

Louisville Cemetery
Highway 42 & Empire Road
Louisville, Colorado
Historical Background

Located on the Colorado prairie between Denver and Boulder, the town of Louisville was incorporated in 1878 as a pioneer agricultural and coal-mining settlement. Populated predominantly by Italian, German, Welsh and French immigrant miners and their families, over time, the settlers were joined by others of Anglo-Saxon and Hispanic origin. Although cemeteries existed in the larger area, in 1892 the community established its own burial ground southeast of town. The land was acquired by three Louisville fraternal organizations: the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, and Improved Order of Red Men. After the Louisville Cemetery was established, a number of graves were reportedly moved there from the Superior cemetery (this would explain burials at the cemetery with dates of death prior to 1892). The new cemetery was platted and divided into three sections of twenty-four burial blocks. Each were further divided into hundreds of burial lots. A grid pattern of narrow unpaved drives traversed the site, providing access first by wagon and later the automobile. Common at the time of the cemetery's founding, the burial sections were individually managed by the fraternal organizations. The City of Louisville eventually became a part-manager of the site, with its own section for the burial of citizens not associated with the fraternal lodges. Evidence of the distinct fraternal sections remains in the cemetery today.

Aside from the graves and markers, it appears that the site was not landscaped throughout its first four decades of use. During those early years, it was most likely a dryland cemetery with native prairie grass and few, if any, trees or shrubs. From the 1930s to the 1970s, the site was maintained with dedication by long-time locals George and Laura Ellis. George Ellis later recalled that a water line was first extended to the cemetery in 1909. However, it remained planted with native grass until 1935, when George and Laura determined to beautify the site. The couple approached the town board with a request for funding to plant trees. The town provided \$25 and the Ellis' went to work, recruiting planting help from other citizens. Additional fundraising provided money to purchase hoses. George acquired sod from town citizens in 1940 and created the lawns that remain there today. When a storage shed was needed, George Ellis coordinated the work of a group of Louisville residents to construct one on the site. Rocks were gathered from Eldorado Springs, iron rails to support the roof were acquired from the adjacent coal mine, and the cement work was donated by local businesses. George and Laura spent much of their free time over more than forty years improving, maintaining, and grooming the site. By the 1970s, the fraternal lodges were in decline and the cemetery's care was taken over by the City of Louisville, which allocated regular funding for the site's maintenance.

In the 1990s, the City expanded the site to the west with two additional burial sections. In 2008, the Louisville Cemetery Master Plan <http://www.louisvilleco.gov/home/showdocument?id=304> was adopted, and in 2009 Phase 1 of the cemetery expansion was completed.

Original documentation prepared by Tatanka Historical Associates, Inc., May 7, 2008 and included in the City's 2010 Cemetery Master Plan.