

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

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Bob and Minnie Milligan

Bob Milligan was the first logger in Spillimacheen. He came from Ontario to Golden in 1898. He received a contract to cut logs for the Columbia River Logging Co. on the Spillimacheen and Bugaboo Rivers. Bob had been a logger in Ontario and was looking for adventure and opportunity in the west which he found as a logger in Golden and Spillimacheen.

In 1900 Bob returned to Ontario where he married the widow Minnie Esch who's husband had died of a ruptured appendix. He adopted her three children and brought the family out to Golden. He bought a house where they lived for the next two years.

Finding it more convenient to be closer to his logging operation, he bought a property in Spillimacheen in 1902. This land had been homesteaded by Manuel Dainard. (Now called the Dunne place.)

At the time the Columbia River Lumber Co. (C.R.L.) was in full swing with their sawmill in Golden. Working the logs on the Spillimacheen and Bugaboo Rivers meant falling and skidding the timber to the river banks, then dumping the logs into the river in a boom. When the water had risen high enough in early summer, the logs were let loose and floated downstream into the Co-

lumbia and on down to the mill in Golden. This was called "the river drive" where men followed the logs in boats, breaking up log jams as they went. On one log drive, when they broke a jamb, 4 of the 5 men that worked on the jamb were drowned when it broke. The only one saved was Mert Dolan.

Bob Milligan made his logging headquarters at the farm. He put up a house, large bunkhouses and many outside buildings. The loggers from his camp kept the Barry Hotel going.

When the Milligans moved to Spillimacheen there was no school in the area. A friend of Bobs, Joe Lake of Athalmer, kindly offered to take Olive so she could go to school there for a year until they built the school in Galena, just south of Spillimacheen in 1903.

In 1905 the Milligans purchased 480 acres of the south east part of lot 350 from the Columbia and Kootenay Railway and Navigation Co. He then sold it to Pete Faber in 1910. (Today the farm is owned by Peter and Margaret Feldmann.)

Minnie was a busy pioneer wife and mother. Her gardens were large and they kept many animals on their farm.

They had 8 children: Elgin, Pearl, Olive (who later married Archibald Wolfenden and became Winston's mother.) Fourth child was Bill, then Margaret, Mary, Bob, and Joe.

Big trees were cut with a crosscut saw and the logs skidded out of the bush with horse power onto the skidway where they were loaded onto bunk sleighs and hauled by another team of horses to the banks of the Columbia River. Here they were piled to wait for spring run off when they were dumped into the river and floated to the mill in Golden. A great deal of skill and agility was required by the men of the river drives.

From, (in part)

Brisco and Spillimacheen -A History

We Salute The Loggers

(Jessie Lockhart Files)

The Kirsch's- four miles south of the Hidden Valley Ranch was the Jack Barbour and the Ogeston Ranches. Later these two properties were to join and become the Kirsch Ranch.

In 1914 the Kirsch family had a ranch at East Firlands close to the river and railway track. (Radium Junction.) This was sold sometime in the late 1920's. In the 30's Burt Taylor owned the Moreland Ranch, Windermere and then the Kirsch's owned the property until 1940. In 1940, the Kirsch family ran their ranch on Westside Road, north of Wilmer, and had a sawmill which they operated until the 1970's-80's. The Joe Kirsch family was well known. Mr. Kirsch ran the sawmill with the help of his sons Joe, Peter, Leonard, Hubert, Norman and Paul. Hubert was in charge of the mill's Industrial Centre for many years.

Futa Bros.— 1939-1945

Japanese people were evacuated from the coast and any industrial area such as the Cominco Mine, C.P.R. Railway Centres and Cranbrook. The Futa Family was in residence at Cranbrook before the war but they had to be evacuated!

The Futa Brothers were already in the logging industry. They had a portable mill operating at the small lake (Fort Steele area) now called Jap Lake. The family was well known. Friends were upset, especially Mrs. E. Cleland, of Invermere, Mrs. Beale of Cranbrook, Mrs. Winn Weir and others. In the Post Office a notice appeared... "Futa Family evacuation to Invermere. Any objections, sign here." Not one person signed. So the Futa Family arrived in Invermere. They were lodged in the old Paradise Mine office building.

The Futa brothers brought their sawmill with them and operated it until about 1954. They found it quite difficult and built a store. In 1954 Futa Sales Agency built their store. Over the years they sold appliances, Robin Hood Flour, dairy products and supplies, propane, and even soft drinks. In 1960 the business changed to a coin laundry

and dry cleaners and was sold to Lou Adams. Lordco occupies the original building. (2020)

Foyston and Sons— Mr. and Mrs.

Fred Foyston and their children, Tom, Frank, Bill, Marjorie and Clara came from Alberta to B.C. in the early 1930's. They settled in Athalmer. Fred Foyston had a trucking business. In the 1940's he bought the Ed Barbour Ranch, 16 miles north of Wilmer.

In the 40's-50's, Foyston and Sons operated a sawmill. Logging and trucking into Athalmer. Son Tom was active in the operation, Frank enlisted in 1940, returning with a D.D.C., R.C.A.F. and Bill served in the Marines. Fred Foyston sold the ranch to the Kirsch Family in 1960.

Gordon Stewart— Gordon Stewart left his native Scotland and came to Canada, settling in Benalto Alberta, (Red Deer area) in 1914. There he met his wife Vi and their sons Dick, Dave, Gary, Greg and Bob were born over the years. Gordon bought a portable mill and established Stewart Mill Ltd. Gordon and Vi and sons left the Red Deer area and moved to Canal Flats in 1948. From here the Stewart Mill operated, logging in such areas as Island Pond, Kimberley airport land, Ta-ta Creek and Premier Lake. Then the Stewart family arrived in Athalmer. They established a sawmill and operated portable mills up Francis Creek, Toby Creek and other areas cutting C.P.R. ties and 2x4's. They owned their own trucks for hauling. Hemmelgarns and Potters worked for Gordon for many years as did the men from the Shuswap Reserve, Paddy Michel and J. Stevens. In 1953 the family moved from Athalmer to Invermere.

Gordon operated the mill until 1975, shortly after retirement age.

Walter Wikman- Walter worked for Moores' at Edgewater. Mike Hansen worked for Ronacher's for a long time. In the late 1940's Walter Wikman and Mike Hansen formed a partnership and operated a sawmill at Goldie Creek.

Alfred Trescher— Alfred Trescher immigrated from Germany to the Columbia Valley in 1952. He went falling for Wilder Bros. Sawmill on Settlers Road. In 1956 he went into partnership with Fritz Zehnder. They bought a small portable mill, a truck and a cat and bean cutting mine booms at an old Elliott Camp at Francis Creek. In 1962 the Treschers' bought the Watkins Farm and moved to Brisco. Alfred continued cutting logs, hauling for Stone and Gillis Sawmill and cutting Christmas trees.

Fritz Zehnder —Fritz and his family lived in Invermere for some years, still in the sawmill logging business. They moved to the Paddy Ryan Lake area and established Zehnder and Sons Ranch.

Native Sawmilling **By Shelagh Dehart**

Chief Pierre Kinbasket and his wife Mar-yan were my Grandparents and passed down to me all the information about lumbering or making boards that occurred during their time in the Windermere Valley. This would be in the years of the mid 1800's. My Grandparents said:

It was Francois Morigeau who first taught the Indians how to make lumber. (He was the father of Baptist Morigeau.) At this time, Francois already had a frame home that was situated between what is now Highway 95/93 and before the crest of the hill as you drop down the hill into Athalmer. The Indians were anxious to learn this trade as they had heard it was easier and faster to build with boards rather than with the traditional logs. Homes at this time were one room dwellings built of logs with packed clay roofs. The first church in our valley was situated in the vicinity but down the hill from where the Shuswap cemetery is located today. The church was constructed of log but the roof was made with the first boards of lumber to come from the native's efforts at their first mill. The table and two chairs in the new church were also made of the new lumber and were put together with nails that

looked like horse shoe nails. The nails were a square type. When Father De Smit came to the Valley in 1844-45, there was no church so this Shuswap church was built just after this time period.

The method used to make this lumber or boards was called whipsawing and when Shelagh was a small girl there were remains of lumber scattered around the area where the pit had been located. We cannot find the exact location today, but it was located above the Don Dehart property, to the north, in the Stoddart Creek area.

School Days in Invermere **1913**

The Arthur Joseph and Emily Jane Walker Family arrived in Invermere from Lincolnshire, England in May 1913. There were five children, Jack 15 years, Margaret 13, Tom 10, and the twins Kitty and George 8 years. The sixth member, Elizabeth (Beth) arrived in August 1913, born in Wilmer. That fall they started school in the first school class in Invermere. Margaret had had her schooling in England. In order to have enough pupils (8) to get a teacher to start in Invermere, Margaret registered too. After the school got started, she dropped out. Kitty was the only girl after Margaret left and she was such a tom-boy it alarmed her mother who threatened to take her out of school. The Frater girls from Wilmer arrived in Invermere school just in time to save Kitty from being taken out of school. They became great chums. George never took kindly to school, was always in their bad books, so after an altercation with a man teacher he jumped through a window at 14 years, and never returned.

Tom finished his schooling here and got his first job in the Bank of Commerce in Invermere, as a teller. He lived upstairs above the bank with a shot gun beside him. He went on to be a bank manager and then bank inspector travelling across Canada.

In 1919 the school celebrated with a parade, 50 years of Confederation of Canada.

**Submitted by Fran Kimpton
March 2001**

After reading the article in the February 2001 newsletter, about the finding of gold on Toby Creek, Jerry recalled a wonderful story that Ken Marples related to him 35 years ago. I thought it was worth sharing with everyone.

Ken was a member of a valley pioneer family that settled on the Toby Benches. When Ken was a teenager, in the 1920's, he got his first job with a gold mining outfit that was working on Toby Creek. He was part of a small crew that built trails and excavated along the creek bank. The excavating was done to make it look as if they were exposing the gold.

The crew had a 12 gauge shotgun that had shells from which the pellets had been removed. The pellets had then been replaced with bits of gold.

A lookout was posted further down the creek and whenever a party of investors (mainly English) was seen coming along the trail, the lookout would run back to warn the crew. A crewmember would then take the shotgun and shoot the gold into the face of the newest excavation so investors could be shown that there was indeed gold to be found in Toby Creek.

Radium Hot Springs Hotel

This Hotel was owned by John and Jessie Blakley and was built in 1923. The first hotel burned down in 1925 and was re-built in 1926.

Dudley Harrison, the brother of Bill, Stan, Jack, Harold and Lorne, remembers it well. Dud was working at Kootenay Crossing and he was headed for the Crow's Nest Pass to be married. He stopped at the Blakely's hotel on this fateful night, losing all his belongings including his clothes for the wedding. The Blakleys rebuilt on the site which was just west of the Radium Hot Springs swimming pool.

The Hotel was torn down in 1962.

Our Summer theme for 2020 is "Heritage Buildings"

**This is the last chance to view our
Camera display.**

**The Kootenay National Park display
has been moved from the basement of the
museum to the Blakley cabin.**

Welcome Summer Students

Hannah Zehnder

I was born and raised in Invermere, and am just entering my grade 12 year at David Thompson Secondary School. My whole life my siblings and I have taken part in the sports and music programs offered by the Valley. I am now a guitar player, a competitive soccer and volleyball player and I'm on the school basketball team. But not only am I an athlete, I also love to travel. My interest in history comes in part from the experiences I had while traveling with my family in 2016-2017. In every country we visited I made sure to learn about how history shaped the cultures we experienced.

My favorite experience was visiting the National Archeological Museum in Athens Greece. I found the history to be very intriguing. After I had learned the history of places like Greece, South Africa, Bali and Haida Gwaii, I realized I was unaware of the history of my own home town.

I grew up on the Zehnder farm which some people may also know as Comfort Ranch, previously owned and farmed by the Johnstons. Living on one of the valley's early homesteads has also sparked my interest in our local history. Since I have started working at the museum, I've been looking into the interesting past of my back yard.

Greydon Rohrick

I have deep roots in the Valley and I'm very fascinated by it's history. My Grandpa has lived here for nearly 50 years and served the Valley with his appliance repair business. My Dad grew up here and graduated from D.T.S.S. in 1982. I spent my childhood exploring the Valley wilderness and swimming in the hot pools, so it is really amazing to discover the history behind the places I know and love. I count it a privilege to call the Valley my home and I look forward to sharing our history with others at the Windermere Valley Museum.