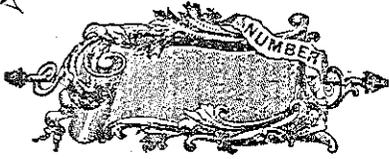


ASPEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ACCESSION NO. 78.28.1a

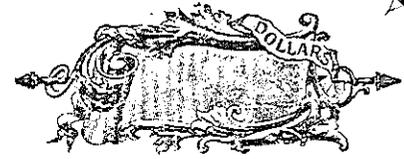
Ashcroft, Colorado
The Waning Years
1886 - 1974

James S. Kane
November 19, 1978
HY 695

DK



State of Colorado.



BY AUTHORITY OF THE TOWN OF ASHCROFT.

LICENSE.

Permission is Hereby Given to _____
to maintain and carry on the following described business of _____

for the Term of _____ Months, being from the _____ day of _____,
A. D. 188____, to the _____ day of _____,
A. D. 188____, both days inclusive.

WITNESS, _____ Mayor of the
Town of Ashcroft, and the Corporate Seal thereof, this
_____ day of _____ A. D. 188____

ATTEST:

CLERK AND RECORDER.

MAYOR.

Introduction

While the exact date assigned the discovery of Ashcroft has varied from the summer of 1879 to the Spring of 1880, the first semi-legal entity was a Miner's Protective Association formed on June 17, 1880.¹ This organization, with Charles B. Cluver acting as President, gave the town a sense of permanence. The group constructed a courthouse and, later, found it desirable to establish itself as a town, as the population now stood at ninety-seven. In Leadville, at the General Land Office, the townsite was entered as the Castle Forks Placer, United States Survey Number 2016.² Utilizing the northern portion of the placer, the site was divided into 840 lots and apportioned equally to the original ninety-seven members of the town company.³ From these humble beginnings, the town of Ashcroft rapidly grew. By the winter of 1880 - 81, the following buildings had been built on Castle Avenue, a major north-south artery: the Town Recorder's Office, Post Office building, two stores, several saloons, in addition to numerous dwellings.⁴ A multitude of mineral discoveries were made that year, including the Montezuma-Tam O'Shanter mines, later owned by H.A.W. Tabor. Winter was fast approaching and the final meeting for the Miner's Protective Association

¹Charlene Kay Knoll, "Memories Worth Saving," (M.A. Thesis, Western State College, 1977), p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³See Ashcroft Journal, 2 May, 1882; Town Plat, Ashcroft, Colorado, Plat Book Number One, p. 12. Pitkin County Courthouse, (APPENDIX ONE).

⁴Ashcroft Journal, 2 May, 1882.

of 1880 was held. Agreeing to re^l-convene again on 1 June, 1881, the town was abandoned by the min^lers, with the exception of seven indefatigable souls.⁵ The early spring of 1881 was a busy one for the area. This optimism was tempered by the fact that ^{the} Colorado General Assembly designated Aspen, rather than Ashcroft, the county seat on 23 February, 1881.⁶ By July of ~~that year~~, Ashcroft boasted four saloons, a meat market, a real estate office, two assay offices, a shoemaker's shop, bakery, and several grocery and mining supply stores. Under construction were: another survey office, two hotels, a laundry, restaurant, and bank. Also established during the year was the Ashcroft Journal under the ^{editorship} leadership of D.H. Waite, the future governor of Colorado.⁷ Mining was vigorously pursued during the mild months and the population was estimated to be one thousand.

The winter months of 1881 - 1882 saw a sizeable number of pioneers staying in the valley with a glee and dancing club providing needed diversion from the winter storms. The slack months afforded the residents of Ashcroft a period to prepare for the coming mining season. Five thousand people were anticipated in Ashcroft, in the spring, ^{according to} a local paper ~~wrote~~.⁸ In March ~~of~~ 1881, the Rocky Mountain Sun asked that⁹

Until the first of May, men who earn a living by their muscle stay away. Due to the snow, the mines cannot be worked. Ashcroft is at 10,000 feet elevation.

If you have a few hundred dollars to spare, this is the place for you right now. Real estate investments will pay handsomely and businesses started will flourish providing continued revenue so you can mine. We have enough liquor stores. We want businesses to give Ashcroft a solid basis, to supply cheap foods and clothes.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Don and Jean Griswold, Colorado Century of "Cities", (n.p. 1958), p. 217.

⁷ Aspen Times, 18 February, 23 July, 1881.

⁸ Knoll, "Memories", p. 45.

Our mineral is rich and composed of true fissure veins of high grade minerals. To men of means of knowledge of this business, a fine opening presents itself. We are a band of brothers. If we do not have room, Aspen will.

Our camp is full of life, of business, of schemes and of chances. Wait until the month of May, then come and work at whatever you can get to do. 9

An election for town incorporation was conducted on March 27 and ²seventy-five votes ^fa majority, ^{was} were cast in favor of such a move. Articles of incorporation were filed with the Secretary of State on April 22.¹⁰

The general prosperity of the town seemed assured with the yearly increases in population and mining activities, but 1882 was destined to be its biggest year. The town saw the first smelter being constructed in addition to a ^{Fourth} 4th of July celebration in which over 3,000 people were estimated to have attended. Gambling and drinking were prevalent ^{since} at one time there were over fourteen saloons within the town. The events of the coming years did not support this euphoria. By 1883, the decline of Ashcroft had begun. The smelter, operated by Books and Bethune, faltered after its initial blow-in. Without the presence of a local smelter, ore had to be freighted to Crested Butte, ^fa long trip by mule. This did prove profitable and, as a result, the prospect for Ashcroft's future began to dim.¹¹

Did not prove profitable
ADF

In 1884, with rich ore discoveries on Spar Ridge, outside Aspen, people began to leave the town. The activities of miners continued while merchants

⁹Rocky Mountain Sun, 25 March, 1882.

¹⁰Knoll, "Memories", p. 54.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 61 - 72.

began to relocate in Aspen. It was during the summer of 1885 that the building activities of the previous years were not evident.[?] Vacant stores began to appear and the boom years were now over. The reasons for the deterioration of the town are many. Ashcroft's miners could not attract the capital they needed to develop the mines because the production of high grade ores was sporadic. The lower grades could not profitably be worked because of the absence of a smelter and a lack of a cheap method of transportation to another smelter. The signs that Ashcroft had passed its zenith are numerous. The most indicative is that Colorado Business Directory, for 1884, claimed that Ashcroft had a population of 1,000, whereas the same publication reported the numbers had dropped to a hundred the following year.

Even though Ashcroft had passed the glory years of its existence, it continued to function, albeit on a limited scale. The Colorado Business Directory listed a population which ^{averaged} ~~was on the average of~~ 80 persons until 1913; thereafter Ashcroft was no longer listed. The entry was probably discontinued because Ashcroft lost its Post Office on November 30, 1912.¹² The population of the town fluctuated in terms of individuals, but several inhabitants continued to live there until ^{they died} ~~their end~~. While the built environment was deteriorating, there were numerous efforts ~~made~~ to revive the mines in the area. The following is a documentation of what happened to Ashcroft in the waning years, 1886 - 1974. The town no longer could muster up the glory of the previous years, but refused to pass away without dignity.

^{By} In 1886, Ashcroft was beginning to experience the difficulties associated with a declining population. The town treasurer, O.D. Smith refused to let Ashcroft go bankrupt, even though there was only \$5.60 in the treasury. The municipal elections, held in April of ^{that} ~~the same~~ year, showed that there were only eighteen ballots marked in Ashcroft compared to 1,364 cast in Aspen.¹³ The price of silver, which fluctuated rapidly, impacted the amount of mining that took place in the area that season. Many mines had been sold by either the owner or sheriff the previous year. Mines that were being worked that spring included the Taupiteus, Croesus, and the Cleveland group located on Silver Mountain. Most of the miners did not have the backing to invest in the equipment needed to make the mining of low grade ore a

¹²William H. Bauer, et. al., Colorado Postal History (n.p., J-B Publishing, 1971), p. 17.

¹³Knoll, "Memories", pp. 115 - 116.

profitable venture. The majority of the miners clung tenaciously to the hope that their claim^s held undiscovered resources destined to make them rich. ~~The miners~~^{They} also believed that even their low grade ore might be profitable after the Denver and Rio Grande (D & RG) began to discuss the possibility of constructing a spur, up Castle Creek Valley to Ashcroft. If the line ~~was~~^{had} developed, low grade ore could be shipped, enabling marginal mines to become lucrative.

By 1887, ~~miners in the area~~^{they} began to stockpile^{ed} their ore in expectation of the tracks reaching the town. Aspen had train service beginning on the first of November, and the D. and R.G. had promised service to Ashcroft no later than the following year. Anticipating its arrival, the Montezuma-Tam O'Shanter was leased in May ~~of~~ 1888. The ~~re~~^{re}opening of the mine, after a two year hiatus, was a significant commitment in the eyes of area residents. They were optimistic that the camp would now experience a new economic revival. Even the fourth of July was celebrated in a fashion reminiscent of 1882.

The day was ushered in amid the roar of giant powder that continued until nightfall, at which time ladies and gentlemen of the locality repaired to the City Hall, that was appropriately festooned, and to the melody of rich music, discoursed by the thistle string band, began to trip the light fantastic that continued with the early morn.

Joe Vannah observed the National Festival by pulling the plug from two lusty kegs of zang around which his friends collected. A case of three star brandy was added to this and the walls of his hospitable cabin were lashed with eloquence that would have done credit to the swell clubs of the east. 14

In addition to the re-opening of H.A.W. Tabor's old mines the Colorado

¹⁴Muriel Sibell Wolfe, Stampede to Timberline, (Denver: Sage Books, 1949), p. 230.

Coal and Iron Company had purchased the rights to a large deposit of high grade iron ore, located on Taylor Peak. The company needed the railroads to ^{insure} successfully develop ^{ment of} the mine, and inhabitants of the area ^{believed} felt that the development would be the impetus the railroads needed to build the spur. ¹⁵

In May, 1888, the local newspapers announced that the D. and R.G. would begin preliminary work on the construction of the branch line. Surveyors began their work in June of that year. The miners, in Aspen, also realized the importance of the Ashcroft mines. The editors of the Sun reminded them of this when they wrote:

The talk of a railroad to Ashcroft has of late assumed a phase which gives a most helpful look to the project. Nothing official can now be given, but officials do not hesitate to state that the scheme has been favorably received. Ashcroft is the equal of Aspen in mineral resources, and their development will do more for our camp than the development of any other section of the county. The Aspen public should give its aid and influence to bring Ashcroft to the attention of the capitalists. ¹⁶

Other developments ^{lightened} heightened the expectations of the ^{area} area miners. H.A.W. Tabor was finally given clear title to the Montezuma-Tam O'Shanter properties after ~~three~~ years of litigation. ~~The people of~~ Ashcroft ^{residents} felt that Tabor had the financial backing to ^{re}open the mines and convince the D. and R.G. that the branch up Castle Creek would, indeed, be profitable. The whole ^{are} area was active that season ^{attempting} in an attempt to convince railroad officials that there ^{was} ~~was~~ enough minerals to make the line profitable. While some high grade ore was found, for the most part it was scattered across the

¹⁵Knoll, "Memories", pp. 119 - 121.

¹⁶Rocky Mountain Sun, 7 July, 1888, cited in Knoll, "Memories", p. 124.

area. The town was beginning to experience a minor boom with new people coming into the area although the Colorado Business Directory listed the population at 50, a drop from 100 of the previous year. By August, owners of various mines realized that the tracks would reach Ashcroft that season and began to ship their more productive ore to Aspen. By Jacks¹⁷. In November the Sun wrote about Ashcroft stating:

Ashcroft has a population at the present time of seventy people. At the election, seventeen votes were cast. There are four married and two unmarried ladies in camp. There is one Bible, and that is owned by Mr. Parker who leads the Sunday Prayer meetings. The stage piles between Ashcroft and Aspen three times each week. 18 *plus!*

The Aspen Evening Chronicle also commented on the "seasons work at the old camp" by stating the only newsworthy work was on the Dreadnaught and ^E express groups and that "nothing startling had occurred."¹⁹

Without the railroads, the town of Ashcroft was doomed to having its mining record each year described ^{by} as "nothing startling". Several groups tried to remedy this situation during the 1889 season. H.A.W. Tabor and six other men incorporated the Pitkin County Railroad Company in June with the express purpose of reaching Ashcroft by rail. Two months later, the corporation was reorganized as the Aspen and Ashcroft Railroad Company with a capital stock of \$500,000. The local paper recorded that the construction of the thirteen mile railroad was to commence immediately. The Aspen Evening Chronicle also reported that the Colorado Midland was interested in developing

¹⁷See Knoll, "Memories", p. 124, and Aspen Evening Chronicle, 12 July, 1888, 13 July, 1888.

¹⁸Rocky Mountain Sun, 17 November, 1888.

¹⁹The Aspen Chronicle, 1 January, 1889.

a spur to Ashcroft. A final incorporation occurred in November when the Aspen and Southern Railroad became a legal entity ^{which proposed to} with the purpose of developing a train system for the Castle Creek Valley.²⁰

The miners in the Ashcroft region worked their claims and stockpiled ores at the dump waiting for the day the trains would reach them. They waited in vain as the tracks were never laid. In 1889, Tabor announced that the Montezuma - Tam O'Shanter would cease operation until the necessary transportation improvements were made. Local papers still used the ^{adjective} subtitle of "prosperous" to describe Ashcroft even though the Tabor mines were the only ones to ship ore ^{to} out that year.²¹ ^{miners continued to work} The people of Ashcroft ^{dweller's expected} still thought the rails would reach them and ^{work continued} on the Cleveland, Express, Silver King and Elmira lodes during the winter. ^{Reports stated that} Valuable ore was said to be discovered at the Express and Cleveland groups.²²

After 1891, there were no longer regular dispatches from Ashcroft and, as a result, little is known of the mining activities during those years. The papers did record that in 1894, due to the drastic drop in the price of silver, mining in the Aspen and Ashcroft areas was almost totally suspended. The Tam O'Shanter and Express lodes continued to be worked intermitently through the years and Colorado Fuel and Iron continued to make preparations to mine iron ore on Taylor Peak.²³ Sporadic reports from

²⁰See Knoll, "Memories", p. 131, and The Aspen Evening Chronicle, 14 February, 1889.

²¹Aspen Tribune, 17 October, 1895.

²²Knoll, "Memories", p. 133.

²³Rocky Mountain News, 21 April, 1894.

Ashcroft usually referred to recent discoveries in the "Old Ashcroft Section" or updates on the mines that were working.²⁴ The Postmaster of Ashcroft was said to be the only resident of the town during the winter of 1898 and 1899.²⁵ The mines of the area failed to produce the wealth that ^{the camp's} ~~its~~ founders anticipated for reasons that have been mentioned. Succinctly summarized, the reasons are: failure of railroads to reach the area; as a result the mining operations could not attract sufficient capital investments needed to make mining a viable economic activity. The causes for the decline are indeed circular.

The men who stayed did so for various reasons. One of them, Charles S. Armstrong, kept a diary of his daily activities between November, 1899 and May, 1901. A sampling of his entries provide a glimpse of what it must have been like for those who still lived in Ashcroft. He wrote:

November 29, 1899 - I am fifty-two years old today. I walked to Aspen... spent my money on no good. Sent up $\frac{1}{2}$ hog and two cans of oysters.

December 14, 1889 - Went up to Ashcroft this afternoon to do some surveying at Trayon Mine. Thermometer at Dan's (McArthur) was 12 degrees below zero.

February 8, 1900 - Fine. Cold. Dan came up on the stage. He opened two bottles of beer - gave us the morning paper.

March 28, 1900 - Fine clear day. I was in house all day. There is so much snow I didn't go out - only to Creek for water.

March 29, 1900 - Fine day. I got no mail. Haven't had the sun for over three weeks.

May 27, 1900 - Splendid day. I worked the claim in forenoon, put in one shot. The rock looks fine - full of copper stains and iron.

²⁴The Republican, 15 July, 1896.

²⁵Denver Times, 28 February, 1899.

November 6, 1900 - I was clerk at election. 16 votes at Ashcroft, all Democrats. 26

Mr. Armstrong and his contemporaries continued to mine and live in the valley hoping that some day the area would be revived. Their spirits were certainly buoyed by schemes such as James T. Stewart's^{WRO1}. He started to promote yet another railroad to Ashcroft, ^{and} He went so far as to solicit bids from contractors for grading of the railbed. His hopes, like others before him, ended in failure.²⁷ The newspapers continued to carry small articles concerning the mining activities of Ashcroft even claiming that the new mines had "great silver values".²⁸ However, it was technological advancements in mining methods that would allow the re-opening of a major mines in the area.

New metallurgical methods^{approved that} allowed the processing of ores^{which} that contained large amounts of zinc, therefore mines that were at one time unproductive could be re-opened. In 1906, the Montezuma Mine was one of those to show new activity. Carroll H. Coberly documents the subsequent developments in a rather extensive article for The Colorado Magazine.²⁹ The operation of the Montezuma's sister mine, the Tam O'Shanter is detailed in J.R. McClane's article for Mines and Minerals. Coberly's observations provide a glimpse of what life was like during the minor boom^{m about} around 1906.

²⁶ Ibid., 14 October, 1901.

²⁷ See Carroll H. Coberly, "Ashcroft", The Colorado Magazine 37 (April, 1960): 81 - 104, and "Echoes from Ashcroft", Engineers Bulletin, May, 1936, p. 8.

²⁸ J.R. McClane, "Milling the Tam O'Shanter Ore", Mines and Minerals 32 (1912): 492 - 494.

²⁹ See Coberly, "Ashcroft" and Theo. E. Schwartz to H.S. Clark, 28 August, 1905, Pitkin County Mining Papers, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

The winters in the area still proved to be one of the largest obstacles to life and mining in the area. An example of their power can be seen in the following report from Ashcroft in 1910:

The glad New Year broke in on us with all the force and fury that snow, sleet, wind, rain and hail could collect. Add this to eleven or eight cycloidal cyclones, seven hurrying hurricanes, thirteen and 1/3 blizzards and multiply the whole cheese by fifty-two and 5/8, you'll have a weather chart of this point and place...old Sol must have been on strike for longer hours to allow such favor to reign in the one and only paradise of Elk Mountain. 30

After ~~working on~~ cleaning the debris and snow from the Montezuma in the summer, the mine was open^{ed} for inspection in mid-August, 1906. Even though engineer Theodore E. Schwartz ^{inspected} ~~conducted an inspection of~~ the site in 1905 and concluded that ^{for the} ~~at~~ present the site was not conducive to low cost mining, plans were made to install a tramway and new mill.³¹ The machinery for the mill was hauled to the site, four miles above Ashcroft, but not much construction continued after that. Due to the winter conditions and human errors, the mining ^{an} ~~of~~ the Montezuma didn't ^{not} ~~it~~ prove to be lucrative and it was closed in 1916.

Coberly lived in the Ashcroft area from 1906 ^{to} ~~in~~ 1914. He said that only seven buildings were left on Main Street in 1906. Four remaining citizens in the town stood out in his memory: Dan McArthur, Jack Leahy, Jim Fitzpatrick and "Gauly" Smith. McArthur, who lived in Ashcroft from 1883

³⁰ Aspen Democrat Times 1 January, 1910, cited in Jim Markaluna's, "Aspen: The Quiet Years, 1910 - 1930", Aspen, Colorado, 1975.

³¹ See Coberly, "Ashcroft" and Theodore E. Schwartz to H.S. Clark, 28 August, 1905, Pitkin County Mining Papers, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

until his death in 1923, served as saloon keeper, mayor and postmaster at the time. Jack Leahy, Justice of the Peace, was known as the poet of Ashcroft and a sample of his art is contained within this report. (See APPENDIX TWO). Jim Fitzpatrick and "Gauly" Smith were old miners who worked their claims without success.³² With the closing of the Montezuma in 1916, the mining era came to an end. There were prospectors, as those mentioned above, who continued to dig for hidden wealth in the mountains surrounding Ashcroft. As late as 1924, there were reports coming out of Ashcroft that major strikes had been made. In that year, Henry Fitzpatrick drilled a shaft to the depth of twenty feet in the town proper. Ore was discovered in sufficient enough quantities that Fitzpatrick and his partner, J.M. Raleigh, left for Butte, Montana to try and raise capital for further exploratory work. The news caused such excitement in Aspen that many old mines were reactivated. Mining, however, had lost its hold on the Castle Creek Valley and ~~it was~~^{as} other exploitive industries ~~that now~~ were being developed within the shadows of Ashcroft Mountain.

The valley had been used by ^{the} Ranchers for grazing purposes since 1900. Both sheep and cattle roamed where once thousands of men toiled. This activity was never large, but continued until 1971 when permits were no longer issued by the Forest Service.³³ ~~It was to be~~^{There} the Highland-Bavarian Corporation ~~that once again dreamed~~^{began dreaming} of Ashcroft and the surrounding area as the key to riches.

³²See Coberly, "Ashcroft" and interview with Stuart Mace, Tokat Lodge, Ashcroft, Colorado, 21 August, 1976.

³³Knoll, "Memories", pp. 157 - 158.

The Corporation was developed to establish an alpine ski resort in the Ashcroft region. After being inspired while attending the 1936 Winter Olympics at Garmisch, Germany, the group of men, including Theodore Ryan, sought to find an area suitable for skiing in America. ^{After choosing} After ~~deciding on~~ the Aspen-Ashcroft area, ^{and} they began to purchase land in the ^{region} ~~area~~ for full-scale development. The group hired Andre Roch to explore the area and to determine the feasibility of developing the area as a winter resort. He and an assistant, Gunther Langes, finally said the mountains surrounding Ashcroft would provide a ski area unrivaled in either America or Switzerland.³⁴ Roch also suggested that a hotel be built below Mount Hayden ^{after which} ~~and they~~ a Swiss-style tram between Ashcroft and Mount Hayden could be constructed. Highland-Bavarian Corporation wished to attract year-round settlers to the town site. This ski complex would dwarf anything in America at the time. Assistance would be provided to help in building new homes. This was not the first time a Swiss village had been contemplated for Ashcroft. Jack Leahy, the poet, had hoped to establish a village with "cuckoo clocks and yodelling tyroleans" at Ashcroft. He described it as a "typical Swiss town that was to be populated by Swiss immigrants." They would be expected to reproduce the living conditions of their country as exactly as possible, enabling tourists to see "the home, habitats and customs of the Swiss without crossing the Atlantic."³⁵ For different reasons, both proposals for a Swiss village never developed past the planning stages.

³⁴See Lois Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn", Colorful Colorado, January-February, p. 28r., and Knoll, "Memories", pp. 163 - 164.

³⁵Markalunas, "Aspen, the Quiet Years," p. 24.

Highland-Bavarian acquired the townsite of Ashcroft after the Pitkin County Commissioners had cancelled all delinquent back taxes, which had ~~been~~ ^{ed} accumulating since 1891. The deal first had to be approved by Homer F. Bedford, the State Treasurer. He endorsed the action in May, 1938. Finally, in a special session of the District Court on 26 February, 1940, the town of Ashcroft was declared abandoned and the title turned over to the business.³⁶ Planning continued for the vacation spot with the Colorado State Legislature creating the Mount Hayden Tramway Commission.³⁷ These plans all ground abruptly to a halt with the advent of World War Two.

The area now became the training grounds for the Ashcroft Test Detachment, First Battalion Reinforced, 87th Infantry, Mountain Regiment. Sixty men arrived in August, 1942 and established training procedures, in the Ashcroft region, for the duration of their encampment. By November, of the same year, the troops had left for Camp Hale where transportation and communications logistics were more easily handled.³⁸

The plans for the Swiss village at Ashcroft were not revived after the war due to several factors, the first being that one of the original partners, Billie Fiske, did not survive the war. There was also the establishment of a major ski area on Aspen Mountain. Ryan, with a small family, was unable

³⁶See Aspen Times, 29 February, 1940, Colorado Springs Gazette, 8 May, 1938, Knoll, "Memories", p. 171, and Rocky Mountain News, 8 May, 1938.

³⁷Knoll, "Memories", p. 174.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 177 - 178.

to assume the role of a developer and returned to his home in Connecticut after spending the winter of 1947 at the Highland-Bavarian ranch. At this time, Ryan sought the services of a caretaker to protect the Valley and located Stuart Mace. Mace had been associated with the area since 1937 when he entered the valley to climb Castle Peak. He returned to Aspen in 1947 searching for a place to establish his dog sled business. By 1948, Mace had secured a long term lease in Ashcroft and began to build what is now known as Toklat Lodge.³⁹

In 1952, Mr. Ryan was informed that in 1939 the Forest Service had made an agreement with his associate, T.J. Flynn, that the Forest Service would receive a portion of land in return for re-building of the Castle Creek Road.⁴⁰ The road was to serve the proposed Swiss village. Ted Ryan, interested in preserving the Ashcroft townsite, suggested that the Forest Service accept the concentration of building that constituted the remains of Ashcroft as the exchange site. The deal was completed and now the townsite of Ashcroft was under the control of the United States Government.⁴¹

Ashcroft continued to deteriorate while under the auspices of the Forest Service. The mid-fifties saw a flurry of activity as "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon" was filmed in Ashcroft. The stars of the series were Richard Simmons, Yukon King, and Rex, a horse. Mr. Mace provided much of

³⁹Ibid., pp. 180 - 181, and Mace Interview.

⁴⁰Glenwood Post, 31 August, 1939.

⁴¹See Knoll, "Memories", pp. 190 - 191, and Mace Interview.

the dogsled footage. The movie executives in their enthusiasm attempted to reconstruct Ashcroft to fit ^{their ideas of} ~~what they felt~~ downtown Dawson or White Horse ~~would look like~~ in the years 1897 - 1906. The Forest Service wisely felt that this "reconstruction" was inappropriate and requested that all new construction be removed.⁴² Preservation of the buildings was not always foremost on the minds of the government foresters in the 1950's, as they burned several structures in Ashcroft to prevent squatters from inhabiting them.⁴³

It wasn't ^{not} until 1974 under the guidance of Ramona Maralunas, Director of the Aspen Historical Society, George Morris, Forest Service Supervisor, and Stuart Mace, that the cycle of decay, at Ashcroft, was halted. While the techniques of historical maintenance will have to be judged by future generations, Ashcroft will no longer be fading into oblivion.

The town of Ashcroft was officially designated a National Historic Site on 7 June, 1975.⁴⁴ The waning years for Ashcroft had ended.

⁴² See Denver Post, 29 September, 1955 and Knoll, "Memories", p. 204 - 205.

⁴³ Knoll, "Memories", p. 204.

⁴⁴ Denver Post, 18 August, 1976.

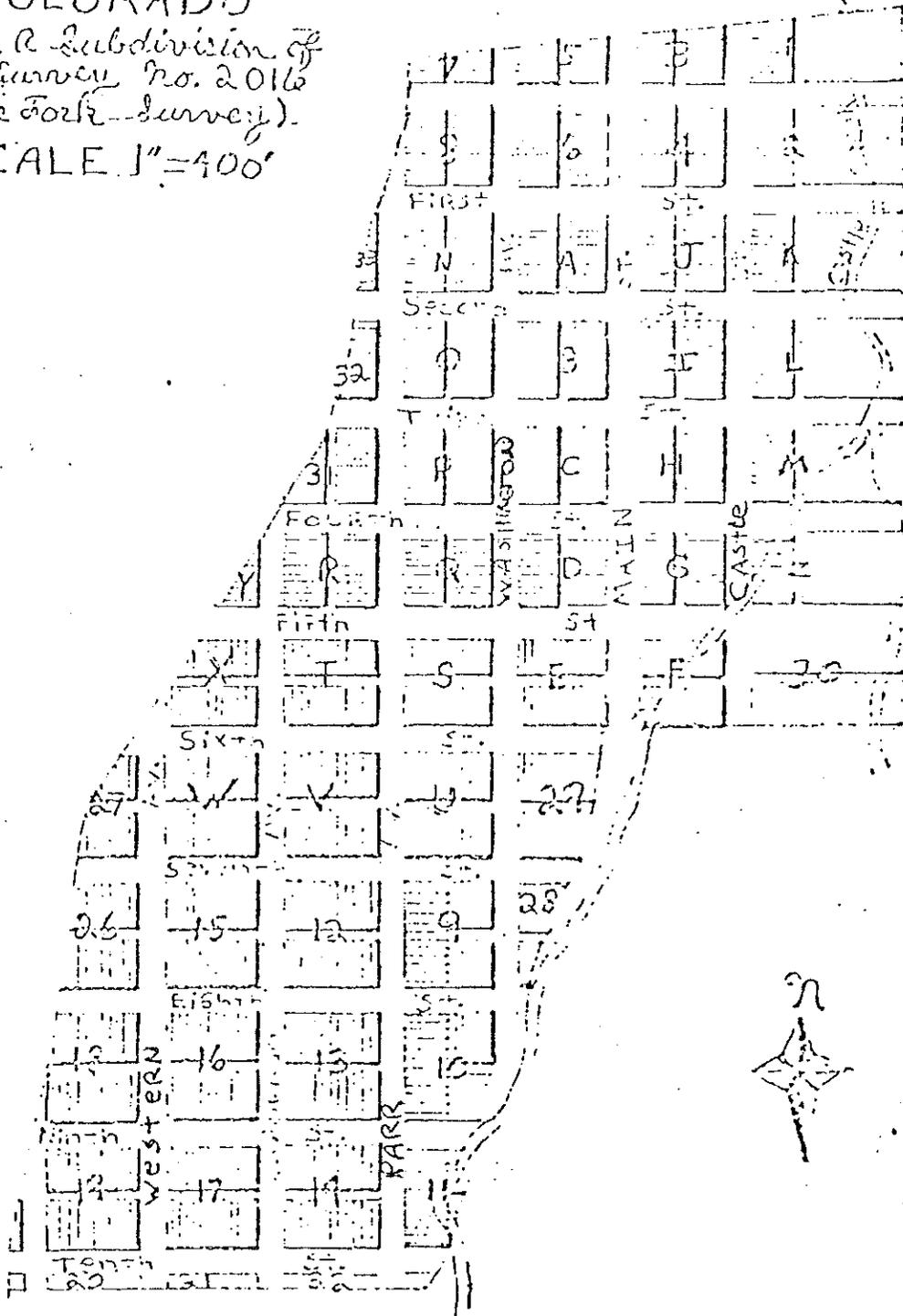
APPENDIX ONE

APPENDIX TWO

PLAT
OF THE
TOWN OF ASHCROFT
PITKIN COUNTY
COLORADO

Being a Subdivision of
U.S. Survey No. 2016
(Castle Fork Survey).

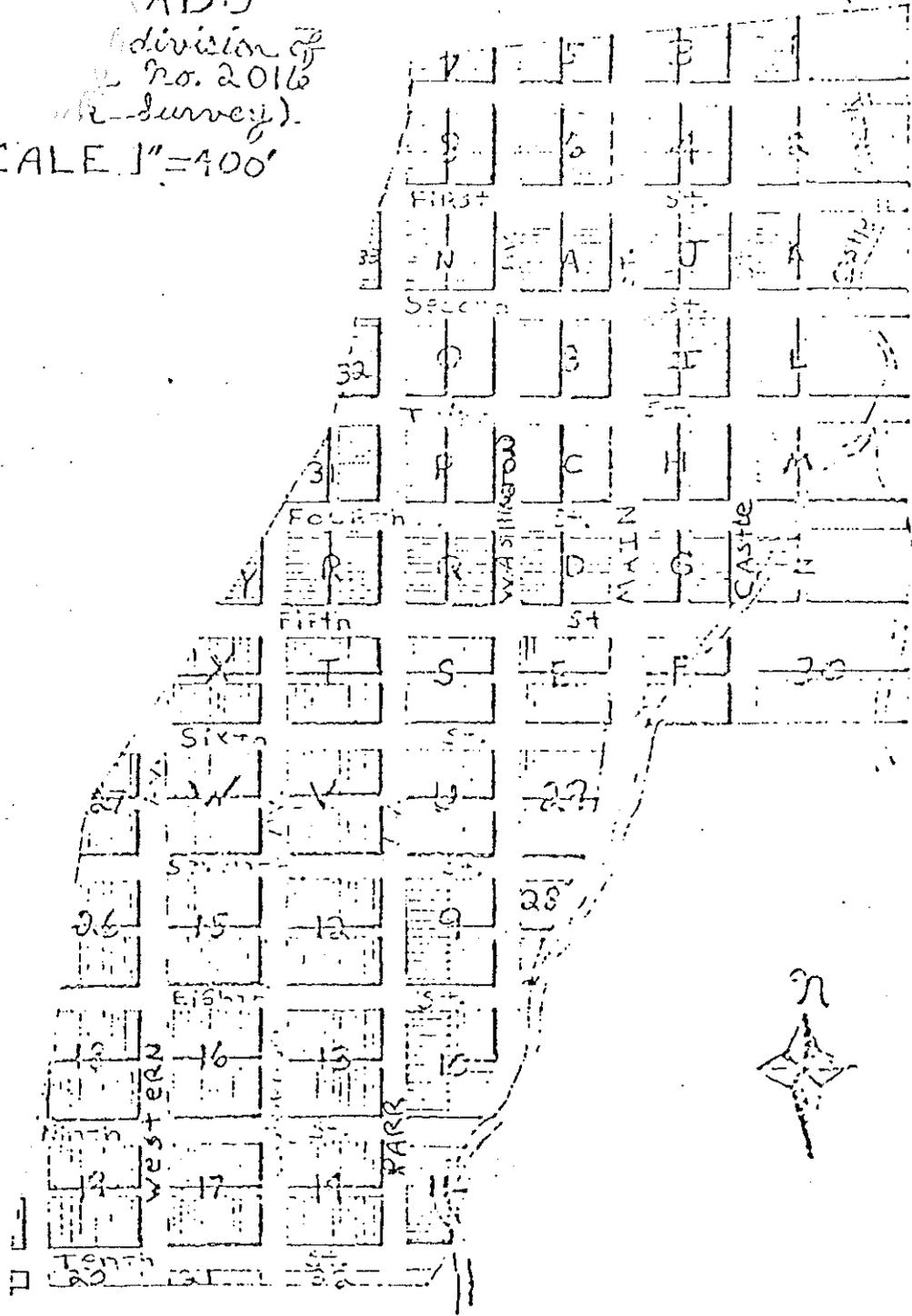
SCALE 1"=400'



John Bosco - R.E.

CROFT
COUNTY
ADO

(division of
No. 2016
survey).
SCALE 1"=400'



John Besco - R.E.

HOW WE BUILT A CHURCH AT ASHCROFT

1880

Jack Leahy
Poet of Elk Mountains

1

Come all ye Irish gentlemen, a story I would tell
Of St. Tim's church at Ashcroft and all that there befell.
Since snows did fall and streams run down from lofty Castle Peak,
More witching spot could ne'er be found, of poet man to speak;
Or ;ovely vales, bestrewn with flowers, or columbine more rare;
Or sparkling waters foaming down, or azure skies more fair.

2

The faithful met at Paddy's, with chairman Deacon Perch;
Six trustees were elected and empowered to build a church.
The reason why - the camp was shocked one evening's stage to meet,
A portly dame, one Madame Nobbs, with six from Holliday Street.
We were all high protectionists, or, as the case may be,
The vote stood ninety-nine to one 'gainst reciprocity.

3

The trustees all were moral men with here and there a flaw;
Brilliant Lawyer Callahan, with perpetual motion jaw;
And Jim McCool of Provo, of whom gossip doth aver
That he was one of the elect at the Meadow Mountain Massacre;
And Roaring Mike, sleek Broker Shark and bibulous Deacon Perch,
With Billy Shale the expert, were the trustees of the church.

4

A site was soon selected on a knoll on Silver Hill
That overlooked the valley and the Rocky Mountain Mill.
The hearts of all beholders, filled with solemn, holy love,
A flame divine reminding them of their prospects far above,
Forgot their prospects in the hills and all their earthly woes,
With experts, side and apex rights, and gun plays with their foes.

5

They dispensed with all formalities, they were business to the brim,
With but one thought, to dedicate to the Irish saint, St. Tim.
The announcement brought forth hearty praise from many fervent hearts,
Who knew the Saint first introduced our silver in the arts,
And spread its use as money, and in every way had he
Fostered and protected it, a benignant tutelary.

6

And Irish hearts were light that day, they rambled through the town
And drank and cussed and fought and prayed and danced to Garry Owen.
In all their past adversity, since they were forced to roam,
To leave the Isle to memory dear and wander far from home,
This was the first occasion when in all the interim,
Such honor had been done to him, their patron saint, St. Tim.

7

The Reverend Father Placid next day arrived in camp
From o'er the range at Canyon, a most sintillant lamp,
That ne'er beneath the bushel hid, but in refulgent rays
Caused adamantine hearts to break, reluctant tongues to praise
The glory of our heavenly king, and her we hold as queen,
And acknowledge with contrition the lowly Nazarene.

8

The trustees met the Father, led by honorable Callahan,
Who knew small law or equity and practiced catch as can.
They were ushered to the presence of this calm and holy man,
And without an introduction this lawyer thus began:
"With apostolic benediction your assistance we implore,
And Jehovah will reward you when you reach the golden shore.

9

"We bespeak your riper wisdom and pray you us advise
In this spiritual proceeding, this heavenly enterprise,
In which we lay our treasures, in haec, ad hoc, quoddam,
At his feet and beg his favor for our sacrificial lamb,
To wit, the lofty spire we very soon shall raise
On Silver Hill above the vale, where Ashcroft lies in tranquil ways."

10

A silence spread for yet a while, then up rose Broker Shark:
"Most Reverend Sir, we hold that this shall ever be a mark
Of holy veneration, such grace doth heaven lend
To fulfillment of the law 'Be thou faithful to the end.'
Five thousand plunks are promised us and now are fully due,
With two thousand for a parsonage on Hold Up Avenue."

11

Father Placid rose in rapture and shook each trustee's hand.
"Behold in me a servant who obeys divine command.
To do the will of him on high, before you I appear,,
To glorify his holy name out on this wild frontier,
Where I find three bustling hamlets, or cities so to speak,
Nestling in this quiet valley neath the shade of Castle Peak.

12

"With Hunley's in the center and Kellog lying south,
And Ashcroft joining on the north, I find that Pine Creek's mouth
Is centrally located, between the sister towns.
Then build the church on one of those majestic rising mounds
And throw the life line out" - "Cut her short," yelled Roaring Mike,
"You're prospectin' a blind lead in a big slungullion dike."

13

"I tell you, boys, I've tried to be a sober Christian man,
Since I let the light o'day shine through Apache Dan.
Deak Perch knows well that Hunley duck on me did get the draw,
And but for good old Calico Sal this day I'd never saw.
If the church is built at Hunley's I stand right here to tell
That fifty churches in a row wouldn't keep 'em out of Hell."

14

Quoth Jim McCool: "This latest pill has a most bitter taste;
But, brethren, in such matters we should never act in haste.
As for my sins, I will admit the bunch I ran last year
Were bred betwix a branding' iron and a festive Texas steer.
'Tis said I am not married, but Parson - well, of course
I cannot marry her by law till she gets her divorce."

15

"To save my mortal soul from Hell, with all my will and power
I've entered in the vineyard at this eleventh hour,
To be a Christian soldier, by my colors standing true,
To do that unto others just what I wish to do.
If the church is built at Hunley's I have but one desire;
To visit it in broad daylight and set the shack on fire."

16

Then Deacon Perch rose saying: "We must this day decidé,
As Broker Shark has options, down to Devanny's slide.
To me it feels like pulling teeth to be giving up the knoll,
But I'll do even more than that to save immortal soul.
Where'er it's built, you'll find me with God's praises upon my tongue.
Thank God I'm glad to take my drink from the spigot or the bung."

17

Then forth stood Billy Shale who'd been silent until now,
With perspiration steaming from his scientific brow.
"Your conclusions, worthy father, the very Gods do mock.
Our Savior bade St. Peter build his church upon a rock.
By blow-pipe test we find the knoll hard, massive diorite;
On the west eruptive granite, on the east flint dolomite."

18

Earthquake and volcano-proof forever t'will remain;
It hits the north west corner of the Rock of Ages vein.
Theology and geology go ever hand in hand.
If the church is built at Pine Creek you build it on the sand.
The mound's a mere deposit of a glacial moraine,
And if you put it at that spot your building is in vain."

19

Father Placid then got ruffled and lost his peaceful smile;
"You may build your church at Hunlêy's, at Kellogg, or a mile
This side of nowhere, as you please. I'm well content that when
You get your just reward on earth, I'll see you at the pen;
My duties there I will resume and greet you when you come;
Your hearts are hard as Silver Hill; to the voice of God you're dumb."

20

Next morn the Father left, with dissension in the flock.
Some shouted, "Put her on the sand," some, "Stick her on the rock.
To pristine resolution, though, the trustees all were game,
On Silver Hill they blasted and erected high the frame;
But funds that were forthcoming are yet forthcoming still,
And nothing more was ever done at St. Tim's on the hill.

L'Envoi

Her Nobbs, the Madame, no less bold than she of scarlet fame,
Between two suns went up the hill and stole away the frame,
And builded her a house upon the sands of Castle Creek,
As if to mock the teachings of our Savior, mild and meek.
"God is not mocked." Ye sinners, hear and heed the fearful fate
Of Nobbs' gay crowd, and mend your ways before it is too late

Cathedral Dome tossed off a slide where never slide was known,
That with increasing fury ran from e'en its topmost comb;
And gathering boulders as it ran, down through the Pine Creek slope,
With vengeance from on high leaped down and buried without hope
Of rescue, all that mocking crowd of light and erring folk,
Who thought on failure of our church th perpetrate a joke.

APPENDIX THREE

The following is a transcript of an interview that I conducted with Stuart Mace to gather background information on the waning years of Ashcroft. The transcript has been included because Mr. Mace's thoughts are germane to the discussion of Ashcroft.

This is Stewart Mace speaking into a tape and trying to recollect as much of the personal history as he can and trying to put it into as much of a sequence as possible about the various persons who still lived and remembered Ashcroft as a viable town. I freely admit that these men like all other old miners and western old-timers were prone both to flights of fancy and forgetfulness, but most of them, not all of them, were of very sound mind and good humor, and I will omit the things that I questioned as being myth that they had built up in their minds. I only wish to say this is not out of books; this is out of the personal involvement with these old men at a time when there were no tape recorders. In some cases, it wouldn't have done any good to have a tape recorder, as I will point out about different persons, but it would have been great for some of them because they were very verbal and they were not afraid to talk to anybody, so I doubt that a tape machine would have bothered them. These are personal recollections which bear on the background and history of the village of Ashcroft as told by these many sources and the things overlap enough so that we pretty much are sure that some of these things were true.

First I must say that I came into the town of Ashcroft in June, late June, of 1937, as a young fellow who was acting as a photographer and climbing companion to Carl Melzer and his son, and it was our mission at that time to climb all the 14,000 foot peaks which surrounded this valley and also to attempt a rather strange project. Mr. Melzer wanted to be sure that before he was too old that he climbed every peak that was 14,000 feet and the early surveys were done by ground plane table and many of them were inaccurate to a rather extreme degree and he had suspicions that there were several peaks that could be viewed Cathedral Peak out of this valley that might be 14,000 and weren't listed as

such. Later years we had an aerial plane table flown of this entire quadrant as they did of the rest of Colorado and it did bring up some of these errors. We came in here with a full size surveyor's transient and tripod and we climbed Cathedral Peak first because of the rather long top that we could use as a base line for triangulation and lines to the almost due south of the peak was the main mass of the area Castle Peak, which had been triangulated from enough different positions that he felt sure he could rely on it's height. So that was my first touch with Ashcroft in that we came up from Aspen and the buildings, many of them had good roofs, there was furniture in some of the buildings, there was mail in some of the slots in the post office slots, there was all kinds of evidence that people had just walked away, which is what they really did, and nobody else bothered. There was evidence that there were old timers living around, but since we were so single minded and rose long before dawn and returned after dark, the 1937 visit to Ashcroft made no encounter with any of the then summer living residents of the town. All I can say is that the town was, I can't count the number of buildings, quite frankly I was too poor to take any pictures, and so my only memory is that it was a very, very extensive main street of buildings, and we had our pick of where we wanted to put our bedrolls and there were good sound floors in some of the buildings. So that's the only impression I can go back to 1937. The rest of what happened during that early era and before has to be told through the experiences of these other old men who lived here. Anyhow, that's my first contact.

The next contact was in the winter of 1947-48 when we decided to move to the Aspen area with our dog teams and family and were able to through the kindness of Ted Ryan, who then owned the Highland Bavarian Lodge, the first ski lodge built in Aspen halfway down the road about six miles below the townsite of Ashcroft, and who then was part of a group who owned the ghost town property, and therefore the ghost town, and most of the land encompassing this upper

level of the Castle Valley, was known as the Highland Bavarian Corporation. They had built the Highland Lodge where we stayed that first winter on the site of the old town of Highlands, which was a tiny little village compared to Ashcroft, it never was more than eight or nine buildings at the most, but it was at the fork of Conundrem Creek and Castle, and there was some activity up Conundrem a ways, and I think that was the reason for this a lovely meadow and pretty place to stay. That was where we landed; we were given the servant's quarters to live in and a grove of Aspen trees to put our dogs in out of the wind in winter and out of the shade in summer, and our focus, of course, was toward Aspen, going down the six miles to see if we couldn't, with our dog teams, stir up a little interest in what might be available in the way of tourist business. This, just as a side, was a big joke, because there was no tourist business to speak of; you could count the tourists on two hands and we did nothing more than get acquainted with some of the locals and a few of the new people who had come to Aspen. One great old guy who was just starting business along with us was a baker, Louie Nielsen, and I mention this just to put the flavor of the times in perspective. He was from Denmark, and a fine Danish baker, and he had come here with Mr. Ryan the year before to spend some time at the Highland Bavarian the year before we lived there and had loved it so that he decided to see if he could find a place for himself in Aspen when the Ryans returned to Connecticut the following year. So he was here ahead of me, still no business, but he still every day would bake something, trying to learn high altitude baking, and we were the recipients of all his so-called mistakes. We would drive from the Highland Bavarian down with our dog teams to Aspen, park in front of the Hotel Jerome, which was the only place to stay in town, and right across the street Louie Nielsen had the Epicure Shop in one of the old buildings, and we would sit there all day and wait for the non-customers, and about the time we started to head home up the

valley with the dog teams, Louie would whistle out the back door and he'd always have a big sack of Danish pastries for us. And quite frankly, we kept the wolf away from the door partly on Danish pastries the first winter. That only leads to the fact since we had no business to speak of, and we knew that if we did have business we wouldn't like the pony ride carnival aspect of taking people around through a town like Aspen even as it was in those days, because we had to fight every old retired miner's little dog, and chase cats down the street, and there weren't any cars to bother us then, which you won't believe, but there weren't; anyhow we knew that that wasn't going to be the answer and that we must look for a more permanent answer, so we would turn instead of going toward Aspen, we came up into this unbroken snow and roadless, then roadless area to the old town of Ashcroft. I want to say here that the first view I had of Ashcroft setting in the snow on a beautiful sunlit day as I came over the hill at what is now the Elk Mountain Lodge area, it's a sight that I never cease to thrill in seeing, and one of the many motivating factors in trying to preserve the town because it was so uniquely beautiful not being marred by old mine shafts and dirty dumps, and what not. Just a mining community--a crossroads between three mining routes, so to speak, just seemed to belong in this beautiful little valley which was surrounded by high peaks. So my first visit to Ashcroft was with no guide, nobody at all, just took a dog team right up here, and instantly fell in love with the place. So then I set around to finding out since it would look like the place one dreams of living, or at least where I dreamed of living, who owned the land, and discovered after a couple of weeks that the same fine man who was loaning me his servant's quarters was a partner, or a party to the ownership of this whole strip of valley where the town of Ashcroft lies. So at that point, I made another attempt to contact Mr. Ted Ryan to see what the chances were for a guy who had no savings, no money left after World War II, I won't go into the

reasons why; it was certainly not because I play dice or poker during my spare days in the Army--I might say it was probably due to the fact that a private got \$21 a month, and after your allowances you didn't have enough money for toothpaste. I didn't stay a private the whole war but at any rate, we came here on a wing and a prayer. So we approached him on the fact that we had no money, we had these beautiful dogs, and we had this great desire to live in that beautiful valley, and somewhat in the setting of the ghost town itself. So he made a trip out from Connecticut to visit with us, and just took us on faith. He really didn't need a caretaker for all this beautiful land, and yet or at least he hadn't thought about the idea, but the more he thought about it the more it appealed to him and so he said, well you pick yourself a spot that you think you can live on and I will deed you an acre of land of which you can live for your entire life as long as you choose to live here. He wasn't able at the time to sell it, and we didn't have money to buy it if he could sell it. That's merely by way of saying how I became the recipient of this one square acre of God's earth that is so beautiful, and my status here. It should be known that this has been an immense benefit in so many ways, of course, the first one was to let someone who couldn't afford to live here, to live here, but also, it's kept my mind free from the possibility of being prejudiced in thinking and talking about the land since I'm really not an owner. I'm not an owner in the legal sense only. In the broader emotional sense, I'm like Jack ^{Lahey} Lahee, who'll I discuss in a minute, who just fell in love with the valley and wanted to live here regardless of the consequences to him and so that's why my wife and I decided when the thaw came that next spring that we would take Mr. Ryan up on it, and we came up here to look over a bare piece of sod. Therein lies my first contacts with the first characters, as I'm going to call them, because all these men were really characters--they had lived very full and interesting and unique lives and they were also unique minds, each one of them, and my first two we will go into first, because neither one of

them actually lived during their summer months, as some of the others did, in Ashcroft, but who had helped Mr. Ryan acquire this land, actually, and who knew every inch of the country and much and many of the stories, and gave me much of the information that I want to pass on. The two that came up with me in the spring to in quotes "survey" my one acre of this beautiful valley, was Mr. Bill Taggart, and I should Bill as one of the most rugged individualists that I have ever known with probably the roughest front and the most tender heart of anybody that you'd ever know. You'd meet him the first time you'd think he was an old buzzard, and it was only until you scratched past that surface you discovered a very gentle and kindly and thoughtful man. At the time that I met him, he was on crutches, he had taken a fall from a horse or mule, I know not which, and had not had the leg set right, and he'd been on crutches for years, or on a crutch, and he used it as though it were just part of him, and I have many times found him in places I didn't think I could get with my two good legs myself. An amazing man of grit, fortitude, and he was the only one that I knew at that time that was still blessed with a very fine wife. That's the reason, of course, they had a little home there in Aspen, and that's where they lived the year round, except that he came up as often as he could drive his old hoopy up here because he had a great emotional attachment to the whole valley. Anyhow, the day up was with Bill Taggart, who was acting in a sense, to represent Mr. Ryan, both in his basic interest in where I should pick a spot, and help advise me as to where a good spot might be, and then he brought with him a wonderful old character, who again, never lived up here during the summers, but spent a lot of time up here, and whose heart was really up here, and a man who lived in a dream world at that age, I don't know how old he was, he was a very old man, his name was George Fulsom. George Fulsom, in his own mind, was a surveyor. Now he never had been and never was a surveyor, and just exactly what George did in the

early days was never very clear, because he had wiped out of his mind everything but the fact that he was a surveyor. So anything that you got from George was about surveying. Now George wore puttees to fit the part and he was a very thin little man, and very precise, and he fitted sort of the character of the surveyor, but all he had was a tired old Army compass. Nevertheless, these two great old codgers drove up the road with me, and we went the length of the valley, it was a dirt based road, went past the town, went up as far as the scenic turnaround, which is now opposite the Pine Creek Cookhouse area, because this road had been relocated during the post-depression era, and the road we followed was not in all cases the old ore road that went from Ashcroft to Aspen, I might point that out. There are spots of that road that are still visible down valley, and they were rerouting it, and this was purely a thing to get people jobs in Aspen after the depression, and the road was built with horse ^{or} fresnos and hand tools to keep the men busy. It was listed on the books and still is as a scenic access road. It stopped right up at the turnaround where you got a tremendous view of Star Peak. Then we turned around and came back down and we got to just to the north of the main part of town of Ashcroft and on the west side of the road were two structures--one a very far gone two-story large cabin, and accross the little water drainage from it, an immense caved-in what had been a sod and log roof barn. It was Bill Taggert who explained that this was the sight of Pete Larsons, which was an overnight stopping place for the mule drivers, called mule skimmers in those days, who were the men who brought everything in and out. They brought the mail and supplies into the town and they carried the concentrates of silver, lead, and zinc out. So they were the big wheels; when they arrived, the mail arrived, the food arrived, news arrived, the outside world, and we feel somewhat isolated today because we have, until the local radio station, no radio because of the extreme metal loads around here of iron, and still have no television, and don't really miss it, but we have a sense of isolation, which is both pleasant, but once in a while

frustrating, if there's something great really going on in the world or important that you'd like to know about. At any rate, these men brought the news in, as much as anything else. They brought the gossip and what was happening in Leadville, and Denver, and over the prospects of silver staying on the money standard for the great bust when they took silver out of the money standard and put us purely on a gold standard. So, we stopped here and I was at that time thinking of a small lodge in which I would run my dog teams and take in guests because the dog teams, I knew would not support me, and I'd have to have some further means of support, and it was Bill Taggart again, and his dry, crusty old wisdom saying, well why don't you be a second generation innkeeper. Pete Larson built his cabin where it is today, which is in front of where we live, because he was right at the edge of the old road, and obviously if you are going to run a road house, a boarding house for mule teams, you have to be on the road. That's true today; you run a motel, you don't usually have the motel way off the road. So, you might say, in a sense, that Pete Larson's was a motel, and it had a "restaurant"; Mrs. Larson fed all the men in her big kitchen, and Pete put all the mules up in his barn, and did whatever was needed for them, even shoed them if they lost a shoe, so they were really producing a very specialized service, and so they got so they couldn't, first they couldn't and then they wouldn't take anybody but mule team drivers, or mule skimmers. They were highly specialized motel where only mule skimmers and mules were welcome. I think you could come in and visit if you could find room. That was their business. Now Mr. Taggart said if you look around that the buildings here, Main Street is right in the air flow and the wind slot both of the valley. This is a north-south valley, and he said if you'll also notice the cabin across from you which is now the King cabin where it has been remodeled, and that is where the cross-country skiing starts today, that's a bit of history preserved right in tact, he pointed out that that was nestled in the trees.

The Aspen trees, even without leaves, broke the wind. So he said, now Pete had to live and build down here, but you don't have to because you're not going to be taking in guests immediately off the the road. So why don't we go up and rummage around his old cabin and see what we can find as an ideal spot. So that is what we did; we came up a few hundred feet to where we got out of the air flow of the valley, and you can feel it instantly as you reach the edge of it, especially in winter, you get to where the trees are breaking it, and it was reasonably flat, this is not a flat meadow, but Pete had had an old cooler house and there's this wonderful spring that feeds the water to us and has been such a boon in having our ponds, our irrigation and water systems, and he had used it in the same way; he brought some down for a cooler to put vegetables and milk in that would come in on the mule teams, you know, they had no refrigeration. Right above his old cooler house was this rather level spot tucked in front of a fine grove of trees on the north hill. Then an open meadow in front and then a screen of trees around the other building. With the old ghost town very much in view. He said well now this is certainly a home site--and it's virgin sod and that's the way you ought to start; don't put your house on the site of that old log cabin because you'll be in the air slot all the time and you'll have to burn twice as much wood--good practical thinking, advice you don't hear from a high paid architect today. Then we walked up above into the grove of trees, and not very far above the house was a grove of what we call Balm of Gilliads, or narrow leaf cottonwoods, technically known as Engleman Cottonwoods, they are a highly variable type of tree there, the connection between the willows and the true cottonwoods. They still produce cotton and so they are listed in the cottonwood family, even though Aspens produce cotton and aren't. But he said there would be a great place for the dogs because they'd be totally out of the wind, and these big trees furnish good protection, and he said, linking it to the past, he said this was in summer where Pete used to put out the mules who had gotten a sore foot or had to be left behind, he used to put the mules up here

because the water runs through the edge of it, and he said you'd have the same thing. So we just traded animals, so to speak, and we started thinking about the exact acre, you know, when you've got so many acres to pick from, you are not sure just exactly where it ought to be. He again said, remember now, you have only got one acre, and you're going to live here all your life, so you'd better look it over, so I came up several days by myself and walked back and forth and this you have to realize is beautiful June weather, everything coming green, the valley pretty, and we decided, Isabel and I, that the spot where our house is now, was the right spot. That was the right spot, and it wasn't too far to go up the hill to where the kennels would be where the old mule corrals had been, and we didn't think the dogs would do any damage to the trees in the area, we could fix their houses in such a manner that they wouldn't, we'd have water, and that they would be totally protected from the wind - not just the valley draft, but they were far enough up against the hill and with enough tree cover, and they were, all the years we had them, very well protected up there, even though it was somewhat of a chore to haul things up every morning and haul things down every evening. We put the dogs above us. Then we went back to Bill Taggart and said, ok, we're ready to delineate our acre, and he said, now I want to let you in on a little secret, he said, Mr. Folsum was up the other day, he's an awful nice man, and I've known him a long time, but he isn't a surveyor. But he said, we don't need a surveyor, because we'll just put some permanent rocks, corners, and we know how to measure out an acre, but he said just to make him happy and make him feel a part of it, I'm going to have him come with us, and we're going to let him run his compass lines, and run his rules and what not, and when he gets all through we'll check it, and we'll be sure that we're right, but he said, don't make a point of that please, I wouldn't want to offend him. Now, I make a point of this as a social item, that this was characteristic of most of these fine old men, that they did not want to offend each other or you

as a newcomer, and they didn't. They were gentlemen, and they might have been crusty, but they might have been sometimes on first sounding curt, especially old Bill Taggart, but they really in the truest sense, had hearts of gold, and were terribly sensitive about each others feelings. So, the final day arrived, and we came up with the great surveyor and the wise old maneuveror-and we established our acre in this valley. From that point on, I'll make it very brief, but it is part of the history of Ashcroft, because we are still part of Ashcroft, this is still part, we live on the townsite of Ashcroft, we live east of the road which is still controlled now entirely by Mr. Ryan after his having picked up the loose ends from all the heirs from all the other men who were originally in on it, and so we are and still list as Ashcroft, even there is no post office here. Ashcroft is our home. We're not really on the edge of it, because to the north of us is Jack Lahée's cabin, and beyond that is an unknown cabin, that is a cabin whose owner we did not know, and so we came up with an exact spot. This was June, and some of the pioneering spirit was still evident in our approach, and I inject this only because of the discussions later about the building of the buildings in Ashcroft proper. We had very little money; I've said this before but we not only had very little money to buy any land, we had very little money to build a building. That wasn't why we pioneered so much as that it was my feeling to build as much of this as I could myself, both design it and build it for the very sake of building my own home. It was also, at the same time, a necessity, because I would not have a home today if I had not built it myself, whether I had wanted to or not. I did want to, and my wife wanted to. We were living six miles down at the Highlands, and there were a lot of big overripe Aspen trees above us, and we got permission to log them, and my wife, who was really quite pregnant with our second son, and third child, would work the shift levers on the wench of our power wagon, and helped me log out these big logs and we loaded them with just a pregnant woman and myself. There was a good deal of the pioneering idea of doing it yourself-

building your own home from the logging of those logs to a great deal more that went into this building. I could empathize with the men who came in here with a pick and an ax and a lot of determination, but the old men who were still alive here in this town could also empathize with me in that they could see that I was trying to build something with my own hands and that I was having a good deal of struggle to do it, and so I gained some silent respect, even though they kept considerable distance, which I'll go into in a little bit, for quite some time.

At any rate, once having decided on the spot of land, we had to come up with idea for how our little tiny lodge would be built, what we could afford in both time before winter would set in, and what we thought we could round up in the way of financial backing, besides what little we had, and we decided we didn't want to copy the old buildings in town and make just a log cabin, but we did want it to fit into the valley and not offend the old town. So we also found that we could get what we now call recyclable material at very low cost, mostly for the expense of getting it, in the form of the white marble in my building which came from the Crystal River area where they used to dump at the shore up at the railroad grade. They had the big marble quarries cutting for the big buildings in Washington, and whenever it had a flaw in it, they just throw the junk in the river, and when we came the river was just full of it, and nobody laying claim to it, nobody challenging you, if you wanted to wade out and get it. The marble we used here we felt would fit into the idea of snow-capped peaks, and the redstone that we used in the lower third of our structure with the logs, we felt would fit into the general look of the peaks themselves with the red sandstone bottoms and the snow covered tops. Architectally, it was just a thought, then as far as the rest of the building, it had to be logged, that was what was available, and we found some very cheap logs that were bone dry that had been already felled for a mine that went bankrupt and we picked most of

logs and built the first story of our building up for much less than they were worth and they were dry, which we needed, it was an amazing piece of luck, we didn't get them free, we had to haul them from all the way below Glenwood, but again, by today's comparison, why, we all but stole them, so that was our basic material. As far as design, we have one major peak here which this year has been renamed after the poet Jack ^{Leahy} Lahee, that dominates the angulation of the mountains here, and that used to be called Star Peak, now called ^{Leahy} Lahee Peak, and I thought, why not instead of having symmetric roofs, I'm going to face my building south for sun heating, and for against any wind current that may come and blow the snow away from the front of the building which I want to use to help heat my house, we decided to make the roofs asymmetric, so that the front was less steep and would allow for the proper overhang to let the winter sun into my giant windows, these were the first two thermalpanes ever laid this high. Now thermalpane is a common word and they use it everywhere. At any rate we also figured that if we followed that angulation that would give us a steep north roof, which would help slip the snow. So, both for practicality and for fitting the shape of the building into the valley, we chose the asymmetric roof and we chose to shingle it because we thought the texture fitted the shingling on the old buildings of the ghost town, but we also learned that that wasn't practical to run it all the way out; you had to put a metal strip from the vertical roof-vertical wall edge out so that you would slip the snow off and wouldn't back ice-up the shingles and take them off the roof every winter. Just a few things we learned the hard way, but what's kind of interesting is that in that period of time when the first guys came in here they came in here with a horse and what he could help him do, we came in a Dodge power wagon and ⁱwench, but beyond on, we had a wheelbarrow, a pick and shovel, and a kerosene driven cement mixer that took a quarter of a yard, and sand had to be hauled from below Aspen from an old sandbar, and was unwashed sand, and that's all there was,

you either used it or you didn't have sand, then on one corner of the bar there was some natural gravel and you shoveled that on yourself so that the Dodge power wagon with its wench helped us log our Aspen wood which we hauled off to be cut into paneling-it has no strength, but we wanted to include it in the building because it's part of the country. It hauled us our sand and our red stone in the building, which was left over as scrap from the salvaging of the first school built in Aspen, the Washington School. Giant big blocks of redstone, they were all dirty and black from the building having been burned, and the man who had salvaged the building had sold the brick but didn't know what to do with the stone. So again, we got it for much less than its value, but it had to be brought up here, and there were no trains, or lifts or anything around and the big blocks of stone had to be rolled up long planks by--I've failed to mention that I hired two high school boys, both sons of friends of mine in college, and one buddy who was with me in the Army Rescue work who was a bonified trapper--he lived over around the area of Pience Creek. He felt he could give up three months of the summer at a fairly low wage just to help a buddy build his cabin, because he lived in a cabin he'd built himself. So, I had these three helpers. The footings and foundations were all cut with a pick and a shovel and the stuff hauled off in a wheelbarrow and the reason our building is on several levels is not just because split level housing was a fashionable thing of the day, because it wasn't, but we couldn't afford to move all that dirt to put the house on one level. So, each wing is lower because the land is lower there, and even then I had to rock up the far end of it to support it because the land wasn't that level--I really should have three levels in my house. At any rate, everything was done by hand and was very slow. The big rocks had to be split and refaced and cut and marble had to be all cut and the red sandstone, the marble cut differently, and it was all cut by hand with a ten-pound sledge and some stone mason's tools that an old blacksmith had made for me when he knew I was coming up here to this valley there was standing right behind this granite block a two-story cabin and we

learned from a number of the old-timers that this was known as Pete Larson's and this was the mule skinner's motel; the overnight stop for muleskinners, they would pull in in pretty much the present parking area the muleskinners parking area, they would pull in and just drop the reins and Pete would come running out and take over, and then they would head straight for the ghost town and their favorite saloon, and his wife would then count noses and get to whipping up dinner for how many muleskinners she had to put up, and the upper story was devoted to little sleeping rooms for them. Now, the cabin became unsound to the point of not fixing, not being able to really fix it up without tremendous expenditures, but as I said, it was a very large cabin and you can see the definition, this was a corner here and it went way back there and over--it had no root cellar. Usually you can tell cabin sites by their little dig-out for a root cellar, but they did something else. They had up to a little beyond my woodpile now, they had a spring house, and they brought some of Devaney Creek down one of its many alternate courses and they had worked out what I worked out later behind my house, was the use of water flowing over wet rags and they could keep all kinds of things cool that way and they kept their milk down in the water, and so on. So, this site here is preserved only by Pete's vanity. He took his wagon, or I think he conned one of the muleskinners into going over Taylor Pass, way over into the Buena Vista country, where this granite was being quarried for mill blocks, they didn't have much cement for the early mills and they used these giant blocks of granite that were drilled with, as you can see with the various holes, they'd fill those with lead and put screws in to hold down beams especially for crushers. This is sort of double historic, in that it was cut for mining purpose, but he was vain enough that he wanted a doorstep that was solid, and so, if you today, you know, with your big trucks you can haul this sort of thing over, but I think it's sort of great that besides, if you get up on that hill you can see the outline of his house, even with all

the rich sod that I've tried to develop here, but that remains a monument to Pete's vanity and to his kind of thinking. Right over across the way, across our little Devaney Creek, where you see the ground cleared where we have our little summer garden, that was the site of the mule barn, and that was all sodded over and you could only see it--that pretty much went down and we just cleaned it up and then the sod came in, and it stayed that way for many years until one of my sons got old enough to be a green thumber, and he decided to put the garden there since it was the level spot, and he dug out medicinal bottles and old mule shoes and ^{son} and so forth. Anyhow, these two things that are behind the private land fence are gone. They show in some of the first pictures I took when I came up with my dogteam in winter, and I will dig out for the Historical Society a 35mm slide showing Pete Larson's still intact, and then I have a black and white in my scrapbook I would delighted to have rephotographed--I have no negative for it or anything showing the building still standing. At any rate, this was Pete Larson's and then across the way and behind the fence is Jack Lahee's cabin and at some later date I will put down on tape all the stories that the old timers told me about him. You can correlate that for your historical information to the poems you may have or some letters that he wrote for people, but he never turned a shovel, you know, he was the poet and the intelligencia, and he lived apart; he wanted to set himself apart. The town was over here, the main street was over here. So we'll go on over there now, but I do want to put down on tape because it didn't get down in the paper, and I think the historical background is important, and I don't care how you feel, credit ought to come where credit is due. Now, there were three pieces of land that were private up here in the 1933 era, and I think first you ought to realize that the road you came up was repositioned and rebuilt during the WPA era to give local Aspenites a thing to survive on. You can talk to folks like Mr. Bishop who used to run Beck and Bishop, Al worked as a fresno, they didn't have any bulldozers, I understand it was all

horse fresno work, and so this was build^t on the books, as a scenic access road. Then it was turned over to the county for maintenace, but it was a forest service scenic access road built by the local people of Aspen to keep them alive when they needed work. One of the local projects. I think that is not commonly known. Allright, now during about that same era the first interest in skiing came into this area and ten men known as the Highland Bavarian group, who had learned to ski at Alberg, and the only remaining member of the group, the one who now controls the private land, Mr. Ted Ryan, but they had a local man, again, Mr. Tom Flynn who was their liason-promoter, "put this thing together for them", by getting it straightened around as to how they could acquire the title to the townsite of Ashcroft which goes from that fence over there up to a corner I could show you later if you want, as a technical entity, that was the townsite of Ashcroft. Now, below that from the fence down to where the fence crosses the beaver swamp about 3/4 of a mile down, that was the Jack Lahee homestead. Beyond the townsite and on up to where the land ends with the old F camp which is now the halfway place, that was the Fitzpatrick homestead. That was not Henry Fitzpatrick's land, but his brothers or cousins, I don't know what that relationship was, Henry never made it clear. But anyhow there were three entities here, and this was all private, including all of what is now government. There was a committment by this group as they were acquiring this land to induce the building of this scenic access road that they would give a portion of the townsite to give it back to the forest service so it could become a public picnic area and so that the town could be preserved. This documentation, some of it is very, very old and part of it was verbal. The point is that I did get in on it when it was still private land when I came here, and the Superintendent of the White River National Forest, Superintendent Leehow, called on me and said that he felt that the then existing, those that were left of the Highland Bavarian group should honor this committment made way back

when the road was put in, and he dug out the correspondence that he had, and we had some discussions on what was the promise. Just so everybody knows, nobody, the Highland Bavarian people, the Forest Service, knew where the corners of this land was, and I make no aspersions to try to explain it because they didn't know, such things as a government campground on part of the Highland Bavarian land accross the Taylor Pass Bridge, and then Mr. Ryan proved the corners and the forest withdrew. There was another one up beyond the camp and they withdrew from that. Also there was a false right of way accross the next meadow which they were very cooperative in helping us restore - and you can see that the restoration is going on beautifully there and Mr. Ryan gave a new right of way which could be and would get up to the Cathedral Lake trail. Due credit is due that this land was a gift, and of course there is this problem which is unresolved, and I don't know whether it will ever be resolved, but because the corners weren't known, the Lawyer who wrote up the gift put up more land than Mr. Leehow and I agreed to, and the government now owns and/or was given a larger piece of land than was promised. This comes to the point of when I took the Ryans to Denver the other day, they expressed the sorrow they would not be here at this meeting, but Mr. Ryan said, and I think I would say the same thing if I were in his boots, that he feels that he has given his share in giving the land, and that he doesn't want any restoration group to look for money to restore the buildings because he felt they long ago should have been restored, and this does not reflect on George whatsoever, he's just come into the district, but it does reflect on the thinking over many years because it was a long time ago that this was given.

The basic problem in saving any of these old buildings from going further to pot is to keep the roofs sound, and the second one is to get them real level and stones under them and new base logs that have rotted out. Those are the two important factors in primary restoration. This one went down because the

roof started to deteriorate, and the minute it did, the logs started to bulge, and you can see it happened over here in some buildings I'll show you, so in the buildings that should be fixed up, we'll try to establish some order today, or thinking on some order, to prevent this. The roof is the single most important thing, and temporary level. And then finding logs to replace the rotten base logs is the next most important thing. This one was used at one time as a livery stable, and was not designed in the early days as a livery stable, and my suggestion is just that the sound logs in this building might be better be used to help restore the buildings that we would like to work on and not think of trying, this has been down too long, you'd have to find too many old logs to restore this one, and it had no real significance, as such, and it's within the town structure. My basic thinking is we ought to work on what's left of the feeling of the old town main street, that's my basic feeling. But now as you stand here looking at the historic buildings that are behind private land fence, you will see with a tin roof on it and restored releveled, and whatnot, the Whispering ^{Swede's} ~~Sweet's~~ cabin, and I can give you a wonderful lot of stories on that if you decided to make a marker for that, and behind it the flat roofed building, the jail. Now, the ^{Swede's} ~~Sweet's~~ cabin was made with burned spruce from this fire which, as far as I can get the history, was started by the miners in a little draw in order to get pitch logs for cribbing their mine shafts, and you produce pitch by burning a green forest. They really didn't want pitch, they just wanted logs, but there was red tape even in those days, and lacked communication, and they could not get a logging permit in here, as I am told by three different people, who had no relationship to each other, tried to get a permit and couldn't, and when they couldn't, they hired a shyster lawyer and he looked up the details, and he found that there was nothing to stop them from cutting burned timber. So, they did not intend to start a forest fire which

went over Ashcroft Mountain into the bowl of the spur of Taylor, over that shoulder, and down the other side of Taylor, and wound up burning some of the bowl of Star Peak. It must have been a horrible thing to those old guys because all they intended to do was burn one draw and get a little timber. What I'm trying to say is, that the ^{Sweet's} Sweet's cabin, you can hit those logs, and they ring, cause they are pitch logs, see, and that's why, see the trees standing way up there almost to timber line, they are still standing on their own roots since the 1883 fire because they are solid pitch. You hit them and they just ring. So, the ^{Sweet's} Sweet's cabin has been preserved and the jail I put a new roof on and it does need to have it's lower boards replaced and be leveled up and/or some concrete poured instead. The Ryan's jail was up in the trees. That's behind the fence. Now the King cabin, right accross from you, which the Ryan's now use as the base headquarters for the Ashcroft Ski Tours, Unlimited, all but the front porch and an extension of the back, but they kept the line, that building was built after Joe Sawyer and his brother moved to Ashcroft and set up a sawmill. Their name was Sawyer and they were sawyers. They still had the silver gleaming in their eyes, but they made their living sawing lumber, and Joe lost his eye in a sawmill accident, as many people do lose a finger or an eye from flying chips, and I don't know how many of you knew Joe, but he was a wonderful old guy and I have no pictures of Joe and I would hope somewhere you can dig up pictures of Joe with his old sourdough type campaign hat and he didn't wear a patch, he was not proud, but he was a great old guy and he was very clear when I first came, and he was the first most hospitable of the three local guys that were still alive when I started to build here. I got to know him very well, he had lots of wonderful information and stories. If you'll turn around just a moment, a little of the history of Ashcroft, behind the house you see a _____ as a bare sagebrush front edge, and then goes up to the skyline where you see a few beautiful spruce and

a big meadow, it rolls over this way and forms a "V", alright, that's known as the Jackass Trail. When I came here, Joe was an old, old man, but he still kept a horse and he was smart enough to realize that he needed exercise, and he used his excuse that he had to go up and check his claim. Now, what he meant is that he had to go up and restore his spiritual battery, that's one of the most beautiful little hanging meadows up there where the deer come down and the elk used to come down to graze, and drink, and then Joe had another trail which some folks have thought of opening, it starts up right behind this behind the house, and went up and along the angle along the hill to another claim. So he just would choose his day and take his old friend, his horse, nothing on it, and they'd walk. The only money he made, and it was darn little, from his horse, was once in a while somebody would come in here and they'd nail a buckskin way up in the bowl of Hayden and they were too lazy to haul it out, and they'd get Joe to haul it out. I can say, quite honestly, that I don't remember more than three or four times Joe ever hauling out a deer, although that when we came, I want to also state for the record, there was lots of game in this valley, and they did not go down to the ranches around Aspen; they wintered on the slopes you are looking at right down here, and they stayed there all winter and we used to be able to count 300-400 head who spent the whole winter there, and at the same time, they were kept in balance by about four dens of coyotes, one just beyond out of sight around the corner, one on that rock slope, there was one over here, and there was one over here. We used to have wonderful coyote music in this valley, by the way, it's starting to come back. I'll put a plug in here on the tape for what it's worth, that everybody help to cut down the restoration of these coyote guns which they are trying to slip in now by word that they will leave it on an expediency basis. Well, the point is, that the coyote guns that they killed coyotes might be conceivable justified, but folks, we have lost our eagles, the eagles used to live and nest in the cliffs of the draw going up

to Cathedral Lake and this valley used to enjoy the soaring of an eagle every day and sometimes two or three eagles soaring, goldens. I saw one bald eagle down in the swamp one day about the third year we were here; they don't normally come this high, they like to do their eating and hunting down low, but there are some bald eagles left, by the way, between Aspen and Basalt. Seen them several times, and had one excited housewife call me who lives down in the Snowbunny area, asked me to describe a bird she was looking at out her back yard window sitting over the stream. Of course it was a bald eagle. Anyhow, we've lost our eagles, we've lost all but one of our badgers that we know of, we've probably lost some of our wolverines, believe it or not they are supposed to be extinct in Colorado, but we've got some; we've lost all but one or two of our wolves; all to the coyote bait program, because they all will either be killed on secondary or ^{tertiary} kill because they all will eat ^{and} ~~eat~~ ^{scavenge} ~~carion~~ if they are desperate, but if they don't take the bait directly, they get killed by something that was killed by the bait. There are wolves here, and I will not tell you where they run; I'll tell nobody, until we see more than two tracks. If they'd leave the coyote bait off this high country up here, we'll get a restoration of everything. I do want to state, before I get any farther, the animals are part of restoration, I mean, that's more my interest in restoration; the animals and the plant life than are the buildings. I mean, I said I'll plug for the buildings as long as you'll help me plug for the restoration of the animals. Because this meadow used to have badgers, if you had badgers you wouldn't have an overpopulation of these darn gophers "peep,peep,peep", that's a picketpin gopher talking to you, you're in his territory. At any rate, I want to state there's only one animal that survived this onslaught of the poisoning, and he's driven us literally wild for fifteen years here as he's come up to his normal balance, and that's the fox. The only thing that took fox out of here was the trappers, or the potshooters. The fox is too smart to take the poison bait or to take a ~~gianid~~ duck, and the word "foxy" is well applied to them; they really are foxy and they really have

survived. So they are the only predator on these gophers that we have left, except my siamese cats. I like the wildflowers well enough and I'm all for a balance, but the gophers are overpopulated in this area right now. The restoration of this, if you want this to be wildflower meadow, we've got to get rid of some of the gophers.

In talking about priorities, what can be done and what should be done, what's possible and what's not, let's just say that everybody is sentimentally attached to the hotel, but it's going to be a massive piece of reconstruction, just to put it back in the shape it was before it collapsed this fall. But, I was told that this building served for many years as the post office. Now, that may have to be crosschecked because some of the information the old-timers gave me came out of the whimsey of their old age, and it's like sometimes the Indians give you an answer and they give you the answer they think you want. So, I'm not going to say that was the post office, and leave it up to the historical society to prove it wasn't, but that building started to go down in the corners several years ago, but with some careful work, it could be shored back up, reroofed, and saved. If you let it go one more year, it's going to be in the shape of the building you just passed. One more year of heavy snow and wind and that one will be gone and it will cost you ten times as much to put back in shape. But, turning around here, this building is one of the finest examples of hand hewing, those were some Engleman spruce that the old guys logged off that hill and some of them are Doug Fir, or what the loggers call red spruce, that's the timber up at the first band above you, the trees that don't have the pointed tops, right up there, that's Doug Fir, that's your red spruce which is very hard. It's not like your west coast Doug Fir. At any rate, this is the prime example of a fine old ghost town building. No piece logs, no splices, one beautiful big structure, which was a roaring thing; this was the finest saloon in town and they had a blue mirror, a true blue mirror, it had blue wallpaper, they used to use linen, or as they called it, it was just cotton colored

wallpaper and people have drug wallpaper off in shreds, but this is the building that I can see that ultimately first should be restructured and then I think if you were going to do an interior rough restoration of a building, this would be the one to do. Now, the neighbor here is an oddity. It lost it's roof without collapsing; it's in beautiful shape, and some of the logs from the building clear down there could be used here to put this back, put a roof on it and put this in shape at very little expense. You wouldn't even have to think about chinking for a while or something like that. There is only a little bit of work that needs to be done, but in order to rough restore these, there's going to have to be some interior support that is not natural, to hold the corners which are worn or have been pushed too hard by the overexposure. So, I don't know how you all think in terms of restoration, but we put braces on the hotel that weren't there and didn't belong there and didn't look good, but it kept the hotel up, you see. Later if you want to come in and restructure, but let's go in and if you'll come in with care, do watch the little one, they tell me this was another competitive saloon. They never would, I couldn't tie them down on that building. This building could be jacked up and if you couldn't find strong enough logs to replace the bottom logs that have rotted out accross, I think it would be perfectly fair to, this is where volunteer help could be obtained, and that is to set up a project where you acquire a real old ax like these were cut with, and got some of the local young bucks to agree to learn to streamline and draw a new one as the present generation's effort rather than a sawed log. Maybe there I'm being overly fussy, and maybe what you need is just good sound log in the bottom, but here now is a typical fit, this is a fairly large one, you must have hid more than just a few potatoes down here, but this is a typical pit which you can see all up through the trees as showing there was a house site there. This could be restored without restoring the floor. I do think

that the old shed which was perfectly legitimate addition and went on there during the active days, ought to be restored by finding some barn lumber off, or what is to be referred to as barn lumber, I think the building ought to be restored with it's shed. There again, that's just a personal opinion. You see here, that if care were taken, the present pulls that make the roof would probably be sufficiently strong as long as maybe an extra brace were put in on these cross .

This building really, well again, it's on the record of Mr. Lee records down in Glenwood, and I won't hold a promise, the day that we finalized that this land would be given back to the government, I said to him, if you don't fix up the Blue Mare Saloon, we're going to take it apart log for log and move it over where it can be protected and fixed. And that conversation is on record.

I never kept him to it, because I'd like to see it restored here, so I'm plugging awful hard this morning for this to be the first building to be worked on.

If you don't, you're going to lose the whole roof very shortly. These all of the lodgepoles on this side have to be replaced because I think they are rotted out due to the loss of the roof. This was a wonderful blue , and you can see some of the blue paint rubbed up over here, you can see the blue over here, but they had blue cloth wallpaper and a blue mirror behind the bar. You know my oldest cat who is now dead, was caught under one of these buildings, competing with the local badger, and he took the worst end of it, but lived! You never saw a cat so hurt in your life. He used to crawl under these old buildings and he met the local badger one day and he really got torn up. You see there is less to do on this building than anything else, and you can see how they when they got a fancy little number, they faked a skirt, and since most of the skirt had been jerked off by people and hauled off to Aspen, I really think the rest ought to come off and leave the logs there.

Q: How late were these buildings worked on as far as remodeling?

I couldn't get from the fellows the history, but you have to realize that the pictures they have of Ashcroft will show that the first cabins were typical flat roofed sod log cabins, and it wasn't until Joe and his brother came in that they had sawed lumber. These buildings went through two stages, they were first log cabins, and then they were remodeled to utilize sod lumber, but there's different styles of log work, and I think that is something that the historical marker ought to point out. This guy over here would have been thought of as a poor craftsman, because he made a rather poor joint and didn't hew his logs, just trimmed them where they were out of line and left them round. Whereas, this was a matter of pride. These logs were all hewed with a sodax. ^{broadax} If you will sight down on the edges of these buildings, boy, the only thing that bowed those is time. They were broadax to a string line. Now, I want to point out one other thing about restoration that there ought to be a resident naturalist on duty all times if anybody is working on these buildings because these shrubs, these gooseberrys, are part of the historical bit of every one of these cabins. They were put here by the old miners because they liked gooseberry pie, and gooseberrys flourished around cabins, and the only thing missing from Ashcroft ought to be replanted, and that is rhubarb. You can tell many sites of cabins where the cabin is totally rotted away, I can show you those down at the Highland for instance, and above there too, the cabin is gone and the thing that remains is not a granite doorstep, but the rhubarb. The rhubarb has outlived the entire cabin. But getting back to priorities, that building seems to be holding it's own and call it the competitive saloon or if you can find out any more about it, would be third in order, but quite frankly, this ought to be stabalized, if not roofed, and this ought to be rejacked, stabalized roof, and braced, or you are going to have a pile of logs. I think it would be a shame to lose the only post fronted building in the town. So, that's #3.

Now, by some fluke a directive came down, once it was turned over to the government, that in order to prevent a buddy of Joe's from becoming a secondary squatter, and having a big legal squabble over it, his cabin had to be taken down by that buddy. It was an original Ashcroft cabin in beautiful shape; I've had a number of pleasant meals in this cabin and it's an historical site, and I would like to recommend one of those cabins endangered by the close proximity of the road be moved down on Joe Sawyer's site, because up there they are going to be destroyed and there is no way to protect them, and I'm going to recommend today for your own thinking and consideration that one of those be moved down and put here and it doesn't have to say it's Joe Sawyer's cabin, but this is an original Ashcroft cabin; the owner we didn't know, but this is the site of Joe Sawyer's, of which is a great deal known, and he was one of the last living residents of Ashcroft and I have pictures of this cabin because we used Joe's cabin in filming "Sancho, the Homing Steer" which is Walt Disney's version of Frank ^{Dobie's} Dolbeys book "The Longhorns" and I stood right out here in front of the mean old father, so I got some good color pictures of this and the steer standing with me. Right over the bank, over there, was a farm that Joe built with some of the first lumber he sawed. Sawed lumber, a story and a half barn that has his wonderful old horse and hay in the top. Now, that's gone, it was made of sod lumber and I don't think there's any point in the future of restoring that, because there's nothing to restore it from. I want to say that that's where it was and I think a marker ultimately ought to go over there because Joe was one of the last links to the past and the present. Right over here this flat, off was a two story building which shows in your pictures and they tell me was a hotel at one time but later turned into a poker hall and was run by a claim jumper who name was known as Stu Baker I believe, who went up and made a claim jumping cabin in the absolute ridge above

at the poker hall, and have their picnic and leave him a few bucks and some food for his courtesy. So, I didn't know Stu Baker, he was here when I climbed Cathedral in 1937, but I never met him. I didn't meet Joe in 1937, I didn't meet Henry in 1937, they were all living here, I didn't meet the ^{whispering} Woodspring Swede then, they were all here then, and he was an old German, spelled by his name, and then we had two real crusty Irishmen, and I don't know what their story was. I think Joe was English, but he had a good old mountain man's accent. Now you see here the berries are taking over the building. The berry bushes have moved in and these are not the ones they planted, but your plant life has a recovery cycle and so in a few years you'll only see the pit back there or if you back up you'll see square outline of this because this side will move over slowly and destroy this building. But, in light of this, folks, restoration has not been able to happen because people come over here with their metal detectors and this has all been dug up as has a lot back there and a lot back in there. I would like to see the prohibition of digging in this townsite for not so much the people after bottles and a few old things that are worthless, and your recovery of your plant life can't happen if they keep digging.

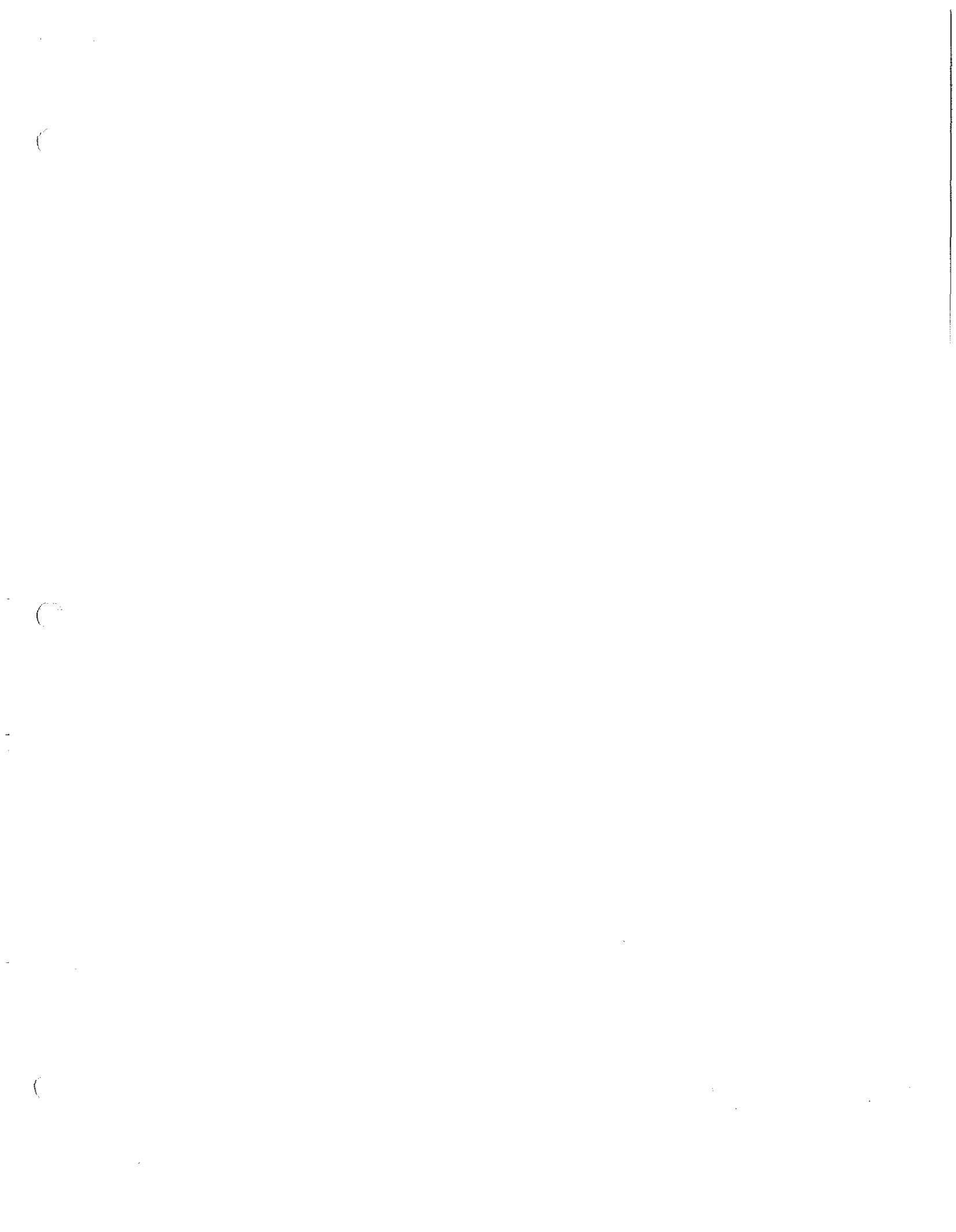
The hotel has been documented in so many photographs it will be no difficulty when you have the money to restore it because I've got dozens and dozens of fine color shots and there are dozens of other people who have. It came this way because this corner was weak and I just won't go into it because I don't want to sound like a mean old man. The braces that were on there were taken off and new braces were put on that were inadequate. Forget that. It went down and it ought to go back up. When it goes back up, it ought to go back up with some care to all the plant life around it, in other words, it shouldn't destroy the whole area around it in trying to put it back ~~down~~. This cellar back here I think, the reason I mention it is, I think when you restore the hotel, that historically and whatnot

the order still exists, that this was the deepest cellar in town because this was the best cooking in town, this was a shed back here which was the domain of a Chinaman whose name is unknown, he was just called Yellow Boy, and he was the cook for the girls and the madam and their guests. And he cooked very well apparently. But one day he got mad and threw his cleaver down and he went up the hill, and this peak right in front of you is called North American and the peak over there, the higher peak, is the southern sphere of Mount Hayden, and that's called Yellow Boy after him, because he went up there and had, be it ever so humble, a little grubby claim, and made his mark on the mining history of Ashcroft and left the gals ^{to} cook for themselves, which he should have done in the first place. But, at any rate, that's called Yellow Boy, and I think in honor of Yellow Boy and the name of the peak, the Yellow Boy shack ought to be restored. It was a simple shed built on the back, and you can see the line cellar if you look right here you'll see the peak of the roof, you can even duplicate the angle of the shed because it's in the back on rope. In the future, when I think it ought to be in the master plan, if you want to call it that. Now, let's go look at these other three cabins here. I think the privy ought to be put back in shape, but not useable.

I do not have the names of the owners, these were living cabins, these three up here, and I never was able to get from Henry or Joe or anybody, or from Bill Taggart what you'd call these cabins like we call ^u ~~up in~~ Whispering Swedes over there. This one here with the round log construction most closely resembles Joe's cabin, and of course Joe didn't live in it, but it was somebody else's cabin. I would really like to recommend it, it hasn't lost it's roof yet, and the shed is shot and could be forgotten if you wanted, but I'd like to see that picked up, reroofed, just fixed up externally on the side of Joe Sawyers cabinsite, and then down here, I forgot to stop, I feel that his partner should be moved down to one of the true cabinsites next to the about to collapse post office. Then, that

puts Main Street back in order, even though you've done a little hunking up,
it's no trouble to pick these two cabins up and move them. Again, this is
where I had a terrible fight with the county and laws when they wanted to . . .

THANKS, CONRAD. SEE YOU AT THE OFFICE.



APPENDIX FOUR

These photographs, from the private collections of Mrs. Louisa Ward Arps and Mrs. Hod Nicholson, show the town of Ashcroft c. 1945 and c. 1912 - 1916. They have been included in this report to provide a visual record of the destruction of the built environment in the town's waning years. Also included are a series of recent (1976) photographs cataloging the remaining structures in Ashcroft. A brief guide follows corresponding to the numbers on the back of the prints.

1. Ashcroft - view from Ashcroft Mountain (1916).
2. East side, Main Street - store front destroyed (1912)
3. East side, Main Street
 - 1st - destroyed
 - 2nd - saloon
 - 3rd - Blue Mirror Saloon
 - 4th - 6th - destroyed
4. West side, Main Street
 - 1st left - cabin on site of Joe Sawyer's; moved c. 1974
 - 2nd - 3rd left - destroyed
 - 4th left - present post office (c. 1916)
5. East side, Main Street
 - 1st left - Blue Mirror Saloon
 - 2nd left - destroyed
 - 3rd left - destroyed
6. East side, Main Street
 - 1st left - destroyed
 - 2nd left - Saloon
 - 3rd left - Blue Mirror Saloon
 - 4th - 5th left - destroyed
7. West side, Main Street
 - "Hotel View" - 1945.
8. West side, Main Street

"Hotel View" - reconstruction (1976)

9. West side, Maint Street

"Hotel View" - 1976.

10. Western edge of town plat - private land (1976)

11. West side, Main Street

Cabin - reconstructed (1976)

12. West side, Main Street

1st left - store (reconstructed)

2nd left - post office (reconstructed)

3rd left - moved from Walled Lake (reconstructed, 1976)

13. East side, Main Street

Blue Mirror Saloon - original walls (1976)

14. East side, Main Street

Cabin moved to site of Joe Sawyer's (1976)

15. Map of Town as it appeared (c.1970)

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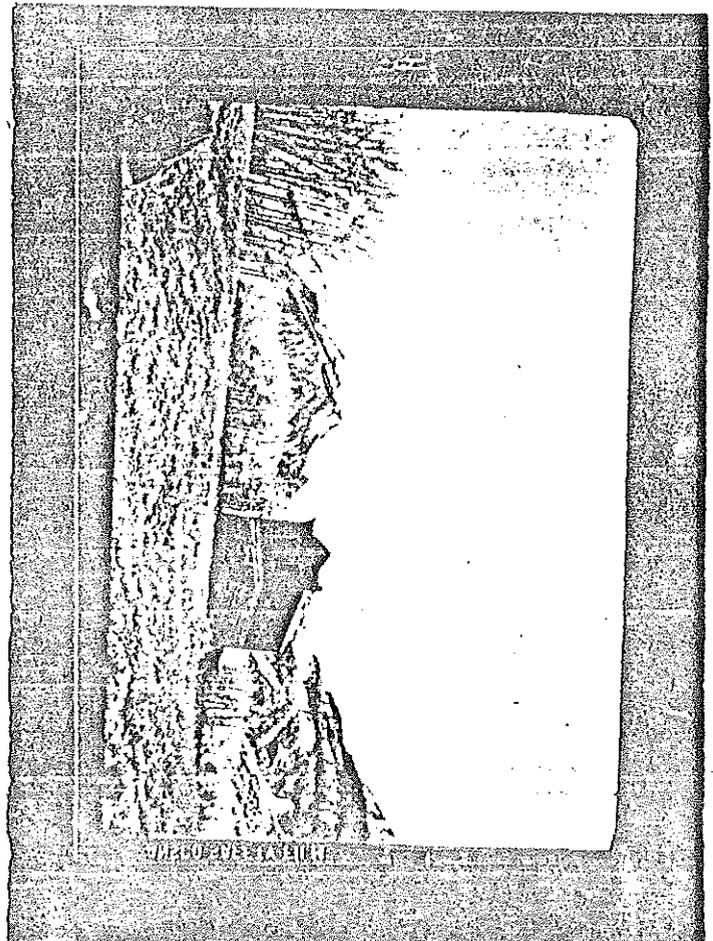
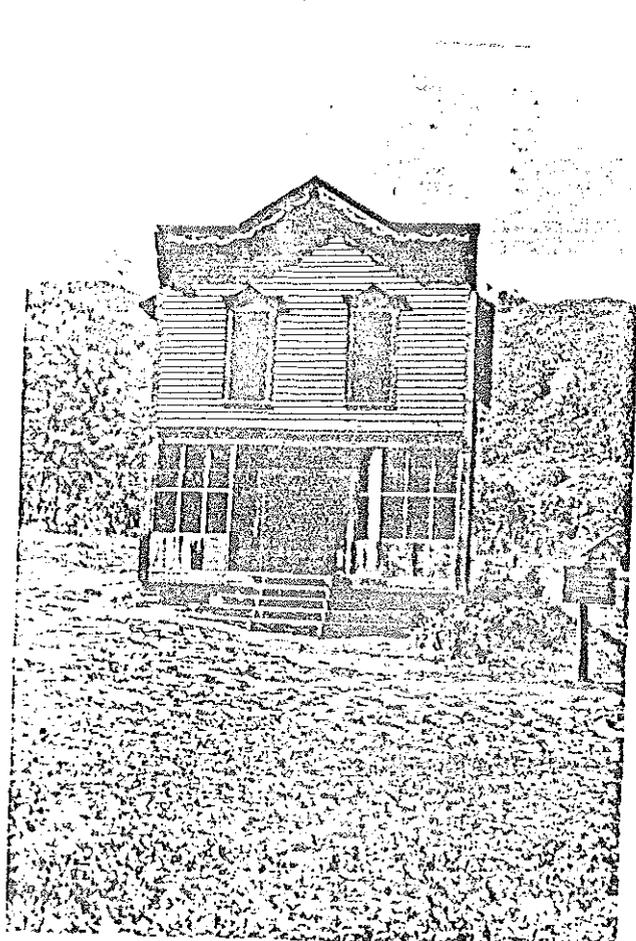
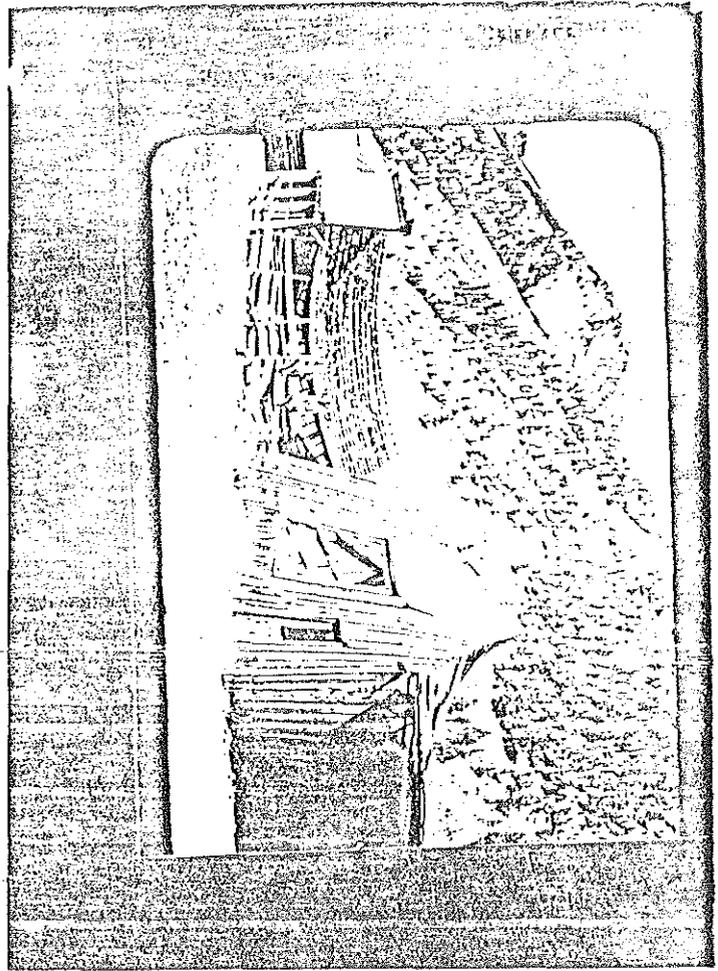
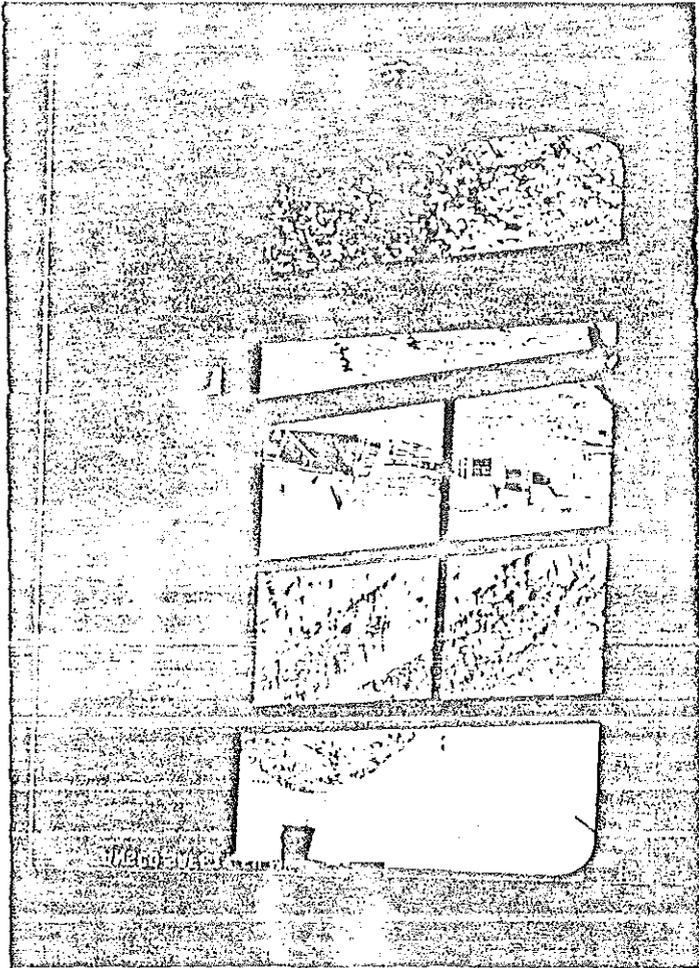
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