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Summary of Oral History Interview with Mary Ellen Roscoe

Mary Ellen Roscoe was interviewed on January 16, 1967, in Westcliffe, Colorado. She shared memories of her family's history, the mining towns of Querida and Rosita, early newspaper publications, and significant historical events in Custer County.

Family Background and Settlement in Custer County

Mary Ellen's grandfather, George Weiman, was a miner who came to Rosita from Central City around 1880. Her mother was born in Rosita in 1881. Her grandfather worked in several mines, including the Humboldt and Rose Mines, before moving to Querida, where he acquired a ranch and worked in the Bassick Mine. He was known for his ability to locate ore veins and used divining rods to find water.

Life in Querida and Rosita

Mary Ellen described Querida as a thriving mining town in the late 19th century, with seven saloons and a significant mining payroll. The Bassick Mine, one of the largest operations, was 1,800 feet deep with extensive tunnels. By the time of the interview, it had filled with 1,700 feet of water.

She recalled early physicians, including Dr. Sperry, who practiced in Querida, and the county seat changes—from Ula to Rosita, then to Silver Cliff, and finally to Westcliffe.

Historical Changes and Building Relocations

Mary Ellen detailed how numerous buildings were moved from Silver Cliff to Westcliffe as the town declined. The Catholic and Episcopal churches were originally in Rosita before being relocated twice—first to Silver Cliff and then to Westcliffe. Other structures, including hotels, banks, and general stores, were either torn down or repurposed.

She also spoke about the presence of early newspapers, with Rosita and Silver Cliff each having multiple publications. Silver Cliff had five newspapers at one time, including two dailies and three weeklies.

Community and Social Life

Mary Ellen's family ranched in Querida, and she owned 600 acres of land in the area at the time of the interview. She reminisced about the region's natural beauty, particularly the aspens in the fall.

She also described early mining conflicts, including a violent dispute in Rosita where a man was killed over a claim dispute. She mentioned that mining claims were often jumped, leading to legal battles and occasional violence.

Conclusion

Mary Ellen's interview provides valuable insight into the history of mining towns, early settlement patterns, and the cultural evolution of Custer County. Her recollections highlight the rise and fall of

mining communities, the movement of entire towns, and the resilience of families who lived through these changes.

This summary created with ChatGPT.