorus, boys' quartet, and orchestra. He graduated in 1935 with his class of 26 students and began attending the University of Colorado. In late 1935, Louisville High School's student newspaper, *The Look Out*, reported that La Salle had been chosen as a member of the Glee Club at C.U.

It was not long before La Salle was receiving offers to join orchestras and go on the road. This he did, and the experience led to his taking over of Neil Bondshu's orchestra upon Bondshu's unexpected death in the 1940s. Under the name "Dick LaSalle, His Piano and His Orchestra," La Salle began a nearly



Advertising for Toney W. LaSalle's store appears on a large sign from a Main Street business. The sign now hangs on the wall of the Louisville Historical Museum.

twenty year career in the 1940s and 1950s playing at clubs and hotels all over the United States.

The musical climate at the time was perfect for La Salle's talents. A big source of entertainment for people was dancing to Big Band music and, later, "Society music." La Salle's orchestra catered to this market. With his wife Patricia as manager, he and his orchestra performed at such well-known venues as the Coconut Grove, the Beverly Hills Hotel, the Persian Room at the Plaza Hotel in New York City, the Palmer House in Chicago, and the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. According to liner notes from a 1952 album he made

with his orchestra, *A Night at the Persian Room*, his orchestra had "almost become a fixture of the combination restaurant, dance floor, and show-place which is the Persian Room." The notes go on:

*One of the best bands in the society field, Dick La Salle does everything with charm and élat. He does not have any one "specialty" – his specialty is his range. . . . [S]ays Dick, "when you go out for an evening of dancing, that's exactly what you want. . . . Therefore, we play tunes designed for the feet and not for vocal cords."*

A Hollywood producer familiar with La Salle's work introduced him to the motion picture business. As a result, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he was writing scores for movies and television. One year, he even composed the scores for twelve movies. Movies for which he composed the scores ranged from crime dramas and action movies to Westerns starring Audie Murphy and horror movies starring Vincent Price. The television scores to which he contributed likely still play in the nighttime dreams of baby boomers who grew up on a steady diet of such popular shows as *Lost in Space*, *F Troop*, *The Fugitive*, *Land of the Giants*, *The F.B.I.*, and *Wonder Woman*.

Richard W. La Salle is a prolific musician who did what he loved and has left his mark on American popular culture. When you think about it, it's not surprising that it all started in Louisville.



Dick La Salle is seen on the right with his Maytag Orchestra in this photo. Vincent Damiana is shown third from the left playing the alto sax.

## MUSIC TEACHER HAD LASTING IMPACT

*Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator*

An important influence in the career of Richard W. La Salle was his teacher in Louisville, Violette McKenzie McCarthy. Not only did she help shape the musical careers of others in Louisville as well, but she went on to become “a longtime Denver teacher and musician who left an indelible imprint on the city’s musical scene,” according to her extensive obituary in the *Rocky Mountain News* (January 4, 2000); “[a]nyone in Denver who was in music knew her.” She died at the age of 95.

Born in Iowa, she moved to Louisville with her parents and took lessons from the daughter of the superintendent of the Louisville schools, according to her obituary. She studied piano, violin, and voice. She then attended Drake University in Iowa and returned to Louisville after graduation to teach for five years, from about 1930 to 1935.

During her time in Louisville, “Miss McKenzie” was herself a student of E. Robert Schmitz, an internationally known pianist who held summer classes in Denver, and she was credited with expanding the school orchestra and choruses. She knew talent when she saw it and she was not shy about approaching parents to let them know of their responsibilities. According to Fred Nesbit’s sister, Phyllis Nesbit Hawkins, Violette McKenzie approached their parents to tell them that Fred had a beautiful voice and needed lessons. As a result, they did arrange for him to have lessons, enabling him to pursue a musical career. Nesbit had a radio show in Denver following World War II and became the baritone lead in operas in Denver and Central City.

Violette McKenzie McCarthy’s impact on young musicians during her years in Louisville is a testament to the lasting influence of energetic and caring teachers on their students.

*Thank you to Phyllis Nesbit Hawkins for providing information for this article. If you have information about Violette McKenzie McCarthy’s time in Louisville, please contact the Historical Museum.*



### LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA IS FIRST IN SMALL SCHOOL COMPETITION

*In 1934, The Louisville High School Orchestra placed first among schools of its size (less than 250 students) in the Rocky Mountain high school music contest in Denver. Orchestra director Violette McKenzie is shown with her students in this undated and unidentified photo reporting the win. Richard La Salle is believed to be in the top row, first on the left. Please contact the Louisville Historical Museum to provide additional identifications of the students pictured.*

## LOUISVILLE HISTORICAL COMMISSION



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## BANDS WERE A LOUISVILLE INSTITUTION

*Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator*

At a time when almost every American town had at least one band, Louisville too could boast of having many talented residents who performed in its bands, and of course hearing those bands play was welcome entertainment. According to the recollections of early resident Charles W. Taylor, which are on file at the Historical Museum, the first Louisville band performed in 1889 and included about twenty members.

In about 1891, according to Taylor's recollections, the band drew the attention of L.C. Paddock, who had helped establish the *Boulder Daily Camera*. The band was reorganized, got new uniforms, and bore the names "Paddock's Band" and "The Silk Hat Band." The story goes that this Louisville band performed when the Boulder Chautauqua was opened in 1898.

Some later Louisville bands were reportedly known as the Musicians' Union Band and the All-Star Band. Taylor himself played the part of a western "Music Man" by organizing a boys' band in Louisville (see accompanying photo).

In Louisville, at least two Italian families were known to be particularly musical. The Romeo family that lived in the stone house at Pine and Garfield (featured on the 2005 Holiday



*Louisville resident Charles Taylor was identified as being in the center of this photo of a boys' band that he organized. They are shown in front of the Miners Trading Co. building, which stood at the northwest corner of Pine and Main. This photo dates from circa 1890-1909.*

Home Tour) had five children while here who were all being taught to play instruments. The story is still told that they used to be called home to dinner by a tune on a trumpet.

Another Italian family, the Jacoes, had a lasting impact on Louisville's music scene. Brothers Francisco Marcello (Frank), Eliseo, and Robert came to Louisville in the early 1900s and each gave their occupation as "musician" in the 1910 census. Frank and Eliseo formed the Louisville Concert Band that performed weekly concerts.

Eliseo Jacoe wrote that he had received his musical training from Giuseppe Guzzi in Cosenza, Italy, that he had been in charge of the Cosenza Municipal Band and, after coming to Denver, that he had organized the Italy Colony Band. Both Frank and Eliseo also gave private lessons, Eliseo being known as "the Professor" and teaching the trumpet, trombone, saxophone, and accordion. Eliseo also owned and operated Jacoe's Store, now one of the four buildings of the Louisville Historical Museum.



*The Jacoe brothers were members of the Louisville Concert Band, pictured here in 1914 near the railroad. The lettering on the drum states: "American Federation of Musicians / Louisville Concert Band."*

*If you have additional information about Louisville's musical history, please contact the Historical Museum.*

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### PROGRAM SET FOR APRIL 25

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, April 25 at 7:00 PM, when William Cohen will speak on *BLAST: The 1936 Monarch Mine Explosion* for the annual program of the Louisville Historical Society at the Louisville Public Library meeting room. As many readers and residents know, Bill has been comprehensively researching the explosion, which killed eight miners, and its possible causes. This he has done through interviews of surviving family members and area residents, original documents, and newspaper coverage.

Refreshments will be served. We hope to see you there!

### HISTORICAL MUSEUM HOURS

The current hours of the Louisville Historical Museum are Wednesdays, Thursdays, and the first Saturday of the month from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Please call ahead (303.665.9048) for the latest information on hours or to schedule a tour.

### MUSEUM PHOTOS



The Rex Theatre on Main Street, shown here in 1919, is now the location of Senor T's Restaurant. Mike Wisek is believed to be one of the two men pictured.

## MUSEUM DONATIONS

The Louisville Historical Museum has accessioned the following donations during the months of November through January. We sincerely appreciate these recent donations.

*Lucius F. ("Pete") Cassidy, Jr.* – photos of his family and home in Louisville, including photos of his parents, Dr. Lucius F. and Mrs. Helen Cassidy

*John Brugger* – documents relating to real property owned by the Helburg family of Louisville

*Rebecca Harney* – household items including a pressure cooker and cards of needles

*Gail Wetrogan* – booklet containing an agreement between the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company and the United Mine Workers of America for the period of 1928-1930; a preprinted pad of paper intended for daily reports from mines operated by the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company; and scans of photos showing Louisville buildings taken in the 1970s and in 1990

*Lorraine Todd* - belt buckle inscribed with the words "Boulder Valley Pow Wow" which was associated with area rodeo events

*Richard W. La Salle* – booklet of information and photos about his music career and two audiotapes of music performed by him

*Jean Morgan* – cookbook, Louisville Tidbits (this item was on the Museum's Wish List)

*Tom Steinbaugh* – miner's pick made by J.J. Steinbaugh and anvil used at J.J. Steinbaugh's Front Street blacksmith shop

*Carla Paxton* – booklets with household and cooking information from local sponsoring businesses

*David Ferguson* – two black purses and an iron from the Dionigi family

*Barbara Hesson* – copy of the August 6, 1964 Denver Post containing articles of local interest

### MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Donations have been made to the Museum in memory of:

*William Trebing (1922-2006)*

*Florence Caranci Persson (1919-2006)*

# THANKS TO NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

## NEW BUSINESS SPONSORS

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## NEW MEMBERS

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Peter Murray  
Lorraine L. Todd  
Frank John Nortnik & Family  
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John Leary & Jan Rowen  
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Christian Kopff & Family  
Pamela Bell & Family  
Nancy Mullen  
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June Enrietto  
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## HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW LOUISVILLE?

1. The statue of a coal miner that stands in front of the Louisville City Hall is shown holding a typical miner's lunch pail. In what hand is the miner holding the pail?
2. A clothing store was located on the northeast corner of Main and Walnut in the 1960s, remembered for selling clothes for boys and men. What was its name?
3. What man was instrumental in the founding of both Louisville and Golden, Colorado?

Answers on page 8.

## MUSEUM CORNER

*Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator*

The lead article in the last issue of *The Louisville Historian* proved to bring back many memories of Dr. Lucius Cassidy and his former home and office, which was one of the stops on the Louisville Holiday Home Tour on December 2. One of my favorite moments of the tour this year was seeing retired football coach Fred Tesone, another homeowner on the tour, standing in Dr. Cassidy's former waiting room and hearing him describe the many times that he came there to see Dr. Cassidy after being injured in football games playing for Louisville High School. All of the homes were memorable and lovely.

For those of you who don't want to risk missing the 2007 Holiday Home Tour, it's not too early to mark your calendars for Saturday, December 8. Also, if you have a home in downtown Louisville that you would like to have considered for the 2007 tour, please contact Commission member Elle Cabbage or call the Museum.

Not surprisingly, a common theme that all of the homes ended up having in common was coal mining. All of the houses were either owned by coal miners at one time, or, in the case of Dr. Cassidy's house, owned by a mine doctor. Without any planning for it, there was also an interesting representation of Louisville's different ethnic groups among the previous residents of the homes, including Italians, Lithuanians, Slovenes, Irish, and English. All in all, the houses represented Louisville history beautifully.

Special thanks go out to the current homeowners, who have all been given complimentary annual memberships in the Historical Society and have been provided with written

histories of their individual homes. For those who missed the Home Tour, these histories can be accessed through the link to the Historical Museum web page at the City of Louisville web site.

In keeping with the medical theme of the previous issue of *The Louisville Historian*, Bill and Betty Buffo provided information about Dr. William Bresnahan, a doctor who began to practice in Louisville in late 1955 at the end of the town's coal mining era. He moved to Broomfield, but it was still shocking news for residents to hear in 1964 that he and his wife Laurel had been murdered at their campsite in Silverthorne; the case was solved and made headlines in the *Denver Post* and other area newspapers. Also, it was brought to my attention that Dr. Phillip Davis had a medical practice on Main Street, then on La Farge Avenue, in the 1920s. Another doctor who is remembered for practicing here when Louisville was much smaller was Dr. Stanley Kerkhoff, who had an office on Spruce. Thank you to everyone who was so responsive about providing information on Louisville's doctors!

Thank you so much to Duke Damiana, Mary Kay Knorr, Bill Buffo, Gail Wetrogan, Bill Cohen, Kim Salony, and Jean Morgan for their volunteer work on behalf of the Museum. Also, thank you to Cliff Foster for his recollections about his farm and Louisville history. Last, our grateful appreciation goes to Marion Junior, who through making and selling her lovely holiday ornaments helps raise money for the Historical Commission every year.

## MUSEUM PHOTOS



*The Rex Mine #1, shown here in 1912, was located at what is now the Harney-Lastoka Open Space at the south-east corner of South Boulder Road and Highway 42.*

## JOIN THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Membership in the Louisville Historical Society is a great idea for those interested in Louisville's unique history and cultural character. Members receive the quarterly *Louisville Historian* and an invitation to the annual Historical Society Program.

A yearly membership is \$15.00 for an individual, \$25.00 for a family, and \$100.00 for a business sponsorship.

Visit our web site at [www.ci.louisville.co.us/museum.htm](http://www.ci.louisville.co.us/museum.htm) for a membership form or call the museum at 303.665.9048. You may also write to us at Louisville Historical Museum, 749 Main Street, Louisville, Colorado, 80027. Please make checks payable to the Louisville Historical Society.

# PIONEER AWARD GIVEN TO BILL & BETTY BUFFO

*Don Ross, Vice Chair of the Louisville Historical Commission, presented the 2007 Pioneer Award to Bill and Betty Buffo at the annual Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet on January 25.*

**B**ill and Betty Buffo are lifelong Louisville residents, Bill the son of Dominic and Lillian Buffo and Betty the daughter of Lin and Olga Schreiter, coal mining and farming families that arrived in Louisville in the 1890s. They have been married for fifty-five years and have lived at their same address on Walnut Street for that entire time period. They are the parents of Don and Ron Buffo and have two grandchildren, Angela and Bill, and a daughter-in-law, Kelli.

Bill and Betty are the personification of Louisville, past, present, and future and their very identity is defined by their love of this city. In fact, it is difficult to talk about them individually and without including the common denominator of Louisville.

Betty was, and is still, a full time homemaker but also worked part time at Wardenburg Health Center at C.U. and in the kitchen at Luigi's restaurant in town. A self-taught artist, Betty became an accomplished sculptor and produced many bronze pieces with an American West theme that were sold throughout the United States. One piece is owned by the current governor of New Mexico, Bill Richardson. Her donated bronze bust of a coal miner is on display in City Hall and a crucifix hangs at St. Louis Catholic Church. In addition to boyhood paper delivery and restaurant jobs in Louisville, Bill worked for Joe and Anthony Colacci at their Phillips 66 gas station and worked as a machinist at Rocky Flats, retiring after thirty-five years of service.

Bill attended St. Louis Catholic School and Betty attended Louisville Elementary and, later, would meet each other at Louisville Junior-Senior High School. Bill is proud that he was a member of the first State Football Championship team in 1948 and Betty is equally proud of encouraging him from the sidelines as a cheerleader.

From the very beginning of their life together, they would dedicate themselves to their family and to their community, whether it was Betty as a home room mother and PTA member for her children or Bill coaching Little League sports. Bill was one of the founding members of the Louisville Little League program in the 1950s and spent hundreds of hours maintaining playing facilities. Bill was part of the chain crew at Louisville and Centaurus football games for thirty-four years.

When the Louisville Historical Society was founded, Bill and Betty immediately became active members and, upon the purchase of the Tomeo House and Jacoe Store, lent their time and labor to help make them into the Louisville Historical Museum. Along with many others, they spent hours hauling, sanding, painting, scrubbing, and polishing with the result being what you see today. One of the most difficult jobs at the Museum, after its remodeling, was organizing and cataloging artifact donations. Betty and Bill met with museum curators in Colorado and Betty developed a system that recorded all of the artifacts coming into the Museum. Until just recently, Betty was a regular, weekly volunteer at the Museum helping with window displays and preparing artifacts for viewing. Bill still regularly takes obituaries to the Museum for its collection of historical records.

Today, Bill is a member of the Elks Club, where he helps with the annual hoop shoot. Both Betty and Bill are active members of the Louisville Society of Italian Americans, where they are instrumental in organizing and preparing for the annual La Festa. Both are members of St. Louis Catholic Church.

Bill and Betty are proud to be residents of Louisville and are honored to be recognized by the Historical Commission. They love Louisville because it is where they are from and who they are; a town that has given them a wonderful life, rich experiences, and lifelong friendships. As Bill says, "It's the best place to be from."

## ANSWERS TO HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW LOUISVILLE?

1. The statue of the miner is holding the lunch pail in his left hand.
2. Porta's clothing store had the address of 900 Main and was operated by Arthur "Spud" Porta.
3. Charles C. Welch is the man who played a role in the founding of both Louisville and Golden. Born in New York state, he was engaged in mining operations in both California and Australia as a young man. The prospect of gold and silver mines drew him to Colorado and he became vice president of the Colorado Central Railroad. In 1877, likely aware of coal having been discovered nearby, he obtained the mineral rights to David Kerr's farm, hired Louis Nawatny to find a coal seam, and financed Louisville's first coal mine which was the Welch Mine. Welch also developed the Jefferson Place subdivision, which was the first addition to downtown Louisville, and was engaged in real estate transactions in the Louisville area for over thirty years. In addition, he is known for helping to establish Golden and the Colorado School of Mines. (Sources: *Once a Coal Miner* by Phyllis Smith; *The Louisville Story, Coal Mining in Colorado's Northern Field*, and *Louisville Legends* by Carolyn Conarroe; Boulder County property records; and *Encyclopedia of Biography of Colorado* by William N. Byers.)

# **HISTORICAL COMMISSION SPONSORS SUCCESSFUL AND FUN 2006 HOLIDAY HOME TOUR**

*Elle Cabbage, Louisville Historical Commission*

The 2006 Holiday Home Tour proved to be another successful fundraiser for the Historical Commission. We were once again very fortunate to have five delightful sets of home owners (Elizabeth and Eric Ryterski, Helly and Matthew Duncan, Allyson and Dylan Frusciano, Lois and Fred Tesone, and Elizabeth and Whitney Goodrich) to take part in our festive undertaking and kindly open their doors to the public. Their homes were decorated in the Christmas spirit and reflected history, both of the house and the individuals currently living in them!

Additionally, we recognize and appreciate the following businesses for their contributions in promoting and supporting the Holiday Home Tour: Heritage Bank, The Huckleberry, Louisville's Albertsons, King Soopers, Sam's Club, and Home Depot. Our gratitude is extended to the United Methodist Church for their continued involvement with the Holiday Home Tour, not only as a historic site, but also for its generosity in providing "eternal" free refreshments and transforming the fellowship hall into our heavenly, holiday "boutique."

## **MUSEUM WISH LIST**

The Louisville Historical Museum would like to add to its collection the items described below. If you would be willing to donate any of the described items, please call us at 303.665.9048. If you would prefer not to part with an original photo, please contact us about whether it can be scanned on our photo scanner. All donations to the museum, a non-profit institution, are tax deductible. Thank you for your support!

*Louisville High School Yearbook: 1954*

*Centaurus High School Yearbooks: 1973 to 2000*

*Photographs of Louisville High School's graduating classes: 1954, 1955, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, and 1964 through 1971*

*Copies of the Louisville Times, or pages of it, dated before 1942. (The Louisville Times was published beginning in 1913, but the paper has past issues going back only to 1942.)*

*Coal mine photos and ledgers*

*An old wooden bench for use as part of the Summer Kitchen display*

*Historic photos of homes and businesses in the old town part of Louisville (with or without people in the photos). Specific buildings need not be identified so long as the photos were taken in Louisville.*

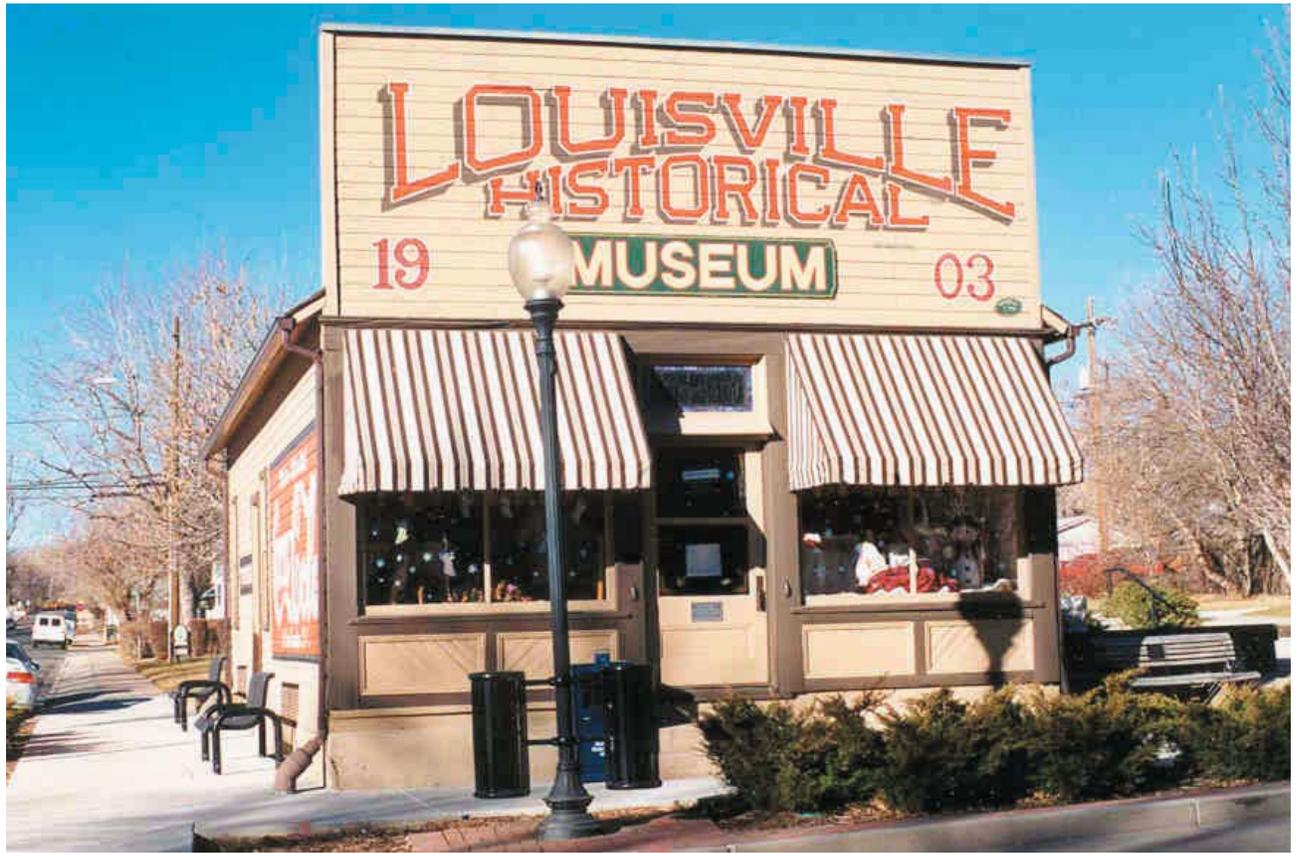
Many thanks are also extended to Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator, in assisting in the selection of homes and composing a thorough comprehensive research report on each participating residence; Mona Lee-Doersam for her many hours of creative graphic designs and layouts; Centennial Printings for the tour tickets; the hosts and hostesses who volunteered their time to assist visitors in the homes; the Chamber of Commerce for including the Home Tour in its seasonal advertising; and the Louisville Historical Commission members for aiding in the promotion, preparation, and implementation of the Home Tour.

We estimate that approximately three hundred individuals toured the five beautiful holiday homes on December 2. The Holiday Home Tour fundraiser achieved its goal with the support of many people and the funds raised will be used to enhance the Museum Campus. We value, and are thankful for, all the individuals and business owners who believe in, and continue to support, the Louisville Historical Museum!

## **BUSINESS SPONSORSHIPS**

*Thank you to all of our Business Sponsors!*

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