

Rapids Hotel



**John Lapsley Ish, his wife
Alice and sons Leslie and Guy**

In 1881 when Laps Ish was 18 years old, he came to Grand County, staking claims outside the mining town of Teller in the mountains north of Grand Lake. He mined for four years, carried mail from Teller to Grand Lake, going winter times on skis or snowshoes. Ish married and homesteaded with his family near Rand. He built the Rand Hotel, operating it with his wife until 1910. After a brief stay in California, they moved to Granby, built the Middle Park Augo Company garage and ran a stage line to Grand Lake.

The Rapids Lodge was built in 1913 by Laps Ish, one of Grand Lake's colorful miners. With the help of his two sons, Ish constructed the lodge by hand; cutting down the trees and milling the logs in his own hand fashioned mill. June 12, 1915 was the Grand Opening of the Rapids Lodge. The original building still stands. The roaring waters of the north inlet Tonahutu River was an excellent setting for the construction and the spectacular rapids of the river were soon utilized for Grand Lake's first electric power.

An ingenious generating plant, powered by a large water wheel, curbed the powerful rapids. The electric power was then stored in banks of batteries furnishing electricity to The Rapids and later to the Parish Church and the Pine Cone Inn and Humphrey's Store. For many years these were the only buildings to have electricity, the rest of the village depending on old fashioned lamps.

The Rapids Lodge enjoyed an early popularity, so Laps Ish added a number of cabins, constructed to match the lodge. In their earlier years, the cabins were used as ice houses, where ice was cut and stored for delivery in summer to vacationers and businesses. It is rumored that during prohibition the cabins proved an excellent storage place for not only ice but also bootleg whiskey, gin and wine. The prohibition era was one of the most prosperous times for The Rapids and old timers speculate that refreshments other than sparkling water may have added to the popularity of the lodge.

Over the years there have been many owners, supplying it with a varied and colorful history.

(from the obituary in Middle Park Times, January 14, 1943 and newspaper article Sky Hi News, 1978)