

Georgianna Smith

Georgianna Smith was born in December 14, 1876 in Hays, Kansas to P. H. and Mary Smith.

The following was written by Idelia Baumgarten in 1955.

Georgia came to Breckenridge, Colorado in 1882 with her mother and two sisters. She enrolled in the first grade although she would not be six until Christmas Eve that year. The family moved to Hot Sulphur Springs in 1883. *An article in the Grand Lake Prospector of January 9, 1886 lists the school program in Hot Sulphur Springs on Christmas Eve. Georgia and Mabel Smith each performed in the programme. Georgia recited "The Snow Birds" and Mabel "The Robin's Nest".* They first lived in Grand Lake the summer of 1885 but eventually returned to live there permanently in March 1904.

Indeed Mrs. Eslick has earned the honor and title of Middle Park Pioneer! It was small wonder that Georgia Smith (christened Georgianna, but she "always hated it") was happy as a pioneer. She was born with a heritage of pioneer blood in her veins. Her father before her and his father before him, for ten generations back, was pioneers clear to the Mayflower. There at the head of her family tree in America stands Francis Cooke, passenger on the Mayflower. He too was headed West across a little known ocean to found a family in the new world. His descendants continued to move westward, opening up new frontiers beyond the horizon of civilization.

Twin sons were born to the Smiths at Sulphur in 1884 and a third son in 1886. Mrs. Smith died when a daughter was born in 1889. By 1889 they had taken up a homestead on Cottonwood Pass, but after the death of his wife PH began to long again for greener fields.

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." His three sons were all too young to work. (Ed was sent back to Kansas to live until he was 12 and the baby girl was adopted by relatives in Hays, Kansas.)

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 share as mother and homemaker for their three young brothers during the long weeks, but held strictly accountable to their father every Saturday night!

"At the mill 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 had to help 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, for native pine shingles outlast any other kind to my notion." And she pointed to some that were still on the roof of their laundry, put there over 30 years ago.

For several years Georgia continued to be her dad's big boy, but by the time she was 17 PH had sold the Fraser sawmill and moved to Grand Lake. The family was still in Sulphur, though.

In the summer of 1894 Georgia decided it was time to be a big girl instead of a big boy. Accordingly she took the stage to Idaho Springs and got a job as a waitress in a boarding house. There she met a handsome miner named Alfred Eslick and six months later, on her 18th birthday, she married him.

Now Alfred Eslick and Georgia Smith had much in common, much more than just being young and in love. Georgia's ancestors, remember had sailed West to found a New World home. Well, Alfred Eslick was also English-born at Land's End, and he too sailed for the New World landing in New York the day before he was 21 in 1889. He also moved westward, spurred by the lure of gold and he found it in the heart of Georgia Smith.

Mr. Eslick continued to work the mines near Idaho Springs, but a touch of miner's consumption prompted their return to Grand Lake in 1904 with six of their seven children. (Loren was born in 1907.)



Mr. Smith with his three daughters on the porch of their home. Georgia is on the right.

(When Georgia and her family moved back to Grand Lake, P. H. put them up in one of his rental cabins, a two-room log structure. It was a tight fit for a family of seven. One room served as a combination kitchen, dining room, and living room; the other was a bedroom. The Eslick children slept in the attic which had been fashioned into two cramped rooms; the two girls had one of the rooms and the boys shared the other. Georgia took in laundry, something she was to continue doing for a good many years and Alfred started to do odd jobs for his father in law.)

At first Mr. Eslick worked for her father, P H Smith who had apparently found his place in the sun at Grand Lake. Gradually Mr. Eslick built up a desirable and responsible job for himself and his family. In 1906 Georgia bought the south 50 feet of lots 7 & 8 in block 12 from her father for one dollar, enough to make it a legal transaction. That's when Georgia helped Alfred start to build their home which was to remain in the family for a hundred years. At first it was a small house,

but over the years, rooms were added. (This building is now part of the Rocky Mountain Theater offices). Alfred built his own cabin court and was school janitor. Georgia and Alfred established a laundry in the 1920s. He became caretaker and general maintenance man for more and more of the beautiful homes of Grand Lake summer resident until his death in 1931.

In 1946 Mrs. Eslick sold her cabin court to their son Clyde and his wife Grace. Georgia still lives in her own home. She no longer operates the laundry but she refuses to give up piecing (on the machine) the beautiful quilts for which she has been famous for many years.

Now her zest for living finds expression in much enjoyed travel. In 1951 she flew to Anchorage, Alaska to visit a granddaughter and then returned by car down the rough AlCan Highway. This summer (1955) she motored to Montana with Dorothy and Bill Thompson to re-live some of the old happy days with Robb and Helen Johnston, former Grand Lake pioneers.



She finds pleasure in her children: Clyde and Grace, her daughter Bessie Lindsey (of Grand Lake) and her two sons Claude and Clarence and their families of Denver, as well as her many grandchildren. Her three other children have died. (Charles died in 1913, Mable in 1918, Loren in 1934)

“This is a good life now,” Mrs. Eslick said in closing our interview during which her mind and speech were as clear as if she were 48 instead of 78. “But it was a good life then, too. We didn’t need to have money and fancy gadgets to have fun and be happy. If we could get together with our friends and sing and dance a little, we felt as rich as kings. And I guess we were!”

With Georgia Smith Eslick we are looking forward to this Christmas Even when she will be 79 years old. For despite her years, like her father before her, she faces West toward the future – always West.

(from the Middle Park Times February 9, 1956.)

Georgia Eslick, pioneer Grand Lake resident passed away at her home there on Thursday January 16, 1956. Funeral services were conducted by Reverend E. W. Collier on Saturday January 28 at 11:00 a.m. in the Grand Lake Community Church. Burial was in the Grand Lake Cemetery. Mr. Eslick died on December 9, 1931. Three of her seven children preceded her in death. Survivors include a daughter, Mrs. Bessie Lindsey, Grand Lake; and three sons, Clyde, Grand Lake, and Claude and Clarence of Denver.