

MIDDLE SCHOOL INTERVIEWS

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EFFIE AMICARELLA 11/19/87 Tape #1085

We're here with Mrs. Amicarella and we're just going to ask you a few questions. The first one is, how and when did your family settle in Lafayette? My husband's family settled here in Lafayette in 1940. Before that, they lived at the Columbine Mine.

What occupations were your family involved in? My husband's folks were all coal miners.

Where did your family come from? They came from Acciano, Italy. Part of the family came from Acciano, Italy and part of them were born over in Sunlight, Colorado which is outside of Glenwood.

Okay, what was the town like when you moved? When we moved here, it was less than 2000 people; you knew everybody. Everybody were friends, it seemed like. And they always said, "Everybody's related to somebody else."

What was the governing body of the town like? Well, they had a City Manager; we didn't have a mayor like they do now. They had a City Administrator. He made most of the decisions and some of the town fathers sat on a Board, but they didn't have a Board like we have now. They later became a Home Rule town and that made a difference.

Were you here during the miners' strike? No I wasn't. Do you know how it would have affected the community? At one time, we used to have about a million dollar payroll. When the strike came on, of course, that cut off the payroll and that affected every one of the businesses in town. A lot of the businesses had charge accounts for them; not all of them. The tithings for the church went down. If you don't have money, you can't give it. When was the strike? About 1915, I think. It was five years.

Do you remember what part the women played in the community? Well, women always played a part in the community as far as I'm concerned, even if they were in the background. They're always behind everything that men do. A lot of women had all the pit clothes to wash for those that were working. And it's always the background of the wife to raise the children. When the man is gone from sun-up to sundown, why it's the wife's job to -----.(?)

What was the social life in the community like you mentioned where everyone was related? Well, they had a lot of baseball teams; the town was great for baseball and they had several teams. My husband belonged to one called the Red Devils. They still meet every three years and get together and talk about it. Then, lets see, they had the Welsh Coal Miners that formed a singing group, a beautiful group of them. I don't believe there's any of them left now. The last one was Amos Dunne. We did get some songs from Amos Dunne; they're recorded over at C.U. It was a large singing group.

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And then the churches had choirs. The women had their groups, the garden club and the Women's Temperance Union used to meet here with Mrs. Miller, that was Lafayette Miller's wife. There used to be notices in the paper about when they met and cheered each other with a glass of lemonade.

Do you have, like, a favorite recipe, maybe, one that your mother had or your grandmother that you would tell us about? Well, I'll tell you one that I won the state contest with, how's that one? Yeah. Well, I won it with what's called --, my mother-in-law was an excellent cook and she made what was called the Genoese Roast:

You take a prime rib roast and have it rolled and then you take garlic and parsley and a little of the fat off the roast and chop that up real fine and cut slits in the roast (insert the chopped mixture) and then cook it as you would any other prime rib.

And I won the state beef cooking contest one year.

Do you have any pictures that you remember or have about the town history? I have some nice pictures of the Columbine Mine. Here I have pictures of Mr. Autrey who at one time - this was when he was hauling coal. This was Moon's Meat Market. I don't have a viewer, I'm sorry. And this is the train that used to go through Lafayette. And this is the trams that used to go through on to Boulder, were in Boulder. Moon's Meat Market was right next door to the old Library. Of course, it was the Congregational Church originally. Bill Moon, whose father owned this, lived to be 98 years old and his ambition was to be 100. He didn't quite make it; cancer caught up with him. This is the bank. Do you know where the Company Store is now, down across from where Roberts' Store used to be - this was the bank that Mrs. Miller started. She was the first woman president of a bank. And this is the Bermont Store. Now, when the re-vamped the store as it is now, they tried to make it similar to what this is. The Bermont Store was Ham Roberts' Store. What was originally the grocery store way back then was Bermont Store and it carried everything. At that time, it went all the way from the, well clear back to the alley and then part of it was taken down in time, but what is there is still the original Bermont Store. And it was built in 1892? Yes. And this is our outstanding firemen's team. Their record still has never been equaled that they made pulling a hook and ladder. Of course, you know we didn't have fire trucks back then. And they housed the fire trucks in the City Hall and so when there was a fire why the fire laddies, well, they had a ramp out front and the fire laddies would have to run in and get their hoses and be on their way to put out a fire.

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Now this is the Black Diamond. (mine) The Black Diamond was located up here just where the Y branches off to 287 and Arapahoe. It was right in there. This was the old depot and if you want to find the depot now, you go to Charlie Parise's house and that was the old depot that was moved there and made into a home. (604 E. Simpson). And this is another one of the firemen; you know they've won many, many things and that's just another time that they ran it. And this was one of the basketball team. One of the men that was in that - his sister still lives here; her name is Iva Whipple; she has Iva's Beauty Shop; one of the Mr. Brown - that's the only relative that's still left in that family. This is the old City Hall and it has a bell on the top and they'd ring the bell for the fire laddies and you can see the old ramp that goes out. Yep, that is so neat. This is the original Simpson Mine. In 1884, they did a testing and found that there was coal here. Mrs. Miller owned the land, of course. And so they offered her a 10¢ royalty on every ton of coal that was mined so in 1886, they sunk the first shaft and this is the mine that was the result of the first sinking of the shaft.

Across the street from the Library - catty-cornered from the Library, they had the old United Mine Workers' Hall and a lot of dances and things were held there. They had meetings and lots of fun besides. Do you remember that? Well, it's there, but not the same structure; it was taken down by the telephone company and re-vamped. And this is another one of the fire laddies. And another one of the fire department.

Now, if you haven't had too much of that, I have some on the Columbine Mine; but maybe you'd rather do that another time. Whenever you feel like it; it's really up to you. Well, you just go through your questions and I'll follow along with what you want. Okay.

Do you remember what kind of businesses were here? This town had many, many businesses. Down town where the Library was, of course, at that time was a church. And then the residents of the Moon Family came next and their meat market. And then there was a livery stable and there was a drug store. And there was a dressmaker's shop and a millinery shop. Then you went across the street and you were going to the bank. The interesting thing about the bank that many people don't know is it had a bowling alley in the basement. And so when it burned down, I understand it didn't damage too much of the basement. They had to take the wood out in the bowling alley down there. And then they had the United Mine Workers' Company Store - the one where you pay your soul to the company store - well it was right next to it and then it became Gambles Store, eventually, but it was the old coal-miners' store.

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And then we had Sam Lucock had a men's clothing store, a lovely store and that was right next door to where you have the laundromat now. And I've sort of forgotten what came next. And then next to that was an opera house and the opera house burned down. And that lot has stayed vacant through all the years. And then Aldersons had their store - Jake Alderson had a big store and you could buy almost anything you wanted in the clothing line and just everything for household furnishings in their store. There was a grocery market across the street which burned down - grocery and meat market. And then there was the Davis Store. And then coming back up this way was a boarding house for those miners who didn't have a family. That was a place where many of them lived. Then there was what is now called Sunburst Apartments. That was a garage and it had a skating rink upstairs. The children could go there and they had a skating rink - not ice skating but regular skates (roller).

Then we had an electric store on the corner and plumbers and another grocer - Bermont's Store. That's about all I can think of just off the top of my head. There was a nice drug store down there too. There was Dow's Drug Store. So it was quite a complete little town; you didn't have to leave like you do now to get what you want.

Can I ask you a few questions about church and all that? Do you know how the Methodist Church in Lafayette got started? No, I do not. I'm not going to be much help to you there because the Methodist Church originally started on 2nd and Geneseo and they had a fire and the structure that is there on Baseline now is the one that was built after that. They asked me to sit on that history thing too but I don't really know enough about it to be conversant.

Okay, do you remember anything about the agriculture and the town - how it affected the town? Well, basically, this is an agricultural community. When the Millers came here, they came here after they were married and they spent their honeymoon coming out west and they went up to what was then a land scam up in Longmont, up in the Burlington Area and when they found that wasn't going to work out --. They brought the first threshing machine with them, that ever came west and when they found out it wasn't going to work out there, they started looking around and they settled down here on the creek and had a Way Station and Mrs. Miller baked pies. It's said she baked a hundred pies one day when she knew a lot of them were coming through. They found that they could raise cattle as well as have crops. And they had beautiful farms and it's said Mrs. Miller kept the neatest farm in all of Boulder County. Everything was in its place and a place for everything, after her husband died - he was 38 years old when he died. He came on horseback from Boulder - it was a very hot day and he drank a glass of iced lemonade and apparently, from reports, he had a stroke. He was just gone very quickly. There was a good number of children - five children for Mrs. Miller to raise and she not only raised them, she kept the farm and kept it going. A great

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deal of it around here was agriculture. It wasn't just all coal mining. And the Wanekas had, as they still have, farms. And the Harmons had a big farm here. There's just quite a few of them that are still around, that started out here farming.

Thank you very much. You're welcome.