

MIDDLE SCHOOL INTERVIEWS

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BLANCHE MOON, 2/4/88 Tape #1084

We're here at the public library and we're interviewing Blanche Moon for the history of Lafayette.

How and when did your family settle in Lafayette? My family didn't come here until 1941 when the second World War started. We moved to East Emma Street; it was 700 East Emma then. It was a farm; now it isn't.

Where did your family come from? Actually, my family came from Eastern Colorado but before we moved to Lafayette, we had lived in the Englewood-Littleton area.

When you came to Lafayette, what occupations were your family involved in? My father was a farmer so we lived on a farm and at that time, everything was rationed, so farming was a good business at that time because there was a lot of demand for what we raised.

What was the town like then? Very small, a very nice little town. There were still a few coal mines working at that time. They had about five grocery stores in town and there was a dry goods store, a drug store and I think there were about two restaurants. There was a bus depot and an automobile dealership was here, and the motels. What bus system came here? Both of them came through here. There was the Denver-Boulder bus and then there was a Greyhound bus came through here. Bus transportation at that time was very, very popular. Everybody took the bus and went to Denver instead of driving downtown. There were a lot people that drove down too, but most people rode the bus. So in the evenings, the bus would be filled with Lafayette people and in the mornings, everybody was catching the bus, riding it to Denver. Was that because of gas rationing? Gas rationing, yes, but a lot of people didn't have cars, either. You couldn't buy a car either. Was there just one car dealership - did they sell just one kind? It was McMann's Chevrolet; he was a Chevrolet dealer. He had been here for quite some time. Before that, they had a Ford dealership in here; a man by the name of Grief ran it. In fact, he was in Believe-It-Or-Not. He was a car dealer and his name was Grief. There were three people from Lafayette who were in Ripley's Believe-It-Or-Not. Dr. Hurt was another one; he was a dentist. Then there was a lady by the name of Erna Dollar; she was in Believe-It-Or-Not also.

What was the governing body of the town like then? There was a Town Board at that time. It was sort of like the City Council is now, except these men were just the Town Board members and they chose a mayor. The mayor conducted the meetings. They didn't have a City Administrator like they do now. They had, all I can remember is, one person working at the City Hall. They had one policeman and he also served as the plumber for the town-it was Louie Starkey. He did a lot of plumbing too but he was the policeman and they had one patrol car and that was it. There wasn't a lot of trouble.

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How did the miners' strike affect the community? I was here during the war while they had a strike on. It affected the economy of the community very much because the miners didn't have money to spend so they had to charge their groceries. A lot of them did charge big bills and the proprietors of the grocery stores had to foot the bill because you couldn't let these people starve. Almost all of them were good for it. When they started back to work and got money, they started paying on their bills. The clothing stores did the same thing; you could charge. You didn't have to have a charge card; just the store did it. When I was first married, I used to run a monthly bill at the grocery store. I'd shop every week and pay my bill once a month.

What part did the women play in the life of the community? Well, I think the woman's role then was a little bit different than what it is now. You found more mothers staying in the home than what there are now; there's more women working now. However, at that particular time, it was after the Depression and the war had just begun and they needed workers in the ammunition plants and that type of thing and a lot of the women went to work. The economy of the town, and of the whole nation, began to grow because people were working and had more money to spend. However, there weren't the things around to buy like there is now. For instance, I can remember standing in line for a pair of silk stockings; and maybe you'd get them and maybe you wouldn't. You'd stand in line to buy washing soap to wash your clothes. You'd stand in line to buy hand soap. They had all these different kinds of things as substitutes that were not very good products, but when you didn't have anything else, you bought them. Meat was rationed; you had stamps and coupons for your meat. You were allotted so much per person in the family per - every three months, I think, you had to get a new ration book. Sugar was rationed. Canned vegetables and canned fruits were rationed. And anything that had sugar in it you couldn't buy - you couldn't go buy a candy bar. And gum - packages of gum - you couldn't buy - the stores just didn't have them. Once in a while, they'd get a shipment in. I happened to work for the Highway Market during this time and we used put everything - if we got in a shipment of soap or gum or cigarettes or anything like that - we didn't put them out, we just put them in our warehouse room there and when our customers that came in all the time came in, we'd let them buy those. There were people who came from Denver and they'd hit all the stores and they'd buy up all the soap, all the cigarettes and everything they could. Every week they'd go around and see what they could get. Soap and that weren't rationed; you didn't have to have stamps for that. The things that you had to have stamps for, the stores had those.

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What was the social life like in the community? Oh, I think you could say the social life was - Lafayette has always been a very sports-minded town and any of the school activities or organizations that form baseball teams or basketball teams in town were the big entertainment in Lafayette - before that time too, very much so. In fact, the firemen would have a baseball team and certain miners, the union might have a baseball team and they used to go - when these teams played out of town, no one was here. You could have come in and ransacked the whole town because everybody went to the games. And that's just the way it was. Then they had school plays. All the churches had organizations and entertainment type things they put on. When the Union Hall used to be here, they used to hold dances and they'd put on plays. There was a group called the Welch Choir and they sang. They not only sang in Lafayette, they traveled to Boulder and Longmont and all over and would sing. They had a lot of talented people here, as far as that goes and they made their own entertainment. There was one theater and I think it cost a dime to get into the show and a nickel for popcorn.

What kind of clubs did they have? They had a lot of organizations. They had Masons, Rebecca, Eastern Star, Odd Fellows, Lions Club. Then there were the churches - women's organizations in the church. There was, of course, the union which was an organization. There was always a fund raiser for something. They used to have fund raiser programs for the library and they would put on a box supper or they would put on a play or something like that to raise money to buy books for the library.

Do you have a favorite recipe that you could share with us that your mother or grandmother had? Yes, do you want unusual recipes or what? Just anything. One that you especially like. We always made our own soap; so I could give you my mom's soap recipe.

Do you have any pictures of the town? Yes, I have these pictures here that I use when I go around to classes and what have you. There's the Millers' house and it was right down the street where the silos are; that's where Mrs. Miller lived. This was the old depot and it was located behind where the Lafayette Florist is now. They moved it and it is now located on East Simpson Street - about 600s - where the old mortuary was - just across the street from there - Angevines live next door. This is a picture of the first school - the children in the first school - and here's the teacher, Miss Scott. As you can see, they went from the very small to men with mustaches. Probably this is the first time these people had the chance to learn to read. What was the first school? It was held in Mrs. Miller's home which was 409 East Cleveland Street. This is the Power Plant in Lafayette. In 1940, this was the Public Service Company but before that, it was built to run the electric train that ran from Denver to the Inter-Urban; it was built to make the power to run the Inter-Urban that went from Denver, through Lafayette

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and Louisville and Boulder, then back through Louisville; there was a loop here. There's a story along with the first power company. We were one of the first places west of the Mississippi to have electric power. They charged by the light bulb, so most people had just one light bulb in their house. I think it was something like 25¢ per month. I'm not quite sure of the hour at night, but I think it was 9:00 at night, they shut the power off so you had to use kerosene lamps after that, and then they'd turn it back on again at 5:00 in the morning. They had a direct line to Louisville and supplied Louisville with power and they had a light bulb on a pole and when that light was burning, they knew that Louisville's power was okay and when the light went out, they knew that Louisville was out of power.

This is Main Street (Simpson). The new building down there that they re-done - across from the Senior Center, you know - that is this building here. This was a bank building where the grass and trees are there and it burned down. This used to have a bowling alley in the basement. The top part of this was used for the lodges to meet. And it had any number stores, but at the time we moved here it was vacant but it had been a company store - the Rocky Mountain Company Store. At one time, all this block here burned. In Lafayette, there was a big fire; that was way back, early. And this bank was started by Mrs. Miller and she became the president of the bank. She was the first woman in the world to be a president of a bank. That's Mrs. Miller that started the town. The bank was robbed and when they robbed it, the robbers weren't too careful and the money sack leaked. So here was all these gold coins going down the alley that they'd lost out of the money sack. Kids found them and went to the candy store.

This, of course, was the first church in Lafayette - where the old library was. It was built by Mrs. Miller and she paid the minister's salary until the congregation was rich enough to pay the minister. She was a very religious person. Did this church ever burn down? No. Which church was this? It was a Congregational Church at that time, however, she was not a Congregationalist; she was an Episcopalian. But she built this church because she felt like it was what the whole community could use. Did she contribute the money for the building of the church? I don't think she ever took money back for that; she put the whole thing up. Somebody says that Mr. Peterson at that time - was a bricklayer and he was an alcoholic, they call them now, then they called him a drunkard - but he always said that he put a bottle of whiskey in the cornerstone of that church. He very well could have; I don't know. We never did know which one was the cornerstone.

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This is the Simpson Mine. This wasn't the first mine in Lafayette; it was the second mine. The first mine that was sunk in Lafayette was the Cannon Mine which was close to this. This was put down by Simpson and it was at the end of Cleveland Street, the shaft was, about the 600 block of Cleveland Street and the shaft right now is still right in the middle of the street, but they filled it in. However, they still have a lot of trouble with subsidence in that area. When we moved here, we lived on Emma Street and, of course, the big pile that shows on here, that was what we could see out our front window - the ash pile from the mine. It operated - at one time, you could go down in one shaft in Lafayette and you could walk all day through coal mines and come up in another shaft at the end of the day. However, that's all filled with water now; the mines are filled with water and at times, they have problems in that area down there when we've had a lot of rain or a winter when there's a lot of moisture, the water goes down and then the mine raises up and a lot of people have trouble with basements filling with water in that area.

This was the union hall and it sat just catty-corner across from the old library. It was a great big building and went clear to the alley. That's where they had their union meetings. It's also where they'd hold dances. It served the community - that and the schools. Whenever they had plays or anything like that, they'd have them in there.

Here's one of the baseball teams that I told you about - that the city was always sports-minded. They always prided themselves in their teams. That's just one of them. This is about 1905.

There's also a little story behind the saloons in Lafayette. Mrs. Miller was a prohibitionist and she was very much against the sale of liquor. So when she donated the land to the town of Lafayette, she put a clause in every deed, saying that it was against the law to serve or to drink any intoxicating beverage in any of the places. So when the saloon keepers came along, they built everything on the west side of the highway and the saloons are still there - a lot of them - and that's why they were. However, the saloon keepers that built up there, but they all respected Mrs. Miller; they didn't try to cross her up. Whenever she wanted contributions for a poor family or anything, they all donated. They respected her - she was a very - well let's put it this way - she educated herself. She bought a set of encyclopedias and read them from cover to cover and educated herself. That's why she felt education was very, very important. When she started the first school, she hired the teacher and it was through the State of Colorado, but she paid the teacher's salary and boarded in her home. Before she started this school, the children had to go out here to Highway 42 and they walked it. It didn't make any

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difference, the road wasn't paved. There was nobody out with a snow shovel, shoveling a path, they just took out and it was very much a sin if you were late to school. Tardiness was not forgiveable. So that's what they would do, is walk from here up there, so that's why she started the first school.

When the mines were going - this isn't when I lived here - but when the mines were going, you might be interested - a lot of the miners, just single people, lived in boarding houses. Of course there were no laundromats at that time for them to clean their clothes. So they would buy a pair of overalls, a work shirt, a pair of canvas gloves every week and just throw the other clothes away. They would buy these at Alderson's. Mr. Alderson said a pair of overalls at that time was \$1.49; a work shirt was 59¢ and a pair of canvas gloves was a dime. But that was very expensive for every week. Yes, when you consider what their wages were. Maybe they would work 10 hours a day and get \$8.00; maybe they wouldn't get that much. They used to be paid by the ton of the coal that they dug and that is one of the reasons why the miners struck. Because they would have to do all the dead work. They would have to move all the rock in the mine so they could get to the coal. They never got paid for that. All they got paid for was the coal that they dug. They'd have to lay all the track to get a car back there to get the coal out and they didn't get paid for that either. There were a lot of things that led up to the miners' strike that sometimes people don't understand. But these men actually set the record and we, now, reap the benefits of paid holidays and all this kind of things - we get a raise in pay every so often and we don't have to strike for them. This is where it all comes from, these people, not only in the coal mines, but the timber mills and the cotton mills - it was those people that struck for better wages and better working conditions and the eight hour day that we benefit from today - they all came through the labor movement.

This is a picture of Mrs. Miller and Mr. Miller. This is their wedding picture; they were married in Iowa. I think they were married in June and the next year in April, they set out to come to Colorado. They came by covered wagon, pulled by oxen. They first came and settled in Burlington, which is now part of Longmont. Do you know where the Buddhist Church is, going on the road to Longmont - it's across from that supermarket there, almost - almost right where you begin the four lanes - there's a big white building up there, well that was the Burlington School and that was called Burlington; that's where they settled first. They were there a couple of years and then they moved to Rock Creek which is down here by Stearn's Dairy - was Stearn's Dairy - down here by the railroad south of town, on the other side of Dillon Road. They settled down there and

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started this stage station. From Cherry Creek in Denver out to there was one day's drive for a wagon. So they'd feed their horses and rest there overnight and then they'd head on out and go on to Longmont and there was a stage station there. And they had to go over, just about one mile, it's called County Road, going to Longmont, to cross the river. Because, where the highway crosses now, the banks were too deep, so they had to go to County Road and cross there because the banks were more sloping. There were no bridges so they had to forge the river and the river had a lot more water in it than it does now. She ran the stage station and he farmed. She was a very hard working woman. They heard that a circus was coming so she got busy and she baked 100 apple pies, if you can imagine, baking 100 apple pies with a cook stove - a coal stove. She sold those pies for \$1.00 a pie to those circus people. So she made \$100. but she worked for her money, imagine just peeling apples for 100 pies. Then they moved from there down on the Miller farm and he bought this land here. At the time that he bought this land, he paid a dollar an acre for it and where the City Hall is sitting here, is an acre, so you can see what \$1.00 would buy. They started farming and raised cattle; they had quite a bit of beef cattle. They had milking cattle and they raised sugar beets. They raised corn and they raised small grain and he died. After he died, she continued to raise the family and she not only raised a family, but she raised the town at the same time. So she was quite a woman. At one time, when she had the bank, the bank went broke. What happened, is she kept extending the miners credit when they were on strike and then when they didn't get back to work, why the bank went broke. They did repay most of the money. She was a very compassionate person. After she started the mine and the immigrants came in, they had what they called the Gooseberry Gulch area, down on East Emma Street. People would flock in there with their wagons and she would go down there every other day or so and she would make sure they had blankets to cover up the children and food to eat. If they didn't have food, she took them food and she made them as comfortable as she could until they could get themselves going. Mines usually furnished housing, but at that time there was no housing around for the mines. The mines did build houses and they were all built alike - four rooms with a chimney in the middle and a cook stove and that was it. There were no closets, no cupboards, no nothing. Just four rooms and out back there was an outhouse and a coal house. Most generally, they had a hydrant in the yard so they could get some water and carry it in - carry it in in buckets.

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Did agriculture play a very big role in the community? Yes, it did. This was a big farming area. It was good farmland. Way back in the early days, they had ditches and water rights from the mountain streams and so it was irrigated then. It did play a big part in the community. They raised sugar beets and all your small grains and a lot of corn and ensilage and what have you. A lot of people had dairy cattle around here. The milk trucks used to come around and pick up your milk and take it into Denver or Boulder to have it pasteurized. They had a beet dump in Lafayette, down by the railroad track - where the elevator is now - north of the elevator up the track there a ways, there was a beet dump. When the farmers harvested their beets, they'd make a great big pile of beets there and then they'd load them on boxcars and ship them out - to Longmont, I think is where they went because they had a big sugar factory in Longmont.

What businesses were in town? Well, as I said before, there were five grocery stores, and there was more than one clothing store, and there was a dry cleaners, Lucocks had a dry cleaners and a tailor shop and he made hats, men's hats. There was a bakery; Scholes had a bakery. There was a drug store - I'm trying to go up the street - Bermont's Store was kind of a unique store, it was an all around store - they sold farm machinery; they sold meat; they sold candy; they sold dry goods - anything - you could buy anything in there and they had the potbellied stove in the middle of the store and all the chairs around, you know. The men would congregate and have their little conflag in there every day. There were doctors here; Dr. Braden and Dr. Porta were two doctors and they were both mine doctors. There were some dentists; I can't tell you all the dentists' names. Even at one time, there was a photographer, which was kind of an unusual thing to have in a town of this size.

Lafayette, when it was running with the coal mines, the Lafayette area had the biggest payroll coming out of anyplace west of the Mississippi. At that time, when the mines were all running. How many mines were running at the same time? There were quite a few. The Cannon Mine, Simpson Mine, the Strathmore Mine, the Mitchell Mine, Industrial Mine - I really can't name all of them. Black Diamond Mine. Black Diamond - it was running in the '40s, yes; it was a later mine than these others. The Black Diamond and the Hiway both were later mines. Anyhow, there were a lot of them.

Were there any restaurants? Yes, there were some restaurants. We had at one time, the Copper Teapot. Then several of the bars had restaurants in them. At one time, there was a restaurant down on East Simpson Street. Both drugstores - there was a drugstore on East Simpson and a drugstore up on the highway -



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And both drugstores had soda fountains then. You could go in and eat.

Going back to the mines, I'd like to ask one question - the Hiway Mine and the Cannon Mine, etc., did they each have their own area or did they kind of interconnect with the other mines? They weren't supposed to connect, but they did. In fact, the miners said lots of times, they could hear people digging just through the dirt, so they were pretty close. The mine companies were very stingy; they wanted to get every chunk of coal in that mine that they could and lots of them would take the floors that they were supposed to leave to keep it from subsidence. But they would take them and let them collapse when they got out of there. Did they buy like squares or acres of land and that was what they were mining? A lot of them were just like they buy oil shares now, you know, you sell your oil shares and then they're allowed to pump that and you get a certain percent of that - that's the way the coal companies were - you sold your shares. If you owned property and you wanted to sell to the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, you sold so many shares. And so many acres for the shares. And that's how it went.

How deep did the mines go? The mine on East Emma Street here, on the cannon mine, was very shallow. In fact, part of the coal was on top of the ground too. The Simpson Mine, I can't remember how deep the shaft was; it was a deeper mine. But the Simpson Mine had the deepest veins of any mine around here and they went 12 to 12 feet. A lot of the coal mines, the smaller coal mines, would only have two to three foot veins. So the men had to crawl into these veins and dig the coal and then push it back of them, and lay on their stomachs. A lot of time, they could work on their knees. And in the museum, you see that there is well that's what they used them for. A lot of times, the mines were wet and they had to be in water to dig the coal.

Thank you very much. Oh, you're welcome.

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RECIPES

COLD WATER SOAP

Dissolve in a stove container: 1 can lye in 1 quart cold water  
Melt 2 quarts of grease

When lye solution and grease are lukewarm, pour grease into the lye very slowly, stirring in one direction very gently with a wooden spoon or paddle. Continue stirring until it drops off spoon like honey. Pour into a rectangle pan and before it hardens, cut into bars. You may add 1 cup household ammonia, 2 tablespoon borax (whitener) dissolved in a little boiling water.

HAND LOTION

6 tablespoons flaxseed boiled in 1 quart water.  
Boil until about a third evaporated.  
Strain through sifter or strainer and cool.  
Add 4 ounces glycerine, 10 drops carbolic acid, and perfume.  
Bottle and keep in cool place.

PNEUMONIA PLASTER

12 level tablespoons lard  
1 square camphor gum  
2 tablespoons turpentine  
2 tablespoons ammonia

Melt lard, then add cut up camphor gum. Then add turpentine, let cool and add ammonia. (Before adding ammonia, take outside).  
Makes 1 cup.

This was warmed over a kerosene lamp and put on the throat and chest area, front and back, and then a long wool stocking was pinned around the neck. I still use this today.