

# A letter from Ralph Navy to his wife Erminia



Colorado  
1915

*by*  
Joan Lander  
July 26, 2016



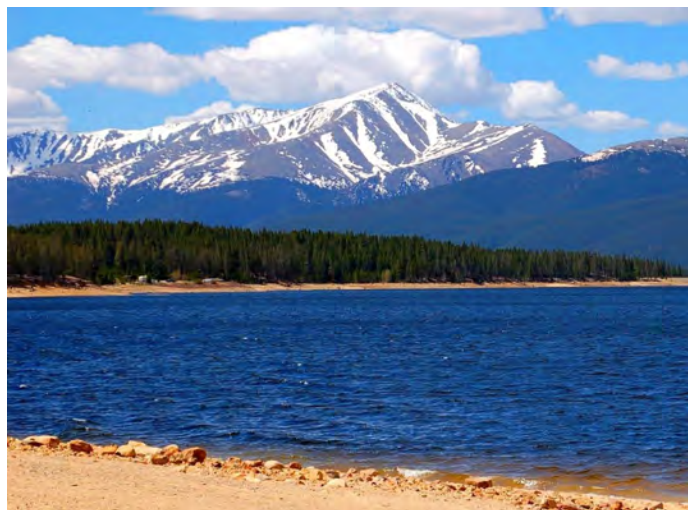
Another priceless gem has recently surfaced in the Nevy family — a letter Nonno (Ralph Nevy) sent to Nonnie (Erminia Nevy) back in 1915 from Leadville, Colorado. Nonnie was staying in Denver at the time. They had just been married in Pennsylvania in January of that year. Family stories say they decided to leave the Nevy brothers' store in Vintondale and strike out for new horizons. They both worked in Denver, but Nonno had gone on to Leadville seeking new job possibilities.

Christine Albetta gave a copy of this letter to Janet Orsinger McIntyre, who gave it to Barbara Orsinger Adolfson's daughter Kristin to share with all of the Nevy family. This letter was written over a hundred years ago!

The envelope says "Leadville Colorado, the top of the world. Souvenir folder." So it may have contained some postcards of the area. The stamp on the envelope says U.S. postage - 1 cent.

There's also a picture on the front of the envelope showing Mount Elbert. This is one of the mountain peaks that Carol Lander climbed a couple years ago. The letter has revealed some connections and opened new questions.

Read on!





The flap says:  
From: Ralph Nevy  
Leadville, Colo



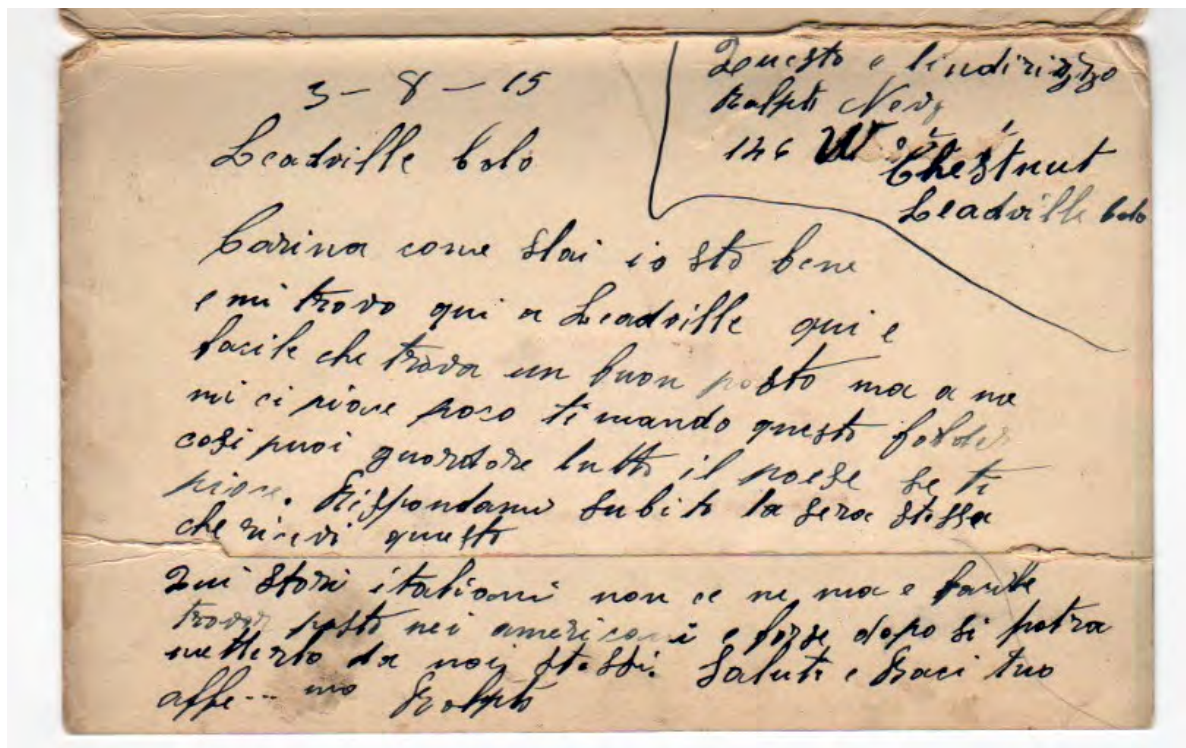


LEADVILLE COLORADO THE TOP OF THE WORLD

3-8-15  
Leadville Colo

Questo è l'indirizzo  
Scritto a voi  
146 W Chestnut  
Leadville Colo

Carina come stai io sto bene  
e mi trovo qui a Leadville qui è  
facile che trova un buon posto ma a me  
mi ci vuole poco ti mando questo foglio  
così puoi guardare tutto il paese se ti  
piace. Rispondami subito la sera stessa  
che vieni questo  
Qui sono italiani non ce ne sono e fanno  
troppa festa nei americani e dopo si potrà  
saperlo da noi stessi. Saluti e baci tuo  
affezionato Scritto



Here is the body of the letter from Ralph to Erminia. Sandra Nevy did the English translation. She wasn't able to make out all the words that Nonno wrote, but here is her best guess.

This is the address  
Ralph Nevy  
146 West Chestnut  
Leadville, Colo

3 - 8 - 15  
Leadville, Colo

Dear, how are you. I am well and find myself here in Leadville.  
(Sandra says this could also be translated as "I have arrived in Leadville.")  
It is easy to find a job here but, to me, it doesn't rain much. I am  
sending you this so that you can see all the things you like. Respond  
to me at the same place that I write this.  
There are no Italians staying here but it is easy to find work with the  
Americans. Perhaps after (you will be able to) by ourselves.  
Greetings and kisses,  
your Ralph



Ralph's letter is addressed to  
Mrs. Erminia Nevy, 2141 California St, Denver, Colorado

I did some research into the city directories for Denver for the year 1915, but couldn't find anything with that address on California Street. I thought maybe it might have been a boarding house where Nonnie stayed. Perhaps it was a private residence, maybe the house of a fellow Italian. Does anyone remember Nonnie's stories of her time in Denver?

Here are some city listings from the time.

— 10 —

## THE "CRANE" SCREEN AND WASHER



Collects

- 1 Rich "Fines" by Screening
- 2 Rich "Slimes" by Washing
- 3 Rich "Lumps" by Picking

from the ore as it comes from the mine

The clean washed surfaces allow close, accurate sorting

USED AT

Gold Coin, Granite, Abe Lincoln, Last Dollar, Mary McKinney, Elkton, Commodore, May Day, etc., Mines in Colorado and other places

AGENTS FOR

Heine Water Tube Boilers  
Ingersoll-Sergeant Air Compressors and Rock Drills  
Gardner

**The Stearns**  
1726 Cal  
Works: Pueblo, Colo.

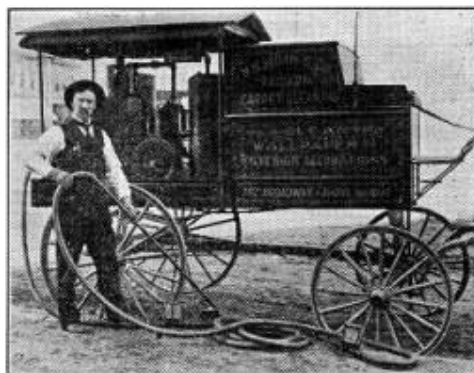
Building Material Both Wholesale and Retail **The Hallack & Howard Lumber Co.,** Seventh and Larimer

404 UTI DENVER BUSINESS DIRECTORY, 1915 VAL

STEINWAY AND 35 OTHER  
LEADING MAKES  
Easy Terms

THE BIG  
ISIC HOUSE  
PIANOS

ESTABLISHED 1898  
**N. N. SLOAN** CLEANS WALL PAPER AND  
INTERIOR DECORATIONS  
LACE CURTAINS CLEANED



**VACUUM  
CARPET  
CLEANING**  
ETC., ETC.

PHONE SOUTH 1800

817 BROADWAY

Schorr Joseph W, 726 Colfax av  
Sill George H, 604 15th  
Smart Harry J, 1112 17th av  
Smith J P, 2220 Downing  
Sneesby D B, rear 1628 Lincoln

Utility Wall Board.

**SLOAN N N,**  
817 Broadway; also wall paper clean-  
ing, lace curtain cleaning, house  
cleaning (Phone South 1800)

**Vacuum Sweeping and Cleaning  
Systems.**

**DOMESTIC ENGINEERING CO,**  
sales agt Tuee and Invincible vacuum  
cleaners, 211 16th (Majestic Bldg)  
(Phone Main 5067)

**Valves and Hydrants.**

**CRANE CO,**  
F W Knapp mgr, 402 Boston Bldg,  
17th cor Champa

CALL PHONE 4040. ASK FOR  
**THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
FUEL**  
COMPANY  
WHEN YOU WANT GOOD COAL  
RETAIL OFFICE 1010 16TH STREET.  
GENERAL OFFICES, A.C. FOSTER BLDG.

**EY LEAD CO.** EIGHTEENTH  
AND BLAKE

**Adolph Coors Co.**  
**GOLDEN BREWERY**

GOLDEN, COLORADO



PHONES MAIN 589 AND 590

OFFICE AND DEPOT, SIXTEENTH AND WEWATTA STREETS

OPPOSITE UNION DEPOT, DENVER, COLORADO

Here are more of the Denver city listings from 1915. Looks like the Italian Catholics were segregated from the other Catholics, even in the American West.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CATHEDRAL—Rt. Rev. N. C. Matz, Bishop and Pastor; Rev. P. A. Phillips, Chancellor and Secretary; Rev. H. L. McMenamin, Rev. M. W. Donovan and Rev. J. A. Belzer, Assistants. East side Logan between Eighteenth and Nineteenth avenues.

MOUNT CARMEL ITALIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH — Rev. Thomas Moreschini, Pastor. Navajo between West Thirty-fifth and West Thirty-sixth avenues.

ST. DOMINIC'S CHURCH—Rev. F. A. O'Neil, Pastor. West Twenty-fifth avenue northwest corner Grove street.

## A DIEBOLD SAFE

"MEANS SECURITY"

The loss of funds and valuable papers may wreck your business. You cannot afford to take chances when

A DIEBOLD SAFE WILL PROTECT YOU



SAFES, VAULT DOORS, SAFE DEPOSIT BOXES  
JAIL EQUIPMENT  
MANGANESE AND TIME LOCK SAFES

Salesroom: 1823 CALIFORNIA ST.

E. R. LORE, Agent, Denver, Colorado  
Experienced Safe Experts Furnished Repairing Phone Main 3505

Of course all those Italians had to have their pasta!

Macaroni Manufacturers.

DENVER MACARONI & NOODLE CO,

P F Vagnino pres, Antonio Vagnino  
sec, 2428-2440 19th

WESTERN UNION MACARONI MFG

Co, N Borelli pres, N Nelson vice-  
pres, P Faes sec-treas and genl mgr,  
3654-3658 Osage

## The Denver Express

NEXT TO THE MINT

*The Only Independent  
Daily in Denver*

### TIME IS MONEY

*A Condensed Newspaper for a Cent  
Saves Both Time and Money*

## ONE CENT

a copy, 25 cents a month by carrier or by mail.  
\$3.00 a year. Every evening except Sunday.

A PLAIN PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE

and read in a big majority of the English-  
reading homes in Denver

EDITORIAL PHONE MAIN 6353

BUSINESS OFFICE MAIN 460



Some scenes of Denver during  
the time Nonnie and Nonno  
were there.

17th street, Denver



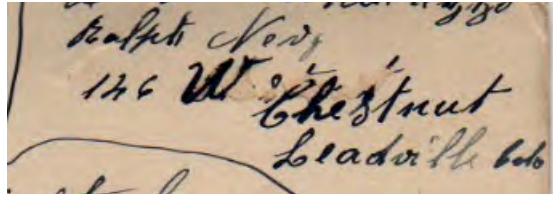
a water park!



swimmers at  
Lakeside  
amusement park

Denver is where Ralph and Erminia wanted to invest in land, but the Nevy brothers called them back to help with their new macaroni factory in Cumberland, Maryland.





The return address on Ralph's letter is 146 West Chestnut, Leadville, Colo.

Interestingly, he lived on a street called "Chestnut". His hilltop home in Bergotto is called "Castagna," which is the Italian word for chestnut. Chestnut trees cover the mountainside there. Chestnut flour is made from the nuts and then used to make those pancakes (pattona) that Florence Lander loved so much when she visited Italy as a child.



A street scene of Leadville taken in 1904, about a decade before Ralph got there.



A Leadville street scene taken by Carol Lander in 2014. Tony and Laura Lander also visited here years ago. Following in the footsteps of our ancestors!

Carol researched the address where Nonno was living (146 West Chestnut, Leadville, Colorado) and found it was the address for a saloon owned by Joe Martinelli. That name Martinelli rang a bell. I remember seeing a sign "Casa Martinelli" in Ralph's home town of Bergotto when we visited Italy in the year 2000. It could be that the Martinelli brothers whom Nonno might have known in Italy had emigrated to the U.S., but instead of settling in Pennsylvania or other eastern states like the Nevy family, they went out west to Colorado.

I thought perhaps the Martinellis could have written Nonno, encouraging him to come out to Colorado, saying they had set up a saloon and boarding house to serve the lead and zinc miners, and that they could give him employment.



However, according to Sandra's translation of the letter, Nonno writes, "There are no Italians staying here, but it is easy to find work with the Americans."

I find this intriguing: surely Nonno would have known that he was living in a boarding house/hotel owned by fellow Italians. The Martinellis opened it in 1893. Perhaps they no longer owned it when Nonno was there in 1915? This history needs further investigation!



Here's a news article about Martinelli's, the boarding house/hotel in Leadville where Nonno stayed. It later became the Crystal Palace. I've typed up the text of the story so it's more readable (see next page).

Thursday, Oct. 25, 1979  
Leadville



## It's In The Ice Palace Park Now

This rambling old structure on the corner of Pine and Chestnut for many years was a large part of Leadville's history. Built around 1880 the wooden hotel building had many owners and several names but it seems to have always housed a saloon and a hotel boarding house.

It was most noted as the locale

of the famed Warlitzer Piano-Orchestra that is now being offered for sale by a collector for \$65,000. Another part of Leadville's history more valuable to others than to ourselves.

The Crystal Palace has had many owners among whom were Frank German, Joe and Louis Martinelli, Rudolph Sayer, Louis Matchel, John Bernat and

Mary Bailey. There were others.

It also had a number of names with the one most remembered by the older folks being Martinelli's. It was also called Bernat's and lastly the Crystal Palace.

The structure was torn down in the early 1960's after the rear had been damaged in an arson inspired fire that sent several

people to jail.

The bar was on the left, the center door led to the hotel rooms upstairs while the entrance to the right was for the kitchen.

This is just another part of the history of Leadville written now only in memories of our residents.

(Photograph courtesy of Beverly and Roger Phillips)

The above newspaper article shows the Crystal Palace Hotel during its autumn years. The title of this newspaper article is a metaphor that clearly tells the story for any seasoned Leadville citizen – the building is forever gone, just like the annual Ice Palace constructed out of blocks of ice during the freezing winter season, only to melt away into oblivion when the Spring thaw arrives.

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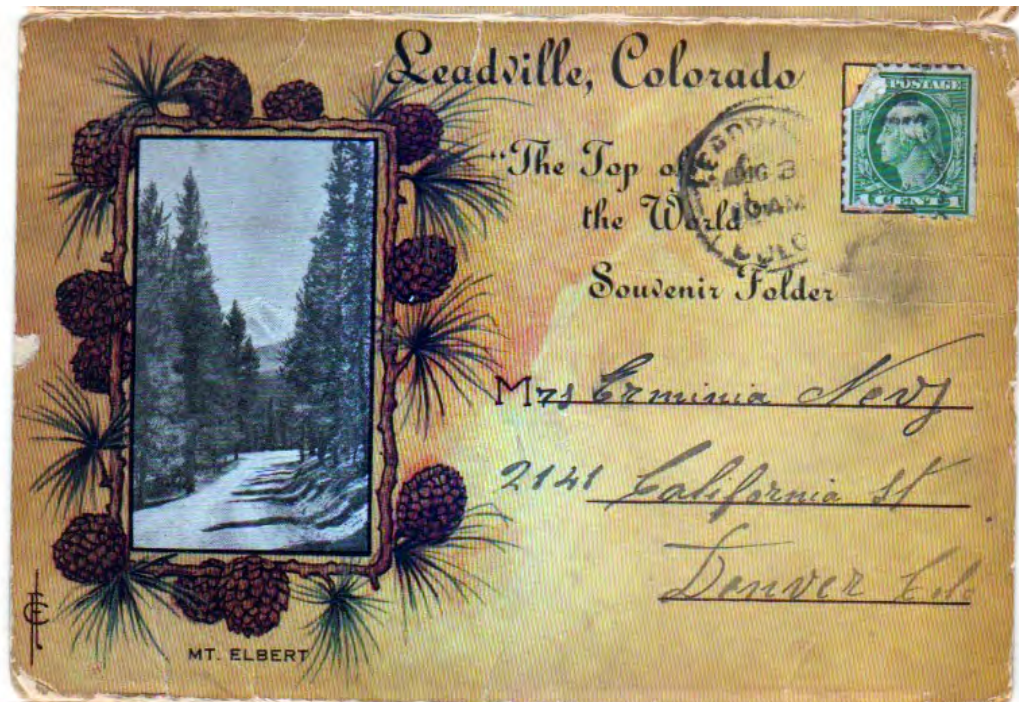
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## Leadville, Colorado "The Top of the World"



Nonno's postcard shows a small photo of Mt. Elbert in the distance. It's the highest summit in the Rocky Mountains and the highest point in Colorado, 14,440 feet.

Carol Lander climbed to the summit a couple years ago. She wondered if maybe Nonno had also hiked the mountain when he was living in Leadville.



But I remember Nonno saying he couldn't take the high elevation and thin air of Leadville (at 10,000 feet, the highest city in the country), and that's why he returned to Nonnie in Denver. I always thought that interesting, since he was born and raised in the Apennine mountains of Italy. Then I realized those mountains are only 6,000 feet high. On the other hand, he did his military training in the Alps! Carol said she wasn't bothered by the high elevation when she climbed Mt. Elbert, but found she had to move slower.

## Another “Italian connection” with the Leadville area!

The article below says that soldiers trained there before going off to fight in the Apennine Mountains of Italy in World War II.



*from Wikipedia*

The Top of the Rockies Byway, designated a National Scenic Byway in 1998, is a highway that travels 75 miles starting in Aspen and traveling through Leadville to either Minturn or Copper Mountain.

Seldom dropping below 9,000 feet, it is literally at the top of the Rockies. It drives over three mountain passes that are above 10,000 feet and there are views of six mountains of over 14,000 feet.

The Top of the Rockies byway runs through three National Forests: the Pike, Arapahoe, and White River National Forests.

**The Camp Hale Memorial is located along the byway, where soldiers trained on skis to fight in the Apennine Mountains of Italy during World War II.**



And that's  
the end of  
the story!



...for now.

I leave you with Nonnie's words:  
Baci cari a che Dio ti benedica.  
Joan Lander

Wait!

Just one more  
beautiful image  
before I sign off.

It has nothing  
to do with this  
story.



**Lake of Barrea**  
**Abruzzo**  
**Italy**



*John McGregor*  
Photography