

Little Bear Inn History

Tucked away in a grove of trees, nearly hidden from the view of modern-day travelers, is an abandoned piece of history that endured almost 80 years of use.

The old Little Bear Inn is nestled on a ranch north of Cheyenne (2 miles North on I-25 to Exit 16 - Horse Creek Road Left on Horse Creek Road , over the interchange bridge to Little Bear Road Right on Little Bear Road 2 miles to The Little Bear Inn on the left). In its heyday, it was a stop for weary travelers, a saloon and casino and a haven of sorts for outlaws.

In the 1870's, people began to travel northward to the Black Hills for gold mining. Seeing the opportunity, Isaac Bard and his wife Rose, bought land in 1875 and erected a way station for the travelers. At that time, their trip from Cheyenne to Deadwood, S.D. lasted three days and three nights.

The Cheyenne-Deadwood stage route passed by the inn, and though it was not a scheduled stop, the stage often would use the inn as a rest stop. The post office at Horse Creek closed in 1877, moving to the Little Bear and making it a regular stop.

The growth of the rail lines in Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming spelled the end of the stage route, and the last stage coach made its journey on the Deadwood route in 1887.

The next life of the Little Bear Inn was as a gambling hall, saloon and restaurant. A writer visiting Wyoming from the east in 1957 described the stories the then-owners told him.

The old saloon was in a rear corner room, he said, and a man on horseback once rode through the doorway, collapsing the floorboards.

Another interesting legend reported by the writer was that of a tunnel that extended from under the saloon to the stage horses' quarters, 100 feet from the inn. When a posse seeking an outlaw arrived at the inn, the trap door was opened, and the outlaw could escape at the other end, or he could stay in the tunnel until the posse left. The tunnel still exists, but was closed after inspection revealed it was crumbling.

When the county sheriff outlawed gambling, in the 1950's, the inn closed because the owners felt city residents weren't willing to drive 30 miles just to eat. Little Bear Inn is Cheyenne's original steakhouse, and has been operating since 1958 at the current location.

If we can do anything to make your dining experience more enjoyable, please let us know. We appreciate your patronage, and hope you will recommend Little Bear Inn to your friends and relatives.