# Interview with Emma Grauberger on July, 19, 2001 at Alpine Lodge Red Feather Lakes, Colorado



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## Interview with Emma Grauberger July 19, 2011, at Alpine Lodge Red Feather Lakes, Colorado

### **Interview and transcription by Linda Bell**

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### From Greeley to Red Feather Lakes, Colorado – a Shared Passion

I was born in Colorado, and so was my husband. I was born in a farmhouse, east of Pierce, Colorado. My husband was born in Windsor District. Natives....

I am Swedish. (My maiden name) is not a name anyone has ever heard in the United States, and if anybody has, I'd like to know it: Stargrant. None of us know how they made Stargrant out of what it was supposed to be. These (relatives) did have a name in Swedish, but then they changed it. I think it should have been "Chilberg." That's what I was told, but they made it Stargrant. If I'd listened to my family way back when and written things down ... but I didn't. You think you're going to remember. I tell people to write things down, on pictures for instance.

We used to come up here fishin' before we were married, so after we were married, we still did. We had a plaster and drywall business in Greeley for many years. It got so his elbows were bothering him, so we came up here.

We bought a lot up here with the intentions of building a cabin. But we ended up buying a store in the Village from Ruth Miller – I think Ted Blakney and Jack Dalton had interests in it as well. (It's) where the hardware store is now, we started it – it was just more or less an empty building. I had a little gift shop. We had groceries, and gas and gift shop, and we fixed flat tires. All sorts of things. It was called Chalet Gift Shop. That was in 1969. We started those groceries, and little by little we kept adding until we had a "King Soopers" or something. You got to have what people need. We had a good business. Our kids were still young. They worked, and didn't get paid. When we bought the store, then we ended up selling the lot. We lived in the back storeroom and a camper, with an outhouse.

We would often go over to the bar and café (Red Feather Bar and Café) in the evenings and dance to the jukebox, drink a little, had lots of good times. Many a night over there.... Sometime there would be a fight, one of the lumberjacks....

Sometimes someone would knock at the door late at the night; their car got stuck at Chicken Park, or they had a flat, and Art would get up and go off with them in the pickup or fix what needed to be fixed. He was always good humored about it.

We were here both winter and summer. The first winter we were kind of back and forth because the kids were in school in Greeley. We'd go down through the week and the lady, Louise Stevens, who had the Red Feather Café and Bar, (she)'d watch the store for us and sold stuff if people needed anything while we were gone. That way, if they needed things, they could get it. We had three children, a boy and two girls.

When we had the store, there was this lady named Bernice George that ran the fire lookout tower. She used to send messages down with the Forest Service guys or whoever and they'd bring in a list of things she needed. My kids would take it up to her – up to the tower. She had to stay up there and watch for fires.

Then we had some gals up from Denver that always shopped with us. They were retired nurses and they came in – this was after the Alpine burnt down – and they said, "Why don't you buy that place and make a trailer park?" So we did. Then we said, "oh Lordy, how we goin' to pay for that?"

My husband started getting it all cleaned up. It was a mess. All that from the lodge burnin' and then there was a motel unit that set back, and we had to get rid of that. He started makin' trailer spots, one by one. The nurses were the first with trailers – the ones from Denver.

Jimmie O'Rorke's cabins were all here but all run down. They didn't burn in the fire. The windows were broke out and we had to fix them up too. In fact we rented this one (the Alpine office home and cabin) to some boys that were going to college but came up here to work in the forest. We rented this to them without any windows. They had a couple of goats. And of course, there was one lady who just had fits, she lived up here on Ramona Lake, and she said, "We just got to get rid of them. That's just terrible, them goats down there." Well, the goats kept the grass down.... They wouldn't bother anybody. Those boys worked hard all day and went to Trout Lodge and took showers at night and came in and went to bed.

We bought Alpine Lodge in 1971. We ran both businesses until 1976. My husband's name was Arthur, but people called him "Tiny." In the Greeley area, a lot of people called him Tiny. But up here, he was mostly Art – Art Grauberger. He was a big man.

We sold the store in 1976. People took over the grocery. There were four owners after us. The last ones left – owing. We sold it to Dean Castleman. They had it about a year and a half. We leased it with option to buy. They exercised their lease. Then they sold it.

The Alpine Lodge burned quick, it happened before anybody really knew it. Kenny Stevens was coming down in the fire truck to put it out, but the brakes didn't work so he went sailing by. It burned in '70 – oh I know, I'd been down in Greeley with the kids and we came back and as we come by I said, "oh look, it's gone." I'm thinking it was in the spring of the year, 1970. It was open all year 'round. Max and Maggie Tippet ran it. At the time it burned, there were live monkeys in the lodge and it was said they may have caused the fire.

We bought (the Alpine) from Ray Higley. He owned the larger portion, the lodge and restaurant part which I think was originally built by the Metzler family. I don't know if the Metzlers named it Alpine Lodge or whether it was Ray Higley. Then Gene Barker owned a smaller portion and we paid him rent until we got tired of him going to Hawaii on our money, so we paid him off, and bought it from him. He owned the motel part.

We made all the trailer sites and we also rent out Jimmie's old cabins. The large lodge and restaurant were where my gift shop sits now. It was a (big) building, two-story. The well housing right under the Alpine sign, that was the well Jimmie dug with the REA's electric while they weren't here. Yeah, that's the original well. And I have another one up there that we use. We don't use that original one anymore.

I have tried to find pictures of the Alpine. Some of the Metzlers\* when they've been here, from Missouri or wherever over in eastern Colorado ... I've asked them.

<sup>\*</sup>The Metzlers made an exchange with Jimmie O'Rorke for his cabin camp, using their cabin which was still under construction at the time as down payment. O'Rorke still owns the old Metzler cabin which he's used as a base in Red Feather Lakes since the late 1950s.

Then some of the people who lived here way back when, that were loggers – like "Swede" Selander, or Lee Rye – they said, "oh yeah, we've got pictures, we'll send you one" but I've never heard anything. I've tried Jimmie O'Rorke and Gene Barker. Jimmie said he didn't (have any pictures) but then, he's got such a mess.... I called the assessor's office, but they didn't have anything. They have pictures of my place now for tax purposes. They suggested the library or the museum, but I daresay they don't have any. I've been up here now 42 years.

The 100 foot easement along the road from the corner of 74E, that the Quaintances kept when Jimmie bought the land originally, was used as a leech field when the establishment was a restaurant/motel, and up until recently it was still used that way. Maybe Barker built it but never bought the land. Last year I came to an agreement with the Bradley family, so now we both have easement rights on it – for the leech field and as road access to Quaintance property to the west if or when they want it.

### Life at "the Lodge"

My son named the Alpine Lodge streets  $-2^{nd}$ ,  $3^{rd}$ . That's Lowell. Sheri and Tammy are my daughters. They've never worked here, they have their own things. They are just names on the business. They do a little bit if they come, but they try to stay away. My oldest daughter Sheri lives in Oregon. Tammy lives in Severance, Colorado. My son lives down south of Castlerock.

I own the small "Ghostbuster" trailer at the Alpine – that was just a name it had on it already – and two large ones, including one for handicapped clients, but all the others are seasonal rentals paying to park.

My clients come from all over – out of state, but mostly Denver, Loveland and Fort Collins, Greeley. I have a couple from Cheyenne who come once a month. They make reservations ahead until the end of the year, once a month, they have their weekend. She'll give me next year's reservations before the end of summer. They always have Cabin #1.

My clients sometimes call me – one of my trailer guys started it years ago. My name of course is Emma, and he started calling me "enema." After my husband died I still kept the car, although I've never driven, I'd have someone take me to town with it. And so, we got the license plates put in, which said "enema." I often wondered why people would be laughing when I came out of the store. (Laughter)

Last year we had the sheriff, and before that, I had some brothers who were on drugs. I had to have the sheriff come. They said they hadn't done anything, but you could smell it – we found their pipe too. We had to get rid of them. I don't allow anything like that. Then last year we had a domestic violence in my one rental. The lady said, "call the cops" so I did, and the sheriff came, and he handcuffed the guy right away. But it ended up it was the woman who was the problem. He didn't take her to jail, but he should have. She threw a beer bottle or something at him and he dodged and it knocked out my window. They had to replace the window and all. This is a gal who has been here before previous years and she did some apologizing. The clients haven't changed much over the years. It's pretty much the same people.

I was going to tell you, this gal who had the domestic violence, a few years ago she and a man friend came up fishing and stayed in the cabin, probably in either 2008 or 2009. He was a really nice guy. He wanted to go fishing in the private lakes so I got him a pass. I said, "now you got to obey the rules and all" and he ... I think they caught all but one fish. He had one fish left to catch and they were up at Erie. The fish took his fishing pole in the lake, so he took his clothes off and dove in after it. And that was the end of him. His girlfriend said he came up once and that was it. The rescue crew found him and they found his pole also, with a 24 inch trout on it. He died, he hyperventilated. Those lakes are cold. That cost me money. He had wanted to stay another night in the cabin, but he didn't have any money with him, so I said "OK, send it to me when you get home." Of course the fishing pass too, he was going to pay me for that too after he got home. His family or whoever they were who came to get him told me, "we'll see that you get it" but it's been a few years. I suppose I would have sent something for the funeral and all. This way, it was about \$100. That's why I can't make any money! (Laughter)

My kids don't get up here often. When they can, but they're all so busy with their jobs. My son is gone most of the time traveling. And my daughter only has the weekends, and sometimes she works weekends. On the refrigerator are pictures of kids, grandkids and great-grandkids. My oldest granddaughter has five children. My last wedding was for my youngest daughter at Severance. She was 32 before she got married. It was in Greeley she got married. She has two girls now. One is going to be a sophomore at UNC and the other is 16 today. My eldest daughter works for the government. They live up in Oregon. She was here though in Estes Park. She was working for the Rocky Mountain National Park up on Trail Ridge. Then there was an opening up at Boisie, Idaho, that she'd applied for and that came and she left me. I really miss her because she was coming up about every two weeks. She'd do some stuff for me. But that put her closer to home and my son-

in-law. He was up at Vale, Oregon, taking care of the house and chickens and she's down here at Estes Park.... She'd fly home about once a month to make sure that he was doing what he was supposed to. Now that she's in Boise she's about an hour and a half from home.

In the winter I still have some clients. The couple from Cheyenne once a month and the Schwan's ice cream man, he comes once every two weeks and stays in a cabin over Friday and Saturday. He comes up here and then covers Glacier View and Red Feather with his truck, then goes down – he stays Friday nights. Other than that, there's not much that goes on here in the winter time. Sometimes in winter I go to my daughter's in Oregon. They have chickens and geese and turkeys. I usually go at Christmastime. Then after Christmas, it's tax time. I work puzzles sometimes, other than that – it's soon time to start over again.

At some point I opened that dumb gift shop, though, 1980 I guess it was. The shop building was the old (toll) gate house for Redfeather Mountain Lakes Assoc, in the 1920s. It was white stucco with a tile roof. Sam Rogers skidded it over here so I could use it for a gift shop.

People from all over stop in, not just the clients here at Alpine. It gave me something to do back then. Now it's just about too much of everything, and they just have to give me time to get down there. That's why I got my golf cart. I can always drive my golf cart.

I do have help with the cabins. David White worked for me for six or seven years I think, then he quit last fall, so I've got two gals now who are working, cleaning. David ran the place whenever I had to go to the hospital. He was very dependable, reliable, he'd just take over, on top of all the jobs he has. He's the security guard at Fox Acres. He has his own gift line business, helps his mom, but he's a good worker. It started because I needed someone to get my mail. Someone suggested David, said he was a good worker. All of a sudden he ended up cleaning cabins. He cleaned the cabins, did laundry, collected rent, he made bank deposits for me, he did everything. You don't find too many people like that. There's nothing he cannot do. When they moved up here in the 1970s he was just starting high school. He had to work then – he worked at the Hill Top and the High Country Club. He'd plant some flowers and trees for some people, anything he could do earn some money. He got enough, so by the time he graduated, he got a pickup. Then he went into the (military) service and I lost track of him.

You can take pictures of the cabins -- # 2 is clean and empty. Then there is the old log cabin up on the hill. It's full of all my stuff. It was built when Jimmie O'Rorke had this place. I knew Jimmie's wife too. She used to stay up here when he was over in Panama or wherever he was. His son used to bring us some ... I can't think what they were called, they were from Guatemala. They were like capes. It was when we had the store – ponchos, woven ponchos. We'd sell them. Jimmie's wife stayed up here in the summertime, course she'd go down to town with the kids in the fall. I hardly ever saw Jimmie the whole time we had the store. She learned how to drive in her later years.

I've never driven. My husband drove. All the time we lived in Greeley, I could walk or use the city bus, or else he'd take me. Then when we moved up here of course he'd take me. One day a week we'd go into town because we had the store. We had to get supplies. It got to where we were going twice a week. I did learn how to pump gas!

I still don't drive. I have good people. Chuck and Carol Arent have hauled me an awful lot over the years, and done things for me. Ed Brunmeier's wife takes me to town – Cheryl. She's been doing it for ... lots of years.

I tried to drive, but I just couldn't handle it. That was way back, when I was a teenager. I think if I had to, I could – in an emergency. (Laughter) Course I could take my golf cart, but then I'd get fined if I take it on the highway. The kids gave it to me – it was my Christmas gift one year from them – and Earl (Deputy Sheriff Earl Fawcett) called me right away on the phone. He'd seen me and said he'd write me up a ticket if I got out on the road. I said, "I'll go the back way," and he says "I'll get 'ya" and I said, "Not if I walk across." I don't know if he's still got his ticket (for me) or not. In fact a few times I've snuck out around here when there's nothing coming, from one driveway to the next one.

#### **Mountain Friends and some Stories**

I was close to Sugarbabe. It's hard to describe Sugarbabe. She was quite the gal. Nobody was a stranger. She'd just come up and say, "Hi, I'm Sugarbabe." She got to be pretty well-known with her painting. When she first started it was decoupage. Then she started the painting and she'd say she wasn't very good. But ... she was very good.

She was married to Billy Carnnival. He worked for Mapelli – Sunny Mapelli, that's who had the ranch when they were here. \*

Mapelli sold it to the Roth brothers, and then Roths sold it to Jerry McMorris – the owners of the Rockies – then Jerry sold it to Monfort. But she could live there as long as she wanted. She was 79 or in her early 80s when she died. Her birthday was April 29<sup>th</sup>. I remember that. She was well-known all over. If you gave her something or paid her, she had to give you something back. Always. It might be a painting or whatever, but she had to give you something. We'd always say, "no Sugarbabe," but that was her way. She was from Innsbruck, Austria – German. She met Billy overseas and he's the one who nicknamed her Sugarbabe. Her name was Herta – and I can't pronounce the last name, I think it was Koch.

I don't know why he named her Sugarbabe. Billy died in the 1970s ... `77. She had two boys and a girl. As far as I know they are still in Denver. I think her one son has a place in Crystal Lakes. He comes up here periodically, but the other is in Denver. (Billy) lived on the place when Mapelli owned it, then he worked for Roths, he was dead by the time the Monforts owned it.

Coming from another country, Billy didn't help her to understand some things. She would get things confused or backwards, which would really be funny. She would try to pronounce words like they were supposed to be. We said "no" and she goes, "no, I've got to learn how to say Carol" – cause she couldn't say Carol, it was "Curl" for Carol Arent. We'd say, "Sugarbabe, stay as you are, that's the way we know 'ya. If she changed, she wouldn't be Sugarbabe.

My friends were Sugarbabe, and of course there was Carol and Chuck Arent, and ... there are people, no matter if you're in pickle or can't do anything, they're there for `ya. If they say they'll do something, they'll do it. You can always depend on Chuck and Carol, which is more than one can say for a lot of people. (Also) Audrey and Rick Robinson – Audrey called him "Rickie Baby."

(I remember) a dance at (Stuart and Shirley) Maxwell's Ranch. Owen Fender got quite drunk and almost fell over the stair rail, but didn't; however he "180ed" his

<sup>\*</sup>The Ranch where Sugarbabe and Billy Carnival lived when he was manager was originally homesteaded by Emmet Harris, before becoming the John Hardin Ranch, then the Ben Scott Ranch. Until a few years ago it was owned by the Monforts of Greeley. It is now owned by Ana and Alex Bogusky. As Lafi Miller notes in his book *Those Crazy Pioneers*, p. 37; "(This ranch seems to be a plaything for rich people and changes hands frequently.)"

car across the road later that night on the way home, so guests returning to Red Feather after him could not move him or get home. (I came) home earlier with Audrey and Rick Robinson. We left early because I had slipped on the slippery dance floor and hurt my tailbone. (I remember) the house had some gunshot in it, maybe near or behind where an elk head is hung. Owen Fender owned the High Country and Trout Lodge. We had our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary upstairs at the High Country Club. There was a skinny spiral staircase you had to climb to get upstairs and it was sometimes hard for the waitresses – they were all neatly uniformed waitresses too. We had wonderful times "Dutch-hoppin" (dancing the polka).

Then Madge Orecheo was another good friend. She's passed away too. She lived right over there in Piney Knolls. She used to take me ... sometimes we went to town, sometimes gambling too, over at Central City. Gotta' go gamblin'. Then another good friend was Harvey Eddy, he used to go gambling. He was from Red Feather – he'd been coming up here since the `30s. He had a cabin back on Nakomis along with his brother Harold and his kids. His niece, Darlene, is over here on the golf course. Her last name is Lewis. They've all been around a long time. In fact Harvey, when the war broke out, he told me he was somewhere up here in the area, and he heard it and he went to ... oh, down there where they used to have the post office ... Log Cabin to enlist in the Navy. That was back in the `40s. He had a cabin up here and only came up on the weekends. After he retired he did live up here, then in the summer he went to Alaska to salmon fish. Fish and gamble – that was Harvey.

Where Lone Pine Realty is now used to be the Old Timers Store run by JoAnn and Bob Smith. They were both teachers at the school, and his mom ran the store during the school year. It looked like an old fort. People would gather in there, play pinochle, sit by the stove. Later it became the "3.2 bar", the Gopher.

The Sportsmen's Café was originally stucco like the original clubhouse (on the old golf course going back to the 1920s and which burned). Leo Thyfault was a deputy sheriff but owned it as a liquor store. For décor he used the birds he'd shot over time which were stuffed and mounted, quail and such. He was short and he co-opted my son Lowell to also join the county as a deputy sheriff. They were like "Mutt and Jeff" because my son was 6'3" and Leo was short. They worked on various fires and the Big Thompson and Poudre floods.

#### **Winter Work on Wreaths and More**

I've sometimes helped Carol Arent to make wreaths. I used to make wreaths; I worked for both Bonnie (Drake) and Linda (Gorton). I was the "gofer". That means you hauled all the wreaths in for those to decorate and kept them supplied with pine cones and wire and all the things they needed. That was my job for both Bonnie and with Linda – to keep those wreaths on my arms, all ten at a time. When Bonnie had the business I think there were (orders for) 7,000 wreaths. I'd haul them in for them to decorate then I'd haul them back out and stack them. I'd help with the count when the people come for them – to get them loaded. My husband and I would sometimes take a load down to "40 and 8 Club" I think it was, to Doris Deffke's in Greeley. That was usually 238 wreaths down to her. She and Bonnie would go round and round; Doris used to work for the Weld County. Hospital and there were many people in the hall, and Bonnie would say, "I don't know how she got anybody admitted" and Doris would say about Bonnie, "I don't know how she can count any wreaths." Two old ladies going back and forth....

I did the same for Linda Gorton, when she had it too, I was the "gofer." But the wreath business got down to where they were going to do most of it themselves.

Carol always made wreaths too, so I'd go up and help her decorate. She's make them, then I'd help decorate them. I still have Carol make some wreaths for me and a grave blanket ... a grave blanket for my husband. It's about 3' by 6'. She takes chicken wire and then she weaves all those greens in to it, then she puts pine cones and whatever. I sometimes made it. Charley would cut the wire for me, but sometimes I would just make a pillow size – I was figuring maybe he was shrinking a little too. I had her make blanket size the last couple of years.

Dick and Lisa Province bought the Hill Top from the Youngs, then they sold it to Chuck and Carol Gerhing. I worked at Hill Top sometimes. Chuck and Carol Gerhing had it at the time. Then they sold it to – yeah, that's their names.... (Laughter). Jim and Karen Miskol. At Hill Top I got paid for working. My husband also worked for Charlie Arent, building houses, doing carpentry.

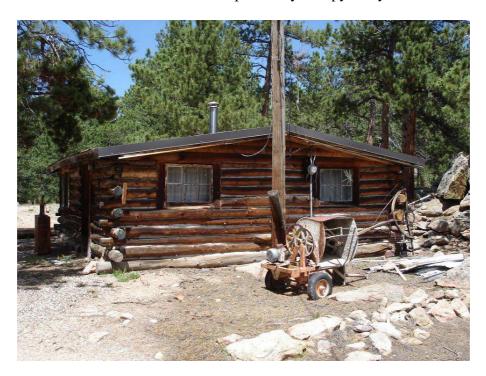
## **Grauberger Addendum Number 1**

### August 2011, telephone interview with Jimmie O'Rorke

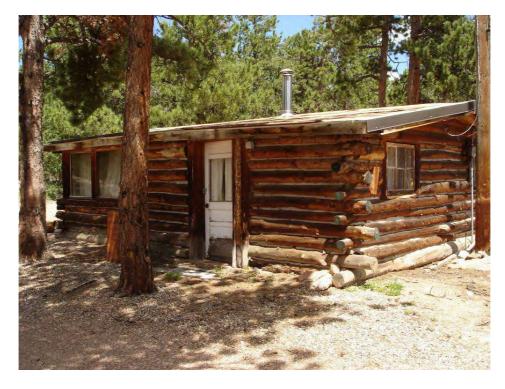
The log cabin at the extreme NW of the Alpine Lodge property was moved there from Eli Cooley's saw mill location on Deadman Mountain. It was abandoned, as was the other tiny log cabin to the west and south of the gift shop at the Alpine Lodge. Those cabins were already 15 – 20 years old when they were moved to the Red Feather Lakes location around June 5, 1955.

Jimmie O'Rorke paid for the cabins to be disassembled and removed from Deadman and transported as logs to his cabin camp, now called Alpine Lodge. The previous fall a couple, Al and Lilly Woolman, with their young daughter showed up at his cabins badly in need of a place to stay. They had been traveling for some time and Al had heard he could get work as a timber cutter up in the area. They stayed that winter in one of Jimmie's cabins even though he had returned to his work in Panama. Occasionally they would let out one of the other cabins and Lilly would clean it before and afterwards – work they continued to do for Jimmie until the land was transferred to the Metzlers, and the deed Ted Dunning drew up gave the Woolmans rights to live in that cabin for as long as needed. Metzler died however soon after the transfer exchanging the cabin he was building near Prairie Divide Road as down-payment on the cabin camp.

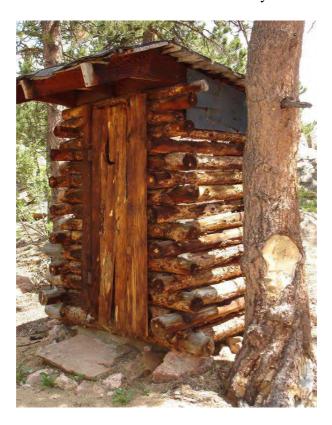
Al Woolman reassembled the old cabins in the place they occupy today in the summer of 1955.



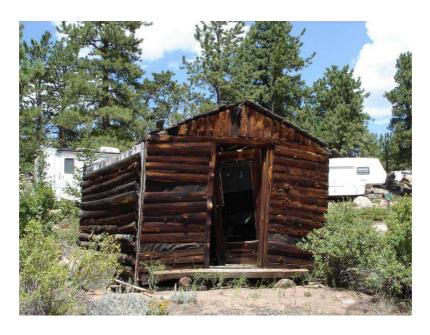
Home to Al and Lilly Woolman 1950s Red Feather Lakes



Original cabin disassembled and moved from Eli Cooley's saw mill on Deadman



Matching outhouse

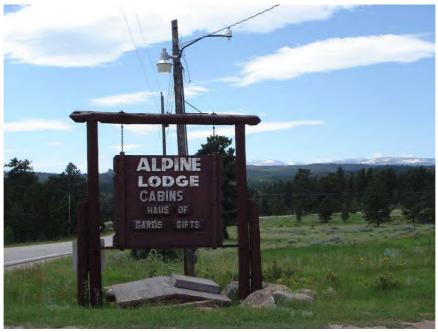


An abandoned log cabin moved to the cabin camp from Deadman, still standing at Alpine Lodge since 1955

# **Grauberger Addendum Number 2**

Photo album from Alpine Lodge, Chalet Gift Shop, and Red Feather Lakes





Sign with Jimmie O'Rorke's original well underneath



Gift house, former gate house for Redfeather Mountain Lakes Assoc. Development



Original location of the gift store now at Alpine when it was the gate house circa 1929 for the Redfeather Mountain Lakes Association



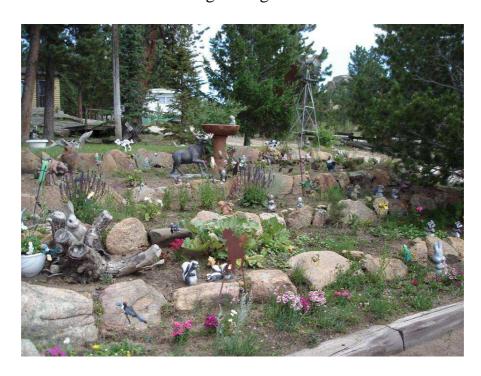
Moving the old gatehouse to Alpine Lodge in 1980



Cabin #2, one of Jimmie O'Rorke's original cabins from his 1950s cabin camp



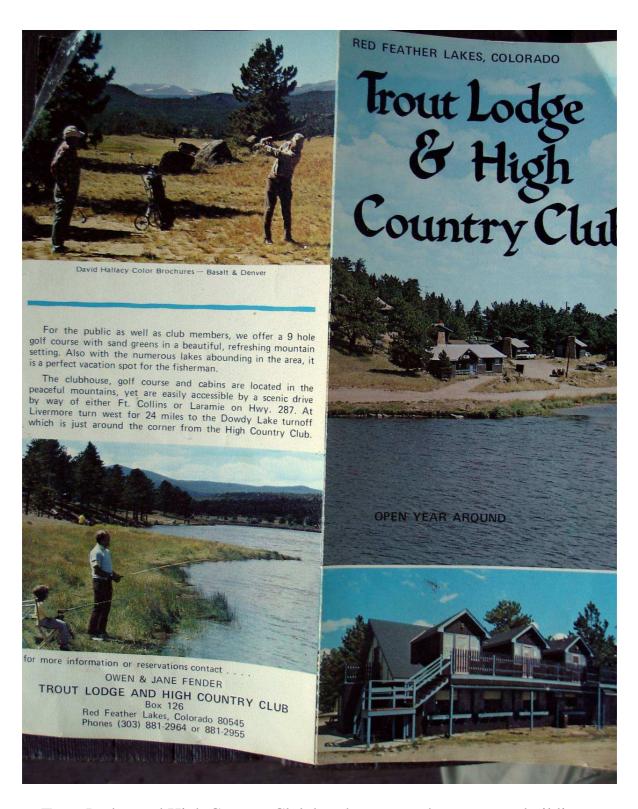
Emma Grauberger's office and home was originally built by Jimmie O'Rorke, and gnome garden





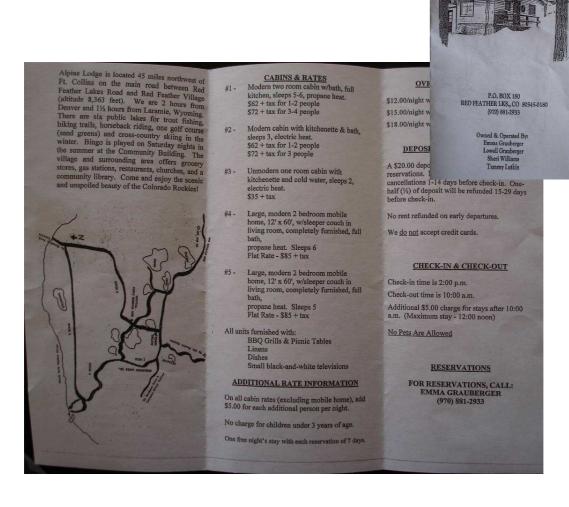
Grauberger's Chalet Gift Shop on Main St. Red Feather Lakes – now home to Panhandle Creek Hardware





Trout Lodge and High Country Club brochure, note the two-story building – later known as Del Rea's High Country Restaurant after fire destroyed upper story

## Brochure for Alpine Lodge, 2011 season



ALPINE

LODGE