

Bottle House



Bottle House 1949

The Bottle House sits almost out of sight up on the hill and is easy to forget. It was built over several years' time by Vannie Maker.

Vannie was born December 22, 1897 and came to Grand Lake with her adult son, M. Colvin Kemp, as a new bride of Fred Maker from Texas in 1931. Fred was an ex-stage driver and was the owner of the general store. They were divorced in 1934 and he was never seen again by Vannie. Once here, she “assisted” her new husband with his store and post office, operated the hotel and café at Farrell Drug Store, sold insurance, was a notary public and did tax returns and alterations. She cultivated and sold 40 varieties of columbine and worked two gold mines she owned in the area. She rode in the parades on the only sidesaddle in town.

Vannie sold the General Store and purchased a lot on the hill as you come into town. Vannie started building her house by cutting and peeling the trees on her property in the early 1940s. With her own two hands she cleared rocks and collected odds and ends to build her four-room house. Using these trees, concrete, stone and some of the 1,000 bottles her son had collected, proceeded to build a 1,000 square foot house and a cottage on her property. The first winter a heavy snow caused the house to collapse. Vannie was not daunted and she rebuilt it stronger and this time she even installed electricity and plumbing but no hot water. She designed it with an east window which frames Mt. Baldy, and a living room which sparkles with the morning light shining through the bottles. Her sewer drain was a small fire hose to her flower beds (Nell Pauly), which explains how she won second place in the Women's Club Garden competition in 1949. The



Vannie at her house 1949

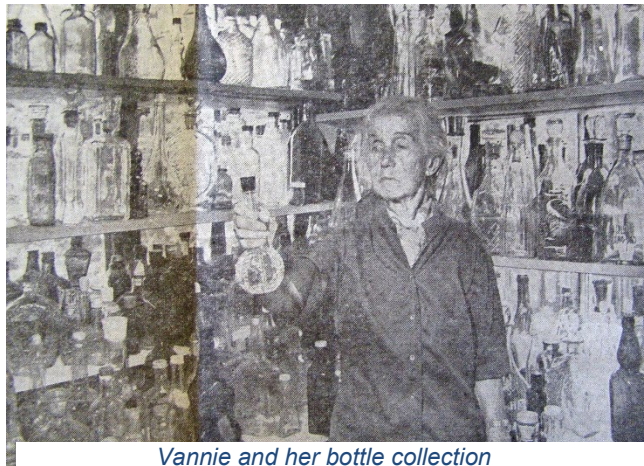
prize was \$10. In addition to her columbine, she had the first peonies in Grand Lake along with roses, lilacs and daisies.



Mrs. Kemp rearranges her seashell collection.

During the winter months Vannie would drive to the Gulf of Mexico to collect sea shells and various junk. She collected the shells for her sea shell museum which was really her living room. She had hundreds of shells.

Vannie died in 1984 at 96. She now rests at the Grand Lake Cemetery.



Vannie and her bottle collection

After her death, the Bottle House was purchased by John and Marion Swartz who operated it as an antiques store for several summers. John was an accomplished contactor and he made many repairs and improvements to the house. Even so, he could not correct the slanting floors, ceilings and listing walls that Vannie had built.

The Bottle House as it looks today.



