

**“The type of restaurant you’d like to find.”
The Pine Grove.**



**“Something that has some history, real good
food at the right price.”**

By Jodi Lacko

Many people hear the name Pine Grove Ranch and visualize succulent lobster, juicy prime rib, luscious teriyaki chicken, twice baked potatoes and cinnamon rolls. Other people from our community remember the Pine Grove Ranch as a dairy farm on a hay producing ranch with cattle and horses in the floor of the Yampa Valley. Three Wire Winter wanted to know more about the history of the Pine Grove, and we were sure that there were old timers in the area who remembered the Pine Grove Ranch as “the way it wuz.”

We spoke with Howard and Dave Lindow, present owners of the Pine Grove Ranch, and Mrs. Leroy Nefzger former owner of the ranch. They helped fill in the past and present history.

Mrs. Nefzger began the history when she and her husband came to Steamboat. “We came to Steamboat in the 1930’s and leased the Pine Grove Ranch. You know, in the 1930’s everyone went broke. We had two choices — Florida or Steamboat Springs, so we flipped a coin and came here. I’ll tell you that was a ‘four wire winter’ not a ‘three.’ When we arrived here the first day of April, 1930, it was the most ungodly

thing we'd seen. Snow was drifted and piled in heaps, and it took about 15 years to adjust to the wintertime. It was fun when we were young and learning to ski, but now as I grow older it seems to be more difficult."



"The brand is the little rocking B or the quarter circle B."

"We had over 200 acres, and we bought registered hereford cows. We had them until I disposed of them in 1979. At one time they didn't make good money, so we bought dairy cows. The ranch had been a dairy once before. We were in the business for eight years, the final count. It wasn't a paying business. The milk had to be trucked out, so when they closed the milk plant down everyone went out of business.



"Nicholas Lacosta, a Russian Count traded the ranch for an apartment house in Denver."

"We had close to 200 head of cattle. It was an up and down business. I recall 1952 as being a good year, and in 1967 we took herefords to

Ogdon, Utah, where they sold very well. We even had to lease land down by Tree Haus. When highway 40 was built it cut the ranch in half. After that it seemed to be crowded and a hazard."

In conclusion Mrs. Nefzger told me about how she felt about her ranch being turned into a restaurant. "As a rancher, I just thought that it wasn't going to be good. They really fixed it up, you know, and it was so changed. I could see up in the hay barn they had put in a dancing floor.

"I said I'd never eat there because I could just see all those sick animals and all that manure, but I have eaten there several times and enjoyed it. I don't smell a thing. The Lindows are very nice people. Mrs. Lindow took pictures that we had and had them made into prints that are on display now in the restaurant."

Howard Lindow came to Steamboat Springs in 1974 by the urging of his son, David. David had



begun the Pine Grove Ranch Restaurant in 1970 and his father came out to help. He told us, "I'm from Minnesota. I originally graduated from college as an agriculture engineer, and I only worked at that three years. I suppose this is as close as I've gotten to agriculture since."

**"I could just see all that manure,
I said I'd never eat there."**

Mr. Lindow told me how the Pine Grove Ranch was turned into the Pine Grove Restaurant. He also told me a little about the history and the changes that were made for the restaurant to be established. "It was a barn at one time occupied by horses. David bought the old barn in 1970 along with the ranch building. It was a dairy farm at one time also, but the latest business was horses. I believe that either Stetson or Camilletti had the horses last. I don't know exactly how they used the horses, but I think in 1970 they had a chariot team. I think the barn is about 70 years old."



“Sometimes we do as many as 400 dinners.”

Mr. Lindow continued with even earlier history of the ranch. “It was originally homesteaded about 1890. The principal figure back in that time was Jerry McWilliams. He was a state senator, cattle dealer and rancher. He sold the ranch to Nicholas Lacosta, a Russian Count. Nicholas Lacosta lived here then sold to another man who in turn rented it to the Nefzgers. The Nefzgers, of course, still ranch over on highway 131. Now the only thing that sounds like a trumped up story is Nicholas Lacosta being a Russian Count. Supposedly he had traded this ranch for an apartment house in Denver.”

“I always wanted to find a good restaurant.”

He went on to tell us a story about Nicholas Lacosta. “About two years ago I was in the restaurant one evening and a man Boris Lacosta called me over to the table and said he was born here on the ranch and is now a lawyer in San Francisco. He just wanted to know me in con-

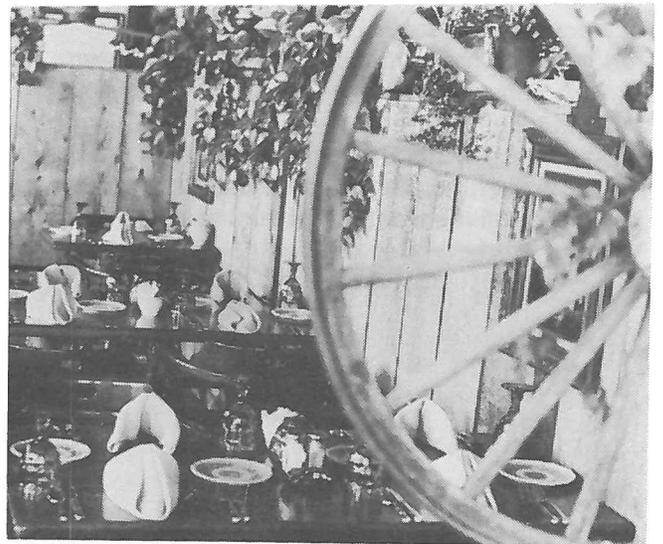
**“I sure wish I had it now;
that was a beautiful place.”**

versation. Boris went to school with John Fetcher, who lives up here and also of all coincidences a friend of mine back in St. Paul. Sam Morgan, an attorney, went to school with Boris. They all went to Harvard. Sam in turn has a son who’s out here, Hank Morgan, he is in the contracting business. The whole thing ties together, so there’s no holes in the whole works.”

Mr. Lindow told me about the restoring and

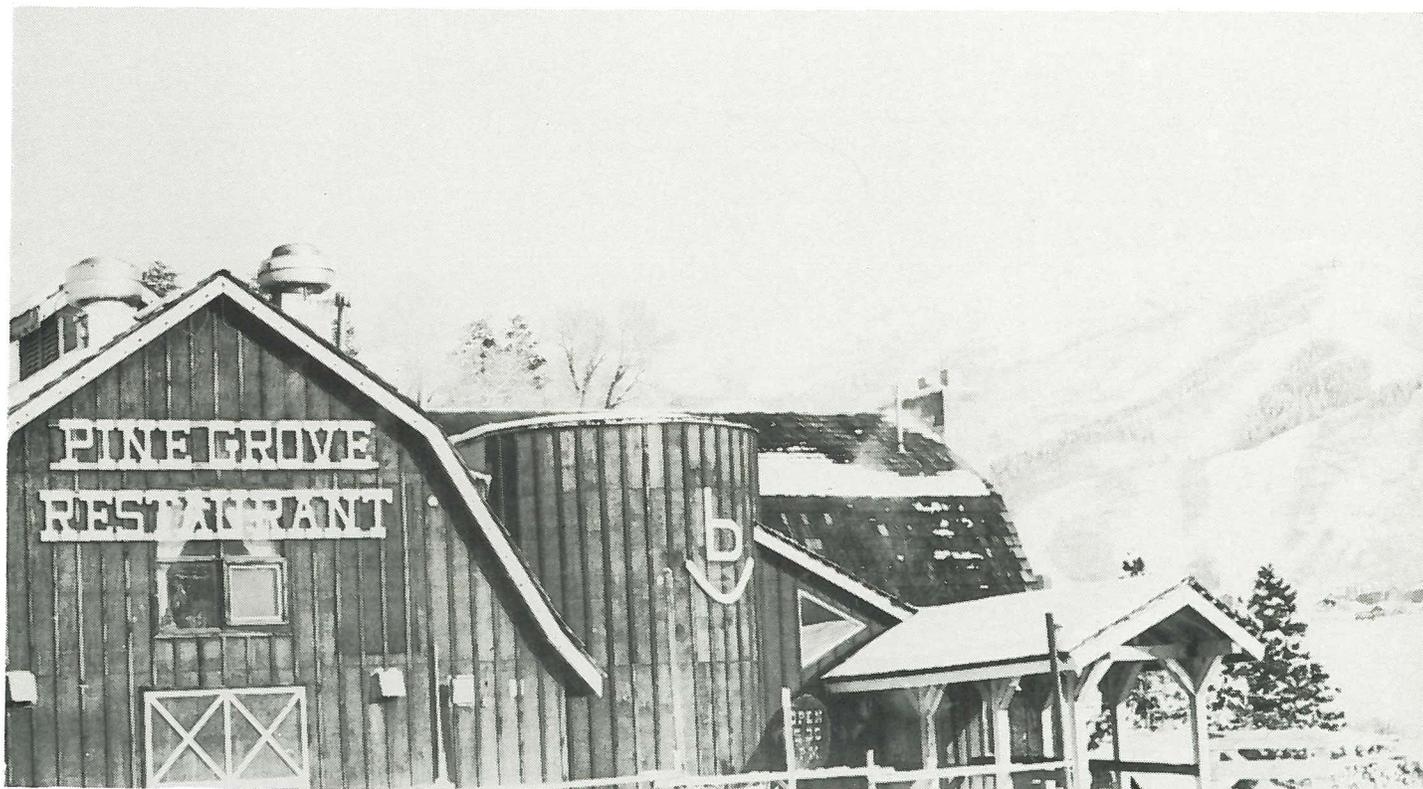
building they did. “I think the ranch house was a gift to Jerry McWilliams’ wife when they married. The original barn stood right where the Pine Grove Apartments are now. The picture we have here of the ranch house is rather interesting because when the house was torn down there was a log cabin in the center. The siding had been put on and it looked like a regular clapboard siding building. Actually it was a log cabin which had been covered up. The old ranch house stove that is upstairs was still in the kitchen when we bought it. It’s being used for shelves and cupboard space. The other stove in the back salad bar was out in the back yard. It was rusty, but we cleaned it and brought it in and used it for a salad bar. The salad bar stove, the one in the main salad bar, was in the kitchen being used. The original house stood right where the Pine Grove Apartments are now. McWilliams had another kitchen built on to the original like an additional kitchen.”

Howard Lindow went on to tell me how they preserved the antiques that they had found in the yard and around the old barn. “Most of the furnishings we have here were all found in the yard or around the ranch. There were a lot of abandoned antiques when we bought the restaurant. The horse collars and decorations were found, but some of them were bought. A lot of things accumulated in the process of building.



The salad bar stove the one in the main salad bar was in the kitchen being used. There are a number of things that were left here like the sleigh runners we have downstairs on the wall, Frank Stetson said bad things about them many times after he stumbled over them in the weeds.”

**“There’s a huge grove of pines
to the west.”**



“We’re proud that we’re a part of Steamboat were trying to keep it that way and make everybody proud of us as a restaurant as well as a ranch.”

Mr. Lindow got into what the brand stands for and how the restaurant got its name. “The brand was the quarter circle B that we have on the restaurant. I believe the Nefzgers still use the same brand. It’s also called the Little Rocking B. The name was given to the Pine Grove restaurant the same as was given to the ranch. It’s been known as the Pine Grove Ranch all the way back to the beginning. I never changed the name, but just continued it.”

Howard told me a little about the waiters and waitresses. He also told me about their delicious food at the Pine Grove Restaurant. “We have about 40 employees both male and female, girls as well as guys. It started out being all male waiters but as the girls worked, they got the chance to try — that’s how it works. The business

varies a lot — it could be anywhere from 100 to 300 dinners a night depending on the season. Initially we started out and one of the favorites was pork ribs. Later the prime rib became more and more important, now the trout is becoming very important. We try to fix trout so that when people come out here they’ll remember trout as a delicious thing.

“Many well known people have visited the Pine Grove Restaurant. The visitors have included Henry Fonda and the whole Kennedy family. One of the things which has kept the Pine Grove Restaurant going is the great food and the satisfied returning customers. We’re proud that we’re a part of Steamboat. We’re trying to keep it that way and make everyone proud of us as a restaurant as well as a ranch.”

Elisabeth Schnackenberg said, “I hate to see inflation come here!”

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