

# The Louisville Historian

Issue #68

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## MONARCH MINE EXPLOSION: 70TH ANNIVERSARY

By Bill Cohen

Monday, January 20, 1936, 6:20 a.m. – As over 100 coal miners assembled for the day shift at the mouth of the Monarch Mine #2 main shaft, a massive explosion shook the ground under their feet. Eight miners on the overnight shift, Ray Bailey, Oscar Baird, Steve Davis, Tony De Santis, Joe Jaramillo, Kester Novinger, Tom Stevens, and Leland Ward, were killed either by the force of the explosion, by the huge rock fall that followed or by the poisonous gas caused by the explosion that flowed through the tunnels. Two miners, Nick DelPizzo and Bill Jenkins, managed to escape ahead of the approaching gas through an undamaged air shaft. At least four miners, Joseph Stevens, Tom Stevens' brother, Assistant Mine Foreman Billy Davitt, A.H. Ward, brother of Leland Ward, and William "Buster" Bailey were overcome by the gas while attempting to reach the trapped miners. They had to be pulled out by fellow-rescuers and revived.

The State Mine Inspector determined that a spark of unknown origin likely ignited leaking methane gas in the main haulage area of the mine. A large accumulation of dry, combustible coal dust in this area helped propagate a huge explosion throughout the area where most of the overnight shift was working. A Coroner's Jury soon found that the mine operator, National Fuel Company, was negligent by ignoring a previous order by the State Mine Inspector to clean up this dangerous condition.

January 20, 2006, marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this indus-

trial tragedy, which had an enormous impact not only on the families of the miners who were killed but on the entire Northern Colorado mining community. Louisville received the brunt of that impact. To commemorate this sad event in Louisville history, the Louisville Historical Museum is conducting extensive research into the facts surrounding the explosion and its effect on the people involved. A special exhibit is also planned.

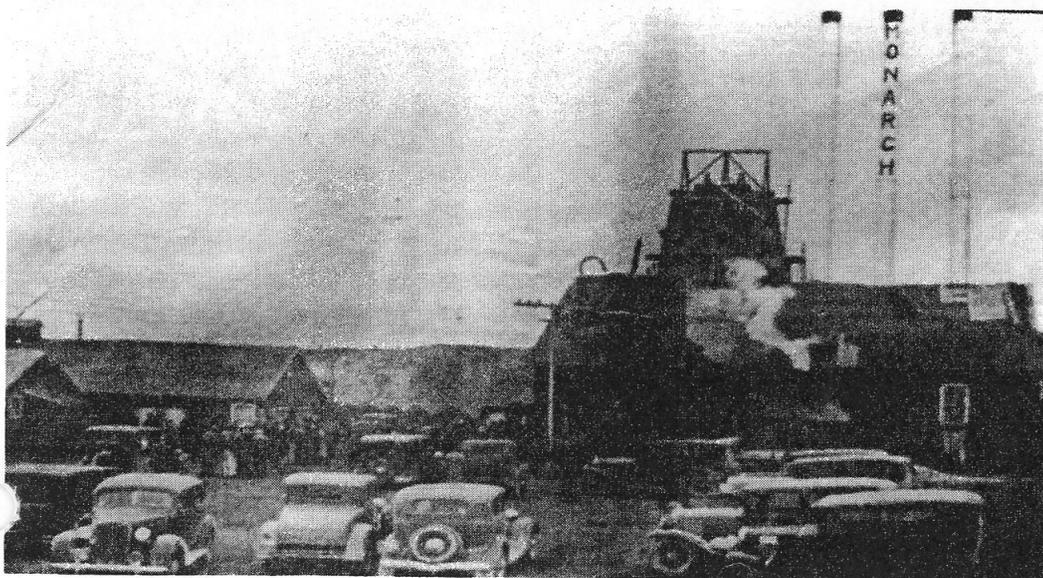
Memories of that Depression-era day in 1936 and its aftermath remain imbedded in the minds of children of the miners killed in the blast nearly 70 years ago.

Louis De Santis and Doris De Santis Winslow, 2 of 6 children of miner Tony De Santis, were 14 and 11 years old, respectively, in early 1936. Louis recalls his uncle, John LaSalle, brother of his mother, Adeline, coming to their Front Street, Louisville home to inform her that there had been "a big explosion out at the mine." John told his sister, "I'm afraid that Tony was in there." LaSalle returned to the mine to help with rescue efforts. Doris recalls being informed of the blast while at school. When her father's body (along with the bodies of miners Ray Bailey and Oscar Baird) was finally recovered two days later, Doris recalls being "devastated." Seventy years later she still has a fear of explosions and a phobia about tunnels.

Donald Stevens, only child of miner Tom Stevens and his wife Josephine Biella Stevens, was just 5 years old when his father was killed in the Monarch Mine explosion. Still,

he recalls coming home that day from the St. Louis Catholic School to find his mother and her sister, Inez Paprocki, crying together in the dining room at his LaFarge Avenue home. On the day of his father's funeral, Donald remembers his uncle John Paprocki picking him up and taking him to view his dad in his coffin. He noticed bandages on his father's head and his arm.

Some children and adults were even closer to the scene. News reports of the explosion and rescue efforts pictured



This scene shows people and cars gathered at the Monarch Mine in the aftermath of the explosion.

Continued on page 2

*Continued from page 1*

miner Joe Jaramillo's 12 year-old son, Ernest, his dog Shep at his feet, standing vigil at the mine shaft-head, along with numerous friends and relatives of the trapped miners. Periodically, Ernest would run to his home in the Monarch Camp on the mine premises to update his mom, Josephine (not Delores, as reported) Jaramillo, on the ultimately fruitless efforts to recover his father's body. After all the other miners' bodies were brought out, Josephine stood a lonely vigil at the mine shaft until State and mine officials ended the rescue effort on February 6, 1936, because the danger of another explosion became too great. According to Josephine Najera and Barbara Barela, children of Jaramillo's older son, Joe, Jr., their dad, already working week-ends in the Monarch Mine attending mules with his father, immediately left school at the age of 14 and became a miner to support his widowed mother and 3 siblings. He worked as a miner until 1978, when he retired. Two months later he died of a heart attack.

Other people, who were in their childhood, recall their experiences on that traumatic day in Louisville history. Betty Ross Marino was 10 years old on January 20, 1936. She woke up that morning to blaring sirens blowing continuously. Later that day, church bells began ringing.

Marion Bailey (Wycoff) (no relation to miner Ray Bailey) was 9 years old and attending the third grade in Boulder on January 20, 1936. Her father, William "Buster" Bailey was a miner at the Monarch Mine. She was picked up at school that day and told that her father was involved in an explosion at the mine. Marion was driven to the Superintendent's house in the mining camp where she was relieved to find her father recuperating. Buster Bailey had been part of the day shift waiting to enter the mine when it exploded. He had gone down into the mine with a rescue crew and been overcome by gas.

Little is known, however, about several of the dead miners or about their families. Official and newspaper reports, including several inconsistencies, reveal only the following sketchy information:

Ray Bailey, 26, a "day man" in the mine, lived in Broomfield with his wife and 1 to 3 small children. He had 2 years mining experience and started work at the Monarch Mine October 1, 1935, as a "cager." He is buried in the Louisville Cemetery.

Oscar L. Baird, 33, lived at Rickard's Corner, a mining camp located between Louisville and Denver. He was married with 2 or 3 children. A motorman, he had 1 1/2 to 2 years mining experience and had worked at the Monarch



*This is one of the few photos in the Museum's collection showing the inside of the Monarch Mine and it dates to the late 1920s. The mule drivers are identified as, left to right: Rocky Piccone; Isaac Robbins; Milo Guenzi; and Tealie Bottinelli.*

for about two months prior to January 20, 1936. His body was shipped for burial to La Follette, Tennessee, his former home.

Steve Davis, 44, left a wife, but no children. The Davises lived in Louisville. Steve was of Welsh background and had 15 years of mining experience. Following his funeral at the Henning Mortuary on Main Street, Louisville, he was to be buried in Florence, Colorado. He may have had a brother, William Davis, who participated in the rescue effort.

Kester Novinger and Leland Ward were cousins. Novinger, of Broomfield, age somewhere between 34 to 39, was survived by his wife and two-year old daughter Sally Belle. Ward, either 32 or 38 depending on the report, was single. He arrived in Colorado the week prior to the explosion and was living at the Monarch Mine Camp. This was only his third shift at the Monarch Mine. His brother A.H. Ward, or possibly "Charlie" Ward or A.C. Ward, a foreman in the mine, was overcome by deadly gas in an unsuccessful rescue attempt.

The Louisville Historical Museum is attempting to locate and interview any surviving children, grandchildren and other relatives of the deceased miners, and any other people who knew the families involved or recall the events surrounding this disaster. The Museum is also interested in borrowing, copying, or acquiring photos, articles or other items related to this historic yet tragic incident in Louisville history. If you have any information, please contact Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator, at 303-665-9048, or Bill Cohen, Researcher, at 303-444-0970.

## BUILDINGS FROM THE MONARCH MINING CAMP

### ARE STILL AROUND US

*Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator*

The Monarch Mine #2, where the 1936 explosion took place, was the site of a mining camp with as many as 80 houses where miners lived with their families, its own school, a store, a bunk house, and other buildings to serve the camp residents. The mine and the camp were located just east of today's StorageTek campus and north of Highway 36.

When the Monarch Mine closed in 1947, people moved many of the buildings from the mining camp to Louisville rather than have them be demolished.

Most notably, Union Jack Liquor (located at the corner of South Boulder Road and Highway 42) is made up of two buildings that came from the Monarch mining camp, according to local residents. Some think that these two buildings may have been the miners' bunk house (or barracks) and the shower house. William Elrod (nicknamed "Dixie" because he came from South Carolina) moved the buildings in the mid-1940s to the South Boulder Road location and combined them into

a larger building, from which he then operated the Wagon Wheel Inn for many years before it eventually became Union Jack Liquor.

By all reports, the school at the Monarch mining camp was torn down. Many residents still remember Mae Austin Goodhue as having been the teacher at the school, which reportedly was located near the mine dump. According to her teaching records, she taught there from 1923 to 1944. A school bus carried older children to attend school in Louisville.

A July 1946 article indicated that the Louisville American Legion was preparing to move the Monarch Mine bunk house to its North Main Street property, but the Museum has been unable to confirm that the move actually occurred.

Miners' houses from the camp are thought to still exist as residences throughout Louisville, including on Jefferson Avenue, Parkview Street, two locations on Main Street, and on Front Street across from the

Grain Elevator. Sadly, the information about exactly where these Monarch Mine homes are located is being lost.

If you have any information about where the buildings from the Monarch mining camp have ended up, or if you have any photos of the camp that we can copy, please help us by calling the Louisville Historical Museum at 303-665-9048.



*This photo shows the school bus that carried older students from the Monarch mining camp to Louisville High School.*

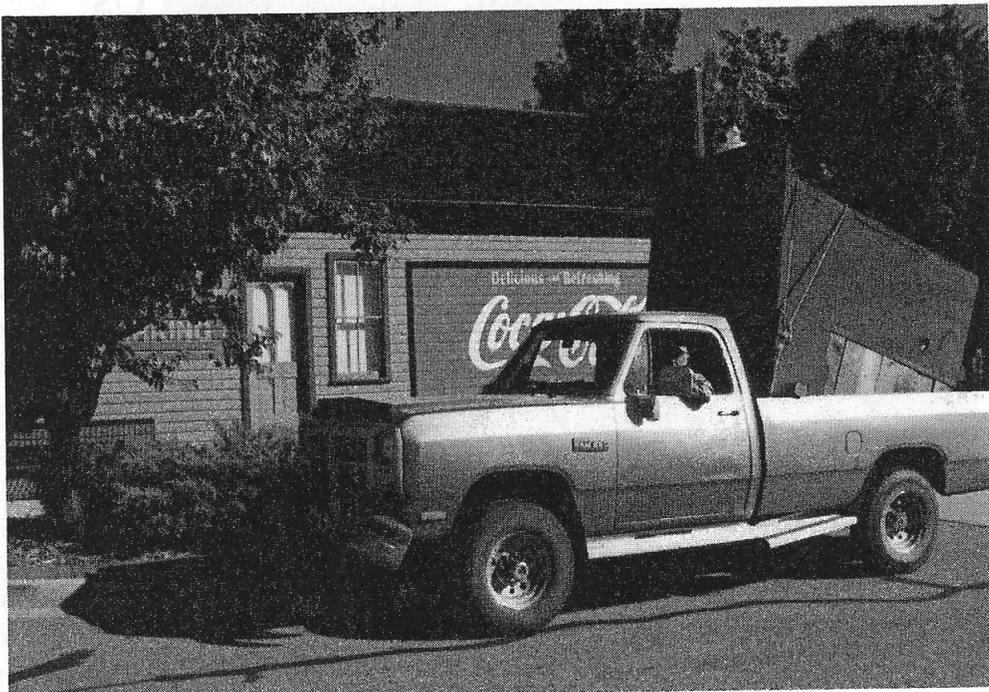
### HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW LOUISVILLE?

1. The Lydia Morgan Senior Housing site is located on Lincoln Avenue near South Boulder Road. Who was Lydia Morgan?
2. In what decade was the Louisville Grain Elevator built? (The Grain Elevator stands between Front Street and the railroad tracks just south of Pine Street and the Post Office.)
3. The Louisville High School football team in 1956 named a person to be its team mascot. Who was this person?

*Answers on page 6*

## THE OUTHOUSE IS HERE!

For years, the Historical Commission has been on the lookout for an old outhouse to place on the Museum property. It was a stroke of luck when Historical Society member Jean Morgan contacted us about her friend, John Sprague, who had an outhouse to donate. And now not only has he donated it, but he drove it to Louisville from Rockvale, a former coal mining town near Florence, and unloaded it himself. It is now bolted onto a cement platform at the back of the Museum campus and we are looking forward to incorporating it into our school tours!



*It is not every day that you see an outhouse being driven down the streets of Louisville. Donor John Sprague is at the wheel of his truck in this photo.*

### MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Donations have been made to the Musuem in memory of:

*June Dionigi Bonner (1918-2005)*  
*Lorraine Capra DeRose (1931-2005)*  
*James Henry Weir (1865-1929)*

### THANKS TO NEW MEMBERS

Mona Doersam  
D.L. "Pat" McHugh  
E. Soppeland  
The Lombardi Family  
Paul Jones

### UPDATE ON THE JORDINELLI HOUSE RENOVATIONS

On the exterior of the Jordinelli House, the City has been installing an underground irrigation system, with the laying of sod next to the sidewalk area to follow. The City also put in a ramp to the deck for handicap accessibility. An outhouse was donated and placed on the property.

Inside the house, some windows have been replaced in preparation for having the windows tinted, which is being done to protect the Museum artifacts that will be displayed inside. Also, picture frame molding has been purchased and painted.

In the Summer Kitchen, a wood floor has been put in and coated with linseed oil. Also, the inside chimney has been repaired. The work around the door has been completed and a screen door has been repaired, painted, and hung. A table and two chairs were recently acquired for the Summer Kitchen to become part of the display inside.

## DONATIONS

The Louisville Historical Museum has accessioned the following donations from August through October. We sincerely appreciate these donations.

*Don Ross* – photographs of coal miner cottage

*Ed Domenico and Frank Patete* – binders with records relating to the Louisville High School football team

*St. Louis Church* – seven bingo cards with advertising by Louisville businesses

*Robert Enrietto* – miner's lunch pail, 1937-38 Sears Catalog, and 1935 Montgomery Wards catalog supplement

*Patricia Seader* – numerous items from the DiGiacomo family, including farming records and objects, Louisville Friendship Club records, cookbooks, World War II ration cards, and Lions Club items

*George Zedrick* – 1953 issue of the Lookout, the Louisville High School newspaper

*Shirley Elrod* – three photos of the 1961 Louisville High School football team

*Arlene Leggett* – 1953 issue of the Louisville Times, with articles about the demolition of Redmen Hall

*John Sprague* – 1930s era outhouse from Rockvale, Colorado

*Ira Star* – pieces of coal from a local mine

*Elizabeth Sirokman Friden* – photograph of first grade class in 1928

## ORNAMENTS TO GO ON SALE

Marion Dionigi Junior has been making and selling porcelain holiday ornaments to benefit the Louisville Historical Commission every year for nearly twenty-seven years. A former Historical Commission member herself, she now hand crafts 250 ornaments each year in order to satisfy the demand from Louisville residents, many of whom pre-buy Marion's new ornaments every year.

In the beginning, Marion and other Historical Commission members worked on the ornaments together, but in more recent years Marion has taken on this job by herself. Marion makes the ornaments, which are of a different design each year, out of porcelain that she pours, fires, sands, paints, and then fires again. Marion taught herself how to work with porcelain after deciding that she wanted to learn how to make a porcelain doll. It is a time-consuming process and it takes Marion about six months to make all 250 porcelain china painted ornaments.

The ornaments sell for \$8 each and the design this year is that of a pine cone. Ornaments that are not pre-sold should be available for purchase at the Louisville Historical Museum beginning on the evening of the Parade of Lights on December 2.

Thank you so much to Marion for her valuable and unique contribution over the years to benefit the Louisville Historical Commission!

## Louisville HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEMBERS

Sally Burlingame  
Elle Cabbage  
Vignia Caranci  
Robert Enrietto  
David Ferguson  
Donna Hauswald  
Alice Koerner  
Diane Marino  
Daniel Mellish  
Stuart Pritchard  
Donald Ross  
Patricia Seader  
Aline Steinbaugh  
William Unrau



## MUSEUM WISH LIST

The Louisville Historical Museum would like to add to its collection the yearbooks and photographs described below. If you would be willing to donate any of the described items, please contact the Louisville Historical Museum and let us know. A reproduction of an original photograph would be acceptable. All donations to the museum, a non-profit institution, are tax deductible. Thank you for your support!

- A copy of "Louisville Tidbits," a cookbook created by Mrs. Dhieux and her 6<sup>th</sup> grade English class in the 1970s
- A miner's lunch pail for use by the Historical Commission for collecting cash donations at public events
- Louisville High School Yearbooks (Cargos): 1954, 1961, 1964, 1965, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, & 1972
- Photographs of Louisville High School's graduating classes: 1954, 1955, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, and 1964 through 1971
- Centaurus High School Yearbooks: 1973 to 2000

## THE MUSEUM CORNER

*Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator*

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the Holiday Home Tour on Saturday, December 3! This wonderful community event will get us out walking around old town Louisville, seeing different house styles, learning about Louisville's history, and supporting the Historical Museum and Commission. I hope to see you then!

Thank you to everyone who has been helping with the research of the Monarch Mine explosion. Many residents who recall the event have noted that they had relatives who could easily have been caught in the explosion that day. Numerous Louisville coal miners had been injured or killed over the years, but this incident was by far the worst in this area and made many residents even more aware of the inherent dangers of mining.

Joan Tuley recently contacted the Museum about a donation that she wanted to make in memory of her grandfather, James Henry Weir, who died in 1929. She has very fond memories of Louisville and of the Weir family home at 1100 Main Street, in which only the Weir family or a family member ever lived from 1892 until the 1980s. The Historical Commission and I are very grateful to Joan for her generous and thoughtful donation in memory of her grandfather.

After the article "Homes By Sears: Louisville's Mail-Order Legacy" by Heather Lewis appeared in the last issue of *The Louisville Historian*, Evelyn and Al Harr of Wisconsin responded to our request for more information about Sears homes in Louisville. Al reported that when they lived in Louisville in the 1950s and 1960s, they discovered that their home at 921 Garfield was a Sears house because of the "Sears" markings on the rafters that they discovered while building

an addition. Thank you, Al and Evelyn, for adding to our information about Sears homes in Louisville.

As always, thank you to the many people who volunteer their time one way or another to help the Historical Museum: Bill Cohen for his historical research and his contribution as the author on the Monarch Mine explosion in this issue; Mary Kay Knorr; Dick and Darlene DelPizzo; Betty and Bill Buffo; Jeremy Ferguson; and Mona Doersam. Also, the second graders who have recently come on tours of the Museum have been benefiting from the insight of such tour guides as Duke Damiana and Historical Commission members Don Ross, Diane Marino, Pat Seader, and Bill Unrau. Also, thank you to Commission member Stuart Pritchard and his wife, Lois, who have been lending us their expertise on antique bottles that were found during construction of the new Louisville Public Library. I would also like to recognize and thank Artie Sabeti, who comes to the Museum regularly to tend to the beautiful and fragrant rose garden that is next to the Tomeo House and that was donated by the local Baha'i community.

I'd like to especially thank one person in particular who has recently moved back to California after living in Louisville and working as a volunteer at the Museum for two years. Lois Kershner did invaluable behind-the-scenes work accessioning the donations that the Museum regularly receives. In the past year, she went above and beyond the call of duty by entering into our cataloging software all of the Museum's past donations so that we can have a complete picture of the Museum's collection. The Museum is very fortunate to have been the beneficiary of Lois' professional expertise in this area. Best wishes to Lois and her family!

### HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW LOUISVILLE? - ANSWERS

1. Lydia Morgan was a teacher who taught first grade in Louisville for 43 years and influenced hundreds of young Louisville students. She taught here for all of the years from 1918 to 1962 except for one.
2. The answer is 1900-1910. The Louisville Grain Elevator was built in 1903, 1904 or 1905, according to various records, and it recalls a time when farming was a vital part of Louisville's economy along with coal mining. It was owned for decades by the Thomas family, one of the founding families of Louisville, who settled here in 1883. It has the distinction of being one of the Louisville properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
3. Louisville resident and football booster Robert Kasik was named to be the team mascot of the LHS football team. He was appreciated for his unflagging support of the team and his years of attending practices, games, banquets, and pre-game pep talks.

## 2005 FALL FESTIVAL SILENT AUCTION A GREAT SUCCESS

We sincerely thank everyone that supported our 2005 Annual Fall Festival Silent Auction. This year's auction was the largest ever as we had 71 items available for bid from a variety of businesses. We were so pleased to have raised \$2,600.00 (almost double the amount from our year 2004 auction results) for our general museum campus fund.

We are very grateful to the following businesses that provided auction items this year and appreciate their support for this annual fund raising event.

*1st National Bank of Colorado*

*3 Margaritas*

*Achtermann Chiropractic PC*

*Albertson's of Louisville*

*A-Plus Transmissions*

*Applebee's (Boulder)*

*Barlow's Premium Pipes & Cigars*

*Birds of Prey*

*Blue Parrot*

*Body Options Massage Therapy*

*Carrabba's Restaurant*

*Cats Meow*

*CD Depot*

*Children's World (McCaslin)*

*Coal Creek Golf Course*

*Crazy Horse II*

*Critters Corner*

*Cuts for Men*

*Earl's Saw Shop*

*Eric Olson Jewelry*

*Five Elements*

*Flowers with Flair*

*Fuzzy Antlers*

*Gatos Design*

*Heritage Bank*

*International Martial Arts*

*Joe's Bike Shop*

*La Piazza*

*Louisville Cyclery*

*Louisville Glass*

*Louisville Massage Therapy*

*Louisville Recreation Center*

*Louisville Tire & Auto Care*

*Marriott Courtyard*

*Marriott Residence Inn*

*McGuckins*

*Morrell Graphics*

*Music Together w/ Shari Griswald*

*NAPA*

*Pasquini's*

*Premier Travel*

*Quality Inn & Suites*

*Safeway of Louisville*

*Senior T's*

*Tapstry's Spa*

*The Huckleberry*

*Tulien's Restaurant*

*Union Jack Liquor*

*Via Toscana Italian Restaurant*

*Vic's*

*World of Wines Wine Club*

*Worldly Possessions*

*Wow Children's Museum*

### A CONVERSATION WITH VERA TAYLOR

*Bridget Bacon, Museum Coordinator*

I recently sat down for a chat with Vera Dixon Taylor about her recollections of Louisville. Many people in Louisville know Vera as a former teacher at Louisville High School and as having been a library volunteer at the Centaurus High School library and the Louisville Public Library.

Vera, who is 98, grew up on her family's farm just south of Louisville. Her great-grandparents, William and Emeline Hake, founded Superior. She graduated from Louisville High School in 1925, when the school was located at the corner of Garfield and Walnut, and graduated from the University of Colorado in 1929. Vera recalls such events when she was growing up as the strike conflict at the Hecla Mine in 1914 and the Camp Fire Girls collecting books to start Louisville's library in 1924. I truly appreciate Vera's sharing of her memories of our town.

### MUSEUM BUILDINGS DESIGNATED AS HISTORIC LANDMARKS

The Louisville City Council recently approved the designation of the buildings of the Historical Museum as Local Historic Landmarks. The Jacoe Store, the Tomeo House, and the Jordinelli House and Summer Kitchen were each built in the early 1900s. The Museum's Jacoe Store is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

These are among the first buildings in Louisville to go through the process of designation as Local Historic Landmarks, along with the Louisville Center for the Arts at 801 Grant Avenue and the Austin-Niehoff House at 717 Main Street.

Locally landmarked sites may be eligible for certain grants and tax incentives. Applications for local historic landmarking designation are available at City Hall and on the City's web site through the information on the Louisville Historic Preservation Commission.



**1001 Main Street  
Louisville, Colorado  
303-665-9048  
museum@ci.louisville.co.us**

**Hours:  
Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays  
&  
the first Saturday of every month  
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

**Louisville Historical Society  
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