

20-Mile House

By: *The Town of Parker Historic Preservation Commission*

Speculation and some confusion surround the facts of an old cabin on Mainstreet just west of Parker Road. Parker legend states that Alfred Butters built a one-room log building in a grove of pine trees one mile south of present-day Mainstreet in 1863. Appropriately named Pine Grove, Butters handled mail, supplied provisions, and relayed messages left for travelers along the southern branch of the Smokey Hill Trail, also called the Cherokee Trail.



In 1864, George Long bought and moved the “post office” to its current location at the northwest corner of Mainstreet and Stage Run. Long, who “squatted” on the property, added a large white frame building containing ten rooms, a kitchen, dining room, and ballroom upstairs. Serving four different stage lines 20 miles south of Colfax and Broadway, the location of the main stage station in Denver, Long named the first of six stops into Denver the 20-Mile House. The first stage coaches to service the stop were those of the Butterfield Overland Despatch Company, which were sold to Ben Holladay, who sold them to Well, Fargo and Company. Many wagons also used the trail to move fresh cut lumber from the Pineries to the growing city of Denver. After Long relinquished rights to the property in 1868, Nelson Doud executed a homestead application on the property, and paid taxes on it until 1870. To sell the property, Doud then opted out of the homestead application and paid two hundred dollars for the land at two dollars and fifty cents per acre, indicating the property was eighty acres. Emma Doud Gould, Nelson’s daughter, recalled her mother, Susan, serving meals to traders, gold-seekers, freighters, Indians, and Preachers who were going back and forth to Denver from Bijou Basin, Kiowa, Running Creek, and Cherry Creek. The ballroom was open four times a year for square dances. Admittance was five dollars and included dinner. The Doud’s moved to 17 Mile House and sold the property.

On September 15, 1870, James Sample Parker bought the property, and then three months later on December 8, Parker became postmaster; a position he held for twenty-seven years. The structure became the official post office of the town, Pine Grove. The Denver and New Orleans Railroad came to town in 1882 and began delivering mail to Pine Grove, but because there was another settlement called Pine Grove on the Denver and South Park Railroad, confusion in delivering the mail developed. Parker suggested that the town and post office be renamed Edithville in honor of his daughter, but postal authorities opted for the railroad’s designation for the stop, Parker’s. The government later decreed that all the possessives be removed from post office designations, and the stop became Parker. James Parker added a blacksmith shop and a general mercantile store to the facilities. He built and donated a school house, paid and boarded a teacher for the first year, and donated land for the Pine Grove Cemetery. The 20-Mile House structures were the first hotel, mercantile, blacksmith shop, restaurant, and official post office in Parker. As newer and larger accommodations were built, James reduced his operation and finally retired as postmaster in 1897.

James Parker lived on the property until 1910, when he moved to Denver and sold the property to Neil Duncan. A succession of owners followed including Ed and Lena Poupirt, Charlie O’Brien, and Gerald Clarke. The railroad ceased to pass through Parker in the 1930’s. During Charlie O’Brien’s ownership in 1946, the 20-Mile House portion was demolished leaving only Butters’ original structure, which was used as a garage. O’Brien built a two story concrete block house that was torn down in January of 1998. The Parker Area Historical Society and Town of Parker refurbished the cabin to its

appearance as shown in photographs from 1890 which is what we see today at the 20-Mile Historic Park.