

## **Emma Van Laken and Seagraves Park**

Emma Elizabeth (Seagraves) Van Laken is the donor of 16 acres of property out of the original 25- acre homestead on Fernan Hill for use as a public park. She was born on April 20, 1907 and died January 22, 1997. The original log house she lived in for most of her life is still standing next to the park.

In 1944, Emma married Peter Van Laken (1882-1959). Peter was a mason by trade and helped build the original City Hall on 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Lakeside Avenue.

Emma was a school teacher who valued education. She gave a generous donation to the Coeur d'Alene Public Library and the children's section is still known as the Seagraves Children's Library.

Emma's father, Harry E. Seagraves, was born in Pennsylvania on September 19<sup>th</sup> 1854. He started west at a young age, making his way across the continent while working as a blacksmith toward his final destination, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

In a memorable encounter, Harry stopped to make horseshoes for the 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary under the command of George Armstrong Custer just before his fateful battle with the Cheyenne and Sioux Indians in 1876 at the Battle of Little Bighorn. It is said that after Little Bighorn, Harry Seagraves fled for his life across Montana.

Harry settled in Coeur d'Alene in 1885 and built his first log cabin on Fernan Hill, overlooking the lake and town below. Shortly afterward, he built a larger cabin a short distance away.

In 1894 while working in Spokane, Harry met and soon married Anna Ramsey (June 25, 1868-October 1944).

Their first son, Charles (1895-1946) was born in Spokane. In the following years, four more sons were born in Coeur d'Alene, Harry "Hal" Edward (1899-1924), Miles (1900-1965), Dallas (1902-1970) and John Kootenai (1905-1983).

At some point, Emma's brothers deeded the old homestead on Fernan Hill to her. The 16 acres Emma donated to Coeur d'Alene for a park include eight acres of forested hillside and eight acres of relatively flat former pastureland. Emma asked that site be developed for passive recreational use.