

HISTORICAL INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER

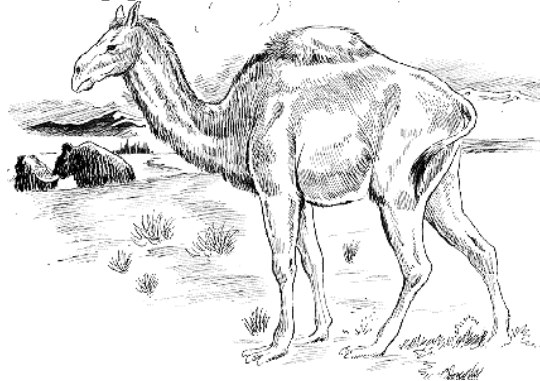
Discover history in your own Denver home

Volume 1, Issue 2

This newsletter offers articles regarding local history, historic preservation, and related interests for Realtors, homeowners, and historians. Feel free to forward to others who might enjoy its contents.

THE HISTORY OF HILLTOP

“Yesterday’s camel” was the first known resident of Hilltop. Known to paleontologists as [*Camelops hesternus*](#), this grass-eating, single-humped animal lived in the area more than 10,000 years ago. Its fossilized remains were found in 1936 by a more sophisticated area resident who wanted a new drain pipe.



The modern father of Hilltop was George Ernest Cranmer. He used to ride horses up to the crest of Mountain View, watching sunsets with his wife Jean and dreaming of a future together. Of course that future involved money: the city had invested \$20,000 to establish a park in the area, which he knew would enhance property values. So he bought the hilltop in 1916, built his 22-room Mediterranean mansion at the apex, and awaited growth.

The advent of the automobile and the relocation of CU’s School of Medicine in the 1920s brought Hilltop’s fortune. In fact, so many medical professionals had arrived by 1950 that the area was informally known as “Pill Hill.”

The neighborhood’s proximity to Lowry Air Force Base meant that residents frequently heard airplane engines overhead. But on 3 December 1951, they were jarred by a much larger sensation. A B-29 bomber failed to make the Lowry landing strip, ripping through five houses at [First and Eudora](#) and exploding in a ball of fire at Bayaud. The *Denver Post* reported the ground “strewn with splintered houses, hot electric wires, and chunks of tin and scrap from the fuselage. In seconds, the entire area was a sheet of flames.” Eight crewmen died and several residents were injured. By 1960, low-altitude flights had been rerouted to Buckley Field; aircraft would no longer menace the peaceful Hilltop.

IF WALLS COULD TALK: 622 GRAPE

Just north of Hilltop in Hale lies a home at [622 Grape Street](#). Constructed in 1941 on a nondescript lot in an upscale neighborhood, the home played a significant role in preventing airplane crashes not only in Denver but across the globe.

The home's first owners, Elrey and Nadine Jeppesen, lived there for more than twenty years. Public records revealed tantalizing clues about the family, including occupations as "president, Airway Manuals" and "pilot, United Airlines." Such hints belied a rather significant past which neither the owners nor the home's buyers had known.

Flying was a dangerous activity in the early years; four of the eighteen pilots who flew Boeing Air Transport's Cheyenne-Salt Lake City route were killed in winter 1931-32. Former barnstormer Elrey Jeppesen – who had started flying at age 14 with a pilot's license signed by Orville Wright and was one of the fourteen surviving pilots – realized that a better system would be needed to stay alive. Rather than relying upon road maps, railroad tracks, and helpful farmers, Jeppesen began to chart elevation, orientation, and landmarks in a little black book soon coveted by others.



As one of United Airlines first stewardesses, Elrey's wife Nadine was a pioneer in her own right. She soon became secretary-treasurer of Jeppesen & Co, climbing her share of mountains and water towers to calculate elevation throughout the 1930s and 40s. And when the Navy hired the company during WWII, she organized the sales and distribution of these newfangled "Jepp charts."

The name [Jeppesen](#) is now universally known to pilots. Astronaut John Glenn wrote a letter in thanks: "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you." As others suggest, "the next time you are on an airplane that takes off or lands safely, you may want to thank God first -- and then Jeppesen." You can even do so semi-personally as you land at the [Jeppesen Terminal](#) at Denver International Airport.

Of course, you can also think the same as you drive down 6th Avenue in Montclair and espy an unassuming little Cape Cod on Grape Street. After all, if homeowners can be so unaware of such important people in their midst, how much history do we miss on a simple drive through the neighborhood?

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Porter & Raymond subdivision on which 622 Grape Street was built was founded by Baron von Richthofen, among others. A native of Silesia, Richthofen had come to Denver in 1877 after the Franco-Prussian War, started the Denver Chamber of Commerce, and founded Montclair. But perhaps his greatest claim to fame came from aviation exploits: he was the uncle of Manfred von Richthofen, the celebrated “[Red Baron](#)” who shot down 80 Allied aircraft during World War One. Visit the baron's castle at 7020 12th Avenue for more about this prominent Denverite and the planes downed by his famous nephew.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Equality? African Americans couldn't even cross High Street in Denver until the 1950s.

HISTORY NEWS & EVENTS

The recent tsunami destroyed lives, property, and a few sites of timeless importance. For information on [the disaster's cultural impact](#), visit the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM).

[Historic Denver](#) is kicking off a series of Heritage Homes Workshops as part of its new Urban Living program. The first workshop is on restoring and maintaining wood floors and wood trim, led by John Van Camp. Event is on March 10th at 7:00 pm, and will be held at Four Winds Native American Survival Project at 201 West 5th Avenue.

BUSINESS UPDATE

According to CinemaTreasures.com, the Mayan Theatre is one of "[10 Great Places to Revel in Cinematic Grandeur](#)." To honor the theater's 75th anniversary, Historical Insights has been hired to publish, promote, and preserve its history. Look for more on the upcoming history of the Mayan Theatre in future editions of Historical Insights Newsletter.

Historical Insights salutes Judith Clausen, who is using history to draw eyeballs to her realty services. Neighborhood histories lovingly decorated with pictures and rich details provide insight into the Denver area for residents new and old. Check out [Buyers Advantage](#) for a web-savvy and historically-sensitive approach to realty.

Historical Insights is the only historical research agency in the country specializing in realty and homeowners. Call on us to help add value to your home, business, life, or community.

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