



**A, D, F, & J. RABBIT EARS MOTEL SIGN
201 Lincoln Avenue, Steamboat Springs**

The curative mineral springs, hunting, skiing, hiking, and other recreational tourism activities have traditionally played a significant role in the economic development and welfare of the Steamboat Springs area. Improved roads and the arrival of the railroad in 1909 enhanced accessibility and expanded recreational opportunities. Early tourism peaked in the 1920s, declined in the subsequent two decades due to the Great Depression and World War II, and experienced a resurgence in the 1950s to include rodeos, softball games, conventions, dances, and other summer activities. Several hotels, motels, and tourist courts were constructed to accommodate the influx of visitors with diverse

interests. The Rabbit Ears Motel, a twenty-unit brick complex trimmed in green and yellow, was constructed and opened in 1953 by H. L. and Evelyn Beswick, who operated the motel for ten years. The crowning glory of the establishment from its inception was a large, unique, eye-catching neon sign with a rabbit face atop a large arrow outlined by flashing chase lights that indicated the motel's name and entrance. The sign was originally bright green and dark red, trimmed in yellow; the rabbit's eyes were flashing neon that created by an ingenious switch mechanism the effect of the rabbit looking from right to left. The property had various owners until 1971, when it was purchased by Ronald and Lyle Koehler, whose family continues to own and operate the establishment. The sign was painted a rusty, reddish pink with blue background in the early 1970s, and florescent pink, yellow, and blue thereafter. The Colorado Department of Transportation required that the rabbit's roving eyes and the flashing chase lights be removed in the late 1970s due to a State law prohibiting animated signs along national highways. The sign was moved further back onto the property in 1977-78 to accommodate the widening of the highway. In 1988 the sign was coated in aluminum since paint would no longer adhere to the original galvanized steel construction and the colors were altered to the present-day pink with yellow-beige background. The sign continues to beckon travel-weary visitors and remains indicative of the architectural characteristics of desert motels and signage of the Southwest during the modernistic, post-war era of the 1950s when family vacation road trips burgeoned in popularity. The sign was one of several neon signs on the main street of town but is the only one of its kind remaining, which increases its uniqueness as a visual feature of the downtown area.