The cherry industry: A history lesson in 10 pages or less of northern Colorado.
The City of Loveland Cultural Services Department strives to enrich lives and connect our community through diverse arts and history experiences.

The Loveland Museum has created a series of quick lessons designed to provide basics on a topic important to our local history. These lessons have been compiled by staff and volunteers at the Loveland Museum. Suggested activities give ideas for hands-on learning and are not intended to be all-inclusive. Other resource links may also be provided in some sections for additional online learning.

Introduction

The Cherry Industry of Northern Colorado

The cherry industry in the Loveland area began in 1890s, but boomed in the 1920s and through the 1960s. During the boom, there were over 10,000 acres of orchards between Longmont and Wellington, with Loveland at the heart. During the 1920s Loveland boasted the largest orchard west of the Mississippi (Spring Glade Orchard). Loveland had over seven processing plants at different times from 1920s-1960s. Three of the largest canning companies included Kuner-Empson, Loveland Canning and Cherry Products Corporation.

In 1928, 1929 and 1930 the area produced over $1 million in fruit. In October, 1954, there was an early "hard freeze" which prematurely killed crop. In the spring of 1955, growers found that trees were dying or not healthy. Crops were too damaged and the industry started to fade and nearly vanished by the early 1960s.
What do you see?

Which lake is this and why do you think that?

What else do you see?

What do you think might be different if the same photo was taken today?

This photo of Loveland from the Museum’s archives, was taken in the 1950s.
The land between the lake and the mountains was covered with mostly cherry orchards.

Hints of the Cherry Impact on Loveland

- In May of 1930 the first Cherry Blossom festival was held in Loveland. Festivals, parades and baking contests were held by different entities throughout the 1900s. The Loveland Museum began its Cherry Pie Celebration event in the mid 1980s with pies, ice cream, music, a baking contest and activities on 5th Street.

- Some of the cherry orchards were located in the areas that we now know as Orchards Shopping Center or Cherry Hills Estates. Some of the neighborhoods in the area still have cherry trees in their yards.

- Popular road side stands were located between Loveland and Estes Park and sold juices, jams, pies and other cherry treats. Learn more about one of them, Colorado Cherry Company, later in this lesson.

- Loveland High School's colors were originally cherry and black, but have evolved to crimson and black.
**Economic Impacts of Agriculture**

**Younger Kids**
What is agriculture? What crops have you seen growing in Colorado today? Write a story about what you think it would be like to be a cherry picker in the orchards. Use the coloring page of cherries to make a cover for your story.

**Older Kids**
Learn more about agriculture in Colorado. What crops have been important in the past? What crops are important now? Write a brief paper on your findings.

**Resources**
- Colorado Foundation for Agriculture: Colorado Agriculture in the Classroom [https://www.growingyourfuture.com/](https://www.growingyourfuture.com/)
- Colorado Farm to School [http://coloradofarmtoschool.org/](http://coloradofarmtoschool.org/)
- Google search: “Colorado Cherry Industry”. Stories published in the Loveland Reporter-Herald by Olivia Lowe, Kenneth Jessen and others will come up first. Read these stories and learn more about how this industry impacted the local economy for a long time.

---

**ACTIVITY TWO**

Loveland’s orchards grew sour cherries. Sour cherries are used for pies, juices, preserves and jams... all things that we know to be sweet! Sweet cherries are what we typically buy at the store for snacking.

In the days of the boom in Loveland, workers would mostly use a “cherry stoner” to remove the pit or seed from the center of the cherry. The cherry stoner is a steel device that would latch onto the side of a table. The worker would turn a crank and a handful of cherries would roll through the trough-like top, through a pizza-cutter-looking blade, separating the cherry from the pit. However, several variations of hand-held cherry pitters were invented later that made the process a bit less messy.

- **Google search “cherry stoner”** and see if you can find a video on how this tool worked.
- **Do some thinking or research** on the types of cherries, and also try your hand at cherry pitting! Create your own process to remove the pit, if you don’t have access to a pitter.

---

**ACTIVITY 3**

Cherry stoner from Loveland Museum collection
The Colorado Cherry company has been in the Lehnert family for generations... four to be exact! It is a locally owned and operated business. Their first location, in the Big Thompson Canyon, in Loveland is a popular tourist stop on the way to Estes Park.

Colorado Cherry has since opened two additional stands in Lyons and at the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park. In 2019, they also opened their first full-kitchen restaurant in Windsor.

Visit https://www.coloradocherrycompany.com/ for more information and to see all of the wonderful things they make from cherries!