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# Anne Evans - A Pioneer in Colorado's Cultural History

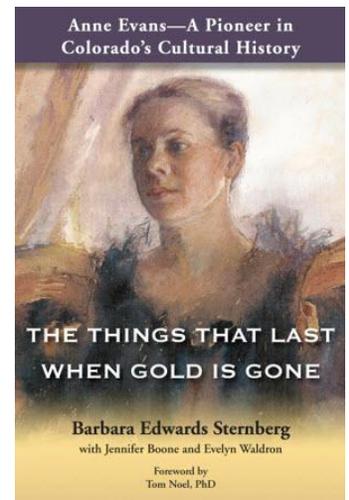
## THE THINGS THAT LAST WHEN GOLD IS GONE

### Q & A with Barbara Edwards Sternberg

#### 1. What got you interested in writing a biography of Anne Evans?

Until the 1950's the major contributions that were made to Colorado's development by women had been largely ignored and forgotten. Then one by one, as part of the rising women's movement, women authors became interested in uncovering and writing about women like Emily Griffith.

For me in particular, my interest in Anne Evans arose out of writing a history of Evergreen (*Evergreen, Our Mountain Community, 1987*). In the course of writing this book we interviewed people about the Evans Ranch in the mountains above Evergreen. In talking with Evans descendants still living on the ranch, we heard about the activities and achievements of this remarkable Anne Evans, the daughter of the 2nd Territorial Governor John and his wife Margaret Evans.



#### 2. In a nutshell, what were some of the achievements of Anne Evans?

Anne Evans contributed to the development of a small group of artists (Denver Artist's Club) and worked tirelessly to evolve it into a thriving civic institution, the Denver Art Museum. Her father said, "This is going to be one of the great cities in the country." She carried the same goal as her father and always felt that "nothing but the best for Denver." In her work on the Denver Public Library Commission (from 1907 - 1940) she chose the best quality in staff and library collections, and created branch libraries that were accessible to all, that were designed by talented architects, and filled with art and sculpture. Anne Evans and another remarkable woman Ida Kruse MacFarlane were largely responsible for the restoration of the Central City Opera House and the inauguration of the still thriving Central City Summer Opera Festival. Anne was an early pioneer in working for the recognition of Native American art as art worthy of being collected by connoisseurs and museums around the world. She was a leader in the preservation of New Mexico Mission Churches. Anne participated fully on the Denver Art Commission to achieve Mayor Speer's dream of a Civic Center. She also gave generous time and energy to nurture the growth of Denver University's Art and Civic Theater Departments.

### **3. How long did it take you to write this 500 page historical biography?**

To give you an idea of how long I have been working on this book I will use my granddaughter's life. Megan and I began researching this book when she was majoring in history as an undergraduate student at University of Colorado, Denver. She graduated, finished her studies to become an Elementary School Teacher, and taught for three years. Megan got married to a wonderful man, and then achieved her Montessori Teaching Certification. Megan and John had a baby who just had her second birthday. The book was published after the baby's first birthday. All in all, with the help of many, I spent about eleven years researching, writing, and editing the book. My multi-talented daughter Jennifer Boone is a co-author, who devoted years to researching, editing, and typing the first manuscript. Evelyn Waldron, while finishing her MA in Western History at the University of Colorado, Denver, and a King Intern with the Center for Colorado and the West (sponsored the publication of the book) was invaluable in helping prepare the manuscript for publication.

### **4. I heard there were some major difficulties in writing this biography. What were they?**

About a year into the research we discovered that Anne Evans had ordered all her personal papers destroyed upon her death. That also meant we had no explanation for why, after studying for over ten years to become a professional artist, Anne Evans gave up her own painting completely and focused on helping other artists and on contributing to the development of Denver's cultural institutions.

### **5. How did you get around these difficulties in your research?**

With difficulty. It required ingenuity in pursuing avenues of research and sources of information that enrich the book and the writing, but might not have been necessary if Anne had been like her mother and left copious personal letters and diaries.

### **6. What was so remarkable about the contributions of Anne Evans?**

First, she was a superb networker. Second, she had keen instincts as to which person would be the best fit for a particular leadership position. It was her simultaneous membership on various boards and commissions that enabled her to rather quietly stimulate win-win solutions that advanced the goals of multiple institutions- for example she was a member the Denver Public Library Commission and on the Board of the Denver Artist's Club, which became the Denver Art Museum when the DPL was building its first Central Library on the new Civic Center Campus. Due to her dual membership Anne was able to secure gallery space for the Denver Artist's Club in the Carnegie Library. This quiet, behind the scenes activity was repeated many times to the mutual benefit of two institutions.

## **7. Do we know anything about Anne Evans religious beliefs or affiliations?**

Governor Evans and his wife Margaret were devout Methodists and we expected to find that Anne Evans like her siblings was a member of a Methodist Church in Denver. Instead, research revealed that she was a very active member of the Theosophical Society in America, and was in fact the President of the Denver Chapter of that organization. This was a fascinating discovery and certainly provided a deeper understanding of Anne Evan's conviction that any good one seeks to do must be done for its own sake, and not for the expectation of any honors or rewards. This is one of the fundamental principles by which Anne lived, and is a core tenet of Theosophy.