

LADY MOON (Catherine Lawder Grattan Moon)



Lady Catherine Moon was a colorful character in the Red Feather area during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Lady Catherine Moon began life in Ireland in 1865 as Catherine Grattan Lawder. Her parents passed when she was 12 years old. She was sent to live with her mother's sister in Iowa. She went to school and about 16 she worked as a domestic. When a family friend decided to move to Larimer County, Colorado she went with them. She arrived in Larimer County in 1883 and worked at Elkhorn Lodge near Manhattan a mining town where she probably worked as a maid or waitress. Kate met and married Frank Gartman who was several years older than her. He was working in the mine at Manhattan and making little money so Kate took in washing to supplement their meager income, her customers were mostly miners and young men from Ashley Grange, a school of English remittance men. When one of the men named Cecil Moon became sick she was employed to take care of him in her home. When taking care of him they fell in love and she divorced

Frank and married Cecil in 1888. Cecil Moon was an Oxford graduate from an aristocratic British family. He was known as a wayward son who had been sent far from his family. Shortly after the two met, Cecil's grandfather died and Cecil inherited the title of Baronet along with a large fortune. Catherine then became known as Lady Moon. In 1888 Cecil returned England with Catherine who also brought, Moses, her favorite horse with her as she traveled across the Atlantic. It was rumored that Cecil's mother found Catherine socially unacceptable. Cecil was a gambler and lost money where he admitted that he could not manage money so he gave control to Catherine where she started buying up land and cattle. They lived alternating in Denver and on the Grange Ranch and eventually she purchased Cold Spring Park Ranch on Elkhorn Creek near Manhattan.

Cecil and Catherine returned to England in 1903 but she returned shortly after that since the romantic relationship between them rapidly deteriorated. In 1909 Lady Moon became the first woman in Colorado history ordered by the court to pay alimony following her divorce from Cecil.

After much haggling, her lawyers got a change of venue transferring to the Fort Collins court. Eventually, she paid a lump sum of \$2,500 in order that Cecil be able to "maintain himself in a manner befitting a gentleman."

Lady Moon certainly gave the citizens of Fort Collins something to talk about! She was "loud and crude" but had a generous heart and took in strays of all kinds without hesitation. She was known to tittle a bit and said to have secreted liquor in the folds of her skirts when she came to town—as well as a pistol.

The personal life of Catherine Lawder Grattan Moon was rocky, to say the least, and her turbulent life ended in 1926 at the age of 61. At one time the proud owner of race horses and a fine herd of cattle, Catherine Moon had fallen on hard times. The ranch buildings had burned and she had lost some rental properties she had formerly owned in town. But her heart was at her ranch, and when she died, having had to abandon it, she had little left to give. She designated a few cash gifts to friends, of which she had many and named recipients for her gold-plated cane, a gold belt and two leather chairs. The bulk of her estate, such as it was, went to St. Vincent's orphanage and school in Denver, which received \$500.

She specified that she wished to be interred above ground at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Denver.

The following was summarized from Lafi Miller's book "Those Crazy Pioneers" which can be found in Red Feather Lakes Community Library.

