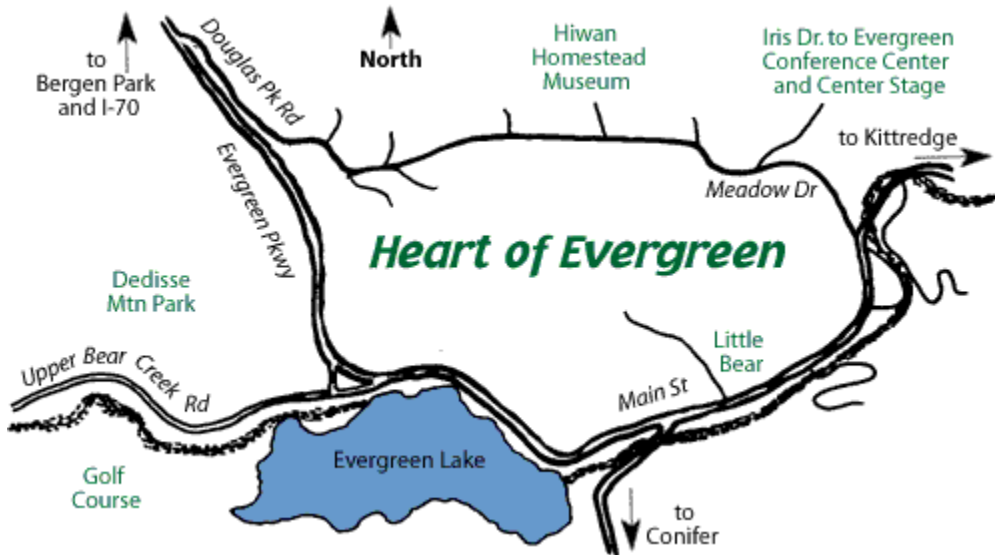


"Heart of Evergreen"

by Carole Lomond

Evergreen "Main Street" – An Eclectic Mix of Historic, Remodeled and New

Fire swept through seven business structures and four homes on November 10, 1926. First discovered at 3:45 a.m. in the E.R. Riel Mercantile Store, the telephone operator notified every Evergreen resident who formed a bucket brigade from Bear Creek. A stiff breeze fanned the flames that destroyed J.J. Baxter pharmacy, a butcher shop, barber shop, restaurant, four residences and two vacant buildings owned by John Ross of Morrison.



In response to the devastation, Denver city and regional planner and architect S.R. DeBoer designed a "Main Street" business district appropriate for Evergreen's mountain setting. But the frontier-culture land owners refused to cooperate. Most of the buildings were independently replaced in 1927.

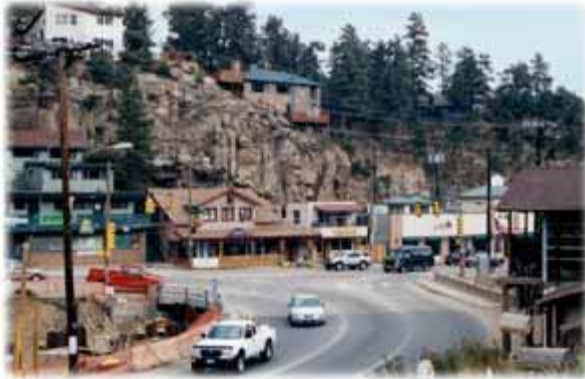


left: proposed "Heart of Evergreen" Illustration by architect S.R. DeBoer, 1927

The new "fire-proof" Riel Supply Co. building, originally Luther's 1896 General Store, later housed a grocery store, Evergreen Trading Post, and other enterprises, including the Round-Up Grill in the 1990s. The Trust recently helped renovate the building with business owners of Evergreen Gallery and SOHO Evergreen.

Much of the downtown is owned today by Ross-Lewis Trust, which is managed by attorney Leo Bradley. The Trust replaced Evergreen Transfer & Storage with the community's first bank, Evergreen State Bank in 1959. Several changes in bank ownership ended in 1981 when locals took control of Evergreen National Bank.

Below the dam and east of the water works was the Liston Lodge, a popular hotel for tourists. Dr. Hunt's office and a movie theatre of the 1940s gave way to a Wellness Center in the 1970s. It was remodeled for shops and offices and named Bear Creek Mall in the 80s. Most of the "mall," Davidson Insurance and Sheppard Real Estate were recently removed to make way for 74/73 intersection improvements.



left: Evergreen's Hiway 73/74 Intersection

The store fronts on the east side of County Highway 73 and south of State Highway 74 have been utilized for a variety of shops and offices, including a U.S. Post Office during the 1940s. Two art galleries, an antique store, log home builder and web designers now utilize this two-story historic building. Lee Shortt has operated Lee's Barber Shop at the same street level store front for 34 years.

The Evergreen Plaza, above the intersection and south of SH 74, is a 3-story, shopping & office "village" built in the 1950s, accessed off Plettner Lane. With faith that intersection improvements and a pedestrian trail under the bridge will preserve a "village" atmosphere, owners of Alpine Pastries recently relocated there from the Safeway Center north of Main. Today's Baskin Robbins replaced a Conoco station north of the creek in 1985.

Evergreen's downtown "anchor"

The primary social, economic and cultural building of Evergreen's Main Street is now known as the famous (some say infamous) saloon, the Little Bear. The core building was initially an Episcopal Church named St. Mark's-in-the-Wilderness, constructed near Evergreen's Cemetery in 1875. The building was deeded to a Methodist Church that moved it to the present location in the 1890s.

right: the Little Bear Saloon today



Legend says the most lucrative point-of-sale for bootleggers during Prohibition (1919-33) was behind the Little Bear when it was Prince McCracken's Drugstore and the Round Up Dance Hall and later the Red Ram. Some of the original church structure is said to remain at the rear of the Little Bear building.

Since 1971, the Little Bear business has been owned and operated by Ken Jeronimus. The building is owned by Ross Grimes who has operated the Evergreen Crafters since 1948 (in one of the many buildings owned by the Ross-Lewis Trust). The Evergreen Hotel historically housed residents and tourists, employees of the Hamilton Rustic Tea Room, "a certain group of Ladies," an antique store and other assorted enterprises. Ken and Judy Jeronimus rebuilt the Evergreen Hotel in 1998. The Ice House Bar & Coffee Shop offers a smoke-free environment with elegant historic ambiance.

right: Mule Deer at St. Mark's today

A few hundred feet above the Little Bear, off Douglas Park Road, was the Trail Movie Theatre that operated from the 1940s until an electronic games parlor took over in the 1970s and the Coal Mine Dragon restaurant. In the mid 1990s, the interior of the building was gutted and rebuilt to become the Thuy Hoa restaurant. Chef Hoa provides exquisite French-inspired food of Vietnam. Restored movie theatre seats are available just inside the front door.



Evergreen's Parking Lot

The central parking area along Bear Creek was first built in the 1940s for Evergreen's Thrifty Market. Community volunteers built the first firehouse in the middle of the parking area in 1950. When Evergreen Food King replaced the Thrifty in 1965, the firehouse was moved to the Episcopal diocese to house participants of the Evergreen Conference. It has been affectionately called "Holy Smoke" ever since.

Today's Lauren Brooks interior design store replaced the Rockin' I Western Wear store. The building was the first Public Service office that was renovated when the utility company relocated in north evergreen in 1986. The supermarket building was converted to retail store fronts and a restaurant, now Rapids Bar & Grill, that offers creekside dining.

Further east along the north bank of Bear Creek, Creekside Cellars Winery and Deli recently replaced the original Olde's Texaco, established in 1921. Herman Olde's Texaco is the oldest family business in Evergreen. He played violin at weddings and dances at Prince McCracken's Dance Hall and allowed local families to "charge" gas and oil until during the winter until tourism profits began to flow during the summer. He also sold sportswear, shoes and workcloths at the site. His sons and grandsons now operate the business near Bryant Drive off Evergreen Parkway.

Residential Growth

In 1941, the WPA Colorado Guide Book described Evergreen as "the center of a region of hotels, resorts and summer residences. The town is built along the narrow, tree-fringed canyon, and the highway constitutes its only street."

By 1944, there were 177 party-line telephones operating for an estimated year round Evergreen population of 500. Long-timer Hal Davidson remembers the small town telephone service. "I'd ring the girls on the switchboard and tell them where I'd be for lunch in case anyone needed to reach me." The first Evergreen Rodeo Parade marched down Main Street in 1947. Davidson helped establish the fire district in 1949. Ross Grimes was the primary founder of the water and sanitation district in 1950.

As more people moved to Evergreen, shop owners and chains began to abandon Main Street for new facilities at Meadow Drive and in North Evergreen.

Hiwan Village Shopping Center at Meadow Drive and Hwy 74 was established in 1958 after the state straightened Highway 74 by cutting through Sheep's Head Hill. The U.S. Post Office and Evergreen's first Safeway Supermarket were built there in 1961. When Safeway and the Post Office relocated in north Evergreen in 1973, the supermarket was converted to two floors of offices and retail.

*right: Rodeo Parade and Festivities
on Main Street*



Today's Hardware store business on Meadow Drive began in the historic red "Hammond Hardware" building on Main Street, west of the telephone building. When built in 1924, it was the "Evergreen Transfer" for freight hauled to Evergreen from Denver. The company also sold lumber, feed, ice, coal and hardware items.

In 1941, Paul Hammond purchased the business and moved it to the Hereford Showplace Barn built by Darst Buchanan in 1948. The red "Hardware" building on Main was recently purchased by Ken Jeronimous who recently rebuilt the Evergreen Hotel and owns the Little Bear business.

Ted and Kise La Montagne purchased The Hardware Store in 1976 and renovated an adjacent bunkhouse for retail kitchenware and home accessories named Mountain Home. Both businesses continue to thrive within the historic buildings by providing "small-town" personal service and prices that are competitive with the big box chain stores.

The 3-story, Showbarn Plaza building was constructed in 1972. Different restaurants have always occupied the main floor, from "My Friends" to today's Rib Crib Sports Lounge owned by Evergreen native Troy Tyus. The bar seats 55 and non-smoking dining room seats 60.



left: Ice Skating on frozen Evergreen Lake

Hiwan Homestead Museum and Heritage Grove

Camp Neosho, the Williams/Douglas family compound, was purchased in 1938 by Texas entrepreneur Darst Buchanan who named it Hiwan Homestead. In 1974, the Jefferson County Historical Society, as part of its campaign to persuade the County to purchase the site as an historical museum, applied for and received designation with National Register of Historic Places. JeffCo Open Space purchased the Homestead in 1976 and later acquired "Heritage Grove" for outdoor exhibits and events.

*at right: Hiwan Homestead
Museum circa 1972*

JCHS has a contract agreement with the County to accept the responsibility for the programs and collections of the museum. The collaboration of a government jurisdictions with the non-profit corporation has resulted in a lively and vital interpretation of Colorado heritage.

Excellent exhibits and events, an ongoing education program with JeffCo Schools, and tours of the property are managed by Open Space staff and JCHS volunteers. For current events, call 303-674-6262.



The Evergreen "Community"

The unincorporated Evergreen area received the federal 80439 zip code in 1963. "Main Street" is the geographic center of the vast Evergreen Fire Protection District territory of 140 square miles and 78 square miles of Evergreen Parks and Recreation District. The eclectic mix of downtown historic and remodeled retail, restaurant and office buildings are blessed by a tradition of hardworking community volunteers that serve over 150 organizations.

Heart of Evergreen improvements demonstrate how citizens manage their "community" without city government. The Evergreen Metro District and Evergreen Parks & Recreation District (Colorado Special Districts) established a park below the dam and placed a sculpture to honor Ross Grimes in the 1990s. Evergreen Garden Club (founded in 1960s) volunteers designed, planted and continuously maintain gardens below the dam. Evergreen Naturalists Audubon Society volunteers provide monthly educational lectures and monitor the area in support of healthy flora and fauna.

Volunteers formed Art for the Mountain Community in 1995 to display original sculpture in the "Heart of Evergreen." The art remains on display for one year, when new exhibits are selected. After "The Foreman", a sculpture of a cowboy carrying a newborn calf was displayed at the Hiwan Homestead Museum, community donations acquired the bronze sculpture to remain at the site.

*"The Foreman" sculpture
at the Hiwan Homestead Museum*



This community service tradition has guided the transformation from a remote glamorous hideaway to today's funky Main Street of an upscale residential area. Most locals are satisfied with Colorado Special Districts, Denver Mountain Parks, JeffCo Open Space and other Jefferson County services for basic "government." They would rather depend on volunteer neighbors than pay higher taxes for more layers of potentially unresponsive government. The Evergreen Area Chamber of Commerce campaign captures the community spirit: "Everything's in Evergreen."

History sources: Ruth Brookfield, "Church of the Transfiguration" 1899-1999; Mary Helen Crain, "Evergreen, Colorado" 1969; Connie Fahnestock, "From Camp Neosho to the Hiwan Homestead" 1985; Barbara & Gene Sternberg, "Evergreen, Our Mountain Community" 1987; "Evergreen Historic District" application for National Register of Historic Places, 1979; "Historic Evergreen Downtown Walking Tour" Canyon Courier, 1999; "Tourism in Evergreen; Where Have All the Tourists Gone"" by Vanita Cosper, Historically Jeffco, published by the JeffCo Historical Commission 1994; "The Evergreen Lake" Denver Municipal Facts, Sept/Oct 1925