

# NOTES FROM THE ARCHIVES

## APRIL, 1996

### Early history of Windermere written by Harry Richardson:

I was pleased..... it brought back memories of those far off days when Pitts Store was the main gathering place of the community in the long winter nights as we gathered around the large wood fired stove to await the arrival of the royal mail. For many years, Mr. Pitts had the contract of picking up the mail from Athalmer with his team and sleigh. Charles Van Fleck drove that team and carried the mail for many years.

In the winter, the lake was used as the highway from Windermere to Athalmer. Prior to Mr. Pitts having the mail contract, it was brought up from Athalmer by Mr. R.A. Kimpton in his large car, possibly the only one of that make that was ever in the Valley. The name plate on the radiator was, H.A. Moyer, Syracuse, N.Y. Several interesting stories could be related on this car as it delivered the mail away back in 1916 when we spent the best part of a night stuck on the old Athalmer hill.

Mr. J.C. Pitts had that store built in 1912 and my father, along with Frederick Kimpton were the carpenters employed in its construction. The supports, which support the overhang of the roof were constructed by my father in his old workshop which had formerly been the first blacksmith shop in Windermere and operated by George Geary in the early 1890's.

Shortly after Mr. Pitts had this store constructed the property directly across the street from the store was set apart and was known in the area for years as "The Park." That large piece of property was fenced in with a well constructed fence of heavy posts and a decorative wire. At that time we were informed that within a few short years a large hotel would be erected. Just inside that fence on the north east corner there was a tall flagpole erected and it stood there for many years. Each day the flag was flown from that pole as it was from the school flag pole. I still have a picture of that flag pole being erected in the corner of that park by Edgar Stoddart, Sinclair Craig and a number of other pioneers.

Prior to moving into this new store in 1912, Mr. J.C. Pitts operated a general store in the building across the street which still stands and which for many years had Mr. Kimpton's name on it. That Kimpton building is very old and has quite a history over the years, but it is very doubtful that it is the oldest building in Windermere.

In the early fall of 1888, my father along with a number of others, from the Placer Operations on Finlay Creek, stopped overnight at the Windermere Hotel, which at that time was operated by Presler and Cummings. Others in the party included Lady Adela Cochrane, Mrs. Algernon St. Maur. They were to meet their husbands at the hotel as they returned from a big game hunt in the area. All were returning to Mitford, Alberta where Lieut. Thomas B.H. Cochrane had a small sawmill and a narrow gauge railway in operation, in that area.

The log portion of the Windermere Hotel, the R.A. Kimpton Building and the George Geary buildings (of which there were many), are the three oldest in the town. The George Geary farm buildings, together with their many buildings to take care of the numerous freighters, plus the blacksmith shop date back prior to 1893. In the late 1890's, the Geary place was renamed and licenced under the name of the Lakeside Hotel.

Mr. R.A. Kimpton was operating in the Windermere area in the very early 1890's and had a small group of buildings to the east of the present White House. When day school started in Windermere in 1894 they used one of Mr. Kimpton's buildings which he had just vacated. In the early spring of 1899, Mr. Kimpton started the construction of a group of stables to take care of the horses which would be used on the freight, express and mail route between Golden and Windermere.

In 1896 and 1897, Valley pioneer, Joe Lake was manager of the East Kootenay Supply Store in Windermere in the building which later became the general store of Pitts and Kimpton. In 1899, R.A. Kimpton was a merchant in Windermere and J.C. Pitts was a merchant in Donald.

In the late winter of 1897, Kimpton and Pitts of Donald, B.C., advertised a removal sale to clear out their whole stock of general merchandise. In the early spring of 1900 the firm of Kimpton and Pitts were operating as general merchants in Windermere and Donald. Later, in the early summer of 1900, Mr. R.A. Kimpton of the firm of Kimpton and Pitts of Windermere went to Donald with a number of

