

Granite Creek Hotel Piano by Diane Sterne

The Granite Creek Hotel Piano which is now housed in the Princeton & District Museum and Archives was donated by Skip Broderick in November, 2021. Skip's grandfather, George Batstone (1878-1967), had purchased the instrument from Ed Cook. Ed was the only son of merchant and businessman, Foxcrowle Percival Cook, who had arrived at Granite Creek in 1885 during the gold rush. F.P. Cook owned stores in Granite Creek, Coalmont and Princeton. He was a well-known, respected citizen who helped improve each of the communities he lived in.

After the devastating, Granite Creek fire of 1907, F.P. Cook was determined to rebuild the town. He constructed a new store as well as a fine home for his wife, Emma and their children. In 1913, at a public auction, F.P. Cook purchased the rebuilt Granite Creek Hotel. According to Skip, the piano belonged to the Cook family and was used in that Hotel. F.P. Cook's grandson, Barrie Cook, recalls his grandmother, Emma, owning a piano. Ed Cook had told Barrie, the piano "was packed in on horseback (broken down into sections and reassembled at Granite Creek)". Barrie doesn't know where the piano was purchased, but he said his father, Ed, was "admiring of the act of packing the thing in from wherever".

The date November 21, 1909 is pencilled inside the piano. This could be the date the piano was bought by the Cook family. It would make sense the piano was purchased after the 1907 fire, as the Cook family (any most others in the town) lost everything they owned. The piano is a McMillan with the serial number 12849. It was manufactured for Gourlay, Winter & Leeming (GWL) of Toronto.

After doing some research we have learned that in 1907 GWL purchased R. McMillan & Co. which was based in Kingston, Ontario. R. Selden Denison, owner of the McMillan company, was ill so he sold all his interests in the company to GWL. The sale covered "not merely his piano stock finished and unfinished, but his plant, scales, drawings, good will, etc." GWL decided to keep the organizations separate, meaning that the McMillan piano would continue to be manufactured in Kingston, Ontario under the name McMillan. This would explain why, under the R. McMillan & Co. stamp, is "Manf'd by Gourlay, Winter & Leeming, Toronto".

The Granite Creek Hotel piano is a rare and important artefact of Granite Creek. We are so very grateful to Skip Broderick and her family for taking such good care of the piano over the decades and for generously donating it to the Princeton Museum where it can be admired by the public.