



## LET'S TALK ABOUT MILLIKEN

*Compiled by Milliken Historical Society*

Like any story, the juicier the better! So goes the "story" of the town's purpose and especially the naming of the streets in this cozy, little community. You've heard it before. The question is, Fact or Fiction? Maybe it would be wise to learn a little more about the history of this town.

On July 10, 1909 a town plat was filed for this small developing community born out of the emergence of the Denver, Laramie and Northwestern Railway Company. The town of Milliken became an official name on the State of Colorado map January 6, 1910.

In actuality, the town had its original source from the settlement of Hillsboro which was established from land donations located in the southwest corner of the current Highway 60/ Quentine Avenue intersection. The people of Hillsboro had named their streets, had a general store/post office, developed businesses and organized a school, but once the railroad came to town, growth took another turn, and the little community of Hillsboro, formed around 1905, was annexed into the new settlement of Milliken.

Judge John David Milliken received the honor of having his last name attached to the naming of the town, but he made it clear that "someone did that behind his back!" He was President of the Northwestern Land and Iron Company and General Counsel and Director of the railway company overseeing the three companies involved in the railroad line. This company boosted town lots and farm land sales in connection with the building of a new railroad.

Milliken was known at one time as the "hub" of northern Colorado. Agriculture and the railroads worked hand in hand in growing and exporting farm produce and livestock. In the late 1920's and 1930's this area was known for its crops of sugar beets, beans, cattle feed, potatoes, corn and wheat. The center of sugar beet production and center of the lamb market of the United States, it's future would make it a strong distribution point of this area.

As the town progressed and the layout of the road grid began, it was determined that the north and south roads would be considered avenues and were to be named after

girl's names and placed in alphabetical order starting on the east end of town. The east and west roads would be considered streets and were given the names of trees with the exception of the main street going through town which was named Broad Street.

Beginning in 1910 the town had two churches, a school, a bank, a cafe, a general store and 150 people to keep them going. The town continued to progress but at a slower rate than expected, and in 1917 the Denver, Laramie and Northwestern rail lines were abandoned. The lines were never laid beyond Greeley, Colorado. The town of Milliken also had its share of fires from 1911-1924 destroying homes and businesses.

The community struggled, but the spirit of the people who comprised the community remained high. Businesses continued to develop, the agricultural area remained rich in its resources, clubs and organizations were started, and the Great Western and the La Salle -Ft. Collins branch of the Union Pacific developed in the area. In 1921, 11 years after the establishment of the town of Milliken, the population was around 200; in 1941-531, in 1960-630. With the expansion and explosive growth of the northern Colorado region in the last 25 years or so, the population as of 2020 according to Google is 7862!

So let's get back to the question at the beginning of this piece. Is the story true? The story goes that the avenue names are the names of those women of the "Red Light District" and the reputation the town of Milliken had supposedly developed. Fact or fiction? Remember, people like a juicy story, but the story is fiction!! Railroads were historically well known for the naming of towns every ten miles along their lines. They would use the names of people associated with the railroad or major customers on the shipping lines. The railroad officials were influential in the communities that sprang up because of their presence, so in this case the names of the avenues running north and south in Milliken were the names of the wives of the railroad officials. And the name of main street? Who knows? Maybe just a really wide street at the time!!! (As a note, the street was 80' in width and graded to 56' from curb to curb.)

Milliken Historical Society was established in 2010. The organization is currently housed in the renovated home of Anna Flood now called the Museum at the Heritage House and is located at 102 N. Grave Avenue just north of the Milliken Town Hall.

Board president-Lois Onorato, Vice-President-Linda Measner, Secretary-Pat Bernhardt, Treasurer-Sharon Morgan, Board members-Joyce Chaput, Becky Selby, Patty York and Susan Forehand.

Museum open hours are every first and third Tuesday of each month from 10:00 am-1:00 pm. MHS meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 6:00 pm. Tours of the museum can be scheduled by appointment if desired. Contact Lois at 970-397-5608 or Sharon at 970- 815-4777. Email address for MHS is 80543mhs92@gmail.com.

