

FINN TOWN TOUR OF RED LODGE

Finnish Highlights and History

The wooded end of Platt is Finn Town Park where the ladies used to have their summer coffee get-togethers and is still a picnic spot.

In the first block of Platt are homes of many who were always involved in Finnish programs—Luhtala, Saari, Kansala, Karjala, Nasi, and Timonen. In the next blocks lived Sironen, Kentala, Laukka, Hoingisto, Nyback, Saari, Kaattari, Aho, and Matson families. Notice the barns in the rear. Tom and Ida Kallio house had a sauna at 408 and 418 So. Platt.

At the corner of 14th St. is where Fiina and Mikko Mero lived. She took in boarders. Today it is a bed-and-breakfast, complete with Finnish pulla. A third-generation Finn operates it today.

The Workers' Hall was built in 1912 on Platt (210) at a cost of \$6,000. There was a large stage on one end and an area for the auditorium. The kitchen and dining facilities were in the basement. It was the center of social activities, including high school graduations, plays and dramas. Dances were held often. The hall was in continuous use until the middle 40's. In 1972, the hall burned and was totally destroyed. 202 So. Platt was a bakery owned and operated by Lehman.

Look to your left. The Finnish Opera House was built in 1897, sometimes referred to as the Temperance Hall. It housed all the main cultural activities in Red Lodge before the Workers' Hall was built. Today, it is The Mountain People Dry Goods Store on 13th St. & Broadway.

This block (13th and So. Platt) is much the same as it was in the 1920s and 1930s. The Tuuri boarding house at 117 So. Platt is now a renovated Guest House. We ride past houses previously owned by prominent Finns such as Hilma Ylenni, (106) a far-famed midwife, a nurse and a regular correspondent to Finnish newspapers.

The Finnish Lutheran Church was founded in 1891, built on Platt Ave. next to the fire station. In 1903 the church had 500 members. The church burned in 1972; in 1973 Messiah Lutheran Church was built at 723 So. Adams.

At 2 So. Platt, the founder of Ladies of Kaleva, Alex Karvonen lived in what is now a Guest House called Pitcher House.

On 11th and No. Platt was the Theatorium, the distillery much later, and across the street was the Bekkarinen house (that they moved to from a small house on Haggin). They had a very large yard for the kids to play in at that time..

Turning right toward Rock Creek from the corner of 11th and Haggin, lived Herlevis, in a small house. Sanfred, a miner, contributed greatly to the music of Red Lodge. Their daughter, Martha, worked in the Montana State Legislature for several sessions and was elected Representative from Carbon and Stillwater counties during the 1975-76 term. She died in 1984.

The Honkala sauna was erected between Platt and Haggin Ave. on 10th St. It continued as a sauna until it burned to the ground in 1969. The most prominent boarding house in Red Lodge was located on No. Haggin Ave. Called Suomela, it was built about 1900 and last owned by Hilda Rintala. Sleeping rooms were on the 2nd & 3rd floors; the kitchen, sitting and dining room on the 1st floor. It had a large pantry. It closed in 1929 when the mines closed. It still stands facing the hillside where the foundations of the East Side Mine remain. Today, it is lilac in color!

Warila sauna on Haggin Ave. was built about 1906 by Mr. Honkala and was operated until 1953. After the sauna closed, it was remodeled into a beauty salon.

Sophie Hayha, a junior high teacher, lived at 123 No. Haggin on the corner. Continuing on the west side of the street lived the Erkkilas, Salos, Mattilas, and Heikkilas. Kasper Kangas was a carpenter and made this Company house into a two-story home at 124 No. Haggin.

Looking north along No. Haggin to 7th St. are some bigger houses, which were company houses and also Finnish boarding houses. Nearly all of the houses on the west side which were occupied by Finns: Salos, Anntilas, Filppulas, and Teinis have changed little since the 1920s.

The first Grand Matron, Jemini Hannula, lived at 318 N. Haggin. She came from Cokato, Minnesota in 1910.

Turning left on 7th, then also left on Platt, we will just look down to 10th St and Platt where the Suomis, the Jokis, and the Tofferis lived. Tofferi moved his photography studio to the corner of 10th and Platt from downtown. Leona Lampi's house is on the west side of Platt, right behind the courthouse. Her folks bought it from the Keros in 1925. Leona has written "At the Foot of the Beartooth Mountains", a history of the Finnish Community of Red Lodge, Montana. Turning right on 8th St. we will end our tour at the Museum.

The Kaleva Store operated, in 1909, on the 1st floor of the Labor Temple building. Today, it is the Museum. In 1912, the Kaleva Store moved to the old Meyer and Chapman Bank (now a new Wells Fargo Bank building). The store was a central place for local farmers to gather and socialize while they traded eggs for groceries.

1. Library
2. Carbon County Historical Society & Museum (formerly Labor Temple)
3. Carbon Co. Courthouse
4. (formerly Theatorium and then Distillery)
5. (formerly Finnish Church)
6. Pride Park
7. (formerly Opera House, Temperance Society)
8. (formerly Workers' Hall)
9. Civic Center
10. Elem. and High School
11. Junior High School
12. Finn Town Park (formerly Puskaperä)
13. ----- outline of Finn Town
14. (formerly Mill Island)

