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### **Summary of Oral History Interview with Eleanore Medell**

Eleanore Medell was interviewed on February 4, 1999, at her home, where she shared her family's history and memories of growing up in the Hardscrabble and Wetmore areas of Colorado. Her ancestors arrived in the region in the mid-1800s, coming from England and Wales.

### **Family Background and Early Settlement**

Eleanore's grandfather, Terat "Teddy" Wright, emigrated from England in the 1850s to avoid entering the family printing business, preferring to farm instead. He homesteaded land in Hardscrabble, but farming proved difficult in the rocky terrain. Her grandmother, Florence Hiss, arrived from Wales at age 14 and settled in what later became the Holstein ranch.

Her mother, born in 1885, attended a local one-room schoolhouse before enrolling in the Canon City Normal School, where she trained to be a teacher. She later taught in the same schoolhouse where she had studied as a child.

### **School and Childhood Memories**

Eleanore attended Fairview School, a one-room schoolhouse near Forestdale. She recalled having only six classmates and a teacher who taught grades one through eight. One memorable classroom activity involved a "mistake box," where students recorded errors in grammar and speech to win prizes.

During winter, deep snow often made travel difficult. She once spent a month stranded at her grandmother's house in Wetmore due to heavy snowfall. She also remembered hearing mountain lions scream at night, describing the sound as eerie and unforgettable.

### **Community and Social Life**

The local community was close-knit, with social gatherings revolving around church, schools, and dance halls. Her grandmother operated a large dance hall and summer resort, hosting events where people from Florence and surrounding towns would gather. The property also included a post office and a small general store.

She recalled seeing a flag at Lover's Leap, a local landmark, where legend held that two Native American lovers from rival tribes had jumped to their deaths to be together.

### **Life as a Nurse and Family Losses**

Eleanore became a nurse, receiving practical training at the state hospital and later working at Parkview Hospital. She was married twice, first to a man she met in Ohio, and later to a longtime acquaintance from Colorado.

She suffered personal tragedy when her 16-year-old daughter was killed in a car accident. Later in life, she faced serious health challenges, including a near-fatal battle with Legionnaires' disease, which she survived thanks to the quick intervention of her family.

### **Reflections on Change**

Eleanore noted the transformation of the region over time, from a bustling ranching and mining area to a quieter community with fewer small farms. She recalled her grandfather working as a freighter, hauling supplies by oxen from Cripple Creek and Victor to Rosita and Canon City.

Her oral history provides a vivid picture of pioneer life, education, and community traditions in Custer County, offering a firsthand perspective on the resilience and adaptability of early settlers.

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*This summary created with ChatGPT.*