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# PLAIN BROWN RAPPER

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News for the Tandy and Grace Brown Family

March, 1999

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## THE METROPOLITAN HOTEL



This picture is of the Metropolitan Hotel as it was in about 1925-30. My car expert, a treasure in our family, our son in law Walter Nash tells me the car in front of the hotel was built circa 1926. This picture was taken from 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Carey Avenue (formerly Ferguson Street). The Railroad Depot is also on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, two blocks East of the hotel. There were fire hydrants, concrete curb and sidewalk and the street was paved. Even has drainage for rain and melting snow runoff. Built in late 1800's it was razed in 1946. The sign on the back to attract the Railroad customers says, "LUNCHES/TRAVELERS/OPEN ALL NIGHT" and could be seen from the trains pulling into town. The sign on the side which is covered by the mar on the picture is priceless, it says "Beer/Buffer/Lunches/Curb Service." High up on the end of the building, carved into the stone it says, "METROPOLITAN HOTEL."

**I**n Cheyenne's early history, we were the cross roads of the nation because rail transportation was the easiest and fastest way to get from one place to another and

we had both the North-South (Burlington and Northern) connection as well as the East-West (Union Pacific). The Union Pacific came to Cheyenne in about 1865,



before it was a city. We were called "Hell on Wheels" and some other uncomplimentary names. After the railroad, the cattle industry boomed (again because of the ease of railroad transportation) and in 1879, Wyoming gave women the right to vote and we were on a par with St. Louis which was considered the most modern place West of the Mississippi.

In the late 1880's, there was a blizzard that nearly ruined the cattle industry, but we prevailed because of the railroad and in 1890 Wyoming became a state. The Metropolitan Hotel was equal to the Interocean Hotel which was considered the finest until it burned. Teddy Roosevelt stayed at the Metropolitan as did Jessie and Frank James, the Younger Brothers and other notables. In about 1922, Mollie Parker joined Charlie Eidam as proprietors of the hotel.

Mary Elizabeth (Mollie) Parker was mother's mother and we called her Grandma Eidam. Charlie Eidam was husband number 4 or 5 or 6 (we're not sure which) and we called him Grandpa Eidam. Leah has contributed this fun narrative from her memories when she was a child going to the hotel and the times she, June and Betty helped at the hotel making beds.

### Memories of the Metropolitan Hotel by Leah Shriver:

**A**fter several failed marriages, Mollie Parker met Charlie Eidam who was a hard headed Dutchman, younger than she. Mollie and Charlie were married in February of 1922 at Kimball, Nebraska.

*They had to go to Nebraska because Cheyenne had an ordinance governing the number of times you could be married in Laramie County and Grandma Eidam had gone over the limit. Their marriage was probably one of convenience for there was never any romance connected with it, just a plain and simple business deal and I'm sure the reason it lasted so long was because Eidam was a person who didn't give up easily and hung around all those years. They took over the proprietorship of the Metropolitan Hotel in the same year as their marriage.*

*The hotel was considered one of the finest in it's day and one of my most vivid memories was going into the big bridal suite which we loved. It was a large room, with a bed and a bathroom of it's own. The big windows looked out over the rail road and it had a fireplace. Very plush! The suite was used by newly weds, but also the VIP's and notables who stayed at the hotel.*

*Betty, June and I were commissioned by mother to help Grandma Eidam make beds at the hotel. Sometimes we had a hard time deciding which one of us was going down to the hotel to do this job. A lot of the times Betty, the sister between June and I got to stay home and help mother and June and I went down to help at the hotel.*

*I can remember there were a lot of old (they seemed old to us probably because we were very young or they were very old) men that stayed around the hotel. If they couldn't pay their rent, they did jobs around the hotel. One I remember the most was an old man, who we thought for many years*



was an uncle, but was just an old "hanger-  
oner" named Elgin. None of us kids liked  
him, he was a creepy, funny little guy. He  
worked at the front desk and did menial  
jobs around the hotel. June and I always  
wanted to go into Elgin's room up on the  
third floor. We would sneak up there but  
we could never get into the room to see  
what was going on. In our imagination, we  
always knew he was a Nazi Spy. But I'm  
sure he wasn't, he was just a goofy old guy  
that stayed there at the hotel and worked for  
Grandma Eidam. Sometimes he cooked for  
them and sometimes he did other jobs, but  
mostly he stood behind the counter and took  
the money. We never knew what happened  
to him

Grandma had another old fella who we  
loved named Henry. The story was that he  
had gotten into a bar fight over a girl friend  
and he killed the man. He was sent to  
prison for a time and when he was released,  
he came to the hotel. Grandma had him  
always go before us and open each door to  
the room we were to clean, checking to be  
sure there wasn't anyone or anything in the  
room that would be harmful for us girls to  
see. He would empty the commode, the  
pitcher and bowl. In those old hotels, there  
would only be one bathroom at the end of  
the hall and in each room was a commode  
(or slop jar as we called them) for the  
people to use during the night. Henry  
always took care of those for us and we  
never had to touch them. The pitcher was  
full of water and the bowl was used to wash  
their hands and face. After Henry cleared  
everything out, we went in to change the  
bed.

Changing the bed was certainly different  
from how we do it today. You took the  
bottom sheet off and put it in the laundry.  
Took the top sheet and put it on the bottom.  
A clean sheet went on top, then the blanket  
and spread and the bed was made. If the  
sheets weren't too bad, you just brushed  
them off and made it up. Not the way I  
would want it, but they didn't seem to mind.

Another old man, who must have paid  
rent because he didn't work around the  
hotel, but was always there and nice to us,  
a Mr. O'Brien. He always made sure we  
had a big bag of firecrackers for the 4th of  
July and he kept bags of candy, things like  
that. We loved Mr. O'Brien. I have no idea  
what ever became of him or Henry but they  
were two of our favorites.

Grandma Eidam had several old fellas  
that hung around there.

She was great, if people couldn't pay  
their rent, she would keep their belongings  
and a lot of times there would be jewelry,  
watches and things like that. She kept the  
good stuff in the hotel safe. We all  
wondered when we were going to get to see  
what was in that safe, but we never did and  
we never knew what happened to the safe or  
when it was opened or anything more about  
it. The Hotel was torn down in the '40's  
and we still don't know what happened to  
the contents of that old safe.....

Frank would be a good one to send some  
memories about being a "Call Boy." Now,  
a Call Boy is not even close to being a "Call  
Girl," these young fellas were hired by the  
railroad to wake up the train crews and tell  
them when their trains were scheduled to  
run. In those days, there weren't any  
phones in the rooms of hotels and not very



*many in people's homes, so these "Call Boys" went around on their bicycles to notify the workers. Many of the men stayed in rooms in the "red light" district and they had to go there to wake up the train crews. We hope Frank will give us some of those stories about some of the places he had to go to call the men. He always said those painted ladies were very nice to him.*

*Remember the early West had some questionable morals, and there were always lots of whispers about the "ladies" on the third floor of the hotel. The Red Light District and the hotel were all in the same area.*

*(Editors note: Cheyenne had old tunnels under the streets from the Capitol Building to downtown; the Plains Hotel, the Frontier Hotel, several of the bars and etc., so the legislators and others could sneak away for a dalliance without being seen by their wives or anyone else. During the flood of 1985, many of those tunnels filled up and there were lots of laughs from people who didn't know they existed.)*

*Across the street from the hotel was one such establishment called the "Modern Rooms." When we had to go down to the hotel after a school program or something, Mother would always say, "don't look at those ladies!" and you know what that did, it just made our curiosity bubble and we could not wait to see all those pretty ladies who wore lots of make up. We wondered why all those men went up and down those stairs all the time. Those dumb little, naive, Brown kids, we'd watch them and thought they were so pretty.*

*One of the things that always fascinated me was when one of those girls would come across the street to the hotel and go up into one of the rooms. When we asked Grandma*

*Eidam what they were doing, she told us they were "just borrowing my iron". We always wondered just exactly what it was they were pressing...., they were in those rooms for quite a while.*

*Sometimes there were some men that didn't want to rent a room, but were just going to sit and play cribbage or pinochle in the lobby until they were called to work. At 10 p.m., Eidam would shut out all the lights except for a little 15 watt bulb that hung above the table and this was all the light they had to play their game.*

*He was such a tight wad and always going to save a dollar. He would prowl the alleys and collect garbage. A very strange fellow. We called him Grandpa Eidam because he was the only Grandpa we ever knew.*

*There were many incidents that took place at the hotel. One time there was a man who had stayed in his room for about two days and June and I wanted to see what he was doing. Above every door there was a transom, a small window that opened and let air into the room. It was too high (the ceilings were about 16 feet and the doors were about 8 feet high), for us to reach the transom to look in. We found a ladder Eidam used to put in light bulbs and we decided to take a peek. We took the ladder to the room and leaned it up against the door. I'm sure we made a lot of noise with our whispering and dragging the ladder down the hall. June stayed at the bottom of the ladder and I was climbing up when the old guy yelled "Boo" and scared us to death. We ran screeching down the hall. We knew he would get us and God knows what would*



*happen then. That was one of the funniest memories I have.*

*There were lots of things which took place but we were sure some of the old men were trying to make passes at us. There was one old guy that smiled all the time and we called him "chessie" cat. We were probably the worst smartalecky girls that ever lived. When we would have to go down to the hotel and work we would just be nasty. Betty was liked by all of them. She was a sweetheart and was nice to everyone. But June and I were nasty. We weren't nice and treated them bad — Betty was their favorite.*

*Cheyenne has lost so many of their historical buildings; the Library, Post Office, Opera House where Jenny Linde sang. The old Metropolitan Hotel would have been one of the cities treasures. It was torn down like I said in the late '40's. It had a dance hall that was about five steps down from the lobby. In the dance hall was a beautiful bar and Grandma Eidam's quarters were down there, just off the hall. If her door was shut, we knew we better not go there. We never knew why, but our active imaginations gave us lots of speculation and ideas about what was going on there. There was also, on that lower level, the laundry room with two great big tumbler style washers. Grandma would do all the laundry there and hang the sheets on lines in the basement. She had huge blocks of homemade lye soap and she shaved them into the wash tubs.*

*During the time the Eidam's had the hotel, there was never any dancing, but the hotel was, for it's time in history, an exquisite place and it's a shame that we don't have*

*more memories of it. I hope this will jog the memories of other family members and perhaps they can furnish more of them from the old hotel.*



This is a picture of the Metropolitan Hotel taken circa 1940 when it was decorated for Frontier Days.

## **DAD'S WILD TALES, by Leah**

**P**lease know, the next memories about Grandma and her early days were stories that Dad told. I'm sure there will be some of you wondering whether or not they are true. Remember, Dad was a great story teller and whether they are truth or fiction, I don't know, I just hope you all enjoy this:

**T**hese stories are ones told us by our father, Tandy P. Brown. Dad told us how Grandma Eidam and mother came to Cheyenne. Grandma was Mary Elizabeth (Mollie) Davis. Born in Eureka Springs, Carroll County, Arkansas, the oldest child of James B. Davis and Caledonia S. (Cassie) Hall. She married Will Parker, a surveyor for the Union Pacific Railroad. Will came across Wyoming with the rail tracks bringing workers, equipment and as always, the ladies of the night. Will came to Wyoming without Mollie so she packed up



*Gracie and followed him in a wagon. Mollie got to Cheyenne after many trials and tribulations. I don't know how he knew it other than Mother or Grandma Eidam may have told him.*

*He told of how they had to follow a river, probably the Platte River, and when they sighted Indians, Grandma would hide along the river bank with mother. Grandma Eidam was probably one of the originators of "Women's Liberation." Some of the things she did in her day we would not consider proper in this day and time. 'We all loved our Grandmother, but we realized she was quite a "Roque" at times. When she and mother came to Cheyenne I believe mother was only about four years old. Grandmother Eidam which I'll call "Mollie", went to work as a cook in the Railroad camps where Will Parker was a surveyor. At some point they were divorced and that left Mollie without any means of support for she and Gracie. She went to work as a waitress at Manawall's Dance Hall and Eating Establishment in Cheyenne. She met Katie Garry and they became long time friends. Katie, I believe was never married. But Mollie had stayed with her and their friendship lasted for many years. Vivian, Anna and Roy probably have more information about that time in her life, I can only go by stories that Dad told and we aren't too sure they are true. He was a great story teller. Mother and Grandma lived in Ault, Colorado for a while and I don't know of any memories from there. As time went on she managed a couple of different hotels in Cheyenne.*

*You know the rest from the Metropolitan Hotel story.*

**In Memorial**  
**Our family mourns the loss**  
**of Bob Yenney**  
**husband of Kathy French**  
**father of Peter, Frankie and**  
**LeAnna**  
**Born February 29, 1944**  
**Died February 28, 1999**

Bob Yenney was one of those wonderful people we all loved and he will be missed by this family and his friends. He graduated from the University of Wyoming, School of Agriculture and after graduation he returned to Washington State to work on his father's farms, The Yenney Farms.

While he was at the University, he married Kathy French, Anna and Norman's daughter, and became a member of the Brown Family.

If you want to send a card, Kathy's address is:

Kathy Yenney

54043 Matthews Lane

Milton Freewater, OR 97862

Memorials can be given to The Multiple Sclerosis

and, the good news is:

Vivian is out of the hospital and on the mend. She called this morning (March 1) and said she was up and moving and getting better each day.

Continued Prayers:

Anna and Kathy Yenney

Bill Brown (Mike's son)

Birthdays:

Marty Brown

Frank Brown

Marilyn Brown

March 15

April 8

April 19