

SIDE STREETS



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*Ivywild
comes alive
thanks to
two women*

The Ivywild neighborhood's rich history as home to the area's first amusement park with a roller coaster, 110-foot "circle swing" and a zoo is being unearthed by an unlikely team of amateur historians.

Linda Johnson and Molly Merry are finding out all sorts of cool stuff about Ivywild, like the old Boulevard Stadium where, from 1902 to 1904, thousands watched the Colorado Springs Millionaires play "base ball." And they are discovering colorful characters like Chicago Alderman John "Bathhouse" Coughlin, who built the 100-acre park with a lake, 65-foot water slide and zoo.

I was interested at how the team — one a longtime Colorado Springs resident and the other a recent transplant — came together.

Linda has always been fascinated by the century-old building that houses her business, Ivywild Costumes at 1619 S. Tejon St. After she quit teaching and bought the business in 1983, she became curious about the building's two ceramic fireplaces. She started researching them and wanted to know about the builder of the old house. Then she started tracing the building's three-dozen owners and its many uses over the years.

Meanwhile, Molly, a retired teacher and later a principal, was doing her own research. Unlike Linda, who grew up in Colorado Springs, Molly was new to the city, having relocated from Canon City a couple of years ago.

Molly was intrigued by her new neighborhood, starting with the landmark Ivywild Elementary School, which was being converted at the time into Bristol Brewery's new home, as well as a deli, bakery, community center and more.

In addition, Molly got involved with the Ivywild Improvement Society. About



MARK REIS, THE GAZETTE

Linda Johnson, left, and Molly Merry talk Wednesday about their research on the Ivywild neighborhood. They are writing a book about the history of Ivywild and plan to donate their research and photos to the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum for inclusion in its neighborhood preservation project.

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a year ago, she put a note in the association's newsletter seeking others interested in learning more about the neighborhood.

Linda responded, and they joined forces, immersing themselves in the history of Ivywild, just across Fountain Creek south of downtown.

Now, they are hoping to find a publisher for a book they are writing. And they intend to donate their research and photos to the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum for inclusion in its neighborhood preservation project.

Their book will start with tales of Cheyenne Indians camped at the confluence of Cheyenne and Fountain creeks, harvesting poles for their teepees from nearby trees. It will include reports of early settlers, including the family of pioneer Irving Howbert and his family and others who settled along the creeks around 1859.

But it really takes off with the introduction of the first of Ivywild's characters: miner and rancher William Jenkins, who subdivided his ranch into 43 lots in 1888,



BILL VOGRIN, THE GAZETTE

Linda Johnson, left, and Molly Merry sort maps Wednesday. They hope their book "gives a sense of Ivywild and how it got to be what it is today," Merry said.

giving birth to a community that his wife, Annie, dubbed Ivywild.

It will tell of builder Chalmers Maddocks, who salvaged wood from inventor Nicola Tesla's defunct Colorado Springs laboratory and used it to build homes in Ivywild.

"I like to think he used some of Tesla's wood to build this building in 1904," Linda said of her costume store.

Maddocks also eventually bought Boulevard Park, which mining magnate Winfield Scott Stratton built at South Tejon Street and Cheyenne Boulevard along

his trolley line to host the Millionaires. Newspaper reports said 4,000 attended opening day April 23, 1902, filling the 65-cent grandstand seats and the 40-cent bleacher seats.

The Millionaires won the game 5-2 but finished the season in sixth place. By the 1904 season, the team dissolved and Boulevard Park was torn down by Maddocks, who built bungalows on the site, including many mail-order homes available from Sears and other stores.

Springs residents also used the trolley to reach the amusement park built

between 8th Street and Alsace Way by the infamous Coughlin of Chicago. Rumors suggested Coughlin was a ward boss who used proceeds from political payoffs, extortion and prostitution to finance the park.

"I was really surprised by Ivywild's connection to Chicago politics," Molly said.

Newspapers reported that crowds of 5,000 regularly visited the park on summer weekends, paying a dime apiece to enter. They rode the merry-go-round, went through the tunnel of love, played carnival games and went to the fun house, roller rink and dance hall.

Linda and Molly even discovered that a writer in Chicago recently produced a play: "Ivywild: The True Story of John 'Bathhouse' Coughlin." They obtained the play and hope to have it performed in Colorado Springs.

Their manuscript also talks about important Ivywild residents such as Joseph Dorr, a water rights attorney from Iowa who relocated here in 1874, ran a hay farm, built a home and, perhaps most important, established water rights for Ivywild and the Cheyenne Canon areas. Dorchester Park, named in his honor, sits just across the creek from his farm and

homestead.

The two women also intend to highlight hidden treasures, current characters and important residents as the neighborhood transforms from a down-on-its-luck blue-collar region into a regentrified, vibrant and hip community boasting pubs, shops, businesses and restored homes.

"Our intention is to put together a book for local residents and visitors that gives a sense of Ivywild and how it got to be what it is today," Molly said. "It won't be an academic text or scholarly. It will give readers a snapshot of life in Ivywild and the people here."

It may not be a textbook, but it has some good lessons in it.

"It's such a humble neighborhood that was so vibrant," Molly said. "Now people are reinjecting some spirit back into the neighborhood. It's an example of what can happen in an old neighborhood when there are people with a vision."

"It shows how a charming old neighborhood can be brought back to life."

If the book gets published, folks all over the Pikes Peak region can learn a lot from Ivywild and these two former teachers.