

“Readers Refuge” article for July 21, 2010, meeting at 7:00pm at the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Center, 1118 W. Cheyenne Road

(The following article is taken from The Century Chest Letters of 1901- Elizabeth Mellor Evans Solly. The book is edited by Judith Finley.)

“Housekeeping in Colorado Springs is comparatively a happy, easy business.”

Colorado Springs

August 1, 1901

My dear Great-Great-Great Grandchildren

I am sure you will be interested in being able to read an account of house-keeping conditions of this time and to compare them with those of your time. I very much wonder – and would very much like to be present in good physical and mental state to see for myself – what the difference will be.

We feel sure mechanical contrivances will continue to be invented to lessen drudgery – but will the moral and spiritual development keep pace with those for the uplifting of mankind? Will the equality of opportunity be more universal and a participation upon equal grounds in earth, air and water be accorded every human being – or will that happy and just economical condition still be in the future to you of the year 2000? In this town of 21,000 inhabitants – census taken last year – land is already becoming so dear as to preclude many from owning their own homes, except upon far outlying district, inconvenient for social or business connections. Frame cottages of one story containing 5 or 6 rooms and a bath – in good locations rent for \$50.00 per month – lots only 25 by 50 feet. Colorado Springs has been from the first principally a resort for health seekers, which meant necessarily people with sufficient means of support – which resulted in the building of many attractive homes with all modern conveniences. Telephones are universal, saving time and strength in social and business pursuits. My marketing is done almost entirely in this way and is quite as satisfactory in results as personal attendance and inspection. Members of “society” are rather fond of attending personally to housekeeping errands down town in the mornings, where the frequent meetings and pleasant interchange of innocent gossip and social chat has the effect of an informal out door club – cheerful and attractive to the semi-invalids, not over laden with pressing engagements, far from home and old friends.

Not many years ago the servant question was a trying one – not being enough to go round. Many working women in the east who would have come west for the large wages could not be persuaded, even by their friends who wrote to them from here, that we were quite safe from sudden Indian raids and attacks from wild beasts if we ventured out of doors. Many a delicately

nurtured lady became familiar with unaccustomed household labor – most likely to her benefit both in health and appreciation of what to expect from others. A few people complain of the market here – but I think it quite good, and each year brings larger quantities and lower prices for vegetables and fruit as cultivation increases. They come also through many months in the year from surrounding states – Kansas, Texas, Mexico and California. The mountain mutton is sweet and tender. Kansas fed beef is very good. Game is restricted owing to former reckless destruction of it. Fowls and chickens are plentiful – but tasteless and poor, owing to ignorance and lack of care in raising and preparing them – a fault not confined to Colorado. Fish is brought from the sea coast in refrigerator cars – oysters and lobsters alive at correspondingly high prices – blue-point being 60 cents a dozen. Beef roasts are 20 cents and 22 cents a pound, leg of mutton 16 cents, chops 25 cents, fowls 15 cents a pound, young chickens 25 cents a pound. Nearly all fish is 30 cents a pound, mountain trout 60 cents a pound. Potatoes are expensive when home supply is not sufficient. Natives are from one cent to 1\_ cents a pound – California 3 cents and Kansas 2 cents. Colorado flour is very good - \$1.95 cwt. Peas are now 10 cents a pound or 3 pounds for 25 cents, beans 10 cents, squash 7 cents, tomatoes 10 cents, strawberries 12 \_ cents quart boxes, cherries 12\_ cents quart, raspberries 10 cents per box, turnips 2\_ cents a pound, wild plums 30 cents a gallon, carrots 2\_ cents a pound, cucumbers 5 cents a piece – in winter from 20 cents to 60 cents, peaches 75 cents to \$1.00 a box, butter 40 cents a pound, milk 14 quarts for \$1.00, coffee 45 cents a pound, Lipton Tea 60 cents a pound.

Cooks receive from \$30 to \$35 per month – other maids from \$20 to \$25 – charwomen and men from 20 cents to 30 cents an hour. There is as yet no grading of labor. Good, bad and indifferent ask and are paid the same. Lately a servants' union has been formed, which I should hope might have the effect of creating a feeling of pride among themselves, which would to a degree at least regulate the price to the quality of work. Much more attention is being given in building houses to the comfort of the workers – separate sleeping rooms, bathrooms and a sitting room when possible. Regulating the hours of labor is being agitated, which may result in good. A large number of women servants here are superior to the average of that class.

There is, I think, rather an unusual amount of social entertainment in this community, probably owing to the number of strangers and visitors constantly arriving among us to whom we wish to show hospitality and kindly feeling. Great taste with simplicity mark many of these occasions, whilst lavish display and expense are gradually increasing among the wealthier class. Hours are rather later than in eastern cities – we breakfast alone or together as is convenient, from 8 o'clock to 9:30 – fruit, eggs, bacon being the usual. Luncheon at 1:30 also very simple. Dinner at 7:30 – soup, fish, meat and vegetables, salad and cheese, pudding, etc. being the every day family menu. The baking and family laundry work is done in the home. Housekeeping in Colorado Springs is comparatively a happy, easy business – I think the dryness of the atmosphere contributing largely toward it – no damp musty cellars – no mud – only clean ? dust – easily swept and dusted – but too much of it the housekeeper's chief grievance. Good roads, quick delivery of marketing, open windows the greater part of the year – admitting the fresh air to fill the lungs and the glorious sunshine with it making all duties seem light and possible.

I do not know that I can tell you any more of interest and hope when you read this that our world and its people may be better, wiser and happier in many ways.

Your loving and interested grandmother

Elizabeth Mellor Evans Solly

Biographical Note: Elizabeth Mellor Evans Solly (1840 – 1927). Elizabeth Solly, born in Philadelphia in 1840, had two children by her first marriage to George O. Evans in 1860. She came to Colorado Springs in 1873 where she met Dr. Samuel Edwin Solly, a suave Britisher and prominent tuberculosis specialist. After their marriage in 1877, she assisted her husband with his medical practice and the publication of information about the importance of climate and temperature in the treatment and cure of tuberculosis. She regularly attended St. Stephen's Episcopal Church although she was a member of the Friends Church. Mrs. Solly and Mrs. William Bell were founders in 1895 of the Tuesday Club, an organization of women that met every two weeks during the winter months for the discussion of current topics. She died in Colorado Springs February 7, 1927.