

Gibson Dairy

This is the story of Jim Gibson, Jr.'s interesting and challenging career. His father moved from New York to Greeley, Colorado early in this century. He later moved to Morrison, and then to Hampden and Pierce, where he had 80 acres and raised sugar beets. He also milked cows three times a day, and this was the beginning of a successful dairy business. Jim, Jr. recalls the early days to the present as follows:

When our family moved over here to 32nd and Wadsworth in 1924 we had 13 acres and we had only 13 cows to start with, but that was when we really got into the retail business, bottling the milk and selling it to the customers. Of course I was still real little then, but I began to help at an early age. As the retail business picked up we had to milk more cows, and since it was all by hand, we used to hire milkers. Each man milked 25 cows twice a day, and fed them, and fed the calves. We had the milkers for board and room, so my mother cooked for them, giving them good things to eat, as she was an excellent cook. My mother always raised Leghorn hens; she had 2000 of them all the time, and we would sell the eggs on the routes and some to stores. She loved chickens; we had three big chicken houses.

All our milk cows were always registered Holsteins. I started milking when I was about five years old. My Dad did most of the delivering with one truck, and when it became too

much for him my mother did the driving and I did the peddling for her. At that time I got up about four in the morning and milked seven or eight cows, went on the route, and then got dropped off at school at a quarter after eight in the morning. At first we had only one milker but when we got up to about 50 head of cattle we got two milkers, and we also had a man who would help in the bottling of the milk.

Of course in those days we did not have to pasteurize the milk; we didn't start doing that until 1935. Back then everybody wanted rich milk. (4 percent). We had to separate the milk and pour the cream back into the milk because Holsteins in those days tested only about 3.3 or 3.4 percent butterfat. We had to pour the cream back in to bring it up to 4 percent. (We fed the skim milk to the calves, and we always had about 150-200 head of hogs, and we also fed skim milk to them). We had to run a Babcock test, take a sample of the milk, and put muriatic acid with it and hot water, and that separated out the cream. The files were graduated out so that the cream would raise up and you could tell how much was fat. Of course we would test the milk first, and if it tested out 3.4 percent and we had 150 gallons in the vat, we knew the formula of how much cream to add. The cream ran around 24 to 25 percent butterfat so we knew how much to pour back into the milk.

In those days, the early 1930's, there were about 125 independent retail dairymen in this town. Each person had one truck, and a little plant, and that's how they made a

living, so the competition was really stiff. Everybody had solicitors out on the street, knocking at doors trying to get the other person's trade. Some of the dairymen were cutting prices. In those days we sold milk for nine cents a quart and we delivered every day so the customers got their fresh milk every day. The afternoon milk we would hold over in a refrigerator tank and bottle it the next day. We had only quarts up until about 1944, and then we started putting milk in the half gallon bottles.

In 1935 the City of Denver put in a law that all milk had to be pasteurized. (not the whole state, which didn't do it until sometime in the 40's). So then we had to buy pasteurizers. The milk was in 200 and 300 gallon vats and we'd heat the milk to 144 degrees and hold it for 30 minutes at that temperature. The vats were heated with a steam jacket on the outside, the milk would agitate, and vats were stainless steel on the inside. We had to have a chart on the wall showing what the temperature was and how long we held it because the inspection was really strict in those days. We had a license to deliver in Denver because that's where most of the business was. This area in Wheat Ridge and Lakewood wasn't built up very much in those days. About every 30 days the Health Department would come out so we had to keep the charts on pasteurization for them to pick up and check over.

I wanted to be a doctor. I always operated on my own cows and did all my own veterinary work. I had some friends

who were veterinarians and they showed me what to do, and supplied me with the needles and knives and everything I needed. I always had the desire to be a surgeon.

One spring two or three years before I got out of school I bought 200 head of hogs to raise ("weiners", six weeks to two months old) at \$5.00 each. The best price to sell them was at about 180 to 200 pounds. I used to go down to 44th and to Clear Creek where there were all truck gardens where they raised celery and cabbage, and most everything else. We could go down there in the fall and get all the cabbage that they couldn't sell, and the pumpkins and everything, and we had a big steam boiler and so we'd grind that stuff up and heat it up, making mash out of it, and add corn. By November the hogs were ready to go to market, but I couldn't get anybody to buy them. This was when they were throwing hogs in the Mississippi River, so finally we sent mine out to the Denver Union Stockyards. They finally said they would take my 200 head, but not by the pound or anything, but would give me \$5.00 apiece for them. After feeding the hogs for six months I had to sell them for the same price I had bought them. That was pretty discouraging. I was trying to get some money to go to school on, but that's the way things were.

One year I planted six acres of beans. That was the year I graduated from high school, in 1937. I went to Wheat Ridge schools all 12 years. When the beans were about two and a half feet high, one day I was out there cultivating

them, and some man stopped by and said, "I'll give you \$4000 for the beans, just the way they set." I said, "No, I think I can come out with \$7000 or \$8000 by picking them." So, the next day it started raining, and that night it started snowing, and the next morning it was 27 degrees, and I lost the whole works because they all froze. That's farming, for you.

Up until about 1944, I guess, the top of the milk bottle had so much cream on it, you know, but then everybody wanted it homogenized so we had to buy a homogenizer, and there was then no more what we called "regular" milk. Within a year's time everybody was homogenizing, and it did give milk a better flavor and was the same all the way through. Before that if you didn't shake up your milk, the first one who took some out got all the cream and the others got the skim.

We were milking by hand up until April of 1941 and that is when World War II broke out. We couldn't get any help. The two milkers I had were drafted, so in 1941 I put in milking machines. We were using three units at that time and from April of 1941 to July 1945 I never missed a milking. In 1945, I was milking about 125 head by myself, doing all the feeding, working in the plant besides, and I had three trucks on the street. That was a headache, trying to get help to deliver the milk, but we did get older men and were able to keep drivers pretty well. Women didn't drive much in those days. We did have one lady we were supplying milk for. She had her own truck and her own route, and we bottled it

for her and put it in her bottles with her labels and everything. It was called Cleveland Heights Dairy. She had three children and her husband had died, so she did that for a living. We bottled milk for her for a good many years.

We had to buy most all of our hay. I farmed about 100 acres around here but all I had was a team of horses, and we raised mostly oats and corn. We would take the oats over to the Arvada Mill and they would roll the oats for us, and mostly the grain we fed the cows was rolled oats and ground corn, soybean meal, linseed meal, and beet pulp. We used to be able to go up to the Brighton sugar beet factory and get the beet pulp, and it was a good feed as it didn't come through in the milk. A lot of people in those days, Coors, for example, were making malted milk and they would get the malt off the malted milk powder. It had a real strong odor to it and dairymen would feed this to the cows. The cows would give a lot of milk from it, but you couldn't drink the milk because the taste was so bad. But, some dairies fed it because it was cheap feed, and in the 30's we fed cows anything we could get, and the cows loved it. It was rough going in the 30's. People were lucky to have food on the table, so we fed the cows anything that would do them some good and we could get milk from them. There was silage from the corn, plus hay and grain, which was the primary feed.

We always bought all our hay in May or first part of June, because the first cutting had more nutrients in it than any of the others. The second cutting grew so fast there was

nothing to it, and the third, well, it just went right through the cows because it contained lots of leaves, so we always fed the first cutting hay. We bought enough to feed for a year, and in those days, until the early 40's, it was always loose. They brought the hay to us loose and we would pitch it off the truck and stack it up, and then we'd get up on the stack and pitch it down into the feed racks. It was about right after the war, when we started getting baled hay. It was easier to handle and we could stack it better. The only problem was we lost quite a few animals because there were pieces of wire in the hay, and the cows would eat it, and of course it cut through their stomachs. On the average we lost four or five cows each year, good milking cows. Then suppliers came up with some magnets we could put in the cows' stomachs, and the wire would collect around the magnets. Later, about the middle of the 50's, they started using twine to bale hay, which helped a whole lot. That was a big relief to us.

The weather in the 30's and 40's was a lot different than it is nowadays, especially winters. We had hard winters. We had about 500 feet of water pipes to our pens and to automatic feeders and waterers that were heated. The water pipes went down four feet and one year they all froze in the ground and I had to get a plumber out to thaw them out with electricity. In those days it was a lot colder and we had more snow, a lot more snow. It was harder to get around with my trucks, and they didn't clean the streets the way

they do nowadays, so it was a lot different than it is today.

Our rough time, of course, was during the war. It was really rough. We couldn't get tires, we couldn't get boots to wear, we couldn't get gas to deliver, and we had to fight every week up in Golden to get the stamps to be able to buy gas. Lots of times we blew out a tire on a truck, would get another one, and go a mile or two and that one would blow out. It was unbelievable. Yet the government was on me all the time to produce more milk because they needed more for the military. They wanted us to go clear up to Camp Hale, up to Leadville, and we absolutely couldn't do it. We didn't have the facilities. They couldn't find anybody to deliver milk to them up there, but finally, since there was a train running up to Leadville at that time, Meadow Gold Dairy put the milk on the train and sent it up to Camp Hale.

Of course many dairies were closing. We couldn't raise the prices until the freeze came off, and had to appeal to the government and show them by our books that we were losing money, and then they would let us have a half a cent raise, or a penny raise. Well, we had just come out of the 30's which were rough, and then went into the war in '45, so it was a tough business, I'll tell you. We worked seven days a week, 15 or 16 hours a day, and there were times when we got a bad storm I wouldn't see the bed for two or three days. I can remember in March 1944 we had 45 inches of snow on the level here, and I tried to have trucks out on the street. I was milking by myself, and the snow was so deep the cows

wouldn't come through it unless you went out there with a whip and got hold of their tails and drove them into the barn. Once I never went to bed for three days and three nights; I'd just get through milking and it was time to start milking again. I guess I had a good constitution. We ate good food. It wasn't fancy, but as I said before, my mother was an excellent cook. We raised and butchered our own hogs.

In the 40's and 50's as time went by, more of the smaller dairies went by the wayside, or somebody bought them out. I bought out three different little ones, including the Golden Eagle Dairy in Golden, and then we started delivering in Golden. Also, I bought out the Cambridge Dairy on South Colorado Boulevard and took over their routes. I sold my herd, 275 head, at public auction. People were moving in around us out here in Wheat Ridge and they were complaining about the smell of the cows, and the Health Department was there all the time. Well, if you have animals you're going to have smell, I don't care how hard you try not to. We scraped the manure every day and piled it up. Of course we had gained more customers, my plant was getting too small for me anyway, so I had started looking around trying to get a permit to build a new plant, but the County wouldn't zone land for that. So, in 1963, I went into the Arvada Dairy which was at 28th and Clay Street, and they had plenty of plant room and had about 20 trucks running. So I added mine to it, and together we had 34 trucks on the street at that time. Altogether between the drivers and the plant men and

the office people I had over 100 people working for me.

Then in 1965, King Soopers (well they were here before that but they were just really getting started) had three or four stores around. We were getting 79¢ for a half-gallon delivered to the house, and I woke up one morning and there was an ad in the paper, "38¢ a half-gallon." In six weeks' time I had to take many trucks off the street. Well, I took Kings to court and sued them for selling below cost, but they had more money than I did, and court costs every day were just killing me. Of course we had to reduce our price on the routes to meet his store price, and we were losing about \$1500 to \$2000 a day, and there wasn't that much profit in it to begin with. After 30 days I got a temporary injunction against Kings for 90 days, and they promised to bring the price up, but always kept it way below us. Customers, of course, were leaving us to go to the grocery store. Other stores had to go along because they had to meet the price to stay with Kings.

In 1967 I sold to Roberts Dairy in Omaha and he bought Robinson Dairy, which was all wholesale, and Stearns Dairy, which was all retail, and bought me, I was all retail. Then Roberts took over the old United Dairy plant which was at 6th Avenue and Bryant Street. In 1965 we had the big flood, and of course the plant sets right next to the river--only 30 feet away. It just wiped it out. The water was 10 feet deep in the plant. But Roberts bought it and we went in and cleaned it all out and put in all new pipes, and had to pull

the boilers out and clean them because they were down in the basement submerged in water, but in about a year's time we were ready to move into it. We put all the dairies in one. We had Stearns Dairy with about 20 retail trucks, our 30, and Robinson with their retail, so it made a big operation, but the retail each month was a problem--if it wasn't King Soopers, it was Miller's. They were here in town and started running cheap prices on their milk. So, we stayed with the retail until 1969, and then we disposed of all the retail trade completely.

I went to work for Robinson, and had a contract to work for them for five years. I was running the place for them. Robinson was very active in wholesale business and so they kept replacing the retail with wholesale and we sold what retail we had left to Royal Crest Dairy, which is still in business. They and Karl's Farm are the only two retail dairies in Denver. But now they deliver only once a week, and it's all in gallon plastic jugs, although I think Karl Farms still delivers some half gallons twice a week, but most of it is once a week delivery. They are still doing pretty good, but how long that will last is hard to say. People aren't home anymore like they used to be to bring the milk in; everybody is working, so it is just a different way of doing business anymore.

I stayed with Robinson Dairy until 1972. My five years were up and they started bringing in college graduates from the University of Nebraska. I ran the whole operation, the

plant, routes, and was general manager. I had to answer to Gordon Roberts who owned it, and a couple others he hired who were over me, and he kept bringing in the younger ones who didn't know a pasteurizer from a separator and yet they were telling me what to do. I decided it was time to get out of there, as I had never worked for anybody in my life until then.

We were supplying all the Dairy Queens with their mix, and a lot of the ones in the Denver area used to come to the dairy and pick it up, and I got acquainted with the people as they came in. So this one person, we knew his brother and went to the same church, said he wanted to sell it (Dairy Queen). I had never done this before, but had to have something to do, so I bought into that Dairy Queen, just a little one and about the poorest one in town as far as volume. It was at 2260 South Federal. So, I went in with him, and in six months time I decided that it wouldn't work because he didn't want to change anything, and I had to build up the business in order to live. So I asked him if he wanted to sell, which he did, so I bought his half. In two years time I was doing as much in one month as he was doing in a whole year. In four or five years we had the biggest volume in Denver. Then in 1987 I built a new one, after tearing down the old one which was just an A-frame building, no seats inside, and no drive-through. So I built a new one with 50 seats, and put in a full brazier store with hamburgers, fries, chicken and so forth, and we did more

volume than any Dairy Queen in the Denver metropolitan area.

My wife Eleanor was a big help, too. We used to deliver milk to houses for thirty days, and at the end of the month we made up the bills. We had a card for each customer and each day we put down what they bought. At the end of the month we started making out the bills. So my wife, and some friends of hers we'd hire, would all come in to the dairy in the office and spend four or five days making out bills. Then the driver would collect from the customer. Until I went into the Arvada Dairy we had one woman who came into the office every day to take care of the books and money, etc. We had problems at times with the route drivers stealing from us, and we wouldn't know it until the bill went out the next month with the total balance for two months. When the customer got the bill, she would say she had paid it last month and had the receipt. I had one driver who got me for \$2500. Also, sometimes we would wind up with people owing us money when they moved or claimed they couldn't pay, so we turned the bill over to the credit people. Well, they took 50 percent of it and only collected 25 percent of what we turned over to them anyway.

There was a really good thing about the Dairy Queen; at least the customers paid before they were served! There again, we had some kids we caught stealing from us. I don't know what there is about it, but they always wanted to get their fingers in the till. Being in business for yourself is not all gravy.

So, in 1991 I decided to sell the Dairy Queen. A fellow came along and we made a deal. I could tell the first week he was there he wasn't going to make it, because he didn't want to work. He wanted to sit in the office and let the kids run it. I worked for him for two years doing nothing, not getting paid, to keep the place running. So, the third year he had to fold up and I took the place back. And, I found another person to buy it, so I'm clear of it now.

I knew I wasn't getting any younger, and had never had very much time to spend with my wife Eleanor all these years. She spent a lot of days and nights by herself. We got married in 1945, and will have our 52nd Anniversary in July. I have two sisters living here, one at 16th and Reed, and one at 35th and Harlan, and they helped when we were kids. They got up at five o'clock in the morning, fed the hogs and the chickens, and when they got out of school they both went to work for the telephone company. They were a big help on the farm. My mother died at age 58, and my Dad at age 81.

I was born here and never left. We have a daughter and a son who both live in the area. Our son is a college professor at Auraria campus, and our daughter works for a dentist as a receptionist; has been there seven years. We're very fortunate we have two good kids; they are very good to us and check on us every couple days. They live their lives and we live ours, but they're close. My wife and I are not big traveling people, but take a trip every two or three

years. We will enjoy ourselves here in Colorado, as there's lots we haven't seen here. In the summer I raise a lot of flowers and have to stick around to water them.

So, that's my story.

Jim Gibson told me his story as related above on February 13, 1997.

Dorothy Donovan 980-6151

Ms. Dorothy Donovan
8127 W. Virginia Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80226

*34 & Transcription -
from tape -
see last page
for photographs*

Gibson Dairy

"I started milking when I was about five years old," Jim's Dad had said. "Within a few years I was getting up at four o'clock in the morning, milking seven or eight cows, going on a delivery route with my Dad--and then he would drop me off at school at a quarter past eight." Jim's Dad had moved to Greeley, Colorado from New York in the early 1900's. Later he moved to Morrison, and then to Hampden and Pierce, where he had 80 acres in sugar beets and also milked cows three times a day. This was the beginning of a successful, long-running dairy business.

In 1924 the Gibson family moved to 32nd and Wadsworth, and that is where they really got into the retail dairy business of bottling milk and selling it to the customers. Although Jim was real little in those days, he remembers that all the family worked hard. Jim's two sisters, who still live in this area, got up at five o'clock in the morning to feed the hogs and chickens. As the business increased, they milked more cows (always registered Holsteins), and since all the milking was done by hand, it became necessary to hire men as milkers. Each man milked 25 cows twice a day, and fed them and the calves. Milkers received a salary plus board and room, and Jim's mother did the cooking for everybody. Also, his mother raised Leghorn chickens--2000 of them--which required having three big chicken houses. They sold the eggs on the routes and to stores.

In the early 30's there were about 125 independent retail

dairymen in the metro area, so the competition was really stiff. Each person had one truck and a little plant, and that's how they made a living. They had solicitors out on the street, knocking on doors trying to get the other person's business, and some of the dairymen cut prices. Jim says in those days Gibson Dairy sold milk for nine cents a quart, in quart bottles only, and delivered every day so the customers always got fresh milk. "Back then everybody wanted rich milk (4 percent)," Jim explained, "so we had to separate the milk and pour some cream back into it because Holsteins tested only 3.3 or 3.4 percent butterfat in their milk." The skim milk was fed to the calves and hogs.

The City of Denver passed a law in 1935 that all milk had to be pasteurized, so Gibson and other dairies had to buy machines to accomplish this. Jim explained that the milk was in 200 and 300 gallon stainless steel vats with a steam jacket on the outside. The milk would agitate and then be heated to 144 degrees and held for 30 minutes at that temperature. About every 30 days the Health Department came out to pick up the record charts and check them over. Gibson Dairy had a license to deliver in Denver, because the population in Wheat Ridge and Lakewood hadn't built up very much in those days.

Jim says he had always wanted to be a veterinarian, and that he operated on his own cows and did his own veterinary work. Friends who were veterinarians had showed him what to do, and supplied him with needles and knives and whatever he

needed. But, his dream to be a Vet just didn't work out.

One spring, a couple years before he graduated from high school in 1937, Jim bought 200 head of hogs six weeks to two months old, called "weiners", at \$5.00 each. He went to 44th near Clear Creek, which was all in truck gardens where they raised celery, cabbage and almost everything else, he remembers. "We got all the cabbage, pumpkins and vegetables they couldn't sell. We had a big steam boiler and ground up the stuff, heated it, making mash out of it, and then added corn, to fatten my hogs." The best price for hogs was obtained when they weighed 180 to 200 pounds. By November they were ready to go to market, but nobody would buy them. This was when hogs were being thrown in the Mississippi River. Finally Jim sent the hogs out to the Denver Union Stockyards, who said they would take the 200 hogs, not by the pound, but would give him \$5.00 apiece for them. After feeding the hogs for six months, he had to sell them for the same price at which he had bought them. "That was pretty discouraging," Jim recalls, "as I was trying to earn money to go to school, but that's the way things were. I learned being in business for yourself is not all gravy."

Milking was done by hand at Gibson Dairy until April of 1941. When World War II broke out, they couldn't get any help, so put in three units of milking machines. Jim milked about 125 cows himself, did all the feeding, worked in the plant, and had three trucks on the street. He said that things were tough during the depression, but their roughest

time was during the war. "We couldn't get tires, we couldn't get boots to wear, and every week we had to fight in Golden to get the stamps to buy gas for our trucks to deliver milk. Lots of times we blew out a tire on a truck, would get another one, go a mile or two and that one would blow. Yet the government was on me all the time to produce more milk because they needed it for the military." Gibson Dairy was asked to deliver milk to Camp Hale at Leadville, but they didn't have the facilities. However, there was a train running to Leadville at that time, so Meadow Gold Dairy put milk on the train for Camp Hale.

Many of us remember before milk was homogenized. Up until 1944, the top of the milk bottle had a lot of cream on it, and unless you shook it up, the first one who took some out got all the cream and the others got the skim milk. So, they bought a homogenizer, and there was no more "regular" milk, as Jim said they called it. Within a year all dairies were homogenizing, and it did give milk a better flavor and was consistent all the way through.

Jim said they had to buy hay to feed the cows since they raised mostly oats and corn on the 100 acres they farmed. They took the oats to the Arvada Mill where they rolled the oats for them, and then combined it with ground corn, soybean meal, linseed meal and beet pulp. They went to the Brighton sugar beet factory to get beet pulp, which was a good feed as it "didn't come through in the milk." Gibsons always bought all their hay in May or first part of June, because the first

cutting contained more nutrients than the others. The second cutting grew so fast there was nothing to it, and the third just went right through the cows because it contained lots of leaves. They bought enough hay to feed for a year, and until after the war it was always loose, so they pitched it off the truck, stacked it up, then got up on the stack and pitched it down into the feed racks. When they started getting baled hay, Jim acknowledges it was easier to handle and stack. But, on the average they lost four or five good milking cows each year because there were pieces of wire in the hay which cut through the animals' stomachs. Jim recalls the suppliers then came up with magnets to put in the cows' stomachs, and the wire would collect around the magnets. About the middle of the 50's, twine was used to bale hay, which helped a lot.

In the 40's and 50's many dairies went by the wayside, or were bought out. Jim bought out three small ones, but eventually sold his herd of 275 head at public auction. He says that people were moving in around them in Wheat Ridge and were complaining about the smell of the cows. Jim says, "If you have animals, you're going to have smell." Also, Gibson Dairy had gained more customers and the plant was too small. They tried to get a permit to build a new plant, but the County wouldn't zone land for that.

In 1963 Jim moved into the Arvada Dairy plant at 28th and Clay for awhile. Then Roberts Dairy in Omaha bought Robinson Dairy, and also took over the old United Dairy plant at 6th Avenue and Bryant. It had been hit by the big flood

in 1965 with water ten feet deep in the plant, but after a year's time it was cleaned up and ready for occupancy. "We put all the dairies in one--including Robinson, Stearns and us--so it was a big operation," Jim said. Retail was a problem however, with grocery stores running cheap prices on their milk, so after 1969 all retail was replaced with wholesale. Jim believes Royal Crest Dairy and Karl's Farm are the only two retail dairies operating now. He notes people aren't home anymore to bring in the milk, and it's just a different way of doing business now. Jim stayed at Robinson until 1972 but needing something to do, bought a Dairy Queen at 1160 South Federal. He built a new building with 50 seats and added a full brazier store with hamburgers, fries, chicken, etc., and did more volume than any Dairy Queen in the area. He has now sold his Dairy Queen, and is "retired."

Jim said that he realized he wasn't getting any younger, and had never had much time to spend with his wife Eleanor all those busy years. He plans to change that now. They were married in 1945, and have a daughter and a son who live in the area. Jim was born here and never left, and attended Wheat Ridge schools for all twelve years, graduating in 1937. Jim and Eleanor have lived on Carr Street in Lakewood for many years. They plan to enjoy life here in Colorado, "as there's a lot here we haven't seen yet," Jim says.



THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring 1997 Newsletter

1997 "Women Who Made A Difference" Honoree Marjorie "Bunny" Clement

Marjorie Elizabeth Clement, a distinguished community leader who served for eleven historic years on Jefferson County's governing Board of County Commissioners, is a descendant of pioneering great-grandparents who moved to Denver from Kentucky at the close of the Civil War in the 1860s.

Familiarly known as "Bunny", a pet name given her by her parents, she was born at St. Luke's Hospital September 3, 1922, the daughter of Elizabeth (Graham) Lawrence and Theodore ("Ted") Lawrence. Her father was a home builder and the family lived in the University Park area, where Bunny and her friends grew up playing on the University of Denver's campus. Bunny attended the University Park elementary school and briefly was enrolled in Grant Junior High School before transferring to the private Kent School for Girls, boarding on campus after her parents moved to Evergreen where Ted Lawrence was building homes. Although her grandmother, the former Elizabeth White, and her mother, the former Elizabeth Graham, both had graduated from East High School, Bunny was sent to South High School before entering freshman year at the University of Colorado.

World War II had been declared just weeks before Christmas vacation in Bunny's sophomore year. While home for the holidays she met an Army Air Force aviation cadet, Robert Frederick Clement, a native of Muskogee, Oklahoma and a graduate of Oklahoma A&M (now the University of Oklahoma) who was stationed at



Marjorie Elizabeth "Bunny" Clement, has been chosen by The Lakewood Historical Society's board of directors as the 1997 "Women Who Made a Difference" recipient. A reception in her honor will be held Tuesday, March 18, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Country School House on the Lakewood Heritage Center grounds, 797 S. Wadsworth Blvd. All Lakewood Historical Society members are invited to attend, but please answer your RSVP by calling 987-7850.

Lowry Army Air Base. Three months later, Bunny said goodbye to CU and traveled to Cape Cod, where she and Bob Clement were married at the Otis Army Air Field post chapel. Although he had "washed out" of flying school, Clement became an armament and supply officer with a heavy bombardment squadron in the China-Burma-India Theatre, returning home after five years' military service.

After three years living in California and in Oklahoma, where their first child, Lawrence (Larry) was born in 1948, the Clements returned to Denver in 1951. Bob Clement and Ted Lawrence teamed up to build homes in Aurora. In 1954, a family friend named Guy Martin, who owned a Denver lumber yard, offered to sell them 210 acres of Lakewood land south of West Alameda Avenue. The property, once part of the country estate of lumber baron Charles Hallack, reached from West Nevada to West Virginia avenues and west from South Harlan to South Pierce streets. The Lawrence-Clement partnership subdivided this area as Martindale. Among the custom-built single family Martindale homes was one that Bob and Bunny Clement designed for themselves. They moved there in 1956 with their son and daughter Elizabeth (Libby), who had been born September 15, 1951.

Young Larry Clement took up skiing and eventually became a member of the junior ski patrol at Loveland Basin. Libby's interest in horses led to her parents' involvement with the Westernaires, the famous youth equestrian organization headquartered at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. Bob and Bunny Clement were caught up in the many Westernaire activities, which ranged from annual riding shows staged for the Denver Stock Show to performing sequences in such Hollywood productions as "Stagecoach." They traveled to Chicago to give sold-out performances in the old stockyards arena and made many similar journeys, the most memorable at Estes Park in 1976. Bunny had been monitor and later supervisor of the hundreds of young people

enrolled in Westernaires. Some 500 young riders, with their horses and parents were under Bunny's direction at Estes Park where, just before the weekend matinee, the skies opened and the Big Thompson flood rushed through the area sweeping away hundreds of buildings and taking numerous lives. Bunny vividly recalls the frantic efforts of Westernaires' leaders to get word out that the young people, their horses, and their adult companions were safe and well. CB operators finally reached Denver radio stations which broadcast the news.

Bob Clement had become involved in Jefferson County Republican politics, and in 1964 Bunny campaigned to become a Republican committeewoman in her area. Soon afterward a Lakewood housewife named Pauline LeBlanc began a campaign to annex the eastern portion of Lakewood to Denver. As LeBlanc's efforts gained momentum, the Clements joined an opposition move to incorporate Lakewood, an attempt that had failed several times in previous years. But in June 1969, the effort to incorporate "Jefferson City" was approved by voters. In the general election in November that year, voters again chose incorporation, opting to drop the Jefferson City name and adopt the familiar unofficial name of Lakewood that had been used here widely in previous decades. Bob Clement was on the original Lakewood City Council until 1972, when he successfully ran for Jefferson County Commissioner in District 2, which covers Lakewood and Wheat Ridge. He had served one year of his third term of office when he died December 22, 1981 after nine years on the board. He was 65 years old.

GOP leaders named Bunny to carry on for him, and she successfully ran for office in 1984 and 1988. She was the second woman in the county's long history to become a county commissioner, was chairman of the board three times, but after eleven years lost the 1992 election to a Democratic Party sweep. She was on the executive board of the Denver Regional Council of Governments, twice as committee chairman, and was the first Jefferson County

Commissioner elected president of Colorado Counties, Inc.

Bunny had always taken a vital interest in Bob's political activities and interests and they discussed their opinions freely. She campaigned ceaselessly on matters they felt were important, among them the Jefferson County Library system and Jefferson County Open Space. After Bob's death many friends donated money as memorials to him, and these funds were divided between the library system and the Open Space area now known as Clement Park in south Jefferson County, named in Bob's memory. She continued a deep interest in the Jefferson County Historical Commission which Bob founded as a prelude to the Centennial-Bicentennial year of 1976 with the Clements' close friend, the late Kay Klepetko.

During Bunny Clement's terms of office, the county commissioners succeeded with construction of three new libraries (Columbine, Evergreen and Standley Lake), as well as the new county jail and sheriff's department headquarters; a nearby new building for the county's department of human services; and the impressive county government center informally known as the "Taj Mahal." A new building for the district attorney and staff has since been completed. All are located in Golden, the county seat, on federal property purchased in the 1960s by former county commissioners for \$56,000.

Bunny and Bob's son, Larry, is vice president of marketing and sales for Armstrong Flooring in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Daughter Libby, who has carried on the given name of Elizabeth from Bunny's family, married Standley Graham, bringing back the surname of Bunny's mother. Her interest in horses continues; she is executive aide at High Prairies Horse Farm in Douglas County where equestrian jumping tryouts for the Olympic Games are held. Larry has two children and Libby has three.

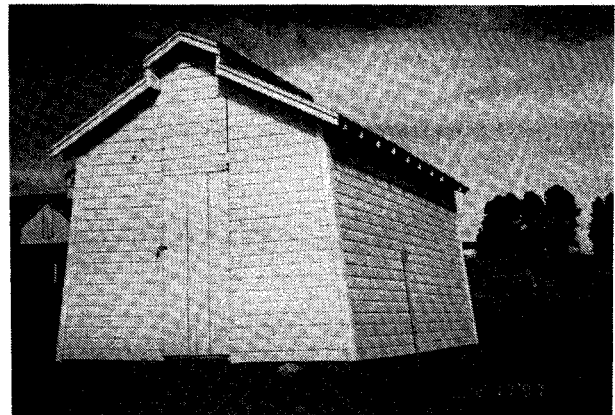
Looking back on her public life, Bunny recently said, "Like Bob, I can't imagine a better political office than being county commissioner. Not many people have the opportunity to be part

of the future, and not many can actually watch things happen that lead to the future."

Written by Patricia K. Wilcox from an interview with Bunny Clement.

Colorado State Questers Give Grants

Grants given to the Applewood Reliques Chapter of the Questers International, Inc., have made two restoration projects at Lakewood's Heritage Center possible in the last three years.



Glen Creighton Pumphouse

First was the circa 1920 Glen Creighton pumphouse originally located at West 19th Avenue and Glen Ayre Road in Lakewood. Moved to its present site in 1987, the pumphouse project began with much clean up work in the summer of 1994 and in 1995 the restoration was completed with the exception of the roof which will be replaced this summer.

A derrick had been constructed to support the plunger-type drill which brought water from the Arapahoe formation, an underground aquifer 600 to 700 feet down. With the pump in place, Creighton framed the outer surface of the derrick posts with drop siding, thus creating the unusual shape of this particular pumphouse. The inner walls were finished with tongue and groove siding.

A Kewanee Private Utilities Co. pump, circa 1913, similar to the original, has been donated by Peter Kopiloff from the More farm for the

pumphouse. Its engine was fueled by kerosene but is now electrically powered. A water storage tank, circa 1930, from the Matthews farm has been donated by David Gertz, President of Sunshine Master Builders, which, too, is appropriate for such a pumphouse

Located on land owned by Cyrus Creighton, one of Lakewood's early developers, this pumphouse is the only one of its kind remaining in the area west of Denver. Individual wells using such pumphouses were gradually replaced by small water companies which eventually became part of the Consolidated Mutual Water Company.

The \$1,000 grant made it possible for the Applewood Reliques Chapter to finish this project which cost \$1,630 in materials and equipment rental. Without the more than 2,000 hours of volunteer labor, the restoration could not have succeeded. The roof expenditure this year will come from the Chapter's annual garage sale proceeds.



Wide Acres Stop

A \$500 grant in 1996 helped restore The Denver and Intermountain Railroad Wide Acres stop. This structure, one of only a few of this type left in the area, was moved to Lakewood's Heritage Center in 1992 and, with the exception of the removal of rotted wood, it had been left untouched. It took over 500 hours of volunteer time and labor to accomplish this restoration.

In 1909 the standard gauge Denver and Intermountain Railroad, built as the Denver, Lakewood and Golden Railroad in 1890, was pur-

chased by the Denver Tramway Company and while never a major coal hauler, this line enjoyed substantial freight traffic to local industries and carried clay from mines south of Golden via the Ruby Spur and the Denver, Golden and Morrison Railroad.

Among the Applewood Reliques' projects this summer will be the restoration of a chicken coop from the Cason Howell house, 1575 Kipling, added to the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties in 1996 through the efforts of Frank Navarro and Pat Wilcox of The Lakewood Historical Society. Its location will be behind the Peterson-Streer house, the only building in the Heritage Center on the National Register of Historic Places. The working windmill to the side of the farm house also came from the Howell residence. Plans are to restore the coop with the help of Boy Scout troop No. 643 supervised by Marc Monson, Eagle Scout candidate.

The turkey coop from the Beers Sisters farm is now at the Heritage Center waiting to be restored to show the importance of turkey farming in the early part of this century. The Beers Sisters, an unorthodox family of five unmarried women, were very successful farmers, and have become the subject of a forthcoming book by Walter Weare, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. His grandfather's farm was nearby where he spent much time, thus his interest in the area.

The financial help from the Colorado State Questers has served as a catalyst for the development of the Family Farm Center at Lakewood's Heritage Center, interpreting the City's culture during the 1920s and 1930s. It has also created a group of volunteers who have worked on the restorations and will continue to be interested in this exciting project of preserving the 20th Century history of Lakewood.

Mile High Motor Court Tour Saturday, May 31, 1997

Join the Colorado Historical Society on a trip back in time when Denver could boast of hun-

dreds of motor courts, cabin camps and motels catering to an ever-increasing number of motor-tourists. This bus tour will give participants an overview of the evolution of motor courts and motels along our major Denver area thoroughfares.

The tour, conducted by Lyle Miller of the Colorado Historical Society and a native of Lakewood, begins at the Colorado History Museum with a slide presentation at 10 a.m. and by bus continues along West Colfax to see such landmarks as the Bugs Bunny and White Swan Motels among others, then south on Federal ending up on Santa Fe Drive with return to the museum about 2 p.m.

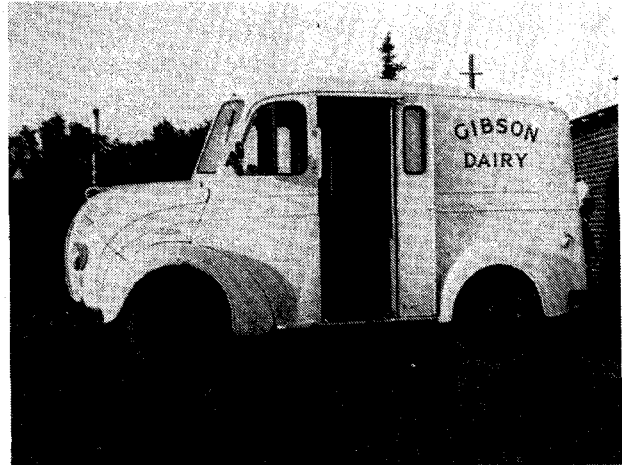
Price of the tour is \$18 for members of the Colorado Historical Society and \$25 for non-members which includes the slide presentation, a box lunch, and the bus trip. Call 866-4686 for reservations.

The Gibson Dairy

"I started milking when I was about five years old," Jim Gibson, Jr. says. "Within a few years I was getting up at four o'clock in the morning, milking seven or eight cows, going on a delivery route with my Dad--and then he would drop me off at school at a quarter past eight." Jim's family had moved to Greeley, Colorado from New York in the early 1900s. Later they moved to Morrison, then to Hampden and Pierce, where his father raised sugar beets on 80 acres and also milked cows three times a day. This was the beginning of a successful, long-running dairy business.

In 1924 the Gibson family moved to 32nd and Wadsworth Boulevard, where they began a retail dairy business of bottling milk and selling it to customers. Although Jim was quite young in those days, he remembers that all the family worked hard. His two sisters, who still live in this area, got up at five o'clock in the morning to feed the hogs and chickens. As business increased, they milked more cows (always registered Holsteins), and since all the milking

was done by hand it became necessary to hire milkers. Each man milked 25 cows twice a day, fed them and the calves. They received a salary plus board and room. Jim's mother cooked for everyone, as well as taking care of 2,000 Leghorn chickens, and selling eggs on the milk routes and to stores.



Early Milk Delivery Truck

In the early 1930s there were about 125 independent retail dairymen in the metro area, so the competition was really stiff with each person having one truck and a small plant. Some hired solicitors to knock on doors trying to get other peoples' business, and some even cut prices. The Gibson Dairy sold a quart of milk for nine cents, in quart bottles only, and delivered every day. "Back then everybody wanted rich milk (4 percent)," Jim explained, "so we had to separate the milk and pour some cream back into it because Holsteins' milk tested only 3.3 or 3.4 percent butterfat." The skim milk was fed to the calves and hogs.

The City of Denver passed a law in 1935 requiring all milk be pasteurized, so Gibson and other dairies had to buy the necessary machines. Jim explained that the milk was placed in 200 and 300 gallon stainless steel vats with a steam jacket on the outside. The milk would be agitated, heated to 144 degrees, and held there for 30 minutes. About every 30 days the Health Department picked up and checked the records.

Gibson Dairy obtained a license to deliver in Denver, the population in Wheat Ridge and Lakewood alone was not sufficient to support the dairy.

One spring, a couple of years before he graduated from high school in 1937, Jim bought 200 young hogs, called "weiners", at \$5 each. He went to the many truck gardens along 44th Avenue where celery, cabbage and other crops were raised. "We got all the cabbage, pumpkins and vegetables that didn't sell. They were ground, then heated in a big steam boiler to make mash, finally corn was added to fatten the hogs." After six months, he took the hogs to the Denver Union Stockyards, where the best price he could get was \$5 each, the same price he paid for them. "That was pretty discouraging," Jim recalls, "as I was trying to earn money to go to school, but that's the way things were. I learned that being in business for yourself is not all gravy."

When World War II began, help was unavailable, so the dairy put in three milking machine units. Jim milked about 125 cows himself, did all the feeding, worked in the plant, and had three trucks on the street. He said things were tough during the Depression, but their roughest time was during the war. "We couldn't get tires; we couldn't get boots to wear; and every week we had to fight in Golden to get stamps to buy gas for our trucks. Lots of times when we blew out a tire on a truck, we'd get another one, and after a mile or two that one would blow out. Yet the government was on me all the time to produce more milk because they needed it for the military." Gibson Dairy was asked to deliver milk to Camp Hale at Leadville, but didn't have the capability. The Meadow Gold Dairy shipped milk to the camp by train.

Many of us remember the time before milk was homogenized. Until 1944, the top of the milk bottle held pure cream and the rest was skim milk. Gibson Dairy bought an homogenizer, and within a year all the dairies followed suit.

Hay was purchased to feed the cows, since

mostly oats and corn were raised on their 100 acres. The Arvada Mill rolled the oats, then combined them with ground corn, soybean meal, linseed meal and beet pulp. The Brighton sugar beet factory was the source for beet pulp, a good ingredient as it "didn't come through in the milk." The Gibsons bought their year's supply of hay in May or the first part of June because the first cutting contained more nutrients than the others. They pitched it off the truck, stacked it, then got up on the stack to pitch it down into the feed racks as needed. When baled hay was available, it was easier to handle and stack. However, they lost four or five good milking cows each year because pieces of baling wire in the hay cut through the animals' stomachs. The suppliers finally came up with magnets to put in the cows' stomachs to attract the wire. In the mid 1950s, twine replaced baling wire, solving the problem.

In the 1940s and 1950s many dairies went by the wayside, or were bought out. Jim purchased three small ones, but eventually sold his herd of 275 head at public auction. People moving in around them in Wheat Ridge complained about the smell of the cows. Jim says, "If you have animals, you're going to have their smell." Also, the dairy facility was too small and Jefferson County wouldn't zone the land for a larger plant.

In 1963 Gibson went to work for the Arvada Dairy. In 1967 he signed a five year general manager's contract with the Robinson Dairy. Roberts Dairy of Omaha bought the Robinson Dairy and the United Dairy. United had been flooded in 1965 with water ten feet deep, but a year later it was ready for business.

Grocery stores began cutting milk prices and after 1969 dairy retail was replaced by wholesale. Jim believes Royal Crest Dairy and Karl's Farm are the only two retail dairies operating now; people aren't home anymore to bring in the milk. Jim stayed at Robinson until 1972 when he retired from the dairy business. Wanting something to do, he bought a Dairy Queen at 1160 South Federal which he tore down and replaced with a new building with 50 seats. The

new full brazier store served hamburgers, fries, chicken, and other items doing more volume than any other Dairy Queen in Denver. He later sold the prosperous business and retired.

Jim attended Wheat Ridge schools all twelve years, graduating in 1937. He realizes he isn't getting any younger, and during all those busy years never had much time to spend with his wife, Eleanor. They plan to make up for lost time by enjoying life in Colorado, "as there's a lot we haven't seen yet," Jim says. Married in 1945, they have a daughter and a son living in the area.

Written by Dorothy Donovan from an interview with Jim Gibson, Jr.

Historical Bugs Bunny Victim of Corporate Power

Threatened with an imminent lawsuit by Warner Brothers, the firm that bought the Walt Disney Studio who long ago created the lovable Bugs Bunny cartoon character and trademarked that rabbit's well-known name, the Bugs Bunny Motel, 6218 West Colfax Avenue, has now become the Big Bunny Motel.



The Original Bugs Bunny Sign

Despite the owner's requests to maintain the motel name, familiar to Lakewood since the place was built shortly after World War II, Warner Brothers were adamant about the name

change and also demanded that the motel's outdoor sign be torn down. The motel, after a long series of ownerships, was bought eight years ago by the Sau family from Korea. Their two sons are graduates of the University of Colorado, one with a master's degree in business administration. The sons said last week that advice from several attorneys convinced them that Warner Brothers' battery of attorneys would fight them to the death.

Soon after they bought the place, the Saus discovered that the City of Lakewood was planning to condemn the building and have it razed. The family heavily invested in a total restoration of the one-story structure, replacing electrical, heating, plumbing and other systems, and tearing out and replacing deteriorating walls, ceilings and floors. "Lakewood has been very cooperative," one of the sons said. "The officials are pleased with our work and have installed a new sidewalk and street lighting." The former Bugs Bunny Motel was the first in Colorado to join the Motel Association of America. It has retained the old sign by blocking out some of the lettering to form the new name. The rabbit figure adorning the sign also remains. "Warner Brothers does not own all the world's rabbits," the son said.

Memberships Are Over Due!

The Lakewood Historical Society invites you to renew your membership and enlist friends to join as well. When we get a full head of steam going (soon), you won't want to miss all the exciting activities going on. In the next newsletter you will be informed about the acceptance of the Schnell Farm on to the National Register of Historic Places.

The interviews in this issue are hopefully the beginning of an ongoing project to record oral histories before it is too late. If you are interested in participating (you don't have to write an article for the newsletter), please call Marian at 233-3050. Completing an oral history

is like visiting with old friends who have so many interesting things to tell about their youth, when the Lakewood area was young, and all the many things that have happened to shape our present city.

Mark Your Calendars

On May 2, 1997 The Lakewood Historical Society will hold its annual dinner at The Lakewood Country Club. The 1996 dinner was a smashing success and the same promises to hold true this year. Although it is almost two months away, we want you to put it on your calendars so when you receive the invitation you won't be

surprised. Jazz pianist Jeff Waters will return by popular request and if you haven't had the pleasure of hearing him make that piano really come to life, then you're in for a real treat. His repertoire will be varied and who can remember the songs he played last year...that was a year ago! Details will be forthcoming.

Your History Question

Why is Colorado called the Centennial State?

Answer: Colorado was granted statehood in 1876, one hundred years after the Declaration of Independence.

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The Lakewood Historical Society, Inc.
797 S. Wadsworth Blvd.
Lakewood, CO 80226