

MEMORIES OF THE PAST

I, Emma Mary , was born on July 20, 1904 to Paul and Dominica Nardin at Telluride, Colorado. This was during the Miners Strike that started in 1901 and lasted until 1904. It was hard on my Mother and Dad as they had bought a small Hotel called the San Juan which was located on Main Street next to the Masonic Temple. During the Strike my folks could not rent rooms and have meals for the miners.

As I grew up I was the adventurous type. During the summer months I hiked and rode horseback over the high mountains around Telluride which I enjoyed. My Dad had horses that he rented to the miners. They always wanted the horse named Mary because she seemed to know where each miner worked and no matter how drunk they might be, she would take them to the right place. After they arrived at the boarding house, the miners tied the reins to the saddle horn and turned her loose to come back to the stable but Mary knew where the tall grass grew and would not always return to the stable so my Dad would send me to find her and bring her home.

One of my favorite spots was Campbells Garden near the foot of Needle Rock. I used to take salt and a knife to dig the vegetables there. They were delicious. I would wash them in the mountain stream nearby. Mr. Campbell was a retired miner and planted a vegetable garden every summer. He didn't mind if we ate some of his carrots, etc.

As to means of travel, it was easier to go by tram...so I rode the trams to the Tomboy, the Smuggler and the Liberty Bell mines to visit friends. The view was picturesque but was scary. The buckets would swing and you wondered if you would land in the canyons below.

I attended Telluride Schools and Nurses Training at St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction, Colorado.

While in High School I worked in the school library, took part in school plays, debating team and played Guard on the Girl's basketball team. The team went on three day trips on the Rio Grande Southern Railroad to play at Montrose, Ouray, Delta, Cedaredge, Ft. Lewis College and Ridgeway.

Some of the girls in High School went to dances at the Liberty Bell, Tomboy and Ophir and also at the Swede-Finn Hall and Finn Hall. We had sleighing parties, box lunches, program dances and High School Dances in the Opera House and Banquets at the Sheridan Hotel.

When I was sixteen a girl friend I met playing basketball, she was on the Ouray team, asked me to visit her in Ouray, so early one morning in July I hiked over the mountain trail to the Smuggler Mine, passed the Sheridan mine over the top to the Virginus mine on the Ouray side, then thru Yankee Boy Basin into Ouray....a 16 mile trip.

When my friend met me in Ouray, she said "take a hot bath..we are going to a dance this evening"! So I did and we danced until the wee hours. I was tired but was ready to be on the go again. That's youth for you. My friend and I took the Rio Grande Southern train back to Telluride and she spent a week there with me.

We played basketball in the Recreation Hall that had been the

First Methodist Church and then remodeled for school plays, basketball and some dances.

The mining companies always had a large spruce tree in the middle of Main Street across from the Busy Corner Drug Store with lights and trimmings at Christmas time. They gave the children toys and a bag of nuts and candy and an orange. I remember one Christmas, I was given a doll which I cherished. The doll was dressed in pink satin, lace and ribbons. I had other dolls that I loved also.

My father leased the Butterfly mine at Ophir and I liked to pick wild raspberries on the slopes above the river. Dad also had claims up Bear Creek at the Nellie Mine. I hiked to the mine a great many times in the summer.

Another place we children played was at the Stubbs and Jakeways building at the east end of Main Street. It was used as an Opera House and the Mule Skinners Ball was always held there. I remember attending the Ball with my folks one time. The building was later torn down.

My Mother and Dad were Austrians from the Italian Tyrol and knew all about mushrooms, so in August, if there had been a lot of rain, we went mushroom hunting at Lizard Head. It was fun and we enjoyed eating mushrooms and steak.

Telluride has seen many ups and downs but has always survived, even in spite of fires at the Smuggler Mine and Mill, the Redman's Hall and the cloud burst in 1914 which caused a great deal of damage when Cornet Creek flooded. There were also avalanches that killed a great many miners.

A great many miners from different countries stayed at the San Juan Hotel and all spoke different languages. I couldn't decide which language to speak...guess I was a self-styled linguist! A kindergarten teacher taught me to speak English.

I had a colorful and interesting childhood in the "Gem of the Rockies" -- Telluride, Colorado.

Emma Nardin Oberto