

## **The Townsend House Hotel**

When the Northern Pacific Rail Road established Townsend they realized that both the town and the railroad itself need to have a grand hotel. The NPRR offered land for a hotel at \$5.00 per lot provided a \$10,000 hotel (approximately \$290,000 today) would be built in five months. The hotel was built by Tierney and Company (W.E. Tierney, J.R. Marks, and D.J. McCarthy) then leased to Cliff Reynolds of Beaver Creek. The hotel was located where T.K.s Auto Repair is now – across Cedar street from the Opportunity Bank.

In February 1884, about 7 months after the deed was signed the “Reynolds Hotel” was built, furnished and opened. According to “The Trenchant” (a local newspaper) “The new hotel is completed and now running in good shape. Cliff Reynolds, the leasee has nearly all the rooms furnished and the traveling public can find comfortable quarters. The hotel would be a credit to any town considerably much larger”.

Cliff Reynolds had originally settled in Beaver Creek (near what is now Winston) and ran the “Halfway House” hotel in Beaver Creek. He bought a ranch near Beaver Creek and tore down the house. While a new house was being built he leased and ran the “Reynolds Hotel”. After the new ranch house was built Cliff Reynolds moved back to Beaver Creek.

J.R. Marks became the manager of the hotel and the name was changed to the “Townsend House”. The red carpeted halls and rooms were elegant and the dining room was king among eating places. Tempting printed menus featured oysters on the half shell and veal cutlets with country gravy. Whiskey at the bar at 12.5 cents a drink and beer was ten cents a glass.

A wing was built on the east side of the hotel for drummers to set up their displays for merchants, the dealers in liquor sales and photographers to visit. The rows of shoes especially fascinated people in the 1890s.

Those who saw the kitchen remember the big wooden sinks lined with zinc. There were no faucets as all the water was pumped by hand and heated in a large barrel attached to the kitchen ranges by a coil.

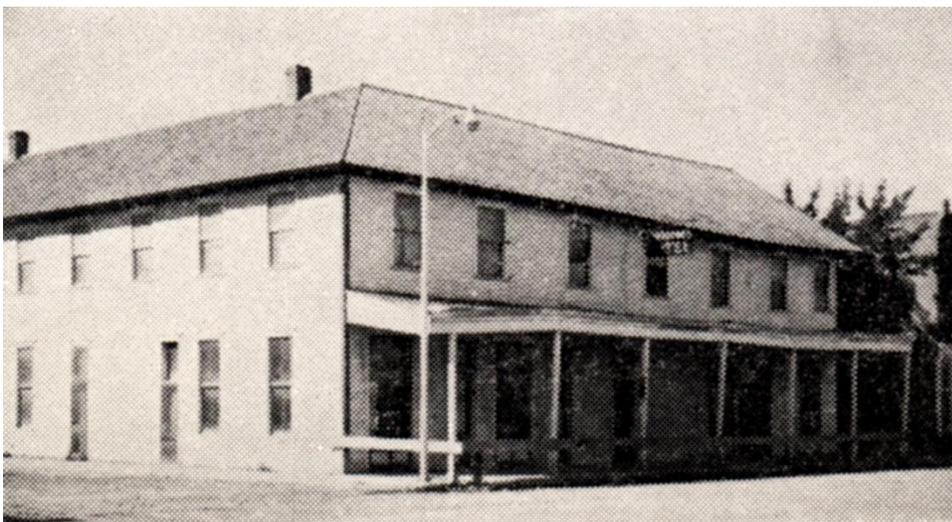
Even though there was no electricity for lights or furnaces, the Townsend House was comfortable with a stove in every room and the kerosene lamps were kept filled and shining. In all the years of service there was never a major fire at the Townsend House.

The hotel was host to a number of notable people. Reportedly, guests of the hotel included Montana Governor Potts, Senator T.J. Walsh and “Copper Kings” W.A. Clark and F. Augustus Heinz. William A. Clark was once named the wealthiest individual in the United States by a national magazine.

J.R. Marks had managed the hotel for over 20 years when he died in 1908 of a heart attack in a room of the hotel reserved for his personal use.

The hotel continued to operate until the location was sold to Carter Oil Company in 1957. It was torn down and replaced with a gas station owned by Lawrence Poe.

The information for this article came from the Broadwater Bygones (available at the museum) and from Linda Huth’s presentation “A Walk Down Mainstreet”.



The Townsend House Hotel in the 1800s.



The Townsend House Hotel in the background in the 1950s.

