

The Purvis General Store at Elwell

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John W. Purvis and his brother William came to the Elwell community in 1895 from Nebraska to work as farm hands. John later secured property from John J. Thornton at the corner of what is now Hwy 60 and Colorado Blvd., and he built a general merchandise store there in 1898.

The store sold everything from groceries and dry goods to hardware and shoes. The top floor was used for lodge meetings and community social events.

In December 1900, John Purvis married Cora Thornton – John Thornton's oldest child. The newlyweds first lived in a small house at Elwell. The following year, they built a home just east of the store where they raised their four children – Vernon, Reathel, Donald, and Virgil. A daughter, Wava, died as an infant.

In 1903, Lou Worden came to work for Purvis as the store clerk. Worden never married and lived with the Purvis family. He took as much interest and pride in the store as if it were his own.

With Worden managing the store, Purvis was able to focus on starting a dairy business, milking and raising registered Guernsey cattle. He showed them for years at the Denver Stock Show, and in 1920, one of his cows was honored as the Grand Champion Butterfat Producer.

Worden was forced to quit working in 1948 after 45 years at the store because of his health. Purvis then leased the store to Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Goodwin and then to Mr. and Mrs. Harry Reynolds.

John Purvis died in 1951. Cora moved to Longmont, and their son Vernon and his family stayed at Elwell to maintain the dairy herd. Cora died in 1963.

The "Elwell store", as it had been nicknamed, closed in 1952. Eventually, the top floor of the building was removed, partially owing to asbestos, and the remaining ground floor was used as a mortuary for a short time, and then for storage. In the spring of 2014, the building was demolished to make room for a dedicated turn lane and traffic light installed there on the corner.

Sources: *A Tribute To Johnstown*, Rebecca S. Healy, 1977; Vernon Purvis written history, circa 1970s.



The J.W. Purvis General Merchandise store and the new Purvis home, 1901.



The store about 1902.



A Texaco gas station was added to the Elwell corner in the 1920s.



The Historic Parish House and Museum

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