



Amazing Montanans—Biographies

Idora Guthrie

When I was four years old, my parents took me to Utica, New York, to have my photograph taken. The year was 1869, and photographs were rather new. I wore my best dress, and my mother curled my hair with a hot iron. While the photographer prepared to take my picture, I had to stand very still, which was not easy for me. I wanted to run out of the studio and skip all the way home.

As a young girl I loved to read, and I did very well in school. I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I attended a school for young ladies not far from my hometown in New York. In 1901 I moved to Helena, Montana, to help my aunt run a boarding house. I taught school near Marysville and met Herbert Guthrie who was a miner. We were married a few years later.

Herbert worked the mines in Butte and in Marysville. Throughout those years I helped as best I could by keeping house, making meals and tutoring students. We did not have very much money, and I was always tired. My husband worked hard, too, and he often did not have time for me. I was very lonely for my family back in New York.

We adopted a five year old boy, Raymond, whose father died in a mine accident. I loved him very much. In 1920, I learned that my mother was ill, so I left Montana to care for her in New York. There was part of me that wanted to stay in New York forever, but I didn't. Herbert became ill with the deadly disease common to miners, tuberculosis, and Raymond missed me. My family needed me, so I returned to Montana.



Idora Smith Guthrie at age 4.

Being the wife of a miner was hard work. But I'll never forget the first snows in the mountains, and the excitement of the train rides into town, and the importance of good friends.