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**Summary of Oral History Interview with Vivian Dieckman & Alice French**

October 9, 1990

Interviewed by Irene Francis

Vivian Taylor Dieckman moved to Wet Mountain Valley in 1935 to teach at the Willows School, a one-room schoolhouse. Born in Louisville, Colorado, she had graduated from Greeley Teachers College. Teaching multiple grades, she earned \$75 a month but was not paid for the last month due to budget constraints. She boarded with local families for \$20 per month.

Shortly after arriving, she met her future husband, Harry Dieckman, and they married in 1936. Their wedding celebration included a large *chivarie* dance, considered the biggest ever held in the valley. After marriage, she transitioned to ranch life while Harry worked as both a rancher and a Forest Service employee, maintaining trails such as the Rainbow Trail.

Life on the ranch involved traditional farming practices, such as using horses for haying and preserving food through canning and an icebox before electricity arrived in the early 1950s. Their children initially attended the Willows School before transferring to a consolidated school in Westcliffe.

Vivian recalled traveling by train from Westcliffe to Denver and witnessing the famous glowing tombstones at Silver Cliff Cemetery, a phenomenon many attributed to phosphine gas or spirits. Her daughter, Alice, later took over the family ranch, maintaining cattle and hay production.

Their memories provide insight into the challenges and traditions of rural ranching life, early education, and local folklore in Wet Mountain Valley.

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*This summary created with ChatGPT.*