



Potica, Pints, and Prayers in Old Bojon Town

Prepared by:

Mary Therese Anstey
Cheri Yost
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Wade Broadhead
City of Pueblo

Dawn DiPrince
El Pueblo Museum

Past and Present Residents of Bojon Town

Certified Local Government Grant
CO-13-017

July 2014



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The Eilers Neighborhood Story and Community-Built Survey

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On the cover. The Walter's Brewers, the team that played at St. Mary's Ballfield, won the 1934 City Semi-Pro Championship game. *(Photo courtesy of Sue Miketa)*

Acknowledgements

by Mary Therese Anstey, Lead Author

Over the course of the past three years spent working on this project, I have been blessed to discover, again and again, what a special place Bojon Town was and still is. The generosity of spirit shown to me during this project is humbling and has probably spoiled me for working on future projects.

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INTRODUCTION

Reaping What You Sow: Harvesting Stories

Kdor redko sejé, bo redko žel.
(What you reap is what you sow.)
— Slovenian proverb

Sometimes the most beautiful gardens grow in the most unexpected places.

In 1883, German immigrant Anton Eilers opened the Colorado Smelter, one of the largest ore processing facilities in United States. Enormous in its own right, it was still dwarfed by the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's adjacent Minnequa Works, the largest steel mill west of the Mississippi River.

The Colorado Smelter generated immense wealth. In less than five years, from August 28, 1883, until January 1, 1888, the smelter company purchased more than \$4.75 million worth of ore resulting in profits of \$1.75 million per year from production. On top of that, the ore from that time period contained 4,436,099.53 ounces of silver and 11,887.25 ounces of gold with a value of over \$7 million, almost \$180 million today.¹

Yet that wealth came at an enormous cost to the environment. Smelters belched out thick, black smoke laden with toxic vapors, so that as early as 1879, a Leadville newspaper labeled the very existence of smelters "a matter of wholesale murder and suicide."² The facility produced staggering amounts of hazardous slag that permanently altered Pueblo's topography. When the smelter closed in 1908 it left behind a lifeless, brown and gray landscape.

But what was once cast aside as barren has born great fruit. A community of Slovenians, themselves displaced with the reordering of the industrialized world, took this neglected place and made it their home. Slag heaps became playgrounds; a smokestack became a school. And in 1988, the parishioners of St. Mary Help of Christians Church, itself built on the very site of the Colorado Smelter, planted a prayer garden; this natural sanctuary is a lush, green oasis in the shadow of a hulking steel mill and within blocks of a busy freeway. Here the rosary took literal form in garlands of roses.

"Urban landscapes are storehouses for...social memories," observes architectural historian Dolores Hayden, "because natural features such as hills and harbors, as well as streets, buildings, and patterns of settlement, frame the lives of many people and often outlast their lifetimes." She implores us to tap "the power of place—the power of ordinary landscapes to nurture citizens' public memory." What you are about to read is an attempt to answer Hayden's call.³

This project, at its heart, is about stories. This document contains a wealth of personal tales and is far richer for it. These accounts, shared individually and in group settings, recall the personal—sometimes funny, often poignant, and always subject to the tricks passage of time and personal filters play on



Figure i.1. When Josephine Okoren, above, arrived in the Pueblo area, she worked for a family "out in the country" who treated her poorly. Somehow local Slovenian Mary Germ found out about this situation and resolved to rescue Josephine. Mary moved Josephine from her initial placement, giving her a job in her boarding house. The Germs became Josephine's American family. Mary bought this dress for Josephine and had the studio photograph taken in 1913 so she could send it back to her family in Slovenia. Josephine later married and became known as "Pepa." (Story and image courtesy of Eileen (Kocman) Deverich)

what individuals reveal. The stories contain the kind of candid details that rarely appear in standard written history sources. This context is based upon the stories of those individuals who chose to participate. It cannot and does not claim to represent the memories and experiences of every person who arrived, worshipped, learned, worked, socialized, shopped, lived, or grew up in Pueblo's Slovenian Bojon Town. From these stories, despite their variations in terms of individual details, a number of larger themes emerged, and those themes provide the structure for the larger story presented on the following pages.

This context traces the story of Pueblo's Slovenian community, from their immigration from Europe to the present day. Within the text the terms "Slovenian" and "Bojon" are used interchangeably. Bojon is an American slang term referring to those of Slovenian origin.⁴ The origins of this term are unclear. However, two possible explanations have emerged. The first involves the fact many Slovene men were named John and dressed in their finest clothes, including bow ties, when applying for work at Pueblo's smelters or the steelworks. Therefore, the name John and the bow tie were combined to describe the men as Bojons. The second explanation posits immigrants who traveled by train to Paris prior to sailing for the United States overheard Parisians remarking, "Quels beaux gens" or "what handsome people." So, when they arrived at Ellis Island, instead of declaring themselves to be subjects of the hated emperor Franz Joseph, they instead called themselves "beaux gens," a term immigration officials recorded as Bojons. Like so many ethnic labels, both the meaning and the perception of the term often depends upon who is using it and in what context. In the late 1880s and 1890s, when Pueblo's industrial economy drew thousands of immigrants, the existing population often lumped Slovenians, Croatians, Slovaks, and

other nationalities together and used the term Bojon as a derogatory slur. However, when used within the Slovenian culture, this label was not considered offensive. Today, the Slovenian-Americans in Pueblo, the ancestors of original immigrants, have adopted Bojon as a positive description not only for their nationality but also for their music, food, heritage, and culture. The area near Eilers Smelter, where so many Slovenians settled, became known as Bojon Town and many current and former residents still prefer the moniker Old Bojon Town to describe their neighborhood and the memories made there.

Slovenian immigrants arriving in Pueblo, like other newcomers before and after them, faced a disorienting array of new experiences. There were the challenges of learning English and, in many cases, discrimination for those who chose not to do so. Those individuals who arrived here, however, endured such negativity in exchange for a better life for themselves and their children. A number of institutions provided new immigrants a way to maintain their identity, culture, and customs. The context highlights the role the Roman Catholic Church, specifically the St. Mary Help of Christians parish, played in both welcoming and assimilating Pueblo's Slovenian immigrants. This parish was established at a time when Church authorities advocated "ethnic" congregations as a way to retain not only high levels of membership in the American Catholic flock but also encourage immigrants to adopt the American way of life. St. Mary's Church and School, under early leadership from Father Cyril Zupan, a native of Slovenia, eased the assimilation of its parishioners. Zupan's decision to relocate his parish, after the 1921 flood, from the Grove to the higher ground in Bojon Town both influenced and reflected the migration of Pueblo's Slovenian-Americans. Several alumni stories described St. Mary's School as a "melting pot" that wel-

comed not only Slovenian but also Italian and, increasingly, Mexican students into its classrooms. St. Mary's Benedictine nuns taught these students and lived on the East Mesa Avenue site for over seventy years. As neighborhood and city demographics changed, St. Mary's ceased to be an exclusively Slovenian parish. Yet, its celebration of traditional holy days and customs; erection of the Prayer Garden featuring numerous memorial bricks and plaques; and establishment of the St. Mary's Gornick Slovenian Library, Museum, and Genealogy Center in the former school building have made it a religious and cultural center for Pueblo's Slovenian American community.

Slovenian-owned local businesses both benefitted the individual ethnic entrepreneurs and served their customers. A wide variety of neighborhood establishments, including bars, groceries and mercantiles, restaurants, pool halls, bakeries, and many others provided Bojon patrons the opportunity to conduct business in their native language. The context highlights the story of Slovenian immigrant Josephine OKoren "Pepa" Glavich who established Eilers' Place in 1933. This neighborhood bar is now in its fourth generation of family ownership, still operating at 326 East Mesa Avenue. Commercial enterprises, beyond supporting individual families, fostered upward mobility. Opening a business, something that never would have been attainable for most immigrants if they had remained in the "old country," allowed many to participate in the American dream and make a better life for future generations.

Some of the most intimate and richly remembered stories in the context describe the neighborhood aspects of Bojon Town. This portion of the text is about how current and former residents define home, not only the physical buildings that sheltered their families but also the events, both mundane and

special, that defined their lives. This project focused on a portion of the neighborhood, an ethnic enclave of late 1800s and early 1900s homes adjacent to the Cyril Zupan Subdivision, where nearly all of the houses were constructed from the late 1940s through the early 1960s by Slovenian American first-time homeowners. Most neighborhood residents, whether living in existing or new houses, relied upon friends and family to assist with construction work. There also was an interesting phenomenon of modernization, perhaps inspired by its adjacency to the new postwar subdivision, among the owners of some older houses along East Mesa Avenue. Many home stories were directly related to memories of food, especially Bojon delicacies like kolbase and potica.⁵

The alleys, streets, yards, and schoolyard in the neighborhood were the scene for numerous childhood diversions. Popular leisure activities for kids in Bojon Town included self-made fun like playing in the clay hills or on construction sites, riding homemade skateboards, building playhouses, playing jacks and hopscotch, riding bicycles, and youthful staples like hide and go seek and kick the can. St. Mary's Ballfield, formerly located where the Zupan Subdivision houses are now, was the homeground for the semi-professional Walter's Brewers team who faced off against famous barnstorming teams. This emersion in and love of baseball translated into big league experience for a number of Pueblo Bojons.

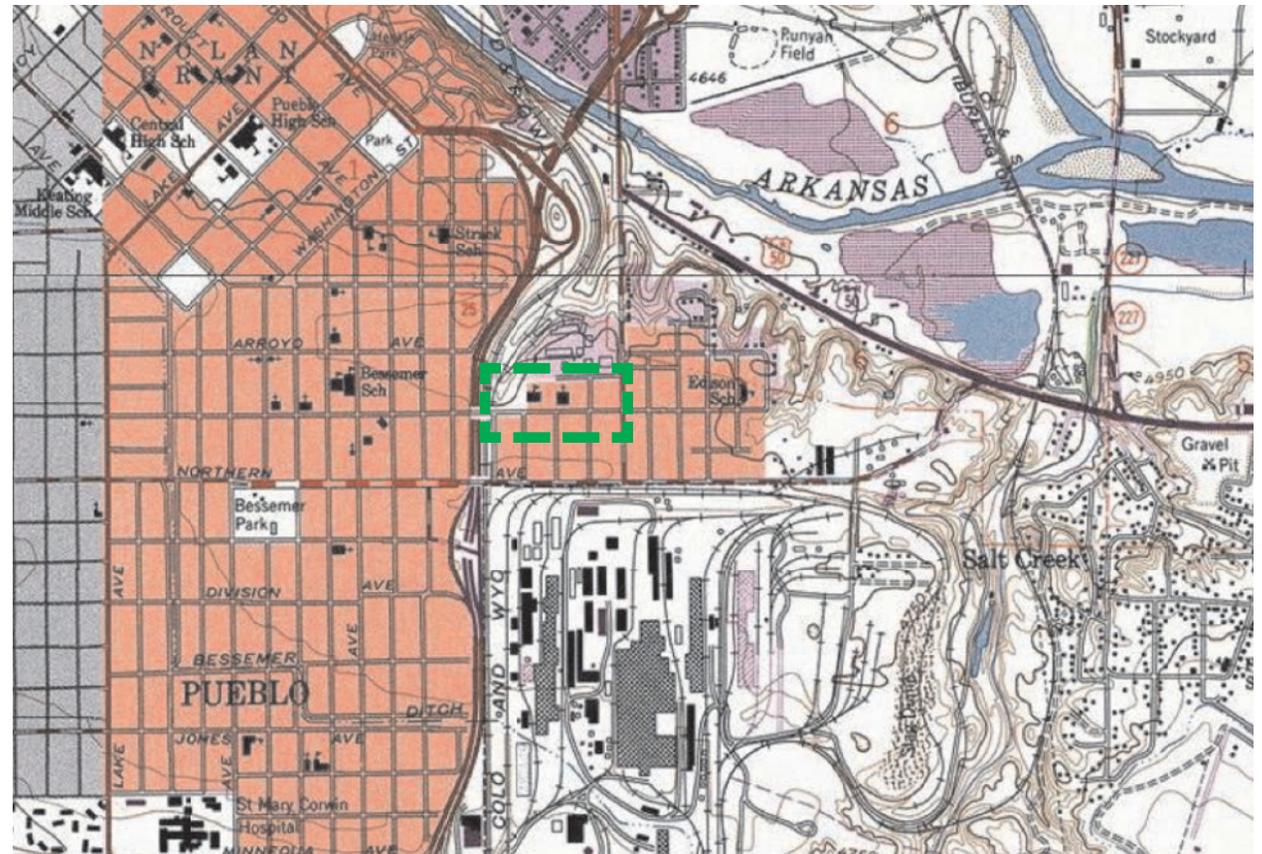
The context portion of this document concludes with a brief discussion of current challenges facing Bojon Town. In the mid 2000s the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) started investigating several alternatives for widening Interstate 25 through Pueblo. The engineering approach the agency favored called for demolition of over fifty homes in Bojon Town and would have brought a new entrance and exit

ramp within feet of the St. Mary's site. After neighborhood opposition, CDOT ultimately decided they did not have sufficient funds to finance any I-25 expansion now. Such bureaucratic interactions encouraged a group of neighbors to establish a formal neighborhood association. These neighbors wanted to be better organized to address issues like required responses to highway proposals, but they are also interested in both honoring the past of Bojon Town and charting a course for the future of the neighborhood. The Eiler Heights (in Old Bojon Town) Neighborhood Association is now engaged in another bureaucratic battle, dealing with issues associated with City

and County officials' late 2013 decision to place the portion of the neighborhood surrounding the site of the former Eilers Smelter on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund mitigation list.

This decision is one of the greatest ironies in Pueblo: that one of its healthiest neighborhoods grows in its poorest soil. What science deems toxic supports the strong, deep, and very healthy roots of faith and family that have led to a rich harvest of tradition, memory, and place.

Sometimes the value of a place is far greater than any sample of its soil.



Map i.1. Overview of the Eilers Neighborhood relative to its geographic context. Downtown Pueblo is across the Arkansas River, to the northwest. The former CF&I Minnequa Steelworks is immediately south. (USGS)

— — — — — Survey Area Boundary

SECTION 1

Eilers Neighborhood Story

COMING HOME TO PUEBLO: SLOVENIAN IMMIGRANTS

The earliest Slovenian immigrants, arriving in North America in the 1700s, were missionary Catholic priests. However, the majority of Slovenians, like Josephine “Pepa” OKoren and so many others, came much later. They were part of the “second wave” of European immigration (1880s–1920s) that included Italians, Germans, and various Balkan and Slavic ethnicities. Between 1850 and 1910 more than 300,000 Slovenians, or about fifty-six percent of the country’s entire population, emigrated.⁶ Slovenian immigration to the United States peaked between 1905 and 1913. The 1910 U.S. Census reported 183,431 persons of Slovenian mother tongue, 123,631 “foreign-born” Slovenians, and 59,800 born in America.⁷ However, it is difficult to determine exact numbers since official immigration statistics both classified Slovenians under broad nationality categories such as “Slavic” and often referred to them as Austrians, Italians, or Croats. Prior to 1918 most Slovenian immigrants were considered Austrian by citizenship.

Slovenian immigrants sought a new life in America based upon economic realities in their homeland. They came from small, inefficient farms in isolated rural villages. They could barely afford the high taxes on their land and had no money to invest in improvements. This mix of small agricultural plots and large families meant their children had little or no chance for upward mobility.⁸ International shipping companies capitalized upon industrial America’s need for inexpensive labor, pro-

moting “the economic, political, and social opportunities available in the U.S., (and) eagerly providing a way for Slovenians to reach them.”⁹ In the early 1880s the Colorado Coal & Iron Company, the predecessor to Colorado Fuel & Iron (CF&I), sent recruiters east, targeting immigrants just arrived from overseas and those already established in industrial cities like Cleveland. They hired Slovenians, as well as Slovaks, Germans, and Italians, to work in the mill in Pueblo.

Slovenia’s geographic location within Europe gave its immigrants a slight linguistic advantage. While they did not speak English, most Slovenian immigrants knew German at a time when many of the company’s foremen also spoke that language. In addition, the Slovenians were considered hard workers and were keen to embrace the higher wages and improved living conditions an American job made possible. Of course, their immigrant status also carried disadvantages. Over time, especially during the economic depression of the 1890s, Americans made subtle distinctions between “genuine German Austrians, other German-nationality members, and various non-German ethnic groups...who were looked down upon...and given...pejorative labels” such as Bojon.¹⁰ Yet, in face of this discrimination, and “regardless of what they had expected when they left their homeland and any disappointment in what they found upon arrival, they had committed to finding a new life in America, and that is what they did.”¹¹

Pueblo’s Slovenian immigration figures mirrored national



Slovenia

The Republic of Slovenia is located in Central Europe, surrounded by Italy to the west, Austria to the north, Hungary to the east, and Croatia to the south. The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana. The country has an area of 7,896 square miles or slightly smaller than the State of Massachusetts. The 2013 estimated population was just below two million. The vast majority of Slovenians are Roman Catholic.

Throughout its long history Slovenia has been under the political control of the Bavarians, the Franks, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Austrian Empire. Slovenia was part of Austria and then Yugoslavia and experienced both German and Italian occupation. From 1941 through 1945, the country experienced a brutal communist revolution. Slovenia declared independence from the Federation of Yugoslavia on June 25, 1991, and after twelve days of fighting achieved this goal. The Slovenian Constitution was adopted on December 23, 1991.



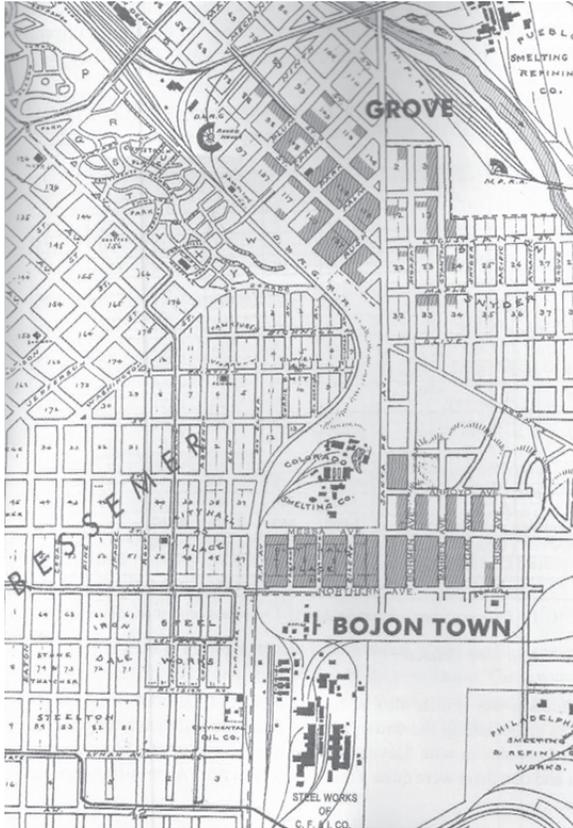


Figure 1.1. In 1910, most Slovenian immigrants and their families lived in either the Grove or Bojon Town. (*Matjaz Klemencic's Jim Pugel and Other Slovenian Pioneers of Pueblo, Colorado (2009)*)

trends. According to Slovenian priest Father Cyril Zupan, only five Slovenian immigrants lived in Pueblo in 1885. However, these numbers grew steadily. He indicated there were 300 Slovenians in Pueblo in 1891, 400 in 1892, and 800 in 1895.¹² In 1907 Pueblo experienced its peak Slovenian population of 3,500, but economic changes in the city, most notably the closing of some of the smelters where these immigrants worked, caused a significant outmigration. The 1910 Census indicated there were approximately 2,410 Slovenians living in Pueblo, a mere 5.3 percent of the city's total population.¹³

Most of Pueblo's Slovenians settled in one of two areas, either "the Grove" or "Bojon Town." Both neighborhoods were located near the major Slovenian employers: the smelters, railroads, and the steel mill. The Grove was a low-lying area along the Arkansas River named for large groves of cottonwood trees that originally grew there. Just southeast of Pueblo's downtown, this Slovenian area was bounded by the river on the north, Moffat Street and Santa Fe Avenue on the east, the Denver & Rio Grande railroad tracks on the west, and the Colorado Smelting Company to the south.¹⁴ Early Slovenian settler Joe Egan bought the majority of land in the Grove, later selling lots to other arriving immigrants. With Slovenian homes, businesses, and institutions, the Grove became a "city within a city" and allowed Pueblo's Slovenians to remain a tight-knit community.¹⁵ By 1894, there were about twenty bars or saloons in the Grove and "in the evening you could hear the sounds of different accordions playing Slovenian songs."¹⁶

Over time, especially after the severe devastation from the 1921 flood, more and more Slovenian families moved to Bojon Town in Bessemer.¹⁷ Located south and east of the Eilers Smelter, Bojon Town was bounded by Russ Avenue on the east, Northern Avenue on the south, and (present-day) Rio Grande

Avenue on the west. Numerous businesses, both new and re-located from the Grove, sat along South Santa Fe and Northern avenues, and East Mesa Avenue formed the east-west spine of the district.¹⁸ Census figures from 1910 indicate 1,275 individuals who spoke Slovenian living in Bojon Town.¹⁹ This figure made up less than fifty percent of the neighborhood; the Bojons shared space with Italians as well as immigrants from the Balkans and Austria-Hungary.

For immigrants, key institutions in the United States helped them assimilate in a new country whilst retaining links to their native language, culture, and customs. Many ethnicities, including Slovenians, started fraternal lodges, native-language newspapers, social clubs, and musical groups in the American communities where they settled. For Pueblo's Slovenians, church, school, Bojon-owned bars and businesses, and their neighborhoods all eased their transition into a new culture and, in the process, fostered lifelong friendships that seemed to reinforce their Bojon identity.

SAVING OUR SOULS: ST. MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS CATHOLIC PARISH

St. Mary Help of Christians Church is the geographic center of the Eilers neighborhood and spiritual home for Pueblo's Slovenian-American community. The site at 211-311 East Mesa Avenue includes the rectory, former school, church, convent, and prayer garden. A remarkable number of former residents, despite moving elsewhere in the city, still belong to the parish and return for not only weekly mass but also special occasions such as annual Slovenian Night dinners, blessing of the Zegen baskets for Easter, the Feast of St. Nicholas prior to Christmas, and family funerals.

The congregation was established in circa 1891 when

Denver Bishop Nicholas Chrysostom Matz asked Reverend Boniface Wirtner, of St. Vincent Archabbey, in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, to establish a parish for Pueblo's Slovenian, German, and Slovak community. This pattern of establishing "ethnic" parishes was prevalent in the Catholic Church during the late 1800s. It was viewed as a way to lessen some of the challenges of immigrant assimilation by offering religious services in parishioners' native language and maintaining traditions from "the old country."²⁰ This congregation first worshipped in an abandoned broom factory on South Santa Fe Avenue in the Grove. Father Cyril Zupan, originally from Carniola, Slovenia, became pastor in 1894 and christened the parish St. Mary Help

of Christians. In 1895 he purchased a site on Clark Street for a new church and school, staffed by the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago. The Slovaks and Germans eventually split from St. Mary's, each building its own church.²¹

Father Zupan remained pastor of St. Mary's and, when the 1921 flood badly damaged the Clark Street property, he sought higher ground along East Mesa Avenue. The current St. Mary's site hosted the former Eilers Smelter, the largest in Colorado at the time of its construction in 1883 but idle since 1908. The eleven-acre site, purchased for \$25,000, also included two residences and a barn. The home of smelter superintendent George Marsh became the rectory, although it

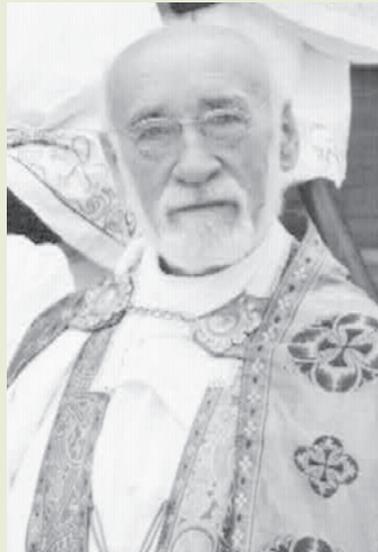
Father Cyril Zupan

Reverend Cyril Zupan was born April 17, 1862, in Srakolje, Slovenia. He was ordained on October 24, 1886, at St. John's Abbey, in Collegeville, Minnesota. He arrived in Pueblo in 1894, serving St. Mary's parish for forty-five years. He chose the name St. Mary Help of Christians based upon the same Slovenian title, Our Lady of Brezje, from his homeland. In addition to his duties in Pueblo, he established (Queen of the Most) Holy Rosary parish (4688 Pearl Street) for the Slovenian community in Denver, commuting by train as its pastor from 1918 to 1921.

During his time at St. Mary's, Father Zupan served as an Americanizing influence upon his parishioners. When the United States entered World War I, he countered feelings of ethnic distrust by standing on the Pueblo County Courthouse steps to pledge his and his parishioners' support for American troops. Nearly 300 St. Mary's members served overseas during the war. He also canvassed parishioners to support the war effort monetarily, with a majority of adults purchasing Liberty Loans and children buying Thrift Stamps. In 1923 he and other Slavic priests in the region suffered personal attacks from the Ku Klux Klan, yet he remained a strong advocate for his people and their integration into larger Pueblo society.

After the 1921 flood, Father Zupan purchased the current church/school site. This eleven-acre purchase cost \$25,000 and covered four full city blocks, extending all the way to South Santa Fe Avenue. In the 1930s the area east of the church was used as a community baseball park complete with wooden grandstands. Sale of both house lots along Eilers and South Santa Fe avenues and burial plots at Rosemont Cemetery allowed the parish to defray its debt, and by the 1950s, build a new St. Mary's Church.

The parish celebrated Father Zupan's Golden Jubilee (fifty years in the priesthood) on October 26, 1936. In 1938 Pueblo's 30 Club, a local charitable organization, named him its "Man of the Year" in recognition of his service to Pueblo's Slovenian Catholics. He retired nearly three years later and moved to Cañon City to be Prior of Holy Cross Abbey. As a farewell gift, he had a new pipe organ installed at St. Mary's Church. Father Zupan died on October 22, 1951, and is buried at Roselawn Cemetery.



Father Cyril Zupan was a long-time pastor who served both in Pueblo and in Denver. Here he is on October 26, 1936, celebrating his Golden Jubilee. (Image courtesy of St. Mary's Slovenian Library and Genealogy Center)

Benedictine Fathers

The Benedictine Fathers from St. Vincent Archabbey, in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, shepherded St. Mary's parishioners from 1891 to 1922. Then the Benedictine monks became an independent monastery affiliated with the Holy Cross Abbey in Cañon City. In 1996 St. Mary's clustered with St. Patrick's and Our Lady of Assumption parishes, ceasing their exclusive association with the Benedictine order.

Benedictine Pastors of St. Mary's Parish

Reverend Boniface Wirtner.....	1891–1894
Reverend Cyril Zupan.....	1894–1939
Reverend Anthony Roitz.....	1939–1943
Reverend Daniel Gnidica	1943–1972
Reverend Claude Roberts	1972–1974
Reverend Blane Bebble	1974–1984
Reverend Gregory Hudson.....	1984–1994
Reverend Louis Kirby.....	1994–1996



The Blessed Mother is central to the faith. (Image courtesy of St. Mary's Slovenian Library and Genealogy Center)

Feast Days at St. Mary's Parish

Lent and Easter. The forty days of Lent are associated with sacrifice and are intended to prepare for the coming of Jesus' resurrection (Easter). The Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday (dates vary). During this liturgical season Roman Catholics traditionally forego meat on Fridays.

Wednesdays—For several years, parishioners shared meatless soup lunch after midday mass with donations made to Operation Rice Bowl to combat world hunger.

Palm Sunday (one week prior to Easter)—The parish holds a mass with the American Slovenian Catholic Union. On this day butarice—rainbow-colored twists of dried palm fronds made in Ljubljana, Slovenia—decorate the Church. After mass, parishioners enjoy a Slovenian breakfast in the Church basement.

Holy Saturday (day before Easter)—The priest blesses the Zegen ("blessed food") baskets. These packages include food symbolizing Jesus. Although baskets differ, some traditional items (and the symbolism of the contents) include: kolbase links (chains of death broken at the resurrection), potica (Eucharist/everlasting life), colored eggs (hope), and horseradish (reminder of the sharpness of the nails on cross). Blessed baskets are taken home for family Easter meals and distributed to shut-ins.

Feast of Our Lady Brezje, Patroness of St. Mary Help of Christians Church. This celebration begins with a candle-lighting service in the church at dusk on May 22. Following this mass, parishioners proceed to the prayer garden, where the priest leads the rosary for the gathered congregation. Many pray using special rosaries imported from Brezje. On May 23 the Preseren Choir, wearing traditional Slovenian costumes, sing the liturgical music. After mass a parish dinner of Slovenian foods is served in the church basement.

Feast of St. Nicholas. Celebration takes place on the first Saturday in December to coincide with the feast day on December 6. Parishioners bring a wrapped toy to mass, placing it at the foot of the Church's historic statue of St. Nicholas (purchased in the early 1900s) for a special blessing. All donated toys are distributed to needy children. For this special mass, the priest dresses as St. Nicholas and his helper is Rupert. The feast also includes blessing of bowls with candy, nuts, oranges, and a nickels for distribution to shut-ins.



Figure 1.2. St. Mary's Church has been the spiritual heart of the Eilers Neighborhood since 1954. (Photo by Adam Thomas)

initially was used for school classes, and the business manager's house became a convent for twelve sisters.

The first religious services on this site took place in the former barn. This chapel, known as "Little Bethlehem" for its stable-like setting, had a small sanctuary addition to the west. Parishioners also added an external staircase with access to the hayloft that was used for school classes and the church choir. Area resident Dorothy (Perse) Cernak, still living in her family home at 1233 South Santa Fe Avenue at the age of ninety nine, embodies the history of St. Mary's. She remembers attending school in the Grove, on both the ground floor and hayloft of the barn-turned-chapel, in the rectory, and eventually at the new school building, erected in 1923.

Despite tough times and many parishioners being out of work during the Great Depression, the congregation debt shrunk from \$50,000 to \$35,000 between 1929 and 1933. This windfall was partially due to Father Zupan selling Roselawn

Cemetery burial plots to St. Mary's members. By 1940 the church debt was down to \$20,000; however, the parish faced costly improvements to the rectory. In response, Father Zupan's successor, Father Anthony Roitz, decided to divide the eastern portion of the St. Mary's property into house lots. A \$3,000 Works Progress Administration (WPA) project created water and sewer lines for the thirty-six lots in

the appropriately named Cyril Zupan Subdivision. The corner lots within the new development sold within a half-hour on May 12, 1941, the first day they were offered to neighbors and parishioners.

As St. Mary's parishioners moved away from the Grove and west into Bessemer, more worshippers wished to attend services at the East Mesa Avenue site. But the existing chapel was quite small and in poor condition. At a general parish meeting on February 17, 1946, church members decided to construct a new building. Always concerned about debt, they pledged both not to begin construction until the needed \$278,000 was raised and for each wage earner to contribute \$100 to the construction fund. In 1947 the "Little Bethlehem" chapel closed and church services were held temporarily in St. Cyril's Chapel on the second floor of the school.

Pueblo Bishop Joseph C. Willging blessed the new church cornerstone on November 1, 1953. Father Daniel Gdnica

placed religious medals along with the names of key financial contributors and a history of the St. Joseph Society into the footings. The bricklayers and carpenters working on the new church donated their first day's wages to the parish construction fund.

John K. Monroe, the principal architect of the Catholic Archdiocese of Denver, was responsible for the plans. In his religious commissions he favored simplified Mediterranean designs with red tile roofs, square campaniles or belfrys, and light colored brick or stone; all three are evident in the new building for St. Mary's Church. Curtis W. Baylis was the brick contractor and Al Jersin was the general contractor for the project. The final cost of the church totaled \$325,000.

The first ever evening mass celebrated at St. Mary's took place on June 6, 1954. Nearly two months later, on August 15, 1954, the Feast of the Assumption, Bishop Willging officially consecrated the new building. The new church was a pleasing blend of new and old, with many of the interior features—the crucifix, baptismal font, Stations of the Cross, and various pieces of artwork—transferred over from the old church in the Grove. The former church had twenty-two stained glass windows in poor shape; these were disassembled, restored, and incorporated into sixteen windows for the smaller openings at the new church. On August 27, 1954, numerous parishioners and neighbors witnessed the installation of three cast-bronze bells from the church in the Grove to the new building. Former altar boy Kirk Riddock still has the home movies his family shot that day. In March 1955 St. Mary's gave their old church on Clark Street to Mt. Carmel parish for use as a school.

The new church, like the old one and the chapel before it, was the site of major life events and sacraments. Charles Barnett and Audrey Medved were the first couple married at the

new St. Mary's and the first funeral was for Steve Ogulin. Karla (Adamich) Miklich recalled the procession around the church prior to her First Communion and, as part of her eighth-grade graduation ceremony, placing a rose in front of a statue of the Blessed Mother. Becky (Galich) Sudduth's memories were of two particularly embarrassing Church-related incidents: in the first grade the Lenten incense made her vomit. Then, when she was a teenager, Sudduth once arrived for morning mass with no scarf and was forced to bobby pin a Kleenex tissue to her head.²² Mary Zakrasek grew up across the street from St. Mary's, at 310 East Mesa Avenue. She recalled the music for church services. Her mother Dorothy was in the choir, serving as its director for several years. She and her sister Dorothy Ann both played the organ, so they "were involved in almost every service there" (at the church).²³ She remembers the choir singing, in four-part harmony, both traditional Slovenian songs and new ones out of books sent from Yugoslavia. Preparations began with "many long nights in the kitchen especially before Christmas and Easter" where the girls separated the music for each choir member into piles.²⁴ For Christmas there were three services: midnight mass, 9 a.m., and 10:30 a.m. One of the highlights of Easter was the 4 a.m. sunrise service with school children in a candlelight procession. Zakrasek recalled, "One year, there were trumpets playing along with the choir—it was glorious."²⁵ She summarized the role of St. Mary's in the life of the neighborhood, noting, "The community was very close knit because the school and church events involved everyone. People became closer friends for life. They went to their children's games together, school activities, baptisms, confirmations, bridal showers, weddings, and funerals."²⁶

In May 1995 St. Mary's celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the parish. The following year the Benedictine Sis-



Figure 1.3. Father Ben Bacino is not only pastor of St. Mary's but also of two other nearby Catholic churches. This photograph shows the priest in front of St. Mary's Church prior to morning mass on Saturday, September 14, 2013. (Photo by Adam Thomas)

Figure 1.4. At St. Mary's School, class photos were an annual ritual. The 1934–35 first-grade class included, from left to right: Front Row—Ronald Yoxey, John Tekavec, Leonard Butler, Joseph Grahek, Stanley Erjavec, Joseph Spinuzzi; Second Row—Elsie Papish, Betty Fatur, Nadine Zakrasick, Mary Yurglich, Geraldine Mrarmor, Margaret Jersin, Loretta Purkatt, Mitsi Krasovec; Third Row—John Skerjanec, John Zupancic, John Petric, Robert Kralich, Rudy Narod, Frank Golob. (Photo courtesy of Sue Miketa)



raising large Slovenian families—wanted their sons and daughters to have easier lives. For that reason, many Slovenians placed a strong emphasis on education. The one exception to this pattern seemed to be the eldest daughter in large first- and second-generation families. Often these girls were encouraged to drop out of school to help their moms with the mountains of washing and ironing, the daily cooking and baking, and the hundreds of tasks required to raise multiple

St. Mary's School Directresses/Principals

The Sister in charge of the school was originally known as a Directress, with this title shifting to Principal in the 1920s. Benedictine records indicate the following Sisters ran St. Mary's School. Those marked with a "†" came from St. Mary's Parish.

Magdelene Becker
 Leocadia Tomaszewski
 Mary Schartung
 Henrietta Dutli
 Theresa Sweigert
 Edith Rabida†
 Scholastica Hrusovsky
 Teresita Pustaver
 DeLourdes Warsek
 Albertina Niznick†
 Jeanne Hegarty
 Benita Coffey
 Xavier Susman
 Rosaria Riter

ters and priests stepped down and, in a diocese-wide move to address the Catholic priest shortage, the parish became part of a tri-parish, Historic Southside Catholic Community. St. Mary's is now clustered with both Our Lady of Assumption (900 East Routh Avenue) and St. Patrick's (304 East Routh Avenue) churches, sharing priests among the three parishes. St. Mary's has become more ethnically diverse over the years and is no longer exclusively Slovenian.²⁷ However, it remains a key mainstay in Pueblo's Slovenian-American traditions.

PREPARING OUR MINDS: ST. MARY'S SCHOOL

Slovenian immigrants left their homeland, among other reasons, to provide a better life for their children. Industrial jobs, at the smelter and especially the steel mill, put food on the table and a roof over families' heads. Fathers—most working shifts in loud and frequently dangerous plants—and mothers—engaged in the hard work of cooking, cleaning, and

children. Despite struggles with the English language and little formal education for themselves, Slovenian parents, like so many immigrants, wanted to protect their children from the discrimination they had faced. For many, the schools were important in making their children more American. Here the youngsters not only learned English but also picked up American customs and manners. They played American sports, especially baseball, and participated in patriotic efforts like bond drives and parades to honor military heroes. Increasingly over time, St. Mary's School became like the stereotypical American melting pot, a place where Slovenians, Croatians, Italians, and other ethnicities came together for a common purpose.

Father Zupan originally requested three Benedictine Sisters teach at St. Mary's School in the Grove. In 1897 Sisters Magdelene Becker, Perpetua Powers, and Leocadia Tomazewska traveled from St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago. Sister Magdelene, with the most teaching experience,

served as the school's first directress. A fourth nun, Sister Salome Rank, joined the teaching staff soon after; she had tuberculosis and likely enjoyed Colorado's drier climate. In 1899 Father Zupan visited Slovenia and returned with his two (biological) sisters who, once they completed their vows, also taught at St. Mary's as Sisters Cyrilla and Ludmilla. These two nuns, native Slovenian speakers, were particularly welcome in the parish. Rose (Kochevar) Zupancic, now aged ninety, remembers not knowing how to speak English when she started school at St. Mary's in the Grove. For Zupancic and other St. Mary's students with limited English proficiency it was, no doubt, a comfort to have at least two nuns who not only spoke their language but also understood the challenges of learning a new one.

With an eye towards economy, Father Zupan planned to reuse the bricks from the defunct Eilers Smelter to construct

the new St. Mary's School. On Sunday, July 15, 1923, the parish held a large picnic fundraiser to finance the cost of demolishing the 225-foot smokestack. Parishioners strung electric lights above the lawns surrounding the rectory, setting up refreshment booths and entertainment for a large crowd that stayed through the afternoon and into the evening. In advance of the demolition, mining contractors Frank and Joe Mehle dug a six-foot-wide trench near the base of the smelter and inserted twenty-nine sticks of dynamite. The imminent explosion was a major attraction. Police kept spectators at a safe distance, along Mesa Avenue from Elm Street to South Santa Fe Avenue. Members of the parish performed various blessings and ceremonies prior to the blast. There was even a movie camera on hand to record this historic event. At 2:22 p.m. on a Sunday in late July 1923, City Commissioner George Stumpf pressed the ignition button, but nothing happened because the charge

was "extraordinarily heavy."²⁸ Parishioners Steve Ovechka and Mike Hiza took the wires to the rectory and used a copper penny and an electric light socket to complete the circuit. At 3:25 p.m. the Eilers Smelter smokestack crumbled to the ground in a controlled detonation that resulted in both all the bricks landing within twenty feet of their original location and no injuries.



Figure 1.5. St. Mary's School served the Eilers neighborhood between 1923 and 1971 and now houses St. Mary's Gornick Slovenian Library, Museum, and Genealogy Center. (Photo by Adam Thomas)



Figure 1.6. The Frolics were a highlight of the St. Mary's calendar, with the dancing, food, and games attracting not only parishioners but also many Pueblos. The Frolics were a successful fundraiser for the Church and School until the late 1960s. (Image courtesy of St. Mary's Slovenian Library and Genealogy Center)

Prior to construction of the school, each St. Mary's family was asked to clean at least 100 bricks. Many families created their own tools for the task, and the children were paid a penny for each brick they cleaned.

This community effort proved surprisingly efficient and groundbreaking for the school took place in late summer 1923. Contractors L.H. Balfe and J.P. Dillon of the Desparin Company were responsible for the construction. The parish pledged a total of \$10,000 for its new school building, but costs ultimately totaled \$45,000. The two-story, Spanish Colonial Revival-style school featured a full basement, six classrooms on the first floor, and both a hall and library on the second story. When it opened for the 1923 school year, the new building was able to accommodate 500 students but had an enrollment of just 229 students, with 250 children still attending classes at the St. Mary's School in the Grove. Interviewed in 2005, ninety-year-old Edward Kochever, who attended the new St. Mary's for fifth grade in 1924, described the facility as "heaven" and remarked "at least we had nice rows of desks. It was a lot better than the crowded classrooms we had before."²⁹ His wife, Katherine (Mikatic) Kochever also preferred the new school. Her first grade classroom was Father Zupan's bedroom at the rectory, with benches for the students surrounding the pastor's bed.³⁰

St. Mary's students paid very modest tuition. The parish made special concessions for large families as well. In 1923, for example, families paid a dollar per month for the first child, seventy-five cents for two to three children, and only fifty cents per month for four or more students. In the 1930s tuition cost nine dollars per year, with hot lunches available for only three cents. By 1959 tuition increased to two dollars per month for St. Mary's parishioners and four dollars per month for non-

members. Given the rising costs associated with a high-quality education, parish fundraisers were a necessity. St. Mary's parish hosted an Annual Bazaar that, in 1936, was renamed the June Frolics. This event was considered a "gala affair... (that) provided funds for the parish (and) united the parishioners more closely together as a parish family."³¹ One of the highlights of the Frolics was dancing on the oversized, covered rectory porch (no longer extant) that extended toward the east. Long-time St. Mary's parishioner and employee Bernice Krasovec said this veranda was the perfect venue, allowing male guests to hang over the side, survey the crowds, and pick their next dance partner. There were also a variety of games, including the Catholic staple, Bingo. Becky (Galich) Suddarth remembers her mother Helen making "oodles of goodies" for the Frolics and other Church get-togethers.³² The Frolics were discontinued in the late 1960s. However, St. Mary's alumni Judy Kochever revived the tradition in 2006 as part of an All-School Reunion. In addition to the Frolics, in 1956 the parish's Holy Name Society initiated the Dollar-a-Month Club. They encouraged Church members to "try your luck, put in a buck" and help raise funds for the school. This fifty-fifty raffle tradition continues today at St. Mary's, with attendees at the annual Slovenian Heritage Dinner buying chances and also investing in the parish.

Alumni memories of attending St. Mary's School are as diverse as the student body. While the school population was primarily Slovenians, there were a number of Italians and, as time passed, a few more Mexican and Hispanic pupils. Italian Mike Occhiato remembers fitting right in at the school, and he regularly ate dinner with his numerous Bojon school friends. Playground games served as another unifier, with the boys gravitating toward baseball as soon as it was warm and dry



Figures 1.7. and 1.8. In 1943 St. Mary's softball team (left) was the Parochial School Champions. Coach Louie Golob led the St. Mary's football team (right) in the early 1960s, with assistance from Father Andrew. (Photos courtesy of Sue Miketa)

enough for long toss. Most girls preferred hopscotch, tetherball, and the swings. Karla (Adamich) Miklich played on the volleyball team, established in 1960, and St. Mary's was known within the diocese for its well-coached football teams. Other popular activities included the school choir for sixth through eighth grade students and, during World War II, the St. Mary's Cadets with their distinctive white uniforms, who encouraged war bond purchases.

In communities across the United States, immigrant children often were "prepared for jobs in manual skills without regard to their abilities... programmed solely for the world of... blue collar work."³³ However, St. Mary's School seemed different and many of Pueblo's Bojon parents, despite having little formal education themselves, worked hard to make higher education a reality for their children. St. Mary's alumni John Zobeck described his father, Louis E. Zobeck, Sr., as "a jack of all trades and master of most...an athlete, carpenter, plumber, artist, gardener, provider, husband, father...(who) never ever wanted even a pat on the back."³⁴ The elder Zobeck "put eight children through St. Mary's (and) four-year colleges without



owning a car. He himself also graduated from St. Mary's (in 1919). If you include his children, their spouses, and his grandchildren, they have earned over sixty degrees from colleges such as five Notre Dames, four Virginia Techs, Duke, Cal Berkley, five Colorado University, and many of the state colleges.... He and Mom sacrificed everything for their four boys and girls."³⁵ The son described the paintings his father left and the education his parents made possible for all of the children in the Zobeck family as a wonderful "inheritance."³⁶

And the school's teachers were as inspirational—and as tough—as parents. Nearly everyone who attended St. Mary's School had some type of nun-related memory. Dorothy (Perse) Cernak remembers the sisters as "wonderful" and regarded Sister Edith, who grew up in the neighborhood, as her "favorite," mentioning the nun taught her mother how to knit and crochet.³⁷ Gerri and Lorraine Yoxey recalled walking down Santa Fe hill to Church with the nuns and helping Sister Caroline clean the chapel.³⁸ In his blog, "Life in Bojon Town: Stories from the World's Greatest Neighborhood," Mike Barnett recalled Sister Beatrice:



Figure 1.9. Many World War II-era St. Mary's female students participated in the Cadets. This photo was taken in 1944 on the Church altar in front of the parish service flag. This flag indicates 394 parishioners were serving in the military (blue stars) and seven had died in wartime service (yellow stars). (Photo courtesy of St. Mary's Slovenian Library and Genealogy Center)

If you look in the dictionary under “stern,” there’s a picture of Sister Beatrice and her ruler. I was old enough by then to realize that she saw something in me and was bound and determined to wrench it out of me no matter how hard it hurt. And I was bound and determined to make it hurt as much as possible. I remember one time when she told me to clean my desk, which was basically a trash can on it’s (sic) side with a seat and a writing top. I didn’t. She drug (sic) my desk out in the hall and told me that I couldn’t come back into the class until I cleaned it. I sat in the hall for three days. Best three days I ever had in that place (St. Mary’s School). Eventually she relented because she realized that I would sit out there until hell froze over.³⁹

Despite the strictness of the nuns and judged by today’s

standards, St. Mary’s students had a great deal of freedom. They walked, unescorted, to and from school—or not. Kirk Riddock recalls,

I went to kindergarten at St. Mary’s which was a half a block away (from our house at 1130 Eilers Avenue). I walked through a few vacant overgrown lots on the way to school. One beautiful day I decided to enjoy the trees and bushes in the vacant lots. The next day I did the same. After a while Sister Leocadia, the kindergarten nun, called and asked my mother how I was, since I hadn’t been to school for two weeks. My mother explained that I left for school every morning and returned at the noon bell. Sister Leocadia said, “Not this school...” Busted.⁴⁰

In addition to walking to and from school, St. Mary’s students also had the freedom to leave school for lunch. For many it seems the biggest treat was a hamburger at Anzick’s (615 East Mesa Avenue), about five blocks from school, on the other side of Santa Fe Avenue.

In 1956, due to a shortage of Benedictine Sisters at a time when St. Mary’s and schools nationwide were facing the effects of the massive postwar baby boom, the school introduced lay teachers for the first time. By the late 1960s, however, attendance at St. Mary’s School started to decline. The diocese considered merging the school with those for Our Lady of Assumption and St. Francis parishes, but this plan was never executed. Instead, Sister Roasaria Riter, with Father Daniel’s permission, established Queen of Peace as a Catholic private school; the lower grades (kindergarten through third) attended classes at Mt. Carmel and St. Mary’s School building was used for the older pupils (grades four through eight). St. Mary’s School closed in 1971 after financial challenges forced Bishop Charles Buswell to shutter all Pueblo Catholic schools. After the school closed, Sisters Jerome Frede, Walburg Matern, and Benita Coffey worked with Father Claude Roberts to de-

Figure 1.10. St. Mary’s students dressed up for All Saints Day rather than Halloween. The entire student body paraded from the school down to South Santa Fe Avenue in their costumes. This picture shows (left to right) Gina Galich and Darla, Joe, Judy, and Marla Kocman on November 1, 1958. (Photo courtesy of Pam and Joe Kocman)



velop a Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) religious education (a program to prepare St. Mary's youngest parishioners for their sacraments).

As with most students, many St. Mary's alumni gained perspective about their school experience with age: "I thought I didn't learn much, but later found out I learned a lot."⁴¹ For the majority, the transition to high school and college was relatively easy, a testament to the academic preparation they received at St. Mary's School.

The Sisters' Home: St. Mary's Convent

As St. Mary's church moved over the years, so did the Sisters who served the parish. The first four sisters who taught at St. Mary's School all lived in the original convent, a building moved to Clark Street from St. Mary's Hospital. Between 1912 and 1921, St. Mary's Sisters shared accommodation with other Benedictine nuns at St. Teresa's Convent, within St. Anthony's parish. When St. Mary's moved to higher ground on East Mesa Avenue, the Sisters initially lived in the former home of the Eilers Smelter business manager. They did not move into a new building until the existing convent was constructed in 1957.

Catholic Sisters, subject to a vow of poverty, earned low salaries for their teaching duties. In 1904 the St. Mary's Sisters made approximately \$100 per month for a total of \$1000 each school year. However, most of the parents of their students made considerably less. At about the same time, the average salary for a CF&I mill worker was only eleven cents per hour. By 1907 the Sisters' salaries increased modestly to \$120 per month. Some nuns received extra pay for working with the Church choir. To supplement their incomes, some Sisters made cassocks for the clergy or veils and wreathes for weddings. Sisters Scholastica and Anthony were well-known for the Christ-

mas wafers they sold.

In addition to poor pay, the Sisters often endured ill-equipped quarters. At their first convent on the current site, twelve Sisters lived in an oversized, adobe, Craftsman bungalow that had thirteen rooms and extensive porches on both levels. By the late 1950s this converted convent building was outdated and in poor condition. A new blonde brick convent, matching the new church, was constructed in 1957 at a cost of \$62,000. Albert Jersin again served as general contractor. During construction, the Sisters commuted to St. Mary's from St. Leander's in their newly purchased car.

Once established in their new home, the nuns had a strict routine consisting mostly of prayer, teaching, and maintaining the convent. This predictable schedule worked to their disadvantage one snowy winter, when Wayne Pechek and his friends Jimmy "Horse" Mohorcich and one of the Zobeck boys noticed the sisters took out the trash at the same time every evening. The Sisters had to walk approximately eighty yards from the rear of the convent to the trash pit. Pechek and his buddies spent all afternoon building a massive snow fort behind the convent and making a full arsenal of snowballs. When the sister on trash duty emerged from the convent, the boys, disguised in woolen ski masks, pelted the nun with snow balls.⁴²

When the Pueblo diocese closed its Catholic schools in 1971, a small contingent of Benedictine Sisters remained at the parish. Many of the nuns taught catechism (CCD) classes to students preparing for the sacraments. Others assisted with the liturgy or ministered to the sick and dying. In 1985 the convent was renamed Hudson Hall and used, briefly, as a retirement home for priests. The Benedictine Sisters returned to this building in 1988, shifting their role to one of "presence, prayer,

St. Mary's Gornick Slovenian Library, Museum, and Genealogy Center

Pueblo brothers John and Alan Gornick created the "John A. Gornick Slavic Heritage Collection" at the University of Southern Colorado (now Colorado State University-Pueblo). Their intention was to "provide Slovene youth with the knowledge of their ancestry, culture, and language."⁴³ Father Alan Schwab and John Gornick's widow Rose agreed to transfer this collection to St. Mary's former school building. Father Alan appointed long-time St. Mary's parishioner and employee Bernice Krasovec as curator and historian, merging the Gornick holdings with St. Mary's museum artifacts. The facility has grown to include a Genealogy Center with sacramental records from the Pueblo diocese. Bishop Arthur Tafoya blessed the newly organized center on November 8, 2000. Longtime St. Mary's parishioner and Preseren glee club member Robert Blazich oversees research inquiries related to birth, death, immigration, and naturalization. The Library, Museum, and Genealogy Center are open Wednesdays from 1 to 4 p.m. or by appointment.

Benedict Park

St. Mary's parishioner Mary Jimenez, who lives at 710 East Mesa Avenue, recalls her concern about the lack of safe play areas for children in the neighborhood, including her two grandsons. In the late 1970s Jimenez, who worked for the Pueblo Regional Planning Commission, suggested to her boss Gladys Comi that the land west of the former St. Mary's School might be suitable for a new park. St. Mary's Church sold the land to the City with the understanding that, should it cease to be a public park, the plot must be returned to the parish. Pastor Blane Bebble chose the name Benedict Park as a tribute to the numerous Benedictines who served the parish, as priests and nuns, over its history. The year 1980 was the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of St. Benedict and the new park named after him was dedicated on October 19 of that same year. Parish council members, City officials, and parishioners attended the dedication ceremony held prior to a 10:30 a.m. mass.



Finding Our Peace: Prayer Garden

In 1988, at mass on the Feast of the Assumption, visiting missionary Father Richard Gielow encouraged St. Mary's parishioners to build a grotto devoted to Mary. However, Pastor Alan Schwab was concerned about both the cost of the garden and loss of mature landscaping in front of the rectory. Schwab asked Gielow and parish secretary Bernice Krasovec to seek "a sign" while on a planned trip to Yugoslavia. They received such a message: Father Jozo Svatko, of St. James Church, in Tiheljina, urged them to, "Go home and build a monument or shrine to our Lady, as those coming home from war build memorials to those who were away."⁴⁴ The parish formed a garden committee, hired an architect, and presented preliminary designs from local artist Michael Trujillo to the parishioners. His pencil shading of the proposed granite mystery stones revealed an unintended, but clearly visible, image of Jesus, a depiction viewed as further evidence the Prayer Garden was meant to be.

The Church hired Joe Wodiuk as the general contractor, and his firm broke ground for the garden in December 1992. Major donations from Michael and Joan Occhiato, Fred Gorsich, and Louis Ursick, plus hundreds of purchased memorial bricks engraved with the names of current and past parishioners, helped finance the garden's construction. The blond-brick, circular structure allows visitors to follow the Way of the Cross, pray the Mysteries of the Rosary as depicted in stone, leave petitions near the central statue of the Holy Mother (donated by the American Slovenian Catholic Union and the St. Joseph Lodge KSKJ #7), or simply reflect silently. Bishop Arthur Tahoma blessed the new garden at a September 8, 1998, mass celebrating the Blessed Mother's birthday. (Photos by Mary Therese Anstey)

and friendship rather than active participation in parish life."⁴⁵ The Sisters offered public adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the convent chapel on Thursdays. In 1995 the Benedictine Sisters left the parish; in ninety-eight years a total of eighty-six nuns tended to the St. Mary's community, with many serving long tenures. St. Mary's Benedictines who celebrated Golden Jubilees (fifty years as nuns) while at the parish included Sisters Edith (1962), Adelaide and Scholastica (1966), and Laurentia (1967).

WETTING OUR WHISTLES: EILERS' PLACE

If St. Mary's Church is the spiritual center of Old Bojon Town, then Eilers' Place is its social hub. The establishment, at 326 East Mesa Avenue, is in the fourth-generation of family ownership. While it is primarily a bar, the framed historic photos, baseball uniforms, and newspaper clippings on the walls make it a pseudo-museum celebrating family history, community sporting exploits, and Slovenian cultural traditions. Like the Church, Eilers' Place draws current and former residents back to the neighborhood whether to share a few rounds with the regulars or for annual celebrations, like the Kolbase Races or the Bojon Triathlon.

Josephine "Pepa" (OKoren) Glavich, the immigrant girl who arrived to the United States in 1909, was responsible for establishing Eilers' Place. In July 1929 she and her husband, Matt Glavich, purchased the Angelo Llamero Grocery Store. The property included not only the store but also an attached family home, three other small houses (320 and 322 East Mesa Avenue and 1209 Eilers Avenue), and a double garage along the rear of the property. Soon after their purchase, Matt moved his existing barbershop, formerly located on Northern Avenue, into the small house at 1209 Eilers Avenue, into the small

house at 1209 Eilers Avenue, in the property's backyard.⁴⁶ Six months after buying the grocery, Glavich died of pneumonia, leaving Pepa to care for their five children. The Glaviches always sold hand-pressed wine to supplement Matt's wages cutting hair. In addition to minding the store, Pepa continued to make and sell her homemade wine during both the Prohibition era and the Great Depression. Always resourceful, she asked patrons to return the empty bottles for reuse. These bottles retained sediment in the bottom, but she discovered the best method for removing this residue: shaking a small amount of sand in them. Neighborhood kids were given a slice of fresh baked bread if they showed up to clean bottles.

When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, neighbors convinced Pepa to open a bar. On August 7, 1933, she received the second liquor license issued in the City of Pueblo. She chose the name Eilers' Place after both the smelter-turned-school and adjacent Eilers Avenue. She borrowed twenty dollars to purchase glassware, converted the grocery counter into a bar top, and had wooden booths built along the wall. She opened the bar with two quarts of whiskey and two kegs of beer.

Despite the family's dire financial circumstances, Pepa developed a reputation for sharing what she had, including feeding hungry neighborhood children and passing hoboies during the Great Depression. She worked all day and night in the bar,



Figure 1.11. St. Mary's Convent was constructed in 1957. (Photo by Adam Thomas)



Figure 1.12. Eilers' Place started out as Angelo Llano's Grocery Store. Like other neighborhood buildings, the second story was removed. Eilers' Place now features a front parapet obscuring its gabled roof. (Photo courtesy of Sue Miketa)

leaving her oldest daughter Elsie to care for her brothers and sisters. Eilers' Place appealed to the entire neighborhood, selling gum and candy to area children, even during wartime rationing. These same children routinely filled lard buckets with beer, taking them home to parents and grandparents. The bar became nearly synonymous with baseball when, in the 1930s, Elsie's husband Rudolph "Moon" Kocman started a semi-professional baseball team sponsored by Walter Brewing Company. The team played across the street at the St. Mary's baseball park and enjoyed "tenth inning" celebrations at the bar. The tavern also experienced a marked wartime boom, serving not only multiple shifts of workers from CF&I's Minnequa Steelworks but also a number of airmen stationed at the Pueblo Army Air Base.

On V-J Day, as at so many other places across the country, Eilers' Place had a "big party (where they) danced all night" to celebrate, among other things, the safe return of brothers Raymond and Matthew Glavich from overseas service.⁴⁷ For Pueblo's Slovenian community, this bar became one of the places "to dance, romance, and drink" and many a match was made here.⁴⁸

When Pepa passed away in 1979, her children took over running Eilers' Place as a neighborhood bar. It was important to them to honor their mother's hard work and carry on the example she had set. They changed very little about the place, neither the modest drink offerings nor the décor. In 1991 Eilers' Place passed to the third generation of the family when Joe and Pam Kocman purchased the bar from Joe's mom and his aunts and uncles. To honor Pepa, the application for the liquor license transfer was in the name of Josephine Glavich, Inc. The Kocmans inherited a spot virtually unchanged since the 1930s. Pam recalls her thrifty Slovenian in-laws left them somewhat

dubious, although still technically functional, cleaning supplies: a mop with only half its strings tied to the handle with an old extension cord and a bottomless bucket used as a trashcan. These items became the key props for the annual tradition of the "Bojon Act Awards." Regulars voted for the patron who most showed his or her "Bojon-ness" during that year. The winner was photographed, on New Year's Eve, with the mop and bucket and their portrait hung in the bar for the following year. After the champagne toasts the Kocmans served a huge Bojon breakfast of zgensa (cornmeal with bacon and egg), fried kolbase, hash browns, and blood sausage. During their ownership of the bar, Pam and Joe also expanded the drinks offerings, adding four more beer taps while still retaining Hamm's (which Pam routinely lobbied distributors not to discontinue in Colorado) and, in 1999, a state of the art glycol cooling system that allowed Eilers' Place to promise "the coldest beer in Pueblo," at a frosty twenty nine degrees.⁴⁹

In 2006 the current and fourth generation of the family took over Eilers' Place. The Kocmans sold the bar to cousins Ray "Ray Dog" Vertovec and Sue Miketa. The brother and sister team are Pepa's great-grandchildren. Like other family members before them, Vertovec and Miketa seek to honor the traditions of Eilers' Place. For them the bar is "about the generations, the history, and our culture. That's what makes it what it is."⁵⁰ Its neighborhood location, with the Church across the street, makes Eilers' Place a zoning anomaly and the bar must remain in family ownership to retain its liquor license. However, there seems to be little risk of this change happening. Miketa says, "I remember as a little girl, I would go over the (Mesa Avenue) bridge to make her (Pepa's) deposit from the bar. She's my guardian angel and I want to keep making that deposit for her."⁵¹



(Clockwise) Josephine "Pepa" Glavich, original owner, behind the bar five years after she received the liquor license for Eilers' Place. (Photo courtesy of Sue Miketa). Pepa in front of Eilers' Place circa 1950s-1960s. (Photo courtesy of Pam and Joe Kocman). Eilers' Place is a family affair, circa 1953: Pepa is pouring a shot, her daughter Eileen (Glavich) Kocman and granddaughter Maizie Mohorcich (Vertovec) also appear on the service side of the bar; Lillian (Glavich) Galich and her son Albert, Pepa's daughter and grandson, are sitting near the end of the bar. (Photo courtesy of Pam and Joe Kocman) A March 2012 photo of the current, fourth-generation owners of Eilers' Place and their bartenders: (from left to right) Jim Miketa, Janna Miketa, Sue Miketa, Ray Vertovec, and Krista Kristan. (Photo courtesy of Sue Miketa)



Figures 1.13 and 1.14. The bar was also home as evidenced by the Glavich family, posing in front of the house portion of 326 East Mesa Avenue (the right side in the photo at right). From left to right: Sons Matthew and Ray, Pepa, and daughters Lillian, Evelyn, and Elsie. (Historic photo courtesy of Sue Miketa; modern photo by Adam Thomas)



A Lasting Memory of Eilers' Place

Gerri (Yoxey) Blazich has a permanent souvenir from Eilers' Place... a scar on her hand. One night when she and her sister Evelyn were sleeping at the attached house, the girls had to use the bathroom. The toilet paper was stored up quite high and the metal dispenser had a very sharp edge. Gerri cut her finger badly and was taken to the CF&I dispensary. Dr. Black stitched up her hand, but in a slightly curled position. Gerri's hand stayed this way until high school when it hindered her ability to learn to type. She then went to a specialist who straightened the original stitches and completed a skin graft on her hand.



In addition to being a bar, Eilers' Place was, from the late 1920s through 1979 and then again in the 1990s, also a home. In the early days it was a particularly full house. Pepa and Matt lived here until his death, when Pepa remained and raised their children in the four-bedroom bungalow attached to the bar. In 1931 Pepa's daughters Elsie and Evelyn married Rudolph Kocman and Jay Mohorcich, respectively, in a double-ring ceremony. Both couples continued to live at home. By 1935 the house was home to Pepa and her three youngest kids, Lillian ("Lela"), Raymond, and Matthew; the Kocmans and their two children, Ed and Eileen; and the Mohorciches and their two children, Joe and Evelyn Mae ("Maizie"). The families continued to grow with the Kocmans adding three girls, Judy in 1944 and twins Marlene and Darlene in 1946. All of the "guys" lived in a huge room upstairs under the eaves referred to as the "dor-

mitory."⁵² The Kocmans slept in one bedroom, Pepa and Lillian in another, and the Mohorciches in a third on the ground floor. The fourth bedroom was for the girls, who also included the neighbor Gerri Yoxey (Blazich). Eileen Kocman (Deverich) claimed "the rooms were all big and we had plenty of room."⁵³

Living with such an extended family required a lot of work and cooperation. Monday was wash day with Elsie (Glavich) Kocman in charge of the two wringer washing machines requiring water heated in a coal stove. The family's clothes dried outside on the backyard clothesline. When they were dry, Elsie and Leela dampened the clothes, rolled them, and placed them in an oilcloth-lined basket for Tuesday, ironing day. Evelyn (Glavich) Mohorcich was the "chief cook and baker," who made "delicious meals and wonderful cakes, pies, cookies, and fancy pastry."⁵⁴ She also had the daunting task of dealing with

the dirty dishes. Elsie and Rudy Kocman lived at the bar until they built their own home, at 1142 Eilers Avenue, in 1949. Evelyn and Jay Mohorcich moved next door, to 1146 Eilers Avenue, the next year, and Lela and her husband, (Albert) Jones “Jonsey” Galich, built a new house across the street, at 1133 Eilers Avenue, in about 1953. Although the live-work tradition ceased for awhile, when Pam and Joe Kocman purchased Eilers’ Place in 1991 they too lived in the house adjacent to the bar, raising their children Shauna and Daniel within earshot of tavern revelers. The Kocmans were able to “sense the changes in the mood of the bar, mostly from changes in noise level.”⁵⁵

NURTURING OUR BODIES: GROCERS AND OTHER BUSINESSES

Eilers’ Place was only one of many bars in Old Bojon Town, and the commercial strips along Northern and South Santa Fe avenues featured a number of shops and other services. These businesses, many Slovenian owned, were important to the community from the early 1900s through the 1980s. The sheer number of retail establishments offer a testament to the vitality of the neighborhood at a time when CF&I’s Minnequa Steelworks were humming, with both Slovenians moving away from the Grove and other immigrants establishing themselves in rented or, increasingly, owned houses.

Neighbors had a choice of Slovenian-owned groceries. In 1900 John Gorsich, Sr., along with Mike Egan, Jack Vidmar, and Joe Mohar, established Gorsich Mercantile, at 1200 South Santa Fe Avenue. During the Great Depression, nearly all customers purchased goods on credit, but Gorsich was able to collect once the economy improved. Remembering Gorsich’s kindness in their time of need, “many people promised him that they would be his customers for a lifetime,” and thankful neighbors continued shopping at the store.⁵⁶ In 1948 the elder

Gorsich died and his son Fritz took over the operation. Fritz closed the grocery in 1973. He donated a great deal of his grocery wealth to the Pueblo Community College; although he had dropped out of high school to work in the grocery store, he still recognized the value of education and wished to make earning a college degree easier for contemporary students.

May Mercantile, at 301-303 East Northern Avenue, was another popular neighborhood grocery store. This commercial establishment was started in 1926 as the Jugo-Slav American Mercantile Association. This cooperative store sold stocks, with members earning merchandise discounts or the right to shop on credit. The store maintained its co-op status when, in 1939, it changed its name to May Mercantile and transferred stock at the cost of \$25 per share. Gerri (Yoxey) Blazich remembers going to “May Merc” every day during high school to shop for her mother; once the shopping was done, the staff would flip to the “Y” section of the spring-loaded register, have Gerri sign for the groceries, and wait for payment until her father’s next payday at CF&I. The upstairs portion of the building was known as May Hall. It hosted the Federated Slavic Lodges and was the site of numerous meetings, dances, recitals, and wedding receptions. Other neighborhood grocery stores included Kark’s Grocery, at 117 East Northern Avenue; Culig Grocery, at 413 East Northern Avenue; and Puntar’s Dry Goods, at 1256 South Santa Fe Avenue.

Located near the north entrance gate for the Minnequa Works, on Northern Avenue, were numerous bars and taverns catering to three shifts of steelworkers. Some of these establishments included Sparky’s Bar, at 223 East Northern Avenue, the Purple Heart Tavern, at 325 East Northern Avenue, and Manning’s Bar, at 405 East Northern Avenue. Rose (Kochevar) Zupancic’s in-laws owned the Veteran’s Tavern, at 315 East

Eilers’ Place Events

Since the 1990s, Eilers’ Place has introduced a number of events intended to expand its clientele, integrating new customers with long-time Slovenian regulars.

Kolbase Races (May) Teams spend the morning decorating kolbase sausage with a wide variety of craft supplies and affixing them to small wooden racecars. In the afternoon the large wooden race ramp, with an approximately forty-five-degree drop descending to a four-foot-long straightaway, is set up in the bar. Winners of best-two-out-of-three heats compete until the winningest sausage car is declared.

Bojon Triathlon (July) Displaying the Slovenian ability to laugh at themselves, this event title requires a tongue firmly in cheek since it includes four, not the traditional three, sporting contests. Held since 2000, patron- and staff-led teams compete in bowling (off-site), horseshoes, darts, and skee-golf. The 2006 event celebrated the transfer of Eilers’ Place ownership from the Kocmans to cousins Ray Vertovec and Sue Miketa, fourth-generation family proprietors.

Softball Game (August) First held in 1993 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of Eilers’ Place, the inaugural event featured twenty five players ranging in age from teens to eighties. Held in Benedict Park, near the location of the St. Mary’s baseball diamond of their youth, the game featured the National Anthem, numerous celebrity first pitches, and a live announcer. Among spectators chanting wisecracks like, “You don’t need no Geritol, make that catch and hit that ball,” the Eilers’ All-Stars beat the Pepa’s Sluggers 3-2.⁵⁷

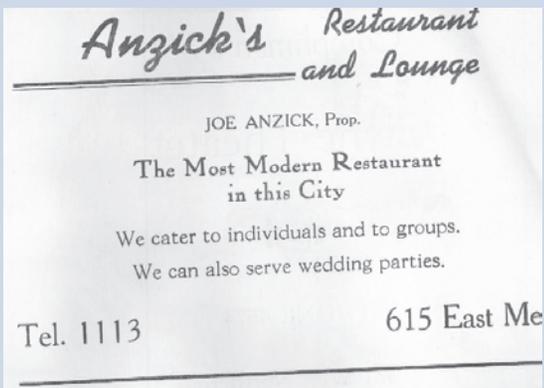
Christmas Party (December) This all-expenses paid event to honor Eilers’ Place customers features Bojon food and live Slovenian Music from the Okolitz Tamburitians. Describing the 2007 event, regular Jim “Horse” Mohorcich claimed, “You’ve never seen anything like this before. Look at all the Bojons. It’s beautiful. Nothing but Bojons and Bojon wannabes. We’re wall to wall Slovenians and Croatians. It’s beautiful.”⁵⁸

Chemistry at Dovgan's Tavern

Many neighborhood bars had housing adjacent or as part of the same building. John Mihelich remembers "the time when my cousin Mike Dovgan and I were playing with his chemistry set in the basement of his father's tavern (Dovgan's Tavern). We mixed up some chemicals—they flashed and started a small fire. We put it out and shook from being so scared that our parents would find out."⁵⁹

Anzick's Restaurant and Lounge

Joseph Anzick established his eponymous restaurant in 1933, at a time when relatively few could afford to eat out. Located at 615 East Mesa Avenue, this eatery became well-known for its hamburgers and French fries. It was particularly popular with St. Mary's students for lunch. Most girls and women remember going inside through the back door near the kitchen rather than through the bar. John Zobeck recalls being at Anzick's to watch the 1969 moon landing. This restaurant later became the Grand Prix, run by Nick and Sadie Montoya, who own the house at 1115 South Santa Fe Avenue. Their son Abel and his wife, Marina Martinez, who often helped out at the restaurant, have lived either singularly or together throughout the neighborhood and "are so proud of their heritage in the neighborhood."⁶⁰ The Grand Prix restaurant closed in 2013.



Potica, Pints, and Prayers in Old Bojon Town

Northern Avenue, during the 1940s and 1950s. Her brother-in-law William M. Zupancic was the manager and head bartender, and her husband, Louis T. "Bully" Zupancic, sometimes bartended on weekends, although his full-time job, both before and after World War II service in the navy, was at CF&I. The couple lived with her husband's family above Veteran's Tavern. Rose was responsible for cooking and cleaning for the Zupancic brothers. She had to deal with their erratic shifts at both CF&I and in the bar. She remembers doing everything with her young son Buddy in tow and infant son Joey on her hip. She shopped for groceries at nearby May Mercantile, making multiple trips to carry individual bags up to the apartment.

Known over its history as B and B Recreation, Cheech's, and the Locker Room, the pool hall in the 1100 block of Mahren Avenue was another popular neighborhood hangout. Relatives Charles Barnett and Stanley "Cheech" Brunjak originally opened B and B Recreation in the early 1960s. In the days before cable television it was the place to check the latest sports scores. A ticker tape machine provided a feed of the latest action for Cheech to read and post on the large chalkboards on the walls. When the pool hall failed to make enough to support both partners, Cheech took sole control after a coin flip between the two former partners. Cheech, who owned the house at 1115 South Santa Fe Avenue until the late 1990s, ran the pool hall with his wife, Mary. It became the place for neighborhood kids to check baseball scores, play pinball, and watch the older boys and men play nine-ball or rotation on the two Brunswick felted tables. The Brunjaks sold the establishment to Jerry Bennett in the late 1960s; he added more pinball machines and a jukebox. Bennett abruptly closed the hall, and when Danny Hochevar re-opened in the early to mid 1970s, the place became a 3.2 (beer) bar rechristened the Locker

Room. Later Paul and Tig Gradishar ran the place. In addition to the pool hall on Mahren Avenue, neighbors also could play billiards at Frank Sabo's pool hall, at 1240 Eilers Avenue.

The neighborhood also featured a number of specialty shops. Opened around 1915, Butkovich Mercantile, at 1201 South Santa Fe Avenue, was the place to buy uniforms and "once was one of the busiest men's stores in Bessemer."⁶¹ In 1987, after the store had been closed for several years and the building began to deteriorate, neighborhood resident and St. Mary's parishioner Ratka Petros Germ purchased the building and planned to open Pueblo's only restaurant specializing in "Slovak-style" cuisine.⁶² While Germ's plans did not come to fruition, the former Butkovichs is now a restaurant. The Do Drop Inn moved here in 1993. With its signature sweet-crust pizza, loyal customers, and lots of hard work from owner Donna MacFarlane-Franz and her large staff, including at least twenty of her family members, this restaurant is a popular neighborhood destination.

Long before the Do Drop introduced sweet crust, the place for sweets in the neighborhood was Minka's Bakery, located at 401 East Northern Avenue. Karla (Adamich) Miklich's aunt, Mary "Minka" (Mesnar) Zigich was the head baker, and Miklich worked in the shop during high school. She remembers her aunt took orders from all over the city and made not only the "most beautiful wedding cakes" but also traditional Slovenian pastries and old-fashioned ribbon candy.⁶³ John Zobeck also worked for Minka. One day, when he was about fifteen years old, Minka said to him, "You can drive, can't you?" "Sure," despite the fact he had neither license nor car, and only had ridden in an automobile a few times. Minka wanted Zobeck to go over to the large freezers she rented at Anzick's and fetch some potica. Since he didn't know how to shift and

could barely see over the dashboard, he drove the car in low all the way there and all the way back.⁶⁴

FEEDING OUR SOULS: HOME, SWEET, HOME

Both St. Mary's Church and School and Bojon-owned businesses were important to Pueblo's Slovenians. But, not surprisingly, folks hold the most intimate memories about their own neighbors and homes. Grocer Fritz Gorsich, quoted in a 1980 newspaper article, claimed the "neighborhood became just like a big family. You never had to lock a door. Everybody trusted everybody."⁶⁵

Given the tight-knit nature of the neighborhood, there were, of course, small spats and petty differences.⁶⁶ Marina Martinez, who now lives at 1115 South Santa Fe Avenue but grew up near the intersection of Roitz and Northern avenues, recalled all of the "beautiful people I'll never forget" like Chip Pechek, Joe Cetin, and her father's other co-workers who labored together for forty years at CF&I. Seemingly in the same breath, she shared the story of visits to her friend Debbie Sejik to play with her pigs. The two fathers were friends, but Martinez remembers Debbie's dad would say, "Get those damn Mexicans out of my yard." Martina's dad told her the kids must have been bothering Mr. Sejik and she, with no show of animosity, agreed her dad probably "was right."⁶⁷ John Zakrasek, formerly of 310 East Mesa Avenue, remembered one of the neighbors, angry about his grandfather Dominick building a new, larger garage on his lot, "turned the hose on Margaret (his grandmother) when she was out on the sidewalk." As Zakrasek recalls the story from this grandfather, "there was a call to the neighbors letting them know that if they did anything like that again, the police would be contacted" and there were no further issues.⁶⁸

Yet, Ginny Kay (Poder) Kaplan, who grew up at 304 East Mesa Avenue, remembers happy relations with the next door neighbors: Louis and Mary DeNiro on one side and Rose and Pete Montero on the other. The three families used to place large tables between their houses and gather for spaghetti dinners. The Poder sisters also had dance recitals in their front yard. "Darla and Marla Kocman and Raejean Galich, along with Jan and I, created dances to music and entertained the neighborhood. We even had lights, backdrops, and Mom's homemade pie."⁶⁹ And, on hot summer nights, the Poders would take the television outside and eat watermelon with the neighbors. For Kaplan, the neighborhood was "a melting pot—Italians, Croatians, Slovenians, and Mexicans, with St., Mary's Church and School being a focal point."⁷⁰

Mary Jo Glavich, who lived at 322 East Mesa Avenue, called the area "truly a neighborhood. Any night of the week you could go outside and find a group of women gathered on the front steps of someone's house visiting or look at the front of Eilers' (Place) to see men gathered in front on the white wooden bench visiting and smoking."⁷¹ The neighborhood was so tight-knit, they even traveled out of town together for special occasions. Evelyn Mohorcich chartered buses to Central High School away football games so everyone could see her son Joe, co-captain of the team, and the other neighborhood boys play. Similarly, Elsie (Yoxey) Zupancic chartered buses to take neighbors to the Ice Follies, in Denver, stopping on the way up to shop at Cinderella City Mall.⁷²

House Alterations, Construction, and Maintenance

Bojon Town has two housing areas. The north-south thoroughfares of Rush, Egan, Mahren, South Santa Fe, (1200 block) Eilers, Berwind, and Taylor avenues feature established houses

"The Wonder Giant" at Gorsich Grocery

"When I was about seven or eight (circa 1950), Wonder Bread had a guy that used to go around to stores to promote their products. They called him 'The Wonder Giant,' and (the company claimed) eating their bread would make you big and strong like him. He showed up at Fritz Gorsich's Grocery one day, and we were all waiting for him. He pulled up in this tiny little foreign car, and when he got out, we couldn't believe it. He was dressed completely in white, and he was at least seven feet tall. We couldn't believe that he even fit in that little car. He talked to all of us, picked us up and threw us in the air and stuff like that, and gave us tiny little loaves of Wonder Bread. It was awesome! I still buy that stuff (Wonder Bread), and it's all because of that guy."

—Mike Barnett, "Life in Bojon Town: Stories from the World's Greatest Neighborhood"⁷³

"Slovenian Radio Hour" Part of Neighborhood Soundtrack

On Sunday afternoons in the 1950s and 1960s, the same sound could be heard from nearly every Slovenian home in Bojon Town. Most neighbors, as part of a family ritual that also included sharing a large family dinner after mass at St. Mary's, listened to the "Slovenian Radio Hour" hosted by John Butkovich (who also owned Butkovich Mercantile). The program of traditional Slovenian polkas and waltzes debuted on KGHF 1350 AM on August 28, 1949. Ironically, the initial program was only a half-hour long. When Butkovich changed to radio station KCSJ, the program expanded slightly to include fifteen minutes of Slovenian-related news. Karla (Adamich) Miklich remembers hearing her mother Frances singing, along with other members of the Slovenec Glee Club, on the radio. All the shows featured Butkovich's "distinctive voice" as he spoke in his "very heavy Croatian accent."⁷⁴

A “Velasquich” in Bojon Town

In 1995 when Glenda Velasquez and her husband Paul moved into the house at 1139 Eilers Avenue, the rest of the block “was all family related.” She admits it was an adjustment being the only Hispanic family in the neighborhood. While living in the house she experienced many personal changes, including going through a divorce and learning to raise her children as a single parent. During that time her neighbors watched out for her kids, making sure they were safe when playing in the yard or riding their bikes. She now feels like she has a “neighborhood family” of Slovenians who adopted her—she has become a “Velasquavich.”

Glenda’s daughter Michelle seems to feel the same way. She remembers, at the age of six, sitting with the neighborhood ladies on the porch, drinking milk while they drank coffee. The family had a particularly close relationship with Ray and Josephine Krasovic, who lived across the street at 1134 Eilers Avenue. Ray would tell Michelle, whenever she visited, “to keep your grades up” and offered other positive encouragement along with a fair amount of teasing. She remembers one day, when her sister and cousin were babysitting, she and her little brother fell asleep in the playroom. When Glenda got home, no one could find the children. The whole neighborhood started looking for Michelle and her brother. Glenda went to Josephine and the two women prayed to St. Anthony. These prayers were answered instantly, because the children woke up and walked outside to see why the neighborhood was in such a commotion.⁷⁵ (Photo by Adam Thomas)



originally constructed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The small, postwar Cyril Zupan Subdivision, encompassing the 1100 blocks of Eilers and South Santa Fe avenues, had thirty-six double lots ready for the construction of new homes.

In the years immediately following the 1921 flood, there was increased demand for housing on higher ground. A number of families who lost their homes in the Grove moved to Bojon Town. They took advantage of their new locations, erecting homes for themselves and often establishing much-needed rental accommodations at the rear of their properties. In 1926 Marie and Anthony De Siato, the new owners of 308 East Mesa Avenue, demolished most of the old, grey, wood-frame house on the site and built a new, red-brick Bungalow. Three rooms from the original house became a backyard rental where “many couples started their married lives.”⁷⁶ Dominik and Margaret Zakrasek, along with their young son Nik, moved from their demolished home in the Grove to 310-314 East Mesa Avenue. The western lot (310) had “two shacks” built in 1900 at the rear of the property and the eastern lot (314) included a home that formerly was a small grocery store. The Zakraseks built a new house for their family and remodeled the existing buildings (still extant) as rental houses. During the late 1920s, Dominik collected “\$15 (per month) for 314 East Mesa (Avenue) and \$8 or \$10 (per month) for each of the back rentals. The \$33 to \$35 a month was more than Dominik made in the mill (CF&I) in a month.”⁷⁷

What started out as St. Mary’s Ballpark became an extension of Bojon Town after World War II. Parishioners purchased lots from St. Mary’s and started building single-family houses. However, the Cyril Zupan Subdivision was not a stereotypical postwar housing development in terms of either location or overall design. This small housing development was located

within a well-established ethnic neighborhood, not in an outlying area immediately adjacent to new interstate highways or other major thoroughfares.⁷⁸ Given this location and the existing infrastructure, the Zupan Subdivision was laid out on a traditional grid pattern rather than with curvilinear streets common to postwar subdivisions. Despite site differences, the new homeowners possessed many of the same challenges and aspirations as other postwar homeowners. Economics, especially the Great Depression and wartime rationing, forced many into rental accommodation, often with their extended families in cramped quarters. Many folks spent time dreaming about how their new homes both would look and fulfill deferred desires for privacy and space. Yet, costs, especially for thrifty Slovenians, remained a consideration and affected the design-build process of their new homes.

Likely for economic reasons, many new owners did a lot of the construction work themselves or relied on help from family and friends. The Riddocks broke ground and dug out the foundation for their new home at 1130 Eilers Avenue with the aid of horses. Eileen (Kocman) Deverich remembers when her family started building their new home, at 1142 Eilers Avenue, in 1948: “Back then everyone dug their basement by hand. No big excavator. Relatives and friends all pitched in to help. Kind of like a barn raising... There was a huge rainstorm that summer and the basement (still dirt—no cement had been poured yet) filled up with water. (We) had our own muddy swimming pool.”⁷⁹ Others obtained building supplies and construction assistance via their extensive personal networks. Because Ann and Frank Zaitz had a friend who worked at Summit Brick, they got a good deal on the brick for their new house. In addition, the Zaitzes had help from two family friends: Joe Tezak did the carpentry work and Harold Edwards

worked on the masonry for their new home at 1129 Eilers Avenue. Mary (Zupancic) McBride “was very proud of the house” at 1137 Eilers Avenue since her dad and Uncle Tony built it.⁸⁰ In one of the more unusual stories of home building-related economy, the Prijatelj family lived in their newly constructed brick garage for about a year while Frank, a foreman at CF&I, and his father, Joseph, built the family’s new house at 1138 Eilers Avenue. Theresa Priatelj remembers, while living in the garage, the family only had access to “cold water for cooking, bathing, or doing dishes.... (All water) had to be heated (first).”⁸¹ The family members only could take a bath and wash their hair “once a week, on Saturday. This was done in a wash tub used to launder or soak clothes. Mom would heat the water and pour it over our head. I’m now thinking back that this was fun and also not so fun because we were so cold in the winter.”⁸²

In many ways, participating in the postwar housing boom and, especially, embracing the iconic Ranch house marked a significant moment when these Slovenian families expressed the epitome of their Americanness. Yet, nearly all of the owners who built their own homes within the Zupan Subdivision were novices. Architects or local builders drew the plans and many received masonry assistance from established professionals like neighbor Ray Krasovic, but they had no formal training in the construction trade. The opposite was true at 1145 Eilers Avenue. Professional contractor Andrew M. Perko built his own home, completing it in 1957. He had built a similar home for a client near Pueblo’s City Park and loved the floor plan, so he chose something similar for his own house. This building has a “very futuristic, modernistic” appearance in comparison to the modest, Ranch homes on the street and, soon after completion, strangers routinely stopped and asked to see the in-

side.⁸³ The interior, on which Perko made all design and decorative decisions, featured very few plaster walls. Instead, there were two types of wood paneling plus a specialized brick known as lava block on both the interior and exterior of the home. In the living and dining room, near the front of the house, the interior walls were red lava block with green block appearing near the rear bedroom and back hallway. Eileen (Perko) Lekancic believes her father was “ahead of his time” in terms of his choices of colors and details; the bathroom was coral, the kitchen featured copper appliances with a light turquoise paint scheme, and the washer and dryer were both a darker turquoise.⁸⁴

At the same time new homes were going into the Zupan Subdivision at least two nearby homeowners made radical alterations to modernize their houses as a way to participate in the postwar Ranch-house craze. Frances Adamich liked the Perko house, at 1145 Eilers Avenue, and asked the contractor to modify her existing, two-story home at 212 East Mesa Avenue. In 1959 Perko Construction sawed off the entire upper floor of the house, removed it, and created a flat-roof with a distinctive pink cornice. Understandably, the presence of a crew with a large crane created quite a commotion, especially at St. Mary’s School across the street, where students clamored to watch out the window. Despite all the excitement happening at her own house, Karla (Adamich) Micklich recalls the sister refused to allow her class to watch the proceedings. A few years later, the Poders, at 304 East Mesa Avenue, also changed their home. What had been “pretty much a shotgun style house” became a modern, brick Ranch.⁸⁵ Contractor Al Jersin, who had worked on both St. Mary’s Church and the new convent across the street, used the same blonde brick for the family’s new home. He left a single wall of the old house stand-



Figures 1.15 and 1.16. Contractor Andrew Perko’s radical modernization of the existing home at 212 East Mesa Avenue is revealed in his permit. (Courtesy of Wade Broadhead, City of Pueblo Planning and Community Development Department; photo by Adam Thomas)



Ginny Kay (Poder) Kaplan grew up at 304 East Mesa Avenue and remembers when contractor Al Jersin transformed their house into a modern, blonde-brick Ranch. Despite these radical changes, the permit refers to the work as an “alteration” rather than new construction. Bill Poder, shown in these photos, assisted with the demolition. (Permit image courtesy of Wade Broadhead, City of Pueblo Planning and Community Development Department; historic house photos courtesy of Ginny Kay (Poder) Kaplan); color image by Adam Thomas)

Application for Certificate of Occupancy
DIVISION OF INSPECTION - CITY OF PUEBLO

Receipt No. 16904
Cert. No.

Fee \$ 1800 Inspector Code No. 8 Date Aug 22 1961

Owner Peter Poder J Contractor License No.
Address 304 E Mesa () Day Labor
Official Address Amount of Contract \$ 9,000.00
Given name under which license is issued Survey made by S.E. Elliott
Address 304 E Mesa Plans and Specifications by

Legal Description: Lot Block Adm. or St.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK (Check one)
New Construction Repair Addition Conversion Moving Remodel Reroof

TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION (Check one)
Fire Resistant I Heavy Timber II Ordinary Masonry III Brick Veneer Adobe Stucco III
Metal Frame IV Wood Frame Stucco V Wood frame Siding V Prefab V

OCCUPANCY AND CLASS (Check one)
Theaters, etc. A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Public Garages X Wholesale & Retail Store F
Factories, etc. C Hotels, etc. H Dwellings Single Duplex Apartment Private Garage J
Other (Specify):

LOCATION
Fire Zone: (Check one) I II III IV V VI VII VIII IX X XI XII
Building Zone: (Check one) A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Minimum setback requirements: (For applicant's information)
ZONE FRONT STREET SIDE
A 20 Ft. 12' 5 Ft.
B 20 Ft. 12' 5 Ft.
C 15 Ft. 7' 5 Ft.

Garage location: Minimum of 80 ft. from front property line.
15 ft. from side property line. No windows or openings within
3 ft. of property line.

DETAIL INFORMATION:
(Not to be answered if plans and specifications accompany this application). Minor, New Construction, Repairs, Miscellaneous.
I. DESCRIPTION OF WORK: (Kind of Material, Size, Scope, etc.)
446 Sq. Ft. Res. Addition on 4th Br Veneer + Brn Repairs

Size of Lot: Lot Area Height of Building 1 2 3 4
Size of Building As Per Plans
Size of Garage Size of Girder Size of Rafters
Garage Vented Size of Girder Support Size of Roof Joists
Size of Basement Bolt Plate To Root Covering
Front Line Depth Below Finish Grade Sub Floor Cedar Beams
Size of Footing Ridge Stone Backing
Thickness Foundation Wall Building Stone
Height of Basement Wall Sway Braces Joint Anchors
Corner Walls Door & Window Lintels Doubled Limes
Wall Thickness Double Stud all Openings Pulley
Concrete Mixture Size of Ceiling Joist Seattle Nails - 24x30 minimum
Foundation Vented Ceiling of Size of Column
Size of Floor Joist Bracedover Corners Size of Pilaster
Double Joist Partitions of Sewer - To be Connected

ADDITIONAL PERMITS REQUIRED FOR: ELECTRIC WORK PLUMBING WORK GAS WORK

Zoning Board of Appeals Variance Case Number Date

I hereby certify that all the answers contained in this application are true and correct to the best of my information, knowledge and belief. And I agree to comply with all City Ordinances regulating Zoning and Building.

Affidavit
I certify that the above described work is being done by a laborer paid by the day and that I have not made any contract with any person for said work, and that there is no agreement for any total sum for the labor to be performed, in executing this affidavit I understand that the performance of this work, repairs or construction, by day labor, and without a license contractor, I assume full responsibility for the work and for all defects in construction, materials and workmanship, and full responsibility for any liability by damage which may be incurred in and about the performance of the work. I hereby certify that I have read the above a foregoing affidavit and know the contents thereof and that the statements contained herein are true to my own knowledge.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this day of A. D. 1961
My Commission Expires

FOR Building Grades, Permits for Sidewalk, Curb and Gutters, Curb Cuts. SEE ENGINEERING DIV. Notary Public



ing, allowing the work to qualify as an “alteration” rather than new construction. The new home featured “a large living room, sunken sitting room with a fireplace and a huge mural on the wall, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a utility room, a huge kitchen... plus a separate two-car brick garage, and a patio between the house and the garage.”⁸⁶ In advance of the construction work, and perhaps in a bid to reduce the cost of the project, neighbors and friends helped the Poders with the selective demolition of the old house.

Whether living in new, old, or altered homes, superior maintenance was the norm in Bojon Town. “All of the yards were beautifully kept and the sidewalks were always clean. Even though people were poor, they were proud.”⁸⁷ Ann Zaitz, of 1129 Eilers Avenue, was well-known in the neighborhood for raking her grass in a single direction and, early each morning, sweeping all of the sidewalks surrounding her corner lot. According to Wayne Pechek, this level of care was not an isolated incidence. When he was a “kid, every one of these homes (on) ... Eilers, Berwin, Bohmen, (all of the houses and streets were so well-preserved) you could eat off the sidewalk.”⁸⁸ Even as some long-time residents sell their houses, this concern about how they will be maintained remains. In 2011, when Steve Degenhart and his business partners were negotiating the purchase of the house at 310 East Mesa Avenue, the Zarkraseks would only sell if these new owners promised to keep the property neat and well-maintained.

Family Traditions

Residents of Bojon Town lived their lives in the shadow of CF&I’s gigantic Minnequa Steelworks, the largest steel mill west of the Mississippi River, a fact that shaped the sights, sounds, and activities of their neighborhood. Allen Luellen re-

called watching the slag pour off into the cooling pond near Salt Creek. And, according to Karen (Mehle) Morris, who grew up at 1119 South Santa Fe Avenue, “you could tell what time it was when you heard the whistle blow at the steel mill and the bells ring at St. Mary Church.”⁸⁹

Not surprisingly, given Slovenians’ love for food, many home memories are associated with making and eating favorite dishes—Eileen (Perko) Lukancic claims most Bojons believe, “If you’re not eating, you’re not happy.”⁹⁰ Sisters Lorraine (Yoxey) Glach and Gerri (Yoxey) Blazich remembered not only stomping the grapes for homemade wine but also butchering hogs for a wide array of delicacies. Their family rendered the fat into cracklings and made a variety of sausages, often dividing the finished product up into bags for distribution to friends and family. Today few residents have smokehouses in their backyards, but kolbase, blood sausages, and other pork products are still a staple of the Slovenian diet. Many now buy their sausage at Frank’s Meat Market, in Blende, established in 1947, and still making kolbase with ground pork, salt, pepper, garlic, and natural casings.

The sweet, walnut-filled Slovenian pastry potica is popular throughout Pueblo, especially at Christmas time. While available at several local bakeries, most Bojons still make their own. Mary Zakrasek recalls, “on the designated potica-making day everyone had to be out of the kitchen. Mom would wrap her head in a cloth, turban style, put on a special apron and begin the process. I’d help pull the dough on the table ever so carefully so it wouldn’t tear. We’d spoon the filling on it, spread it with our fingers, and then she’d hold the cloth that was under it to begin rolling it. She would say Slovenian prayers so it would roll just right and more prayers when putting it in the pans so it would go in smoothly!”⁹¹ Other homemade Sloven-

ian favorites include strudel, sauerkraut, and noodle or barley soup.

Home was the venue for both holiday celebrations and special occasions. Maizie (Mohorcich) Vertovec recalled, “Auntie Lillian and Dad made the fire and got in a big tree for Christmas. Mother made cakes....Christmas was the big event every year.”⁹² Likewise for Becky (Galich) Suddarth’s family, “Christmas Eve night family dinners were the biggest event of the year. My aunt organized everything, making the traditional ham, which we had with my mom’s homemade bread.”⁹³ The Kocmans always started their Christmas celebrations with midnight mass at St. Mary’s and then forty or fifty relatives would return to the house at 1142 Eilers Avenue. Joe Kocman remembered Christmas Eve in 1956 when...

...it had been snowing, with four or five inches of snow on the ground, and (more) still falling. It was about 6:15 p.m. and Eileen and Mickey (his sister and her husband) were fifteen minutes late. All the presents were under the tree, which was positioned in front of the living room picture window. At six years old, I could hardly stand it waiting....I stood to the left of the tree with my chin on the windowsill and every time I saw car headlights driving east on Mesa (Avenue), I would holler that they were here, only to have the car pass Eilers (Avenue)....My heart would sink until the next lights would appear, and I would holler again only to be let down. This happened about ten times before their 1952 Chevy turned onto Eilers (Avenue), and I started jumping up and down.⁹⁴

Watching the bride leave her home for St. Mary’s Church became not only a family but also a neighborhood event. The ritual dictated a button box- or accordion-playing musical escort. This same musician often led the newly married couple back to the bride’s home after the service and, sometimes, even played as they headed to their honeymoon. Nuptial par-



Figure 1.17. In Spring 1950, the Kocmans—husband and wife, Rudy “Moon” and Elsie, and their daughter Judy—lay their own concrete sidewalk in front of their home at 1142 Eilers Avenue. (Photo courtesy of Pam and Joe Kocman)

ties often lasted all day with the ceremony taking place first thing in the morning.⁹⁵ Receptions were held in a variety of places, including local eateries, the church basement, or at fraternal lodges like the May and Columbus Hall buildings on Northern Avenue and the KSKJ (American Slovenian Catholic Union) St. Joseph's Lodge in the Grove.

Circumstance and preference sometimes influenced couples' decision to have less traditional weddings. Rose Kochevar and her fiancé Louis Zupancic wished to be married during World War II while he was home on leave. However, that leave fell during Lent, and Father Daniel Gnidica did not approve of weddings at that time of the year. He finally consented to a March 17, 1942, wedding without either music or decorations. Given wartime austerity, the couple had a small party and spent a few-day honeymoon at Louis' brother's house before her new husband returned to the front. Dorothy Perse was another non-traditional bride. At the age of forty-five, she married John Cernak who lived across the street, after both her mother and his first wife had passed away. As an older woman with a career, Dorothy did not want a big wedding; the couple "ran away and got married in Trinidad."⁹⁶

FUN AND GAMES: ALLEYS AND STREETS

Many of the current and former residents of Bojon Town remember their childhoods as particularly idyllic. Margaret "Mary" Zakrasek, who lived at 310 East Mesa Avenue, said, "There were a lot of kids close in age in the neighborhood, and, in the summer, we'd all play tag and hide and go seek until 10 p.m.... We'd play in the alleys. You could just run over to your friend's house without any worries. Mom had a way she knew to whistle and would stand out on the porch. It could be heard throughout the neighborhood. We (my sister and I) knew to

come home when we heard it."⁹⁷ Friends played together all day, often ending up eating dinner with another family. Somehow most families were able to stretch a meal, even in particularly lean times like the Great Depression, and feed an extra mouth at the table. These types of interactions meant all neighborhood parents made sure all the kids, not just their own, behaved. It was not unusual to receive a scolding from someone else's mother and to face even stricter punishment at home for misbehavior. Mike Barnett recalls a time when this should have happened, but didn't. He, Tommy Pechek, and "Whitey" Cvar were racing their bicycles down the alley between Egan and Mahern avenues, near the pool hall. Whitey tried to get Mike to slow down, but thinking it was a trick to get ahead, he went faster instead. Suddenly Mike ran headlong into a huge dump truck, denting the truck door with his "overhard cranium." The driver was so scared he didn't even get mad at Mike. In addition, there were at least ten neighborhood guys standing in front of the pool hall who saw the whole incident, but no one ever told Mike's parents. He thinks everyone was so "so relieved I didn't get killed that they didn't have the heart to see me get an ass-whipping on top of it all."⁹⁸

Bojon Town was not a wealthy neighborhood, so children often had to make their own fun, often in unexpected places. The clay hills, located north of the neighborhood on the bluffs overlooking downtown, were a favorite venue for all sorts of games, ranging from target practice with homemade slingshots to "cowboys and Indians." Similarly, some recalled playing in the piles of construction dirt when the Krasovics were building their new house at 1134 Eilers Avenue. Kirk Riddock was fond of throwing snow balls at cars on Mesa Avenue. Joe Kocman remembers making homemade skateboards, from two-by-fours and old roller skates. Boys were not the only ones who

Opposite page. Weddings were another reason for families to celebrate. Although the ceremony itself was held at church, much of the wedding preparations and many of the pre- and post-celebrations took place at home. The photos on the opposite page depict a range of Slovenian weddings over time. (Images courtesy of Eileen Deverich, Evelyn Vertovec, Rebecca Suddarth, Elaine Marie Volk, and Pam and Joe Kocman)



Figure 1.18. In the early 1940s, a large group of neighborhood boys are dressed to go to the Colorado State Fair. They are (from bottom, left to right) Ray Videtich, Nick Parepovich, Mike Giarrantano, Joe Mohorcich, Ed “Pudgy” Kocman, Gilbert “Buddy” Lodini, Dick DiNiro, Ronald Yoxey, Eddie Videtich, Bob Smith, and Pete Parepovich. The two youngest kids are identified only as Bill and Bob. (Photo courtesy of Pam and Joe Kocman)



Nicknames

It was tradition in Slovenia to name the first-born male child after the father. This practice had the potential to cause confusion. Perhaps for this reason, nicknames were ubiquitous in Bojon Town. These monikers, assigned to not only Slovenians, became so widely used they had to be mentioned in obituaries so readers knew exactly who had died.

Here is a sampling of just some of the nicknames from the neighborhood: Bear, Beba, Bennie, Big “O,” Blind Man, Brownie, Buckets, Bully, Buster, Cheech, Chip, Coina, Cook, Coogan, Duche, Eho, Elines, Flubby, Fox, Frog, Giz, Gooza, Greaser, Guzz, H, Haize, Hawk, Hockamo, Horse, Inky, Jocko, Jonnie, Jonsey, Killer, Klune, Lemo, Meetza, Midget, Migar, Moon, Morgan, Mouse, Mugsy, Pap, PeeWee, Perks, Pidgeon, Ponch, Popeye, Posh, Preps, Pudgy, Rams, RayDog, Razza, Seed, Skunk, Smitty, Squanto, Stooze, T-Bone, Tamale, Teedles, Tini, Tonza, Weasel, White, Zam, Zebra, Zev, and Zup.

made their own fun. Karla (Adamich) Miklich recalls loving to play “house—I wanted my own house, so in the backyard (of 212 East Mesa Avenue) there were bricks and pieces of wood. I hauled them to the place where my house was going to be. I built a couch and a stove with the bricks and wood. I used to make hamburgers with mud.... I spent hours there.”⁹⁹ Miklich and her friends were also “hopscotch professionals,” who “watched each other carefully when jumping because you couldn’t step on the lines or throw the rock on the lines either.”¹⁰⁰

Probably the most popular “make due” game played in the neighborhood was called Corks. This competition “required limited space, as few as two players, a broom handle, and bottle caps,” all items that were readily accessible in the neighborhood.¹⁰¹ In preparation for a game, boys collected bottle caps from the bars along Northern Avenue and elsewhere in

Bessemer. They often “borrowed” broom handles from their grandmothers or mothers. If a broom handle was not available, they used a piece of wooden lath. The game was called corks because, at that time, bottle caps were lined with cork. This material made the steel caps ideal for “pitching or sailing like today’s frisbees. The objective of the game was to have one player ‘pitch’ the cap and the other player attempt to hit good pitches with the broom handle. Baseball rules were modified for hits, outs, (and) runs.”¹⁰² Corks was played most often in the alleys, although some kids also held games near the northwest corner of St. Mary’s School, using the building as a backstop. It appears the game of corks was mostly for the boys, although Mary Zakrasek remembers being allowed to play. Judy Kochever, however, recalls watching the game along with her Dad and Uncle Nick; sometimes the girls helped pick up the bottle caps at the end of the game, too. Several former players credited their corks experience with success in traditional baseball; they believed “corks made you mechanically sound” and enhanced hitting skills because “if you could hit a ‘cork,’ a baseball looks like a pillow” out of the pitcher’s hand.¹⁰³

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME: EILERS BALLPARK

The sport of baseball, while tremendously popular with the youngsters in Bojon Town, was not just child’s play in this

neighborhood. It was particularly serious business for the resident semi-pro team, the Walter's Brewers, who hosted games at St. Mary's Ballpark, including several well-publicized bouts against popular teams of barnstormers. For a select few, baseball dreams lead to professional-league experience that became the vehicle for upward mobility.

The Walter's Brewers played their home games at the St. Mary's, or Eiler's, Ballpark. Dedicated in 1937, this field stood in the large expanse of open ground immediately east of the original convent building. The Zupan Subdivision homes did not exist yet, allowing the outfield fences to border Newton's Lumber on the north, South Santa Fe Avenue on the east, and East Mesa Avenue on the south. The dirt field featured wooden grandstands behind home plate and advertisements for local businesses adorned the outfield fences. Rudolph "Moon" Kocman was the manager for the team he established in 1932, and nearly all of the players lived in Bojon Town. There were games every weekend. Although the team charged admission, Mike Giarrantano, a young boy at the time, remembers it was "easy to go to alley and hop the fence."¹⁰⁴ Every weekend there was a game and, according to Giarrantano, they were always worth watching since the level of play was akin to today's AAA ball.

In addition to playing local and regional teams, the Walter's Brewers competed against a variety of barnstorming clubs. The term "barnstorming" had origins in vaudeville theater when performers took their shows on the road, playing anywhere they could including barns. The tradition of the barnstorming is as old as baseball, but had its heyday in the 1930s through the 1950s. Giarrantano recalls watching Walter's Brewers play the House of David barnstormers. The House of David baseball team served as ambassadors for a Jewish religious community in Michigan.¹⁰⁵

On June 23, 1938, Walter's Brewers played another barnstorming team whose appearance set them apart. The Zulu Giants, a team composed mostly of Negro League players, wore garish painted face, red wigs, grass skirts, and played in their bare feet. Despite the demeaning costumes, these teams featured some of the best talent in the Negro Leagues. John "Buck" O'Neil, later a Major League scout for the Chicago Cubs, played briefly on one of the Zulu teams prior to joining the Kansas City Monarchs, of the Negro American League. Many Negro League players disliked how the Zulu Giants and another similar team, the Zulu Cannibals, perpetuated negative stereotypes. But both Zulu teams were very popular with the public and drew large crowds when they visited ballparks. On the day the Zulu Giants came to the Eilers' ballfield, some of the neighborhood girls were sent out to pick glass off the field before the game started. Gerri (Yoxey) Blazich, only six or seven years old when she attended this game, remembers being very frightened of these visiting ballplayers. She said one of the players who she thought "was feeling good (had been drinking)..." came over to a group of Walter's supporters in the stands and said, "If we don't win this game, I'm going to kill every one of you."¹⁰⁶ Not realizing such wild talk likely was part of the Zulu's pre-game entertainment routine, she ran home crying. She was so hysterical her mother had to dunk her entire head under the running kitchen faucet in order to calm her down.

The final notable barnstorming visit for the Walter's Brewers came on August 17, 1941, when Satchel Paige brought a team to town. Paige was known as the "master of the barnstormers" and his All-Stars were "by far the biggest draw of the barnstorming teams."¹⁰⁷ Leroy "Satchel" Paige, born circa 1906, had career highlights spanning half a century. He started his



Figure 1.19. Lillian (Glavich) Galich and Margie (Burin) Prijatel pose in front of Eilers Ballpark, offering a great view of the wooden grandstand for fan seating behind home plate. (Photo courtesy of Pam and Joe Kocman)

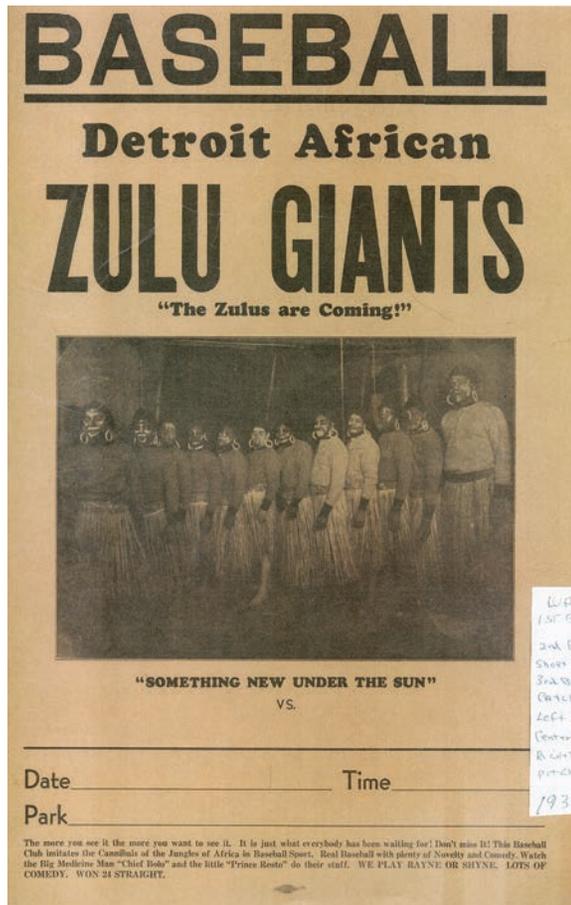


Figure 1.20. In 1938 Walter’s Brewers played the Zulu Giants, a barnstorming team who dressed in outlandish “African” costumes that featured face masks, wigs, and grass skirts. (Image courtesy of Sue Miketa)

baseball adventure in the Negro Leagues, where he pitched for numerous clubs. At the Major League level, Paige played for the Cleveland Indians, St. Louis Cardinals, and Kansas City Athletics. Paige’s team and the Brewers played this game at Pueblo County Ball Park, later renamed Runyon Field. Moon Kocman’s lineup appeared in the local newspaper: 1. C. Pechek (shortstop); 2. E. O’Roark (second base); 3. Yengich (first base); 4. J. O’Roark (right field); 5. Petric (center field); 6. H. Peckek (left field); 7. Boziach (third base); 8. Lindvay (catcher); and 9. Jones (pitcher).¹⁰⁸

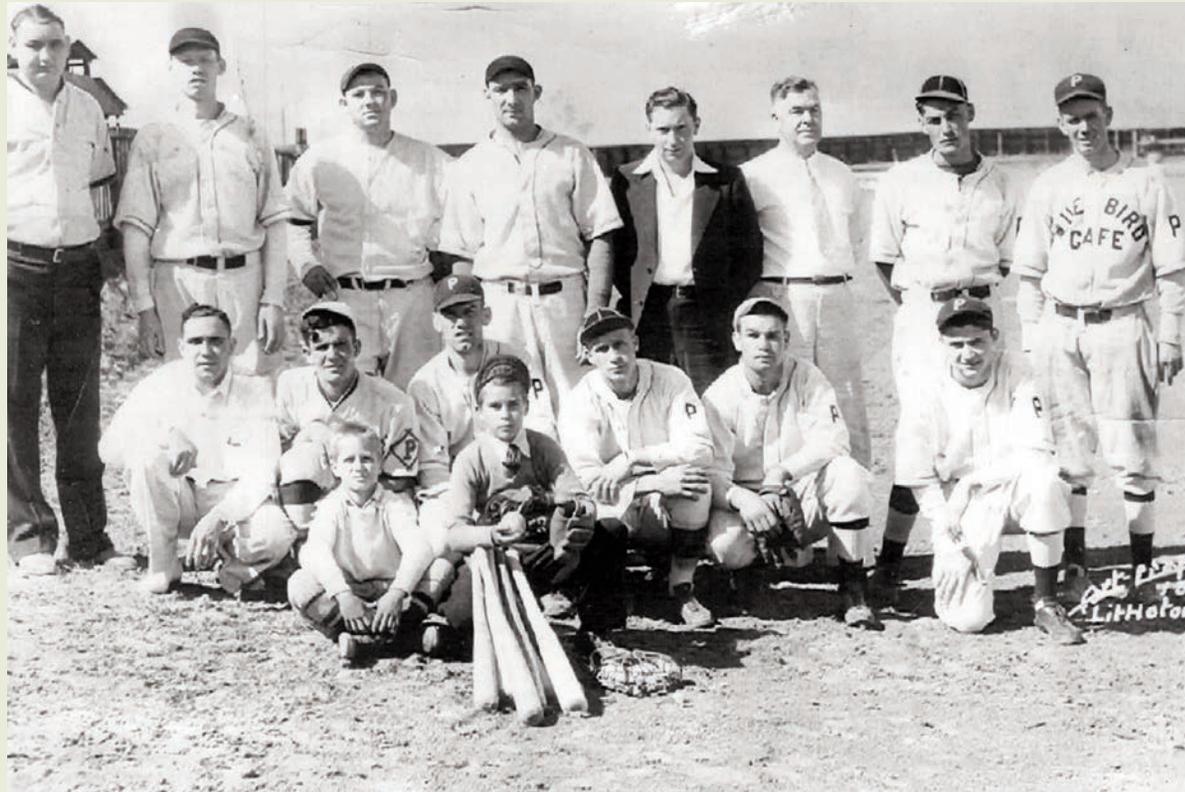
Babe Ruth, also a popular barnstormer, made his final visit to Pueblo on July 7, 1940. He attended the annual semi-pro State Tournament in which the Walter’s Brewers competed. Images from the newspaper show Bojon Town residents Eddie “Pudgy” Kocman, dressed in his Brewers batboy uniform, and Dan “Guzz” Pechek, prominently, just to the side of the retired slugger. Like the bout against Paige’s team, the championship game and Ruth appearance took place at Pueblo County Ball Park. Pechek remembered “they drove him (Ruth) into the ball park in a black car and he came out in one of his old Yankee uniforms.”¹⁰⁹ Ruth, also promoting war bonds during this Pueblo visit, put on quite a hitting exhibition. Kochman recalled Ruth “stepping up to the plate and swatting the ball a mile. He was clearing that fence pretty well.”¹¹⁰ The son of the Brewers’ manager was lucky enough to leave with an autographed baseball. Some years later his sisters, wanting to play baseball like the neighborhood boys, used that precious ball, rather than any of his everyday balls, for a pickup game with their friends. Yet, a 1976 article commemorating Ruth’s 1940 visit mentioned Kocman’s autographed ball as “still cherished” and on display in his home.¹¹¹

Three generations of the Pechek family pursued big

league dreams: Bobby played in the St. Louis Browns organization; his son Wayne spent six seasons in the minor leagues with the San Francisco Giants and Los Angeles Angels; and Wayne’s son Tony was drafted by the Milwaukee Brewers in 2009. According to Harry “Perks” Perko, who played in the Brooklyn Dodgers organization and grew up playing against many of Bobby’s brothers, the Pecheks had the potential to be an even bigger baseball family. When Perko returned to Pueblo after his baseball career was over, he said it was a shame Fred “Coogan” Pechek never went to the major leagues, opting instead to get a job in the mill and work there for forty-four years. Perko claimed if Coogan, who had offers to play in the Western (minor) League, had pursued a professional baseball career, then brother “Hank would have followed, (and) Inky would have followed.”¹¹² Wayne Pechek said that generation of the family had the potential to be “like the Alou brothers.”¹¹³ Pechek’s father told him to go to college and get an education so he had options other than working at the mill. He attended the University of Oklahoma on a baseball scholarship that, ultimately, led to him being drafted into the Giants organization. Ironically, one of the careers he had after hanging up the baseball cleats was selling bricks to the mill, although he never worked inside.

In addition to Perko and the Pecheks, at least one other Pueblo Bojon played professional baseball. Left-handed pitcher Frank Papish made it to the major leagues after ten years in the minors. During his six-year (1945–50) major-league career he played for the Chicago White Sox, Cleveland Indians, and Pittsburgh Pirates. After retiring from baseball, Papish returned to Pueblo and became a deputy sheriff; he passed away in 1965 at the age of forty-seven.

Today, although St. Mary’s Ball Park is gone and the Wal-



Double Feature Baseball Bill at St. Mary's Field

A handwritten draft of an article, by Nik Zakrasek likely written near the beginning of the 1938 season, encouraged folks to come out for a double feature (double header) between the St. Mary's Lodge and Walter's Brewers:

After a week of strenuous drilling, the cream of the South Side baseball crop, the St. Mary's Lodge and Walter's Brewers baseball teams, are quite ready to decide which team will dominate the other. For the fans entertained, the teams will present their full strengths on the field with the star pitchers facing each other. For Walter's, in the first game, hook ball artist Enky Krall will be opposed by last year's leading Arkansas Valley League moundsmen Max Tekaver. In the nightcap, Friebel Laird will face Spunky Muhic, who in his first two games this season, has struck out nineteen batsmen.

The field is in excellent condition. The grandstand built (be)neath the shady trees of Eiler Park has been thoroughly cleaned (and) both teams have received new snappy uniforms. All in all, an afternoon at these games will be well spent. A slight admission charge of fifteen cents will be asked to cover expenses.

Games are scheduled at St. Mary's Field for the entire summer's baseball campaign. Local and out of town teams can be seen in action every Sunday afternoon. Especially to be remembered is the game between Walter's Brewers and the Zulu Giants, a traveling African Colored Team (on) June 23—a real show is promised on this date. Don't miss it.¹¹⁴



(Left) With the Eilers Ballpark in the background, the Walter's Brewers team was (back row) Manager Rudy "Moon" Kocman, Red Miklich, Haze Kocman, Moss Mikatich, Jay Mohorich, Joe Riley, Laird Popovich, Johnny O'Connor, (front row) Joe Muloy, Elines Zupancic, Eff Miklich, Coogan Pechek, Hank Pechek, Sonny Boziach; and bat boys Bobby and Chip Pechek. (Image courtesy of Wayne Pechek)

(Above) Walter's Brewers J. Petric and Laird Popovich help injured opponent Meow Oreskovich off the field. (Image courtesy of Sue Miketa)



The people and porches of the Eilers Neighborhood. (Photos by Adam Thomas)



ter's Brewers players have all passed away, baseball memories live on in Bojon Town. A small plaque graces one of the concrete bollards surrounding the vacant lot on the northwest corner of Eilers and East Mesa avenues. The sign reminds folks to go across the street to Eilers' Place and learn about the history of the site. Long-time residents of the Zupan Subdivision still describe the location of their houses in terms of where they would have been on the old baseball field. For example, Pam and Joe Kocman's house, at 1142 Eilers Avenue, is right near second base. Anyone drinking at Eilers' Place just has to look at the walls to be treated to a lesson in Walter's Brewers history. Old jerseys and numerous black and white photographs help to tell the story of Moon Kocman's club. In trying to explain the importance of baseball in the neighborhood, Mike Giarrantano mentioned he worked at CF&I briefly while in high school. But, when it came to getting a full-time job, he chose to work at National Steel, a local firm that offered standard schedules rather than the routinely changing shifts offered at the mill. The reason for the choice: Giarrantano wanted to have time to play ball, first baseball and, as he got older, softball. Speaking of baseball, he asserted, "It's in our blood."¹⁵

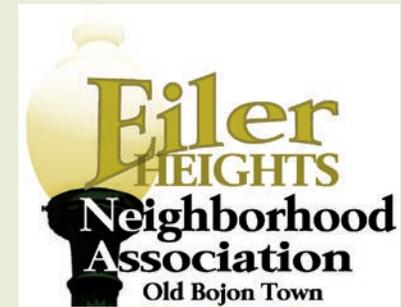
"SUPER FUN" NEIGHBORHOOD

Over the past decade, the neighborhood has faced a number of challenges. In 2012 a few active residents contested Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) environmental assessments and opposed an I-25 expansion alternative that would have not only taken over fifty homes but also created a new highway ramp within just feet of St. Mary Help of Christians Church. Recognition of such threats and the desire to protect the area's unique character and history inspired formation of the Eiler Heights (in Old Bojon Town) Neighborhood

Association, with Pam Kocman serving as the first President. Thanks in large part to these citizens, CDOT, citing insufficient funds, has, at least for now, discontinued its plans for highway expansion. The neighborhood association is in the process of obtaining non-profit status and enjoys high levels of attendance at its monthly meetings.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approached the Eiler Heights group, in April 2012, about the neighborhood being listed as a Superfund site to mitigate the claims of ill-health effects associated with lead contamination linked to the former Eilers Smelter. As part of this process, the association gathered information and presented it to the neighborhood, allowing the residents to vote on Superfund listing. The association vote was against such designation. However, in December 2013, the Pueblo City Council and Pueblo County Commissioners, with a letter to Governor John Hickenlooper, initiated the Superfund process. In response, the neighborhood association prepared their own letter demanding strict adherence to the program's timeline and regulations. It remains to be seen how such environmental designation will affect the Bojon Town neighborhood. Some long-time residents are angry, while others, especially those who have lived very happily and healthily into advanced age, are confused. Many will tell you, "I played in that old slag dump behind the Church and I have no health problems at all!"

Yet, the neighborhood association is working hard to remain positive and encourage residents to focus on the assets of their neighborhood. This group will focus closely on EPA clean-up efforts, assuring all regulations are followed and urging the quickest mitigation work possible. But, hopefully, they will be able to do it on their own terms. Association members have already deployed humor and great spirit. For example,



Eiler Heights Neighborhood Association

Today Eiler Heights in Old Bojon Town is a culturally diverse neighborhood celebrating its many cultures, charms, and challenges.

MISSION STATEMENT

- Enhance the quality of our neighborhood
- Encourage each one of us to be a participant in the neighborhood
- Work together as residents, businesses, and local government to improve the beauty and safety for all
- Encourage communication, cooperation, and friendliness among residents
- Encourage everyone to get to know their neighborhoods

For all residents living in the Eiler Heights Neighborhood, it is up to us, homeowners, tenants, and business owners alike, to help nurture a quality of life that will ensure the well-being of our children, our senior citizens, our families, and our business owners. We want to keep our neighborhood safe, clean, and friendly. We want to do our part to make living here a place where you want to live and where others would like to live.



the neighborhood t-shirts, available in a wide variety of colors, show a huge, whimsical smiley face and, in large text with the pun very much intended, declare their neighborhood to be “SUPER-FUN.”

CONCLUSION: THE POWER OF STORIES AND PLACES

Stories have the power to change how we see our surroundings. Without specific places upon which to anchor, memories tend to drift, becoming lost in the impenetrable fog of time. Yet, firmly planted in place, individual memories endure and entire cultures survive. Houses become more than mere bricks and mortar. Instead they are homes, places that bring to mind memories of waiting for Santa Claus in front of a large picture window, gathering with neighbors on hot summer nights to watch television on the lawn, and seeing a beloved aunt proceed princess-like in a hoop-skirted wedding dress from the narrow upstairs hallway into the front room. Stories rooted in real places encourage us to explore; instead of drinking in the familiar yet generic chain restaurant, we seek out the fourth-generation, family-owned corner bar. Here regulars sit on the same stools their relatives occupied since the 1930s; artifacts pay tribute to the Walter’s Brewers and other local baseball teams. And, if you are lucky, you might have an opportunity to adorn a wheeled kolbase with sequins, paints, and fabric before racing it down a large wooden ramp. The church becomes more than a space for Sunday worship. Parishioners commemorate humble beginnings in a broom factory, remember mass in a barn nicknamed “Little Bethle-

hem,” and proudly celebrate the contributions that made their modern, blonde-brick edifice possible.

Stories rooted in a place also have the power to shape perceptions. The memoir workshops that made this document possible were like family reunions; one person’s story jogged a memory for someone else, and eventually, everyone talking over each other. Memories of long summer days spent playing corks with a grandma’s “borrowed” broom handle and bottle caps collected from the bars along Northern Avenue; sneaking into the pool hall to learn the intricacies of “six-ball” or “rotation,” and walking over the bridge to take in a double-feature at the Avalon. Neighbors recalled homemade wine, butchered hogs, day-long potica making sessions, button box-playing relatives escorting brides and grooms to and from church, and the strains of John Butkovich’s Sunday afternoon radio show coming from every home in the neighborhood. These stories became a shelter in a storm as bureaucratic forces portrayed Old Bojon Town as lacking historical and architectural significance or as dirty and environmentally contaminated. They reminded neighbors about the special character of this neighborhood, qualities no longer present in many other places where memories and places have become dislodged. The stories in this context powerfully capture the memories of Old Bojon Town and validate that this was and continues to be a special place. Taken collectively, the stories portray a physically complete and culturally vibrant neighborhood, a place where, “Life was not always perfect...but everyone helped each other and had fun together.”¹¹⁶

SECTION 2

Community-Built Survey

PROJECT AREA

The survey area comprises a portion of “Old Bojon Town” in the Bessemer section of Pueblo, north of the former Colorado Fuel & Iron (CF&I) mill. The twenty-four surveyed sites appear on either side of the 200 and 300 blocks of East Mesa Avenue, along the 1100 block of intersecting Eilers Avenue, and in the 1100 block of South Santa Fe Avenue. The surveyed properties include all those within the Cyril Zupan subdivision and eight buildings on the northern edge of the City Hall Place, 2nd Filing subdivision. The survey area includes not only historic homes but also two neighborhood institutions. Eilers’ Place (320-326 East Mesa Avenue) is the local tavern and the St. Mary Help of Christians property (211-311 East Mesa Avenue) features the 1953 blonde brick Mediterranean style church flanked by the former Catholic school, rectory, prayer garden, and convent. The survey area represents the core of a much larger historically Slovenian-American community that, over the years, evolved to include residents with Hispanic and other ethnic backgrounds.

Intensively surveyed sites had legal locations within Section 1 of Township 21 South and Ranges 64 and 65 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, depicted on United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic maps of the Southeast Pueblo (1994) quadrangle. The approximate acreage for this project, determined by adding the area for all surveyed sites, was nearly 14.3 acres.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of this project was to collect and analyze architectural and historical data for twenty-four buildings within the Eilers/Old Bojon Town neighborhood. The project followed a new methodology called community-built survey. Based upon similar methods used for citizen-driven park design efforts, this survey depended upon high levels of community participation. Current and former residents shared detailed information about the history of and physical changes to the survey properties and the neighborhood. In essence, the community members built their own potential historic district with assistance from professional consultants. The shared stories informed the survey forms, the historic context, and the documentary film. These products are intended to both honor the past and inform the future of this micro-community, making the history more accessible to current residents, individuals who have left the neighborhood, and newcomers alike.

File Search and Previous Work

The original impetus for this project came in 2007 when City Planner Wade Broadhead approved a variance for homeowners Pam and Joe Kocman to construct a large garage at the rear of their property at 1142 Eilers Avenue. Broadhead was impressed with the integrity of the nearby resources, intrigued by the special character of this Slovenian neighborhood, and

Scope of Work

The City of Pueblo Planning & Community Development Department prepared the following scope of work for the Eilers Community Built Survey project:

- A. Execute contract with OAHP and hire the consultant
- B. Conduct two memoir writing workshops, one focused on owner’s homes and another with a theme that seeks to obtain information about how people used their neighborhood
- C. Draft Context and Survey Report incorporating general memoir information, survey results, and archival research
- D. Complete #1403 survey forms for twenty-four properties, with residents providing a majority of the history
- E. Submit Final Context and Survey Report including recommendations for further use of context
- F. Consultant attends one Pueblo Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) meeting to introduce and discuss the project
- G. The City will issue a press release about the grant project prior to the first memoir workshop in order to engage residents, including those who may have moved away
- H. Produce five-minute documentary telling the story and history of the Eilers area
- I. Incorporate revisions and recommendations from City and OAHP reviews of draft context
 1. Submit four bound copies and an electronic (PDF) version to OAHP to meet the CLG contract requirements
 2. Submit fifty bound copies and an electronic (PDF) version on CD-ROM to City for dissemination and public outreach; copies to be given to public library, repositories, public officials, and citizens
- J. Present final context/ report and documentary at a community meeting/ video premier near the conclusion of the project



Figures 2.1 to 2.3 (top to bottom). Three of the eight properties eligible for local landmarking include 1138 Eilers Avenue, 1142 Eilers Avenue, and 1145 Eilers Avenue. (Photos by Adam Thomas)

entertained by the couple's stories about owning the bar. He recognized the potential for an historic preservation project and the Kocmans agreed. In 2010 Broadhead and a small group of area residents initiated discussions about project goals and possible methodology. What was originally envisioned as a modest, self-funded historic context to record the neighborhood's stories evolved into the CLG-funded Eilers Neighborhood Story and Community-Built Survey. Prior to beginning work on the grant project, local scholar and writing instructor Dawn DiPrince hosted the first memoir-writing workshop in November 2012 and consultant Mary Therese Anstey conducted numerous oral history interviews, mostly with older residents, in spring 2013.

On October 12, 2013, the City of Pueblo signed a contract with Historitecture to assist with portions of the project. Historitecture requested an official search of Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) files, which indicated twenty-one sites had been previously documented. CH2MHill recorded many of these sites as part of a 2006-07 compliance project conducted to study historic resources in the Area of Effect for Colorado Department of Transportation's proposed widening of I-25 South. CH2MHill assigned all site numbers based upon property addresses rather than historic parcels, necessitating some changes to select site numbers as part of this survey. OAHP linked the affected properties to the previously assigned numbers to allow researchers to access all survey results.

The community-based survey model depended upon collaboration among property owners, City and County staff, and Historitecture to complete the intensive-level survey forms. Despite multiple contributors, all products meet the standards established in the *Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Manual*

Guidelines for Identification: History and Archaeology (2007). The project included the following steps:

Memory Collection

The recollections of current and former residents not only provided the details for the construction history and narrative history on the survey forms but also contributed to the themes and details in the historic context. Three techniques were used to gather memories: memoir workshops, questionnaires, and oral history interviews. A total of three (two within the grant contract) memoir workshops were held. At the first two sessions participants prepared basic footprints of their homes, noted basic memories based upon the five senses, wrote about a memory of their choice, and shared their writing with the larger group. The third, architectural memoir workshop focused on the larger Slovenian neighborhood, with attendees not only recording and sharing thematic memories but also identifying key landmarks on a large map. The postal questionnaires asked for information specifically relevant to Fields 29 and 35 on the survey forms. Anstey conducted oral history interviews with individuals unable to attend the memoir workshops. These three techniques yielded at least some information on each of the twenty-four survey properties. Historitecture's Adam Thomas attended a Front Porch social prior to one of the workshops and photographed home owners in the neighborhood.

Fieldwork

For all intensively surveyed sites, Historitecture visited each property to record its architectural features and photograph each building on the property. During the fieldwork, archaeological potential was not considered because this was

an historical and architectural survey. Anstey completed intensive-level fieldwork on October 22, 2013.

Photography

Historitecture recorded all of the survey photographs on a Canon EOS digital camera with 16.1 megapixel resolution, then printed them according to the National Register's seventy-five-year archival standard using an Epson Stylus Photo 1400 inkjet printer. This included Epson Claria high-definition inks on four-by-six-inch Epson ultra premium glossy photo paper. Historitecture saved the photos as four-by-six-inch, 300 pixel-per-inch images, in tagged image file format (TIF) and burned them onto a 300-year, archival compact disc.

Archival Research

Historitecture gathered information from a number of local sources to supplement details from the memory collection phase. These resources included Pueblo County Assessor records (online), the clippings files and city directories at the Robert Hoag Rawlings Pueblo Public Library, online searches for relevant topics, and electronic databases such as Ancestry.com.

Form Completion

The results of the research on individual properties were shared via Architectural Inventory Form (#1403). Responsibility for form completion was divided among project partners. Anstey was responsible for the architectural descriptions, statements of significance and integrity, assessments of individual and district eligibility, and photographs. Current and former residents provided the details for Fields 29 and 35. Broadhead completed all other form fields and assured infor-

mation was entered into the survey database. County GIS staff prepared all survey maps. Thomas was in charge of proof-reading, formatting, and printing all survey forms, including the black and white photos. Historitecture compiled and generated forms in Archbase, a FileMaker database.

Narrative History (Context)

Based on the information gathered during the memory collection and archival research, Anstey wrote a history of the neighborhood. This written narrative organized the information into themes related to the built environment.

Documentary

The City of Pueblo places high priority on communicating project results to the community. In order to share the story of Bojon Town, Historitecture produced an interpretive video, which was premiered in the neighborhood and distributed freely to city repositories, community partners, and neighbors. It was posted to YouTube in July 2014.

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historitecture's team assessed the twenty-four survey properties for their historical and architectural significance and, thus, their individual eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, and as Pueblo local landmarks. Initially, in consideration of National Register eligibility, Historitecture ranked each surveyed site on a scale that considered the combined levels of historical significance and physical integrity, based on the four National Register criteria of significance and seven aspects of integrity. Historitecture also applied local criteria for local landmark eligibility. Those rankings were, from low (not

National Register Eligibility

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, created the National Register of Historic Places, which the National Park Service administers. Criteria for National Register eligibility are set forth in Title 36, Part 60, of the Code of Federal Regulations and are summarized as follows: The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

State Register Eligibility

The Colorado General Assembly established the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties by statute in 1975. The State Register became an active program in 1991 and is a listing of the state's significant cultural resources worthy of preservation for the future education and enjoyment of Colorado's residents and visitors. The State Register is administered within History Colorado, which maintains an official list of all properties included in the State Register. Properties that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places are automatically placed in the State Register. Properties may also be nominated separately to the State Register without inclusion in the National Register. The criteria for listing are as follows: Significance in history, architecture, archeology, and culture is present in buildings, sites, structures, objects, districts, and areas that possess integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- A. The property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history; or
- B. The property is connected with persons significant in history; or
- C. The property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan; or
- D. The property has geographic importance; or
- E. The property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history.

Local Landmark Eligibility

Pueblo's standards for landmark designation are found in section 4-14-8 of the City's Historic Preservation Code (Title 14, Chapter 14, City of Pueblo Ordinances): A building, object, monument, structure or site may individually be designated as a Landmark, or one or more buildings, objects, monuments, structures or sites which are united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development may be designated as a Historic District, if they have distinctive character and have:

1. Special historic or prehistoric interest or importance:
 - a. has significant character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, State or Nation; or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or
 - b. is the site of a historic event with a significant effect upon society; or
 - c. exemplifies the cultural heritage of the community; or has yielded, or may be likely to yield, important prehistoric information.
2. Special architectural, engineering or aesthetic interest or importance:
 - a. portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or
 - b. embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type or engineering specimen; or
 - c. is the work of a designer whose individual work has significantly influenced the development of the City; or
 - d. contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.
3. Special geographic interest or importance:
 - a. by being part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area, which should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural or architectural motif, or
 - b. owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City.

For a property to be eligible for Pueblo Landmark status, it must be significant under at least two of the three major categories

significant, low physical integrity) to high (very significant, high physical integrity).

Historitecture used National Register standards as a guide for considering potential districts. As a general guideline, 50 percent or more of the properties in a potential district must be considered contributing resources for the district to be eligible. However the density and distribution of contributing resources is critical in determining the boundaries of a potential district. Districts are subject to the same National Register areas of significance, criteria, and determinations of integrity as individual properties.

RESULTS

This project resulted in the inventory of twenty-four sites. Of the surveyed sites, two—the St. Mary's property and Eilers' Place—are eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places and the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties. This project included eight sites determined eligible for listing as Pueblo local landmarks. These results are summarized in Tables 2.2 and 2.3.

This project also identified an eligible National Register Historic District that includes the Cyril Zupan subdivision plus the Diocese of Pueblo property to its west. This area is important for its association with Catholic priest Father Cyril Zupan who, after the devastating flood in 1921, purchased this land on higher ground for the St. Mary Help of Christians parish. This site ultimately included a K-8 school, rectory, prayer garden, convent, and church. This purchased plot included additional land that the congregation subdivided for housing and sold to parishioners, in 1941, as a way to defray parish debt. Relevant areas of significance for this district include Ethnic History (for association with the Slovenian-American parish),

Community Planning and Development (for the non-traditional postwar subdivision layout and sale of lots exclusively to St. Mary's parishioners), and Architecture (intact examples of self-built Ranch homes). The proposed period of significance for the district is 1921–1964, a span beginning when Zupan purchased the land and ending in accordance with the 50-year rule. Table 2.1 summarizes the contributing and non-contributing resources within this historic district. Map 2.1 illustrates the boundaries of the district and shows the balance between contributing (fourteen) and non-contributing (two) sites.

In addition to the identified National Register historic district, the project also determined the survey area to be at least part of a potential Pueblo local landmark historic district associated with Pueblo's Slovenian-American community. Such a district would include all of the resources surveyed for this small project but the boundary extends to a much wider geographic area. More research and survey work is needed to determine the appropriate local historic district boundaries. Based upon the information gathered thus far, nearly all of the sites surveyed as part of the community-built survey likely would be contributing to the proposed local historic district.

COMMUNITY-BUILT SURVEY LESSONS LEARNED

This project followed an experimental methodology. For that reason, it is important to analyze the effectiveness of this approach and to highlight particular lessons learned. In many ways, the Eiler Heights/Old Bojon Town neighborhood was ideal for the chosen community-built survey. This area has a tight knit group of homeowners, many of them the same individuals who built these houses originally; they have an intimate knowledge of the construction history of their houses. It

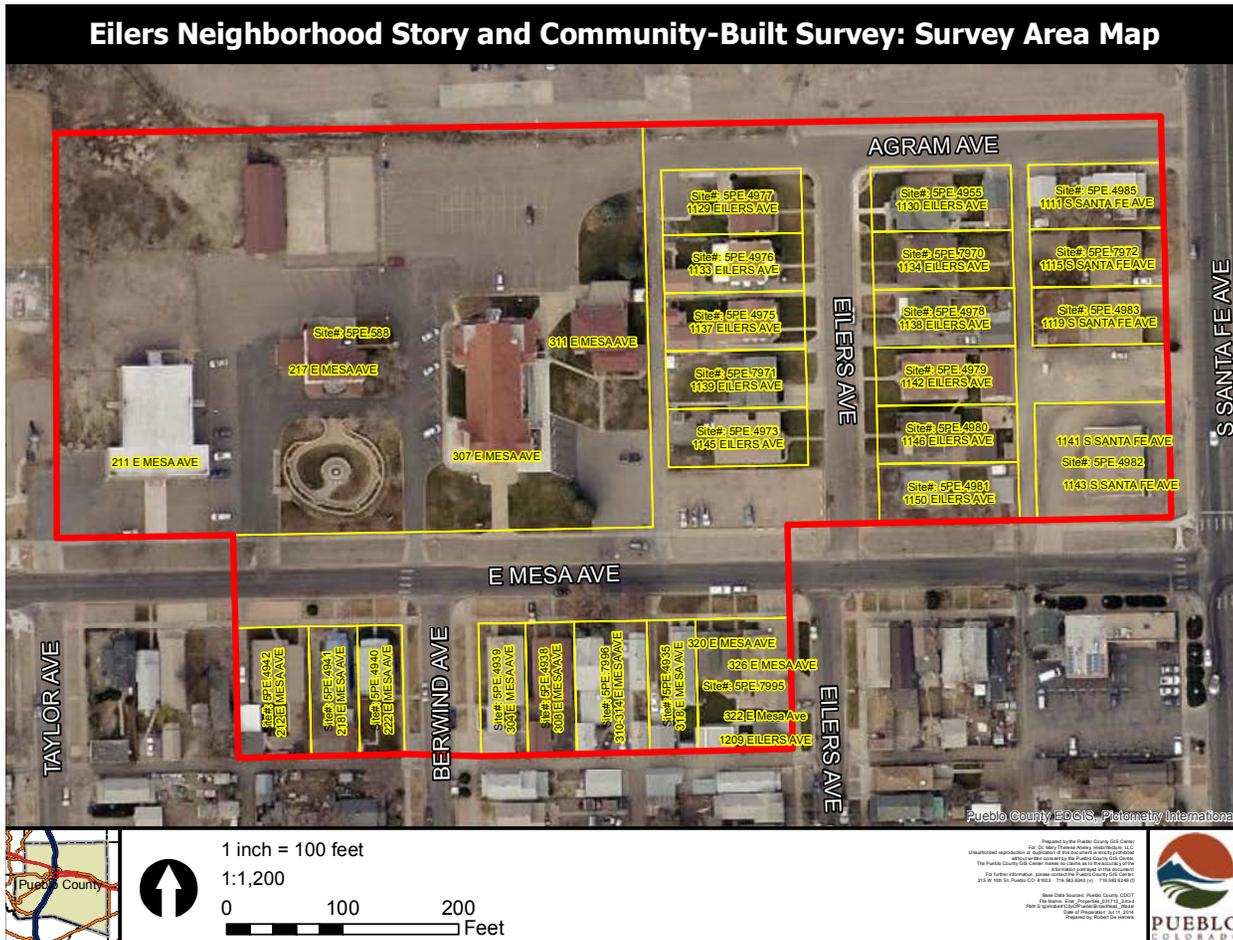


TABLE 2.1: ELIGIBLE NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT

Site Number	Address	Contributing	Non-Contributing
5PE.588	211-311 E. Mesa Avenue	X	
5PE.4955	1130 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4973	1145 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4975	1137 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4976	1133 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4977	1129 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4978	1138 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4979	1142 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4980	1146 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4981	1150 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.4982	1141-1143 S. Santa Fe Avenue	X	
5PE.4983	1119 S. Santa Fe Avenue	X	
5PE.7970	1134 Eilers Avenue	X	
5PE.7971	1139 Eilers Avenue		X
5PE.4985	1111 S. Santa Fe Avenue	X	
5PE.7972	1115 S. Santa Fe Avenue		X

also had the advantage of active supporters of the project. Pam and Joe Kocman were excellent ambassadors with strong, well-established ties within the neighborhood. They participated enthusiastically in all facets of the survey and, in doing so, encouraged others to share their stories, memories, and family photographs as well.

This project enjoyed extremely high levels of participation. The longer than usual time period over which this project

evolved (initial efforts to self-fund this endeavor plus the standard CLG grant schedule) likely encouraged more sharing; current and former residents, who continued to see Anstey and Broadhead attending memoir workshops and conducting oral histories, realized the professional commitment to their history. The age of the homeowners and the various threats to the neighborhood also may have enhanced levels of participation or at least made preserving the area's history a more

TABLE 2.2: PROPERTIES BY SITE NUMBER

Site Number	Address	Historic Name	Style or Type	National Register	State Register	Local Landmark
5PE.588	211-311 E. Mesa Avenue	St. Mary's Help of Christians property	Mediterranean/ Colonial Revival/ Mediterranean/ Spanish Colonial Revival	Yes	Yes	Yes (only former school currently listed)
5PE.4935	318 E. Mesa Avenue	Yoxey Residence	American Movements	No	No	No
5PE.4938	308 E. Mesa Avenue	De Niro Residence	Bungalow	No	No	No
5PE.4939	304 E. Mesa Avenue	Poder Residence	Ranch	No	No	Yes
5PE.4940	222 E. Mesa Avenue	Babich Residence	Bungalow	No	No	No
5PE.4941	218 E. Mesa Avenue	Prince Residence	American Movements	No	No	No
5PE.4942	212 E. Mesa Avenue	Plese-Adamich Residence	Modern Movements	No	No	Yes
5PE.4955	1130 Eilers Avenue	Riddock Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.4973	1145 Eilers Avenue	Perko Residence	Modern Movements	No	No	Yes
5PE.4975	1137 Eilers Avenue	Zupancic Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.4976	1133 Eilers Avenue	Galich Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.4977	1129 Eilers Avenue	Zaitz Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.4978	1138 Eilers Avenue	Prijatelj Residence	Ranch	No	No	Yes
5PE.4979	1142 Eilers Avenue	Kocman Residence	Ranch	No	No	Yes
5PE.4980	1146 Eilers Avenue	Mohorcich Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.4981	1150 Eilers Avenue	Zakrasyck Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.4982	1141-1143 S. Santa Fe Avenue	Zakrasek Commercial Building	Commercial	No	No	No
5PE.4983	1119 S. Santa Fe Avenue	Mehle Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.7970	1134 Eilers Avenue	Krasovic Residence	Ranch	No	No	Yes
5PE.7971	1139 Eilers Avenue	Pechek Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.4985	1111 S. Santa Fe Avenue	Philip's Liquor/ Mehle Residence	No Style	No	No	No
5PE.7972	1115 S. Santa Fe Avenue	Brunjak Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
5PE.7995 (formerly 5PE.1325, 5PE.4917, 5PE.4933, 5PE.4934)	320-326 E. Mesa Avenue 1209 Eilers Avenue	Eilers' Place	House with Commercial Addition/ No Style/ American Movements/ American Movements	Yes	Yes	Yes
5PE.7996 (formerly 5PE.4936, 5PE.4937)	310-314 E. Mesa Avenue	Zakrasek Residence	Bungalow/ American Movements	No	No	No

TABLE 2.3: PROPERTIES BY ADDRESS

Address	Site Number	Historic Name	Style or Type	National Register	State Register	Local Landmark
1129 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4977	Zaitz Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
1130 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4955	Riddock Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
1133 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4976	Galich Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
1134 Eilers Avenue	5PE.7970	Krasovic Residence	Ranch	No	No	Yes
1137 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4975	Zupancic Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
1138 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4978	Prijatelj Residence	Ranch	No	No	Yes
1139 Eilers Avenue	5PE.7971	Pechek Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
1142 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4979	Kocman Residence	Ranch	No	No	Yes
1145 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4973	Perko Residence	Modern Movements	No	No	Yes
1146 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4980	Mohorcich Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
1150 Eilers Avenue	5PE.4981	Zakrasyck Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
211-311 E. Mesa Avenue	5PE.588	St. Mary's Help of Christians property	Mediterranean/ Colonial Revival/ Mediterranean/ Spanish Colonial Revival	Yes	Yes	Yes (only former School listed currently)
212 E. Mesa Avenue	5PE.4942	Adamich Residence	Modern Movements	No	No	Yes
222 E. Mesa Avenue	5PE.4941	Prince Residence	American Movements	No	No	No
	5PE.4940	Babich Residence	Bungalow	No	No	No
304 E. Mesa Avenue	5PE.4939	Poder Residence	Ranch	No	No	Yes
308 E. Mesa Avenue	5PE.4938	De Niro Residence	Bungalow	No	No	No
310-314 E. Mesa Avenue	5PE.7996 (formerly 5PE.4936, 5PE.4937)	Zakrasek Residence	Bungalow/ American Movements	No	No	No
318 E. Mesa Avenue	5PE.4935	Yoxey Residence	American Movements	No	No	No
320-326 E. Mesa Avenue 1209 Eilers Avenue	5PE.7995 (formerly 5PE.1325, 5PE.4917, 5PE.4933, 5PE.4934)	Eilers' Place	House with Commercial Addition/ No Style/ American Movements/ American Movements	Yes	Yes	Yes
1111 S. Santa Fe Avenue	5PE.4985	Philip's Liquor/ Mehle Residence	No Style	No	No	No
1115 S. Santa Fe Avenue	5PE.7972	Brunjak Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
1119 S. Santa Fe Avenue	5PE.4983	Mehle Residence	Ranch	No	No	No
1141-1143 S. Santa Fe Avenue	5PE.4982	Zakrasek Commercial Building	Commercial	No	No	No

immediate concern.

If community-built surveys are replicated, either elsewhere in Pueblo or in other communities, there are budgetary and time-related issues to consider. This project, involving so many different partners, required a great deal of flexibility, especially in regard to the “learning curve” for the survey database, sequencing of steps to complete the survey forms, and overall collaboration. The existing budget was not sufficient to handle the time needed for the consultation (with homeowners and City, Library, and County staff). It is also important to realize successful memoir workshops and oral histories derive different and richer material to be included on the survey forms and in the report. The budget must allocate more funds to cover both professional time and printing costs associated with these two survey products.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Eilers Neighborhood Story and Community-Built Survey project represents the first of many endeavors possible in this historically rich and architecturally diverse area of Pueblo. The recommendations below offer only a few suggestions for future initiatives.

Recommendation 1: Designate National Register Historic District

This project identified a potential National Register Historic District. The City, property owners, and representatives from OAHF should collaborate to designate these properties. Such honorary designation is an excellent way to recognize the important history and architecture here. The survey forms, context, and survey report include most of the necessary information required to complete the nomination.

Recommendation 2: Broaden the Study to Include the Potential Pueblo Local Landmark Historic District

This project also identified a potential Pueblo local landmark historic district marking the significant culture, history, and architecture associated with the city’s Slovenian community. The boundaries of such a district extend beyond the small scope of this project. More survey work should be conducted within the historic boundaries of the Grove and Old Bojon Town. Given the success of the memory gathering aspect of this project, similar research methods are encouraged for the assessment of Pueblo’s entire Slovenian community.

Recommendation 3: Engage in Additional Memory Collection

The budgetary restraints of the current project limited the length of both the context and the documentary film. Sufficient material exists for not only additional coverage of the themes explored in these products but also study of other topics like Slovenian military service in World War I and II, women’s roles in the community, racial relations with other ethnic groups, the importance of musical expression (Preseren, Tambouritzas), and the role of the Slovenian lodges. Scanning of family photographs was an offshoot of the community-built survey and, hopefully, will continue. Oral histories also were an important component of this project. During the course of the three-year research process, several of the individuals interviewed either passed away or became quite ill. Therefore, collecting oral histories, especially from older Bojons, should be a priority; ideally the recordings and transcriptions of these interviews should be available at the St. Mary’s Gornick Slovenian Library, Museum, and Genealogy Center.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey DeHerrera, Cheri Yost, and Adam Thomas, *Forged Together in the Bessemer Neighborhood* (Denver: Historitecture, 2011), 70-71.
2. Christian J. Buys, *Illustrations of Historic Colorado* (Ouray, Colo.: 2000), 118.
3. Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1995), 9.
4. Author Matjaz Klemencic claims, in *Jim Pugel and Other Slovenian Pioneers of Pueblo, Colorado* (Ljubljana: Institute for Ethnic Studies, 2009) that the term "Bojon" was exclusive to Pueblo. However, there is anecdotal evidence the term also was used in Salt Lake. Yet, it seems in Utah this label was used solely as a slur.
5. There are multiple spellings within the Bojon community for the sausage that is a dietary staple. Kolbase, the spelling used in the context, is the same term employed at Frank's Meat Market in Blende.
6. Heather A. Cadogan, "Seizing America's Promise: One Man's Life in the Early Twentieth Century." M.A. thesis. (University of Delaware, 2009), 15.
7. Edward Gobetz, "Slovenian Americans," <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Pa-Sp/Slovenian-Americans.html>.
8. Many families with sons also left Slovenia to avoid mandatory military conscription.
9. Cadogan, 11.
10. Gobetz.
11. Cadogan, 35.
12. Klemencic, 14.
13. Ibid, 16.
14. Anton Eilers built the Colorado Smelting Company's smelter near the current site of St. Mary's Church. Therefore, the Colorado Smelter was also known as the Eilers Smelter.
15. Klemencic, 37.
16. Ibid, 28.
17. Klemencic noted in 1910 a few Slovenian families also lived in the southern part of the city outside the Grove and Bojon Town. His research located Slovenian surnames on Abriendo, Box Elder, and Elm avenues.
18. When Bojon Town was originally established, the undeveloped area east of South Santa Fe Avenue was referred to as "the Prairie," a label some current residents still use despite the fact the land is now completely built out.
19. Klemencic, 16.
20. Readers interested in learning more about the role of the Catholic Church in immigrant assimilation should read Michael John Botello's thesis, "Catholic-Americans: The Mexicans, Italians, and Slovenians of Pueblo, Colorado, Form a New Ethno-Religious Identity."
21. The Slovaks formed St. Anthony's parish in 1895 and built a new church, also on Clark Street, in 1911. St. Boniface's was established as a German parish in 1900 and its new church was located near Sixth and Santa Fe avenues. Of these three ethnic parishes, only St. Mary Help of Christians remains. St. Boniface worshippers joined St. Leander's parish in 1922 and St. Anthony's parish ceased to exist in 1990.
22. A 1917 Church law required women to wear a veil or other head covering during Mass. This practice was discontinued officially in 1976.
23. Mary Zakrasek. "Property Owner Worksheet: 310 East Mesa Avenue." (2013).
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. According to Klemencic, this shift from a strictly Slovenian parish had occurred by the time the new Church was constructed in 1953. But he noted all of St. Mary's priests were of Slovenian descent until 1972.
28. Bernice Krasovec. "Reverend Cyril Zupan O.S.B." (Pueblo: St. Mary's Slovenian Library and Genealogy Center, 2014), 3.
29. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (3 July 2005).
30. Ibid.
31. Bernice Krasovec. "St. Mary's Church in History, 1895-1985." (Pueblo: St. Mary's Help of Christians Church, 1985), 34.
32. Architectural Memoir Workshop. Eilers' Place. (14 September 2013).
33. Cadogan, 53.
34. John Zobeck. "The Zobecks." Memoir Writing Workshop. El Pueblo Museum. (5 May 2013).
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Dorothy (Perse) Cernak. Pueblo, Colorado. (5 May 2013).
38. Lorraine (Yoxey) Glach and Gerri (Yoxey) Blazich. Pueblo, Colorado. (4 April 2012).
39. Mike Barnett. Life in Bojon Town: Stories from the World's Greatest Neighborhood. "Places to Get an Education in Bojon Town." (13 January 2012) <http://lifeinbojontown.wordpress.com/>.
40. Kirk Riddock. "Kindergarten Memory." Memoir Writing Workshop. El Pueblo Museum. (5 May 2013).
41. Architectural Memoir Workshop.
42. Wayne Pechek. Pueblo, Colorado. (22 January 2014).
43. Gathering to Remember 103 Years of Friendship and Support. St. Mary's Church. (26 July 2008).
44. John A. Gornick. John Anthony Gornick 1904-1983, an autobiography. (Pueblo: self-published, 1984), 8.
45. Prayer Garden. <http://www.slovenianheritage.com/Prayer%20Garden.htm>.
46. Matt Glavich's apprentice Johnny Smith continued to operate Smitty's Barbershop on Northern Avenue until his retirement in the 1970s.
47. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (23 June 1985).
48. Architectural Memoir Workshop.
49. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (28 July 2003).

50. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (18 March 2012).
51. Ibid.
52. Eileen (Kocman) Deverich. "Memories of 326 East Mesa Avenue and 1142 Eilers Avenue." (2013).
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (28 July 2003).
56. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (5 September 1980).
57. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (9 August 1993).
58. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (17 December 2007).
59. John Mihelich. "Chemistry at Dovgan's Tavern." El Pueblo Memoir Workshop. (5 May 2013).
60. Marina Martinez. "Memories of 1115 South Santa Fe Avenue." El Pueblo Memoir Workshop. (5 May 2013).
61. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (11 March 1987).
62. Ibid.
63. Architectural Memoir Workshop.
64. Ibid.
65. *Pueblo Chieftain*. (5 September 1980).
66. Mentions of such squabbles occurred rarely or never during the discussions at the three memoir workshops and arose infrequently in the neighbors' written accounts from these workshops or on the Property Owner Worksheets.
67. Martinez.
68. John Zakrasek. "Property Owner Worksheet: 310 East Mesa Avenue." (2013).
69. Ginny Kay (Poder) Kaplan. "Property Owner Worksheet: 304 East Mesa Avenue." (2013).
70. Ibid.
71. Mary Jo Glavich. "Memories of 322 East Mesa." St. Mary's Church Memoir Workshop. (19 November 2012).
72. Evelyn (Yoxey) Matkins. "Chartered Busses." Memoir Writing Workshop. El Pueblo Museum. 4 May 2013.
73. Barnett. "Some Random Bojon Thoughts." (29 February 2012) <http://lifeinbojontown.wordpress.com/>.
74. Klemenicic, 101.
75. Architectural Memoir Workshop.
76. Rose (DeNiro) Montero. "Property Owner Worksheet: 308 East Mesa Avenue." (2013).
77. John Zakrasek.
78. However, the route chosen for I-25, officially opened in 1959, did run just east of this neighborhood.
79. Deverich.
80. Mary (Zupancic) McBride. "Property Owner Worksheet: 1137 Eilers Avenue." (2013).
81. Theresa (Prijetel) Smith. "Memories of 1138 Eilers Avenue." St. Mary's Church Memoir Workshop. (19 November 2012).
82. Ibid.
83. Eileen (Perko) Lekancic. Lakewood, Colorado. (21 January 2014).
84. Ibid.
85. Kaplan. (2013).
86. Ibid.
87. Architectural Memoir Workshop.
88. Pecek.
89. Karen (Mehle) Morris. El Pueblo Memoir Workshop. (5 May 2013). The CF&I whistle blew at 7:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 11:00 p.m. to signal the morning, evening, and graveyard shifts.
90. Lekancic.
91. Mary Zakrasek.
92. Evelyn "Maizie" (Mohorcich) Vertovec. "Memories of 326 East Mesa Avenue and 1146 Eilers Avenue." St. Mary's Church Memoir Workshop. (19 November 2012).
93. Becky (Galich) Suddarth. "My Grandma's House." El Pueblo Memoir Workshop. (5 May 2013).
94. Joe Kocman. "Property Owner Worksheet: 1142 Eilers Avenue." (2013).
95. This timing allowed for the wedding Mass to include Holy Communion and the guests to adhere to the Catholic dictate that required worshippers to fast prior to receiving the host.
96. Cernak. Unlike most other Slovenian women interviewed for this project, Dorothy (Perse) Cernak worked outside the home. She was a buyer for Montgomery Ward for a total of thirty-three years, traveling to New York City two or three times per year. The "girls" at the store wanted to throw her a wedding shower, but she already had a fully-stocked home. Instead her co-workers bought the Cernaks a rotisserie oven.
97. Mary Zakrasek.
98. Barnett. "Some Random Bojon Thoughts." (29 February 2012) <http://lifeinbojontown.wordpress.com/>.
99. Karla (Adamich) Miklich. "Playhouse in Backyard." St. Mary's Church Memoir Workshop. (19 November 2012).
100. Karla (Adamich) Micklich. "Hopscotch Professionals." El Pueblo Memoir Workshop. (5 May 2013).
101. Bill Kocman. "Corks." El Pueblo Memoir Workshop. (5 May 2013).
102. Ibid.
103. Pecek.
104. Mike Giarrantano. Pueblo, Colorado. (22 January 2014).
105. Although it is not clear exactly when they played Walter's Brewers, the House of David had at least three barnstorming teams who traveled around the country. The religious community sent out barnstormers from 1930 to 1940 and then again from 1946 to 1955. The most distinctive thing about this club was the long, flowing beards all players were required to grow.
106. Glach and Blazich.
107. Barnstorming in Baseball. http://www.barnstormersbaseball.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=636&Itemid=191.
108. *Pueblo Star-Journal and Sunday Chieftain*. (17 August 1941).
109. *Pueblo Star-Journal*. (19 August 1976).
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Pecek.
113. Pecek. Note: The Alou brothers were a prominent baseball family from the Dominican Republic. The three brothers were Felipe, Matty, and Jesus. They became the first all-brother outfield when they played for the San Francisco Giants in 1963. Felipe's son Moises also played in the Major Leagues. Mel Rojas, Moises Alou's cousin, pitched in the Major Leagues as well.
114. John Zakrasek. (8 October 2013).
115. Giarrantano.
116. Karla (Adamich) Micklich. "My Maternal Grandparents." Mailed Memoirs. (5 April 2014).

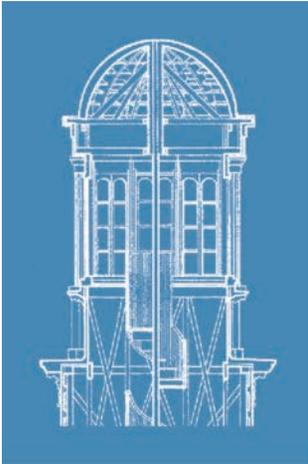
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