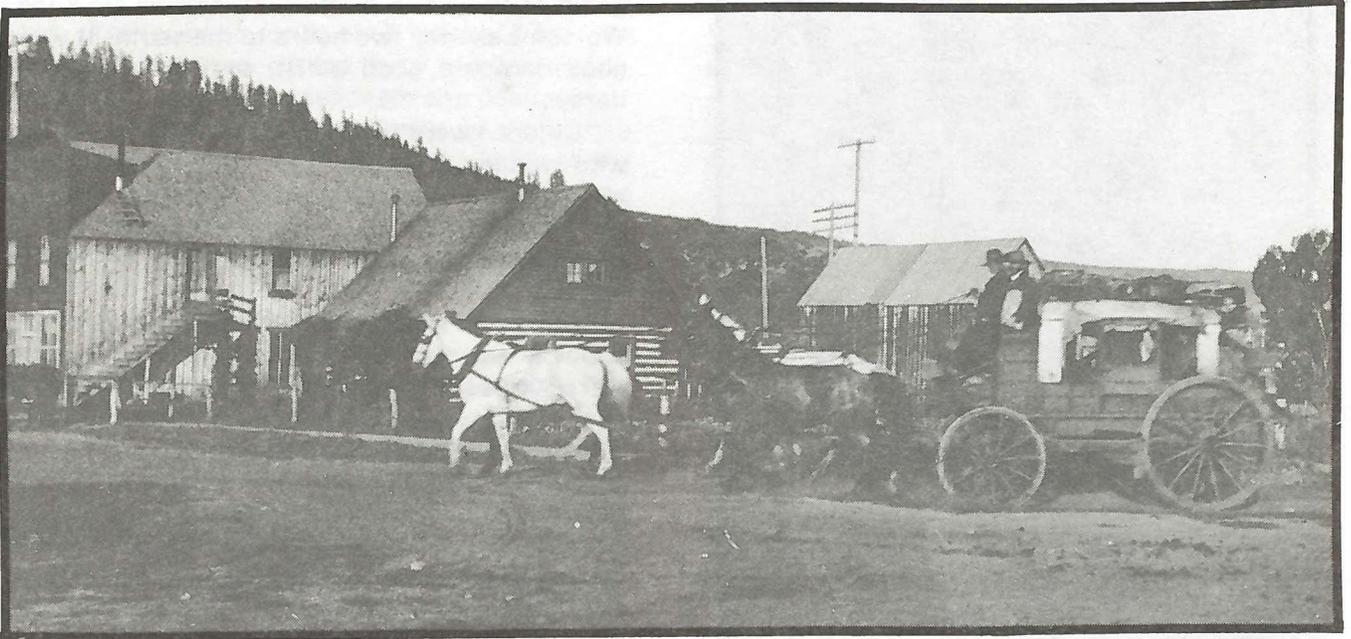


*"They would serve you beer, whiskey,  
anything you wanted, even 'not nice' girls."*

*by Nancy Hoar*



*We think this is the morning Stage leaving Brooklyn at 6:00 A.M.*

In the early 1900's, "fun" was as illegal as it is today. In the small town community of Steamboat Springs, "fun" was so "abhorred" that a separate district was established for all illicit and illegal nonsense. This area occupied no more than four city blocks but was bulging with profitable businesses such as saloons, houses of ill repute and pool halls. They overflowed with patrons, usually in the form of travelers, cattlemen and adventurers who frequented this area. Many townspeople were not only opposed to this area called Brooklyn, but at times tried making legislation to outlaw such a "fun" area.

As one old timer told me ... "My mama would never let me venture to that area because that's where all the bad people were." And as another said, "My mama told me to look the other way when I saw one of 'those' women."

Several interviews were conducted with three long-time community members: Bob Swinehart, Dorothy Wither, and the late Anton Kline. Each helped supply the history of Brooklyn.

Brooklyn was located on the west side of the Yampa river, across the bridge leading to the rodeo grounds and to the left. At its peak it occupied a distance from Beer, Bait and Beans to Bedell's, only across the river on the "other side of the tracks." Because of train and travel on

county roads and a main thorough fare to the communities of Sidney, Oak Creek, and Yampa, this area was frequently passed by many people. And because liquor was never allowed in Steamboat proper, saloons, pool halls and "fun" houses were established in Brooklyn, for all those who wished to stop.

*"Brooklyn didn't have any  
government, and Steamboat had its  
own jurisdiction."*

Bob Swinehart informed us that there were three to five saloons. "For years they wouldn't allow saloons in this town of Steamboat, ya' know? When Crawford was here, the man that located this place, he had a clause in the original agreement that there was never to be any saloons in this town. After he died, why, they worked that out. There were saloons and a couple of houses over in Brooklyn. There were several families over there. Oh yes, there were several families. But the people just living there had nothing to do with the saloons at all.

"The saloons were like they are today, with a long bar, you know, and everything. They weren't like in the movies, the movies put in a

lot. They would serve you beer, whiskey, anything you wanted, even 'not nice' girls.

*"My mama told me to look the other way when I saw one of 'those' women."*

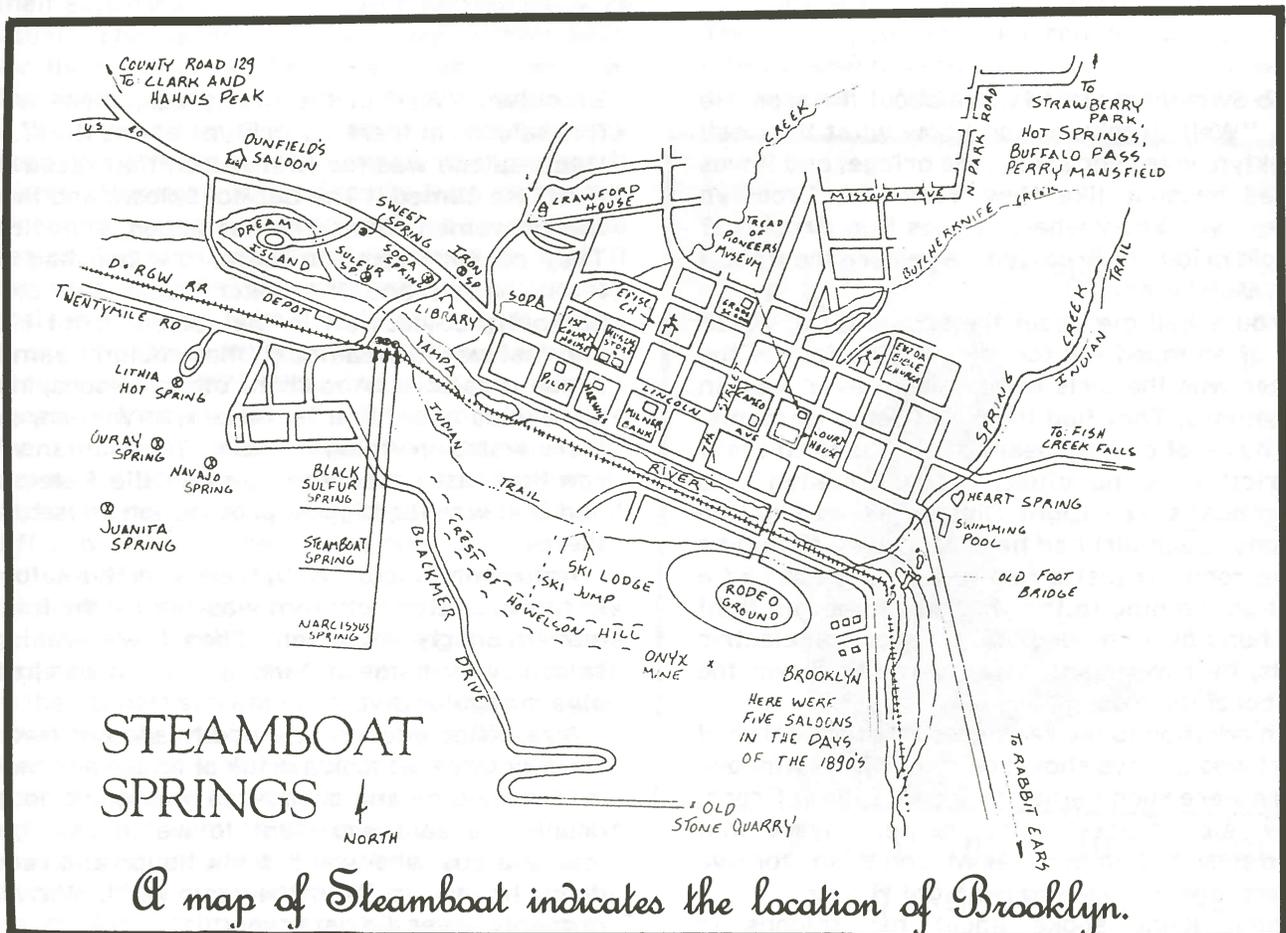
"Deeds issued by the Steamboat Springs Town Company prohibited the making and sale of spiritous liquor, and the town was dry. Because this didn't sit too well with cowboys from local ranches, a small community developed on the Yampa. This was dubbed Brooklyn by residents of Steamboat Springs who considered it the 'Red Light District.' As many as forty persons lived there during its heyday between 1902 and 1914.

"Brooklyn consisted of one unnamed street, running from the river south to the hillside, lined with saloons. The first saloon opened in 1898 and was quickly joined by four more. Among the best known were Shorty Anderson's, Fred Cheetel's and The Capitol, where no women were allowed. Hazel McGuire's was reportedly the leading parlor. Despite the booze and the ladies, residents from all over the county went to Brooklyn where they camped along the Yampa River during the rodeo and Strawberry Festival celebrations.

"The only liquor available outside Brooklyn was served at Danfield's Saloon located where the Stock Bridge joins U.S. 40. It was distinguished by the fact that an overindulgent patron was found frozen to death one morning in one of the creeks that forms Dream Island. Changes in the state liquor laws and efforts by Steamboat Springs' residents to clean up the area closed all the Saloons by 1914."

Dorothy Wither informed us that Brooklyn was actually started in 1885, when her father brought the first load of liquor over the pass. "There was no roads and no way of getting in here, but he came in on the first load of liquor. He hitch hiked. That is the only record I have of it. Then they started what they call a Red Light District, that was the women that were in ill repute, and they lived there. Brooklyn didn't have any government. It was just called Brooklyn, and they were on their own and Steamboat didn't have any jurisdiction."

Footnote 1 — This was taken from the **Historical Guide to Routt County**. Printer, Fredirec, Printing-Denver, Co., 1979. Page 67.





*Brooklyn is the buildings to the right of the town.*

Bob Swinehart talked more about the area. He said, "Well Brooklyn, you know what they call Brooklyn, was over across the bridge, and it was named because like New York, the Brooklyn Bridge, you know where it goes into Brooklyn? The old bridge to Brooklyn was where the Rabbit Ears Motel is now.

"You asked me about the saloon girls, which kind of stumped me for awhile. The fact of the matter was the girls were seldom ever seen in the saloons. They had their own establishments. You have, of course, heard about the 'Red Light District' in some cities. Well, Brooklyn was Steamboat's Red Light District as well as the saloons. Each girl had her own house, or maybe just a room. If just a room, the occupant had a red light shining in the window or the red light was hung over the door. There were no electric lights, they were lanterns. The red light was the symbol of the trade.

"In addition to the red lights, the first name of a girl was always shown on the door or window. There were such names as Irene, Lilian, Grace, Ruby, etc., never the last name. Anyone that could show two dollars was welcome, and for five dollars, one could spend the night."

Anton Kline spoke about the saloons in

Brooklyn. "Well in the first place, there were five saloons in there (Brooklyn) at one time. My Dad's saloon was the first saloon that faced the river. He named it The Capitol Saloon, and there was no women allowed in that saloon, at no time. They couldn't come in there. My Dad had the ferris wheel, and the poker game and other gambling devices all in the saloon. Until 1909, and that was in Steamboat, they couldn't gamble in them saloons. And them other saloons, they were wide open, that is, there was women, and there was everything in there. The woman who ran that fast house was named Ollie Peterson, and that was the biggest prostitution house over there.

Anton continued, "Well, there was five saloons in there, and one of them was run by the fellow named Shorty Anderson. Then there was one saloon by the name of Durbin, and that was just a dive, a regular dive."

Mrs. Kline added, "My daddy always used to say any guy that took a drink of liquor and made a terrible face and shuddered was going to get drunk. He said you want to watch that guy, 'cause a guy who would drink liquor and really drink liquor, he liked the taste of it. Why, he probably never did get drunk."

Anton continued to speak about the time his father was held up. "That was when the railroad came in, and the railroad came in 1908. There was a bunch of hard rockers that was putting that cut in there by where the depot is. At that time this hard rocker come up there, and he was a Swede. As he held my dad up, I was standing by the end of the bar. Me and my brother always had to clean the saloon in the evening, see. So 'All right,' my dad says, 'my safe's open.'

"I remember that as if it were yesterday. Well, the robber went down there to the safe and got the money sack, and he came by the drawers and got all the cash out of them and walked over to the door. My dad was standing behind the bar all the time, see. I was scared, really. See, I was about nine years old at the time. When that man went to the door my dad knew he had to turn.

"My dad was a Northwest Mounted Police; he mustered out of the Candian government. He served about thirty years up there, and he was a crack shot. Well, when the man went to the door, and where Dad got that gun, I don't know, I don't know to this day, but Dad hit him right here. (Anton pointed to his wrist.) That gun and sack fell on the ground, and he went down and got the sack. 'That will show you, you son-of-a-\_\_\_\_\_, ' he said, 'now get out of here and don't come back.'"

"I will never forget it. I was standing at the end of the bar, just a kid yet, and my brother took off; he wouldn't stay. But I couldn't run 'cause I was too scared."

Bob Swinehart told us more about the bars in Brooklyn. "If you went into one of the bars at Brooklyn, a drink would cost you 15 cents, or two for a quarter, and beer was a nickle."

I asked him if the beer was warm or cold. "Oh yes, it'd have ice ya' know. They'd cut the ice, and store it there in Brooklyn. They had an ice house and they'd sell it around town. There was no such things as refrigerators in those days.

"Oh yes, I used to go over there and have a lot of fun. The bars never closed, they were open all night, and during the day too. They had a long bar with a big room. Ten to twelve people could get in the bar. Thirty-five to forty could get in the saloon all together. I don't remember the first time I ever went to the bars; I 'spect I must have been eighteen. I don't think they were suppose to sell it to anyone under twenty-one, but I think they did anyway."

Bob even mentioned that drunk riding back then is the same as drunk driving today. "Oh yes, if you were on a horse and went to town and raced down the street or something like that, you bet, if you done something very bad, they would fine you maybe five dollars, or something like that."

*Could a person get arrested  
for drunk riding?*

Bob Swinehart told me about the cattle drives. "We used to drive through to Wolcott. We would drive the cows there, from here. There were a lot of cowboys coming through from Craig. It was a good cattle country down there, ya' know. Cowboys now can't think about riding 25-30 miles; that was nothing then, ya know.

*"Cowboys...they were real  
cowboys in those days."*

"We'd drive our cattle to Wolcott. It took near a week to get out there. 15-16 miles a day is as much as you drive cattle. You could make it faster, but they'd lose too much weight. We'd get, oh, thirty dollars for a good steer."

It was mentioned that the cattle companies came out to Brooklyn, and the cowboys would go to the saloons. Bob continued to say with humor ... "Oh yes, everytime. That was their headquarters. Whenever they'd come to town, well, they used to gather their cattle here and then take them to Wolcott to ship them from there. That's 75 miles out to Wolcott, and then they were shipped to Denver or where ever they wanted to go from there. Now, of course, they ship from here (Steamboat), but that was before the railroad, you know."

As for fun and recreation, baseball was a game well enjoyed in Brooklyn. The big game was always between Steamboat and Craig. "Well I'll tell ya, we used to go to Craig to play, and it'd take us three days. We'd go down with a four horse team and a wagon, and we'd play two games the next day and come home the third day. So it'd take us three days to play a game with Craig, an they'd come up here and do the same. There was a good field over in Brooklyn. After a game we used to go in for a beer.

"We had two teams there at one time, men's team and a boy's team. I was the first one that the men picked out of the boy's team to play with them, see? Then I played with the men. Those are some of my happiest days, playing baseball. I don't know why they don't have a team here now. They have softball ... that's a sissy game.

"Fourth of July was a big celebration, over in Brooklyn, and so was what we called Pioneer's Day. That was the big days early in September. There was horse races, and jumping contests and all that sort of thing ... cowboys ... they were real cowboys in those days."

Now when we look at the memories of Brooklyn we remember many things. This is a quote that depicts Brooklyn when recalling that little community so well liked and yet hated by many town dwellers..."A very merry, dancing, drinking, laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time." — The Secular Masque