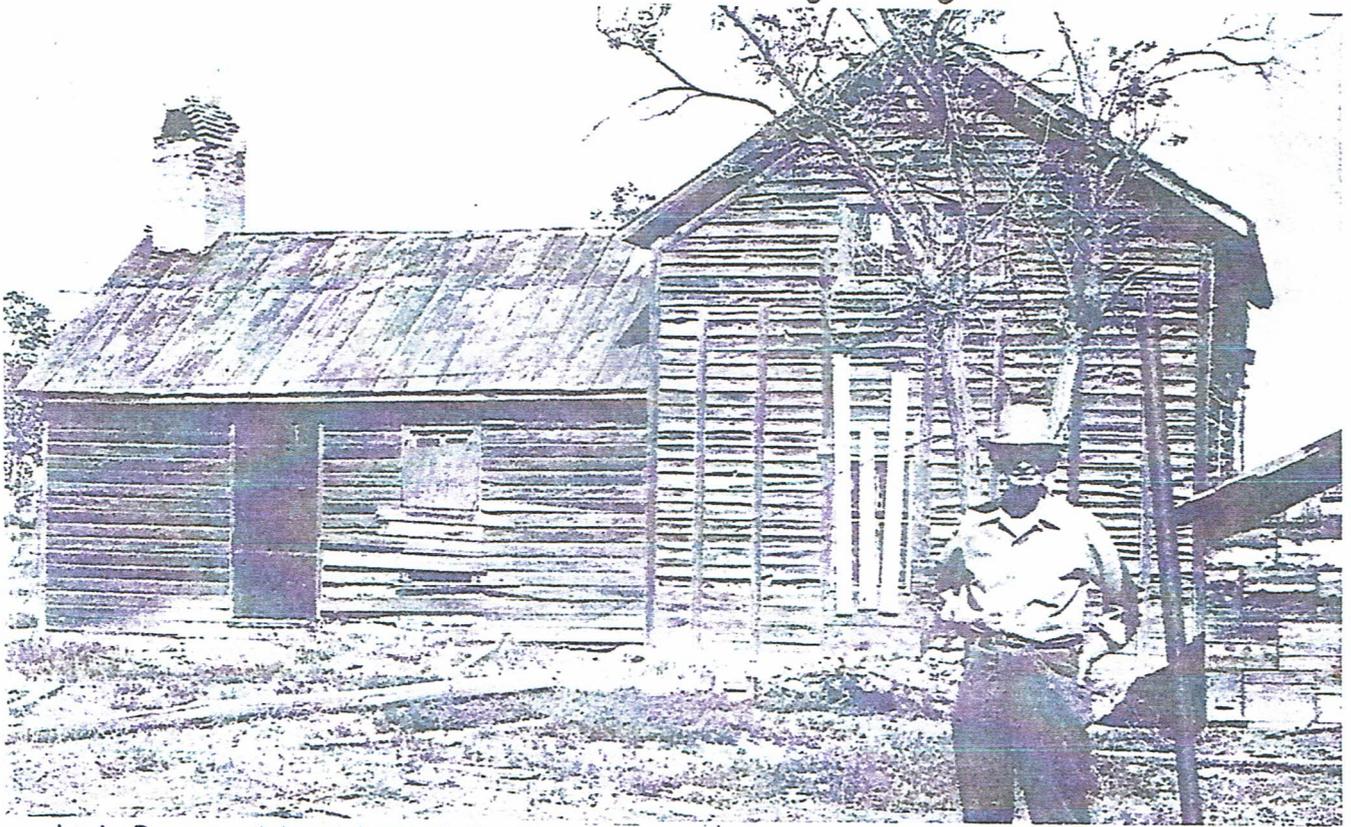


Here Travelers Rested; Wetmore Halfway House



Louis Draper, pictured here at the site of the historic old Halfway House, two miles east of Wetmore, is familiar with the old legends and stories of Wetmore area in the early days. Louis started as a cowboy when he was 14 years of age and has lived in Wetmore for 62 years. According to his information, this old building is more than 100 years old.

This old landmark was first used as a Halfway House in 1872-73 when the north Hardscrabble Canyon Road to Westcliffe was made passable by donations from Pueblo and Rosita. Located at the top of Jackson Hill, the Halfway House was a welcome sight to passengers enroute to the Wet Mountain Valley. Fresh horses were hitched to the stage while the passengers were served a home-cooked meal. At that time, the main highway by-passed the town of Wetmore and the stage stopped at the Greenwood Hotel.

Mrs. Edith Hall, Wetmore, remembers stories told by her uncle, Joe Parker, who drove the stage from Pueblo to Westcliffe in 1873. Parker later married Ida Akins who was employed in the dining room of the Halfway House.

Altho now battered and weathered. Louis Draper describes this 100 year old building as a monument to the hard working pioneers seeking their fortunes. The adobe walls, covered by wooden siding, furnished a warm shelter in winter and a cool spot in summer.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Essmeier, Florence, owners of the Halfway House and the 500 acre ranch since 1930, recall stories handed down by early settlers. Mrs. Essmeier, the former Beulah Harms, moved to the Wetmore district in 1905. She remembers the Halfway House was known as the Watson place and it was then used as an over-night stop for wagon freighters, hauling timber, feed and potatoes from

Westcliffe to Pueblo. Corrals and stables were available for the four and six horse teams. The house was partitioned into very small rooms to accommodate overnight guests. Mr. Essmeier has been ill for several years and the old house gradually deteriorated.

Mrs. Edward Cozad, Florence, the former Josephine Calmett of Rockvale, moved to Wetmore in 1911 when her father bought the Chatham Ranch. She married Edward Cozad in 1914 and they started a cattle ranch in the Red Creek Springs country, three miles east of Greenwood, Mrs. Cozad recalls the Halfway House and its use as an over-night stop. Later the old Greenwood Hotel became more popular and the Halfway House closed. Edward Snider made daily trips from the Greenwood Hotel to Florence with a covered spring wagon. He carried the mail and had space for two or three passengers. Starting early each morning and returning before dark the same day, he also hauled small packages of freight.

Mrs. Josephine Cozad remembers seeing the two-vacant resort hotels at Red Creek Springs when she and her husband ran cattle there. According to information furnished by her early settlers, the Chase Hotel was built on the Chase Ranch and the Wagoner Hotel was further south under the bear's head—a rock formation resembling a bear's head. Both hotels were built before the turn of the century, were two story, and the number of rooms indicated each could accommodate 25 guests. Many were tubercular and came seeking a cure with the use of a warm mineral water. Several died and were buried in a cemetery that contained about 50 graves. The wooden markers have disappeared and the graves have been trampled by cattle.

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Mrs. Cozad was in the saddle most days helping on the ranch with the cattle and horses. She accompanied her husband and the area cattlemen on fall roundups. During the October 1915 roundup, she had gathered several head of cattle in part of the Babcock Hole and the foothills. Other riders were to meet her there. A wasp got under the saddle blanket causing her horse to bolt and runaway with Mrs. Cozad. The horse ran into a fence and she was thrown against a cedar post. Searchers found her many hours later with a crushed chest, a broken jaw and internal injuries. She spent several months in a cast but the next summer she was back in the saddle again traveling between their ranch and Greenwood.

In 1919, Mr. and Mrs. Cozad purchased the new Greenwood Hotel and cottages located south of the old

Greenwood Hotel. They catered to summer patrons and enjoyed serving many nice people for several years. Edward Cozad died in 1959 and Josephine has lived in Florence since 1969.

Describing the social life in Wetmore during those early years, Josephine remembers the good times just visiting neighbors, the dances held for the cowboys on the cattle drives to the summer pastures, and during the winter months, neighbors gathered whenever possible for dances in ranch homes. Everyone brought the children and good eats. She recalls that they danced to the tune, "Old Nellie Gray" all one winter because that was the limit of the fiddler's ability. Of course there were church socials and the Wetmore Fair every fall.

Jack McFall