

Continuum

Newsletter of the
Boulder History Museum

Two Local Women Make their Mark in History

Spring 2005

By Leigh Campbell-Hale

To commemorate Women's History Month in March we are sharing the stories of two women who played important roles in the *first* Columbine Massacre, which occurred at the Columbine Coal Mine near Lafayette, Colorado on November 21, 1927. One of these women was Elizabeth Beranek and the other was Josephine Roche. While Roche has received some, but not nearly enough, historical attention, Beranek was a miner's wife who has rarely been written about or discussed. When the Columbine Massacre is seen from their perspectives, two very different pictures of women's history, represent-

ing two very different strands of that history, emerge.

Elizabeth Beranek came to the United States from Bohemia and in 1907 moved with her husband Joseph to the coal-mining town of Lafayette, Colorado. The Beraneks already had one son, and, over the next twenty years, Elizabeth would bear 16 more children. Although Joseph may have been recruited as a strike-breaker, he joined the United Mine Workers of America (UMW). In 1910 the union contract lapsed and the northern coalminers, including Beranek, walked out on strike. They stayed out on strike until 1914. It was during this "long strike" that the Ludlow Massacre

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President's Message

The complexity and ongoing activity of a local history museum is truly amazing. One would expect a "laid-back" agenda yet there seem to be new issues, concerns and excitement each day.

Just recently, we received the original sign from Crossroads Shopping Center; a "punch card" voting device and booth, from Boulder County; our exhibits are changing dramatically; and your Board of Trustees is looking forward to the future.

Warehouse space is rapidly filling and we are considering the possible addition (or purchase) of significant additional square footage for both storage and curation.

Our Trust Committee is actively working with Bank One/J.P. Morgan Chase to clarify the required periodic distributions from the Christiansen Trust.

Our Finance Committee is carefully monitoring our budget and overseeing the Museum's first full professional audit.

Our Nominating Committee is seeking and interviewing selected candidates for

the Board of Trustees (members suggestions are always welcome). We are looking forward to our newly scheduled Annual Meeting on April 26 at which our audit will be presented and new board members will be elected. A board retreat, scheduled for May 7, will review and examine our long-range strategic plan.

However, the most exciting

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Mark in History cont...

occurred in Southern Colorado on April 20, 1914. Ludlow resulted in the deaths of scores of people including women and children who were burned alive in their Ludlow colony tents. Their deaths and the ten-day open warfare between authorities and the workers terrified the general public.

The public demanded solutions to all the labor unrest. The result was the formation of the “company” union, a union created under the direction of John D. Rockefeller, Jr and controlled by the mining company. In addition, a state industrial commission was formed, which was charged with investigating and preventing the causes leading to labor unrest. By 1927, Colorado’s coalminers were making less money than they had been in 1917, during World War I. The UMW in Colorado, the organization representing the coalminers, declined after the Ludlow Massacre. The company unions and the state industrial commission, controlled by corporate interests, contributed to the difficulties of the coalminers. Changing economic forces also drove coalminers’ wages down: natural gas was replacing coal as a heat source and mechanization was increasing the efficiency of the mines. As a result fewer miners were needed to produce coal. While most history emphasizes the “roaring” twenties—the rise of automobiles and prosperity, women with bobbed hair and short skirts dancing the Charleston, the surge of mass marketing and media—for families like the Beraneks, the 1920s was a decade of desperation.

As one after another of the Beranek boys followed their father into the mines, Elizabeth watched the prospects for her children decline. Into this void of organized labor and financial desperation stepped the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The Wobblies, as they were known, had peaked in the era before World War



Elizabeth Beranek seated along with her husband, Joseph with ten of their children in 1917. Photos courtesy of Beranek family.

I, but their radicalism made them federal government targets. During and especially after the war, they suffered extreme political persecution, and most IWW leaders were jailed. By the mid-1920s, most had been released from jail, including A.S. Embree, who became the IWW leader in northern Colorado.

A.S. Embree and other IWW leaders successfully recruited coalminers all across Colorado, including the Beraneks, who became enthusiastic Wobblies. Joseph went out on strike with 13,000 other Colorado coalminers on October 18, 1927 and stayed out until February, 1928. As a result, miners in both the northern and southern Colorado coalfields received an immediate pay raise; no other miners in the country obtained raises until the New Deal in the mid-1930s. Those factors made the 1927-28 strike the most successful coal strike in Colorado history.

Part of the IWW strategy was to keep the miners and their families busy during the 1927 strike. For that reason, they orchestrated huge Sunday rallies and daily “parades” to the Columbine Mine, in Lafayette, Colorado, the only major coal mine still operational dur-

ing the strike. Perhaps it was the huge success of the Sunday rally in Boulder (several thousand attended) on November 20, 1927 that led Governor Billy Adams to send 18 more state police officers (nine were already there) to the Columbine Mine that evening.

Around daybreak on November 21st, 1927 the morning parade participants approached the fence that had been erected around the mine. But that morning, unlike other days, the gate was locked. When a strike leader climbed the fence he was pulled over and beaten unconscious. The angry crowd of 500 strikers broke the fence down and the police officers opened fire in return. Two miners died immediately and four more were dead by the end of the week. Somewhere between 20 and 60 others (depending on who told the story) were also injured.

Among those injured during the melee was Elizabeth Beranek. On the morning of the initial conflict she had the honor of carrying the American flag to the mine. After the beatings began, Beranek placed the flag over one of the unconscious men, believing

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From the Executive Director



Nancy Geyer, Executive Director

Things are hopping at the Boulder History Museum. As you'll see from this newsletter there is much going on. If you've been to the museum recently you know that space is at a premium in the Harbeck house, so this spring we are moving our permanent exhibit "Storymakers" to the second floor of the museum in order to free up the first floor for programs and temporary exhibits. We're excited to have some open rooms this

spring and summer so we can offer programs in the museum. Look at our calendar listings for all the exciting events we are hosting. In addition, we are making the space available for small receptions or meetings during this time. If you would like to schedule a meeting or party, please give us a call.

Our mission to collect and preserve our history is an ongoing process that is never complete. We are continually looking for items that tell the stories of the people who have lived and worked in the Boulder area. We have many artifacts that represent our history 100 years ago, however currently we are looking to collect items from our more recent history. You may think that your Boulder High School gym uniform from 1975 is useless, however, it isn't to us. Please keep us in mind when you run across items that represent stories of Boulder. You would be surprised at the kinds of things we

collect; photographs, clothing, posters, advertisements, signs, and furniture. So the next time you're cleaning out your attic, think of the Boulder History Museum.

I hope you'll take advantage of the many fun and fascinating programs we are offering this spring and summer. Please bring your friends and family and encourage them to join us to be a part of preserving our history for future generations.

President's Message cont.

news is an endowment challenge provided to us by the LMC Community Foundation. LMC has agreed to match dollar-for-dollar all endowment funds which we raise prior to July 29, 2005. Using existing funds, new grants obtained by Nancy Geyer, and individual contributions by board members and museum friends, we have already created an unrestricted endowment totaling \$215,000. Our goal by the end of July is \$ 410,000. And our ultimate goal is \$ 800,000.

Our Endowment Committee, chaired by former president Jim Swaebly, will soon be contacting our members, friends, and community leaders in an effort to reach our goal.

These separate endowment funds will then be used to support Museum operations while the restricted funds available from the Christiansen Trust can be used to expand our facilities.

It is indeed an exciting time at the History Museum.

Karl

Karl F. Anuta, President
Board of Trustees

With Sympathy

We were indeed saddened to learn of the untimely death of Jeff Limmerick, husband of Board Member and nationally recognized historian Patty Limmerick. Our prayers are with the Limmerick family.

Mark in History cont.



Josephine Roche at work in her office.

Photos courtesy of Norlin Archives, University of Colorado, Edward Costigan Papers, undated.

her action would stop his attackers. It did for a moment, until officers turned and began to beat her as well.

What drove this miner's wife, this mother of 16, to such desperate actions? Unfortunately, we will probably never know her full story. Newspaper accounts at the time don't mention her actions that morning, but from other newspaper stories we know that women were active participants in the coal strike as organizers, speakers & marchers. As a result, they too were

jailed for taking part in these activities. We only know of Elizabeth Beranek's actions from oral histories taken in the 1970s and 1980s by local historians whose interest in the Columbine Massacre was re-kindled, in part, by their interest in women's history.

The few accounts of women's involvement in the Columbine Massacre focus primarily on Josephine Roche. She owned the Columbine Mine and was probably the only female mine operator in the country. In an era of intense anti-unionism, she negotiated a 1928 UMW contract with the coalminers. Some of her many other accomplishments included running in the 1934 Colorado gubernatorial Democratic primary, serving in FDR's New Deal as Undersecretary to the Treasury, helping to write the social security act, becoming the first female president of the National Consumers' League, and later, one of three trustees in the UMW's Welfare and Retirement Fund.

Most of what is written about women's history focuses on exceptional women like Josephine Roche. However, many other women, like Elizabeth Beranek, are virtually invisible. The few historians who have examined Roche are

laudatory of her successes. Very little has been written about her role in perpetrating the conditions that led to the Columbine Massacre and her support of the UMW Welfare and Retirement Fund that led to widespread corruption in the union. Because women are still historically underrepresented, historians are reluctant to write "warts and all" histories of women like Roche. However, for women who don't leave records behind, such as Elizabeth Beranek, the state of women's history is even less complete. They are not just misrepresented; their stories are barely visible.

There are two major challenges facing women's history today. The first involves moving beyond the celebratory study of truly exceptional, but hardly representative women like Josephine Roche and to do so more accurately. The other challenge is to find the stories of women who, like Elizabeth Beranek, left their mark on their communities but whose contributions have been overlooked. These stories are harder to uncover, but they are well worth searching for to reveal the unsung heroines of our history.

It was a Gala Event...



**Our 60th
Anniversary
Celebration
Oct. 10, 2004**



Program Notes & Volunteer Voice

by Julie Schumaker, Programs Manager

As Programs Manager, I am constantly on the look out for possible programs that would fit the Museum's mission and be both educational and entertaining to our members and the public at large. In the first three months of 2005, the Museum co-sponsored three terrific lectures with the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History. In January, local author, Diane Benedict, presented an interesting and informative slideshow based on her book *Lyons, Colorado: Birth of a Quarry Town* to a packed house of enthralled attendees. During the month of February in honor of Black History Month, CU Professor Polly McLean provided an educational and entertaining presentation about her unique project with twenty CU undergraduates which documented the history of black women of Boulder County during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in a book titled, *A Legacy of Missing Pieces: The Voices of Black Women of Boulder County*. Lastly, for Women's History Month this March, Boulder storyteller Kay Negash offered a compelling rendition of her first person interpretation of *The Life of Margaret (Molly) Tobin Brown* to a captivated audience.

The Boulder History Museum will continue to offer many exciting programs in the months to come and would like to invite all of its members and Friends to be sure to keep their calendars open in anticipation of attending these events.



Joan Hemm as 'Lucy'. Photo courtesy of Joan Hemm.

Please be on the lookout for announcements of our April 17th program *Lost in the '50s with Lucy as Our Guide*. This engaging one-woman show by Joan Hemm will be a fun and educational tour of the 1950s featuring songs & music of the '50s, plus vintage costumes and props for a program that can be enjoyed by all ages!

The Museum will also host its 4th annual Boulder History Day on Saturday, May 21st from Noon until 4pm. If you have not been able to attend in the past - be sure to come and participate in our free day of activities and historical presentations that are fun and educational for the whole family! The Museum has two other special events in the works for June and July, but will be keeping them under wraps until all of the details are finalized. We are very excited about these potential events and hope that our members will also be enticed to join us for some fun filled programs in the months to come!!



Polly McLean as Mollie Gordan, Boulder's only Black Madam during the late 1800s.

Boulder History Day Volunteers Needed

Saturday May 21st, 12 - 4 p.m.

Please consider volunteering at this years Boulder History Day Celebration.

We need help for set-up, break-down and during the event.

Volunteers needed 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.

Please contact Julie Schumaker at 303-449-3464 if you are interested in volunteering.

New to the Collection

By Laura Lee, Collections Manager

Crossroads Mall Sign



The Crossroads Mall opened on March 14th, 1963. On Wednesday the second of February this year, one of the Crossroads Mall signs was removed from its permanent location on the north-east corner of 28th and Canyon where it had greeted mall goers for the last forty years. It traveled on a flatbed truck to its new home in the Museum's off-site storage facility. By 11:15 a.m., it had been hoisted by crane from the truck and deftly maneuvered by the Sterling Crane company of Arvada into the warehouse. The sign is 16 feet long, four feet high, two feet wide and weighs an estimated 1,000 pounds.

Nomad Dress

The Museum recently accessioned this dress into the permanent collection. It was donated by the Nomad Theatre where it was known as "The Publicity Dress." The bodice of the dress features Daily Camera headlines dated Monday, June 15, 1953. The full circle skirt is signed by numerous "Nomadians."

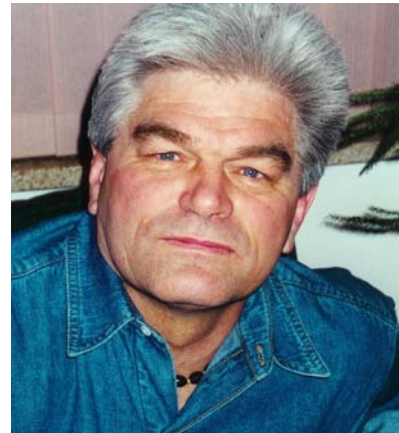


The recently acquired dress is modeled here by original Nomad board member and actress Eunice Veazie. In this photo, Eunice is talking to Chrissy Mansfield who, according to the inscription on the back of the photo, "sometimes acted, long time headed costumes, and also could wield a mean hammer."

Photo appears courtesy of the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History.

Welcome Our Newest Board Member:

Larry Matthews



Larry was born in Boise, Idaho, grew up in Northern California, and later moved to Boulder, Colorado to raise his family. He received his B.A. in Liberal Arts and completed graduate work in business finance and administration. Larry as a leading Franchise Executive with more than 20 years experience in business development founded his own management and business consulting firm in 1994. Since that time, he has served as the President and principal consultant for Evolution Management, Inc, working in a wide range of industries, supporting entrepreneurs and companies achieve success. Larry lives in Boulder County with his two daughters, and loves theatre, music, and the mountains.

Membership

Supporting the Boulder History Museum through your membership helps preserve the history of Boulder County. We would like to thank our renewing members since September 04, for their continued support. They include Karl & Barbara Anuta, Faith Butler, Beulah Caldwell, Anna Clements, David Davis, Nancy Dunn, The Felknor Family, Janet & Chuck Folden, Elizabeth Horton, Neil Kelley, Barbara & Charles Margolf, Marge McLellan, John & Glennys McPhelimy, Tom & Beverly Meier, Josef & Sara Michl, Mildred Nilon, Danielle Okin, Mary Reilly-McNellan, Nolan & Sharon Rosall, Virginia Ross, Jim & Susan Saunders, Barbara Tamplin, Tebo Development Co., and Alice Dodge Wallace.

We would also like to thank and welcome the following new members: The Avery Family, Jack & Sarah Box, Pamela Forcey, The Geyer /Silbert Family, The Linde Family, and Matthew Silverman.

We currently have 177 active members. We want to thank every one of you for your continued support.

Wish List

For Collections:

Sheets

For Exhibits:

Objects from 1950 to the present

Truck in reasonable condition

A handyman to help out now and then.

Sue's Gift

Last year's beautiful quilt, handmade by our very own quilting group, the Museum Piecers, was raffled at our Holiday Open House. The winner was Mrs. Theo Ertl, pictured below with Nancy Geyer, Boulder History Museum Executive Director.



CALENDAR

**Lost in the '50s with Lucy
as our Guide**
Sunday, April 17 @ 6:30pm

Colorado History Day @ CU
Saturday, April 23

**Program in honor of
Preservation Month**
Thursday, May 19

Boulder History Day
Saturday, May 21
Noon - 4pm

Murder Mystery Dinner
Saturday, June 18 @ 5:30

Mork & Mindy Family Nights
July 10 and 17 @ 5:30 pm

For updated information on exhibits
and activities please visit our website at
www.boulderhistorymuseum.org

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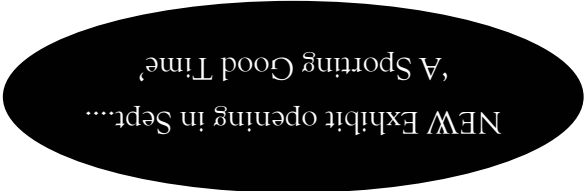
Julie Schumaker
Programs & Volunteer Manager

WANTED

Information leading to the creation of an
exhibit on Sports in Boulder coming this fall.

Please contact Julie @ 303-449-3464 or
jschumaker@boulderhistory.org

The Boulder History Museum fosters understanding and appreciation
for the unique history of the Boulder region and the resourceful and
innovative people who have chosen to live here
- a living history that grows with each new generation.



Phone: 303 449 3464
Fax: 303 938 8322
www.boulderhistorymuseum.org
Email: info@boulderhistory.org
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1206 Euclid Avenue
Boulder, Colorado 80302

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