



## *Lee Elliott (1892-1964) & Bessie Elliott (1894-1980)*

*One of the Clinton and Rock Creek Valleys pioneering families. When not fishing the Rock Creek, Lee could be found ranching or working to bring electricity to the Bonita / Clinton area. Bess was often flying down the railroad tracks as "a midwife is always on the ready." Together, they built the Rock Creek Lodge by sawing logs from their own land. Five generations of this family have continued operating service businesses in the Clinton and Bonita area to this day.*

- **182-Birth.** Lee was born on Feb. 20, 1892 in Bonita Montana; Bessie was born on Sept 12, 1894 in Chicago, Illinois.
- **1915-Marriage.** Lee and Bessie were married November 1, 1915.
- **Deaths.** Lee died November 7, 1964 and Bessie died July 22,

1980

- **Lee and Bess's Children.** They had five children: Bruce, Jean, Doris, Bruce, Ross and Joann.
- **Bess' Family.** Bess's parents Robert and Ida Thompson moved to Montana in 1910. They came on the train from Chicago to Clinton with their 3 children Bessie, Blanche and Monte. Clinton seemed to them to be the end of the earth.
- **DuPont Powder:** Bess's family ran the DuPont Powder Company in Clinton for several years. It supplied blasting supplies for the local miners and farmers.
- **Lee's Family.** Lee's parents Stephen Lee Elliott and Hulda Elliott were Bonita pioneers. They had two children, Lee and Florence. His father, Stephen, had attended school at the Bonita school house traveling by horseback or foot, and then attended business college in Missoula. Stephen ended up in the saw business at Taft Montana. He died in a saw accident in 1907, Lee was only 15 years old at the time.
- **1913.** Bess entered nurses training at St Pats School of Nursing. She attended for two years. When she married Lee she became the neighborhood midwife. When word would come of a birth soon to happen, she was often put on a railroad speeder and sent flying down the tracks.
- **1915-1947.** Lee and Bess ranched and farmed in Bonita. They raised cows, chickens and hogs which they sold from Bonita to Missoula. At one point there were 21 cows to be milked. Quite the chore it was, twice a day, once in the morning and once in the night and all done by hand. The hogs were often taken to town to John R Daily's for slaughtering. Lee was president of Missoula County Farm Bureau.
- **1937.** Lee was elected Vice President to the original board of the Missoula Electric Cooperative. He did a lot of traveling to Helena attending many meetings, helping to accomplish bringing electricity to the Bonita/Clinton area.



Grave 5 - Lot 2 - Block 21

- **1947-1972.** One of Lee and Bess's favorite pastimes was fishing Rock Creek. With the help of their children, they built and started the Rock Creek Lodge. All the timber for the building was sawed from their land. They operated Rock Creek Lodge for 25 years, their children continued on with the business after Lee and Bess's retirement.
- **1972.** They retired to a new home built just for them where the sawmill had once stood.
- **1975.** Lee and Bess's daughter Doris and her husband Jim followed family tradition building Ekstrom Stage Station, a restaurant and campground along Rock Creek, still a popular stopping spot to this day. This family has been in the service industry in the general area of the Clark Fork and Rock Creek

Valleys for five generations, from 1883 to the present.

*Information provided by Doris Elliott Ekstrom, daughter of Lee & Bessie, owner Ekstrom Stage Station.*