

JULY – DECEMBER 2025



The Broomcorn Express

The Journal of the Broomfield Historical Society



Get Ready for
Broomfield 2026!



The Battle for The Field, Part 2 | The Monarch #2 Coal Mine Disaster
Stories of Early Farm Women | Pierre Lac Amora

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On the cover (background): The Field Open Space, Impressionist image from 2025 photo via OpenAI.

President's Notes

As we wrap up this year, we can state that the Broomfield Historical Society accomplished the goal of becoming more publicly active. We presented four history programs for the general public, hosted information tables at the community summer concerts and at a Metzger Farm open house, and participated in Broomfield Days with our own booth. Increasing our public face included producing a new colorful informative brochure, stickers with our logo, and a delightful set of Broomfield postcards.

Two issues of the *Broomcorn Express* were created and a new monthly blog of short local history features was introduced. We plan to publish four issues of the *Broomcorn Express* in 2026. Copies of our print publication, *The Best of the Broomcorn Express* are available at the Broomfield Depot Museum for a donation. Past issues of the digital journal are also available on our website.

The Broomfield Historical Society also continued our support for the Broomfield Depot Museum by volunteering to help at children's programs and special events hosted by the museum. We also secured a grant from the Greenwood Foundation to purchase archival storage materials for the collection housed at the One Garden Center archives. These supplies will help protect and preserve local historic artifacts, documents and photos into the future.

Most excitingly, we convened and are working with representatives of other Broomfield organizations under the name *Broomfield 2026!* to plan activities commemorating the historic anniversaries coming in 2026: the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the 150th anniversary of Colorado statehood, the 65th anniversary of the City of Broomfield, and the 25th anniversary of the



Roberta Depp
President, Broomfield Historical Society

City and County of Broomfield. You'll see various *Broomfield 2026!* activities and programs throughout next year, beginning with the colorful banners located along Community Park Road that were unveiled in September. In October, Mayor Castriotta read a proclamation (page 5 of this issue) declaring 2026 as a special anniversary year for the United States of America, Colorado, and the City and County of Broomfield. She is inviting all community members to participate in our local commemorative events, and we enthusiastically add our voice to that invitation!

I hope that you enjoy this issue of the *Broomcorn Express* with stories from the far and near past in Broomfield. Also please consider making a donation to support the continuation of our work. You can now contribute conveniently through [our listing on the Colorado Gives site](#). Thank you and good reading!

Roberta Depp
President, Broomfield Historical Society

Broomfield Historical Society 2025 Activities

Programs

- January MLK Commemoration at Depot
- March Women's History Month program: Eleanor Roosevelt—Colleen Sawyer
- April Wottge Open Space history—Fred Martin
- November “Why is the library named after Mamie Doud Eisenhower?”—Colleen Sawyer

Publications

- The Broomcorn Express—two issues
- New monthly blog and email with short history features

Assistance for Museum

- Greenwood Grant
- Preschool play date volunteers
- School visit volunteers

Promotion/Publicity

- Table at summer concerts (June and July)
- Table at Metzger Open house (June)
- Booth at Broomfield Days (September)
- Revised brochure
- Postcards and stickers

2026 Historic Anniversary Commemoration

- Convened 15 local non-profits and related city departments to work on 2026 commemorations (April)
- Moderated six *Broomfield 2026!* Meetings (April, June, July, Sep, Oct, Nov)
- Collaborated with DAR and Depot Museum to create and install banners commemorating 2026 anniversaries (Sep)
- 2026 proclamation presented at city council (Oct)
- Posted *Broomfield 2026!* calendar on BHS website
- Created Broomfield 2026! logo and printed stickers

Fundraising

- Spring donation appeal
- Offered books and postcards at public events for a donation
- Registered for Colorado Gives

Membership

- Added two new members to the board!

Commemorative Banner Installation

By **Roberta Depp**
President, **Broomfield Historical Society**

Have you seen the colorful Banners near the library? These banners were installed on light poles along Community Park Road in mid-September. They are meant to announce and commemorate the historic anniversaries occurring in 2026: the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the 150th anniversary of Colorado statehood, the 65th anniversary of the City of Broomfield and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the City and County of Broomfield.

The installation is a collaborative project of the Broomfield Historical Society, the Front Range Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Broomfield Depot Museum. A dedication ceremony was held September 18th on the library lawn and was attended by regional and state representatives of the DAR, along with members of the Broomfield Historical Society, Broomfield Arts & History staff, and the general public. The beautiful designs for the banners were the creation of designer Rachel Courtney of Pretty Nice Creations. Production and installation was by local firm Fast Signs. May the banners wave joyfully!





Proclamation

PROCLAMATION DECLARING 2026 AS A SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY YEAR FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, COLORADO, and THE CITY AND COUNTY OF BROOMFIELD

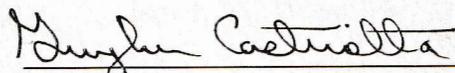
- WHEREAS, *the year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence; and*
- WHEREAS, *the year 2026 marks Colorado's 150th anniversary of statehood; and*
- WHEREAS, *the City of Broomfield founded in 1961 and the City and County of Broomfield established in 2001 have contributed proudly and significantly to the history of our nation and our state for more than 65 and 25 years respectively; and*
- WHEREAS, *in 2016 the United States Congress established by Joint Resolution the America 250 Commission to encourage observance of the 250 years of our nation's existence; and*
- WHEREAS, *the Colorado legislature established the America 250 - Colorado 150 Commission with the passage of Bill 2022-011, and the Commission has determined its mission and purpose is to celebrate Colorado by acknowledging the completeness of our shared history, honor what makes Colorado unique, and strive towards a more perfect union; and*
- WHEREAS, *a collaborative assemblage of Broomfield organizations has formed the Broomfield 2026! planning group to commemorate our national, state and local history; and*
- WHEREAS, *it is appropriate that the City and County of Broomfield engages fully with our past and looks toward a shared future; and*
- WHEREAS, *the mayor and city council of Broomfield thus encourages its residents to create and participate in programs that will commemorate the history of our city, our county, our state, and our nation; and*

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that I, Mayor Guyleen Castriotta, do hereby proclaim that the City and County of Broomfield will fully engage in commemorative activities leading up to and during the Commission's stated length of observance: July 4, 2025 through December 31, 2026.

I urge all community members to take advantage of the resources available from the America 250 - Colorado 150 Commission and the local Broomfield 2026! planning group to observe the Sesquicentennial and local anniversaries by participating in commemorative events, historical activities and educational opportunities. Broomfield pledges to uplift, support, and generate commemorative opportunities.

In witness whereof, I hereunto set my hand and official seal on this the 14th day of October, 2025.





Guyleen Castriotta
Mayor

The Battle for “The Field,” Part 2

By Patrick Quinn

Former Broomfield Mayor

2007-2017 and 2019-2021



On April 4, 1997, the Broomfield open space community could breathe a sigh of relief. After four contentious years, the battle for the 115-acre parcel affectionately known as “The Field” was now over. The purchase of the property was closed, and the Field was owned by the City and County of Broomfield, purchased with “open space” tax dollars.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE PURCHASE

The battle for The Field had included several nights of public testimony in 1993 public hearings that went past midnight, two elections to approve an open space tax and bonding, a court battle with the developer that wanted to put 433 housing units on The Field, and finally a condemnation of the land by the City.

In the four years leading up to the purchase of the Field, the open space community spent countless hours testifying at public hearings, talking to neighbors, and knocking on doors to pass the open space tax and related bonding in November 1994. The voters approved the bonding in 1993 but did not approve the sales taxes that were needed to repay what had been borrowed. According to Rick Erickson, the 1993 sales tax initiative failed by 28 votes, partially because of misinformation included in the blue book provided to voters to inform them on ballot initiatives.

THE 1994 ELECTION

In early 1994, Rick and others, including Ellie McKinley, Jean Patterson, and Gordon McKellar, were not discouraged. They were determined to succeed that year. Ellie recalled in July 2021, “We were battling against some very influential people

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... nobody worked as hard as we did to get something passed.”

One important tweak was made to the wording for the 1994 tax initiative. In 1993, the tax was to be used solely for open space, but in 1994, the wording was revised for the initiative to have broader appeal: “80% of the proceeds of the [sales tax] increase is to be spent on the acquisition of land for open space and 20% of the proceeds of the increase to be spent on acquisition of lands for parks and for park development.” The Field was purchased with the open space portion of the sales tax.

To the open space community, the definition of open space was clear: land that is intentionally left free from future development, including active sports activities such as soccer, football, or baseball fields. Broomfield had a goal to set aside 40% of the city for *open lands* in its 1995 Master Plan, but open lands is a broader category that includes open space, golf courses, and ball fields. However, I served on Boulder County’s Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee from 1988 to 1993, where it was crystal clear that the definition of open space does not include active recreation of any kind.

So on April 4, 1997, the entire community learned that it could continue to enjoy the peacefulness of the Field, walk their dogs, and appreciate nature.

Or so they thought.

RECREATION FIELDS ARE NEEDED TOO

Six months later, on October 4, 1997, the *Broomfield Enterprise* reported that “A coalition of sports advocates last week asked the city to turn part of the property south of Midway Boulevard into a sports complex containing four baseball diamonds,

six soccer/football fields and parking. The project would cost taxpayers an estimated \$3 million.”

Broomfield is renowned for its dedication to youth sports; since 1997, Broomfield High School has won 11 state championships in soccer alone. To prepare boys and girls for high school soccer, baseball and other sports, Broomfield has recreation leagues run by the City, as well as several nonprofit organizations like the Broomfield Soccer Club (“BSC”) formed in 1974. According to its website, BSC offers six different soccer programs: “Recreational,” for kids 4 to 14 years old; “Competitive,” commonly known as Broomfield Blast, for kids 13 to 19 years old; and “Academy,” “representing the highest level of boys programming.” This is also true for baseball, where in 1997 we had two competitive leagues competing for limited playing fields.

In a September 2025 interview, John Ferraro, a past director of Broomfield Parks and Recreation Department, said that in 1997,

Soccer went from 6 to 8 teams in 1975 to 2,500 to 3,000 kids in the 1985 programs, same thing for baseball and basketball. . . . I can tell you for sure, every field in Broomfield was used every day. . . . this included city fields and school district fields where we had a joint use agreement. We had a substantial number of fields but not enough.

Paul Derda, who was the Parks and Recreation Director in 1997, and for whom a Broomfield recreation center is named, concurred. The demand for ball fields prior to the mid-1990s was for baseball and softball. In a November 2025 interview, Derda said that at the time the Field was acquired, “the demand for soccer fields had taken off.”

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Gary Brosz was the fields director for the BSC in 1997. Gary was one of the principal people behind the proposal to construct athletic fields on the Field in 1997.

In a May 18, 1999 article in the *Rocky Mountain News*, staff writer Marlys Duran wrote that “Soccer is so popular among metro-area youths that some clubs are turning away youngsters for lack of playing space and others say they are stretched to the limit.” Gary Brosz is quoted, reacting to the City Council not allowing soccer fields on The Field: “That’s a real disappointment for us. It doesn’t begin to address the need we have . . . We are right now at saturation. If I had to add two more teams I have no idea where I would put them.”

Council and the Parks and Recreation Department hired Winston and Associates to prepare and present to Council a final master plan for The Field. To that end, Winston held several public meetings in 1999 “to discuss the fate of The Field, a focal point for controversy for nearly a decade,” according to Monte Whaley in the March 4, 1999 *Broomfield Enterprise* newspaper. The article goes on to state, “the two sides clashed February 24 over preliminary plans. . . . One favored little development, while the other called for most of the southern portion to be turned over to soccer and baseball.” Kris Von Wald, a parent and soccer coach, spoke at the meeting “I hate like crazy that we don’t have more options for kids in this town. And I hate we have a field in the center of town that’s plowed dirt.” Ellie McKinley also spoke: “I also know we need some unique parts of Broomfield without a ball field on every corner. We need open space as a restful part of our lives.”

Monte Whaley wrote a follow up article in the *Enterprise* on May 5, 1999, summarizing the final Winston recommendations. He opens by saying that

Residents wanting “The Field” to remain free of any development dislike a plan to turn almost half of the 115 acres of vacant land in the middle of Broomfield into ball fields and other recreational uses. Youth sports enthusiasts, meanwhile, consider the proposal . . . too meager to meet Broomfield’s growing recreational needs.

OPEN SPACE COMMUNITY RESPONDS

Clearly the public policy debate was set. Both sides worked to lobby City Council to their point of view.

In a Letter to the Editor published June 5, 1999, Ellie McKinley and three other members of the Broomfield Open Space Committee argued, “The committee is for soccer fields and knows the need. However, open space is not a land bank waiting in reserve for a need or good causes to draw on. If this is allowed now, open space will forever be up for grabs, because laying claim on it will be easy.”

It is safe to say the open space community viewed the recreational enthusiasts’ efforts to put soccer and baseball fields on The Field as existentially overturning their hard preservation efforts over the past decade. They had a point.

During the summer of 1999, advocates for open space formed an ad hoc committee called Citizens for Broomfield County Open Space (“CBCOS”). Its members included Ellie McKinley, Rick Erickson, Dan and Jean Wilkie, Rob Bodine, Jean Patterson, Gordon McKellar, and me.

CBCOS debated and eventually proposed five recommendations to the City Council “that would go a long ways towards mitigating the effects of rampant growth in our community”:

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- Recruit a full-time Open Space Director who reports directly to the City Manager’s office.
- Extend the .25% O.S. tax beyond 2015 and authorize a November, 2000 ballot issue to approve the additional bonding necessary to acquire Open Space in a timely fashion.
- Authorize a November, 2000 ballot issue to approve a City Charter Amendment to protect Open Space in perpetuity. (Ensuring that City Council cannot sell Open Space when a financial need arises.)
- Define and pursue a trail system.
- Support and acquire funds for the “enhancement of the Field.”

Of no minor significance, 1999 was an election year for the Broomfield Mayor and five of the City Council seats. CBCOS lobbied most of the candidates that year using Dan and Jean Wilkie’s home as their base. In what became one of the more contentious mayor races in Broomfield history, Larry Cooper, a sitting council person, opposed the incumbent mayor, Bill Berens. There were allegations of stolen signs and a fake press release faxed from Kinkos—where, notably, there were security cameras.

BROOMFIELD INVESTS IN THE FUTURE

During the nineties, Broomfield was working hard to shed its bedroom community image. To that end, Broomfield initiated several major public works projects including construction and completion of the 96th street exchange on US 36. In 1999, Broomfield established the Northwest Public Highway Authority with Lafayette and Weld County to pursue construction of a 9-mile segment of the metro Denver beltway. This was required to connect Interlocken, a high-tech Broomfield business park,

to the new Denver International Airport and improve access to a planned regional mall at 96th street. Notably, Sun Microsystems, a Fortune 500 company, announced its relocation to Interlocken in 1996.

Other major projects were moving forward as well. Here is some of the backstory:

Karen Stuart, who was born in London to two British parents, moved to Broomfield in 1983 with her husband, a veterinarian, and three kids. She immediately committed herself to Broomfield, volunteering for everything from school committees to the Library Board. In 1993, she considered herself a newcomer, but successfully ran for City Council. In reflecting on Broomfield’s effort to get Flatirons Mall, Stuart stated,

It’s important to remember that Broomfield was in competition with the Stevenson Development Company (whose property was in southwest Denver) to land a Nordstrom store. We knew a Nordstrom anchor at our mall would draw regional shoppers to Broomfield that would contribute to the tax base that would help build the coffers for open space acquisitions. With the help of the Broomfield Economic Development Corporation, I asked Nordstrom’s for 500 blank credit card applications and stamped them with a red header that said ‘Bring your next Nordstrom’s to Broomfield’ and passed them out to every woman I knew who was a fan of Nordstroms.

She doesn’t know if that helped, but indeed, Nordstrom decided to anchor the Flatiron’s Mall. In 1998, the City annexed the land where the Flatiron’s mall now sits and agreed to provide \$79 million in tax incremental financing (“TIF”). According to the June 11, 1998, Broomfield Enterprise, “\$35 million of the TIF will go toward on-site work such as grading, a circular road around the mall, parking and utilities. . . . The remaining \$44 million will be

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earmarked for off-site improvements,” including interchanges along U.S. 36. Westcor, the developer, would pay for the improvements but Broomfield would rebate Westcor 50% of the 3.5% city sales tax collected at the Flatirons mall. The quarter-cent open space sales tax, approved in 1994, was not included in the TIF and according to the article, was to generate more than \$1 million a year. In 1999, the Mall was under construction and opened in August 2000. The grand opening was August 11, 2000. Raquel Welch, a legendary star in the 60s and 70s, attended the opening in support of her husband, who opened Richie’s Neighborhood Pizzeria in the food court. Longterm residents were heard saying, “this is Broomfield?”

BROOMFIELD BECOMES A COUNTY

In 1964, at age seven, Larry Cooper and his family moved to Broomfield from Brooklyn. While he graduated from Fairview High school, he met his wife Tryna in 9th grade in Broomfield. They were both 18 when they married, and they established firm roots here. Cooper was first elected to City Council in 1989. Larry and Tryna were also avid volunteers for everything and concentrated on teen programs in the early nineties, including Connections, a nonprofit benefitting Broomfield teens that they helped start. They, along with others in the early nineties, worked with the National Civic League to complete a community needs assessment. By 1994, Broomfield had expanded out of Boulder County into bordering Jefferson, Adams, and Weld Counties. The needs assessment conclusion was that not one of the four counties provided meaningful services in Broomfield, and that was a problem in accessing funding for youth and other programs.

Counties are a subdivision of the states, and there hadn’t been a new county formed in the US in nearly a hundred years. The only way to become a

city and county was through statewide approval at the ballot.

Hank Stovall, Larry Cooper, and others lobbied for the city of Broomfield along with George DiCiero at the state capital for weeks to get the city/county measure on the November 1998 ballot.

A group called “Citizens for Better Local Government” was formed to help lobby statewide for the County issue. According to Cooper, this political group worked with 180 citizen volunteers to campaign state wide. The Co-Chairs were Al Jeffreys and Larry Cooper. The Vice Chairs were Hank Stovall and Gary Grenier, and the Treasurer was Shirley Orr.

According to Cooper, Al Jeffreys was an executive from Ball Aerospace. His skills in organizing people were essential. Larry Cooper called himself “the outside team member [who] gave over 105 campaign speeches around the state of Colorado.” Others campaigned statewide as well.

The *Rocky Mountain News* featured an article on Broomfield County on September 6, 1998:

Parts of Broomfield are in Adams, Boulder, Jefferson and Weld Counties. . . . Broomfield police officers coordinate with district attorney’s offices in four counties, depending where a crime occurred, and transport prisoners to the jail. Mayor Bill Berens and other city leaders have complained for years about the confusion of dealing with 14 county commissioners and four differing sets of county regulations.

The statewide ballot initiative passed in November 1998. Broomfield was then tasked with implementing an ambitious plan to become a city that ran a county. On November 15, 2001, Broomfield officially became a county separate from Boulder, Jefferson, Weld and Adams counties.

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COUNCIL WEIGHS IN

Hank Stovall was born in Kansas in 1930 and attended a one-room grade school in Arma Kansas. After serving in the Air Force during Korea, where he was trained in airborne electronics; he was eventually recruited by Western Electric in Kansas city and later transferred by Western Electric to the Westminster facility located on 120th Avenue. Stovall had served on a city council in Nebraska and believed it was important to be involved in local government. He told me in an August 17, 2021 interview that “You can’t complain unless you get involved.” Stovall moved to Broomfield in 1969. He said he first got involved in open space by being named to the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan committee. Boulder County did not want “urbanization” of the county and wanted to push growth through open space to the cities, which then included Broomfield. Stovall was first elected to City Council in 1977 and told me in that same interview, “I was in favor of the open space tax the whole time, in both 1993 and 1994.”

Stovall had been a coach and involved in recreation sports so he understood both sides of the issue. He thought the attempt to put three ball fields on The Field was “shortsighted.”

The battle was to come to a head on October 12, 1999, where the Council would formally review the recommendations from Winston. I reviewed a video of the meeting provided to me by the City Clerk’s office. Kirk Oglesby presented Winston’s report along with six separate maps showing different levels of athletic fields on The Field. Kirk summarized the process by saying, “the Consultant and I wanted everyone to agree and unfortunately that didn’t happen. Today we have very strong views.”

Oglesby also stated that “Our revenues are now projected to be far greater than we thought. We may have some additional money to meet the need for additional athletic complexes other than The Field.”

Kathy Brown, a councilwoman who helped create the acclaimed Broomfield Community Foundation, said “the consultant was impartial, I think a fair recommendation was made, fair to all of the taxpayers. . . . It is a crying shame if southern portion isn’t available for teens to use as playing fields.”

Hank Stovall stated that night: “We have to do something fairly dramatic; we handicapped the consultant by not looking at the need for the entire city. We limited their scope.” Stoval was opposed to the southern portion having ball fields because “it would take \$2.5 to \$3 million to irrigate plus \$1 million to reimburse open space and it wouldn’t solve our long-term athletic field problem.”

Stoval, Cooper, and Stuart had worked on an alternative resolution (from Staff) which would not allow athletic fields on The Field but instructed the City Manager to work with the newly formed Open Space and Trails Committee to come up with plans for The Field consistent with the definition of Open Space by March 31, 2000, and the now separate Parks and Recreation Committee to come up with recommendations for a new athletic complex by April 15, 2000.

The resolution passed 8 to 1 with council member Cathy Brown opposing it.

OPEN SPACE TAKES OFF

And the battle was over. Open space and parks and recreation goals were addressed in rapid succession during the next several years.

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A catalyst in all of this was hiring Kristan Pritz as Open Space Director that reported into the City Manager’s office, not to the Parks and Recreation Director.

Kristan started her public service career in planning. She was interested in community engagement so early on she worked for a design company that helped prepare community plans for a variety of small communities like Lyons. This led to a planning position in Vail. Kristan states in an October 31, 2025 interview:

I was a pretty outdoorsy person, loved skiing, so it was great to live in that community and further my career In that position we had a lot of legal issues come up so it caused me to want to go to law school, which I attended at CU Boulder starting in 1994. . . . My husband saw the advertisement for the Broomfield (Open Space Director) job which was exactly what I wanted to do. . . . I could still be involved in planning and really liked community engagement. The position combined everything in a perfect position.

Kristan, who remains the Open Space Director to this day, states, “when I started here in July 2000, it was made very clear what my marching orders were and what was open space and what were parks.” Her top three priorities were to develop a prairie dog policy, develop an overall master plan for open space, and to help acquire land in section 30, known now as Broomfield County Commons (“BCC”). I will note that I served on the Open Space and Trails Committee (“OSTAC”) during this period.

All three goals were achieved fairly quickly in Broomfield’s own unique style.

The Prairie Dog policy was adopted by Council in 2001. The policy, in essence, was to inventory the open space in Broomfield, relocate prairie dogs

from where they aren’t wanted to open space where they can flourish. And once those lands are saturated, extermination is allowed.

Next was the acquisition of the land for BCC.

Charles Ozaki was the Deputy City and County Manager during this period. In a June 12, 2025 interview, he stated he met George DiCiero when he was working for the City of Westminster. Ozaki left Westminster and served as “circuit riding manager” for the small towns of Norwood, Nucla, Colborn and De Beque in Southwest Colorado. He got married and “had to move back to the Front Range.” That was when he connected with George DiCiero again in 1982. He went to work in Broomfield because of “knowing George.” Ozaki says, “George and I were partners.”

That partnership was mentioned throughout the interviews I conducted for this article. They were good partners and good negotiators by all accounts.

As instructed by Council and the new citizen committees, the new athletic complex, which would include plenty of playing fields, a recreation center, and open space, was to be located east of Sheridan Boulevard, north of Midway and south of 136th Avenue. Ozaki said the man who developed Aspen Creek (a large development in town) controlled most of the land: “They wanted to develop it—they were developers but they were willing to entertain the idea of selling to us.”

Substantially all of the land was acquired by the end of 2000.

In 2003 and 2004, the OSTAC and Parks and Recreation Committees prepared the Open Space Parks and Recreation Master Plan (“OSPRT Plan”), which was adopted in its entirety by City Council as part of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan update.

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The OSPRT Plan not only identifies lands that could be potentially acquired to meet our open land goals, but it also specifically addresses the funding shortfall and identifies ways to finance this shortfall. Additionally, OSPRT provides recommendations for community trails. The plan is very thorough and includes maps of potential open space acquisitions and recommends trail alignments.

In November 2001, Ballot issue 2B, extending the .25 cent combined open space and recreation sales tax in perpetuity, passed with 78% of the vote. In November 2006, Ballot issue 1A, preventing the City from selling open lands without a specific process, passed with 70.1% of the vote.

So remarkably, in November 2006, all of the goals Citizens for Broomfield County Open Space sought had been met.

As of today, according to City and County of Broomfield’s website, “Broomfield has a total of 8,607 acres of open lands, within a planning area of 23,887 total acres, which equals 36%.” Broomfield is confident it will achieve our 40% open land's goal. Broomfield also has 350 miles of trails.

In his interview Paul Derda notes, “People move to Broomfield because of its open space, parks, recreation facilities and trails.” I agree.

It is also significant that Paul Derda and Ellie McKinley became friends. Paul was the MC at her 90th birthday party a few years back.

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City and County of Broomfield website on November 20, 2025.

The Monarch #2 Coal Mine Disaster

By David R. Feineman
Broomfield Historical Society



Figure 1: Miners at the scene of the Monarch 2 explosion on January 20, 1936, a notation on the back of the photo indicating they might have been part of the rescue operation. Given the timing, they may have been the day shift arriving on the scene. Photo from Denver Public Library Digital Collection, <https://digital.denverlibrary.org/nodes/view/1128129?keywords=mining&type=all&highlights=WyJtaW5pbmciXQ==>

*Tragedy is a tool for the living to gain wisdom, not a guide by which to live.*¹

—Robert F. Kennedy

Sitting in an out of the way site in Broomfield, in Frank Varra Park between the Macy's parking lot and Highway 36, is a monument to a man who died in a 1936 mine explosion and remains buried inside the mine. As with other historic sites in Broomfield,

such as the Railroad Depot, Honey House, and Shep's Grave, the location of the memorial plaque is not the site where the actual events took place.² While much of the history of old Broomfield was about agriculture and its supporting services, this one from the local mining industry is a tragic tale from our past that is worth some greater recognition. It's probably worth beginning with a

THE MONARCH #2 COAL MINE

brief introduction to the coal deposits that underlie this part of Colorado.

THE NORTHERN COAL FIELD

From the 1850s to the 1970s, coal was actively mined in multiple communities along the Front Range. The coal deposits are found interbedded within rocks from the Laramie and Denver Formations, and these deposits are the same age as local fossils of Triceratops and Tyrannosaurus Rex. Coal deposits are formed where layers of decaying plant material have become buried and compressed. Various combinations of age, pressure, and heat within the layers produce different types of coal with distinct characteristics. The coal that was mined here in Broomfield was classified as subbituminous—a type that is still used today in the USA for electrical power generation. Subbituminous coal here and in Montana and Wyoming occurs in beds close to the ground surface which means it is relatively cheap to extract.

Although the Northern Coal Field underlies much of the area north of Denver, a subarea of intensive mining occurred in an area that is called the Boulder-Weld Coal Field, which ran in a north easterly direction from the west side of Broomfield past Superior, Louisville, Lafayette, and Erie.

THE MONARCH #2 MINE

At the time of its operation, the Monarch Mine #2 was one of the southernmost mines in the Boulder-Weld Coal field, located in an area that was considered part of Louisville. It was operated by the National Fuel Company starting in 1909. The mine entrance and surface unloading facility (the tippel) was located at what today is the Flatirons Crossing Mall. From the entry, a shaft went down about 375 feet to where the active mining work occurred. At that depth, it was one of the deepest mines in the

Boulder-Weld Coal Field.³ Tunnels went from the entry both due west, as well as northeast, crossing under highway 36. Housing for mine workers was located on the east side of Highway 36 and just north of today's Northwest Parkway in an area called Redtail Ridge.

Within the mine, small cars on rails were pulled by donkeys to move the coal back to the shaft where it could be brought up to the surface. There were at least 2 motorized cars that were used for moving personnel along the tracks. The coal seam thickness being mined varied between 10 and 15 feet high. Extraction proceeded as a room and pillar operation: coal was removed from a rectangular area laid out like a checkerboard, with the corners of the boxes left unmined, so that there was rock from floor to ceiling to support the roof to keep it from caving in. Reports mention the mine had 20 miles of abandoned underground tunnels adjacent to active operating areas. However, a more recent survey of local mines to understand subsidence issues clearly states that information on mine layout in the area was largely inaccurate.⁴

Reports show that the mine was typically worked by about 100 people depending on the shift. The work was hard and intrinsically dangerous. On Sunday, a skeleton crew of 10 men were underground.⁵ Three of the men were involved in work related to fire safety: two using cement to create a firewall to isolate burning parts of the previously worked that had already been abandoned, and another to check for potentially explosive methane gas and asphyxiating carbon monoxide. Underground coal mine fires could be caused by an accidental source of ignition, like sparks from the metal wheels on the cars used to move coal, or by spontaneous combustion.⁶ Such fires can even move through unmined layers of coal towards a source of oxygen and rapidly intensify when they get there. Typical practice in room and pillar mining as a final phase

THE MONARCH #2 COAL MINE



Figure 2: Surface facilities of the National Fuel Company Monarch Mine. *File:Tipple of the Mine. National Fuel Company, Monarch Mine, Broomfield, Boulder Company, Colorado. - DPLA - 252526f5cf5115183f2f3752e024b5eb (Page 1).Gif - Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tipple of the mine. National Fuel Company, Monarch Mine, Broomfield, Boulder Company, Colorado. - DPLA - 252526f5cf5115183f2f3752e024b5eb \(page 1\).gif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tipple_of_the_mine._National_Fuel_Company,_Monarch_Mine,_Broomfield,_Boulder_Company,_Colorado._-DPLA_-252526f5cf5115183f2f3752e024b5eb_(page_1).gif).*

was to pull the pillars by removing their coal and allowing the roof to collapse, which was obviously also a dangerous undertaking.

THE MINERS' SITUATION

National Fuel, as one of the largest coal mining firms in the area, had a company store in Louisville. The building itself still exists and is on the national and state historical site registers.⁷ Company towns had a great deal of control over the lives of miners in terms of setting curfews, restricting access with company guards, and evicting anyone who failed to

follow company rules. These harsh restrictions and dangerous working conditions led to a wave of activity in unionization and demands by the United Mine Workers of America, which were rejected by mine operators. A strike was called in 1913 and ran into 1914, beginning in southern Colorado but extending to the Front Range mines by 1914. The strike was characterized by violent attacks between mine guards and Colorado National Guard troops fighting with striking miners which became known as the Colorado Coalfield War.⁸ The war ended without an agreed settlement to grievances of the workers—the strike simply ended when the union

THE MONARCH #2 COAL MINE

ran out of money.

The Broomfield oral history interview of Chuck Waneka⁹ adds some clarity about how the miners' strike played out locally.¹⁰ His recollection was that strike activity happened over a period of 10 years and only ended when the National Guard arrived and started putting striking miners in jail. The mine operators hired non-union workers to replace them, and if one of those workers made the mistake of leaving company property, they risked being badly beaten by locals.

You might think that the mine owners are coming off badly here in terms of their treatment of workers: you would be right. It was common for miners in the Front Range coal fields to be paid by the tonnage rule. This simple performance metric meant that the more coal you produced in a shift, the more you got paid. The downside to that was there was no compensation for safety-related activities, which essentially incentivized less safe work habits. For example, the Monarch Mine #2 was regarded as a "dirty mine" with a large accumulation of dry coal dust in the tunnels used to haul coal back to the surface, which could act as an accelerant if a fire ever started.¹¹

The oral history interview with Chuck Waneka also mentions the use of child labor in the mines. He started work in a mine in Lafayette at 13 years old, while Ron Fenolia's interview says his father started work in the local mines at 11 years old.¹² Apparently, wages for children were around \$1 per day, plus 10 cents for oil for their miner's lamp. There is also a description of a grisly worksite death. At about the same time an adult miners' wages were about \$3 per day plus money for the oil in their lamps.

Women were not employed to work in Colorado coal mines and even visits to non-working mines were a rarity.¹³

THE MONARCH #2 MINE DISASTER OF 1936

Over a Sunday evening shift, late in January of 1936, a small crew was working in the mine. Because of the nature of the assigned tasks, most were working at some distance from one another. At 6:20 a.m. on Monday, January 20, there was an explosion and fire deep in the mine, which also caused damage to the mine's surface facilities. Of the 10 men who were in the mine, two managed to escape to safety through an air shaft. The remaining eight men were killed, either by the fire, collapsing rubble, or asphyxiation. By the time a rescue operation could make it back into the mine, there were no survivors. They managed to find and recover seven bodies but were unable to find the body of Joe C. Jaramillo, the stable boss, who tended the mules used below ground in the mine's operation. There is conjecture that he was the person working closest to the point of ignition of the fire and explosion, but a definitive official cause was never found.

Nevertheless, tucked inside a long oral history captured in 1987 from Katie Mosher¹⁴ is this passage talking about the Monarch Mine explosion¹⁵:

It was caused from an electric car that went in and brought the coal out, and they would drive those cars way back in, and coming out, the sparks flew and they got gas somewhere and it blew up. Ray Bailey was the one I knew real well. He'd been after me for months to come up and take me down in the mine and show me what it was like down there. He and my brother worked down there.

THE MONARCH #2 COAL MINE

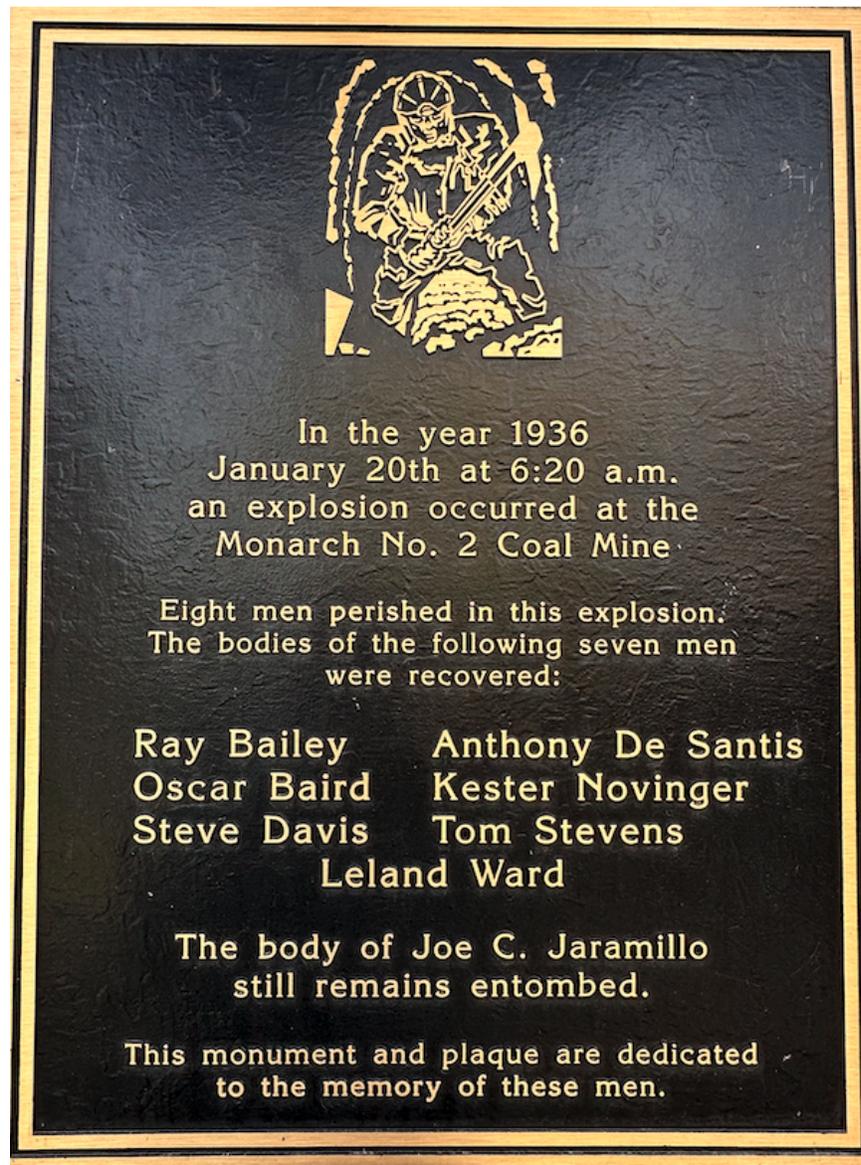


Figure 3: The Monarch Mine #2 memorial plaque in Frank Varra Park, author's photo.

He took me up there one night after work. I went up and we went up in there and the sparks started flying of of that rail with those iron wheels and it scared me. I think it was two nights after that that it blew up and he got killed. And then I couldn't even sleep.

The National Fuel Company apparently made offers to Jaramillo's family to get them to agree to discontinue the search for his body given the cost and danger of the operation, and ultimately an agreement was reached to end recovery activity. He therefore remains buried within the abandoned

THE MONARCH #2 COAL MINE

mine somewhere under what is today Flatirons Crossing Mall. The company erected a monument to the killed miners that was placed at what had been the mine entrance. The monument to the lost miners was moved to Frank Varra Park during the construction of the mall.

The article cited earlier, "Blast: The 1936 Monarch Mine Explosion," by William Cohen, provides a great deal of information on the recovery efforts, the autopsies and the legal proceedings and investigations that followed on from the disaster, as well as biographies of the individual miners.¹⁶ The immediate post-incident court case found there was no definitive cause for the explosion, which meant that National Fuel was not negligent in its operation of the mine. Even at the time, there appeared to be significant uncertainty about the validity of that conclusion.

THE END OF THE LINE

Many sources say the mine was immediately shut down after the explosion, which would seem like a fitting epitaph for the miners lost during the disaster. The real situation appears to be different, in that only the portion of the mine damaged in the explosion was sealed off, allowing new access to be implemented and operations restarted. The WPA Guide to 1930s Colorado that was published in 1941 has the following entry for Louisville:¹⁷

Left from Louisville to the MONARCH MINE (visitors not encouraged), 4 m., still a large producer despite the fact that a part of its workings was destroyed in 1936 by an explosion that killed eight persons.

The book *Coal Mining in Colorado's Northern Field* states that the mine reopened as soon as debris from the explosion could be cleared, and the mine

remained operating until 1947, a full eleven years after the incident.¹⁸

LEGACIES

What is below our feet in the former coal mining areas of the Front Range may not always be inert and harmless. Investigations after the Marshall Fire revealed an underground coal seam that had been smoldering under Marshall Mesa for about 100 years.¹⁹ Today around 40 additional coal seam fires are known to exist in Colorado.²⁰

Abandoned mines can create subsidence issues over time as supporting structure from when the mines were active begin to decay and collapse.²¹ Subsidence and surface collapse issues had begun to be observed even when mining activity was still active along the Front Range in areas where mines were less than 200 feet below the surface: the 1975 Coal Mine Subsidence and Land Use report made by the State of Colorado cataloged a large number. Deeper mine related surface subsidence is still possible and detectable with precise surveying.

The coal seams themselves remain under our feet as well, unlikely to be called upon again given the amount of development, population growth, and land costs along the entire Boulder-Weld trend combined with the decline in coal demand. The transformation of communities like Superior, Lafayette, Louisville, and Erie in the last 100 years from hardscrabble mining towns to their present state as desirable upscale communities seems incredible.

It doesn't seem like there was much learning from the disaster that factored into coal mine safety: additional coal mine disasters occurred elsewhere in Colorado after the Monarch #2 mine. Findings by internal government researchers about the potential

THE MONARCH #2 COAL MINE

risks of dry coal dust and methane gas in mines were not immediately implemented into new safety standards.

Most people in Broomfield don't know that there's an underground coal mine within the City and County. This is not too surprising since the surface evidence was removed a long time ago and later replaced by Flatirons Crossing Mall. After the disaster in 1936, the National Fuel Company erected a headstone above the site of the mine collapse following the explosion where Joe

Jaramillo's body was believed to be located. With the later development of the site, the marker was moved to the north side of the Macy's parking lot at Flatirons Crossing Mall in a secluded area of Frank Varra Park. Nearby, a second plaque lists the names of all who were lost in the explosion. This monument doesn't just represent the men who lost their lives. It's also a stark reminder that many issues from this story remain unresolved—the mines are a precarious and volatile foundation we shouldn't ignore.

Endnotes

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13. Carolyn, Conarro, *Coal Mining in Colorado's Northern Field*, 2001.

THE MONARCH #2 COAL MINE

14. Katie Mosher arrived in Broomfield with her family in 1925. Her father's farm grew beets, corn, hay, and wheat on land owned by Mr. Zang. When they started construction of Broomfield Heights she opened a cafe in the old post office in the Jones Hall Building.
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Stories of Early Farm Women

By Roberta Depp

President, Broomfield Historical Society



Image of Amelia Kozisek, Broomfield History Collections.

The dust was flying in furious bursts as two vehicles raced down the dirt lane. At the helm of each was a fiercely determined redheaded woman. No shrinking violets these. Amelia Kozisek again hadn't turned the ditch's water wheel to divert required water into the Brunner's neighboring fields, and Elizabeth Brunner was on her way to get it done. The two women were racing to be first at the water gate.

Water was essential for farm operations, and this competition could have resulted in hostilities, but

the two women were actually close friends who shared common circumstances and respected each other's strength and fortitude. Both had lost their husbands and were managing family farms on their own with four children each. Elizabeth had the help of four sons, while Amelia had to manage with one son and three daughters.

Amelia's husband James had come into the house one day and asked his then 18-year-old son Bob if he thought he could run the farm on his own. Bob answered yes. His father then lay down for a rest and never got up again.

Both families had originally settled in Kansas but moved to Broomfield at similar times: the Koziseks in 1915, and the Brunners in 1919. James Kozisek was the descendant of Bohemian or Czechoslovakian immigrants, while Albert Brunner was the son of Swiss immigrants. Albert and his wife Lizzie wished to get away from the Kansas tornadoes. A tornado had killed the entire family of one of Lizzie's brothers. Her other brother, Fred Berges, had a farm in Broomfield and offered it to them after his wife had died. One of the Brunner sons, Les, married Elizabeth Shaw in 1925, and this is the Elizabeth of the ditch race story above.

James and Amelia moved to Broomfield with their three daughters, Adelaide, Marcella and Jessie. Their son Bob was later born in Broomfield. James had meant to retire here because of his health, but he never managed that. The 40-acre Kranbeck Farm he first purchased eventually grew to 400 acres. The farm was located along the east side of Main Street from what is now 10th Street south to 2nd Street, the area known as The Field Open Space and the Outlook Neighborhood. They raised wheat, corn, alfalfa and white-faced Hereford cattle. Milk from

STORIES OF EARLY FARM WOMEN

their dairy cows was made into cheese by local cheesemakers, and James brought cream to the railway station to send to Denver. The Kozisek farm was known for its distinctive hip-shaped barn. The barn was a “Gordon Van Tine”¹ precut building that was shipped in segments via rail cars. It became a familiar Broomfield landmark.

The 100-acre farm Albert and Lizzie purchased from her brother was on the northwest corner of 120th Avenue and Sheridan, where the Broomfield Town Centre shopping plaza is now located (King Soopers, Home Depot and other shops). All four sons—Gilbert, Clyde, Dale and Les—were born in Broomfield. The Brunners grew corn, alfalfa, barley, oats and even broomcorn and raised milk cows, chickens and hogs. Les and Elizabeth worked on the farm and purchased it after Albert retired in 1946. Their attractive farmhouse, originally built by Fred Burges, was moved to The Field Open Space along Midway after the property was sold in 1998.

So, what about those two redheads? As well as managing farms on their own and raising children, they became community builders and leaders along with other strong Broomfield women of that era. Amelia and Elizabeth, or “Lib” as her friends called her, belonged to the Methodist Church’s Women’s Society of Christian Service where they and the other women held various fundraisers to raise money for church construction. They were both members of the long enduring women’s Merry Mix club, whose motto was “Peace and Pleasure,” and the Grange. The Grange was an important center of community activity and entertainment. Music performances, dances, and potlucks were often held there. Elizabeth had first met Les at one of the dances. After all that hard work on their farms, enjoyment was in order.



Liz Brunner and family, c. 1946, Broomfield History Collections, <https://hub.catalogit.app/broomfield-history-collections/folder/photographs/entry/c33e8f30-15f2-11ee-9fb9-5172ef2dc7bd?query=elizabeth%20brunner>.

Amelia was a co-founder of the Broomfield Garden Club, of which Lib was also a member. Both women loved flowers. When the family moved from Kansas to Broomfield, Amelia brought with her the offshoot of a favored white rose carefully packed in a barrel. She often named her flowers after the friends who gave them to her and loved exchanging flowers with them. Her daughter Jessie said of her

1. The Gordon-Van Tine Company was incorporated in 1907 as a subsidiary of the U.N. Roberts Lumber Company in Davenport, Iowa. They supplied kit houses and buildings until they closed in 1947.

STORIES OF EARLY FARM WOMEN

mother that Amelia would say she was going “to visit with my friends,” meaning she would be tending to her flower garden. Elizabeth’s home was also surrounded by huge trees and lots of flowers, making for an especially welcoming scene. Her favorite flowers were Jonquils. Elizabeth enjoyed bowling and her bridge groups, and she later worked in her son Clyde’s veterinary clinic. She like animals, especially dogs, and enjoyed meeting all the people who came to the clinic.

The local newspaper included a column by Amelia called the “Broomfield Brushings.” It often covered gardening topics. She was also a correspondent for the Broomfield Star Builder and wrote for the Lafayette Leader. Somehow, with all this community and cultural activity, she was still a formidable farm woman. Amelia fed huge meals to the combine crews who came to help harvest on the farm. She got up early to pick chickens, kill them, take all the feathers off, and cook them for the crew. Added to the buffet was fresh bread, cooked vegetables and salad—after which she insisted that they take a twenty-minute nap. The crew members would all be spread out on the grass by the lake, taking their naps as ordered! Her granddaughter, Renee, tells of an incident when the cows got into the alfalfa field and were becoming dangerously ill from bloating. Amelia rushed out with a knife and stuck it between the ribs of each cow to release the gas. Of the five cows, three were saved. Another time everyone was in the farmhouse having breakfast when a shot ran out. It was Amelia. She had shot a skunk that was trying to get into the chicken coop.

In later years, these two formidable women were fondly called “Grandma Kozy” and “Grandma Brunner” by family, friends and acquaintances. Amelia passed away in 1967 and Elizabeth in 1985. They helped build the foundation of present-day Broomfield and have gifted us a legacy of resilience, creativity and community.

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Who was Pierra Lac Amora? An Adventure in Historical Research

By **David Allison,**
History and Museum Coordinator

If you stop reading this article after one sentence and read nothing else about Pierre Lac Amora, I'd like you to know that there was (and is) no one named Pierre Lac Amora. He is a figment. A fraud. A legend.

The story of Pierre Lac Amora supposedly began in 1909, when a French immigrant came to Broomfield and began plying his trade as a masseuse among the local farmers. Along the way (so the story goes) Monsieur Lac Amora introduced the safety bike to the rural denizens of Broomfield and bequeathed his name to the northwesterly neighborhood of Lac Amora. Where the story ends, however, is nothing short of an archival adventure that culminates in the unveiling of a historical myth and glimpse at the ease with which the internet can promulgate innocent falsehoods.

In the book *Life of Pi*, Yann Martel describes the tension between a better story—a tiger and a young boy living together on a raft for months after a terrible shipwreck—and cold, hard facts:

Mr. Chiba: "So tell me, since it makes no factual difference to you and you can't prove the question either way, which story do you prefer? Which is the better story, the story with animals or the story without animals?"

Mr. Okamoto: "That's an interesting question!"

Mr. Chiba: "The story with animals."

Mr. Okamoto: "Yes. The story with animals is the better story."

In the case of Pierre Lac Amora, the better story is definitively false. But I cannot argue that the false tale told on the Broomfield Bike Club's webpage about Pierre Lac Amora is the better story.

This past September, I was approached by someone wanting to know more about Pierre Lac Amora. I was intrigued and dubious all at once. I had never heard the name, and felt certain that I would have, given that the Lac Amora neighborhood is in the Broomfield Depot Museum's backyard.

Despite my doubts, I gamely donned my historian hat¹ and started researching Pierre Lac Amora. A simple Google search turned up the Broomfield Bike Club's website, which described the beginnings of biking in Broomfield as emerging due to the efforts of Pierre Lac Amora, a French immigrant who came to Broomfield in 1909.

Failing to find any corroborating evidence on other websites that Pierre Lac Amora was a real person, or that someone by that name lived in Broomfield or introduced bicycling to the town in 1909 (which is coincidentally the year that the Broomfield Depot opened), I determined to dive a bit deeper by

WHO WAS PIERRE LAC AMORA?

combing through census records and cemetery records with "Pierre Lac Amora" as a search term.

I also checked the Colorado Historic Newspapers, My Heritage (a genealogical website), and the Broomfield History Collection to try to find more information.

After a solid hour and a half of searching, I couldn't find a lick of supporting evidence for Pierre. Nearing the end of my journey, in desperation I asked Google Gemini (an AI search engine) who Pierre Lac Amora was. Google Gemini unhelpfully regurgitated the Broomfield Bike Club's content without any other useful sources.

After this futile search, my suspicion was that the Broomfield Bike Club wanted to create an interesting "backstory" for the group and concocted the character of Pierre Lac Amora.

One other tip that perhaps the Broomfield Bike Club intended Pierre as a jest was that the photo of "Pierre" on the website is pretty clearly photoshopped. The photo of the Depot they used was from the 1960s, not when Pierre was supposedly in Broomfield.

Ultimately, I would guess that Lac Amora was a "pretty name" that the developers came up with for the neighborhood---it means 'Lake of Love' in French---rather than a name that has any ties to an historical figure.

The final confirmation about the fallacious nature of Pierre Lac Amora came from the President of the Broomfield Bike Club. I saw him at the City and County of Broomfield's Arts & History booth at Broomfield Days and we had a good talk about our shared love of Pierre Lac Amora lore. He told me, with a twinkle in his eyes, that Broomfield needed a good history of that part of town, and that it was fun to believe in Pierre. He said it was the better story.

He's right, of course. Pierre is a good story. Sadly, not all good stories are true.

Endnotes:

1. My historian hat is a tricornered chapeau with a large ostrich plume jutting jauntily from its aft corner, if you must know.



Lac Amora neighborhood, 1994, Broomfield History Collections, <https://hub.catalogit.app/broomfield-history-collections/folder/photographs/entry/c5ddaba0-6df8-11ee-b4ce-79fd8bb071ab?query=lac%20amora>. <https://hub.catalogit.app/broomfield-history-collections/folder/photographs/entry/c5ddaba0-6df8-11ee-b4ce-79fd8bb071ab?query=lac%20amora>



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