

Clyde Henry Eslick

From an article in the Middle Park Times, September 14, 1967

Clyde Henry Eslick was born in Idaho Springs, Colorado on October 9, 1901 to Alfred and Georgia Smith. He has a twin brother Claude.

Clyde Eslick was listed in Who's Who in Colorado in the Centennial edition, and in the historical encyclopedia of Colorado. He is a member of the Mayflower Society, 10th generation from James Cooke who came from England on the Mayflower.

Clyde's biggest regret is that he could not complete his education. He had to quit school in the fifth grade to help earn a living. He started work in the timber at an early age. His advice to the younger generation is to get all the education you possibly can as you'll always be able to use it.

Mrs. Florence Fogg (sister of Mary Lyons Cairns) of Boulder was one of Clyde's earlier teachers. She tells that when she tried to get to the bottom of some childish prank she'd ask all the children, but she knew that Clyde would always tell the truth.

In 1967 at the Middle Park Fair we are proud to honor Clyde Eslick as pioneer, an honest, hard working civic citizen – a true pioneer. Congratulations.



From an article in Winter Park Manifest Christmas 1981

“Earning the title of Mr. Grand Lake: it takes men like Clyde Eslick to build mountain towns” by Andrew Miller with interview assistance from Martin Curry.

There are many reasons the citizens of Clyde Eslick’s home town call him Mr. Grand Lake. During the 76 years he has made this gem of Colorado summer resort towns his home, Clyde Eslick has served in almost every civic organization and he has built many of the town’s homes and businesses. Clyde Eslick has always been there when any citizen needed someone whose experience could solve the unsolvable problem.

Clyde Eslick’s list of honors is almost as long as his residency in Grand Lake. He was awarded the Paul Harris commendation by the Grand Lake Rotary Club in honor of his 31 years of perfect attendance at Rotary meetings. He has taken care of the town cemetery for 50 years and is still called with questions about the history of the town which is recorded on the headstones there. He was president of the Grand Lake Water and Sanitation District, being instrumental in the winterization of the town water system.

When the town was incorporated in 1944, Clyde Eslick was there to serve on the first board of trustees. He is an honorary life member of the Grand County Historical Association. In 1967 he became president of the County Pioneer Society – the year he also was named pioneer of the year at the county fair. He has served as a volunteer fireman since the town had a fire department. Finally, he has served for over 40 years as a Grand County Deputy Sheriff and for 30 years as a Grand Lake Town Marshal.

A man’s life is not told by his titles, it is told by his interactions with his community. Clyde Eslick is 80 now, and has just recently moved indoors to enjoy life from an easy chair. He is not there entirely by choice, he suffers from a bone marrow disease called myelofibrosis. On a quiet winter day I found Clyde sitting by his front window, warmed by an open fire and surrounded by his wife Grace’s plants. He was gazing out at a town he knows better than any living man and remembering what Grand Lake was like when his family arrived in 1904.

“I remember when there were five or six buildings altogether around Grand Lake. My Grandad, P. H. Smith was running the sawmill, hotel and livery barn up there on the corner.”



Clyde with mother Georgia



Claude and Clyde were charged with herding cows, keeping the family animals out of town and in the pasture lands which lay where Shadow Mountain and Granby Reservoirs are now. “I herded the town cattle, my Grandad had some, we had some and I’d collect them up and take them out of town. One September evening my brother and I heard the bells of some cows who were missing. It sounded like they were just over the hill so about seven we took out looking for them, following the sound of the bells. They were over by Lilly Lakes. I asked my brother the time – it was about 11. There was a heifer loose which belonged to us boys so Claude got on one side of her and I got on the other. It was a little misty that night and every

once in awhile the moon would come out. We got her by a big spruce tree and we laid down and put our heads on her and spent the night right there. There was a dance that night but nobody went. The whole town was out looking for us.”

There were two ski hills near town, and Clyde was often on one of them. “The other kids would ski before school, during recess and after school. One time I was out sledding on the lake and went through the ice. The Women’s Club was having a meeting at our house and I was too embarrassed to go in. I stayed out in the shed for several hours. My clothes froze so damn stiff I couldn’t bend a limb.”

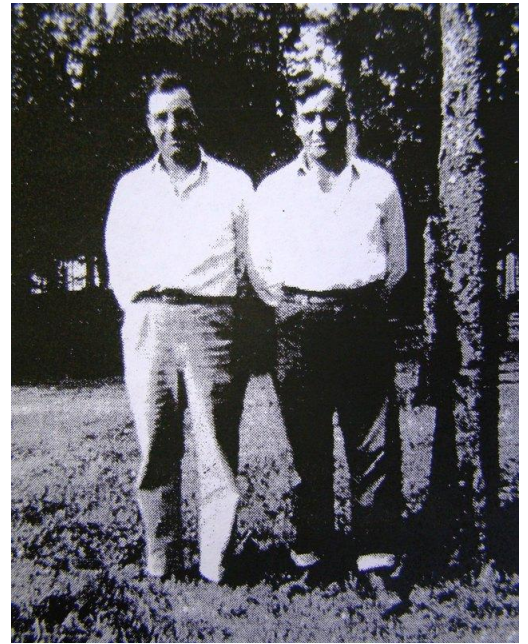
Clyde’s childhood ended abruptly when he quit school after fourth grade so he could start his money making career in earnest. (“I started school in Grand Lake where the manse is now. My grand dad (P. H. Smith) built the school house and that is the year I started school (1906). I went first, second, third and fourth grades and had just started the fifth grade when I had to quit and go to work and haven’t had any school since. One time I was the janitor. My dad was the janitor down here when I first started and I took it over and this one down here and one up here in the street too. I was the janitor of both schools. And then I finished up janitor in the school house down there now, the big one, for about two years, I guess.”) (At the age of ten Clyde went right to work for his grandfather in the woods, cutting and skidding logs. The logs were cut above Sun Valley Ranch where the P. H. Smith sawmill was located. Later the lumber was brought into Grand Lake where it was stacked for drying. As it was purchased, it was planed at Mr. Smith’s planer mill. Much of this lumber can be found in cottages and homes around Grand Lake.) Clyde started what would be his main career in life.

“In the summers, most every Friday night we’d have a dance. We’d either have it in the community center, or we’d load up the wagon with hay and go north or south to someone’s place. The party would go on all night, with fiddlers and lots of dancing.” Main street was the scene of rodeos, kids’ foot races and buffalo barbeques.

Wood provided his livelihood; he’d work with it from tree to log to mill to planer to lumber to the building of a home.

(“My older brother Charley drove mail and freight between Granby and Grand Lake. He was coming down the hill with a load of freight. At that time he had a load of wooden barrels with beer in it. And then he had a load of pipe on it, galvanized pipe. And the brake had a rope on it that hooked over your foot and he was pushing, pulling down with the brakes and the rope broke and he was pushing so hard that he just fell over and the wagon rolled over him and broke his neck.”)

(“During the flu of 1918 (17 years old) I lost two uncles and my sister. My uncle Henry Smith had a ranch down where Dilly Docks is, and he had a bunch of cattle. He was sick in bed. I don’t know how many days he was sick in bed, but he finally got to feeling pretty good and he couldn’t stay still, he had to move these cattle so he got on his horse and started to move his cattle. He took a back slide and that was the end of it. The other uncle I lost from the flu. Ed and I were going up to where my granddad had a sawmill about five or six miles north of here up above Sun Valley Ranch. So we were going up there to clean up the cabin to get ready to start working in the timber, cutting timber, and his wife, my aunt, and they had a baby girl and were waiting til we got things cleaned up so they could move up there. We got things all cleaned up and then Ed came down with a pain and left me up there. He had a bunch of chickens and a cow and left me up there to take care of them and I went ahead and worked in the timber. Then I took sick while I was up there and I stuck it out for about five days and finally I just kept getting worse and worse so I started out afoot, turned the cow out and put a bunch of hay out to her and put feed out for the chickens and took off about 10 o’clock in the morning and I come down to the North Fork and there was no places to cross over the river up there and I thought I would walk down the river about a mile and thought I might find a tree to cross. Now this was the last of November and it is getting pretty cool weather so I got down there and finally got tired of walking down the river so I just took off all my clothes and rolled them, put them up on my shoulder and waded through the river. I got on this side and took my shirt, wiped myself off, got dressed, came on and about dark I came over the hill by Daven Haven and it was after dark and boy, I was getting awful tired so I sat down by a big tree there, I thought I would just sit there and rest a little while. I went to sleep. It was about midnight when I woke up and I heard a couple of girls down at the foot of the hill laughing and talking and I hollered at them. I tried to



get up but I couldn't get up, I was too stiff, so I hollered at them and they came up and helped me get up and I said "who are you girls" and they said "we are taking care of a hotel." Well there is a hotel right over here, belonged to my granddad, a four story hotel. "Our mother and us are taking care of the hotel while Mr. Smith has gone on a vacation." My mother and aunt, grandmother and granddad have all gone up to North Dakota and so the girls helped me over there and I slept by the fireplace til about 2 o'clock in the morning, got thawed out. Well, I thought I'd go to bed and see how I felt in the morning. Next morning at 6 o'clock I was wide awake, not aching, felt fine. Got up and went on from there. I found out my uncle had died and I figure I froze that flu out of me going wading in that river and sleeping down here on the hill.)



Clyde followed in the tracks of his twin uncles in the freight business. By now, a Model T run across dirt and log roads was the method used for transport in the summer; a sled with a pair of horses provided the way home in winter. "I'd leave home at 7 o'clock in the morning and get back here at 9 o'clock at night. One winter there dropped two and a half feet of snow, I started out from Granby with the team but I didn't get very far. I left my sled down on the road and I loaded

the mail sacks on one horse and I crawled on the other. I finally got into Camp Chief Ouray long about 4 p.m."

("In the early days there was no fishing season. When I first started fishing around here another fella and I would go out in a boat and go up to the east end of the Lake and anchor out in about 12 feet of water in the dark of the moon. Each one of us had two big poles, one on each end, one in the front and one sit in the back. We had a big pole sticking out on each side. And we had our fly poles, fly rods and we'd fish with the fly rods while it was daylight and we wouldn't catch many fish then. Then when it got dark we used suckers for bait, cut up squares about so big and put it on there and it took us about an hour and we'd just pull fish in, one here and one there and by the time we got unhooked on the other side we had one there again, and back and forth. We got oh, 100, 150 trout in one night. That's the way fishing used to be.")

About 1920 Clyde heard there was work on the world's highest railroad pass, the Rollins Pass Road which carried David Moffat's train from Denver to points west. "I heard there was work there so Bill Biher and I went to Granby and checked into a motel because the train didn't come until 2 a.m. We slept right through that and had to walk to Tabernash through the canyon." Clyde got a job as a hostier (a man who services an engine and serves as the fireman) because he was left handed. Most new men started as hostler helpers but if you were left handed you couldn't serve as a helper because the fire box was not set up for shoveling by a southpaw. "I ended up working snowplows, driving the big Mallets (rhymes with alleys) over the hill. The

snow was so deep up there you couldn't see where the snow banks ended and the clouds started.” A year on the grueling line was enough and Clyde returned to Grand Lake.

(Tell the boys about your fish fries and how you all used to have fun. *From an interview in 1973.* “We used to send a bunch back up on the streams to catch a bunch of fish. And also get a bear. About the second week in September. We had two pits up here in the town park. One was to barbeque the bear and the other was to fry fish in. We had horse races, bucking contest, foot races, all kinds of things up and down main street here.)

Fishing was a rewarding pastime in those days. “Two of us would go out in a rowboat with two fly rods and two bait rods. We'd fish with flies until it got dark, then fish with bait. We'd stay out a couple of hours and come in with a couple hundred fish in gunny sacks. We'd smoke them and put them up in the ice house.” In winter the men would get out the ice saws. We'd cut hundreds of cakes in the three foot thick ice. It would take over a thousand cakes just to supply the Grand Lake Lodge, each one weighing 75-100 pounds.”



In 1935 Clyde met a young lady tourist from Missouri while she was browsing in a local store. Grace Strobel soon accepted an invitation from Clyde. Grace described her first date, “Clyde picked me up in the pickup he used to take kids to ski meets and different events. We loaded up with kids in the back and went to play ball in Fraser. Then we all drove to the top of Berthoud Pass, returning to Grand Lake later.” The romance lasted three summers leading to their marriage in 1938. Grace has been a school teacher almost since her arrival in Grand County.

The two, even though Clyde only completed the fourth grade, actually shared the same level of education. As Grace explained, “Clyde received his education by living it. He has worked in the timber, at sawmills, and at planer mills. He worked masonry with Merle Hall. He learned log work with Henry Schnoor. His grandfather was a lumberman and a contractor and Clyde started his manual training with him at the age of ten.”

Throughout his career Clyde has used his manual skills to build and remodel homes in Grand Lake. Clyde could build a home without the aid of plans. Clyde explained, “It just came easy to me.”

In the late 30s, work began on the nine mile long Alva B Adams Tunnel. (“The way I got started up there, I was busy, my job here was caretaking and building and I was busy. They came after me because the dry house had burned down and they didn't have for the feller who came out of the tunnel in the winter time soaking wet and they had no dry house to go into to get warm and change clothes and they couldn't get a carpenter so they came to me. I said “go on and get someone else to build the dry house.” They kept after me begging and begging me and finally I gave in and went up there and built the dry house for them. Got the dry house built and then they

said they had work down in the hole and yep, they gave me such a good deal I couldn't let it go. So I went down into the hole and I worked down there til '43 when they closed it down during the war. Then I came back and finished out two more years and the whole crew and I got pneumonia and had to get out.") Clyde hired on as a crew boss for a carpentry form crew. "Working underground never really bothered me much, but I did have a few close calls. Once I was sitting on the seat on a machine in the tunnel and I got off to do something. Just after I climbed off, a rock fell and crushed the seat. Another time I was working near the heading (end of the tunnel) and I walked a few steps and watched a slab peel off the roof of the tunnel and fall right where I had been standing. Nobody was killed in the tunnel although one rock came down close enough to rip the back pocket off one man's pants.

In 1944 the town incorporated and Clyde was a natural choice to sit on the first board of trustees. He had been serving as a county deputy sheriff since Mark Fletcher was made county sheriff in the 1930s, so he was also a natural choice for the job of the town's first town marshal.

Clyde is a big man, over 200 pounds and capable of picking up even the largest of logs. After being asked what he did if he needed the assistance of another law man in the event of a drunken brawl, Clyde answered, "I didn't need help."

Clyde specialized in removing roadblocks in Grand Lake, both literally and figuratively. In the mid-thirties there was still a huge boulder which lay in the middle of Grand Avenue. For years it served as the finish line for everything from bag to horse races, but by this time it stood in the way of a bustling village center. Clyde described his task. "That rock reached two-thirds of the way across the street. It had a welcome sign on it. I shot (blasted with dynamite) it out by hand; you talk about a job. We got in there with hand drills. We had a couple of guys with hammers. Our knees and hands were so pounded all up, but still we went ahead." The rock blew and the only damage done to the nearby community building center was described by the powder expert, "over on this side there was a door that had one of those glass windows over the top of it. I broke that out. That was it."

A Grand Lake family wanted to put a floor furnace in their home, but bedrock right under the floor prevented the installation. Clyde was called and he remembered, "I blew the rock out, never hurt the house."



Often Clyde and Grace would take time out from the full time job of building teaching and maintaining over fifty homes around the lake to travel. Mexico was a preferred destination and they traveled further south too to Columbia and other points in South America. In 1963 they traveled to Europe sharing dinner with Clyde's relatives still in England. A circumnavigation of the globe (in 1977) lent truth to Clyde's statement, "I've been around the world and there isn't a better spot than right here."

Additional information

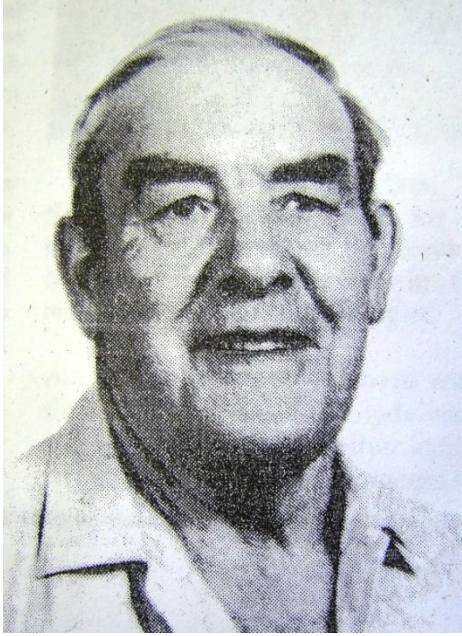
Hundreds of assorted antique keys, all neatly labeled for house, garage or boathouse, still dangle from hooks on the huge pegboard in the Eslick home. For over 60 years Clyde Eslick was keeper of the keys. Affectionately known as “Mr. Grand Lake,” he was entrusted with the care and maintenance of many buildings around Grand Lake.



erected.

The Eslick home was built in 1905 by the father Alfred Eslick and his brother in law Ed Smith. The family had moved here in 1904 when Clyde was three years old. It was a log house and had running water from a hand driven well. The mother, Georgia Eslick and Clyde had their home here until her death in January of 1956. After Mrs. Eslick’s death, Clyde did quite extensive remodeling to the log house, adding a foundation under the logs, added two fireplaces and indoor plumbing, enclosed the back porch, added a living room, and put in clothes closets. As these changes were made, the log walls inside and outside were covered and a breezeway and a double garage were





From the Winter Park Manifest December 30, 1982

‘Mr. Grand Lake’ Clyde H. Eslick dies at age 81

Clyde H. Eslick, who enjoyed life in Grand Lake longer than any other person, died in Kremmling Memorial Hospital on December 24 after a four-year illness. He was 81.

Many Grand Lake residents will miss the man who built and maintained many of the homes and businesses in the community.

Eslick was born on October 9, 1901 in Idaho Springs. His family moved to Grand Lake in the spring of 1905 (4) to join his grandfather, P. H. Smith.

Smith had already established most of the community, opening a sawmill, a hotel, a store, tourist cabins and a livery barn.

In the spring of 1938 Clyde married Grace Strobel of Denver. Grace taught for many years in country school systems and still resides in Grand Lake. Grace taught for many years in country school systems and still resides in Grand Lake. The couple enjoyed 44 years together.

Eslick is survived by an identical twin brother, Claude, who lives in Denver. Another brother, Clarence Eslick, also lives in Denver. A sister, Elizabeth Lindsey, lives in Okanagon, Washington.

Eslick was preceded in death by his parents, two brothers and a sister.

Clyde’s lifetime of good health is evidenced by his 31 year record of perfect attendance at Grand Lake Rotary Club meetings. The club members were honorary pallbearers at the December 28th memorial service held in the Trinity Church in the Pines in Grand Lake.

Eslick was on the first Grand Lake Board of Trustees and served for 40 years. He was Grand Lake marshal for 30 years. He was also president of the Grand Lake Water and Sanitation District, a life-time member of both the Grand Lake Pioneer Society and Grand County Historical Association.

In a Christmas 1981 article in the Winter Park Manifest supplement, it was said of Clyde Eslick, “Some take credit for building towns; we know them as the politicians, the idea men. Others pull out the hammer, the shovel and the dynamite and get to work putting up the timbers. Clyde Eslick is such a man, and he now and will always have the working man’s title of Mr. Grand Lake.”

Donations to his memory can be made to the Grand Lake Area Historical Society

Grand Lake Loses Pioneer Leader

From the Sky Hi News, December 30, 1982

Clyde H. Eslick, the man affectionately called "Mr. Grand Lake" by his neighbors, died Christmas Eve at Kremmling Memorial Hospital after a lengthy illness. He was 81.

He is survived by his wife, the former Grace Strobel, whom he married on May 21, 1938 in Denver.

During services Tuesday at Trinity Church in the Pines in Grand Lake, Rev. Warren Rempel reminded mourners of the long-time resident's greatest love: building and remodeling homes.

"Clyde not only watched this town grow for nearly 80 years," Rempel said, "but he had a lot to do with building it. There is probably not a place anywhere in the Grand Lake area where you cannot look about and see a home that Clyde has helped build."

A member of Trinity Church, Eslick helped build the sanctuary, even down to fashioning the pews.

Born October 9, 1901 in Idaho Springs, Colorado, to Alfred and Georgia Eslick, he moved to Grand Lake at the age of 3 ½ years with his siblings, Charlie, Bessie, Mabel and identical twin brother Claude. With the addition of brothers Clarence and Loren in Grand Lake, the family settled in a small log cabin just off the main street.

The house, with additions and remodeling, was his and Grace's home until his death.

A self-employed handyman and carpenter, Eslick was known to area residents as a tireless civic contributor. An entry in The Historical Encyclopedia of Colorado hailed Eslick as "a pioneer citizen of Grand County."

Eslick is survived by his wife Grace, his twin brother Claude, of Denver, brother Clarence of Denver, sister Elizabeth Lindsey of Skanagan, Washington and many nieces and nephews.

Clyde Eslick was interred at Grand Lake Cemetery. Donations in his memory may be made to the Grand Lake Area Historical Society.