

Lila from Egeria Park

by Letha Mack & Tanna Eck



Lila Allen was born in 1885 and is now 91 years old. She grew up between Yampa and Toponas and has lived in this area all of her life. "Yampa," explains Mrs. Allen, "is also known as Egeria Park and was known as such when I was growing up."

Yampa is the only town in Routt County that was not planned. The word, Yampa, comes from an Indian name for a plant like an onion or lily that grew wild in this valley. Yampa was also the first name of the town which is now called Craig.

Yampa grew little before 1902, but homesteaders like the Crossans (Lila's family) started settling Egeria Park in 1881. "It was just a post office, a store, and a log school house when we lived on the creek (Egeria Creek) on a big ranch with my dad. My father was one of the pioneer settlers; he came here from Iowa in 1882."

Being the first white child born on Egeria Creek (ten miles above Toponas, Colorado) she lived there for fifty some years. She explains, "The last forty years I have spent in Yampa."

Lila's dad and husband both built log cabins for their families on homesteaded land outside of Yampa. "You just file on a piece of land, and you have to build a house on it within a year and live on it, then it's yours. Dad and Howard just chopped down trees, made them fit together and dobed them with mud. It's a more complicated process than that, but basically that's what they did. Ours (Lila and Howard's) had four rooms - living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom, a pantry and a little later a bathroom. It was quite roomy and nice."



Lila and Howard Allen in front of their log cabin home.

"My father had a thousand acres or so and raised beef cattle, about three or four hundred head. He fed them through the winter, then sold them for whatever price he wanted. We had milk cows and used some for our own beef. We built a little house, very air tight, next to the house. We called it a smoke house where we smoked our own pork - bacon and ham." This smoking process meant building a small dull wood fire underneath the meat and letting the smoke permeate the air. "I forget the exact mixture we used for preserving the meat and to give it flavor, but mostly just salt and pepper, to season it. We were careful that the flames didn't heat the meat, but just put out a pretty strong smoke. We raised pigs for the ham and bacon, mostly just for our own use though."

"We raised pret' near everything we ate: milk, butter, eggs, vegetables. We even raised turkeys and ducks, and with our large garden, we really had all we needed to eat." Some of the vegetables Lila's family (Crossans and Allens) raised were potatoes, lettuce, radishes, onions, turnips, cabbage, rutabaga, cauliflower celery and broccolli.

"It was really warmer up there (in Watson on Egeria Creek) than it is down here in Yampa. That was upper Egeria and Yampa is lower Egeria. We had more sucess with our garden in the warmer climate."

The Crossans preserved vegetables as well as meat, "We had a little building, a cellar we called it. We put the vegetables in there and covered them with dirt. It would keep all winter long. Of course, some vegetables like cabbage we made kraut out of. It's better than boughten any day, I'm sure it is."

Social time for the Crossans meant many activities. "Taffy pull was a big thing back then. We'd boil up molasses and sugar, let it cool, and then two would pull it together. That was a party! We played lots of games. 'Button, Button, who's got the button?' was one we played. During holidays we would all gather at one of our houses and have a big meal and have a big time. We used to have dances in each other's homes and play lots of card games. We also played the game where everyone changes chairs. (Fruit basket turn over!) We would have a swell time."



Lila and Howard on a "real" camping trip.

In the summertime Lila recalled spending a lot of time outdoors. "For vacations we would go to Trappeur's Lake and go camping. We would go by horseback over the Flat Tops (flat topped mountain range near Yampa). Usually we would spend several days up there, fishing and camping. Several of the young people would get together, of course, we had to have a chaperone to go along too. We always caught a lot of fish, big ones too. Cut throat trout. We had to go over the Flat Tops and would spend several days getting there and back. It was a lot of fun - real camping."



Lila recalled for us some of her school day memories, "You know country schools - in my class there were three, but there were more in the other grades. We only had grades one through eight, then went to high school. (The Yampa high school is still standing but not used anymore.) "For our school teachers they just had to be out of the eighth grade, and then they got a certificate so they could teach."

Lila's life as Mrs. Howard Allen was quite full and time consuming too. "For many years I worked at our store, Crossans Market. I was bookkeeper and clerk and helped a lot around

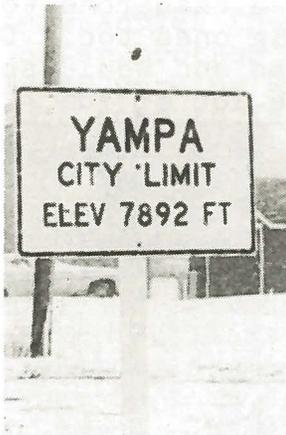
there. We had everything-like clothes, material, flour, coffee, and goods for the horses, harnesses, bridles and saddles. Of course, we didn't have things like bread because we made our own at home."

"I enjoy cooking.

You see, I was born in 1885. I'm 91 years old, so there are a lot of things that I can't do that I'd like to. I used to knit and crochet and embroidery, but my hands won't do it now. I cook, and I live here alone and do everything around here myself."



Crossans Market, Yampa, Colorado.



Lila Allen lived above Finger Rock which looms over Yampa. She recalls, "That was upper Egeria and Yampa is lower Egeria."