

## Edna Edmondson Ruske



*Edna Ruske*

Edna was known affectionately in Grand Lake as “Mom Ruske”. She was born in Milton, Iowa on May 31, 1898. She attended Iowa Normal School and Chicago Art Institute. She was employed as an English and Art teacher when she met Ray, a math and science teacher. They were married in Milton, Iowa on July 19, 1919.

In 1928 they fell in love with the Grand Lake area and moved to the area with their two children, a son and a daughter. Ray had a job in Hot Sulphur Springs with the schools. The road between the towns was not kept plowed open in the winter, so the family lived in Hot Sulphur Springs during the winter.

Their home in Grand Lake was built primarily by Ray, Edna and son, Mac. The logs for the house in Grand Lake were hand peeled by Edna and Mac and then lifted into place. They named the home Journey’s End.



She also operated the Iron Kettle Inn until it burned in 1943. They then owned the Ruske’s Riverside Cottages until 1965.

She met Futzon Borglum, the sculptor of Mount Rushmore, when she attended Chicago Art Institute. He told her to continue her art work as he saw real talent in her work. She continued in between children with her work. She was a great artist in oil, water colors and pastels in spite of her busy life. Spending several winters in

Arizona, Ray and Edna were taught sand painting skills by the local Indians. For 30-40 years they traveled the US in search of various natural sand colors to do their paintings. In turn they would grind up rocks and turn them to sand, which was very special as they would never change colors by dying the sands. They produced upwards of 100 pictures which were given to friends before they started selling them. This was called Roc-San paintings. Her paintings have been exhibited all over United States and Canada.



She made many contributions to the area. She founded and sponsored the Grand Lake Youth Center, teaching arts and crafts to children and adults during the long snow-bound winters, was President of the school board and was PTA President. She also was a board member of the Commercial Association (now the Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce) and belonged to the Women's Club and Music Study Club.

She died November 10, 1979.