

## The Indian Princess in Morrison Colorado

*By Donna Bishop*

Little was known about the Oklahoma family that arrived in Morrison in the summer of 1921. The older woman and her daughter took over managing a local boarding house that served the men working on the road crew rebuilding State Highway 27 along Bear Creek (now SH74). The man of the family worked on the crew but had been a coal miner in Oklahoma who had recently survived a mine disaster that had taken the life of his close friend and the father of his young five-year-old niece who had come to Colorado with the family.

Kate Wells, the older woman, had run a well-respected boarding house in Oklahoma and had every intention of doing the same in Morrison. Her rooms were clean and the food was mighty good. The cook was her daughter, Montie, who had worked beside her mother since she finished elementary school. Ed Taylor, Montie's husband was a quiet hardworking man who let his mother-in-law take charge of the family. After evening meals, Ma Kate would enjoy her pipe of tobacco out on the front porch joining her boarders in the conversation of the day.

Five-year-old Kathrine had spent most of her life in the company of adults or lost in her story books. She had very few lingering memories of her father except that he was very tall. So tall that the family had to remove the front window to allow his casket to be taken from the house. The train trip to Colorado had been long but interesting. She wasn't sure why mommy had not come on the trip but she felt fine with grandmother, Aunt Montie and Uncle Ed.

Finally school was to start. Kathrine had dreamed of school for ever so long. Her dress was ready and Auntie had taken care with her braids. The family had promised this would be such a special day and that she would be making many new friends. Auntie said, "You mind your manners and show all them kids how smart you are." As a new pupil she was asked to tell the class about herself. Kathrine proudly announced that she had just moved to Morrison from Savanna Oklahoma and her Daddy called her his Indian Princess. The class seemed in awe to have a real live princess in their school. Kathrine returned home full of good stories of the day.

The next day she was confused and near tears at the mean way her new friends treated her. They called her a dirty Indian and pushed her away. Grandma Kate made a trip to school and convinced the teacher that Kathrine's desire to be special had prompted the outlandish idea that she was an Indian Princess. All was well and Kathrine never, ever again in her entire life admitted her secret. She was indeed an Indian Princess to her Choctaw father.