

Thomas H Johnston

Tom Johnston was an Irishman, full of fun and wit. He was born in Belfast, Ireland on November 11, 1849. He arrived in American in 1851 with his parents and settled in Burlington, Kansas. He served in the Indian Wars and was sheriff of Grand County, but finally in about 1906, when on the election board at Grand Lake he found he had to be naturalized. So after fifty years in the United States, Tom became a citizen.



Thomas Henry Johnston
1849 - 1914

In 1876 Tom worked for Rollins as a bridge carpenter. He helped build the stone piers at Hot Sulphur Springs. They had thirteen foot high wooden piers on top of the stone piers. The stone piers were still there for many years. Tom built the first swimming pool at Hot Sulphur Springs. Tom and Fount McQueary rode Byers horses in races with the Indians.

In 1878 Tom and Susan were married in Morristoryn (Morrison), Colorado. That first summer Tom worked on the new road that was being built over Rollins Pass.

In 1881, lured by the mining boom, Tom and Susan moved to Grand Lake. Tom built a home for his family down by the lake shore, near the inlet. He also built the Jim Cairns's store. Tom carried the mail, afoot, one trip to Lulu City and one trip to Teller City each week. When the mines, one by one, all proved worthless, Grand Lake took a slump. Tom went to Boulder and ran a saw mill.

In 1884, after Tom's father died in Kansas, they moved back to Kansas. They lived there eleven years. During that time Jim, Johnnie, Marjorie and Mary Hunter were born.

In 1895, they came back to Colorado to Whiskey Park near Hahn's Peak for silver ore. It was a very rich silver ore vein but the vein proved to be just a pocket and it pinched out.

In the summer of 1897, they moved back to Grand County. They had an opportunity to put up some hay over in South Park. Hay was as good as money in the bank in that country.



In 1898 they leased the Coin place. They took up claim at Stillwater and they heard that Mr. Holzwarth was going to give up his relinquishment. Susan moved her family into a cabin that was there, Mr. Holzwarth's claim shack. It was about a year before they could find Holzworth, to get his relinquishment. There was difficulty over Susan's claim, but in time they finally had Stillwater Ranch. They leased the Coin place for two years more and put up the hay. Tom had the stage line from Coulter to Grand Lake and Susan fed and cared for people who rode the stage line.

Tom Johnston, Elizabeth Miner, Marge Johnston, Susan Johnston, Rob Johnston, Jim Johnston about 1903

Tom and Susan wanted to build a big log house and keep people. The easiest way to get homes built was to buy a saw mill, so Tom and George Carr bought a water power saw mill on St Louis Creek. In the summer of 1901 they ran the mill and sawed out enough lumber for both houses and some to sell. They moved into their new home in 1902.



Stillwater ranch was always full; tourists all summer, boys away from their own homes for whom mother Johnston made a happy home, school teachers she boarded to help get an education for her children.

Tom Johnston, as he was familiarly called by his friends, was a man of generous impulse and noble nature. He was the essence of hospitality. He was generous, almost to a fault. No one suffered where he could relieve. No one hungered where he could supply. His home at Stillwater has for many a year been renowned, far and wide, for its bountiful hospitality and generosity. He died on June 19, 1914 at his home at the age of 64 from a heart condition.