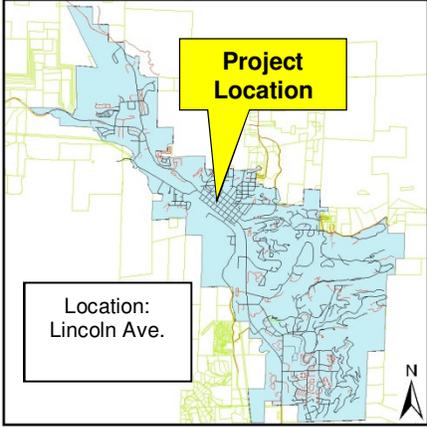


DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT REPORT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM #4:

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Project Name: | Chief Theater 811-813-815 Lincoln Avenue | |
| Prepared By: | Jan M. Kaminski, HP Consultant Mountain Architecture ♦ Design Group (970.879.5764 x12) |  |
| Through: | Tyler Gibbs, AIA Director of Planning & Community Development (Ext. 244) | |
| Historic Preservation Commission (HPC): | September 9, 2015 | |
| Zoning: | Commercial Old Town (CO) | |
| Applicant: | Jack and Mary McClurg | |
| Request: | Application for designation on the Steamboat Springs Register of Historic Places | |

Staff Report - Table of Contents

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811-813-815 Lincoln Avenue**I. CONSULTANT ANALYSIS SUMMARY**

The application for designation on the Steamboat Springs Register of Historic Places has been submitted for the Chief Theater located at 811-815 Lincoln Avenue. Section 26-84 of the Community Development Code describes three criteria for being entered on to the register.

Eligibility Criteria—Historic Resource Designation. A building, site, structure or object may be eligible for designation as a Historic Resource on the Local Register if it meets at least one criterion in one or more of the following categories:

- (1) *Historic Importance.* The building, site, structure or object has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state or nation; is the site of a historic event with an effect upon society; is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society; or, exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community.
- (2) *Architectural Importance.* The building, site, structure or object portrays the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style;

embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen; is the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city or contains elements of architectural design, detail, materials and craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.

(3) *Geographic Importance.* The building, site, structure or object, because of being part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area, should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural or architectural motif; or, due to its unique location or singular physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or city.

II. BACKGROUND

A Cultural Resource Survey – Architectural Inventory Form was created for the Chief Theater in 2007 (see Attachment #1). This form identifies this building as not eligible for the National Register or the local register. It does, however, state in fields 44 – 46 that the building could be contributory to a potential National Historic District. The Steamboat Springs Downtown Historic District was later entered into the National Register in 2013. The property is now considered a Contributing Resource in the Steamboat Springs Downtown Historic District (see Attachment #2).



III. PRINCIPAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. CD Code Criterion
2. Seven Aspects of Integrity
 1. Location
 - Where and why the property was created or why something happened
 2. Design
 - Organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation and materials
 3. Setting
 - Character of the place where the property was built. Relationships between buildings and its surroundings
 4. Materials
 - The physical elements that were combined during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration
 5. Workmanship
 - Physical evidence of the crafts of a particular people during a particular period in history
 6. Feeling
 - A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a period of time
 7. Association
 - The direct link between an important event or person and the property.

IV. CONSULTANT FINDING

The Chief Theater has gone through many physical modifications over the years but its main purpose has remained the same. This application is being made under the CD Code Criteria (1) *Historic Importance* (see Attachment 3).

The application form states *“To have historic importance, the resource shall be at least 50 years old and: The building, site, structure or object has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, State or Nation; is the site of an historic event with an effect upon society; is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society; or, exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community.”*

It also goes on to state *“To qualify as an Historic Resource, a property must meet at least one criterion in at least one of the three categories. The specific criterion must be identified and a statement provided as to how the property meets each selected criterion. The explanation should summarize why the property meets the criteria and therefore has the exceptional, unusual, or outstanding characteristics that make it qualify as an Historic Resource.”*

Exceptional, unusual, or outstanding characteristics are defined by the seven aspects of integrity and not all historic resources are strong in all points.

Association with Steamboat Springs commercial development since 1926 and Arthur Gumprecht as builder are solid themes that support nomination. Location and setting also provide confirmation of that association as well as the continuation of the programs provided the current owners.

Design, materials and workmanship of the original building are demonstrated through the preservation of the recessed entry and rounded entry arch. Other elements surrounding the entry have been altered from the historic appearance as demonstrated in the historic photos (see Attachment 4).

Feeling is evoked by either the aesthetic or historic sense of a period in time.

In conclusion, a basic integrity test for a property associated with an important event or person is whether a historical contemporary would recognize the property as it exists today.

V. MOTION

Possible Motions

HPC shall consider the application at a regularly scheduled or special meeting after the completion of the staff review. HPC shall approve, recommend modifications to, or deny the application.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1:

CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY – ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY FORM 5RT.260

Attachment 2:

CITY OF STEAMBOAT SPRINGS NOTIFICATION OF NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT – AUGUST 13, 2014

Attachment 3:

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION

Attachment 4:

CHIEF THEATER – “THEN AND NOW COMPARISON”

Attachment 5:

CHIEF THEATER – ARTICLES



Department of Planning & Community Development

August 13, 2014

RE: Steamboat Springs Downtown National Register Historic District Approved!

Dear Property Owner,

Congratulations! Your property is now part of an official National Register Historic District.

After a multi-year community effort, the Steamboat Springs Downtown Historic District was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As a property owner and one who has already invested in our thriving downtown, we are contacting you to explain the benefits behind this important recognition. This is an honorary, not regulatory designation.

One of the strongest features of the Steamboat Springs National Register District designation is that it has been tailored to the specific needs and distinct identity of this community. It encourages development that contributes to the quality and vibrancy of a National Register District. This is important to the city's evolution, since it ties past, present, and future together. Investment in our history as well as our future further indicates a healthy and lively economy.

There are numerous property owner benefits and there are no costs or additional restrictions to being in a National Register District. Consider the following benefits:

- Contributing properties within a National Register District qualify for 20% Federal and an additional 20% State Historic Tax Credits for qualified rehabilitation.
- Properties within a National Register District can qualify for grant funds.
- National Register Districts add value to the investments of owners. Real estate agents in many cities cite the enhanced real estate value conveyed by historic district status as a marketing tool to sell properties.
- A National Register District that is aesthetically cohesive and well promoted can be one of a community's most important attractions. The retention of and investment in historic areas as a way to attract tourist dollars makes good economic sense.
- National Register Districts enhance business recruitment potential by offering a higher quality of life, supporting higher return on investment and integrating the business into successful preservation programs and stable historic districts. Customers are offered a unique and authentic experience in the commercial district. Preservation creates jobs, supports businesses and revitalizes communities.

If you have any questions or concerns, or are interested in learning more about historic tax credits and grant opportunities, please contact Steamboat Springs Planning Director Tyler Gibbs 970.879.2060.

Sincerely,

Historic Preservation Commission
City of Steamboat Springs

124 10th Street, P.O. Box 775088, Steamboat Springs, Colorado 80477-5088
(970) 871-8258 • Fax (970) 871-8285 • www.steamboatsprings.net



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE 2280
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20005



July 18, 2014

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to send you the following announcements and actions on properties for the National Register of Historic Places. For further information contact Edson Beall via voice (202) 354-2255, or E-mail: <Edson_Beall@nps.gov> This and past Weekly Lists are also available here: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/nrlist.htm>

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 7/07/14 THROUGH 7/11/14

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name

COLORADO, ROUTT COUNTY,
Steamboat Springs Downtown Historic District,
Lincoln Ave. roughly bounded by 5th to 11th Sts.,
Steamboat Springs, 14000387,
LISTED, 7/11/14

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE EQUIVALENT,
District of Columbia War Memorial,
Independence Ave. between 17th & 23rd Sts., SW.,
Washington, 14000388,
LISTED, 7/11/14

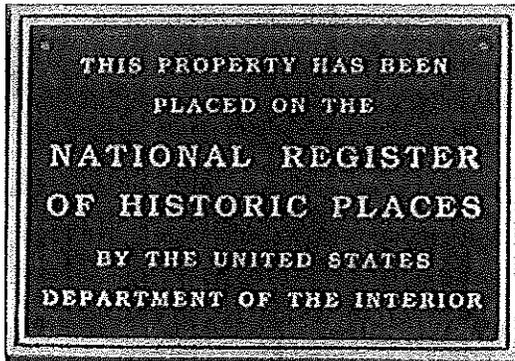
FLORIDA, ESCAMBIA COUNTY,
United States Post Office and Court House,
100 N. Palafox St.,
Pensacola, 14000389,
LISTED, 7/11/14

GEORGIA, MERIWETHER COUNTY,
Warner--Hill House,
La Grange Rd.,
Greenville vicinity, 74000693,
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 7/07/14

MAINE, PENOBSCOT COUNTY,
Holden Town Hall,
723 Main Rd.,
Holden, 14000362,
LISTED, 7/07/14

PLAQUE SOURCES

NATIONAL REGISTER of HISTORIC PLACES



Congratulations on the recent listing of your property in the National Register. You may be interested in obtaining a plaque recognizing the property's official designation. National Register plaques are available from a number of sources. The standard wording is:

**This property is within the
Steamboat Springs Downtown Historic District
placed in the National Register of Historic Places on
July 11, 2014,
by the United States Department of the Interior**

History Colorado and the State Historic Preservation Officer do not endorse any of the companies listed below nor can we guarantee the prices or descriptions quoted. Contact companies directly to obtain specific design and price information.

All-Craft Wellman Products, Inc
4839 E. 345th St.
Willoughby, OH 44094-4671
1-800-340-3899
info@all-craftwellman.com
www.all-craftwellman.com

Champion Ornamental
Castings, Inc.
1621 East 41st St.
Cleveland, OH 44103
1-800-942-8767
champocast@cs.com

Colonial Brass
42 Connie St.
Taunton, MA 02780
1-800-549-8670
colbrass@colonialbrass.com
www.colonialbrass.com

Eagle Sign & Design
901 E. Liberty Street
Louisville, KY 40204
1-888-561-0007
ron@eaglesign.com
<http://www.eaglesign.com/>

Erie Landmark Co.
637 Hempfield Hill Road
Columbia, PA 17512
1-800-874-7848
info@erielandmark.com
www.erielandmark.com

Healy Plaques
60-New River Rd
PO Box 4
Marville, RI 02838
1-800-995-0981
sales@healyplaques.com

Lake Shore Industries
PO Box 59
Erie, PA 16512-0059
1-800-458-0463
info@lsisigns.com
www.lsisigns.com

Metallic Arts
914 North Lake Rd.
Spokane Valley, WA 99212
800-541-3200
info@metallicarts.com
www.metallicarts.com

Plaques & Letters.com
3205 Arthur Drive
Ruston LA 71270
1-866-336-4135
admin@plaquesandletters.com
http://www.plaquesandletters.com/standard_nat_hist_register.htm

The Southwell Co.
PO Box 299
San Antonio, TX 78291
1-800-950-8068
sales@southwellco.com
www.southwellco.com

Additional sources:

National Park Service's
sources for plaques:
[http://www.nps.gov/nr/faq.htm#
plaque](http://www.nps.gov/nr/faq.htm#plaque)

National Historic Landmarks
(NHL) receive a free plaque
from the National Park Service:
[http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/
QA.htm#17](http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/QA.htm#17)

For NHL plaque contact:
NPS Intermountain Regional
Office, Denver
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
Denver, CO 80225-0287
303-969-2882

Steamboat Springs Downtown Historic District

Routt, Colorado

Name of Property

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----------|-----|------------|
| 811/813/815 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.260 | Yes | 1926 |
| 817 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1028 | Yes | 1941 |
| 818 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.244 | Yes | 1909 |
| 821 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1029 | Yes | 1941 |
| 822 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.245 | Yes | Circa 1909 |
| 824 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.246 | Yes | 1913 |
| 827 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1030 | Yes | 1911 |
| 828 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.247 | Yes | 1915 |
| 830 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.248 | Yes | 1905 |
| 831 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.2394 | No | 1975 |
| 833/837 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1031 | No | 1925 |
| 840/842 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.249 | Yes | 1908 |
| 843 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.261 | No | 1924 |
| 845 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.2403 | No | 1924 |
| 902/906 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1035 | No | 1997 |
| 903 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.262 | No | 1910 |
| 908 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.250 | Yes | Circa 1915 |
| 907/911 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.263 | Yes | Circa 1886 |
| 912 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.251 | No | 1899 |
| 917 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1032 | No | 1948 |
| 924 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.252 | Yes | Circa 1899 |
| 928 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.253 | Yes | 1900 |
| 929 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1033 | No | 1948 |
| 941 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1034 | No | 2008 |
| 942 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.1036 | Yes | 1956 |
| 1009 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.264 | Yes | 1909 |
| 1025 Lincoln Avenue | 5RT.2395 | Yes | 1962 |

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION**

Property Identification

1. Address of Resource: 811, 813, 815 Lincoln Avenue
2. Legal Description of Property: Lot 2 Block 30 Original Addition of Steamboat Springs
3. Historic Name: Chief Theater
Current Name: Chief Plaza
4. Historic Use: Recreation and Cultural Theater; Commerce and Trade/Specialty Store
Present Use: Recreation and Cultural Theater; Commerce and Trade/Specialty Store

Historical Data Summary

5. Year of Construction: 1926
Source of Information: Routt County Assessor, Commercial Property Appraisal Record; Sanborn Insurance map, June 1920; Colorado Cultural Resource Survey – Architectural Inventory Form #5RT.260
6. Architect or Builder: Arthur E. Gumprecht (Builder)
Source of Information: Bettger, Susan, and Meyer, Susan. "It Was The Largest Theater in Northwest Colorado, The Chief Theater." *Three Wire Winter*, Winter 1987, pp. 37-41. Located in clipping file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum; Colorado Cultural Resource Survey – Architectural Inventory Form #5RT.260
7. Original Owner: Harry Gordon
Source of Information: Bettger, Susan, and Meyer, Susan. "It Was The Largest Theater in Northwest Colorado, The Chief Theater." *Three Wire Winter*, Winter 1987, pp. 37-41. Located in clipping file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum; Colorado Cultural Resource Survey – Architectural Inventory Form #5RT.260

Photographs

8. Attach at least two (2) current 5x7 or larger photographs (black and white or color) showing the views of the property from the public right-of-way(s) and any important features or details. Polaroid photographs are not adequate. If available, attach copies of historic photographs of the structure.

See attached photos.

9. Provide a sketch map of the property that includes the boundary of the property, a basic footprint of the resource, and additional relevant features (such as outbuildings, significant landscape features, etc.)

See attached map

Statement of Significance

10. Explain how the resource meets at least one criterion in one or more of the following categories. Please cite specific criteria in the summary.

The Chief Theater is historically significant for its associations with Steamboat Springs' commercial development from the time of its construction in 1926. It has been in continuous use as a single stage and movie theater from that time to the present.

Historic Resource Designation Criteria

1. History. To have historic importance, the resource shall be at least 50 years old and: The building, site, structure or object has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, State or Nation; is the site of an historic event with an effect upon society; is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society; or, exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community.

The Chief Theater is historically significant for its associations with Steamboat Springs' commercial development from the time of its construction in 1926. It has been in continuous use as a single stage and movie theater from that time to the present.

Sanborn Insurance maps indicate that this lot was initially developed prior to 1911. A map published in July of that year depicts a small building near the front center of the property. A circa 1910 plat map depicts perhaps the same building labeled "Tailor Smith." The 1920 map depicts three somewhat larger buildings all fronting directly onto Lincoln Avenue. These are respectively labeled "jewelry", millinery and restaurant. By 1926, these relatively small buildings had been removed as construction on the Chief Theater building was begun that year. Mark Schafermeyer, who owned the property in the mid-1920s, deeded it to Harry "Chief" Gordon in 1926.

Historically, the Chief Theater has been an important part of Downtown Steamboat Springs. Constructed by Arthur E Gumprecht, a well-known local builder, in 1926 and owned by Harry Gordon, the original 140' x 50' single story building had a seating capacity of 500 and was acclaimed as the largest theater in Northwest Colorado. In addition to the theater seating, historic interior elements also included a stage, an orchestra pit with a player piano, expensive dark red carpeting with a yellow floral design, and heavy thick curtains. The building displayed Native American motifs throughout, with a concession stand named the "Kiva", and with an array of Indian symbols painted on the ceiling and along the top of the walls. In the early 1930s,

an artist named Bob Smith created a series of Indian motif paintings which were prominently displayed in the auditorium and lobby. The original façade featured a center box office and entryway, flanked by glass cases where movie posters were displayed. The entryway was flanked on either side by large fixed-pane display windows and entry doors which entered other retail businesses located in the theater building.

When the theater opened in early 1927, the Chief Theater was Steamboat Springs' second motion picture house, but it was the first to feature "talkies". "Idle Rich" was reportedly the name of the first "talkie" shown in the Chief Theater.

In 1936 Harry Gordon sold the Chief Theater to John Grieve. Mr. Grieve owned the Theater until 1964 and then sold the building and the business to George Fick. The building's façade was remodeled in the mid-1960s, with what was termed an "Alpine" or "Nordic, Scandinavian" style façade. At the same time, the building's name was changed from the Chief Theater to the Village Theater.

In 1970 Mr. Fick sold the building to Michael D. Barry. Barry relinquished ownership of the theater in 1978, but ended up re-acquiring it in 1986, when he changed the name to the Chief Plaza. Mr. Barry continuously owned the theater until it was purchased by The Friends of the Chief Foundation in October 2012. The Theater's current façade dates to 1986-1987, when the building was again extensively remodeled into a 4-plex modern movie theater. The large single theater inside was replaced by two smaller theaters, each with approximately 100 seats. Two other smaller spaces were converted into even smaller 50 seat theaters.

After purchasing the building, Friends of the Chief Foundation (The Friends) remodeled the building removing the wall between the 2 larger theaters to create a single stage theater. One of the smaller theaters was turned into a black box space to provide for a variety of needs, art gallery, small performance room, receptions, etc. The concession stand was remodeled into a bar, the carpets were replaced, walls painted and a state of the art lighting and sound system was installed. Since the remodel, the Chief has been booking programming at least 6 months in advance. The mission of the Friends of the Chief is to preserve, program and manage the multi-use historic Chief Theater that contributes to the cultural and economic vitality of Downtown Steamboat Springs, much like the original Chief Theater. Friends of the Chief is recognized as the progressive leader in providing a premier multi-use facility with diverse programming that contributes to the cultural and economic vibrancy of historic downtown. The Friends want to take that original mission of the Chief Theater to also maintain a multiuse cultural facility for the community of Steamboat Springs and communities of the Yampa Valley; foster emerging arts and cultural opportunities that include, but are not limited to performing, literary, visual, film and the culinary arts; encourage the growth of arts through education and outreach; program and support diverse art and cultural programs of the highest quality; advocate for historic preservation opportunities for the Chief Theater and the Historic Downtown District of Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

In order for the Friends to be able to focus on their vision for the theater without having to keep up with the maintenance of the historic building, in December 2014, Jack and Mary McClurg through SBS Century Real Estate Holdings, LLC purchased the building in order to let the Friends focus on the community needs and help out with the building upkeep.

Architectural Description

11. Concisely describe the resource and its surrounds.

- a. Describe location and setting including physical context and relationship to neighborhood and other historic structures.
- b. Architectural description including mention of major features, uncommon design features, ancillary structures, and important landscape or site features. Also describe interior spaces with extraordinary design features (if any).
- c. Describe alterations to the exterior of the building.

The Chief Plaza theater building is a single-story building, of brick masonry construction. The impressive symmetrical façade fronts onto the wide concrete sidewalk fronting Lincoln Avenue on the northeast elevation. Entrances into three retail spaces, currently occupied by the "Chief Plaza Theater," "Shoe Chalet & Boutique" and "Summit Shades" penetrate the façade wall. The entry into the theater is within a centered recessed entryway, set within a distinctive rounded arch. A set of paired, stained natural brown, glass-in-wood-frame entry doors, lead from within the arched entryway into the theater lobby. These distinctive doors feature large bronze metal door handles with an Indian Chief Head motif. The doors are also flanked by distinctive sidelights, and topped by a transom light, all with bronze metal Art Deco designs. Similar metal Art Deco designs flank the façade wall to either side of the entryway arch. The recessed entryway is flanked on either side by a single-light fixed-pane storefront display window. Each of these windows has a projecting sandstone sill, and is covered by canvas awnings. Entry doors, leading into Shoe Chalet and Summit Shades, are respectively located at the southeast and northwest ends of these façade. Both of these are stained dark brown glass-inwood-frame doors, with bronze metal Art Deco designs. Both of these doors are topped by flat arches with central keystones. A large marquee for the theater projects over the sidewalk in front of the centered, arched, entryway. The façade wall itself is made of brown brick, laid in running bond, with brick columns at either end. A parapet wall extends above the roof line, culminating in a centered gabled parapet, located above and behind the marquee. The building's name "CHIEF PLAZA" appears in large block letters, centered above the marquee, on the wall of the gabled parapet. The top of the parapet wall all along the façade is finished with sandstone coping. The building's rear (southwest) elevation is made of rough-formed concrete over brick construction. Two steel service entry doors are located at either end of the rear elevation. A small portion of the upper northwest (side) elevation is visible. The wall here is also composed of rough-formed concrete over brick construction. The southeast (side) elevation wall is not visible because it abuts the adjacent building.

This building is located on the southwest side of the 800 block of Lincoln Avenue (U.S. Highway 40), in downtown Steamboat Springs. The historic 1905 First National Bank Building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places is located immediately to the southeast at the

corner of Lincoln Avenue and 8th Street. The Homesteader shop, at 817 Lincoln Avenue, abuts this building's northwest elevation.

This building is historically significant for its associations with Steamboat Springs' commercial development from the time of its construction in 1926. It has been in continuous use as a movie theater from that time to the present. It is also architecturally notable, to a modest extent, for its early twentieth century commercial architectural characteristics. Due to a rather substantial loss of integrity, though, the building does not qualify for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places or in the State Register of Historic Properties. The building also probably lacks the integrity to qualify for individual listing in the Routt County Historic Register. However, the building is significant to the downtown Steamboat Springs commercial development from the time of its construction through present as it's been in continuous use as a theater. The building, also, is a contributing resource to the Steamboat Springs Downtown Historic District.

This well-maintained landmark building has a modern (circa 1986-1987) façade and interior. While in keeping with the building's historic Native American theme, the building's current façade is significantly different than the historic façade. As a result, a sense of time and place relative to the historic theater building is now only partially in place. However, the current owners along with the Friends of the Chief have been actively working towards bringing back the original façade and interiors. In 2012 the single stage theater room was partially brought back by removing the wall between the 2 - 100 seat movie theaters to make a larger theater space for moving, performances, plays, speakers, parties, meetings. These changes are being made as a way to bring back the original character of the building, however, the significance of the what the building provides and has provided since it was first built has not been affected or undermined.

Bibliography

12. Provide a list of research sources used in compiling this application.

Colorado Cultural Resource Survey, Architectural Inventory Form, Resource number 5RT.260

Alexandroff, Marty. "Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Architectural Inventory Form." February 1996, on file with the City of Steamboat Springs, and the Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Bettger, Susan, and Meyer, Susan. "It Was The Largest Theater in Northwest Colorado, The Chief Theater."

Three Wire Winter, Winter 1987, pp. 37-41. Located in clipping file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum.

Klein, Naomi. "Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Inventory Record." May 1981, on file with the City of Steamboat Springs, and the Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph/ Mountain Bell Telephone Directories for Steamboat Springs, 1956 – 2007. On file at the Denver Public Library, Western History Department.

Routt County Assessor, Commercial Property Appraisal Record.

Sanborn Insurance maps for Steamboat Springs, July 1911, June 1920.

"Steamboat Springs, Co. About 1910." Plat map, on file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum.

Chief Theater website, www.chieftheater.com

Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Routt County Colorado, Precinct 1, Steamboat Springs.

Application Information

13. Owner: Jack and Mary McClurg through SBS Century Real Estate Holdings, LLC
Mailing Address: 8082 South Interport Blvd, Suite 200, Englewood, CO 80112
Telephone: 303.589.5760

14. Owner Consent to Designation:

I / We, the undersigned, acting as owner(s) of, the property described in this application for Historic Resource designation do, hereby, give my consent to the designation of this structure as an Historic Resource.

Signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Date: _____

15. Applicant/Preparer Name: Erica Hewitt

Affiliation/ Interest in Property: Steamboat Architectural Associates
Address: PO Box 772910
Steamboat Springs, CO 80477
Telephone: 970.879.0819

Klein, Naomi. "Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Inventory Record." May 1981, on file with the City of Steamboat Springs, and the Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph/ Mountain Bell Telephone Directories for Steamboat Springs, 1956 – 2007. On file at the Denver Public Library, Western History Department.

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"Steamboat Springs, Co. About 1910." Plat map, on file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum.

Chief Theater website, www.chieftheater.com

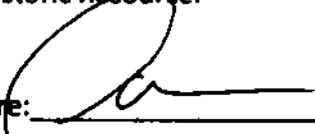
Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Routt County Colorado, Precinct 1, Steamboat Springs.

Application Information

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Mailing Address: 8082 South Interport Blvd, Suite 200, Englewood, CO 80112
Telephone: 303.589.5760

14. Owner Consent to Designation:

I / We, the undersigned, acting as owner(s) of, the property described in this application for Historic Resource designation do, hereby, give my consent to the designation of this structure as an Historic Resource.

Signature:  _____

Printed name: JACK MCCLURG

Date: 9.1.15

15. Applicant/Preparer Name: Erica Hewitt

Affiliation/ Interest in Property: Steamboat Architectural Associates
Address: PO Box 772910
Steamboat Springs, CO 80477
Telephone: 970.879.0819



**Photo: Tread of Pioneers
- Circa 1926**

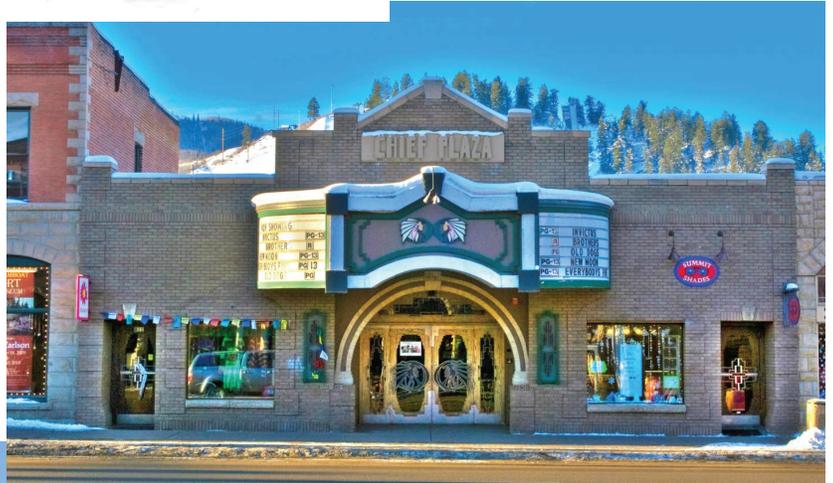


Photo: File Photo- 2008



**Photo: Erica Swissler
Hewit - 2015**



Photo: Tread of Pioneers - 1954



Photo: Tread of Pioneers - 1962

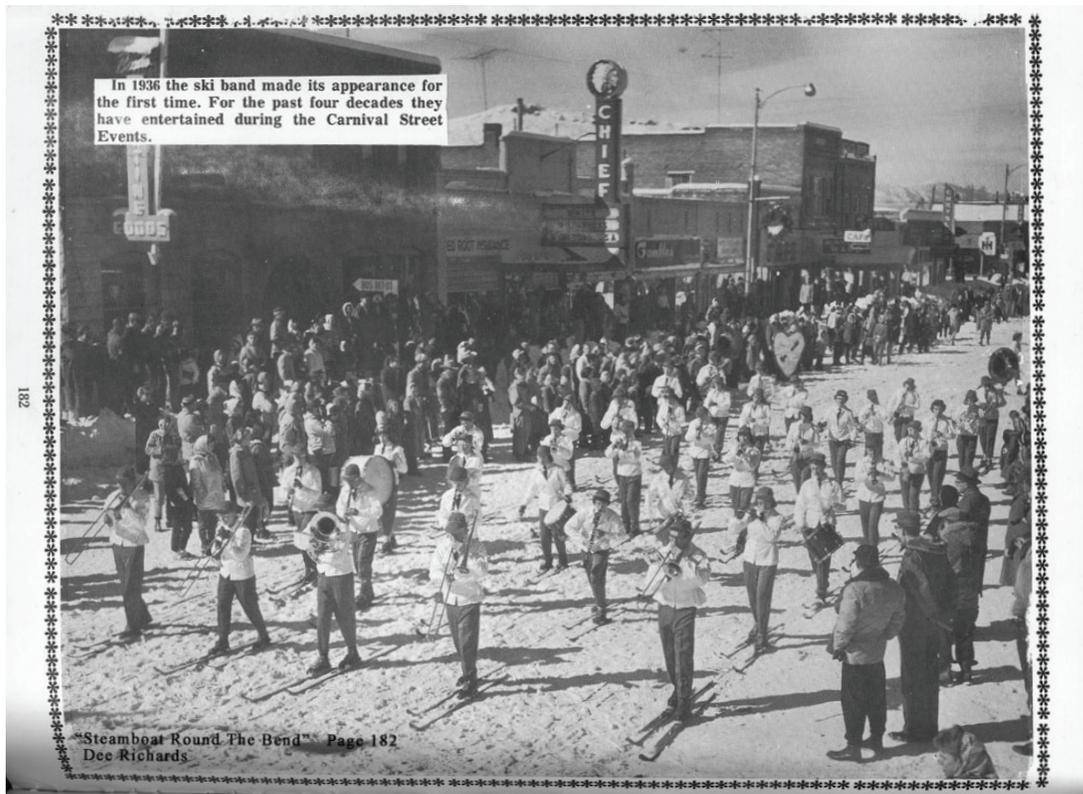


Photo: Tread of Pioneers - 1936



Photo: Tread of Pioneers - Circa 1926



Photo: Tread of Pioneers Museum

Pioneer Hotel, 737 Lincoln Avenue, built 1923 after Bartz Hotel burned, was a hotel until 1979



Photo: Ken Proper

Now Pioneer Building
Horse and skier, winter carnival 2007
737 Lincoln Avenue



***Note date shown is incorrect and should reflect actual built date of 1926**

Photo: Harold D. Alexander

Chief Theater, 813 Lincoln Avenue, built 1922



Photo: Ken Proper

Now Chief Theater 2008
813 Lincoln Avenue

The Chief Theatre



"THE TRAIL OF '98"

MAGNIFICENT AND POWERFUL SPECTACLE, FILM EPIC OF THE NORTH, WITH SOUND SYNCHRONIZATION AND A SURROUNDING SOUND PROGRAM WILL BE PRESENTED AT THE CHIEF THEATRE THREE DAYS

Thursday-Friday-Saturday, July 18-19-20

This picture will have a manifold appeal to this section inasmuch as the thrilling scenes portraying the northern wilderness were taken at Corona, Colorado, on the Moffat road. A battery of 15 action motion picture cameras, manned by 25 cameramen and twice as many assistants, and 50 well known film actors were used in making "THE TRAIL OF '98." What the "Birth of a Nation" was to the South, "Way Down East" to the Eastern states, and "The Covered Wagon" to the West, "THE TRAIL OF '98" is to the North. It symbolizes an important episode in the life and struggle of a great nation. Stars in the cast are DOLORES DEL RIO, RALPH FORBES, HARRY CAREW, TULLY MARSHALL, EMILY FITZROY, TENEN

Playbill at Chief Theater *Photo: courtesy Steamboat Pilot*

Colorado. The Victory Highway opened the way for summer automobile travel. Steamboat Springs received a generous share of those who made their way over winding and often treacherous Rabbit Ears Pass. Many came and went but some newcomers stayed, adding valuable resources to the community.

Medical professionals went beyond care of patients and did their share to restore strength and encourage optimism. Dr. Benjamin Jefferson served the Colorado House of Representatives; Dr. William Kernaghan, on the town's first Board of Trustees; and Dr. Frederick Willett, as mayor. Having moved to Steamboat in 1912, Dr. Willett bought property in 1

Photo: Ken Proper "Then & Now: A History of Steamboat Springs, Colorado"



Photo: Tread of Pioneers - Circa 1920's Livery Barn before Chief Theater was built.

1940 - 1940



Winter Carnival, 1940s

Photo: Tread of Pioneers Museum



Lincoln Avenue, winter carnival, 1986

Photo: Ken Proper



Winter carnival skiers, 2009

Photo: Ken Proper

victory and defeat. In cities closer to the coasts, fear of attack resulted in air raid drills that required darkened streets and shaded windows. Ranchers were given telephone numbers to call when planes were sighted overhead. Fear of attack touched Colorado in another way. Following Japanese bombing in Alaska, and shelling in Oregon, Japanese citizens were forced to leave the west coast, several thousand of whom were incarcerated at Camp Amache near Granada in Southeastern Colorado. Across the country, men and women worked round-the-clock shifts at factories to produce equipment, planes, ships, ammunition, food, and clothing for the troops. Fighting continued to claim lives. Even, in 1945, after Iwo Jima in March, VE Day in May, and the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, Japan rejected surrender. Only after a second atomic bomb could the United States and the rest of the free world celebrate VJ Day. In Steamboat Springs, Walt Webber's sound truck traversed streets from Third to Thirteenth but its patriotic songs could hardly be heard above the blaring horns from every car in town.

The "Sailors" who had known only the trusting life of Steamboat Springs never before realized the wartime implication of their school's nickname. They came home to see their town in a new way.

Winter Carnival

Photo: Ken Proper "Then & Now: A History of Steamboat Springs, Colorado"

Names such as F. M. Light, Archie Wither and his daughter, Dorothy Wither, Charlie Leckenby, his son,

Marjorie Harrison Marr has also had a remarkable history and an impact, both on Steamboat Springs and the

1898. The Harrisons made a stop near Craig to have a canvas cover made for their wagon.

Marj was one of two graduates in the Craig High School Class of 1910. Not enamored with the courses offered by Barnes Opportunity School in Denver, she enrolled in a hat-making class offered at A. T. Lewis & Sons.

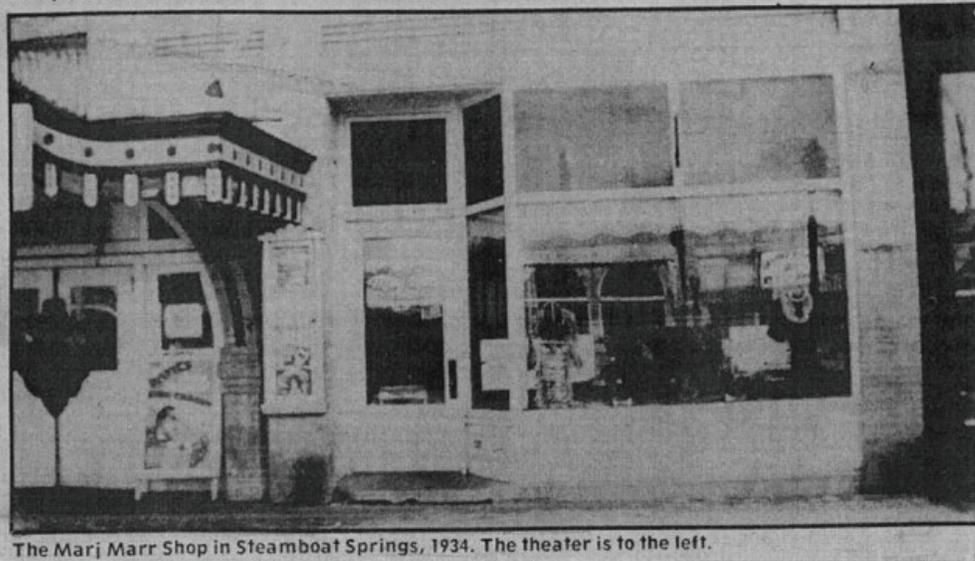
Even before marrying Evan Marr in 1916, she was well ahead of women's lib. She entered the business world at a time when women were supposed to tend their houses and children. Instead, she became a telephone operator, a school teacher and a milliner.

IN ORDER TO afford school for her two children, she took the \$13 saved from cream checks and fashioned 13 hats. Evan hitched up the team and the family drove to Hayden. Going door to door, she sold her creations. The date was Nov. 13, 1923.

Inspired by this success, and with a minimum amount of capital, she rented the old Hayden Library, paying \$15 a



Marj's first store in the old Hayden Library, 1925. Virginia and Betty Marr build a snowman outside the shop.



The Marj Marr Shop in Steamboat Springs, 1934. The theater is to the left.

Photo: Tread of Pioneers - 1934

Winter Carnival 1940's
Photo: David H Ellis & Catherine H Ellis
"Images of America: Steamboat Springs"

Snow sculptures were part of Winter Carnival from 1929 to 1960 and then were reintroduced in 1972. Part of their popularity, as remembered by Hildred Fogg, was that children got out of school to work on them. In 1945, an unidentified boy (above) sits astride a horse in front of a theater playing *Lake Placid Serenade*, a glittery, Cinderella-on-ice-skates musical released only two months earlier. Many of the sculptures in the 1940s had military themes, including an airplane and a jeep complete with two soldiers sporting helmets and guns. Continuing with the war theme, in 1946, a battleship was constructed on the courthouse lawn and christened the USS *Steamboat* (below). (Above, Hildred Fogg; below, Tread of Pioneers Museum, Steamboat Springs, Colorado.)



*Paul Van Horn
Steamboat Springs, Colo.*

Dear Paul:

I have just received your letter dated April 25 and this is May 12, so you see I have not much time. I am trying to finish this so that it will be in the mail at 4:00 clock this evening.

I guess my interest in theaters began at an early age. When I was 16 years old I got a job operating the machines at the old Alden Theater owned by Alden Wessels, an early day Civil Engineer. The machines in this theater were of the silent screen type with captions printed in. All of my three brothers and myself ran these machines for a number of years. The highlight of experience there was running the second Dempsey-Tunney prize fight. It may be interesting to note that Bill Allens Mens Store was the Alden Theater and the projection room is still in the apartment above.

I was operating the machines at the time Harry Gorden was building the present day Village Theater, then called the Chief Theater. Mr. and Mrs Wessels were very concerned that they would not be able to compete with this "New fangled talking machine", since they had just remodeled at considerable expense for those days. I remember talking to them about the problem and trying comfort them saying that it would not last, but I knew it was the coming thing. The Alden Theater only lasted a short time after that,

I had no active interest in Theaters until 1964, when I ^{sp} purchased the Chief Theater. I had considered ~~XXXXX~~ purchasing the theater earlier but the time just did not seem right. Television had a devastating effect on theaters all over the nation and most of them had not recovered. I did however, maintain an interest and felt that if the Yampa Valley College and skiing would progress the Theater could become sound. Both of these did happen and I was able to purchase ~~there~~ at the low point.

I bought the theater from John Greve who had bought it from Harry Gorden. I was also fortunate that Mr Greve trusted me with a



Letter from Previous Owner

payment plan that would enable me to pay it off and later to loan me the money to remodel.

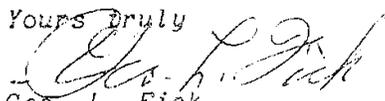
The remodeling included a new front in the Alpine motif from which resulted in the name changed to Village Theater. The entire lobby plus box office and refreshment stands were changed. New carpeting was installed in the lobby as well as the auditorium. The entire auditorium was cleaned and repainted except for the six murals on the walls that depicted Indians in various costumes and dances. Even tho these did not complement the new motif I just could not paint over these. Later four of these were painted over by the next owner, Mike Barry. I do not know if the remaining two are still there. The arrangement of the lobby ticket office candy bar, coke machine and popcorn machine are I think the same as before except for new equipment and possibly new carpeting.

Other operators who leased the theater from Mr Greve were Smith and Ashby and later along with Ashby, J. Green. Ashby and Smith operated the theater for the longest period of time. Mr Sith was the active manager and Mr Ashby was a film salesman was more or less a silent partner. I bought the real estate from Mr. Greve and some equipment from Ashby.

Mr Ashby was a great help to me in learning how to buy films and other aspects of the business and I will always be thankful to him.

It is now 4:30 so I will probably miss today's mail. If I had a little more time I could remember some other interesting things about that Theater. Maybe this will help.

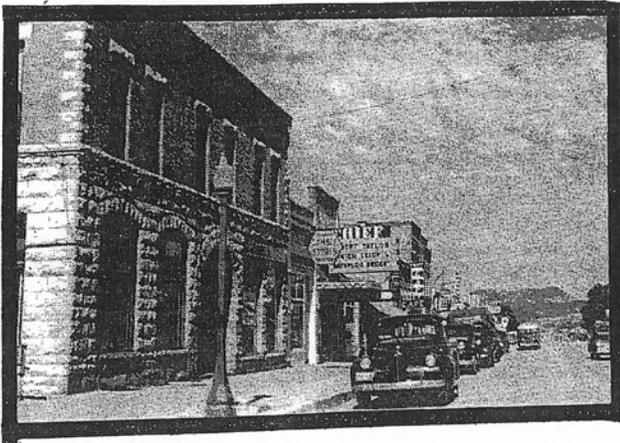
Yours truly


Geo. L. Fick

*I don't have time to correct spelling
Please return the enclosed picture*

IT WAS THE LARGEST THEATER IN NORTHWEST COLORADO, THE CHIEF THEATER.

BY SUSAN BETTGER,
SUSAN MEYER



In the fall of 1986 the Village Theater in downtown Steamboat Springs closed during the slow season in Steamboat. Where were we going to go on our dates? We were pleased to find out that the renovation of the theater was going to be short. When it opened December 19th it was renamed the Chief Plaza.

Susan and I wanted to do a story on the theater from day one. We were glad to find out a story had already been started by Paul Van Horn. When we found this out, we were bound and determined to do a story.

Paul Van Horn graduated in 1984. He interviewed Verna Myers and George Fick. We finished the story by interviewing Mike Barry, who is the owner of the theater.

Paul Van Horn starts the story off: As a kid growing up in Steamboat, the theaters have always had a place in my life. My father, Bob Van Horn, has managed both the Village and Time Square Cinemas since 1973. I have always been especially fascinated with the downtown theater in particular; the old Indian paintings and the sheer size of the building portray a sense of majesty not found in modern movie theaters. Then I began hearing stories about the old Chief Theater. The facts were never all there, so in an effort to learn what the Chief Theater was really like, I bought a ticket to memory lane in the form of a tape recorder and set up an interview with long-time theater employee, Verna Myers.

Verna remembered the theater vividly and provided me with a wealth of information. "The theater itself was built by Harry Gordon. He was an Indian that struck it rich in tin in Oklahoma. He married a lady from this country."

Paul goes on: From court house records and through a substantial amount of old copies of the Pilot, I discovered that Harry Gordon purchased the building from Mark Schafermeyer in 1926 for



"I HAD NO ACTIVE INTEREST IN THEATERS UNTIL 1964, WHEN I PURCHASED THE CHIEF THEATER."

\$25,000. The original building was very large, 50' X 140'. Gordon put A.E. Gumprecht in charge of construction, and in 1927, Steamboat Springs became the proud host to the largest theater in Northwest Colorado. The theater had a capacity of 500 people and had all of the most modern equipment. Harry Gordon sold the theater and building to John Grieve in 1936.

Mr. Grieve was the owner when Verna Myers began working there in the early 1950's. Verna told us what the theater was like back then. "At the time I knew it, it was a movie theater and a stage. A lot of people rented the theater just to use the stage. Down on the right hand side there was an orchestra pit with a player piano. They played it before the movie; that was their music. They just pedaled it, and then we had different rolls with different songs on them. It was a beautiful thing. Not only was the piano beautiful, but the interior decor of the theater was something to behold."

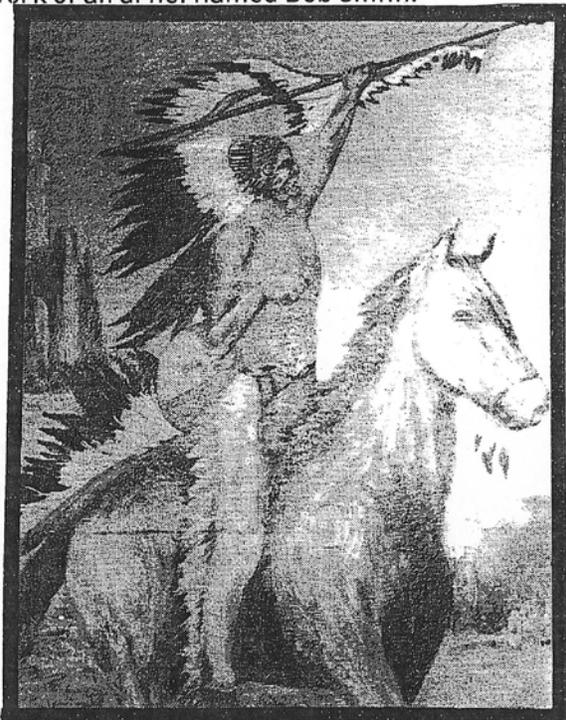
As Verna remembers, "It had really expensive carpeting that would last forever. The carpet was real dark red, like it used to be in the old opera houses, with a yellow floral design. It was really pretty, but it got paint splotches all over it, and they took it up and put down cheaper carpet, but it was still expensive.

"We also had curtains, big thick curtains that were one-half inch thick. Up in front we had big blue ones; then in back we had heavy gray ones with all Indian figures, and they came from New Mexico. They were real Indian drapes.

This story sponsored by B & K Distributing

"In the lobby, the concession stand was straight back. It was called the 'Kiva,' and in Indian that meant the meeting place. Where the concession stand is now, was a mural that pictured an Indian maiden with a herd of sheep; on the other side was an Indian brave on a spotted pony in a desert scene. It was the full length of the lobby."

Paul took up his story again: Upon further investigation, I discovered that the paintings in the auditorium were even more spectacular than those in the lobby. Measuring 12'x13' each, there were four scenes; one depicted an Indian woman doing beadwork, the second showed two Indians engaged in a snake ritual, in the third a plains Indian was hunting, and in the last two, masked southwestern Indians were engaged in a tribal dance. These magnificent paintings were the work of an artist named Bob Smith.



"THESE TWO OLD INDIAN PAINTINGS...PORTRAY A SENSE OF MAJESTY NOT FOUND IN MODERN MOVIE THEATERS."

Verna remembered where the idea for the paintings originated. "That was in New Mexico where the original pictures were. At one time I had a **National Geographic** magazine, and it had everyone of those original paintings in it. They were just exactly like the ones on the wall. Bob went down to New Mexico and just sketched them off of the original paintings. He must have had a machine that enlarged them to put them up on the wall because they were perfect.

"Complementing the paintings were a complete array of authentic Indian symbols painted on the ceiling and on the top of the walls. In the corner there were Indian signs like the Thunderbird; they were in every corner. Every one of them meant something; they were about eight inches in size."



Verna makes us aware that the interior has received changes and so has the exterior. "At the time I worked there, the place where you sell tickets (box office) was out on the street, and then on each side we had glass cases that opened up, and you put great big posters in there. We also had signs out on the street, boards on the street with the marquee. Up on top of the theater was an electric chieftain in full feather head-dress; it was colored, and it flashed, and you could see it from both ends of town."

George Fick describes the changes that have been made in the theater. "The old chief sign was designed to bring people into the theater, and in an effort to bring in even more business, the management came up with some interesting promotions. The merchants would pay for a movie to get the country people to come into town. And then I remember one year that we turned live turkeys loose from the top of the building on Thanksgiving Day to get the farmers into town. Then another time we turned a greased pig loose in the street to get them in. We had what we called family night, no matter how many kids you had, they all got in for a certain price. You had to prove that they were yours, but that was all. We had a money night where we gave a slip of paper with each ticket that had your name and a number on it. We had a drawing, and if nobody drew it, why, it kept building up until someone did win. We did everything to get people in.

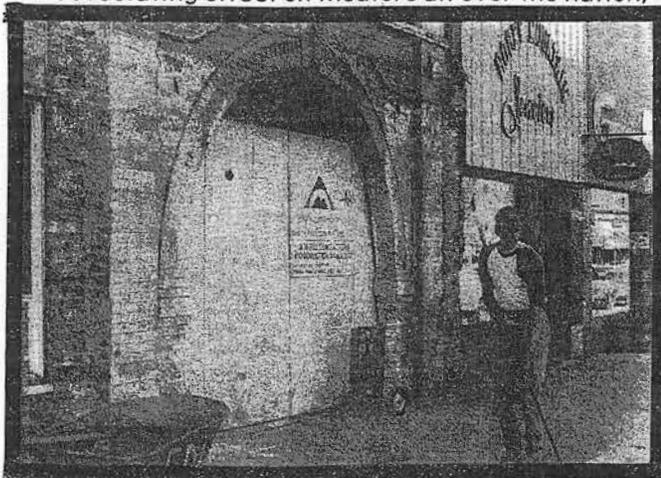
"I guess my interest in theaters began at an early age. When I was 16 years old I got a job



operating the movie projectors at the old Alden Theater owned by Alden Wessels, an early day Civil Engineer. The projectors in this theater were the type for the silent screen movie with captions printed in. My three brothers and I ran these machines for a number of years. The highlight of my experience was running the second Dempsey-Tunney prize fight. It may be interesting to note that Bill Allen's Men's Store had been the Alden Theater, and the old projection room is still in the apartment above.

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"THE REMODELING INCLUDED A NEW FRONT."

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To find out more about the renovation, I (Susan Bettger) talked to Mike Barry. Mike started his story with a little history on the Gordon family.



"THE FRONT PORTION WHICH REALLY MADE UP THE OLD LOBBY, HAD BEEN THE FIRST 30 FEET OF A LIVERY STABLE."

"The Gordon family ended up in Oklahoma, and as luck would have it, the land that they were on turned out to be very rich in tin deposits. A mining company bought the rights on it, and the Gordon family and some other families became extremely wealthy. Harry Gordon, at the time, was then quite well-educated, as were all of his brothers and sisters. He ended up in North Dakota where he married an Irish lady, and they really enjoyed Steamboat Springs and the Yampa Valley. One of their children was born in Meeker, and they traveled to Steamboat many times in the summer and finally moved to Steamboat Springs in 1921.

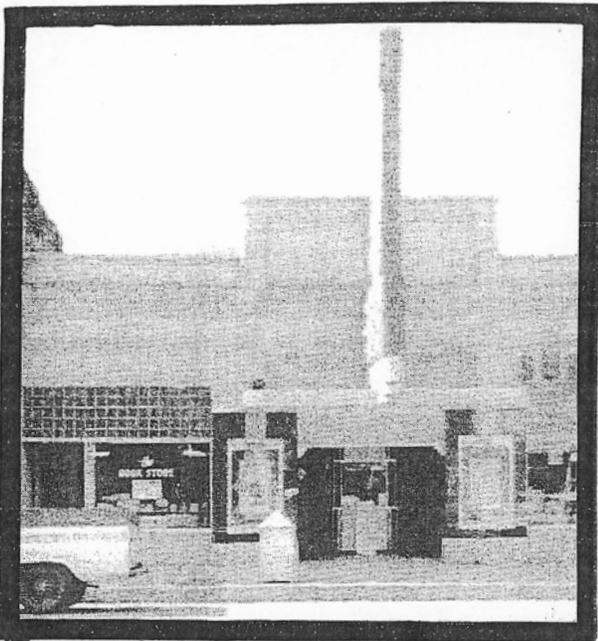
"Mr. Gordon built the Chief Theater, which is really a unique building which was two

buildings; the auditorium portion was added on to the great big part in the back in 1922. I think that the front portion, which really made up the old lobby, had been the front 30 feet of a livery stable. That lovely arch, that is shown there, would be the big livery door."

Mike told me a little about the film process; it's something that is not talked about much. I found it very interesting. "Films were made with a process using silver nitrate, and it is extremely flammable. Probably in science class you have burned a little piece of magnesium; it just flares with a bright hot light, so the projection booths of that day were built like bunkers. The one at this theater was one foot thick solid concrete; it had little metal doors where the projectionist would look out. They were held up, when I bought the theater, with little pieces of lead, so that if it would catch on fire the poor guy who was in there would be disintegrated, and the heat would melt the lead, the little doors would come down, and the audience would then be protected. All the fire would be confined in the cell. Early in September these big machines knocked down this enormous vault." (This was done to renovate the theater.)

Mike told us how he ended up in Steamboat and bought the theater. Mike had an interesting life before he started the theater business. He tells us a little bit about what he did before he got started in the theater business, and how he got started in it.

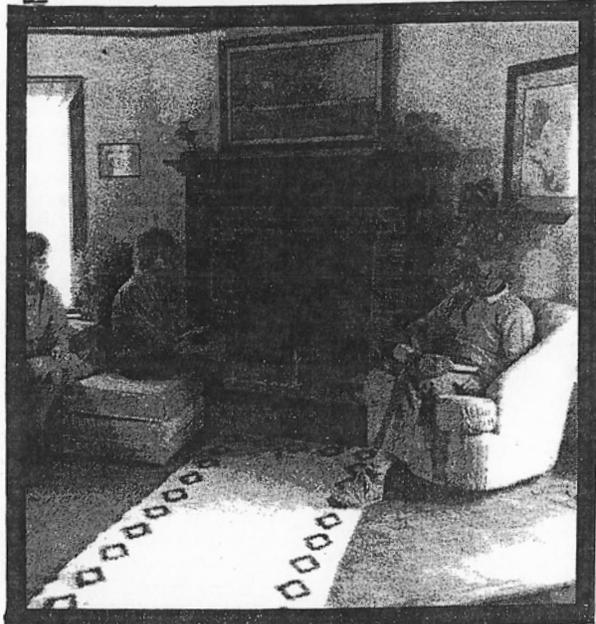
"I was in business in Michigan with a company that is well know today, Amway Corporation. I joined them and was their national sales manager, and then decided I wanted to go out West. I took my car, rented a house, and started skiing in Winter Park. I went to all the ski areas



"THE OLD CHIEF SIGN WAS DESIGNED TO BRING PEOPLE IN."

and came through Steamboat Springs, and it was just so apparent to me that Steamboat was going to do really well. It was a neat mountain town and had neat people.

"I was at the movie one night and thought this would be a terrific business to get into. I could ski all day and run movies at night. George Fick was close to retirement, and he wanted to move to Arizona. I asked him if he would consider selling his theater; that was in late December of 1969. The next day he gave me the figures on it. I took them on my trip, and I wired him an offer from Sun Valley where I was at that time in January, 1970. George accepted it, and I took over the



SUSAN BETTGER AND MS. MARTI WHEN THEY WERE INTERVIEWING MIKE BARRY ABOUT THE THEATER.

Village Theater August 1, 1970. The first movie was **Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.**"

Mike told us about how George got the name of the theater. George held a city-wide contest to name the theater, and that's when he took down the old facade and put up the new clapboard kind of Nordic, Scandinavian style facade.

Mike sold the theater in 1978 and had to take it back in March, 1986. The remodeling started in the fall of 1986.

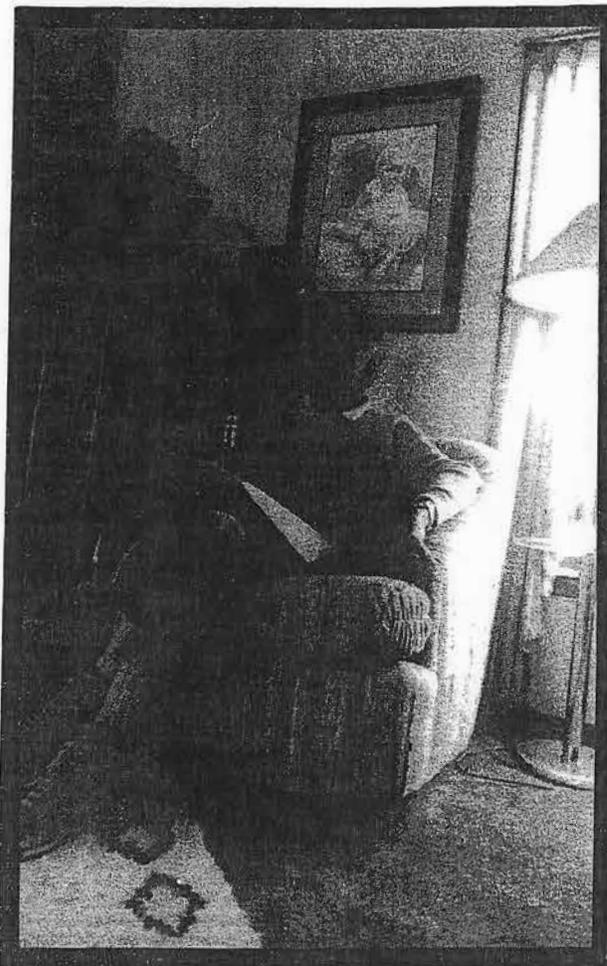
Our perception of the Chief Plaza, once it was remodeled, is that it was an aesthetic improvement! The new complex has two small theaters, each with about 100 seats. We asked Mike why he came up with the idea of a smaller seating capacity for the theater. "I would say that you would never use 400 seats; you would never fill up unless you had one special movie or something like that. On a single show, about 70 percent of our audiences are within 100. So we will make up for the occasions when we have 300 a show by doing multiple showings, and during ski season we are going to experiment by doing

four showings a day in each theater. We will start by having a 2:00 matinee, then we will have a pause, and then start at 5:00 or 5:30 and do a series of three movies or three showings of the same movies: one at 5:30, one at a quarter to 7:00, and one at 8:45. This will give people a lot of options as far as what time they can attend. They won't all have to show up at one time, and I think that overall that will work out a whole lot better. The price will remain the same; the only deviation that I could conceive would be on an awfully big movie where the price to me is real high. A lot of people don't understand the industry; the profit is made in the concession stands between the costs and what you have left over. The price can be as high as 90 percent on the price of a ticket after an allowance for overhead. For example, if you average 75 percent of that as going to the film company, I am only making \$1.25 to cover all of our overhead and \$3.75, unfortunately, is going to Paramount Pictures. It was a totally different industry in 1978. At that time, there were no video rentals or H.B.O. cable hookups like there are now.

"We used to play nine or ten different movies in Steamboat per week. We would run three different movies a week at 7:00, three at 9:00, and then three entirely different ones out at the mountain. We did that by bringing back films over and over again. Now those films go on H.B.O., Cinemax, and the video market. So the secret now in the film business is to get a film just as quickly as you can, because basically, you'll get only one run out of it. Depending on what they have done, you might get another run out of it. The only reason a small town like this can do good film business is because of our tourist population. I am going to have the movie **Star Trek IV** for three weeks and the **Color of Money** simultaneously. People come here at Christmas time and stay for two weeks, and my



"THE BEST ADVERTISING IS THE MARQUEE."



"I FELT THAT IF THE COLLEGE AND SKIING WOULD PROGRESS THE THEATER COULD BECOME SOUND."

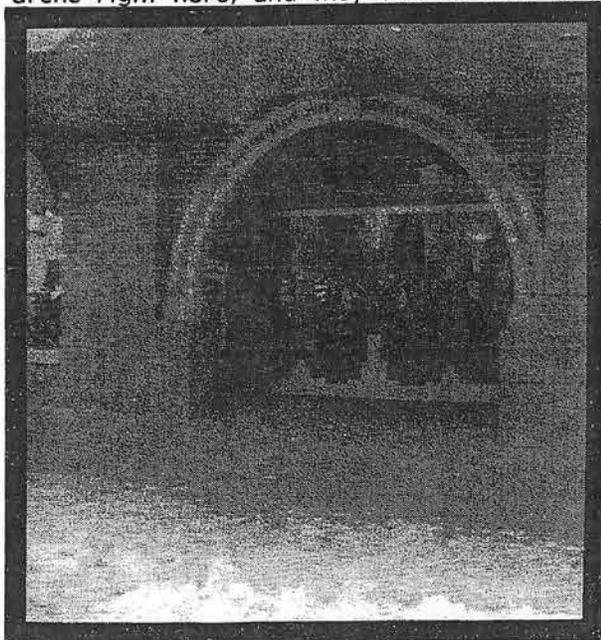
thought is to run the one film through that whole period (**Star Trek IV**), and then to get perhaps three or four movies and run them for four day stretches in the second theater. Then there would be more options for people here. We will get **Crocodile Dundee**, and it depends on whether they will let me have other films by the dates I've requested them for a four day run."

Mike then described what was being done to remodel the theater. "The front will be brick and Colorado sandstone. The awnings over the windows of the two, street-facing, shops will be a turquoise color with violet or purple pin striping. Inside, Irene Nelson is doing all of the decorating for me; the interior is in art-deco. The mall-way will all be a tile mosaic using a coral, blue, and beige tile pattern. There will also be a display case, and each month we are going to feature a Routt County artist that is working here. We will have sculptures and posters just as kind of an eye catcher that will induce people to come in. There are two large sky lights in the internal mall; we will have benches so people can sit there. The theater will be different colors, and we will run carpet in the center aisle in a decorator print. On each side, the carpet will run

four feet up the wall, and on the walls will be a curtain material. One theater is turquoise color, the other one is a grape color. There will be ceiling lighting which will wash down on those curtains. The screen will be a floating screen; there will not be a curtain that opens and closes. It will be of a design so it doesn't look like it's attached. The speakers will be behind it, and we will have a state-of-the-art stereo system in both theaters. The screens will be smaller than the screen was in the old theater, but proportionately to the size of the room it will be quite a bit larger. It will be surrounded with sound. There will be three big voice-of-the-theater-speakers behind each screen, then there will be speakers in each corner and along the walls.

"We have new seats. The seats will be staggered, and it's also ramped; the side lines are all figured out. It's sloped downward; there is about a three foot drop. You are restricted because of the handicap rules as to how steep the ramp can be. We are right to the max. The seats are arranged so that you are able to look between people, and also with the sloping, you are able to see over the person in front of you to see the whole screen.

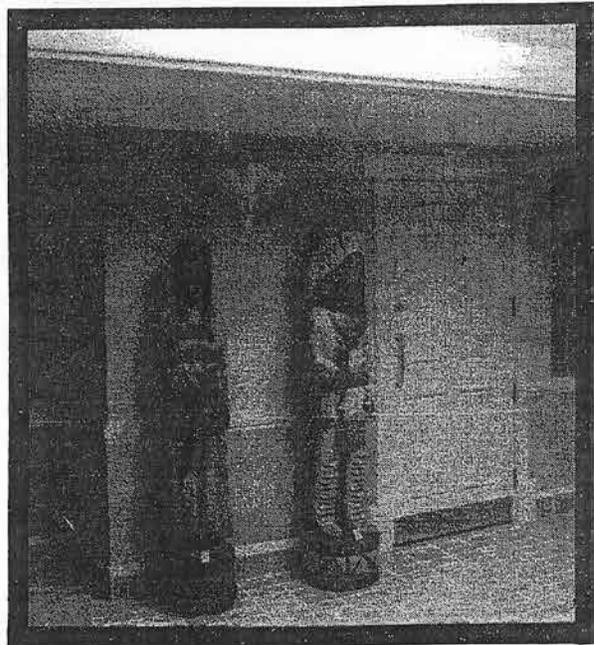
"We tried to return the theater, as much as possible, to what it used to look like, in the beginning. We started calling it the Chief Plaza because of the exterior. There is a great crafts-person that just came to town who does work called marblizing. It's just fascinating; she will take wood and paint it. The end result is it looks like a piece of marble. What we are going to have her do is wainscot along here and some of the same treatment around the windows. There are archs right here, and they will be done in a



"THE REMODELING INCLUDED A NEW FRONT."

marblizing technique that will make them look like marble. At the very end of the concession counter are the ladies' room and gentlemen's room and two small theaters. We are not going to have the same stuff in our stand; candy is not a good concession item. It's hard to keep fresh, and it just doesn't sell. Pop and popcorn are good sellers. In addition, we are going to have nachos and pretzels, and maybe something else."

The outlook of the new theater is fantastic; it enhances the looks of the downtown area. It displays features returning it to its original theme of the "Chief Theater."

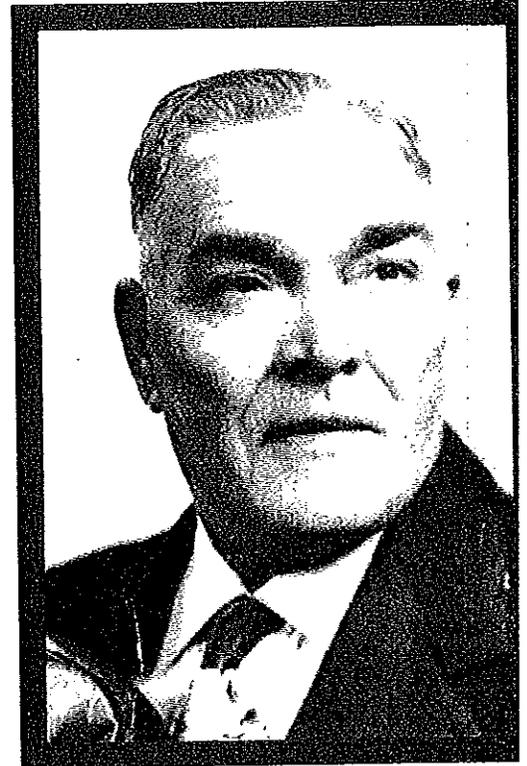


**THE CHIEF PLAZA
DISPLAYS FEATURES
RETURNING IT TO ITS
ORIGINAL THEME OF
THE "CHIEF THEATER."**



Wilma Blakely Collection

Chief Harry Gordon with his wife, Rosie, and the family Packard.



"Chief" Harry Gordon

BY BILL MAY

REMEMBERING STEAMBOAT'S

LAST INDIAN

The position of chief in all Indian tribes may be inherited, but it is only retained by personal performance. If another tribesman demonstrates greater wisdom and leadership ability, the tribe may well choose that individual as its leader.

Yahmonite, a powerful hereditary chief of the Ute tribe, died at Steamboat Springs in the mid-1870s — soon after the first permanent white settlers arrived here. But the old chief left no heir capable of assuming command, and several sub-chiefs contended for supremacy.

The ensuing period of instability was unfortunate for white and red men alike. Ambitious corporals, in their attempt to demonstrate authority, led Ute braves in the Meeker and Thornburg Massacres.

The "uprising" of 1879 resulted in removal of the Utes from the Yampa Valley to the Uintah and Duchesne reservations in

Utah. Perhaps the ghosts of Yahmonite and the minor sub-chiefs who followed him still wander the hills of Routt County — their favorite hunting ground.

Steamboat's last real live Indian Chief, however, enjoyed the pleasures of a modern town here in the Yampa Valley as well as he enjoyed the hunting and fishing of this area. In fact, Chief Harry Gordon did much to help develop the modern resort city we all enjoy today; and one of his daughters, Wilma Blakely, still resides at Hot Sulphur Springs — a neighboring town to the east.

Memories of Chief Gordon were renewed in late 1985 when Wilma, and other relatives now living elsewhere, donated valuable articles from the chief's estate to the "Tread of Pioneers Museum" in Steamboat.

Harry Gordon, like Colorow, Douglas, Jack and Washington — those Utes who

aspired to leadership after the death of Yahmonite — did not hold an inherited title. Unlike Colorow and Douglas, however, Harry had no inclination to take command of his own tribe — the Miamis. His title was honorarily bestowed on him by fellow citizens because of the august nature of his character, in general, and his enormous pride in his Indian ancestry, in particular.

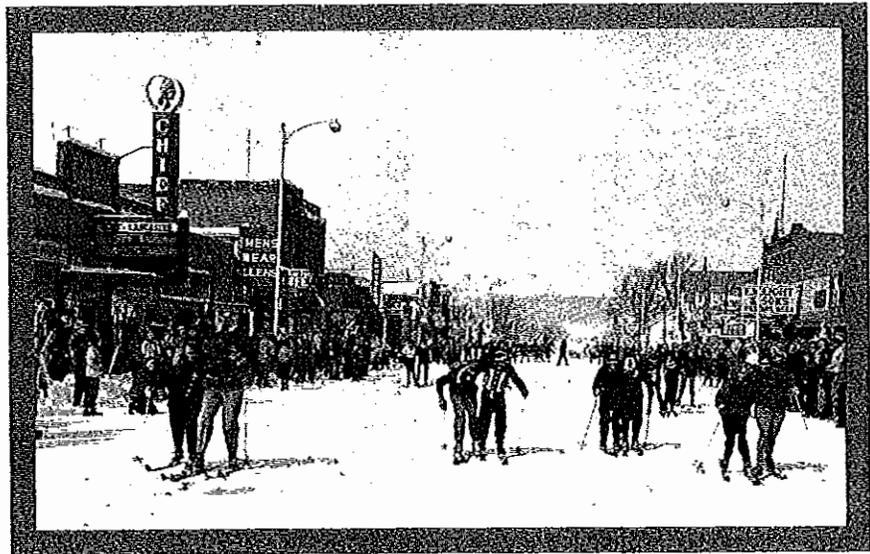
According to Chief Gordon, his mother's name was Wauk-shing-gaw* (Christian name Joshua Goodboo) and his wife's name was Wah-na-kong-ga (Christian name unknown) — were born and raised in Indiana, homeland of the Miami tribe. Joshua's daughter, Shoc-e-choc-quah (Christian name Catherine), was born in 1818 in Miami County, Indiana, and was married there in 1878 to Robert Henry (Frank) Gordon.

Soon after their marriage, the Gordons



Wilma Bakely Collection

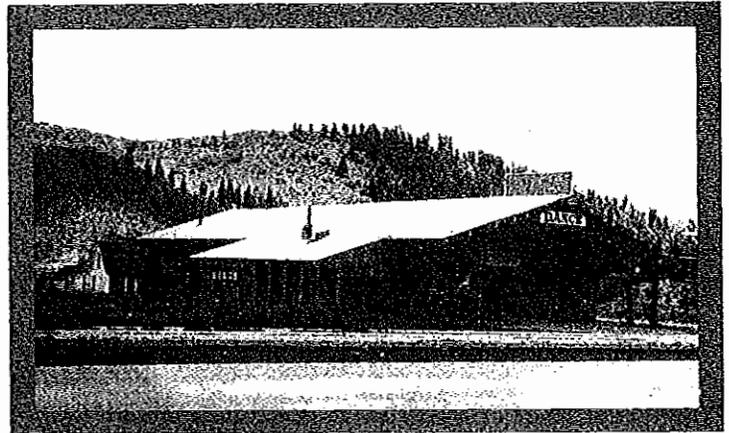
The Chief's Packard on Rabbit Ears Pass circa 1920.



Steamboat Pilot

Many a Winter Carnival has been staged in front of the Chief Theatre, constructed by Harry Gordon in 1922. (This photo taken Feb. 1958.)

"If you were born to hang,
you won't drown."
—Chief Harry Gordon



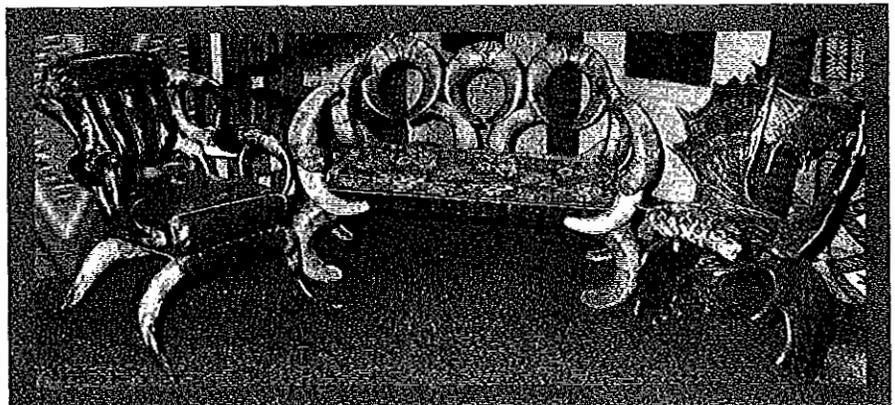
Route County Collection

The Chieftain Ballroom, constructed by Gordon in the early 1920s, was acclaimed to be the finest dance floor between Denver and Salt Lake.

“CHIEF”

moved to the Indian Territory of Kansas (which in the early days had included much of Colorado). Harry was born at Fontana in eastern Kansas where administration of Indian affairs was conducted at Shawnee Mission, the one-time capital of Kansas Territory and a present suburb of Kansas City. Many of the Miami tribe had moved to Kansas from Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin in the early 1800s, but, while Harry was quite young, the Miamis moved again — this time to a new and smaller Indian territory, present-day Oklahoma.

The Gordon family settled at the town of Miami, Oklahoma, where Harry grew up. The land on which the Miami tribe settled was shared with the Quapaws and when the



Hartmut Allen / Richard Allen

Among Harry Gordon's fondest possessions was this custom furniture fashioned from trophy horns and antlers, now on display at the Pioneers Museum.

Wauk-shing-gaw (Christian name Joshua Goodboo) was born in 1830 — the son of Antoine and Catherine (Godfroy) Goodboo (whose Indian names are not known).

Tri-State Lead and Zinc Mines at Titcher, Oklahoma (some six miles from the town of Miami and about 30 miles from Joplin, Missouri), were developed, members of these tribes fell heir to much wealth. In this instance, the common image of the "poor Indian" is certainly dispelled. The industrious and well-educated family of Robert Henry and Catherine Gordon grew up with all the advantages that money can provide.

Members of the Gordon family were all driving automobiles (mostly Model T Fords) while practically everyone else was still dependent on the horse and buggy. And by the time others had graduated from the buggy to the Model T, the Gordons had moved up to big Packard cars — except for a few family members who preferred Studebakers.

At the age of 23 Harry was in the Black Hills of South Dakota. There he met and married his Irish colleen, Rosie Cargile, at the town of Lead in 1910. Harry and Rosie returned to Miami, Oklahoma, to make their home and raise a family of four (three daughters and a son), but they continued to travel a great deal, making frequent vacation trips to Colorado.

During a Colorado vacation in 1915, daughter Wilma was born at Meeker, where the Gordons were visiting some of Rosie's relatives. But of all the places where the Chief's family recreated, the Steamboat area was their favorite. After having spent several vacations at Steamboat Springs, in 1921 the Chief decided to move here from Oklahoma and make the Yampa Valley his permanent home.

When the Gordons settled here, they were joined by Rosie's relatives, the Cargiles. In fact, the Cargiles remained in this area for some years after the Gordons moved away in 1933.

Chief Gordon and his family readily acquired a myriad of friends in the Steamboat area. The Chief's extremely popular son, Harry Junior, is still fondly remembered by many of the older generation as star athlete of the Steamboat Sailors' football squad. Wilma, who still has many friends in Steamboat, is the only one of the four Gordon children yet living.

Practically everyone called Mr. Gordon "Chief" — although one nephew called him Uncle Smoky, because he always smoked either a cigar or a pipe. Harry sincerely appreciated his title, as evidenced by his naming of the Chief Theater (renamed the Village Theater in Steamboat Springs), and the Chieftain Ballroom (known as the Legionaire for its last 21 years).

Recreation and modern transportation were prime interests of the Chief, and he did much to help Steamboat become a leader in both fields. Although an earlier theater showed motion pictures here, when Gordon built the Chief Theater in 1922, the rival theater — just across the street — soon closed. The more modern theater was equipped to show "talkies," and the Alden could not compete.

The Chieftain Ballroom, also constructed by Gordon in the early '20s, was acclaimed throughout its entire life (over 30 years) as the finest dance floor between Denver and Salt Lake. This historic landmark at 345 Lincoln Avenue — present site of Alpine Standard service station — was razed in 1953 to make way for "progress."



The Gordon home at 850 Aspen Street, the current Henry Stroncek residence.

Just north of Crosswhite's big livery barn, which occupied the present site of Steamboat's new police station, Chief Gordon built a modern automobile garage business building. The Luekens family operated this garage at 845 Lincoln (the southeast corner of Lincoln and 9th) for many years. This garage sold and serviced Chrysler, Plymouth and Dodge cars, International and Dodge trucks, and McCormick (later International or Farmall) tractors and farm equipment. This fine business building is still in use.

In those days Rabbit Ears Pass was not kept open in winter, but the hard-core automobile enthusiasts were anxious to open the road as early as possible in the springtime. Chief Gordon could be counted on to be among the first to attack the last big drifts with his snow shovel.

Harry was an avid sportsman and spent considerable time in the woods with his family, teaching his children the hunting, fishing and camping skills of their Indian ancestors. In fact, it was this interest which had inspired the Gordon family to move to the Yampa Valley — a veritable paradise for woodsmen.

Nor were these summer outings limited to the Chief's immediate family. As soon as the Pass was opened each season, Indian friends and relatives began arriving from Oklahoma. Those who most frequently vacationed with the Chief's family were Harry's sister, Emma McBee, with her husband and eight children, and the Chief's brother Harvey with wife and two children.

With their big Packards, these 20 members of the Chief's "tribe" were an impressive feature of Steamboat for the 12 years that the Gordons lived here. And even more so when the additional friends and relations joined them — which was frequent.

The Chief is remembered in various ways, one regarding a common saying he used — "If you were born to hang, you won't drown," which expressed his belief in a preordained plan for every life.

Harry used to tell his family about some of the old customs of his Indian ancestors, such

as tying the foot of a mole around a baby's neck. This was thought to help the baby cut teeth more easily. Natural signs which the Indians had always observed to predict weather were also important to him: He said, "If a crescent moon is turned so that water will spill out, then wet weather is in store, but if the crescent sets like a cradle, which will hold water, the weather will be dry. And if stars appear inside a large circle around the moon, the number of days until a storm will be represented by a like number of stars."

In view of the Chief's great love for nature, it is not surprising that his taste favored the rustic in building design and decor. This preference was clearly reflected in the character of his home in Steamboat, as well as the summer lodge he maintained north of town at the Mad Creek Village on Elk River. The Chieftain Ballroom also was designed on the rustic plan.

Although the ballroom is now gone, both the summer lodge at Mad Creek and Gordon's house on the bank of Soda Creek in Steamboat can still be seen. The town house at 850 Aspen is the current Henry Stroncek residence; the summer lodge is now the home of the Robert Van Horns.

Gordon's house in town was built by one of Steamboat's most notable early day carpenters — a Canadian Scotsman, Ernest Campbell. Mr. Campbell also had built furniture out of trophy horns and antlers he had brought from Canada. This furniture was acquired by the Chief, along with the house. Consistent with Mr. Gordon's Indian heritage and his appreciation for the natural, it was characteristic that these items should constitute his fondest personal possessions. These same articles of furniture were recently returned to Steamboat from the Oregon home of the Chief's late son, Harry Gordon Jr.

Certainly no more appropriate memorial to Steamboat's last Indian chief could be conceived than these magnificent trophies — now on display at Steamboat's "Tread of SSM Pioneers Museum."

Bill May is a noted area rancher and historian whose work appears frequently in this magazine.

