

Grand Lake Plumbing & Heating

Grand Lake Plumbing and Heating Company is a family owned and operated company that has been in continuous operation for 100 years. They have served the plumbing and heating needs of Grand County since Gus Spitzmiller homesteaded near Stillwater in 1909.

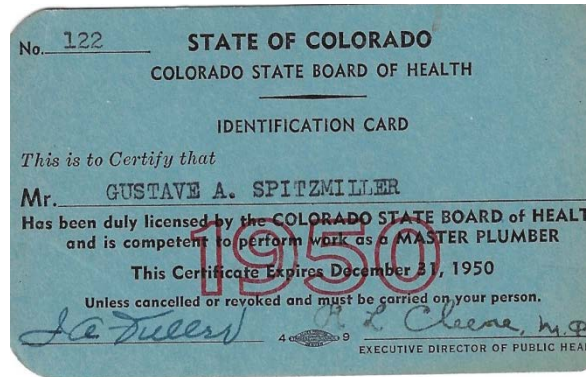
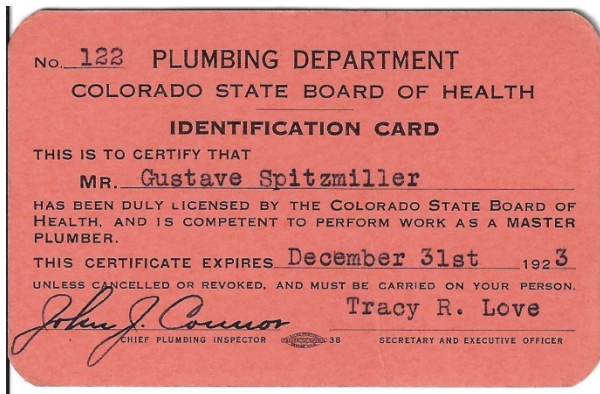
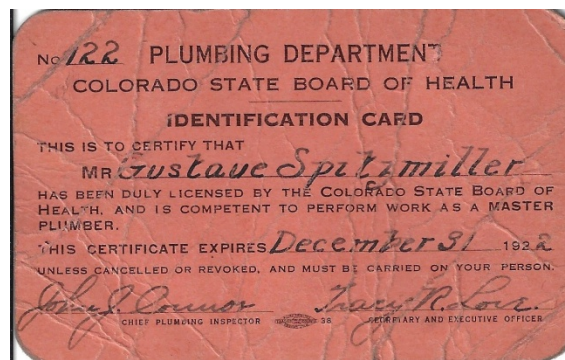
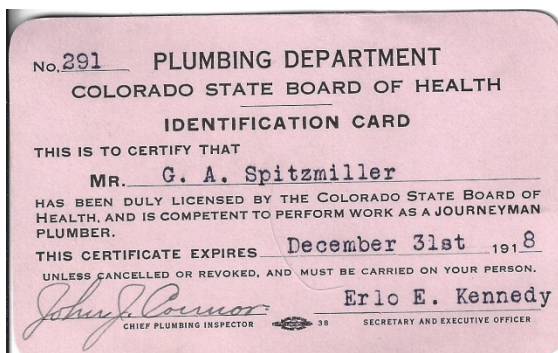
Gus Spitzmiller was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1884. He grew up expecting to continue the work of his father as a stone cutter. The development of cement ruined the stone-cutting business so Gus became a plumber's apprentice at the age of 15. "I got \$3 a week pay for 9 hours a day, six days a week. I was a full-fledged plumber in 1906 and that was the year of the San Francisco fire. I was offered a job with free train transportation so headed west. I got off the train in Denver to visit an aunt and fell in love with the mountains." He got a job as a plumber in Denver. He heard that the train had reached Middle Park on July 4th and in 1907 he quit his job and headed to the mountains. Tom Johnson met him at Granby and took him to Grand Lake and on to Squeaky Bob Wheeler's Ranch up the North Fork of the Colorado. For two years Gus worked as a wrangler and did some prospecting. In 1909 he and some buddies stopped at Stillwater Ranch where there was an old log cabin with a dirt roof and floor with a door and no windows and they decided to spend the night. Jim Crandall, a typical prospector, came along on a horse, leading a burro loaded with coffee and whiskey. He said "I need some money. I'll sell you this 160 acres for \$100 cash." The boys thought I was crazy but I bought the land and the next day we went to Hot Sulphur Springs to record the relinquishment. I became a landowner in Grand County for the first time, not counting the mine that turned out to be fool's gold.



I convinced my father and sisters to come to Colorado. They took over the operation of the land.



(picture of cabin taken 1960)



Gus was doing plumbing work in Iowa and met Anna Sandstrom. They were married in 1918 and he brought her back to Colorado. The Grand Lake Lodge was built in 1920 and Gus went to work putting in all the plumbing. Rocky Mountain National Park decided to put in plumbing and Gus was elected for the job. All over Grand County progress spelled Plumbing and plumbing was in demand. He traveled the length and breadth of the 75 square mile county putting bathrooms in the new homes of ranchers. Then in 1923 the biggest project of his life was undertaken and nursed for 35 years. He formed and installed the Grand Lake Water Company System. He has been in the plumbing business ever since and between 1923 and 1940 he did 90% of all the plumbing in Grand County.





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GORDON R. SPITZMILLER

627-3441

Gus retired in the 1950s and the business was taken over by his son Gordon Spitzmiller. Gordon purchased a house and barn south of Grand Lake where the business is still operating today.



Gordon with his pickup from an advertisement for Jamison Chevrolet in Granby "When I got my first Chevy pickup 32 years ago, I was the only person in the business. Now I have 22 people on the payroll and 14 or 15 pickups."





Frank Appelhans came to work for Grand Lake Plumbing in 1973. He took over sole ownership after Gordon Spitzmiller died in 1990.

Frank's son Travis and Melissa Appelhans continue to carry on the Grand Lake Plumbing & Heating tradition.

