

**FRIENDS OF
BROOMFIELD
HISTORY
NEWSLETTER
Vol. 1, No.1, 2021**

Friends of Broomfield History



<https://friendsofbroomfieldhistory.org>

~Upcoming Events~

Broomfield Depot Museum and CSU Extension present Plan 'B' at the Depot on **Saturday, April 3 at 2pm.** (TICKETS SOLD OUT)

Learn about the fascinating history of beekeeping and apiaries in Broomfield and then hone your own skills with practical tips from CSU Extension on beekeeping today.

On **May 9, at 4pm** learn more about the Bone Wars of the late 1800s and Broomfield's fossil finds in this partnership program with the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.



IPhoto by Engin Akyurt

~Broomfield Library~

The Broomfield Library Friends Foundation Spring Book Sale is scheduled for May 1. Right now there are some March specials in their bookstore inside the library. Children's picture books are half price (2 for \$1.00), and there is a half-price cart stocked with a large selection of books.

Oh Wow!

A Letter from the Friends of Broomfield History President, Annie Lessem

Welcome to the first edition of the Friends of Broomfield History (FoBH) quarterly newsletter. We hope to make it both fun and informative, and right now we are trying to decide what to call it. So if you have any suggestions, please send them to me at quixotic.meow@gmail.com.

To get started on our "fun and informative" theme, I'd like to relay two little-known stories from Broomfield's past. But before I do, I'll provide some contrast. Below is an excerpt from the Broomfield History portion of the City and County of Broomfield's website:

The City and County of Broomfield is an exceptionally prized home to her residents who take pride in the hometown values and atmosphere they have worked to create. Born in the latter quarter of the Nineteenth Century, Broomfield began as an agrarian community, with hard-working, community-oriented families who located here on the heels of those adventurous gold-seekers seeking their fortunes and hoping to strike gold in Colorado's wilderness.

This fairly scholarly, objective passage makes readers envision a quiet, peaceful town that evolved from a
Continued on page 3

The Day the Eisenhowers Visited Broomfield

—Elizabeth Beaudoin, Museum Curator

July 7, 1963 was a hot and sunny afternoon in Broomfield, reportedly 91 degrees. Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower remarked that it was a “swimming kind of afternoon.” He and his wife, Mamie Doud Eisenhower, had come to Broomfield to dedicate the city’s first public library building at 12 Garden Center, now the home of the Broomfield Veterans Museum. Most of Broomfield (then roughly 4,000 residents) turned out to see the former president and first Lady. Photos from the day show large crowds filling up most of the space in front of the new building.

The newspapers covered the visit in great detail. Mamie Eisenhower “wore a light green dress with matching pumps, a white pillbox hat with matching gloves and bag. She wore a 3-strand pearl necklace.” Ike wore a dark suit and tie. The Eisenhowers were seated in the front row with Governor John Love. Dr. Richard Webb, president of Colorado Instruments, was master of ceremonies. Mamie Eisenhower was handed a bouquet of carnations (donated by the Broomfield Business and Professional Woman’s Club) by 8-year old Maureen Cronin of 280 Kohl Street. All four of Broomfield’s police officers were on duty, along with 6 auxiliary officers.

When speaking to the crowd, Mamie Eisenhower is quoted as saying, “This is one time from the bottom of my heart that I want to thank you all for this great honor...I am very proud to have this great library named for me.”

Mayor Don Descombes also spoke to the crowd and is quoted as saying, “What better device could be found to develop the culture of a people than a library properly used? If there is a direct relationship between the degree of formal education and the cultural development of a person, then Broomfield has an excellent future, for the last United States Census found that this city had the highest level of formal education of any city in Colorado.”

“*Maime Eisenhower ‘wore a light green dress with matching pumps, a white pillbox hat with matching gloves and bag. She wore a 3-strand pearl necklace.’*”

After the dedication, a reception was held at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Stanley Kerkoff, 1045 W. 6th Avenue. Mrs. Kerkoff served fruit punch, sandwiches, and cookies. She estimated that over 1,000 guests visited

Continued on page 4



Mamie Eisenhower in Broomfield, 1963

<https://friendsofbroomfieldhistory.org>

Oh Wow! Continued from page 1

hardworking, somber, rural community, but it made me wonder if there was something in our history that would bring to light a more exciting and funkier side of Broomfield. I began to search for stories, and lo and behold, I found just what I was looking for.

As Broomfield was evolving from those staid rural roots, apparently it also had the reputation of being a “swinging place.” Yes, you read that correctly—in the early days of the 20th century, Broomfield’s reputation was perhaps not quite as quiet as we might have been led to believe. On a somewhat obscure page in one of the histories written about Broomfield, a gentleman named Mr. Marion relayed two stories that showed me a completely different side of Broomfield:

Well, there was a dance hall over the old grocery store owned by Edgar Jones. Most times those dances drew great crowds. Well, Mr. Jones had his store filled with tubs, boilers, buckets, kettles and the like on the shelves, and some hanging on hooks. Well, this particular time there were some forty couples, and as the music got more spirited and the dancers more vigorous, the whole building including those pots and pans began to sway and bounce and bang. Mr. Jones came rushing up the stairs, swinging his arms wildly and shouting, ‘Stop the music! Stop the dance! I’ll close the place down!’ And it was a good thing he did because the ol’ building was literally swaying with the rhythm of the forty couples! That’s how Broomfield became known as a ‘Swinging Community!’ and the locale of the ‘terrible tremor.’

About 1906, where the Grange is now, someone came in and started a gambling house and saloon, someone else burned it up. Then they tried using a tent, on a Wednesday night someone burned it up. The Wednesday night fires continued until the idea was abandoned. But for a while [Broomfield] was a ‘Little Las Vegas.’

I was very glad to learn that I live in a place that had dances so raucous they literally could have taken down a building, and gambling establishments that mysteriously burned on Wednesday nights. Those stories tell me that Broomfield had character. It had, and still has, funk, spunk and a history that makes it different than the communities next door. I hope that knowing a little more about the place you live makes you curious about other things that went on in “the real Broomfield.” I also hope learning more about our town will entice you to stay tuned to our newsletter, our web page, and our Facebook page. Don’t forget that we are hunting for a name for our newsletter and your suggestions are welcome at quioxotic.meow@gmail.com. ■

Annie



Jones Hall, ca. 1930

<https://friendsofbroomfieldhistory.org>

Eisenhower - Continued from page 2

her home that evening (although the Broomfield Star estimated 300).

The cost to build this new library was \$37,000, almost all of which came through donations, including the land itself being donated by the Turnpike Land Company. Possibly the biggest supporter of the project was Bal Swan, president of the Empire Savings & Loan and “fishing buddy” of President Eisenhower. It was Swan who suggested naming the building in honor of Mamie Eisenhower.



12 Garden Center, Broomfield, 1970

Mamie already had close ties to Colorado, having spent much of her youth in the Centennial State. In 1916, she and Ike were married at her parent’s home in Denver. When notified that Broomfield wanted to name its library after her, Mamie donated 337 books from her family’s collection. Today these books are on display at the present Mamie Doud Eisenhower Library at 3 Community Park Road.



12 Garden Center, Broomfield, 2020

By the 1970’s the population of Broomfield had already ballooned to 13,000 residents and the library’s square footage was doubled through an expansion in 1975. By 1995, the city had again grown too big for the building at 12 Garden Center, this time moving to 1 Descombes Drive. In 2001, the present library at 3 Community Park Road was opened. However, the building at 12 Garden Center still stands and is now the Broomfield Veterans Museum, an organization that honors and tells the story of Colorado veterans, many of whom settled in Broomfield during its growth in the 1950’s. ■

Rocky Mountain News. 8 July 1963
Rocky Mountain News. 8 July 1963.
Broomfield Star-Builder. 8 July 1963

<https://friendsofbroomfieldhistory.org>

Women's History Month: History's Mysteries

—David Allison, Museum Coordinator

Frances Cron Ridsdale

Frances Cron (Ridsdale) grew up outside Broomfield in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A witty and resourceful writer, Cron kept a diary about day-to-day life on her stepfather William Brown's farm. One particularly harrowing incident she chronicled was a fire that started from a spark thrown by a passing train. Sweeping through the Brown family's crops, the fire nearly engulfed their house before they were able to put it out. During the conflagration, Cron bandaged her stepfather's arm, which had been injured when a haystack fell on him.

As a young adult, Cron attended Barnes Business College in Denver and became a secretary in Denver after she graduated. An independent spirit—among other exploits—Frances attempted to climb Gray's Peak near Silver Plume and wrote poetry.

One of her poems is transcribed below.

Lilies of the Valley

*Oh sweet lilies of the valley,
May I take you in my hand,
When I take that lonely journey,
To a fairer, better land?*

*May your haunting, lovely fragrance
Be wafted from above
And carry to my dear ones
My deep undying love.*

In 1917, Cron got married and added Ridsdale to her name. Eventually settling in Boulder, Frances and her husband had four children. Continuing to write poetry throughout her life, Frances Cron Ridsdale lived until 1970. A large collection of her poems are in the Broomfield History Archive.

To go deeper on women's history in Colorado, check out these great resources from the Center for Colorado's Women's History: <https://historycolorado.org/center-colorado-womens-history> ■



Portrait of Frances Cron Ridsdale



In this photo, you can see Frances Cron and her sisters posing with six other women outside, circa 1914. Ellenor Brown, Frances Cron, and Blanche Brown are seen on the far left.

Images are from the Broomfield History Collection

Sources:

Carol Turner in Broomfield Enterprise, "On History," March 3, 2012.

Silvia Pettem, "Broomfield: Changes through Time," (2001).

<https://friendsofbroomfieldhistory.org>

And Now for Something Completely Different

—Sandra Roberts

The Crescent Grange

The turning of the seasons is upon us, and it won't be long before we see eager seedlings competing for glorious sunlight and thirst-quenching rain. If the thought of spring inspires your inner gardener, consider joining the Crescent Grange Community Gardens. Members work the garden as a team and enjoy the fruits of their labors. Last year the Crescent Grange donated over 800 pounds of surplus produce to FISH. <https://www.crescentgrange.org/>

A number of interesting things are going on at the Broomfield Crescent Grange. You can see their calendar at <https://www.crescentgrange.org/calendar/>

Be sure to check out the Brunner Brick project—they're using old bricks from the Brunner Farmhouse site to make a path around the Grange's gardens. Work begins in April, and the organization still needs donations. ■

<https://www.crescentgrange.org/brunner-brick-project>



Image Courtesy of The Crescent Grange



Walk this Way

—Sallie Diamond

If you are on the corner of 3rd and Main Street in Broomfield and walk or bike .2 miles north, take a look down the gravel driveway on the right and you will see a bright yellow building in the traditional farmhouse architectural style, which is known as the Brunner Farmhouse. It was built in 1908 and is associated with the Brunner family, one of Broomfield's earliest families. It is located at 640 Main Street in Broomfield and it is currently used as a gathering place and garden. ■



Find us on Facebook!
[@FriendsofBroomfieldHistory](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofBroomfieldHistory)

<https://friendsofbroomfieldhistory.org>

Support us while you shop through Amazon Smile!

The Broomfield Depot Museum is registered with AmazonSmile! By adding us as your charitable organization with Amazon Smile, 0.5% of your purchase price will be donated to the museum.

How to add your charitable organization:

1. Go to smile.amazon.com
2. Search for "Broomfield Depot Museum"
3. Click the yellow "Select" button next to our name

Be to sure to always go to smile.amazon.com before making a purchase! All of the same items will be available, but now 0.5% of your purchase price will be donated!

Membership

The Friends of Broomfield History is dedicated to sustaining the history and heritage of Broomfield through our relationship with the Broomfield Museum, our members and other community partners. Your membership or contribution bolsters all our work, and we greatly appreciate your support.

"Be in! Be appreciated! Be connected! Join today!"



Friends of Broomfield History Membership Form

Basic: \$20/year

Contributing: \$50/year

Sustaining: \$100/year

Mail to: Friends of Broomfield History

P.O. Box 274

Broomfield, CO 80038-0274

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____