

# Long Gone, But Not Forgotten ...



## The Royal Hotel

By Tara Grillo and Elise McGill

Tucked away in the scenic Rocky Mountains is the small town of Yampa. A hunter or traveler passing through might be prevailed upon to spend a night while waiting to continue a journey. In the confines of this community in days gone by the sojourner might have stayed at one of three luxury hotels. Each of these hotels were a palace in their day, and such famous travelers as Zane Grey lodged here. Of the Royal, the Antlers and the Grand Hotels only the Royal is still in operation, even though it no longer houses hotel tenants, at least no live ones.

The present tenants, Jill and Daryl Hansen, own and operate a country store which provides everything from television repair to clothing, from veterinary supplies to household items as well as eatable goodies, Three Wire Winter Magazines and greeting cards. Perhaps, also entrapped or sheltered in this friendly country atmosphere is a feeling or sensation of a well-

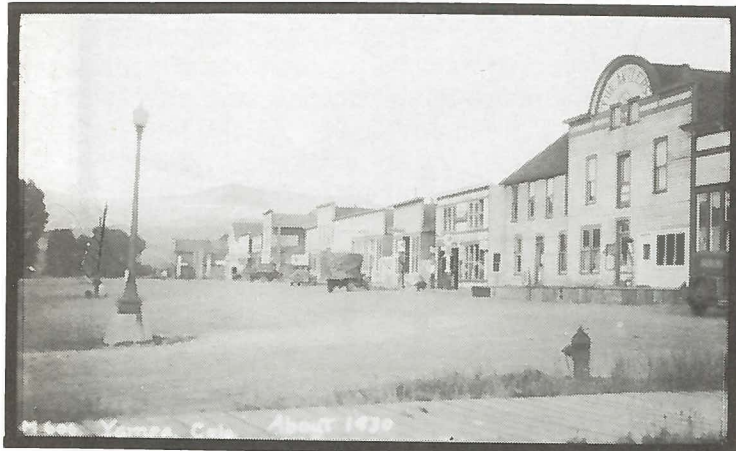
satisfied tenant, fondly known as Roofus.

Unverified evidence has been corroborated about the possible existence of Roofus, yet those frequent visitors who shop at the familiar Yampa store have been intrigued and entertained by stories of a possible ghostly inhabitant named Roofus. Daryl and Jill don't take all this too seriously, yet when we went to interview them for history of the Royal Hotel we did get into conversations about dwellers, both past and present, of this famous old building.

We started by asking Daryl how he got involved with this business. "I worked at Rocky Flats before we came here. We used to come up here in the summertime a lot, fishing, like a lot of people do. You know how people are when they get a vacation in a place like this, they say 'Gee, I really like this. I would move up here if I could find something to do.' Well, one weekend we were at my father-in-law's little fishing cabin,



and I was ready to go fishing in the morning, but nobody else was, so I wandered across the street and came into this hotel building. There was an old man sitting at a coffee counter, and he offered me a cup of coffee. We got to talking and I said, like many people do, 'Boy I really like it here. If I had something to do, I'd move up here.' He said, 'I'll sell you this place cheap.'



"It turned out that we bought this place from Mr. and Mrs. Fred Mohr who owned it for 22 years. Where we are presently sitting was their living room and kitchen. They have since moved to Canon City. It's debatable, whether or not it was a good deal. Fred Mohr primarily had an upholstery business, and at that time they weren't operating the hotel or the restaurant. They had a store on one side where the drugs are now, but it was a very small store. It didn't have much inventory and most of the building was full of upholstery material. The front part was actually a dining room. When I first walked in, there was just a trail in the middle of the store and the rest was foam rubber, padding and rolls of upholstery."

We wanted to know about the hotel's beginning and other incidental history of the Yampa area. "When the lettuce fields were big here there was a great demand for hotels. They raised the finest lettuce in the world here, the most tender and delicious lettuce you could get anywhere. It was so tender that it would not ship well without spoilage. California had tough lettuce that grew there. You can ship that anyplace, so they eventually took over that business. In the summer time they had lettuce workers come in here, a large number of them, and they stayed in a hotel."

Prior to that time in the early 1900s there were three hotels in town, the Royal, the Antlers and the Grand. If you went any place in Northwestern Colorado, even coming from Denver, you rode the train to Wolcott and then you took the stagecoach to Steamboat. One day's ride brought you to Yampa and you often would have to stay overnight, thus the need for the three hotels.

"Auntie Lindsay was the original owner of the Antler's Hotel. After awhile she decided she wanted another hotel, so she sold the Antler's and contracted to have the Royal Hotel built. Then there was also the Grand Hotel, which was on the other side of the Antler's bar. The Grand was originally called the Monte Cristo, then some fella bought, remodeled, and fancied it up and changed it to the Grand. It (The Grand) eventually burned to the ground. That was the biggest fire ever in Yampa. I think that was back in the 20s.

"The Royal Hotel was built in 1909, the same year the railroad came through here on its way to Steamboat. Oddly enough, that was the thing at the time that reduced the need for a hotel here anymore. That's what killed it really, although a lot of hunters used to come to this country. Nowadays everybody's got a trailer or a motor home. They don't stay in town anymore. Back in those days the hunters came to this country and went on hunting trips to be with Scott Tieg, a well known hunting guide.

"There were times when you had a lot of use for the hotel, but I think that there were several periods of time when the hotel really didn't have much demand. We tried operating the hotel after we bought it and rented rooms quite a bit to ski clubs. We had a restaurant in here, too, which we operated for several years. I don't know, running a hotel to me was a tough business."

The hotel is now a general store which is called the "Hansen's Yampa-Western Store." Daryl and Jill Hansen have run and owned the store for the past ten years. The interior is overrun with



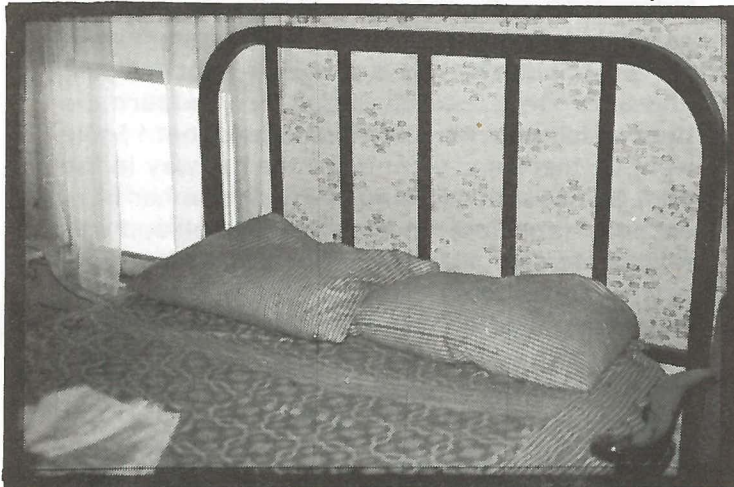
*This area, which is now the clothing department, was the courtyard of The Royal Hotel.*



stocked goods and merchandise and it has become a scene for community gatherings. Many idly pass the time visiting well-known neighbors. Passing travelers might wander in to inspect the wares and catch up on the latest gossip. Unknown trepidations perhaps await those not familiar with portions of small town gossip, which might be centered around the store's friendly and possible present resident, a "feeling" well-known as Roofus.

"Roofus lives in room #8. When we were running the hotel, my wife had to go upstairs to change the beds and such. The linen closet was down the hall past room #8. Sometimes when she'd walk by the room the door would come open by itself. Ya know, it would just swing open, 'creeek, clunk.' Even if the door was locked, it would open by itself. So it made a good story.

"Odd things have happened on that side (west) of the building. When we first bought the hotel the Mohrs moved out and we moved in. There was a living room, kitchen downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs. We never noticed a thing because we lived on the opposite side of the building from room #8. But over the years people that stayed on that side came up with odd things. Once in a while they'd tell us. Also over the years we made a big story about it. It's for fun mostly.'



*Is this Roofus' bed in room 8?*

"We wanted to hear more about the fun ridden myth of Roofus. Daryl told us, "One time when my daughter was in high school, at Soroco, she wanted to have a slumber party. Now, we don't live here in this building anymore, and since we weren't too anxious to have a dozen girls down at the house we said 'Have your slumber party up in the hotel.' So they did. They got their sleeping bags and set up to stay that night in room #1, which is a large double room over in the corner, with a door to the balcony. They had a great time! Of course, you know how girls like to scare each other. Anyway, they moved in late in the day upstairs and by the time they got in the room they already had one girl scared. Along toward



*Daryl and Tara.  
discussing The Royal Hotel.*

the evening my daughter and another girl got brave and walked down to room #8. They said, 'Let's go down there and see what Roofus is doing!' They got down there and were standing by the door when they heard a typewriter typing. My daughter swears it! There is nothing so distinctive as the sound of a typewriter typing. She said what she heard was a typewriter. Well, there's no typewriter in this building and we never had one. They got pretty spooked about it. They went back down to the room, and after a while the whole bunch got the keys and went to open the door. There was nothing in there, then they heard some noise and panicked. They ran over each other getting back to the room. My daughter even got a tooth knocked loose, but they got a lot of fun of it!"

We laughed at the story and began to get chills about inspecting room #8. We asked Daryl to tell us other events that led to the conclusion of a possible friendly illusion. "I have never seen anything to make me believe there is such a thing. However, one time when we were operating the hotel late in the fall, there were two couples that came here to stay for the weekend. They rented the two rooms across the hallway from room #8. It was just cool enough that they came down and asked me to light the pilot light for the gas heaters. They had not been lit yet that year. So I went upstairs and went into room #9 and the two fellows were standing there talking while I lit the heater. Their two wives were next door in room #5. I got it lit, and we were just standing there talking when all of a sudden the window shade rolled up by itself. At the same time the two wives ran out of the room next door and said 'Hey, our window shades just rolled up by themselves!' This happened all at the same time. Those people never did come back. They



stayed a couple of days, but they had talked about how they were gonna come back here every year. I never did see them again."

There were other interesting tales that we coaxed from Daryl and his wife, Jill. "It just got to be a good story about the time we quit the hotel business. Although a time or two we had people come to rent a room. One gal, she was gonna stay a week and she stayed one night. When she checked out the next day she said she wasn't gonna stay here. She never said why, but she apparently just didn't like it. Some places kind of have a spooky feeling to 'em, ya know, and it apparently bothered her. Now, other people have really loved this place. We had one couple that used to come here and stay every summer. He came primarily for the fishing, and when she found out about this Roofus thing, she always rented the room right across the hall from room #8, which was room #5. She just loved the idea that there might be a ghost there. Well, they came for a couple of years and rented the same room. This one weekend they came up and for some reason, I don't remember it clearly, but they wanted a different room because they wanted one with a bathtub. That room they usually rented had a shower. So we rented them the front room on the other side of the building. The first thing she did was trot right over by room #8 and say 'Hey, Roofus, I'm staying over in room #15 this weekend. Come on over and see me!' So she wasn't there fifteen minutes when all of a sudden her window shade rolled up by itself and she said, 'Roofus, you're here!'"



*Maybe this is Roofus' playmate?*

Daryl hesitated in his tale to remind us of the doubtfulness that exists about Roofus. "All this could be explained, you know, loose boards, loose window shades, and it just got to be a good story. I remember another time we had a truck driver, a big burly guy who drove a welding supply truck



*Daryl, relating Roofus' story.*

that used to stay here regularly. He came through here every Wednesday night and would usually get here after dark. He'd ring the bell, and I'd go out there and hand him the room key and an alarm clock. He liked to get up early in the morning, around 5:30, and get on his route. In the wintertime we didn't have many people staying here for days at a time, so we didn't even bother to have the lights on upstairs. Anyway, he came this one night and rang the bell and I went out and handed him the key and the alarm clock, and said, 'Oh, I should run up there and turn the light on for ya.' He said, 'Don't need that.' So he went up there and went down the hallway in the dark to his room. Nothing seemed to bother him, except this one evening he rang the bell and was kind of hesitant. He said, 'Last Wednesday night when I stayed here I had this funny dream that there was something or somebody looking in the window at me. The next morning I got up early and I showered, shaved and dressed. I was just ready to leave, when I went over and looked out the window just to assure myself that there wasn't anything out there. It had snowed the night before so when I looked out the window on to the shed roof there were tracks that came up the fire escape, across the roof right to the window, and then went out to the edge of the roof and disappeared. Now they weren't people tracks.' He said they were tracks 'like a big cat.' "

Daryl had us, so he continued the truck driver's story. "The tracks were from a large cat, not a house cat. So I just kind of soothed him and said, 'It must have just been one of the neighborhood dogs roaming in the night.' But, you know as well as I do, that if a dog came up those stairs and across that roof it would go back down the stairs, and not to the edge of the roof and jump off. Since I soothed him I thought everything was okay, but a couple of weeks later





*Yampa snowstorm, on interview day.*

the bell rang one night, and I went there with the clock and the key. This time the truck driver was really hesitant. So I asked what was the matter with him. He said, 'Last week when I stayed here did you have anybody else staying in the hotel?' I thought about it and said, 'No, there wasn't anybody else. You had it all to yourself. Why?' He said, 'Well, I got up early like I usually do, got all cleaned up, got my bag packed and I was just ready to leave when I heard these foot steps coming from the hallway down by room #8. The steps went right past the door.' He wanted to know who else got up so early. So he grabbed his bag and opened the door. Just as he looked out the footsteps went around the corner into the hallway, so he couldn't see who it was. He went down the hall and just as he got to the corner he could hear footsteps go down the stairs, but he heard the front door close, and when he got to the front door, there wasn't another soul anywhere. And, you know, he never stayed here any more."

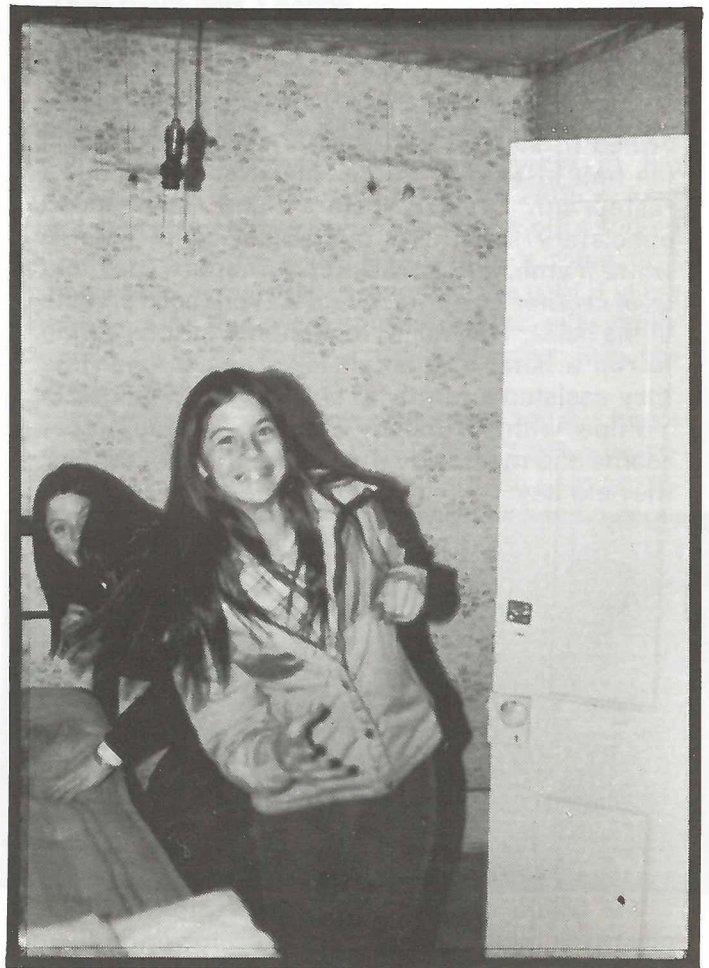
Daryl continued by telling us some of the strange occurrences that have happened to other members of his family. "One time my wife's folks stayed here and they were down the hall in room #1. Sometimes during the night my father-in-law gets up. That night he got out of bed, turned on the light and walked across the room. He was reaching for the door knob when it turned by itself. My mother-in-law was awake, and she saw it too. She said, 'Did you see that?' He just turned around and went back to bed."

"Last winter we built a new room and everybody was making a joke, saying, 'Maybe Roofus won't like all this commotion.' It's just a good joke, but one day my boy was in there on the ladder doing something, and he swears a hunk of plaster came sailing across the room right past his ear and hit the wall. Nobody else was around to confirm it or say what it was."

We questioned Daryl farther to find out about Roofus' personality. "If there is such a thing as Roofus, he has a temper, for a prankster, that is. This year we had a box of Thanksgiving and

Halloween cards that disappeared. I know we ordered them, and they came in, but neither Jill nor I could find them when we went to put them out on the shelf. Also about that time we noticed other strange pranks happening around here. My niece claims the toilet flushed by itself, and we all heard the pipes vibrate even when no one used the facilities. We found out later that someone had turned the water valve off. No one we knew turned it off. We blamed it on Roofus. Even though, there's never been anything sinister happen here, we still think it makes a good story, even if we don't believe all of it."

We relaxed from ghostliness for a bit of conversation about the businesses that have been housed in this old historic building. "At one time this was not a commercial building at all. It gradually became converted to a store when we took out the walls. We took out the front stairway to go up to the hotel and threw it away because we needed the space. Some people might use this as a home, the entire thing. The post office was in here once. At one time they had a soda fountain out in front. The old Yampa Drug Company was in here too. Dr. Male was the town doctor and he owned the drug store which doctors can't do now.



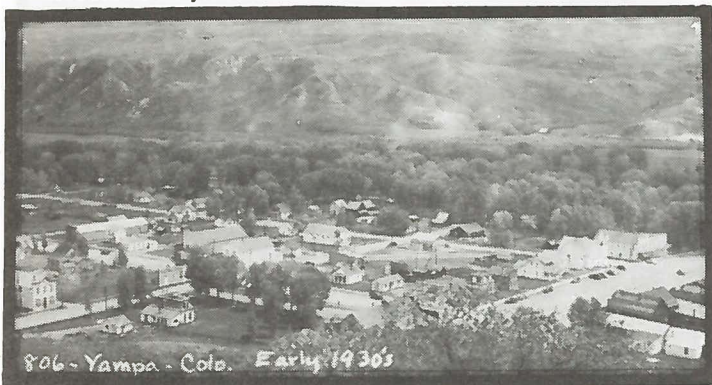
*Tara and Elise alarmed by an unexpected knock.*



We relaxed from ghostliness for a bit of conversation about the businesses that have been housed in this old historic building. "At one time this was not a commercial building at all. Some people have used this as a home, the entire thing. The post office was in here once, and at one time they had a soda fountain out in front. The old Yampa Drug Company was in here too. Dr. Male was the town doctor and he owned the drug store and distributed the drugs. It gradually became converted to a store as we took out the walls. We took out the front stairway that went up to the hotel and threw it away because we needed the space. We try to stock a lot of different stuff today to accommodate people. We even carry veterinarian medicine for the ranchers to use on their animals."

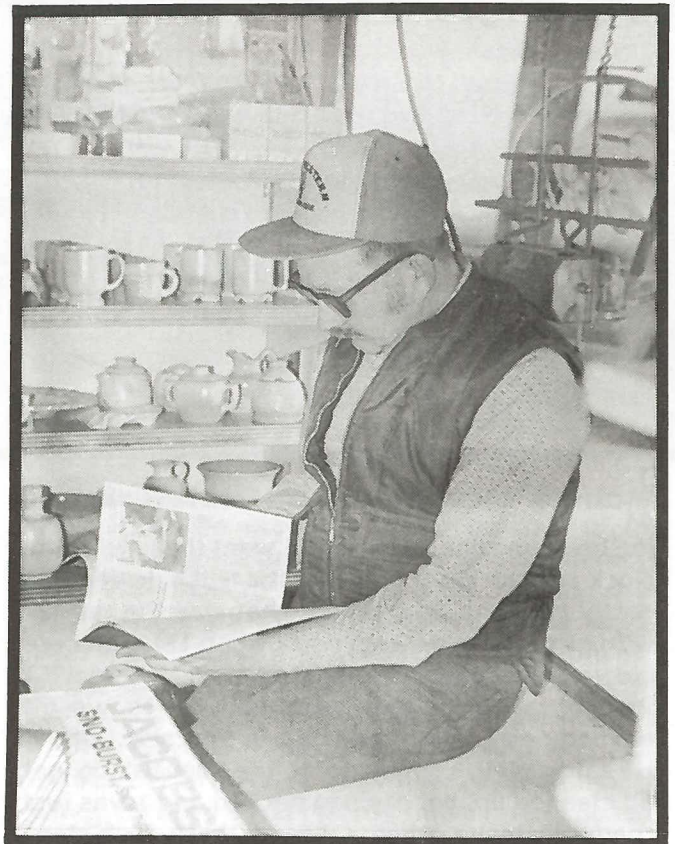
After talking to the Hansens we wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Fred Mohr and asked them a few questions about the Yampa Hotel. Fred and Florence lived in Yampa for over 60 years and bought the hotel from L. E. Crowner in 1947. They owned it for 22 years. While they owned it there were all different sorts of people that stayed there: tourists, hunters, 'lettuce tramps' and once in a while an 'Indian train crew.' Also during the 20s they told of rodeos in front of the hotel. Their busiest time of the year was summer and fall.

They made a few improvements when they owned it, such as bathrooms, which were down the hall instead of in the rooms at that time, a restaurant, variety store and an added upholstery shop. The building used to have a white frame, and it was much smaller. They told us of regular customers who stayed there and ate in the hotel. The Mohrs thought it was interesting to run a hotel in a small town and at one time they assisted a family of six who got stranded in Yampa with no money. They gave them free rooms and meals and then drove them to Denver the next day.



We asked them about the possibility of a ghostly inhabitant in the building to which they replied that they knew of no apparition, but they thought the idea was "very interesting."

With all the many uses of the old hotel and drug store it's no wonder that the elusive Roofus loves these accommodations. We once again returned



*Daryl enjoying a Three Wire Winter magazine.*

our conversation to the ghostly apparition. "I won't say there isn't a ghost, but I won't say there is either," said Mrs. Hansen. "My religion just doesn't believe in that sort of thing. However, there have been some inexplicable things going on around here. The first time we really thought there was such a thing was when my mother carried a bunch of linen up to the linen closet. There was absolutely nobody upstairs, but when she came back down she asked who rented room #8. I said, 'Well, nobody.' So we went up there and the door was standing open. It had opened when she walked by. That was our first indication that there was something maybe going on up there, and that was eight years ago.

"Then some other friends of ours couldn't get the door open. They tried prying and shoving, but it would not open. Later when we went up there the door was open. It makes you kind of wonder why that door would be closed, then open. It seems like strange things revolve around room #8. A couple of times as I walked by, the door would be closed tight, locked with no one in there. Then I would go to room #9 and clean it up and when I came back that door would be wide open. You can believe what you want to, and I don't believe it, but when doors open, window shades go up, it makes you wonder.

Daryl interjected more information during



Jill's narrative, "I think room #8 got picked because that was the room that the door kept coming open on. Jill and another fellow got talking about this and I kept saying, 'Ah, it's just loose boards in the floor.' So they went up there and jumped up and down, ran back and forth, trying to get the door to open, but they couldn't make it budge. So that's why we picked room #8 for Roofus. Everytime somebody comes up with one of these stories it always was on that side of the building. We lived on the other side, and it was as quiet as a church. We never heard clanking chains or anything like that."



*Jill, showing a customer a Three Wire Winter magazine.*

We paused from talking about Roofus to discuss some of the Hansen family background. "We've been married 22 years and we have two kids. I'm originally a Nebraskan farmer. When we came to Yampa it was a nice little town, outside the winter being about six months too long. It's a nice place to live. Still, it's changed quite a bit since we came here. When we came here ten years ago there was a lot of empty houses in town, and most of the people that were here were old or retired ranchers. Now with the change in economics of the area it's very difficult for retired people to live here. It's too expensive. When a house becomes empty you can bet that there will be people moving in right away. When we first came here it was exactly the opposite. There wasn't anybody here that had any money hardly, all just scraped along and got by."

Yampa's past history is one of renown. Many businesses and places have changed through the years. "This business district was pretty big in the early 1900s. There were nine saloons, three or four restaurants, two stores and two banks. This was the hub of ranching and travel before Steamboat grew. Zane Grey even based one of

his books on Yampa. Lettuce was a big business, and down the highway there is a big cement block building called Crowner's. That was the packing shed where they packed thousands of crates of lettuce a day during the season. A little farther down the road, those big old red buildings by the railroad, were ice houses. By flooding a little pond in the field residents could saw chunks of ice out and pack it with saw dust to put in ice sheds. Then in the summer they would put the ice in the railroad cars. Spinach was also quite a big business. One man in Toponas raised so much spinach they called him the 'Spinach King'. There was a big demand for spinach one year, so he made a lot of money. They also used to have ice cream shipped here by train. There are still insulated containers sitting on people's porches. "The problems of those days were many. I'm actually surprised that this building has survived this long because of all the wood stoves. Back in those days nearly all the buildings caught fire because of stoves and kerosene lamps. Another problem I've heard about was all the activity, which made Yampa a busy center. I don't know if I believe this or not, but there's a story about an old fellow who rode the stage into town toward evening and tried to get a room at the Royal, Antlers or the Grand, and the rooms were all taken. The only room he could get cost a dollar, and that one he would have to share with a school teacher. He probably wouldn't have minded, but maybe she would have. All the businesses were busier then and more concentrated."



*Tara and Elise tutoring Roofus in Three Wire Winter lore...*





*An early 1900 postcard of Yampa, Colorado.*

We (Tara Grillo, Elise McGill and Tanna Eck) drove down to Yampa for the second time so we could talk to Daryl and Jill Hansen about the Yampa Hotel and a ghost named Roofus. It took us an hour and a half to make a normal 45 minute drive. When we got there the electricity was out all over town so we talked to the Hansens for awhile. Daryl asked us if we wanted to see the upstairs where the hotel rooms were. We went upstairs in the pitch black, scared of our own thoughts about what might be there. We walked down the dark hallway, passed a few rooms which were for storage, made our way to the ever threatening room #8. When Mr. Hansen put the key in the door, it wouldn't open. He pushed and shoved a little forcing it to creak open. At the time we asked why this room #8 was locked and not the other storage rooms, Daryl smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

Once inside the infamous room we noticed the rectangular shaped room could have housed a

not-so recent guest. The two beds were made as if to welcome an incoming tenant, yet covered with dust. In each window the shades were not easily rolled up, but we needed light for photos, so we persisted in trying to provide light to photo Roofus.

Each bed held extra covers which when moved showed a contrast of the many years of lying on a space protected from dust. Also we noticed there was a cigarette butt in every ashtray, perhaps left by some long ago tenant. The Holy Bible had even left its imprint on Roofus' territory as each room housed a Bible. One outstanding feature we questioned was the closet which was half in the room and half in the hall. As we were examining the empty space our friend and guide, Daryl, managed to sneak into the hallway to rap on the door, which led to screams and terrifying thoughts of what the sudden noise might really be. Just being in this atmosphere led us to believe in the possibility of a semi-real Roofus.

## *The Ghost Of The Royal Hotel*

*From long ago, in a nearby town,  
Lives a ghost they all call Roofus.  
Once we made a short visit to Yampa,  
And Roofus indeed tried to scare us.*

*Is Roofus a fantasy or is Roofus real?  
Can the legend really be true?  
I'll bet if you visit the Royal Hotel,  
He might even try to scare you.*

*Roofus is harmless, or so they say,  
On occasion he can be seen,  
In a bathroom shaving, or just sitting down,  
So they say the Ghost isn't mean.*

*In the Royal Hotel, in room number eight,  
The legend will always live on,  
That Roofus the ghost has a permanent home.  
So be careful not to go there alone!!!!*

*By Jan Fishback*