

Edward Crockett Pulaski: A Short Biography

"Mr. Pulaski is a man of most excellent judgement; conservative, thoroughly acquainted with the region, having prospected through the region for over twenty-five years. He is considered by the old-timers as one of the best and safest men to be placed in charge of a crew of men in the hills."

William G. Weigle, 1910 Forest Supervisor

"He forced them to lie down. He forced them to stay there. It was a spectacular one-man performance. He looms large as . . . kind of the archetypical old-time ranger. Who did everything for his men. Who basically put a gun to their heads and saved their lives."

John N. Maclean, Fire Wars, 2002

Edward's Family About 10 miles southwest of Sandusky Bay on Lake Erie is Green Springs, Seneca County, Ohio. Two counties west of that is Henry County, Ohio. The Pulaski family is documented in both counties as early as February 14, 1864 when Rudolph Pulaski married Celia Crockett in Seneca County. Celia Crockett was born July 6, 1840 at Tiffin, Seneca County, Ohio.

Casimir Pulaski: A Revolutionary War Hero Edward Pulaski states (USFS Personnel Paper) that he was a collateral descendant of Casimir Pulaski and that his father immigrated to the US in the 1850s. Casimir (Kazimierz) Pulaski was born March 4, 1748 at Pololia Poland and died at sea near Savannah, Georgia on October 9, 1799. Family records list Rudolph's father as Martin Pulaski born 1797 in Gombin Ionbin, Poland and his mother as Eva Rosina Kanton born April 24, 1800 in West Prussia. The same records give a marriage date of 1824 for the couple, and a death date of 1848 for Martin. Martin's father is listed as Joseph Pulaski with no further information available. If Edward was, in fact, a collateral descendant of Casimir, it is likely that Martin's father Joseph and Casimir were brothers.

Siblings Edward Pulaski is listed as the oldest child in his family even though there may be as much as a four-year gap between his parent's marriage and his birth. Edward's birthplace was Green Springs, Seneca County, Ohio according to USFS papers and his death certificate. Sporadic birth records begin in Seneca County is 1867 (Edward is not listed) and by 1870 full reporting occurs. George Pulaski, Edward's brother, is listed in the county birth records for April 16, 1872. However, no other identified siblings' births were recorded. At least 3 sisters are known. Family records give their birth dates between 1870 and 1880 and say that one sister, Mary, was born at Napoleon, Henry County, Ohio.

Moving West About 1883 or 1884 Edward Pulaski attended "1 year high school near Marshall, Saline County, but did not graduate" (USFS Personnel Papers.) A guess is that Edward was sent to "help out" his maternal uncle after a family tragedy and there heard all the wonderful stories about the West. Edward's obituary says that he came to Idaho at age 16; that he followed the Gold Rush into Murray, Idaho in 1884; and to "the Coeur d'Alene" by 1889. In 1898 it is likely Edward was working in southern Idaho; he tried to enlist in the Spanish American War at Boise, but men were not needed at that time and he was refused. He worked for 24 years at "misc western mining and ranching jobs" and then joined the USFS July 15, 1908. (USFS Personnel Papers.)

Marriage February 7, 1900 Edward C. Pulaski married Emma Zenobia Dickinson, and according to the 1900 Census, this was a 2nd marriage for each of them. Nothing is known about Edward's first marriage. Emma's maiden name may have been Dickinson—the surname under which her marriage license was issued. Or Dickinson may have been the surname from her first marriage. Her death certificate gives her father's surname as Dickinson; the informant on the death certificate is her daughter Elsie. Emma's mother's name was not provided on the death certificate. This suggests no contact between Elsie and her maternal grandparents while she was growing up.

Emma was born November 4, 1862 in Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan according to her death certificate and in November of 1867 according to the 1900 and 1910 US Censuses. It is not an uncommon vanity for women to remove years from their ages for the census taker (and others!). Edward and Emma were married by A.D. McKinlay, a Probate Judge. At the time of the 1900 Census (June 21, 1900), Edward's occupation is a mill hand and he rents a home.

An Adopted Daughter By the time of the 1910 Census (April 25, 1910) Edward is listed as a Forest Ranger with USFS. He was out of work 2 months of the previous 12. The census also notes that Emma has borne no children. Elsie C. is listed as his adopted daughter, age 7. She was born in Idaho, her father in the "United States" (in other words, not known where) and her mother in Missouri. Elsie's death certificate lists her birthplace as Burke, Idaho. It seems at least possible that in some way Elsie is related to the Crockett families Edward left in Missouri. "Reminiscences of Edwin Crockett" is datelined March 11, 1894 Coeur D'Alene, Idaho which indicates that members of Edward Pulaski's extended family were at least acquainted with Idaho. Elsie's death certificate gives her middle name as Celia, the same as Edward's mother. It is probable that Edward's middle initial stands for Crockett, his mother's maiden name, but only the initial is given on the death certificate or in any other record found.

Elsie's death certificate gives a birth date of Monday, July 12, 1902. By the 1920 Census there is no notation of Elsie being adopted and the birthplaces of her parents correspond to Edward and Emma's birthplaces. The family lives on Canyon Creek Road "going toward Burk" (the 1900 and 1910 Censuses list the family in the Burke District).

Forest Ranger Edward Pulaski was continuously in charge of the River District of Coeur d'Alene National Forest from the time he joined the US Forest Service until his retirement February 9, 1930 (USFS typescript). He was eligible for retirement in February 1930 but "refused" until ill health forced that retirement in August 1930. The 1930 US Census for Coeur d'Alene, Idaho was conducted April 9, 1930. Edward and Emma are listed there. He is identified as 62 years old, owning his own home (worth \$2500 in 1930). Edward's parents are listed as born in Virginia and Poland. Emma's father is listed as born in Virginia, and her mother as born in Ontario, Canada.

Retirement In the years following the fire, Ed Pulaski was lionized for his heroism, perhaps in part because he was everyone's vision of what a hero ought to look like. He bore a remarkable resemblance to the actor, Gregory Peck, stood six-foot three, had steel-blue eyes, and struck a commanding presence everywhere he went. When he retired from the U.S. Forest Service in 1930, a story in the Missoula, Montana Sunday Missoulian bore this headline: "Hero Of Great Fire Will Leave Service."

Death Edward died February 2, 1931 at Coeur d'Alene, Kootenai County, Idaho of probable myocarditis. His death certificate lists his residence as 310 Walnut Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho where he had been living for 2 years prior to his death. He was buried at Forest Cemetery, Coeur d'Alene February 4, 1931. His obituary notes that he is survived by his widow; one daughter, Mrs. Elsie Pabst of Mullan, Idaho; and one sister, Mrs. Oliver Sauld of Marion, Ohio.

Emma Zenobia Pulaski died at age 85 March 11, 1948 at Coeur d'Alene. Cause of death is listed as cerebral hemorrhage. Emma is also buried at Forest Cemetery. The death certificate lists her as having lived in Idaho for 20 years—an obvious error. The informant is Mrs. Arthur Pabst of Wallace, Idaho.

Elsie Celia Pabst died at age 69 June 25, 1972 at Silverton, Shoshone County, Idaho. Her usual residence was Osburn, Idaho according to her death certificate. Her date of birth is listed as July 14, 1902 at Burke Idaho. Elsie, too, was buried at Forest Cemetery in Coeur d'Alene. The informant on her death certificate was Arthur E. Pabst.

Excerpts from: A family history memorandum prepared by Sonja Pyne
– in assisting her spouse's research for *Year of the Fires* by Stephen Pyne

Retirement excerpt from: www.idahoforests.org