

Brookside Centennial—A Patchwork of Subjects

By Sue Cochran

Thanks for all the positive comments we've received about these historical items. If you have a story you want to share, see Renee at the Brookside Community Center or call Sue at 276-0577.

Some of you may remember that back in the day many small towns, mining camps, and even some local businesses had their own ball teams. These teams were a source of community pride as well as a popular form of public recreation. Brookside's teams would have normally played teams from Coal Creek, Rockvale, Canon City, or other nearby teams in the regular season.

Virgil Bunten's dad remembered that in the early 1900s, there was a ball diamond at the corner of Pinion & Willow on the northwest corner. Later, we've heard that there was a diamond at the corner of Pinion & Bluff at the east end of town. In the 1980s there was a DiOrio family diamond at the corner of Scott and Colarelli, complete with backstop.

1948 was an especially exciting year for the Brookside Bombers. They won the State Tournament Trophy! Let's see what the Canon City Daily Record had to say about it: "The curtain rang down on Canon City's softball season Wednesday evening when Joe Berta and his Bombers downed the Bethel Clothiers 8 - 3 at Roosevelt Field.....Berta's homerun to centerfield in the seventh was the game's big blow, although the leading hitters in percentages were Sham Colarelli with two for three and Jim Ranson with two for four. Berta got 15 strikeouts." (CCDR, Sept. 2, 1948)

This accomplishment caused the team to gather for a team photo taken by local photographer Karol Smith for publication in the Daily Record. We have a copy of the picture at Town Hall if you are interested in seeing it. The team consisted of Bunky Zabrusky, Vince Javernick, Ed DiOrio, Moon DiOrio, Jim Ranson, Dom Mazzacco, Joe Berta, Rudy Zabrusky, Art Fabrizio, Earl Berta and Nick Colarelli. Coaches were Frank Sabatino and Alex Horvath; manager was Joe Tisone, and team sponsor was Joe Caldirola of Caldirola Liberty Coal Company. The team was a member of the Arkansas Valley District, which stretched from Las Animas and Trinidad to Leadville.

Pitcher Joe Berta was suffering with malaria that year, and though his numbers continued to be good, the team drafted two more pitchers going into the Tournaments just in case. Pete Perry and Frank Yekovich of the Bethel team went along to help out as needed. If Brookside was playing Bethels, Perry and Yekovich played for Bethels. If Brookside was playing anyone else, they could rely on help from these young men if they needed them.

Anyone else have photos of local ball teams or memories of attending the games? The Bombers played softball. Did we have a baseball team as well? Any other local sports teams? Pictures of our ball diamonds?

We've received an interesting query from Los Alamos, New Mexico. John Balagna has a vineyard and winery there, and is interested in the old varieties of grape vines. He and his friend Tom Hill want to know if anyone remembers Nebbiolo grapes being grown at Brookside. They are especially interested in the source ... where did those grapevines come from? How early were they here? Call Tom at 505-672-1058 or e-mail him at TRH@lanl.gov. John and his sister plan to attend the Centennial celebration, by the way.

Marie Burns has donated some trade tokens from her family's saloon. The tokens are good for 5 cents in trade at Vezzetti & Zontene's. They are neat little tokens, and back then, 5 cents would buy you something.

Last month we talked about the railroad that came to Brookside. I said that I had found both 1933 and 1947 listed as the date the rails were taken out. Virgil Buntin says that those dates are too late. He says that by 1934 he had a bicycle that he rode all over town and that the rails were gone by then.

Santa Fe railroad researcher Larry Green of Colorado Springs found Santa Fe company records that state that Brookside's rails were removed in January of 1914. He says that the confusion is probably because there was a siding called the Brookside Siding or Brookside Junction down by the Santa Fe parking lot for the Riverwalk off MacKenzie Avenue. That siding was maintained until into the 1930s or 1940s. The dates I was reading could have referred to the siding being closed.

I read three different newspapers looking for mention of the rails coming out in January of 1914 and found nothing. Furthermore, I was stunned to realize that if that date is correct (and Larry is usually correct) there was a railroad crew taking up the rails into Brookside the same winter that the most violent coal mining strike in our local history was going on. In January, a guard on the Santa Fe line between Rockvale and Radiant was shot and killed. In March, remember that State Militia were dispatched to help keep the peace in Brookside after a shooting incident. That winter also saw the Ludlow Massacre and the shootings at Chandler. Would you want to be working on a crew that was removing the only rail access that the little town of Brookside had? Not me! But at this point I don't have any evidence to show that the 1914 date is wrong. I do have a couple maps made after that date that still show the rail right-of-way, but we can still see part of it today if we look, so I don't call that proof of anything. Can anyone help confirm or deny these possibilities?

While I was looking for the removal of the rails, I did find an item that said that the Brookside Local of United Mine Workers was sending Felix Pogliano to Indianapolis as their delegate to the International Convention. That's an interesting addition to the mining history from January of 1914.

P.S. It would also be interesting if we could locate the trophy that they won and is shown in the team photo. Anyone?