



Martha Pearl James Grout (1852–1930)

Presentation Date: July 16, 2026

Presenter: Beverly Higginson Noe (as Martha Pearl James Grout)

Introduction

Good day. I am Martha Pearl James Grout. I was born in Quincy, Illinois, in 1852.

The Journey to Colorado Territory

My father, Marcus Linzy James, first came west to Colorado in 1860 during the Gold Rush. He returned to Illinois in 1863 to bring my mother, Margaret, and us children out to the Colorado Territory. Mother and I both suffered terribly from asthma, and the doctor felt the dry mountain air was our only hope.

I was just nine years old when we set out in an ox-drawn covered wagon. Many back home didn't expect me to survive the journey. My sister, Mary Alice, my brother, John, and I walked most of those 600 miles. Because of our health, Father traveled slowly, often waiting at settlements until another wagon train came along so we could join them for safety.

It took us eight long, grueling weeks to travel from Illinois to Denver. We bathed in rivers, cooked over open campfires, and choked on endless clouds of dust. At night, the men slept under the wagons while the women and girls slept inside.

Encounters along the Trail

My sister Alice had thick, vibrant red hair, and we had to guard her constantly. Indians we encountered believed red hair brought great fortune, and at one point, a group offered Father 100 ponies in trade for her!

Father insisted that we children always shake hands and be friendly with the Indians we met. Mother would bake fresh biscuits for them on the small steel stove we hauled in our wagon.

Life on the James Ranch

When we arrived, our family first settled on the George Ratcliff "T" Ranch, where Father worked for several years. By 1871, we saved enough to buy our own land. Father built us a log cabin near West Plum Creek, near what is now the intersection of Perry Park Road and Wolfensberger Road. Our bed frames were nailed directly into the cabin walls, and our mattresses were stuffed with straw.

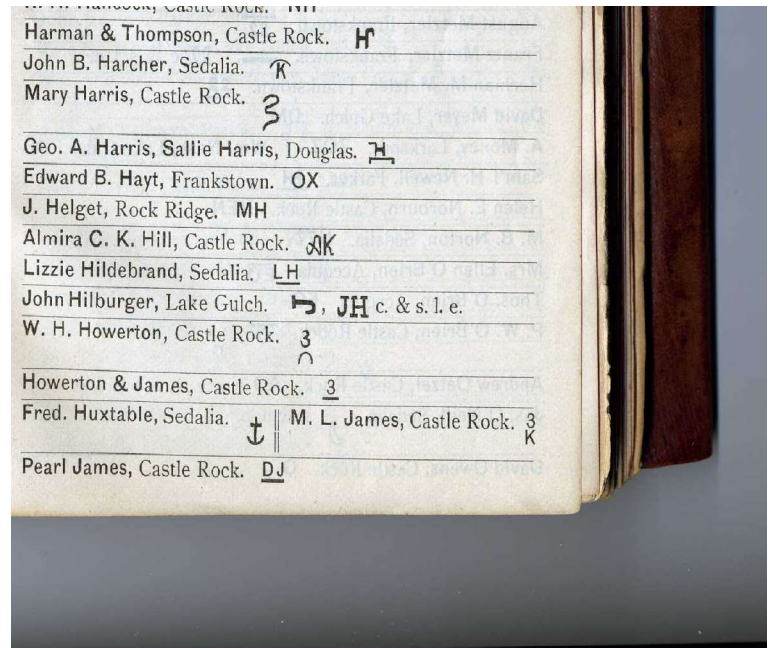


Because of our home's central location, Father was appointed U.S. Postmaster as well as the local Justice of the Peace.

We raised both beef and dairy cattle. Every summer, we drove our beef cattle up into the high pastures of what is now the National Forest to graze alongside neighboring herds. Father's cattle brand was **3K**, and my personal brand was **DJ**

Bar. We children worked hard: feeding chickens, gathering eggs, helping with the morning and evening milkings, and assisting Mother with baking, cleaning, and sewing.

Education was deeply important to my father; he wanted us to leave the world better than we found it. Since the nearest schoolhouse was six miles away, Father hired a private schoolteacher to tutor us at home, eventually ensuring we were tutored in college-level subjects as well.



Raids, Books, and Jam

Though neighboring homesteads were occasionally raided during tense times on the frontier, our home was usually left alone—a quiet courtesy returned to us because of Mother's hot biscuits and Father's insistence on friendliness. During one raid on a neighbor's homestead, however, Indians gathered up all the family's cherished books into a pile, knowing how much the settlers valued them, and poured jars of preserved fruit jam all over the pages to ruin them!

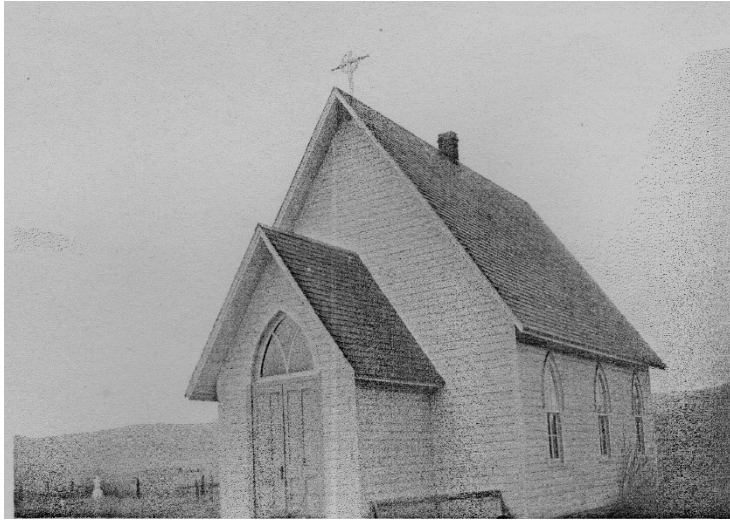
When nearby raids made it unsafe for women and children, we were instructed to take shelter inside the stockade fort at Franktown.

Saint Philip's in the Field

By 1872, our community recognized the need for a proper church. Newton Grout was hired for \$200 to design and build the structure known today as **Saint Philip's in the Field**. The church was erected in just 22 days, built by my father, Leonard Wells, Upton T. Smith, and Newton Grout. Many local families donated time and funds—including the Daken, James, Ball, Curtis, Huxtable, McInroy, Jarre, Smith, Garrison, Harris, Ratcliff, Craig, Hammer, and Wells families.

Unfortunately, after collecting an additional \$600 to complete the interior, the traveling circuit minister vanished with the money!

Undeterred, we held the dedication anyway. Mother and I baked the celebration cake, and we used overturned wooden crates for pews until proper benches could



be built. Mother was also the driving force behind establishing the cemetery next to the church. We gathered colorful mountain wildflowers to weave into memorial wreaths for the graves—a tradition my children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren continue to this day.

Life on Jackson Creek Ranch

Newton S. Grout had come to Colorado in 1869 alongside Upton T. Smith, working as a carpenter and surveyor while looking for land. Newton fell in love with the Jackson Creek area beneath the shadow of the mountains, establishing the 2,000-



acre Jackson Creek Ranch in 1873. His brother Robert ("Honey Bob") established the adjoining Devil's Head Ranch.

After asking for my hand in marriage, Newton built a large, two-story home on the ranch in 1879. We were married in May 1880, and together we raised six children on that beautiful property.

Our ranch became known as one of the finest in Douglas County. Newton built a sophisticated irrigation system that fed our extensive orchards and gardens. We grew apples, cherries, melons, blackberries, raspberries, and vegetables of every kind. I spent my summers

canning hundreds of jars of produce to feed our large family through the long winters. We also raised beef, dairy cows, horses, pigs, and poultry, and every autumn, we drove wagonloads of fresh apples to sell in Denver and pressed cider on our large back porch.

Life had its accidents, too. One afternoon while I was driving a horse team, something spooked the horses. They bolted, throwing me from the wagon and breaking my hip. I walked with a noticeable limp for the rest of my life.

Astronomy on the Frontier

Newton's father, Robert C. Grout Sr., came to live with us on the ranch in 1872. He was a man of extraordinary mechanical talent and ingenuity. He constructed a special shed with a roof that could be lifted back so he could study the heavens. Grandfather Grout built his own powerful astronomical telescope complete with 14 custom eyepieces and a clockwork tracking mechanism to follow the movement of the planets and study sunspots. Visitors came from miles around just to marvel at his work.

Resilience and Legacy

After my beloved Newton passed away in 1901, I continued to manage and work the ranch. In 1908, our daughter Margaret married Herb Stewart, and they lived on the ranch with me until 1915. Their three oldest children were born right here at Jackson Creek.

I remember one afternoon when one of my toddler granddaughters accidentally fell into the deep irrigation ditch running directly behind our porch. Panicked, I ran straight through the wire screen door without stopping to open it and pulled her safely from the water!



Back Row - Pearl James Grout - dau. Margaret Louise Grout
Middle Row - Newton S. Grout Pearl Grout, Robert Clark Grout
Bottom Row - Lenore Grout, Newton Grout II - Les A. Grout

This belongs to Margaret Benn.

Eventually, our daughter Lenore and her husband rented the ranch, and I moved to Denver, where I lived peacefully until my passing at age 78.

Margie and Herb had six children, one of whom was named Amy. Amy had a daughter named Beverly—my great-granddaughter, who stands before you today to share my story. My mother always believed that **"Work is the secret to happiness,"** and it was through hard work, faith, and family that we helped build this country.

Historical Notes & Epilogue

Newspaper Excerpt (1894)

"A day of both pleasure and profit can be spent at the home of Mr. N. S. Grout, which is located on Jackson Creek almost under the shadows of the mountains. He is what might be called an independent ranchman, since everything that is needed to supply a bountiful table is raised by himself and family... If one should tire of wandering over the ranch and studying agriculture, they can, by the kindness of Mr. Grout, Sr., study astronomy or view the sun's spots through a fine telescope, which is one of many specimens to be seen of his wonderful mechanical skill and ingenuity."

— **Castle Rock Journal**, August 29, 1894

Historical Artifacts & Present Day

- **The 1874 Diary:** In 2002, during renovations of the original Jackson Creek Ranch house, workers discovered a hand-written diary Pearl kept in 1874 tucked hidden inside a wall. It details the daily triumphs and struggles of early Douglas County pioneer life and is now preserved in the Douglas County Libraries Archives.
- **Family Heirlooms:** Robert C. Grout Sr.'s handmade microscope, a grandfather clock, and a hand-inlaid wooden table (crafted for his sister, Lizzy Smith) remain cherished historical artifacts, with ties to early research collections at Colorado A&M (now Colorado State University).
- **The Ranch Today:** The Jackson Creek Ranch property still stands at the base of the mountains. Although purchased by a developer with plans for a residential subdivision and golf course, the land remains largely undeveloped due to local water rights constraints