

ROOM 222: LOUIS & KATHY L'AMOUR

LOUIS L'AMOUR: 1908-1988
BORN TO THE NAME LOUIS DEARBORN LAMOORE
PSEUDOONYMS: TEX BURNS, JIM MAYO

KATHY L'AMOUR
BORN TO THE NAME KATHERINE ELIZABETH ADAMS
OCCUPATIONS: ACTRESS, MOTHER, ENTREPRENEUR

THE LIFE OF LOUIS

If you are sitting comfortably in room 222, you are in the presence of a legacy.

This is the room where Louis L'Amour wrote many of his Sackett series novels, typing at the very same drop-leaf table in 222.

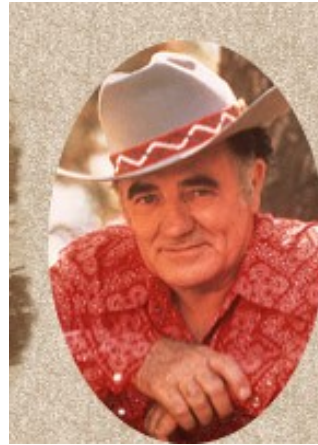
Louis enjoyed this room, as he could type while the ragtime piano below played into the night, and as his children Beau and Angeli-que slept peacefully in the room next door.



Young Louis at age three.

Let us take you back to the beginning of the life of this famous and well traveled

author: Jamestown, North Dakota had provided Louis with an idyllic childhood but hard times finally uprooted the family and set them on a course that would forever alter Louis' life. After a series of bank failures ruined the economy of the upper Midwest, Dr. La-Moore, his wife Emily, and their sons Louis and John took their fortunes on the road. They traveled across the country in an often-desperate seven-year odyssey. During this time Louis skinned cattle in west Texas, baled hay in the Pecos valley of New Mexico, worked in the mines of Arizona, California, and Nevada, and in the saw mills and lumber yards of Oregon and Washington. It was in these various places and while working odd jobs that young Louis met the wide variety of characters that would later become the inspiration for his writing. Young Louis met many



famous figures in his travels. He also met hundreds of men and women of lesser fame whose lives helped establish an understanding of the characters that lived in the nineteenth century. These people helped Louis create the basis for many of his fictional characters.

IN THE RING

In the years after leaving Jamestown, Louis had a sporadic career as a professional boxer. Having been well taught by his father

and older brothers, Louis made extra money from an occasional prizefight and, in the year just after his family left Jamestown, he often fought in the ring for the money to buy gas so that they could move on. On more than one occasion a run of luck allowed him to box full time.

Over the years he spent time in dim gymnasiums in cities all across the west, first as a boxer, then as a trainer, seeing the world of fighters, managers, gangsters and gamblers first hand. Louis ended his fighting career by coaching several successful Golden Gloves teams; the first few in Oklahoma, the last, an army team that went to the Tournament of Champions in Chicago. Louis freely drew from this experience for many of the boxing stories in the collections "*Hills of Homicide*", "*Beyond the Great Snow Mountains*" and "*Off the Mangrove Coast*".

VISIT WWW.LOUISLAMOUR.COM FOR EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT LOUIS L'AMOUR!
ALSO, YOU CAN HEAR THE MAN HIMSELF IN AN 1984 INTERVIEW AT WIREFORBOOKS.ORG/LOUISLAMOUR



Louis at the Yoba Copper Company, where he was a caretaker for three months.

“MY BOOKS ARE FOR THE PEOPLE WHO DO THE WORK OF THE WORLD, WHO STRUGGLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET, WHO BUILD, THE PEOPLE WHO DO!”
-LOUIS L'AMOUR



Louis at 18 years old with his father, Dr. LaMoore. Louis had just returned from a trip around the world on a freighter. Pictured here as a steelworker.

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

On his own, Louis hoboed across the country, hopping freight trains with men who had been riding the rails for half a century. He wrapped newspaper under his clothes to keep warm while sleeping in hobo jungles, grain bins and the gaps in piles of lumber. He spent three months "on the beach," in San Pedro, California and circled the globe as a merchant seaman, visiting England, Japan, China, Borneo, the Dutch East Indies, Arabia, Egypt, and Panama with the rough and ready crews of various steamships on which he served. In later years he wrote stories about these times, his own experiences and those of people he had known.

Though he left school in the 10th grade Louis had a thirst for knowledge. Throughout his life Louis haunted libraries and bookstores across the country and all over the world. Often he went without meals in order to afford to buy books. He sometimes worked long and hard so that he could quit working temporarily and afford to study full time. Louis liked to brag that from 1928 until 1942 he read more than 150 non-fiction books a year and that in order to do it he worked miserable jobs and lived in skid row hotels and campgrounds. After several years in the Pacific Northwest, Louis' parents moved to a little farm that their eldest son, Parker, had purchased in Oklahoma.

John had left Oregon a year before and had not been heard from since and so it was just the three of them who traveled across Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska and Kansas to settle on the acreage outside Choctaw. They had a house, animals, occasional crops, and their lives returned to normal. They lived in a community in which they were not viewed as vagabonds . . . slowly the LaMoore family began to put down roots.

Louis always wanted to be a writer but in his early days he thought that his writing would take the form of poetry. For years he struggled to learn this craft without much guidance except his own intellect. Eventually, he broke out into a number of little magazines and began placing poems regularly. The name Louis L'Amour was seen in public for the first time. Poetry, however, didn't pay very well . . . in fact it didn't pay at all. He tried writing short stories that drew on his life experience, sending them to college journals or literary magazines. This was not the answer to earning a living as a writer either. Finally, he sold a short story called "Anything for a Pal" to a pulp magazine called *True Gang Life*.

He made less than eight dollars but he took it as a sign and committed his attention to writing for the pulps. The hoped-for breakthrough took almost two years to come.

IN THE ARMY NOW



Louis was inducted into the US army late in the summer of 1942. (Photo above, Germany, 1945.) After boot camp he went to Officer's Candidate School and then Tank Destroyer School. By the time he was eligible to join a TD outfit he was ordered to change assignments because with his 35th birthday just over six months away he would be too old to join a combat unit. He joined the Transportation Corps and was sent to England and then on to Europe with a trucking company. As a second Lt. he commanded a platoon of gas tankers that supplied planes and tanks all through the fighting in France and Germany. Before he returned home he was promoted to 1st Lt. and was briefly a company commander. While in Europe he gathered the background that he later used in his stories about that area.

LOVE FOLLOWED TOUGH TIMES

After his discharge from the Army, Louis returned to the U.S. only to find that the market for his Adventure stories had nearly disappeared. Now editors were asking for Mysteries and Westerns. Because of Louis' background, an old friend in the publishing business pushed him in the direction of Westerns. Following his friend's advice, Louis L'Amour moved to Los Angeles, a city he knew well from his sea-faring and boxing days, settled into a small room in the back of another family's large apartment and began to write. For the first couple of years he sat on the bed and worked with his typewriter sitting on a folding chair. Compared to his Oklahoma days his output was enormous. In one year he sold almost a story a week and wrote even more than that. The pulps had never paid very well and that situation had not changed much. Louis' average take on a short story was less than \$100. By the early 1950s, many writers, Louis included, found it harder and harder to sell their stories. Like others Louis tried many different markets, but it was the success of Hondo that gave Louis' career a much-needed boost.



Louis and Kathy L'Amour, near the location where Heller with a Gun was being filmed as Heller in Pink Tights. (c. 1959- 60)

In 1956 Louis L'Amour married Katherine Elizabeth Adams, an aspiring actress. The daughter of a resort developer and silent movie star, Kathy had grown up in the deserts and mountains of Southern California where her father had once owned vast tracts of land. Together they traveled all over the west searching out locations and doing research for Louis' books. In 1961 their son Beau was born and in 1964 they had a daughter, Angelique. The 1960s were a productive time for Louis. He developed his famous Sackett family series, traveled extensively to promote books and movies, and, for the first time in his life, bought a house. He was often invited to speak at public forums and held book signings for large crowds all across the country. And he finally settled down to work with a single publisher, Bantam Books.

After six years (1953 -1959) of going back and forth be-

tween Fawcett/Gold Medal, Ace and Bantam, Louis was looking to find a publisher who would bring out more than two of his books per year. His editor at Gold Medal lobbied to let him write more but management refused even though he was placing books with competing publishers. L'Amour had sold 14 novels, 9 motion pictures, and several million paperback copies before Bantam Editor in Chief Saul David was finally able to convince his company to offer Louis an exclusive contract that would expand to three books a year. It was only after 1960, however, that Louis's sales at Bantam began to surpass his sales at Gold Medal.

Louis loved to collect books and finally he had both the space and the money to do so. His private library grew from some 3,000 to nearly 10,000 books and half again as many journals and periodicals. True to his athletic past he would spend an hour or two every day lifting weights, skipping rope and punching a heavy bag, first in a paved area of his small back yard in Hollywood, later, in the garage that he had converted into a gymnasium.

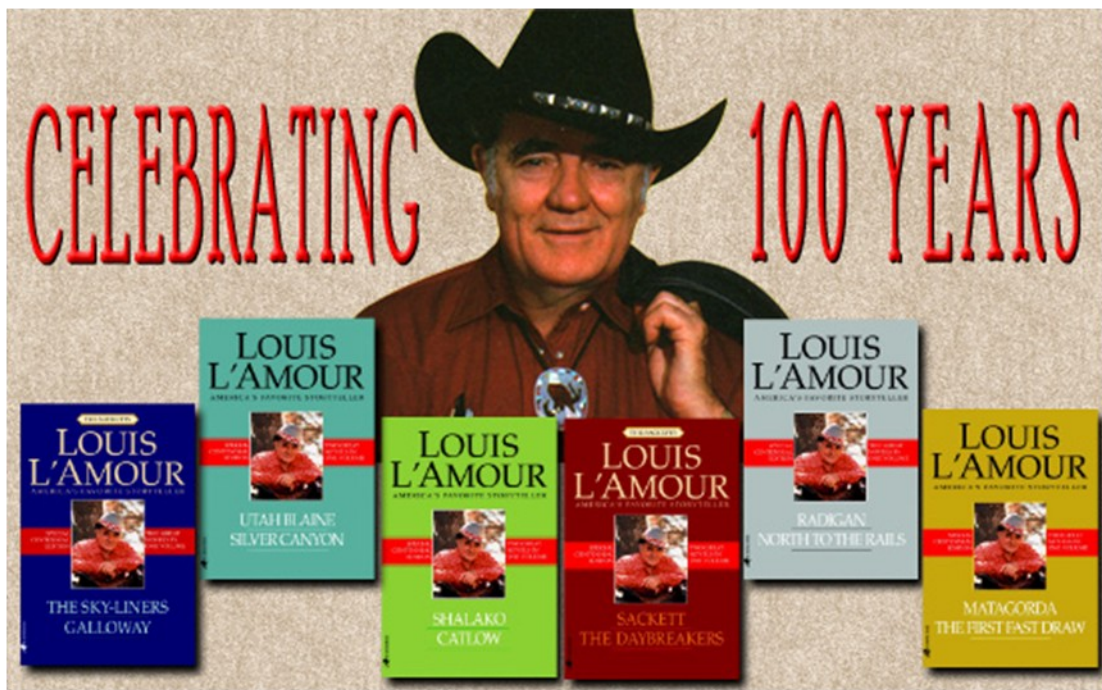


Louis in Central Park, 1954

IN THE YEARS SINCE HIS DEATH IN 1988 OVER ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY MILLION COPIES OF HIS BOOKS HAVE BEEN SOLD.



At the typewriter, 1953



Other websites for you to enjoy

louislamourgreatadventure.com * louislamourslosttreasures.com * Sonofawantedman.com * thediamondofjeruaudio.com
www.louislamour.com

THE REST OF THE STORY

Starting in 1966 Louis would take his family to spend the summer in Durango, CO, a place he had visited briefly with a mining buddy in the late 1920s. For over ten years they spent the month of August here at the Strater Hotel, Louis dividing his time between writing and hiking in the La Plata or San Juan Mountains.

In later years Louis participated in the Presidential Committee on Space, a Ute/Comanche peace treaty, and was on the National Board of

the Library of Congress' Center for the Book.

The summer of 1987, Louis began his long postponed memoir, *Education of a Wandering Man*. He had been diagnosed with cancer. As the disease progressed Louis moved his work from his office to a desk in an upstairs bedroom and ultimately into the master bedroom. He was editing the book the afternoon that he died. A few days before he passed away Louis was notified that sales of his books had topped two hundred million.

Since his death in June of 1988, Bantam Books, a division of Random House Publishing, has continued to release the work of Louis L'Amour. *Smoke from this Altar*, his 1939 book of poetry, and a revised version of *Yondering*, were released in the same year. Since then there have been re-releases of the four *Hopalong Cassidy* novels, and many books of his short stories, some containing material never before published.

During the summers of the late 1960's and early 1970's,

third generation Strater owner Rod Barker, was a bellman at the Strater. He distinctly remembers the annual arrival of the L'Amour family. "It was a fun time for all of us," recalls Barker. "Louis was very easy to know and to like. He seemed to honestly enjoy the hotel staff and was friendly to all of us. We looked forward to seeing the family each day for breakfast in the dining room. I also distinctly remember moving the trunk full of books and references that Louis brought with him in the family station wagon.

HUNGRY FOR HISTORY? GET YOUR OWN COPY OF THE **STRATER HOTEL STORY BOOK** AT THE FRONT DESK AND READ MORE ABOUT THE FAMOUS GUESTS OF THIS HISTORIC HOTEL.

It was a very large trunk that took three of us to get up the stairs.”

Barker and his wife Laurie remain friends with Louis’ wife Kathy who spends part of her time at her beautiful ranch near Durango. Barker points out that behind every great man is a great woman and Kathy never comes up short in that department. He notes, “She has always had a lot to do with the success of the L’Amour enterprises, from her marketing creativity to her straight forward manner and acute business acumen that has helped to keep Louis’ great work in the public eye long after his passing. She is a wonderful and caring person who has a rare knack of extracting the best a person has to offer. It is a skill that few people are fortunate enough to possess and usually she works her magic without the knowledge of the

recipient.”



Kathy is the President of Louis L’Amour Enterprises, Inc. Because of her commitment to his work, over one hundred and twenty million copies of his books have been sold since 1988. None of Louis L’Amour’s Bantam titles have ever been out of print.

Over the years the annual L’Amour family visits have been instrumental in helping the staff remember stories. The stories

about room 222 and Louis L’Amour were a part of the Bellmen normal routine welcome to the hotel guests. These stories helped foster recollections and research about the history of the Strater. “When you spend 40 or so years talking about the Louis L’Amour room, you naturally start to think about the other 92 rooms.

Barker is quick to note, “Think of all the great people that have stayed at the Strater Hotel as well as all of the great people that helped to establish this unique western town of Durango. Many of these people are the people that Louis would say are “the people that do”. How many of those people and families could vanish into obscurity without a project by which to remember them? The durability of this legendary hotel can lend to the durability of the legacy of these wonderful peo-

ple. This room is really the genesis for our naming project and room 222 has been the Louis L’Amour room long before I connected the dots to do this for the rest of the rooms. We are very grateful to the entire L’Amour family for their contribution to our history and for their friendship.”

In this case, at the end of this story is another great story. We hope that you will acquaint yourself with the many wonderful books written by Louis L’Amour. To find out more, go to www.louislamour.com or to your local bookshop. You’ll be glad that you did. And if you are interested in a few more of the interesting stories at the Strater Hotel, just go to www.strater.com and learn about more of our Durango pioneering families and founding institutions.



Beau L’Amour



Angelique L’Amour

BY WAY OF THE NAMING OF THIS ROOM, THE STRATER HOTEL SALUTES THE ENTIRE L’AMOUR FAMILY FOR ALL THE WORK THEY HAVE PUT TOWARD PRESERVING THE FLAVOUR OF THE WEST, AND THE HISTORY OF THE STRATER HOTEL.