

“Steamboat is a town of vitality and youth! I think it’s great!”

Narrated by Gloria Gossard



Written by Anne Morrison and Christine Carson

Gloria Gossard, a long time Steamboat resident, is a coherently talkative person. As she told us about her life we understood how she is a modern day, educated and determined person. Her positive and exuberant personality made us see her as a young thinker, active in a self-fulfilling life which we admired and wanted to know more about. We’d (Anne and Christine) like to share our interview with our readers.

“I was born in Chicago, but I didn’t live there long, and I’m not sorry. I lived in Indianapolis for five or six years, and in La Jolla, Calif.

“I’m not sure I know the exact year my family came to Steamboat, but it was many, many years ago, long before I was born. My grandmother on my mother’s side, Clara Miller, was the first of the family to come here. She lived in a hotel in Chicago with other widows when a promoter talked several of these widows into coming to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. He said

that Steamboat Springs was absolutely rich with gold and silver and all kinds of precious metals. I mean, we do have minerals and things around here, and always have, but nevertheless he had in mind a little money for himself. He was trying to sell them property; I think at that time mostly in the vicinity of Hahn’s Peak, which was a boom town then. That was in 1909 or 1910.

“So, my grandmother came out here, not that she had any money to invest, but she was adventurous and thought it sounded like a lark, a fun trip. So she came here and loved it!!! She rented a house, the house that Ray and Maureen Barrows have now. It was here at that time, believe it or not. She liked it so well she came out a second year, but only in the summer. People who came during those days from the Midwest or the East were always frightened of the winters, and well they might have been, without snowplows. Even skiing, except for survival, in

those days was minimal.

"Anyway, the second year she came here, my mother and father came with her, and they were really quite taken with Steamboat Springs, and the country. However, they did not come here to live at that time; they just enjoyed it. It was 1930 before my family came here to live.

"We came in an old yellow seven passenger Lincoln. It didn't do too well in the winter because we didn't have snow tires, and studs were unheard of. There was a garage below our house on the hill where the car was parked because we couldn't get it up the hill. In those days, we hardly ever went to the market; there weren't supermarkets but little neighborhood groceries. We called in our order, and it was delivered by sleigh or sled.

"When we came here, the population of Steamboat was around fifteen hundred. We rented the Wither house until we bought the Wessell's house (Still next to Gloria's present house on Crawford Hill). We were there until my mother and I built this house in 1969.

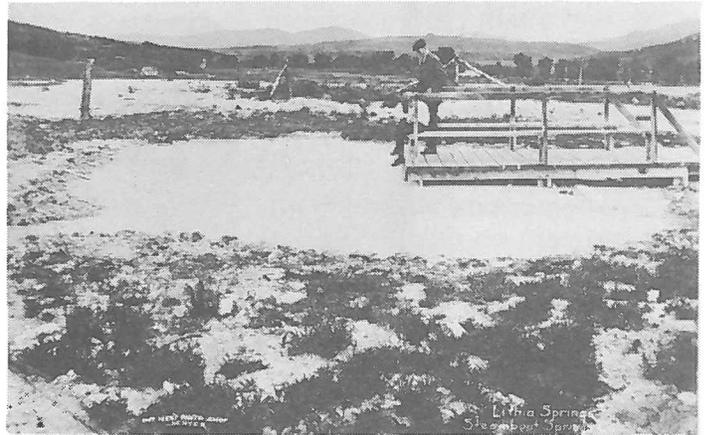
"My dad, H.W. Gossard, had retired from his business in Chicago, the girdle and corset business. He founded this company years and years ago, even before he was married. He operated it for years in Chicago and eventually retired to his interests in ranching and farming. In Indiana it was farming, out here it's called ranching. He had a country place in Indiana and he always liked raising cattle and horses. So, when we came out here, he was eager for a ranch.

"H.W. bought a ranch near Craig, actually between Craig and Meeker. We did not live on the ranch, but my brother and his wife, Bill and Carol Gossard, have lived there for twenty years, they liked the ranch life. My mother and father preferred Steamboat "city" life and just commuted.

"My dad died at the age of 94 and my mother at the age of 98. So you see, they really were retired

for quite some time. When they first moved here, it was during the other depression years of the thirties. My dad operated what was called the townsite property which included the swimming pool, the rodeo grounds and all the springs. He was very big on the idea of what were known as 'spas', places where people came to drink mineral water and take mineral baths. Unfortunately, during the depression time the last thing people needed to spend their money on were springs and baths!

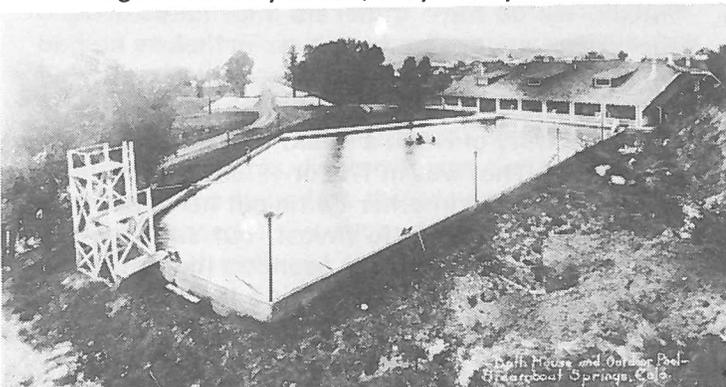
"H.W. leased the pool for several years and planned on development. Oh! He had books and consulted with all types of experts on the qualitative and quantitative properties of the springs. He was a great believer in their health-giving benefit. He drank the Lithia water, that was his favorite for years and years. One time we drove back to Chicago and stayed at the Drake Hotel. In the trunk of the car we had this enormous bottle of Lithia water which he took along. It was so big it barely fit in the trunk. When the bellman came to carry it into the hotel he said, 'We have very good water here, sir.' It wasn't Lithia water. However, he lived to be 94, so don't knock it!



"My dad was a great believer in the Lithia Springs quantitative and qualitative properties."

"I first started school in Indianapolis then went in La Jolla, California, and when I was in fifth grade I started school here. I finished grade school, junior high, and graduated from high school here. I then attended Colorado College in Colorado Springs for four years. I received a BA in sociology and minored in journalism.

"Then, the high school was on seventh street where the junior high used to be. There was no gym except in the basement of the square building. The year I graduated they were building a gym. In my graduating class, I think there were twenty-four. We knew each other well and really loved each other. There were



"My dad owned the townsite property, which included the swimming pool."

probably a dozen teachers who taught all of the subjects. The coaches doubled in class and taught many subjects as well as being coaches."

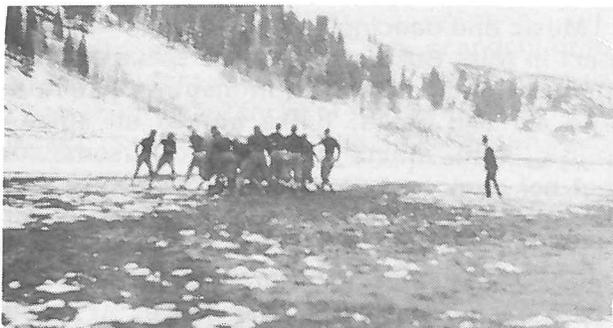
Gloria continued talking about the schools when she was in attendance. "We had football and basketball, no wrestling; that came later. We had a terrible football team one year, just awful! The field used to be by the rodeo grounds, and I stood there on cold October nights like this one, in the snow and rain and cheered, because I was a cheerleader for the Steamboat Springs Sailors when they lost to Craig 60-0. We had a better basketball team, and I cheer-led both. It's a little different now, I think, but there were hardly enough of us then. We had to double in everything. For some of the boys it was difficult because there was football, basketball, and band.

"Sports weren't the only thing. We walked every place. I walked to school and back, and then we didn't have school lunches, so we walked home for lunch, and the children who came in from the country brought their lunches. There was not a school lunch program; the government wasn't into that type of thing at all in those days.

"We had a good music department in school and good choruses. We went on band trips to Grand Junction, Denver and other places for contests. We were usually invited to play during the summer at different rodeos, even in Walden. And, at our own rodeo and at the ski carnival we were the ski band and performed. Gee, it was fun because we made our own fun. The trips were big things in our lives, because we just didn't go to Denver all the time like people do today. It was a totally different perspective for us than for you youngsters today.

I was in the student officers bit, you know, student body this, student body that and so forth. Don't ask me which offices, president, vice-president, etc., I don't remember. It's been awhile.

We asked Gloria about the fads then. "At that time we were getting into the penny loafer bit, and some saddle shoes and that sort of thing. We even had saddle shoes with autographs on them.



"We had a terrible football team one year, just awful!"

That was quite the thing. Generally we just signed first names because there wasn't much room, depending on the size of your foot. We wore our hair dull!!! It was longer and had more of a tendency to a strange type of permanent-wave curls, almost kinky, really sort of revolting."

As the interview continued, Gloria referred more to days gone by. "I've lived in Steamboat all these years, except for trips away in the winter sometimes. Quite a lot of Steamboat is still here and many old families like the Goodings and Browns whom we knew well. The most conspicuous landmark we always had was the Cabin Hotel which burned to the ground in 1939. There was another hotel, which was approximately where the Chevron filling station is now on Lincoln Avenue. Most of Main Street is pretty much the same, really. They've done something to store fronts and things like that. The Squire building on the corner where Lyon Drug is, that's always been there.

"From the Boulevard to the top of the hill north, and Village Green Highlands and Woodchuck Mountain, was absolutely nothing. That is, no houses then. We used that area for a horse pasture and skiing in the winter. We had our own horses in town then and nobody cared, everybody had them. There was an old golf course up there. Some of the stalwart golfers of the day were George Allen, Bill Allen's father and L.L. Brown. They were good golfers, but they had funny golf courses! One was up behind Crawford Hill, and one later was over by the railroad tracks. At any rate, there were not houses beyond this block for many years.

"Steamboat was a fun place to live at that time because we made our own fun. We used to coast (sled), early morning on the crust, usually in March. We went from the top of the old golf course all the way to Main Street, because they didn't plow the streets as well in those days. It was great sledding. We didn't have tubes, we just had sleds. Flexible Flyers; if you didn't have a Flexible Flyer, forget it!!"

Since high school Gloria has led an active and full life. We asked her about how she spent her spare time and what hobbies and interests she had. "Writing has always been a, well, a hobby, shall I say? Now that we've sold our ranch I'll have time to do some serious writing. Maybe! I have written some novels. I have them tucked away in drawers complete with their rejection slips through the years, but I've never felt I put enough time into them. I hate to revise and that, of course, is something I need to do. I like to sit down and write when I feel like it. I'd like to send it to a publisher who will accept it right away. Neither my sentence structure, paragraph structure or my typing is all that good. I'm



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“I’ve written a couple of mysteries. There’s a mystery about the ski area and its boom. I’m interested also in writing what would be partly fictional, partly not, about people like my family who saw so much when they lived almost a century. They came from a totally different locale totally different era from the Midwest, and the South. My mother and father’s first trip out here was by train as far as McCoy. There was no train from there and they came over in a stage to Steamboat in the spring mud. My mother said she’d never forget that mud. They had to spend the night in McCoy. My dad brought a gun along because he’d heard about the ‘Wild West.’ He had a ‘six shooter’ pistol he’d brought out from Chicago. He’d heard how wild it was out here in the West, and he slept with that gun under his pillow that night. It was a Saturday night, and the cowboys came in and shot up McCoy. That was in 1909 or 1910. So, it was pretty exciting!

“I think it’s true that a writer should probably write about things he or she knows best, and that includes your locale. I know Steamboat and Colorado better than Chicago, Indianapolis or La Jolla, California, even though I’ve lived there. I really would like to write something fictional but based on my family’s experiences. I have never published any books, just articles.”

While telling us about her writing skills, Gloria relaxed to fill us in on some of the history of the Winter Sports Club for whom she wrote. Then she continued talking about her favorite kind of authors and writings. “I used to do some writing for the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club. In those days they didn’t have many writers on skiing. We did have the Denver papers sending reporters over here to cover our ski carnival. We were also trying to get people to come over and ski (then as now) though we didn’t have motels and lifts and all of the fancy things. People were cross country skiing then, and they enjoyed watching the ski jumping. The Winter Sports

Club needed some publicity, and I did that for many years. I just contacted Denver reporters and sent articles to them and to some of the ski magazines in Colorado. Whoever would take our articles, we would try to supply them.

“The Winter Sports Club was a strong organization. They had Sunday afternoon ski hikes all winter, and the whole town participated, from kids who were only four or five years old who could barely ski, to older people in their seventies, maybe seventy-five or eighty. The Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club would publish in the Pilot every week what was happening, and we would meet at a central place, downtown generally. If we were going some place that the skiing wasn’t particularly good, until we got there we had a hay ride, horse-drawn, and everybody climbed aboard, skis and all, and they would transport us and then we would ski from there on. For instance, we would go out on the slopes of what is now Mt. Werner, where all the action is today. It was a pretty long trek skiing out there from town, so we would go on a hay rack. Of course, no lifts, so we had to pack up the hills. The club always took a great big huge iron coffee pot (about three feet tall). And we took sandwiches and would stop sometime during the afternoon from our skiing, and enjoy coffee and some snacks. I’ve forgotten what it cost for ski club membership in those days. I doubt it even cost five dollars to be a member of the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, and for us kids it was probably a dollar and a half. There wasn’t much money here then; that was in the 1930’s.”

Then Miss Gossard continued about her writing saga. “My favorite writer is probably Shakespeare. I have many favorites. I like to read, all kinds of reading material from biographies, novels, to mysteries. I have many magazines I haven’t gotten around to yet. I love mysteries, but that’s for relaxed reading. Most fiction is for relaxed reading, mysteries and things like that. Then I get into biographies and histories, and I get sort of down to the nitty-gritty and really read. I enjoy most reading because it keeps me amused and is a learning experience.”

Music and dancing have played an important part in Miss Gossard’s life. She spoke about the fine arts and her interest in them. “I like music and art and ballet. I like almost all kinds of music. Well, maybe not punk rock, some rock but not punk rock. I like classical music and I love opera; I’m a real opera buff. I like jazz and anything with a good beat; my favorite musicians are Puccini, Mozart and Beethoven; I like dancing. I went to the dances at the old Cabin Hotel on Saturday nights. I was too little to participate, but my brother and I used to sit on the steps and watch, as the ballroom was in the basement of the Cabin Hotel. The feast they had!

Wow! They had the feast at eleven o'clock or midnight, and the hotel put them on, and practically the whole town went to these. It might be a winter night, and twenty or thirty below and nobody had a car, or we walked; it didn't matter where a person lived, they walked. Some people had a sleigh. People didn't think a thing about it; we just walked from all over town to the Cabin Hotel, especially for a dance.

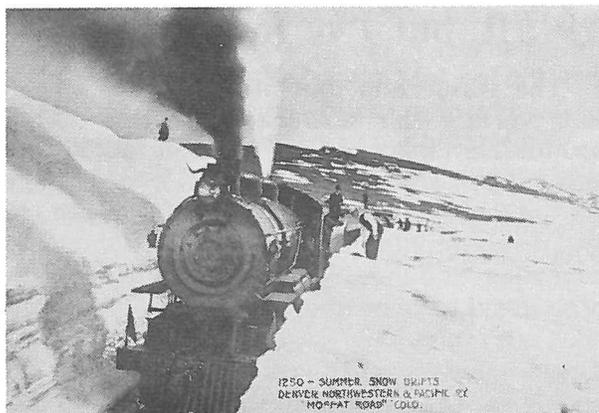


“The old Rabbit Ears Road is a lot narrower, windier and steeper than the new one.”

People who don't live in this area may not realize how difficult and long the winters are. Transportation was a problem in earlier days. Gloria talked about how it used to be as they walked a lot and train travel progressed, slowly, in the Rockies. “I have to laugh now when people complain about the chuck holes. They're bad, I know, but you should have seen the caves we had. You just wouldn't believe in the spring when the melting came but, at any rate, when the plowing was done there was a foot of snow left on the street. And there was no paving, no asphalt; just dirt, gravel and then mud. So even downtown you could have trouble with a car with no snow-tires. People did have tire chains and they went bang, bang, bang, around. Some of the old cars were pretty funny and people took them places where now people take jeeps. They were such high cars in those days, we really climbed into cars. They could go over rocks without tearing out oil pans. Actually, it was amazing how far up in the woods, like the Hahn's Peak area and Buffalo Pass, that some of these old cars would go, and generally they boiled. They almost always boiled, anywhere you took them. On the old Rabbit Ears Road, the old road was quite different from the new one; it was narrow and winding and steeper, although the new one is steep enough. A car would be pulling and tugging hard to get up that hill, and they would not have the cooling capacity like they do now. They would boil and water and steam would just pour out of the radiator and around the radiator cap. Everyone simply pulled off and waited until the

cars cooled off. From a stream on the pass, we'd have a tin can in the car and we would get some cold water. I can't really remember what they did in the winter, because they didn't have the modern anti-freezes, I don't think.

“I do remember quite a bit about the train trips. That's the way we traveled most of the time. It took hours, even days. When my parents first came by train, the Moffat tunnel was not in existence. It was built in the 1920s. The train went over the top of the mountains; it had to go all the way to the top of the mountain, under which the tunnel is now. That was tortuous, back and forth, with switchbacks. Frequently the railroad had to have an engine on the rear of the train as well as one on the front to make sure the train didn't slide. It needed that extra power. In the winter they would have to put sand on the tracks. There were snow sheds on the pass because the snow would be so deep on top of the mountains that there would be terrible drifts. The snow would drift around the sheds and it was like going through a wooden tunnel. The tunnels did catch fire a couple of times. There were steam trains with fire in their boilers. A couple of times the sheds did burn, and when that happened, the train couldn't get through because of the drift conditions. That was a long, long trip. Oh wow! The trips through the Moffat Tunnel were shorter. The train usually came on a daily basis, one in and one out. They even had sleeping cars and sort of a dining room. Their dining room was not the greatest but they had some food.”



“There were snowsheds on the pass because the snow would be so deep on top of the mountains that there would be terrible drifts.”

As we looked around us we saw that Gloria has a beautiful home filled with lovely and valuable antiques. As we conversed she told us about some of the antiques her parents had bought at different World Fairs. She mentioned that in her new home now being constructed outside

Phoenix, she intended furnishing it with more modern furniture. "All of the antiques were left to me. I just carpeted this house this summer (luscious blue). I have oriental rugs which are worn and really old, and finally it got to the point where I started running my foot through. This house has hard wood floors, and the oriental rugs always did look nice. They're old, and I'm getting someone to repair them. I may toss a couple over the carpeting when they get back from the cleaners.



"It's carrara marble from Italy. I'm sure there's a story behind it, but I've forgotten."

"The statue and that picture came from an 1890 World's Fair in Chicago; my grandmother bought them there. At that time the World's Fair was more of a World Trade Mart, where as today we think of them having different kinds of rides and amusements, it was an exhibition of other countries, and the United States, and all of their products. I have no idea the worth of these things now, but I think they were very inexpensive then. They were valued because they came from other countries. That little table is real ivory and that's true ebony. It's quite ornate. In the guest bedroom, my mother's room, there is a bedroom set that you won't believe the work. The statue is carrara marble from Italy, and the reason it's sort of dull looking is because it must be cleaned carefully. It's a soft marble, and that's why it was used for carving in such intricate detail. It can be cleaned with Ivory Soap and a very, very soft cloth. Undoubtedly there is a story about the statue, but my grandmother died before I was born, and somebody's probably told me but I've forgotten. The statue is the oldest, the next oldest is probably the table, and then the picture and that little table."

Even though Gloria is building a "winter" house in Arizona she doesn't consider herself a world traveler like many of her friends. "I don't travel a great deal as many people do. Usually I just travel some place to get out of the snow for awhile. I go to Arizona. I've been to Florida and California, but I'm not an extensive world traveler like Dorothy Wither. She just takes off. She's going around the world in February. She's been so many places. I've never been particularly enthusiastic about travel. I like to go some place and stay for awhile, even if it's only for a week. To me, too many of these tours are too fast, you may just get to some place you really like, and it's time to move on. I'd rather find the place I like and stay for a couple of days or a week. You don't see much that way, I know, but I get worn out on tours."

As the interview was drawing to a close we were pleased to hear Miss Gossard had a few things she wanted to add. She wanted to tell us about Perry Mansfield and the emphasis on the arts, education, and culture in our community. "I have just a couple of things I'd like to add, for what they're worth, and that is I think we are lucky here in Steamboat, and always have been for such a little town, to be such a cosmopolitan type of town. The reason I think this is true of Steamboat, and not of some other small towns in Colorado, is because we have had such a diversified, such an interesting group of people who have come here, not necessarily on a permanent basis, but for some reason or another, this little town from years ago, has attracted people from the Midwest, the East, and Denver. Early on, Perry Mansfield offered so much more



"That table is true ebony and ivory."

in cultural things than even some cities. A valuable experience was to know the founders of Perry Mansfield, Charlotte Perry, better known as Kingo, and Portia Mansfield. They were good friends of my parents, and we exchanged dinners. They would have us for dinner at the camp, and we would have them for dinner at home. Some of their stories of life at Perry-Mansfield Camp were just marvelous.

"Some of the New Yorkers couldn't really understand all the 'mountain bit.' It was certainly not all that remote, but it was not all that far removed from some of the resorts in upper state New York. Nevertheless, the town seemed very small to them. I think many people wondered why Kingo and Portia wanted to establish their camp here, but they loved this country and they certainly did a great job. I say, as I said earlier, I think Steamboat has benefited greatly in a lot of ways; the people that have lived here always felt the cultural influence that so many little towns could never have had without something like Perry-Mansfield Camp to spur them on. Charlotte Perry was always generous with her directing talents when we had a community players group here, but she wasn't a year-round resident. If asked for advice on directing, she always gave it. She said, 'Well now, why don't you do this, or that and try it this way.'

"The biggest celebration for the Railroad Depot was when the Perry-Mansfield people arrived in late June and departed in late August. Camp lasted for a longer time in those days. I mean, if you were a student and you came all the way out here, you wanted to stay longer than the students do now. Everyone went down to the Depot when the Perry Mansfield people came on the train and gave them a huge welcome, and bid them goodbye. Otherwise, I don't think the Depot was a very popular place to meet in those days. As a matter of fact, I see many more people when I fly than I ever did when I took the train. The train was not very crowded except when the Perry Mansfield-people came.

As we finished the conversation, Gloria invited us for tea which made us relaxed and more comfortable. As she took us for a tour of her home, she pointed out antiques and momentos which she values from the past. At the same time she struck us as a "modern day" woman with definitely vociferous opinions. We felt her positive attitude was exhibited by her outlook about a growing and changing Steamboat Springs. "What a blessing as far as I'm concerned that Steamboat has had the boom it has had. It has been said that some of the natives resent the growth and the influx of developers and population growth, tourists and all that. I think Steamboat would have folded absolutely in the 1950's or 60's had it not been for the boom.

Our young people were leaving, and now we're a town of young people. I think it's great! That gives energy and vitality to a place. A town needs stamina and vitality.

"We have an ideal situation in Steamboat Springs; A developing resort, a long-time stable ranching community, cultural aspects and a population with diversified interests. I think it's great!!!"



"We're a town of young people. I think it's great! That gives energy and vitality to a place. A town needs stamina and vitality."

