

PURITAN PIE FACTORY: BUILDING WITH A SWEET HISTORY NOW HOUSES ROCKY MOUNTAIN LAND LIBRARY

Why do you think A.J. Senter chose this neighborhood to build his pie factory?

The Puritan Pie Factory was built for the Senter Pie Company in 1911, and has served as a factory, warehouse and workshop, and is now home to the Rocky Mountain Land Library. The factory is located at 26th and Champa, in the Curtis Park neighborhood. This neighborhood, just to the northeast of downtown Denver, is now called Curtis Park for the city park in its midst and was the creation of the city's first golden age, that time between 1870, when the railroad came to town, and 1893, when the Silver Crash brought a rude end to Denver's early prosperity. During that brief period, the rate of Denver's population growth was higher than that of any other city in the country (Curtis Park).

History

The Puritan Pie Factory was built under the supervision of A.J. Senter, of the Senter Pie Company, in 1911. The original building was expanded in 1918, adding a large addition to the back as well as a second story. In 1920, Clive Senter renamed the company Puritan Pie Company. The building was supposedly the first to be built with extra deep cellars to accommodate ice and cherries, so that the company could claim that their pies were made with "fresh" cherries year round. In the 20th century, the Puritan Pie Company attained notoriety for its association with beat author Neal Cassady, whose childhood home was across the street. Neal's older brother Jack ran a whiskey still out of the back of a house just north of the Puritan Pie Company building and relied on the "heavy sweet odor" of the pies baking to mask the smell of alcohol. The Puritan Pie Company continued to produce delicious pies for decades to come (Puritan Pie Factory Fact Sheet).

The building has served as a workshop and warehouse for the Richardson Agency, a property-management firm, for the last half-century. "My grandfather traded for that building [the pie factory] in 1966," says Eileen Richardson, whose parents own the building and continue to operate their business in it. Richardson's partner saw an article about the Land Library looking for a space in the city in *Poets & Writers* magazine and convinced her parents to offer some space to the Land Library. "It was aligned with what we love," says Richardson. She's a botanical illustrator, printmaker and a trained chef, and her partner works on permaculture projects and edible landscaping (Peterson, 2016).

Rocky Mountain Land Library

The Rocky Mountain Land Library's mission is to help connect people to nature and the land. In 2014, the Rocky Mountain Land Library found a home in the historic Buffalo Peaks Ranch, owned by the City of Aurora, which bought it to offset river frontage lost with its construction of Spinney Mountain Reservoir in the early 1980s. The Land Library signed a 95-year lease on the property. The plan is to renovate about a half-dozen historic structures at the ranch (Peterson).

References

Denver Public Library. Curtis Park. Retrieved from <https://history.denverlibrary.org/curtis-park-denvers-oldest-neighborhood-upgrade>.

Puritan Pie Factory Fact Sheet.

Peterson, E. 2016. Birds, Books & Pies: Rocky Mountain Land Library Expands to Denver. Confluence Denver. Retrieved from http://www.confluence-denver.com/features/rocky_mountain_land_library_101916.aspx.