

A lifelong resident of South Dakota, Edythe Jones George had a love of the Great Plains and their history that helped her become a pioneer in the study of the state's archaeology.

Edythe Lyle Jones, the youngest of three children, was born 17 June 1886 to David R. and Elizabeth Jones on a homestead in Faulk County, Dakota Territory. The family later moved to Faulkton, where Edythe Jones graduated from high school. After attending college in Redfield, she homesteaded with four other young women near Bixby, in Perkins County. She subsequently worked as an agent on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation until returning to Faulkton to operate a women's clothing store with her sister, Florence Greener.

In 1919, Jones married William H. George, with whom she shared an interest in South Dakota archaeology. Working over the years with archaeologists from the Smithsonian Institution, William H. Over of the University of South Dakota, and others, the couple helped to excavate and study sixty-five Arikara Indian villages in Potter, Walworth, Sully, and Campbell counties. Edythe George was the author of many archaeological reports for the Smithsonian Institution and the state of South Dakota. During the 1940s, she also directed a state survey of prehistoric villages along the Missouri River before they disappeared under the waters of the Oahe reservoir. Along with her husband, George accumulated more than five thousand Arikara artifacts. The collection was considered at the time to be one of the world's most extensive, including projectile points, tools, pottery fragments, knives, fishhooks, and hammer stones.

In 1945, the couple moved to Pierre, where Edythe George became an employee of the South Dakota State Historical Society. There she continued her archaeological investigations, constructed exhibits, and conducted genealogical research. Her ability to find the most obscure facts earned her the admiration of many researchers. In addition to being a member of the State Historical Society for fifty years, she belonged to numerous civic and social organizations, including the Order of the Eastern Star, the Pierre Dickens and Garden clubs, and the Oahe Riding Club.

Edythe George continued to work for the State Historical Society until poor health forced her to retire in July 1969 at the age of eighty-two. She died six months later, on 7 January 1970, and was buried in the Faulkton Cemetery.

by Christopher Leatherman

## Dakota Images



Edythe Jones George

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