

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered 5-20-83

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name SBL821, 5BL823, 5BL817, 5BL818, 5BL819

historic Lafayette Coal Mining Era Buildings (Thematic Resource)

and/or common n/a

2. Location

street & number See Survey Forms n/a not for publication

city, town Lafayette n/a vicinity of

state Colorado code 08 county Boulder code 013

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	n/a In process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thematic	n/a being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
group		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership (see continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town n/a vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Boulder County Courthouse

street & number 14th & Pearl Streets

city, town Boulder state Colorado

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

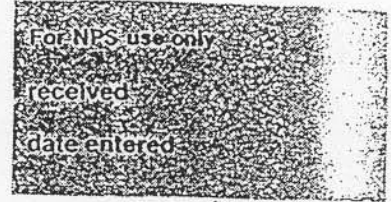
1. Reference List of Buildings in Lafayette Colorado; Cramer, Anne
title 2. City of Lafayette Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1. June 1980 2. Ongoing federal state county local

depository for survey records Lafayette Public Library

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Continuation sheet Lafayette Coal Mining
Era Buildings

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Congregational Church --5BL821
300 E. Simpson
City of Lafayette
201 E. Simpson
Lafayette, Colorado

Miller House-409 E. Cleveland --5BL818
Mel Roberts
409 E. Cleveland
Lafayette, Colorado

Lewis House-108 E. Simpson --5BL819
City of Lafayette
201 E. Simpson
Lafayette, Colorado

Kullgren House-209 E. Cleveland --5BL817
James M. and Mary G. Callen
P.O.Box 1331
North Bend, Washington 98045

Lafayette House-600 E. Simpson --5BL823
Edward Parker
Box 929
Silverplume, Colorado 80476

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one
 unaltered
 altered

Check one
 original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lafayette Thematic District is a group of structures which represent an era in the community's history when coal mining dominated the lives of the citizens of this small Colorado city. From 1887 to World War II, coal production increased from one to five mines in the immediate vicinity of the town, as well as the continued exploitation of the Northern Coal Field. Labor problems eventually resulted which received nation-wide publicity, as miners battled owners for higher pay and better working conditions.

The buildings dating to this important period in the history of Lafayette which appear to meet Register criteria include five properties--three residences, one commercial building and a church.

Religion-Congregational Church

Commercial-Lafayette House

Residence-Kullgren House (merchant)

Residence-Miller House (city's founder)

Residence-Lewis House (miner)

Each structure is architecturally different, reflecting their varied use. They are all situated within the original town site of Lafayette as platted 1899, occupying one or more city lots.

The survey and National Register nomination forms were completed by Community Services Collaborative, an architectural and planning firm specializing in historic preservation. Manuel Weiss, chief historian for the firm, was the team leader of this project which included architects and designers from CSC.

The original city limits of Lafayette were selected as the target area. Initially work began with meetings with town officials who offered their input regarding the historically significant structures in the city. Next a determination of eligibility for historic designation for Lafayette Historic District (1979) was pursued. It was deemed, after careful field analysis, that there was approximately 30-35% intrusion of modern structures and alterations, negating the concept of a traditional historic district. Instead, a thematic district was deemed most suitable.

The Congregational Church and the Lafayette House, suggested by the city were chosen as appropriate examples of the theme and other structures were sought which might be included. Because of financial considerations, only the best and most varied examples of the coal era structures were selected. These were to represent all facets of the era, meet National Register criteria, and possess historical integrity.

The searches were conducted at the preservation offices of the Colorado Historical Society, the Lafayette Library, the Lafayette Miner Museum, and the Western History Archives at the University of Colorado. All previously recorded site forms in the target area were photocopied. Earlier historic site surveys were gathered in order to establish the most complete data base.

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This facet was followed by preliminary field work. With an initial list in hand developed from the earlier research, all possible sites were inspected. This eventually reduced the number to less than a dozen choices. In order to complete the final list of sites which would comprise the thematic district, a public meeting was held with the support of the local historical society. The project was explained in depth and slides were shown depicting the best examples for the district, as well as those which did not meet the set criteria for the National Register of Historic Places. As hoped, the program spurred the memory of those citizens present at the meeting and input was received both on those structures selected by CSC staff and others.

After careful consideration, five structures were chosen as best representing the coal mining era of Lafayette (unfortunately there are no structures remaining at the mines). These buildings were then researched thoroughly, not only the traditional resources (i.e. libraries, newspapers, museums, county courthouse, archives, etc.) but also included interviews and oral histories with owners and residents. After exhaustive and comprehensive studies of each property, the final register nomination was then completed.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		SEE SURVEY FORMS
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature
___ 1600-1699	___ architecture	___ education	___ military
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music
XX 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy
XX 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government
		___ invention	___ religion
			___ science
			___ sculpture
			___ social/humanitarian
			___ theater
			___ transportation
			___ other (specify)

Specific dates See survey forms Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lafayette Coal Mining structures are significant in reflecting the important role played by the coal mining industry in Colorado. The variety of buildings - commercial, residential, and religious - illustrate life in the coal mining town in all its facets.

Lafayette and Mary Miller, arriving in Colorado in 1863 from Iowa, homesteaded 160 acres near Burlington. By the following year, he purchased a stage station along the Overland Trail which served as the main link between Denver and Cheyenne. The Millers operated the station for seven years, moving to the present site of Lafayette in 1871. Here the couple began an agricultural operation, only to move again, this time to the city of Boulder in 1874. Four years later, Lafayette died and was buried at his farm.

Returning to agricultural pursuits, Mary Miller soon became interested in the possibility of coal deposits on her property. Since 1859 coal had been mined at Marshall and it was assumed by many that the veins of the black mineral ran throughout the area. In 1884 a 14 foot vein was encountered on the Miller farm which by this time numbered 1280 acres and was considered one of the best farms in the county. Under a lease agreement with John Simpson in 1887, the first shaft was sunk on the Miller land and mining commenced in the area.

The following year, Mary platted 150 acres for the town site of Lafayette, which she named after her late husband. By July of 1888 the first houses were erected and a second mine (The Cannon) was in operation.

Nearby, at the McAfee farm, another shaft was sunk by Joseph Mitchell. Within six months the town had taken shape with two general stores, livery stables, boarding houses, and commercial establishments. The output from the mines at Lafayette totaled 300 tons per day, amounting to 10,000 tons per month.¹

By this time, the Northern Coal Field in Colorado was being heavily exploited with mines at Marshall, Louisville, Erie, and other communities. More mines opened at Lafayette as the railroad reached the town, among them the Excelsior and Spencer. In August 1889, organized miners of the Northern Colorado Federation of Coal Miners called for other trade groups in Denver to boycott the scab coal arriving from the non-unionized mines at Lafayette.² This was the first sign of the ensuing labor unrest that was to plague the community.

A school was erected during the summer of 1889 to house the growing population which had reached 50 by 1890.³ Within two years, as the mines increased production, the population soared to 1,000⁴ with 200 houses, many commercial buildings, and five working coal mines.⁵ A city water system was installed to meet the needs of the growing community.

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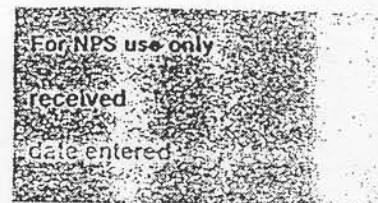
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Lafayette Coal Mining Era

Continuation sheet Buildings

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Labor problems arose again in 1893 when a mass meeting of miners was held in Lafayette on October 25th. The men wished payment in cash, as opposed to checks, and called a strike which took place on November 1st. The next day operators agreed to their demands and the men returned to work. This is but one example of the many problems which arose between labor and management at the mines.

As American industry grew, so did the demand for fuel. In 1899 the Simpson Mine was shipping 40 train carloads of coal every day, much going to the hard rock mining camps in the mountains.⁶ This eventually reached 216,982 tons⁷ in 1902.

The importance of coal to the community was further evidenced by the erection of a power plant in 1906. Since it is cheaper to transport electricity than coal, a site was chosen near Lafayette to furnish power throughout the area. During its peak years of 1906 through 1929, the Lafayette plant produced electricity for the towns of Boulder, Longmont, Berthoud, Loveland, Fort Collins, Greeley, and also provided the power supply for the interurban Railway.

The Strike of 1910 thrust Lafayette into the limelight. Until this time organized labor, in the form of the United Mine Workers of America (UMW), could claim a membership of only 15% of the workers in the Northern Coal Field. John Lawson, famed organizer for the UMW, arrived in Lafayette in 1908, quickly organized the entire field, and moved to obtain a contract for the Louisville-Lafayette miners which was accepted by the operators. When this contract came up for renewal in 1910, the operators refused union demands and on April 4th of that year the miners went on strike.

Many operators brought in strike breakers and scab labor. Incidents of violence occurred in Lafayette. In August of 1911 the situation was further aggravated when the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company merged with the leading producer in the area and was intent on breaking the union's will. The fight continued and was elevated to a national level by John P. White, UMW president, who claimed, "Colorado should be a good proving ground for the whole nation."⁸

In the following years, attention was directed to the southern coal fields, but Lafayette was thrust again into the limelight when fighting erupted in October 1913, and the state militia were ordered into the area. Things remained calm until the Ludlow massacre when violence again erupted as miners were determined to avenge the death of their fellow workers. In April 1914, the federal government intervened when President Wilson ordered a cessation of violence and federal troops were sent to the area. The strike continued until December when representatives of the UMW acquiesced to a federal committee and its eventual decisions. Throughout this entire period, Lafayette was considered the center of the northern strike district.⁹

Labor unrest continued in the area, notably after World War I when the war time agreement expired. All but two of the mines in the Northern Coal Field were affected. Yet, the community continued to grow. The importation of strike breakers during the year of 1910 alone increased the population by 80%.¹⁰ The rich agricultural lands increased in value, but coal continued as the dominant economic factor of the community.

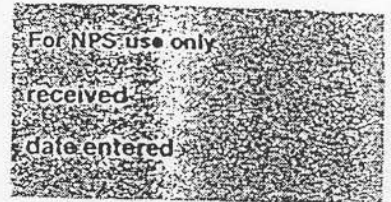
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The UMW had been crushed after the earlier strikes of 1914, but the 1920s ushered in the Industrial Workers of the World as a new organizing force. Their activities eventually led to the strike of 1927. Lafayette was once again the center of the Northern Field and on October 17th a mass meeting of the miners elected to walk out of the mines the following day. By October 20th, only the Black Diamond and Columbine mines were operating. Although the center of the strike started in the Southern Field, it shifted to the north when miners blocked the road from Lafayette east to the Columbine in November. State police were ordered to protect the mine property. This only increased the number of strikers picketing at the Columbine where barb wire enclosures sealed off the site. The inevitable violence occurred on November 21st when state police and mine guards opened fire on the unarmed strikers, killing six and wounding sixty. The dead were buried at Lafayette.

The Columbine Massacre was the height of labor unrest in the area, although the strike continued into 1928. The ensuing years brought natural gas to Colorado, the depression, and severe market and price reductions, all of which seriously affected the coal industry in and around Lafayette. The industry never recovered, and in 1944 the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, owner of almost all mining operations surrounding Lafayette, went bankrupt.

From 1930 through the following two decades the population remained fairly stable as the economy of the area changed from mining to agriculture. Mining never regained a foothold in the region, but from the 1880s through the 1930s, coal was the mainstay of the community providing almost all inhabitants with their livelihood, either directly or indirectly. The labor problems which plagued the community brought Lafayette to the forefront as a center for union activities and violence during these years. Frank Miller, grandson of the founder of the town, looking back over the decades concisely described the community "Lafayette was completely a mining town."

The buildings selected to represent the theme of coal mining reflect a broad cross section of the properties of this era. Only those buildings which occupy a central role in the history of the town during the coal mining era or are the best representative of their type and style have been chosen for nominations. Those properties which constitute the thematic district have been carefully selected to portray the role of the various sectors of Lafayette during the years that coal was the dominant theme of the community.

FOOTNOTES

¹The Boulder News, 3 January 1889.

²Rocky Mountain News, 26 August 1889, Vol. 31, p. 3:2.

³Colorado State Business Directory, 1890.

⁴Boulder County Directory, 1892.

⁵The Boulder County Herald, 13 July 1892.

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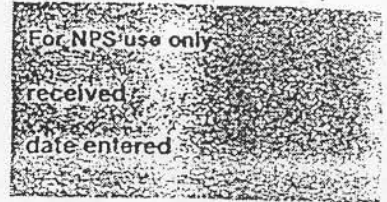
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⁶Daily Camera, 11 May 1899, Vol. 9, #40.

⁷Henry Dennon, 10th Biennial Report of the Inspector of Coal Mines of the State of Colorado 1901-02 (Denver: The Smith Brooks Printing Co., State Printers (1903)). p. 96.

⁸Barron B. Beshoar, Out of the Depths, (Denver: Golden Bell Press, 1942), p. 35.

⁹Rev. Henry A. Atkinson, The Church and Industrial Warfare, (Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America), 1914.

¹⁰Dana Fletcraft, The Growth of Lafayette, 1972, p. 7.

¹¹Oral History with Frank Miller (1893-1973), 1968.

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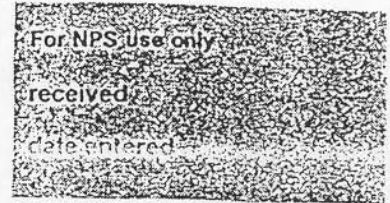
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BOOKS

- Atkinson, Rev. Henry A. The Church and Industrial Warfare. Federal Council
Beshoar, Barron B. Out of the Depths. Denver: The World Press, 1942.
- Glenny, Hazel Alice. "A History of Labor Disputes in the Northern Colorado
Coal Mining Fields with Emphasis on the 1927-1928 Strike." Masters Thesis,
1938.
- Lawson, Henry O. "The Colorado Coal Strike of 1927-1928." Masters Thesis,
University of Colorado, 1950.
- McGovern, George S., and Guttridge, Leonard F. The Great Coalfield War. Boston:
Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972.

REPORTS

- "Biennial Reports of the State Inspector of Coal Mines of the State of Colorado."
(relevant years).
- "Biennial Reports of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Colorado."
(relevant years).
- "Proceedings of the 10th Annual Convention of District Number 15, United Mine
Workers of America." Louisville, Colorado, 1913.

NEWSPAPERS

- Boulder Daily Camera, various articles.
- Boulder County Herald, various articles.
- Rocky Mountain News, various articles.
- Lafayette News, various articles.
- Boulder News, various articles.

FILES

- Historic Files of the Lafayette Library - clippings, oral histories, historical
tracts, business directories.