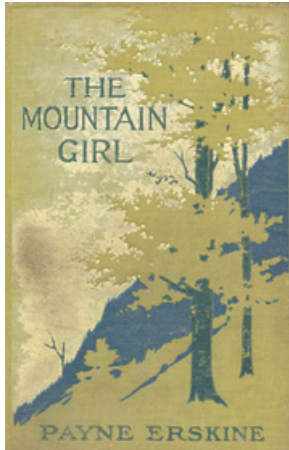


Erskine, Emma Payne ^[1]

Erskine, Emma Payne

By Richard Walser, 1986

10 May 1853–4 Mar. 1924



"The Mountain Girl, by Emma Payne Erskine."

^[2]Emma Payne Erskine, writer, painter, and civic leader, was born in Racine, Wis., the daughter of Alfred and Olive Child Payne. Her father, a native of England, was a portraitist and taught at the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) ^[3]. Through her mother, she was a tenth-generation American. Emma was educated at home. On 8 Apr. 1873, she married Charles Edwin Erskine, a musician and gardener. Their children were Alfred, Harold, Ralph, Violet (Mrs. Macdermid Parish-Watson), Malcolm, and Susan (Mrs. Carroll Pickens Rogers). The Erskines first went to Tryon, N.C., in 1885 with their three small sons and fell in love with the region; in 1895 they moved permanently to Lynncote, their home built of native stone designed by the architect of [Biltmore Village](#) ^[4]. They participated wholeheartedly in community affairs, and Lynncote became a center of civic and artistic activity. He was interested in providing schools and churches. She was energetic in building up the [Lanier Library](#) ^[5], meanwhile clearing and donating the land for Tryon's golf club. She painted dozens of landscapes and "portraits of old ex-slaves still living in the vicinity." Of her seven books, three are works of fiction set in the North Carolina mountains: [When the Gates Lift Up Their Heads](#) (1901) ^[6]; [The Mountain Girl](#) (1912) ^[7]; and her best known, [A Girl of the Blue Ridge](#) (1915) ^[8]. The last two went through many reprintings. [Iona, a Lay of Ancient Greece](#) (1888) ^[9] and [The Harper & the King's Horse](#) (1905) ^[10] are books of poems. The other novels are [The Eye of Dread](#) (1913) ^[11] and [Joyful Heatherby](#) (1913) ^[12].

Charles Erskine died in July 1908. Nine years later Emma married Cecil Corwin in August 1917. In her later years she was president of the Holly Hills Co., a [real estate](#) ^[13] concern engaged in designing and building homes on land she owned. She was an Episcopalian and a Republican. She was buried in Racine. Her son Ralph married Barbara Peattie, daughter of her close friend, the Tryon writer [Elia W. Peattie](#) ^[14]. An oil portrait of Emma Erskine, painted by her father, is a family possession.



"Where Payne Erskine's Novels Are Written," from *Sky-Land* magazine, 1915. Image from the North Carolina Digital Collections.

^[15]**References:**

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Image Credits:

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^[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/erskine-emma> ^[2] <http://www.feedbooks.com/book/4909/the-mountain-girl> ^[3] <http://www.artic.edu/> ^[4] <http://www.biltmorevillage.com/> ^[5] <http://www.lanierlib.org/> ^[6] <https://archive.org/details/whengatesliftupt00ersk> ^[7] <https://archive.org/details/mountaingirl00ersk> ^[8] http://books.google.com/books/about/A_Girl_of_the_Blue_Ridge_1915_a_Girl_of.html?id=ZII0kgAACAAJ ^[9] <https://archive.org/details/ionalayofancient00ersk> ^[10] <https://archive.org/details/harperkingshorse00erskiala> ^[11] <https://archive.org/details/eyedread00desigoog> ^[12] <https://archive.org/details/joyfulheatherby00erskgoog> ^[13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/real-estate> ^[14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/peattie-elia> ^[15] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/sky-land-1915-january-v.1-no.-11/501914> ^[16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/art> ^[17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/artist> ^[18] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> ^[19] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/women> ^[20] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/writer> ^[21] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/walser-richard> ^[22] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/mountai-11> ^[23] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>