

What's New at the

Grand Lake Area Historical Society

Our mission is to preserve, protect and promote the history of the Grand Lake area.

Searching for Grand Lake's Colonel T. N. Gimperling by Steve Batty



My journey started September 2010 when my Grand Lake neighbor, Bob Jackson gave me an old padlock. The lock had been left behind when the Ferry family had sold him their south shore lake cottage in 1996. In its place, Bob and Mary Ann built one of the nicer new log homes on the lake. The tag on the old lock had written on one side: T.N. Gimperling, Grand Lake, Colorado, and stamped G. A. Spitzmiller, Grand Lake, Colo.

I thought it would be a challenge to see if I could find the year the lock had been manufactured. Later that afternoon, while taking a break from splitting firewood, I sat down at my computer and started searching the "Chicago Lock Co." I discovered that the company had been sold a couple of times and I found no records on it. From there, I went looking for material on Col. T. N. Gimperling.

What I remember of Col. G was sitting with him on his dock back in the late 1950s and listening to him tell me tales of his US Army days. Unfortunately, I don't remember one of the stories. I do remember he gave me an old nightlight that had a vane on the top, and as the light bulb put off warm air, the plastic shade revolved and showed different views of burning fires. Another memory was his living room in the part of the cottage he had built. He had been stationed twice in the Philippines and had the room decorated with spears, shields, bow and arrows, and even a small cannon on wooden wheels. As a boy, I was more fascinated with his memorabilia than his stories.

I was not sure when Col. G stopped coming to Grand Lake, but I remember hearing some time in the early 60s that he had passed away. His cottage was broken into, and all the neat memorabilia from his army years had been stolen, even the cannon.

For the next couple of weeks, I found myself taking several breaks from closing up the cottage and researching Col. G on the Internet. By the time I left for the season around the first of October, I had nearly 30 pages of material on the Colonel, his wife, step-daughter and family servant.

Thomas Norton Gimperling was born in Dayton, Ohio in 1880 -- about the same time my grandparents who built the lake cottage were born in Alma, Nebr. He had volunteered with the 5th Ohio Infantry in 1898 to fight in the Spanish American War, but the 5th Ohio Infantry did not make it any farther than Florida where it sat until the very short war was over. The shooting only lasted about eleven weeks. He had risen to the rank of sergeant but was released early because he had received an appointment to the US Military Academy at West Point, NY in the class of 1903.

Little did I know when I started my Col. G journey how much data I would discover about his life and military career. None of it was in chronological order. It all depended on what I learned from my last hit and how I worded my next search.

He should have graduated in June 1903, but the class of 1904 kept coming up. My assumption was that he needed to attend a prep school first but, no, that was not even close. In April of 1901, there was what some newspapers labeled as a mutiny at the USMA. Eventually five upper classmen were dismissed from the institution, and six lower classmen were suspended for one year. Col. G -- or as his cadet class referred to him, the Gimp -- was one of those suspended for a year. Thus, he slipped to the class of 1904.

The Gimp's problems did not stop there. In January of 1904, he talked a kitchen staff member into smuggling in a bottle of liquor. When he walked to the kitchen to retrieve his prize, a captain was there to deliver it. After he pleaded guilty to all charges, it was recommended that he be dismissed from the Academy. It went all the way up to President Roosevelt but was eventually overruled, and he was allowed to finish his senior year and receive his brown bars in June with the rest of the class. He did have to stay the summer and march off his sentence before heading to the Philippines. He did not earn his silver lieutenant's bar until 1911, much later than usual. It appears that his antics at the Academy were following him. Eventually, after thirty-five years of service, he was promoted to Full Bird Colonel.

In the USMA 1904 class book, his fellow cadets wrote; "Tom Gimp of the mutinous clan finds trouble wherever he can, but a bit of the brown takes away every frown, from the brow of this unlucky man." It then goes on to say, "We know nothing good of him."



When he returned from the Philippines, he was posted to Ft. Logan just west of Denver. It must have been there that he met his wife Helen Campbell Tritch. Helen was the daughter of Major Lafayette E. Campbell, the officer who designed Ft. Logan. Helen, a wealthy widow, came with a young daughter, Gretchen, and a maid, Louise, who stayed for life.

Col. Gimperling was in the service from 1904 until his last posting in Denver as head of WW II Army recruiting in that area in 1944. He spent most of his adult life in the military, from age 18 until 64, when the Army retired him in the service of our country.

This newsletter is not long enough to cover all the information I have on The Gimp, so here's an abbreviated version after his graduation in 1904: Philippines for two years, Ft. Logan for a couple of years where he was married. He took his family with him back to the Philippines for three years until 1912. While there he was finally promoted to 1st lieutenant. They spent almost two years at the Presidio in San Francisco, CA. That must have seemed like heaven after living in the tropics. From there it was to south Texas with Gen. Pershing chasing after Pancho Villa during the punitive expedition into Mexico. From there he spent some time in high school and college ROTC projects. He spent about a year at Ft. Lewis in Washington state training troops to go to France in July of 1918 to fight the Bosch. In 1919, he returned from WW I to the United States and eventually ended up as a staff officer in the D.C. area.

Eventually he took his family back to France to add American war equipment to the large military museum near Paris. Then it was back to the States. I did not find much on him between that time and when he was stationed in Cuba and left during the Sergeant's Rebellion of 1933. After that, he ended up back in Ohio heading a CCC camp. He and his family must have stayed there until WW II started when they were posted back to the Denver area until his retirement in 1944.

A question that kept coming back to me was, how did the Gimperling family discover Grand Lake in 1929 when they purchased their GL property? That was answered one January day years later when I was going through some old GLYacht Club membership records and discovered that Helen Gimperling's father, Major Lafayette Campbell, had been a member of the club around 1907. Their daughter even won the Lipton Cup in 1929 sailing the Elf and might have been the first female board member of the organization.

Two more senior Army officers worth mentioning: Major General Orlando Ward and Lieutenant General Gordon Sumner. Both have published biographies, which can be purchased on Amazon.



Visit our Websites:

www.grandlakehistory.org

Facebook: Smith-Eslick Cottage Court

www.cottagecourt.wordpress.com

Send us your e-mail address so we can send you our E-Blasts:
glhistory@rkymtnhi.com

Contact us:

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Grand Lake

Smith Eslick Cottage Camp
729 Lake Avenue
Grand Lake

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News From the The Cottage Camp

So much has been accomplished in the last year as we work to make the Smith Eslick Cottage Camp a terrific museum and community event site!



The central building at The Cottage Camp is the Smith Eslick Cottage Court, the oldest original condition motor court in the region, and perhaps the nation. Water was brought to the Court site, funded in part by grants from the Town of Grand Lake, Grand County and the Grand Foundation. A generous donor provided installation of additional irrigation and sod, and its “front lawn” looks great!

Beginning soon, the Cottage Court will begin a complete restoration, making it very like its original self, but also making it sturdy enough for visitors’ entry and installation of exhibits. This project is paid for in part by a History Colorado – State Historical Fund grant.

Also coming soon are more landscaping, and construction and installation of exhibits at the site. Exhibit topics have been researched and developed by the very dedicated Cottage Camp Planning Committee and Traub Design Associates, Inc. of Kansas. Topics to be explored in exhibits will include the history and importance of automobile tourism in the Grand Lake area and the American West, our unique local architecture, area entrepreneurs like the Eslicks who responded to the influx of auto tourists with new and changing businesses, area recreation and landscape features now and in history, the development of roads to meet the challenge of auto transportation, and more.

Of particular interest will be the replication of a portion of the historic Cairns #3 Water Distribution Ditch located on the Town right-of-way in front of the Cottage Court. The GLAHS is working with the Town of Grand Lake to not only replicate the Ditch, but to interpret the importance of water in our area and the entire western USA. Contact us if you can help with this project! We would be especially grateful for your financial support as this project progresses. Costs a lot to do things well!

2016 coming events – Mark your calendars



May 28th Kauffman House Museum opens for the season.
Open Daily 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM through Labor Day, and weekends in September. New exhibit - “Dolls for Guys and Gals” Featuring the rich history of imaginative play for boys and girls, including the Kauffman sisters.

**June 8th, 7:00 PM, Grand Lake Community House
GLAHS Annual Meeting & Election of Board**

**Come join us for a presentation by Hoppe Southway sharing history, stories and tales(!) of the old Southway Lodge.
It's all-FREE and we always have yummy treats and coffee.**



June 25th, 5:30 PM-9:00 PM Souper Stars for the Cottage Camp
There'll be super soups and fixins, excellent live entertainment from Tight Like That, wonderful old and new friends, adult beverages, a really unique live auction, and a great time altogether. \$50 per person; all proceeds benefit the Cottage Camp Campaign. If you'd like a mailed invitation, or to reserve or for location and more information, [970-627-8324, glhistory@rkymtnhi.com.](mailto:glhistory@rkymtnhi.com)

July 19th, 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM , Victorian Tea at the Historic Rapids Lodge
Join us for a lovely Light Tea in a wonderfully historic setting.
Bring your own, or borrow one of our hats! \$20 All proceeds benefit the Cottage Camp Campaign. For more information, or to reserve, contact glhistory@rkymtnhi.com, 970-627-8324 or call the Historic Rapids Lodge directly: 970-627-3707.



August 29th Second Annual Community Chicken Dinner at the Cottage Camp, 729 Lake Avenue. It's an all-Town party with plenty of great food beginning at 5:30 PM: dinner with chicken cooked on-site and loads of delicious side dishes, campfire and marshmallows, vintage automobile rides and more! The music will again be from the delightful “Kauffman Combo” with their fun swing tunes! 970-627-8324 or glhistory@rkymtnhi.com for more information. Last year's event was such fun! Don't want to miss this! Dinner for adults \$10, for kids \$5, beverages purchased separately.

Restoring the Kauffman House

The Kauffman House museum underwent a complete exterior restoration last summer. Funded in part by a grant from History Colorado-State Historical Fund, and with donations from members, friends and visitors, the log exterior got some much-needed refurbishing. Local contractor Dan Schneller with Wes Bishop replaced or repaired damaged logs, and renewed the chinking between logs with historically accurate materials. And finally, Grand Design's Jimmy Peterson re-stained the entire log surface. It's BEAUTIFUL, but there's more! Stop by this summer and watch the original windows getting a glazing repair and trim painting to completely finish the project. Hooray!



Dolls for Guys and Gals



This year's special exhibit at the Kauffman House Museum is amazing and unexpected. It's called "Dolls for Guys and Gals" and features over 200 vintage and collectible dolls, all sorts of action figures and the like, a dollhouse, and much, much more. It's designed for everyone who is, or ever was, a kid!

There'll be lots of history about how dolls evolved over the years into so many interesting varieties. It's going to be a terrific event, beginning May 28th when the Kauffman House opens for the summer – open daily 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Adults \$5.00, Free to Children 12 and Younger, Active Military and GLAHS Members.



Docents Welcome Visitors – and We Need You to Help!

People love to visit the Kauffman House museum. They feel like they've truly come to someone's home when they are warmly greeted by volunteer docents who are ready to answer questions or to tour them through the House. There are always two docents on duty so someone's always at the entrance to greet folks, and there's no reason to hurry through the visitor conversations. Volunteer docents work a three hour per week shift, either 11:00 AM-2:00 PM or 2:00 to 5:00, so it takes 28 people to keep the House open and running smoothly! We need a few more folks for this summer's season, and would love to have you join the team. It's fun, and you'll meet very interesting folks. There's a little training, but that can be arranged to suit your needs. Give Frank a call at 301/980-9081 or e-mail frankreardon@gmail.com! Thanks!

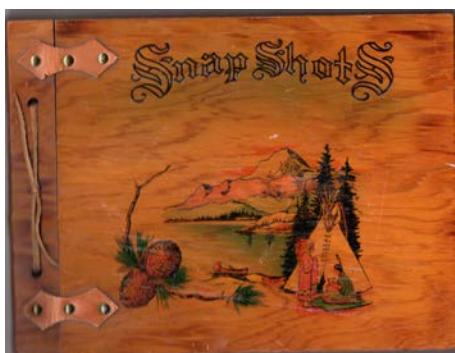
Website: grandlakehistory.org

Visit the website for information about Grand Lake History – the People, Places and Events that tell the interesting stories of long ago. We update the site regularly with current events sponsored by GLAHS and add pictures of current and past exhibits. You will be able to read the booklet distributed last year about the Changes in RMNP's West side over the past 100 years.

The Adventurous Life of Isaac Alden has been loaded onto the website copied from a scrapbook – the typewritten interview by Carolyn Rhone made in 1922. Ike tells his experiences in Colorado and Wyoming, where he was during Custer's Last Stand, the Shooting in Grand Lake, and many other interesting accounts.

Let us know what more you would like to see on our website, www.grandlakehistory.org. And check out our other sites: Facebook:Smith-Eslick Cottage Court and Blog: cottagecourt.wordpress.com.

Two of the donated items from this past year



Two wonderful albums have come to the Grand Lake Area Historical Society this year. One came from Gary Willett and features photographs and other memorabilia collected by his mother in 1946. “Della Seyl, the Iowa elementary school teacher who would become my mother, traveled to Colorado with two of her friends to take summer jobs at Grand Lake Lodge... she created a photograph album using the photos she took and bought.”

A second album from Ed Green who took a summer job in 1949 in the kitchen of the Corner Cupboard, which then was a series of hotels, cabins and eateries stretching along blocks of Grand Avenue. “I started out washing pots and pans and helping the chef Joe with getting the meals ready.” The album features 60 Corner Cupboard menus from 1949 through 1953. Lots of photographs also, including these of the 1949 Hotel and 1949 Soda Fountain Coffee Shop... buildings you may recognize.



The President's Two Cents

What a busy year it's been, thanks to our members, volunteers and Board members!

The Kauffman House Museum is looking marvelous! Our dedicated volunteer docents continue to welcome visitors from around the world all summer long, plus several special dates through the winter, including New Year's Eve. Last year's special display for Rocky Mountain National Park's Centennial was a hit with both young and old. Thank you to Kathy Means, her volunteers, Cabela's, Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife and Rocky Mountain National Park. Coming this summer is a display of antique dolls, including some of Rosemary Kauffman's.

Following completion of the Smith Eslick Cottage Court's first ever foundation and installation of a water line into the property, a community member donated the installation of the irrigation system and lawn that now graces the front yard. We were thrilled to receive funding from the State Historic Fund for restoration of the Court to its 1930's condition, due largely to the efforts of Elin Capps and Dennis Humphries. Work on this \$145,000 project is scheduled for completion this summer. We are getting closer to being able to implement the Master Plan developed for the site. We are now embarking on efforts to build displays interpreting the Smiths and Eslicks, the Cottage Court, early automobile tourism, and the importance of water in Grand Lake and the American West.

Following the amazing celebration of the centennials of the Cottage Court and our neighbor, Rocky Mountain National Park last August, we were encouraged to make the community dinner and social an annual event. So, for the 101st birthdays, we will again gather at the Cottage Court on August 22nd. I hope you will join in this fun event.

So much going on! So much important work to do! If you can contribute 3 hours a week, 2 days a month, one day a year, or a few hours here and there, I encourage you to contribute what you can toward our common goal of Preserving, Protecting and Promoting the History of the Grand Lake, Colorado Area. Thank You!

Your financial support is needed!

I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to join with us in supporting the Grand Lake Area Historical Society. We are an extraordinary and very hard-working all-volunteer organization. Your dues help create a history experience for visitors and local citizens alike. Following are a few of the products and services we provide: Kauffman House Museum -FREE ADMISSION for MEMBERS; family history research, recording and access to records and artifacts; research of local business histories including people, structures, stories; historical picture reproduction; archival storage of photographs and artifacts; ever changing fresh exhibits: research, development, presentation; Grand Lake Walking Tour; interviews and transcriptions of local histories; advise and counsel to local government and site owners regarding restoration and preservation.

The money we receive from memberships goes toward funding the behind the scenes work required to accomplish all that needs to be done to keep Grand Lake history alive to be enjoyed by people like you. Please join us by returning the "Yes! I want to become a member" form in this newsletter or through PayPal on our website www.grandlakehistory.org. Looking forward to hearing from you!

Sharon King, Membership Chair.

Yes! I want to become a member of the Grand Lake Area Historical Society:

Date _____ New Member Gift Renewal

- Individual Membership..... \$25
- Family Membership..... \$40
- Business Membership..... \$50
- Benefactor \$100 - \$1,000
- Other Contribution
- Heritage Coalition Master Membership.... \$175 Includes membership in four organizations

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\$ _____

Thank You!

Grand Lake Area Historical Society, Grand County Historical Association, Moffat Road Railroad Museum, Grand County Characters

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