

Preston Henry “P.H.” Smith

P. H. Smith was born in Allen Grove, Walworth County Wisconsin on January 24, 1847. His parents were Preston W. Smith and Frances A. Scofield Smith, originally from Rochester, New York. They had five children Preston, Eliza, Anna, Dwight and Clarence.

In 1860 Preston H Smith was 13 and lived in Clinton, Rock, Wisconsin

At the age of 21 Preston married Susan Wakeling on June 9, 1868 in Wisconsin. Susan died in 1869. Preston married Martha Stringer of Illinois in Taylor County, Iowa on May 16, 1870 and they lived at Liberty, Ringold County, Iowa.

The Smith family, including Preston’s parents, moved to Hays City, Kansas in 1874. Preston married Mary Ellen Adkins June 11, 1874 at Elkhorn, Wisconsin. Mable (1875), Georgianna (1876), Florence (1877) were born in Hays City, Kansas and Genevieve was born in Wisconsin in 1880. In 1880 Federal Census Preston H Smith was 33 and lived in Independence, Osborne, Kansas. He was living with Dell Kelly (26) and Fred Wolcott (23).

(Statement by P. H. Smith)

“I made two trips into Middle Park before I came here to locate. The first trip was in 1881. I came from Breckenridge and crossed afoot over the pass and around over Jones Trail to Williams Fork on a mining prospect. I got up on the range – that was in August, and it snowed on us for three days; - before we got all dried out again, we were out of grub and had to go back home. The next trip was in 1882 down the Blue, to the Grand, hunting a railroad lumber contract. The first night out – we laid out overnight, using our saddles for pillows and picketed our horses to our feet, so we could tell when there was anything the matter with them.”

PH Smith moved to a mining camp in Breckenridge, Colorado in the fall of 1882. Mary was 28 years old when she left Hays, Kansas with her three small daughters Georgia, Mabel and Genevieve, to follow her husband to the mining camp. Florence stayed in Hays with her grandparents. It was school time when they arrived and the two older girls were enrolled in school. Mabel was in the second grade, and Georgia was in the first grade although she would not be six until Christmas Eve that year. The baby was Genevieve, too young for school.

P H Smith ran a successful sawmill business with his partner Bob Williams. Before the snow came to stay, PH drifted down the Blue River, crossed the Grand River (now the Colorado) near Kremmling, and journeyed upstream to the county seat of Grand County, Hot Sulphur Springs. He was there in time for Christmas 1882. He spent the winter there working in a sawmill for W. N. Byers. In the spring of 1883 PH returned to Breckenridge for his family. As soon as school was out, Mrs. Smith loaded a lumber wagon with all their belongings and three girls and they moved on again. But after a pleasant summer at the Springs in 1883, Mrs. Smith packed her wagon to return to Breckenridge to continue her children’s schooling. At this point fate and the weather intervened to shape the destiny of the P H Smiths. ***“It snowed two feet that night”*** Georgia recalled, ***“I remember it well. We were terribly disappointed, but not even mother would face the long 75 mile trek back to Breckenridge in that much snow alone. For characteristically father had moved on to work in a sawmill at Grand Lake for Henry Lehman.”*** Thus was their future cast with Middle Park instead of Breckenridge because of two feet of new-fallen snow. Twin sons Preston and Henry were born in 1884 in Hot Sulphur Springs.

In 1885 PH Smith was deputy assessor for Middle Park. He then took charge of Henry Lehman's sawmill in Grand Lake. Edward was born in April of 1886 and the family spent a summer at Grand Lake in 1886 although their permanent address was still Hot Sulphur Springs. By 1889 they had taken up a homestead on Cottonwood Pass road. Mary Smith died in childbirth when daughter Mary Gertrude was born December 28 at Hot Sulphur Springs. Mary was adopted by John C. Adkins (Mary Ellen's brother) and Gertrude Smith Adkins (Preston Henry Smith's sister). She died at age 3 from scarlet fever in Hays City, KS. The younger boys were sent to live with Mrs. C.F. Adkins in Hayes City, Kansas. They returned to Grand Lake about 10 years later.

A notice in the local newspaper June 14, 1892

Preston H Smith Land Office at Central City, Colorado

Notice is hereby given that the following named settler has filed of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim and that said proof will be made before the Judge of the County Court at Hot Sulphur Springs, Grand County, Colorado, on July 25th 1892, viz: Preston H. Smith, H. E. No 730 Section Number 1, Township 1 – N, Range 78W Issued January 13, 1893. He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land, viz: Walker McQueary, David Gardner, W. S. Thompson and Solomon Jones of Hot Sulphur Springs, Grand Co, Colorado.

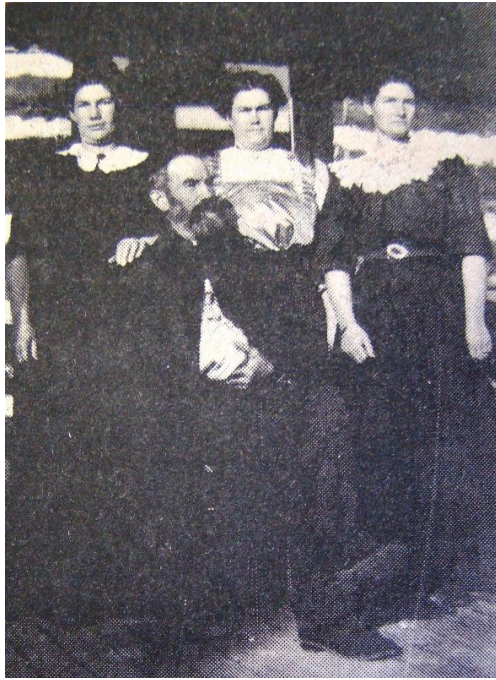
After the death of his wife, PH began to long again for greener fields. They were homesteading on Cottonwood Pass. With F. H. Janson as a partner he started a sawmill about two miles from the Cozens Ranch above Fraser and 13 year old Georgia was his "big boy". So Georgia Smith went every Sunday back to the sawmill with her father and worked all week, returning home Saturday night for the weekly wash and scrub-down. Mabel and Genevieve were doing their shares as mothers and homemakers for their three young brothers during the long weeks, but were held strictly accountable to their father every Saturday night.

"At the sawmill we sawed and edged native pine shingles," Georgia recounted. "It seems to me there were two other men besides Mr. Janson and father. Dad did all the cooking, and he was a good cook too. I helped with the dishes, which I hated, of course, but what I really liked to do was pack those sweet-smelling pine shingles." "Dad said I could pack shingles better and faster than any man he ever had! That made me so proud I used to nearly bust my buttons trying to outdo myself. And we sold them as fast as we got them ready."



In the 1900 Federal Census Preston H Smith was 53 and living in Grand Lake, Grand County, Colorado. His residence was listed as Precinct 1-5 Grand Lake, Fraser, Hot Sulphur Springs, Kremmling, Sheephorn, in Grand County Colorado. Ray Gregg (23) was living with the Smith family which included the twin sons Preston A. and Henry A. Smith. P H Smith married Mary Eva Quinn (48) on January 16, 1900 at Hot Sulphur Springs. She died August 9, 1903 and is buried at Hot Sulphur Springs Cemetery in the Smith family plot.

PH Smith owned most of the block west of Ellsworth on Grand Avenue. He built a sawmill and lumberyard in Grand Lake and acquired several properties. He had a carpenter shop and also took contracts to erect cottages.



In 1902 P.H. Smith built and successfully operated the Hotel Bellevue on the main street of Grand Lake village. This was the largest and most pretentious of the early hotels, two stories in height with about sixty rooms on the main street about 200 feet from the lake. It had a first class dining room and bathrooms and running water were installed in 1910. It had accommodations for 75 guests and cabins and tents in connection. On the south part of the lot, was his livery barn with saddle horses and teams for his guests. He stored finished lumber from his mill in the top part. Mr. Smith was assisted in the management of his hotel by his daughter Genevieve. Genevieve played the big Swiss Music box in the old hotel and it was said that there was no sweeter music. The success of the Bellevue hotel helped confirm that tourism held the key to Grand Lake's economic future. P.H. was a good entertainer and amused his guests with stories of old times in this locality. Rates ran from \$12 to \$20 per week.

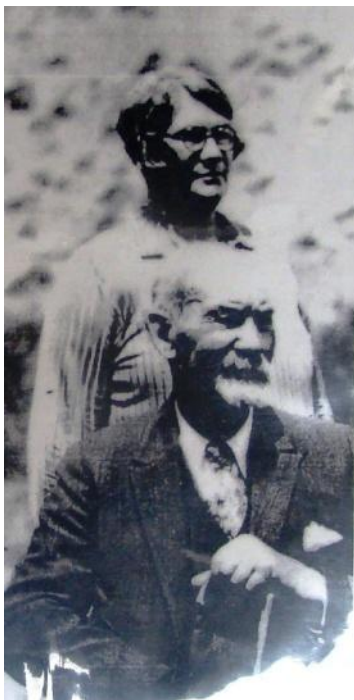
PH Smith married again on August 28, 1904 to Mary Emma Judson at Hays City, Kansas. They were divorced on July 22, 1909 at Hot Sulphur Springs.

Soon after the turn of the century an active Sunday school was conducted in the winter months by Preston H. Smith. He was elected Superintendent in 1905.



The Bellevue Hotel

Preston Smith, Jr., one of the twin sons, died when a horse fell on him.



The 1910 Federal Census lists Preston H. Smith, age 63, divorced and living with his daughter Genevieve Smith (29), Sadie Thomas (44) and Jim Winters (27).

(From a Grand County newspaper December 22, 1911)

Sadly the Bellevue Hotel burned to the ground Saturday morning December 16, 1911. The occupants barely escaped from the building before its destruction. A large dinner bell which had been used to call guests to meals was pressed into service to sound the fire alarm. But at the second stroke of the clapper the rope broke. The bell, now tragically silent, failed at the time it was needed most. It is supposed that the fire originated from a defective flue. It is not definitely known how much insurance was carried on the building at the time of its destruction

(from the Middle Park Times, Nov 29, 1912)

November 22, 1912 a serious mishap occurred to Mr. P H Smith, a pioneer and for many years a prominent businessman of Grand County. The unfortunate accident occurred at Mr. Smith's sawmill, situated on the North Fork of the Grand River about five miles above Grand Lake. It seems the sad affair was brought about this way. That Mr. Smith was engaged in removing some saw dust from near the saw while the saw was in motion and in some way, which had not been quite clear, and while having his back to the saw, he inadvertently and in a way which seems unknown to himself, threw his hand back against the saw while in motion with the result that his right arm was severed between the wrist and elbow. The only person present besides the unfortunate victim of the accident, was Mr. Fred Thompson (grandson), who was employed at the sawmill. He immediately summoned another man, who was working in the timber nearby, to his aid. A conveyance was hastily arranged for and Mr. Smith was conveyed to Grand Lake. Dr. F. H. Harrison of Fraser was immediately telephoned for and hastened to Grand Lake, and all medical skill could devise to relieve the stricken man. Our latest information is that Mr. Smith is getting along very well and is on the way to a speedy and we hope permanent recovery.

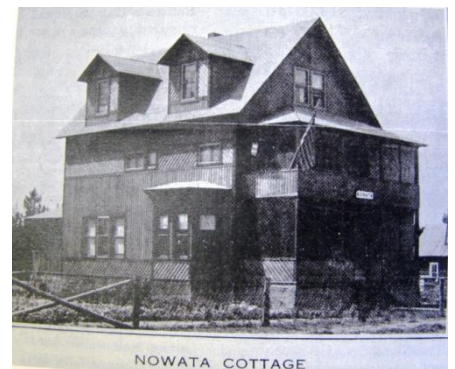
(Middle Park Times December 13, 1912)

P. H. Smith is rapidly recovering from his painful accident, and learning to use his left hand. P.H. Smith is listed as Manager of the Grand Lake Lumber Company

P.H. Smith married Mary A. (Saunders) Thomson on May 17, 1915 at Boulder, Colorado.

(from the Middle Park Times – May 1915)

P.H. Smith's new hotel is thoroughly completed and ready for summer business. Grand Lake can take care of her people now, and hopes for a bigger rush than ever before. He built the Nowata Hotel, a smaller two story, 8 room bungalow on the site of what was later the Corner Cupboard Hotel. Unfortunately the Nowata burned in 1921. It was valued at \$10,000.



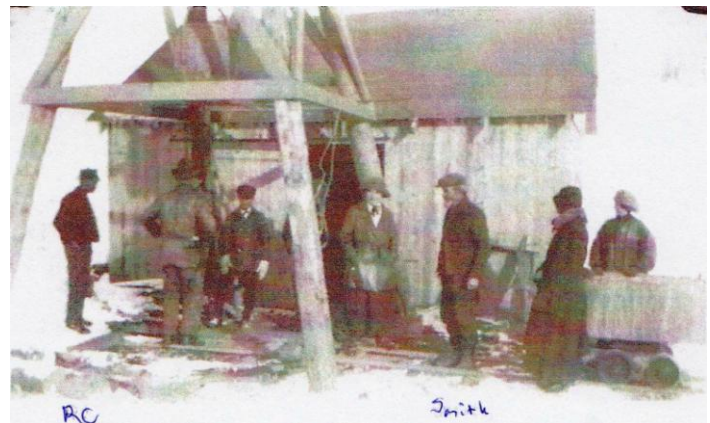
(Middle Park Times – April 21, 1916)

A fire of unknown origins broke out in P.H. Smith's barn twice in the same evening recently. At 6 o'clock smoke was seen coming from a pile of blankets and was extinguished. At 9 o'clock the fire was discovered in the center of the floor, where a large hole was burned. Prompt response saved the building.

Two members of the Smith family – Henry and Ed Smith died of the Spanish Influenza in 1918. P.H. Smith became treasurer of the Grand Lake school board and ran for Justice of the Peace. 1919 newspaper reported that the North Fork ranch owned by P.H. was sold to a returning soldier. Other articles of the same time report P.H. selling lake lots.

The 1920 Census lists Preston H Smith, age 74 living in Grand Lake. Spouse is listed as Emma M. (Mary), age 55, born in Ohio. During 1920 P.H. was instrumental in building the Community Center in the Grand Lake town park.

P.H. Smith and Roy Curtis look over the Windy Gap Coal Mine in 1920.



(from The Middle Park Times – January 6, 1922

*Letter dated December 28, 1921, 604 Crosby St, San Diego,
California to the editor)*

***We have finally located for the winter at the above address. ...
Spent a week with a brother in Lodi, had not seen him for 38 years,
was two weeks with a brother and sister at Hanford. Found an old
school teacher of my boyhood days at Santa Cruz, had not seen
him for 49 years.***

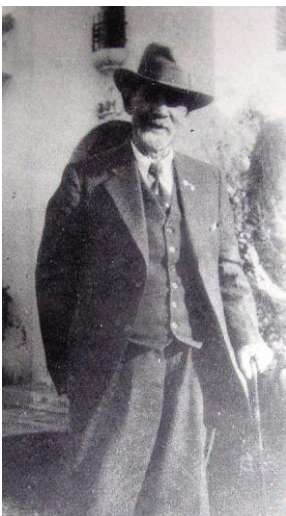
....

***The first word I had received of our house at home (Nowata) was
in your paper, which was the first mail I found at Hanford. Our
driver Mr. Fredrick learned it in the middle of the desert, but did
not tell us after we had seen it in the Times.***

Very Sincerely Yours, P. H. Smith

(from the Middle Park Times - June 16, 1922)

Mr and Mrs P.H. Smith who have spent the past winter in California are home for the summer. They have decided to make the far west their permanent home. In the 1930 census Preston H Smith, age 83 married to Mary A. Saunders Thomson, age 65.



(from the Kremmling Register – Thursday, April 18, 1935)

Preston H. Smith Died April 11 in California

Word has been received here of the death of Preston H. Smith, Grand County pioneer, at his home in National City, California on Thursday, April 11, 1935. His devoted wife and his daughter, Mrs. Georgia Eslick, of Grand Lake, were at his bedside as death came.

Mr. Smith had been in failing health for several months, and had been tenderly nursed and cared for by his wife and daughter to the end. He was 88 years old, and death came to him peacefully and without pain.

Simple but impressive funeral services were held in National City on Saturday, April 13, with Rev. Mr. Brown, pastor of the Baptist church of which Mr. and Mrs. Smith have long been members, in charge. A large number of relatives and friends came to pay their last respects, and the casket was banked with lovely flowers. The body will be cremated, and the ashes buried beside the remains of deceased members of his family in the cemetery at Hot Sulphur Springs.

Mr. Smith moved to Grand County in 1883 and was for many years an honored and respected citizen here. He was a Christian man of strict integrity and sterling worth, a true and loyal friend, and a loving husband and father. Since he moved to California a number of years ago, he has made his home in National City, where he leaves a host of friends.

(from the Boston Globe – February 13, 1961)

In Newton, Feb. 11, Mary A. (Saunders) Smith in her 97th year, formerly of 65 Deaconess, Rd., Boston, and National City, California; wife of the late Preston H. Smith. Services will be held at the Mackay Funeral Home, 465 Centre St., Newton, Mass. Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. Friends may call at the funeral home on Monday evening from 7 – 9 p.m.