

Nancy Lawthers 0:11

This is Nancy Lawthers. I am interviewing for the Carnegie branch library for local history. It is February 8th, 1996. The narrator is Ron Fenolia F E N O L I A. This is the history of Broomfield in Boulder County. If you would just say testing 123

Ron Fenolia 0:46

Testing 1234.

Nancy Lawthers 0:52

When and where were you born?

Ron Fenolia 0:55

When? I was born at Louisville, Colorado on September the 28th 1923.

Nancy Lawthers 1:05

And when and where were your parents born?

Ron Fenolia 1:11

My mother was born in Louisville, Colorado. In 1901. My father was born on the farm outside of Louisville, Colorado in April of 1896. He was the youngest of his family and they, his father and my grandmother, as well as my mother's mother and grandmother have been here in the Louisville vicinity for Marshall, Louisville facility for some time

Nancy Lawthers 1:58

and what about your grandparents.

Ron Fenolia 2:03

Okay. My granddad and grandmother moved into the Marshall, Louisville area, that is on my father's side, in the late 1870s. To the best of my knowledge. And on my mother's side, my grand dad first settled and my grandmother also first settled in Como, Colorado, which is in the mountain area near Fairplay. Then they later moved to Louisville. My three, one uncle was born at Como. My one aunt was born at Hanna, Wyoming. And my mother and her older brother were born in Louisville. As far as my father's side of the family, the majority of them were born in the Marshall, Louisville area. Now what else would you like to know?

Nancy Lawthers 3:47

Did they come from Italy?

Ron Fenolia 3:49

Oh, yes. My granddad on my father's side came into Italy, from Italy, and first settled in Fort Smith, Arkansas. He didn't stay there very long. Then he went back to Illinois. Then back to McAlester, Oklahoma. He then sent for my grandmother and they were married in McAlester, Oklahoma, in the late 70s, and they moved into Colorado.

Nancy Lawthers 4:35  
What brought them to Colorado?

Ron Fenolia 4:37  
Indians chase them out of Indian Territory in McAlester, Oklahoma.

Nancy Lawthers 4:42  
I see.

Ron Fenolia 4:44  
And on my mother's side, my granddad first settled in Chicago and he spent the year as a bricklayer in Chicago. From Chicago, he went to Como. And my grandmother met him there at Como. He sent for her from Italy.

Nancy Lawthers 5:17  
Oh, so

Ron Fenolia 5:22  
that's all I can remember about the family other than the numerous other relatives that I have emerged from as time progressed on

Nancy Lawthers 5:38  
what brought them to the Marshall, Lafayette, and Broomfield area?

Ron Fenolia 5:44  
well, they, they will likely say, on my mother's side, my grandfather was a bricklayer and he was laying brick and then he later went into the coal mines in the Louisville area. He worked for years at the Matchless Mine and the Acme Mine, which the Acme is in the immediate town of Louisville and so is the Matchless now. In fact, most of that area adjacent to two mines, you know, is all undermined, I don't know whether the people know about it or not. And the same thing was with my on my father's side, his father was a coal miner as well as a farmer and rancher. And they operated the farm, well the old Stearns dairy farm for years, which is just adjacent to the Rock Creek area just right over the hill here and adjacent to the city limits of Broomfield. Right across the fence

Nancy Lawthers 7:13  
Right across the fence.

Ron Fenolia 7:15  
Yep.

Nancy Lawthers 7:15  
Oh.

Ron Fenolia 7:19

Now mining and farming has been the source of income for the families throughout the year. My father's sister married. Well, the first white child that was born in the incorporated limits of Lafayette, in, he was born in 19, no 18, 1889. And he became a miner and operator. Mine operator for years. He operated the Liley Mine in Frederick, Colorado for years, then closed it down. And they came and operated Liley Mine which is north of city limits of Broomfield and south of the city limits of Lafayette until the fire burned down the tip of mine in January, New Year's Eve of 1950. He then went to, he acquired the Black Diamond Mine which was on the curb over the northwest side of Lafayette of Highway 287. In fact he closed down the last coal mine in Boulder County

Nancy Lawthers 9:08

Oh. There were no more coal mines operating?

Ron Fenolia 9:13

Not to my knowledge, no. I think in the paper, the Boulder Camera, under issue of February the 7th, there was the article which I showed to you, did say that there was 189 mines in this immediate Louisville, Lafayette, Erie area. And to the best of my knowledge none of them are operating at this time. Likely as specified in the article. There's still some underground fire in the mine and I don't think there's a way of putting those out. Now, is there anything else I can help you with?

Nancy Lawthers 10:07

Yes. You told a story about the Coors helping to put out one mine fire?

Ron Fenolia 10:14

Well, no, after the fire destroyed our mine the Lighly Mine. In January of 1950, the shaft remained open and to close the shaft, why, it was filled with debris and waste matter, then Coors found out about it. And they had a bunch of, oh a quite a large amount of contaminated beer. And they negotiated with us, and we allowed them for a fee to dump it into the shaft.

Nancy Lawthers 10:59

Oh, goodness.

Ron Fenolia 11:00

They did this with my cousin. Yeah.

Nancy Lawthers 11:03

Made it smell nice.

Ron Fenolia 11:05

Oh you couldn't tell the difference.

Nancy Lawthers 11:06

Oh. Oh, where did you go to school?

Ron Fenolia 11:11

I went all through school in Louisville, Colorado. Then after graduating from high school, I went to Colorado A&M at that time. And then on to the service. After the service. I got my degree at Colorado State University which is the same college

Nancy Lawthers 11:42

Same, right. When you, when your family was farming and ranching, how did they obtain water?

Ron Fenolia 11:53

Well, on the farm near Stearn's dairy it was delivered to the irrigation ditches.

Nancy Lawthers 12:02

Yes.

Ron Fenolia 12:04

And it was this this area immediately north has a very poor water right out of South Boulder Creek. The [good you] ditch it's actually it's just a flood right. And as soon as the snow melt is over in the spring they cease to deliver water and then the farmers are entirely dependent on rain to finish and materialize their crop.

Nancy Lawthers 12:36

I see

Ron Fenolia 12:38

later on the Big Thompson project was developed in it furnished a lot of water for the whole Longmont, Loveland, Fort Collins, Greeley area. In fact, there have expanded their delivery system to the point where the city of Broomfield is now obtaining Big Thompson water for their domestic water set. I don't think they're obtaining it right now. But they're about to obtain it.

Nancy Lawthers 13:17

But it won't go to the farmers

Ron Fenolia 13:19

Oh no, it'll go into the Broomfield reservoir.

Nancy Lawthers 13:22

I see. I see. Well, what kind of crops did you raise?

Ron Fenolia 13:30

Primarily grain and alfalfa and pasture.

Nancy Lawthers 13:34

Right. Right. And did you have then a lot of cattle

Ron Fenolia 13:38

Had some cattle, not a lot. Enough to make a living on, now this was my grandfolks and right and my father's not me. I didn't farm.

Nancy Lawthers 13:48

No, but your grandparents and your father did. Right. Right. So that you actually lived on a farm?

Ron Fenolia 13:56

They did. I didn't. Yeah.

Nancy Lawthers 13:58

You did not

Ron Fenolia 13:59

No, I didn't grow up on a farm. No, I grew up in town of Louisville

Nancy Lawthers 14:04

In the town of what?

Ron Fenolia 14:05

Louisville.

Nancy Lawthers 14:06

Really?

Ron Fenolia 14:06

Yeah.

Nancy Lawthers 14:07

I see. I see.

Ron Fenolia 14:09

What did you say, I might call myself a native now.

Nancy Lawthers 14:13

Yes, you are. Where? What what is the center of Louisville? I mean, all the building that's gone on has disguised the center, where is it now?

Ron Fenolia 14:25

The Old Main Street is known as Old Town now and there is about five or six blocks of the downtown Main Street and primarily known for Italian spaghetti restaurants.

Nancy Lawthers 14:44

Is that because all of your relatives were living around there?

Ron Fenolia 14:49

Oh, no, no. No. The other families that developed the restaurant business, I see the Colaccis and others

Nancy Lawthers 15:03

I just wondered what had brought people to the area?

Ron Fenolia 15:09

Well, it's actually a bedroom community. Most of the people that live there at that time worked elsewhere, either in the mines or commuted to Denver, Boulder. A lot of them worked at the University of Colorado. A lot of them just worked at various manufacturing institutions in the Denver area and quite a few of the later residents worked at Dow Chemical Plant. Rocky Flats.

Nancy Lawthers 15:51

Oh, I see.

Ron Fenolia 15:52

And a lot of them still do.

Nancy Lawthers 15:54

I see. Oh, all right. All right. Yeah. .

Ron Fenolia 15:58

Then the recent growth is again attributed to well, Storage Tech, IBM, various other small manufacturing plants located in the immediate metropolitan area.

Nancy Lawthers 16:18

Right. Now you said that the two of the mines were right in the center of Louisville.

Ron Fenolia 16:23

That's right

Nancy Lawthers 16:23

Whereabouts? I mean what streets?

Ron Fenolia 16:30

Well, under the Acme mine, it was located on the very south end of Lafarge Street. They have a senior citizens complex right across the street from it. And then the Matchless Mine was located in the vicinity of Via Appia, I don't know whether you've heard of Via Appia

Nancy Lawthers 17:04  
I have

Ron Fenolia 17:06

Fairly close to the Louisville recreation center. Now, in addition, all their various other minds now for instance, where the Centennial Center is located in Louisville, family by the name of Hudson had a mine just west of it. Just west of Louisville and there is another mine it's in the middle of Louisville, the Thomas family had a mine there and it is fairly close to Harper Lake. If you know where Harper Lake is. And then in in the town of Superior they had the Industrial Mine and just north of us right here is the old dump site of the Sunny Side Mine the Big Six Mine. And the old Centennial Mine is now in the city limits of Louisville. And it is just the old Centennial is just right on the top of Murphy's Hill as you come south on 96th and then the new Centennial Mine, which was, both them were owned and developed by the Nesbitt family. The new Centennial dump is still in its visible on Highway 42 just half a mile west of 287. Now there may be some others as I don't recall. I don't know that now there's some mines in the Lafayette area too, the old Simpson mine was there. The Black Diamond as well as the the Liley mine on top of the hill here.

Nancy Lawthers 19:43  
What mine?

Ron Fenolia 19:44  
Liley, my uncle's mine

Nancy Lawthers 19:46  
spell that

Ron Fenolia 19:46  
L I L E Y

Nancy Lawthers 19:48  
L I L E Y

Ron Fenolia 19:49  
Yeah. So we, the family still own the farm there and it's like I told you just adjacent to the city limits of Lafayette on the north and the Broomfield on the south

Nancy Lawthers 20:04  
Was it very big?

Ron Fenolia 20:06  
The mine?

Nancy Lawthers 20:07  
Yeah, no, I was thinking of the acreage how much?

Ron Fenolia 20:09  
240 acres?

Nancy Lawthers 20:11  
How much

Ron Fenolia 20:12  
240

Nancy Lawthers 20:13  
240?

Ron Fenolia 20:14  
Yeah.

Nancy Lawthers 20:15  
Right. How did people mine, do the actual mining in the beginning, did they use oxen? Or? Did they carry it out by buckets?

Ron Fenolia 20:28  
Well, no, they had cars. And then they had in the early days, they had mules. And I heard another mine just, I forgot to mention right over the hill, the old Monarch mine, which is, I don't think it's in the city limits of Louisville now, but it's near Highway 96. I think we can see it from my, out the window.

Nancy Lawthers 20:54  
Oh, well, we'll have to take a look.

Ron Fenolia 20:58  
And they used quite a few mules there. And some of the old miners were like horticulturists too let get in the mule barns, and with the mule manure, they'd grow mushrooms,

Nancy Lawthers 21:16  
Oh they would? Well, now that's interesting. Yes.

Ron Fenolia 21:20  
They had an explosion in let's see, in the Monarch mine in February of 1936. Black [map], methane gas exploded. And I think there was about 13 miners that were lost in the explosion. Two of them were able to scramble out the air shaft and up to safety. They recovered all the bodies except one. And that was the body of Joe Jaramillo. And his tombstone can be seen just to the south of highway 36. As you approach Storage Tech, going west to Boulder.

Nancy Lawthers 22:22



Oh, I see. Would you spell his name?

Ron Fenolia 22:25  
Jaramillo?

Nancy Lawthers 22:25  
Yes,

Ron Fenolia 22:26  
J A R A M I L L O

Nancy Lawthers 22:33  
Thank you. Yeah. As and who do own that particular mine,

Ron Fenolia 22:39  
Who owned that? Rocky Mountain Fuel Company

Nancy Lawthers 22:42  
Rocky Mountain Fuel.

Ron Fenolia 22:46  
I don't know whether Rocky Mountain Fuel did have a business. I think somewhere on top of the hill over here by Jefferson County Airport. I think they'd built up. I'm not sure about that. But the prime owner at the time was a lady by the name of Josephine Roche [spelling corrected]

Nancy Lawthers 23:13  
and spell that

Ron Fenolia 23:15  
R O A C H E

Nancy Lawthers 23:19  
Oh, with an E.

Ron Fenolia 23:20  
Yeah, I think that's the way you spell it.

Nancy Lawthers 23:24  
Right. And she owned that.

Ron Fenolia 23:25  
She owned, well, she was the majority stockholder of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company.

Nancy Lawthers 23:30

I see. That must have been unusual.

Ron Fenolia 23:35

Well, she was, as I gathered, a rather active person and involved in the politics in the area

Nancy Lawthers 23:49

Right, right.

Ron Fenolia 23:50

She had to be

Nancy Lawthers 23:51

Yes, yes. Well, it, was Broomfield, a town or a village? obviously Louisville and Lafayette were.

Ron Fenolia 24:02

Broomfield was just a white spot in the road. They had the elevator and the Grange Hall and a few dwellings which are located just off of the old Wadsworth highway there. I can remember when I was in high school to going to dances at the Grange Hall. We had quite the time.

Nancy Lawthers 24:35

The Grange Hall is still

Ron Fenolia 24:36

the Grange Hall, I think right now is occupied by the Colorado State Patrol.

Nancy Lawthers 24:42

Oh, yes.

Ron Fenolia 24:43

Yeah. And there were the Zang farm, with the houses still in Broomfield here. But there was a lake. Oh, pretty good size irrigation reservoir somewhere in the vicinity of, well it'd have to be just off of Second or Third and Nickel, or a little bit to the east there. And then there was another lake south of south of 287 on 10th Avenue and both of those have been leveled and gone into housing. At this time unless you have some other specific question, that's all I can remember.

Nancy Lawthers 25:54

Well, can you tell me exactly where your farm was, where your parents farm was? in Louisville? Describe the

Ron Fenolia 26:04

The old Stearns Dairy

Nancy Lawthers 26:06

Stearns Dairy.

Ron Fenolia 26:07  
West of the Stearns Dairy lake.

Nancy Lawthers 26:10  
West of the Stearn's Dairy Lake,

Ron Fenolia 26:12  
You wanna see it.

Nancy Lawthers 26:13  
Well, in just a minute. Yeah.

Ron Fenolia 26:16  
Right there

Nancy Lawthers 26:18  
right up that way.

Ron Fenolia 26:19  
Yes.

Nancy Lawthers 26:22  
Do you have any old pictures of Louisville, and the mine, or the mines, or Broomfield or?

Ron Fenolia 26:33  
I did have some. And I gave them to the Roseville Historical Society.

Nancy Lawthers 26:40  
Oh, all right. So they're already there.

Ron Fenolia 26:42  
Yeah, yes. Right. I've got some old family pictures. Don't think that you'd be interested in that?

Nancy Lawthers 26:52  
Well, sometimes researchers like to see how people dressed, what they did. Which reminds me what kind of foods did your family eat?

Unknown Speaker 27:06  
[phone ringing, audio paused]

Ron Fenolia 27:09

Just normal family affairs, dinner every Sunday. And contrary to the belief of most people, my mother's folks as well as my father's folk were from the northern part of Italy. And their staple item was not spaghetti. It was rice.

Nancy Lawthers 27:40

Oh rice?

Ron Fenolia 27:41

Yeah. So Sunday, you could expect to have risotto alla Milanese. With chicken.

Nancy Lawthers 27:47

Would you spell that? Whatever that is?

Ron Fenolia 27:49

It's it's risotto alla Milanese. Milan is the city. Yeah. And my grandmother. My mother's side she come from the Como, Lake Como area, which is rice country again.

Nancy Lawthers 28:08

Oh, I see.

Ron Fenolia 28:09

And that's just about where my grandfather on my mother's side came from.

Nancy Lawthers 28:15

How did they get the rice? Here? In Colorado

Ron Fenolia 28:20

Bought it!

Nancy Lawthers 28:21

They just bought it. They didn't raise

Ron Fenolia 28:22

Oh no. No rice grown in Colorado. You can find rice down in Mississippi and Louisiana. Further on South but not in this, and California. But not in our area here.

Nancy Lawthers 28:36

So you've raised chickens too, to go with it?

Ron Fenolia 28:38

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Chicken every Sunday.

Nancy Lawthers 28:40

Chicken every Sunday. Yeah. Right. And did you have special family? Well, festivals or get togethers?

Ron Fenolia 28:52

Thanksgiving, Christmas and the holidays. We'd get together. After the families were grown up why they dispersed and they weren't all close. Many have moved to Denver. And so the visitations were limited to specific dates, right? Such as I said, holidays and so forth.

Nancy Lawthers 29:21

Right. How could the dustbowl years affect you on the farm and even just

Ron Fenolia 29:29

Well. That was in the 30s it was just like anything else, the crops were not plentiful. They were limited. The economy was well, on the downhill side I can remember in town where they had WPA projects, Work Projects Administration. My father for years was the city clerk and constabulary for the town of Louisville.

Nancy Lawthers 30:17

Oh.

Ron Fenolia 30:18

And later, he went back to the mines. And then later he became postmaster. He was postmaster for? Well, let's see, I think from '36 to '68.

Nancy Lawthers 30:37

That was a long time.

Ron Fenolia 30:38

Yeah. So he was known in the area, well known.

Nancy Lawthers 30:48

Did he drive around and deliver the mail or he had somebody to do that?

Ron Fenolia 30:55

Everybody had a box, there was no delivery then.

Nancy Lawthers 30:59

Oh, I see. All right, everybody came to the post office.

Ron Fenolia 31:02

That's right, they had to come to get their mail in the box at the post office. Or there's two methods, either you had a box or you had it in the general delivery. And they'd stand at the counter, then you'd ask for their mail and you'd go through it in alphabetical order and deliver it to them.

Nancy Lawthers 31:20

I see.

Ron Fenolia 31:22

Mail delivery didn't come until after World War Two, right. I mean, it was just a little community. It wasn't a very big community. 1000 people 1200 people.

Nancy Lawthers 31:42

Did you have electricity? Or was that a later thing?

Ron Fenolia 31:46

Oh, we had? Yeah, we had electricity. Dad built his first house for \$1,000. But didn't have any indoor plumbing in it. We still had the old outhouse. Right? And we knew it for when Halloween come everybody

Nancy Lawthers 32:08

Knocked it over?

Ron Fenolia 32:09

That's right. Exactly. It wasn't until I got into high school that we got indoor plumbing. So

Nancy Lawthers 32:25

that you didn't have electricity early. We had electricity and telephones

Ron Fenolia 32:30

And telephones. Yes.

Nancy Lawthers 32:31

You had a telephone exchange. Could you tell me where that was?

Ron Fenolia 32:36

Yes. In fact, my mother was a telephone operator for a while and the telephone operator is right at Ninth and Main, there in Louisville. Right. On the west side of the street. It's a it's a residence now. It's directly across from Joe's market if you know where Joe's market is.

Nancy Lawthers 33:01

Oh, and how did the telephone work? Did you crank it or

Ron Fenolia 33:09

You'd crank it. Operator'd say number please. And you'd tell him the number then they'd connect you.

Nancy Lawthers 33:16

Did you have different rings for your people?

Ron Fenolia 33:19

No. We had a single line

Nancy Lawthers 33:20

Single line. Right.

Ron Fenolia 33:25

But some of them did have different rings because it was on a party line. But ours at home was a single line so didn't have any problem in that respect.

Nancy Lawthers 33:39

Right and no one listening in.

Ron Fenolia 33:42

Well, the operator might have been

Nancy Lawthers 33:43

Yes. Why did the electricity come after? I mean the water come after the electricity. indoor plumbing.

Ron Fenolia 33:54

We had water, domestic water in the sink but we didn't have a bathroom. Right? Why? Economic reasons. Money.

Nancy Lawthers 34:05

Was that true of most people in Louisville?

Ron Fenolia 34:10

Yeah, I would say by far and large it was sure. Because every Halloween you'd know it

Nancy Lawthers 34:19

what kinds of things did boys do on Halloween, besides that?

Ron Fenolia 34:23

Oh, normal, would go by and they'd get wax and wax windows and, they didn't trick or treat then.

Nancy Lawthers 34:41

Oh, they did not?

Ron Fenolia 34:42

No, that's that came on later. But they would move a whole trash bucket and you'd find them a mile down the street or. Just various pieces of property that were an eyesore would be removed. It was a help.

Nancy Lawthers 35:08

I see. Huh? How did you get rid of your trash? Aside from the boys moving it?

Ron Fenolia 35:16

How did we get rid of the trash? Well, we had what were called an ash pit and waste paper and such was disposed of in the ash pit and burnt. And tin cans were put in a container and eventually moved to the city dump. So as the ashes were, people burnt coal at that time.

Nancy Lawthers 35:53

Yes.

Ron Fenolia 35:54

And then when they cleaned their stove and furnace out, they had the coal ash, and they were in the ash pits. And they had people that were regularly employed, employed to clean the ash pits and they'd run up and down the street. Now some of the families that were more well to do in my generation that had bathrooms. Here's an unusual situation. Some of them had septic tanks, but some of them that were located over the old area where the mines were, would get a well driller and drill a hole down to the mine level. And they would connect their sewage and let the sewage disposal, take it down to the mine.

Nancy Lawthers 36:53

Alright, Just

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