

# VALLEY HISTORY

## AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

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### A STAGE RIDE FROM GOLDEN TO FORT STEELE IN THE YEARS 1897-98

from Cranbrook Courier  
June 15, 1933

written by mel stewart following a letter from an early  
day pioneer friend

Golden, B.C. was the stage terminal for the North Columbia in those days and Fort Steele the terminal for the South. At these junctions, a jolly crowd was always assembled to see the arrival and departure of the stage. Within the waiting room and around the entrance were men and women discussing every topic of the day. These were exciting days, when prospectors, mining promoters, drummers and tin-horn gamblers were going to the "Wild Horse boom", then on at Ft. Steele. The rate collectable for each adult passenger was \$20.00 for the through trip, while express was rated at charges of 10 cents per pound.

When all were aboard at Golden, they were a happy crowd. Humorous old-timers and jolly young adventurers, amid whom might be seated several precise old ladies. There would be merry-making miners and lady-shy old bachelors, comprising the group of south-bound passengers.

From Golden, the road wound around the precipitous curves following much the same route as it does today. The passengers then, however, had time to view and meditate upon the splendour of the enchanting valley, from the loftiest peaks of the snow-clad mountains to the depths of the Columbia river bed below. Sometimes the trip would be doubly enjoyable when some one would start up the old-time songs, accompanied by the sweet strains of the jews harp. Along the Canyon Creek Valley, the driver would drive the quick-slipping Cleveland bays, while the merry voices sounded and re-echoed through the deep forests of the Columbia Valley.

By noon of the first day the stage would arrive at the late Ed Johnston's homestead, the famous old "Hog Farm" where Mr. Johnston would welcome so many old-timers with whom he had been so long acquainted. Mr. Johnston was himself an old pioneer of exceptional humour, beloved by all, and he made welcome young and old during his years at the "Hog Farm."

However, before the flourish of 1897 arrived, Mr. Johnston had left the spot, the farm then being owned by Mr. H.G. Parson, and run by his manager, Mr. H.G. Scully. It was after Mr. Parson the village there took its name.

After a splendid noon meal which everyone enjoyed at Mr. Parson's (and there were hearty appetites developed by the stage ride) the happy travellers would proceed with fresh horses to complete the first day's fifty mile journey to Mr. Atchison's.

The late Mr. Atchison, often known as "Shorty," was one of those original characters with an inspiring personality. Everyone was made at home there, and often he would tell to the many passengers, the story of the wonderful operation he performed upon his partner, "Red." It was a cold winter's day when "Red" returned from his trap line with his toes frozen solid. So after a thorough diagnosis of the case, Mr. Atchison cheerfully advised him that only by immediate amputation of his toes could his foot be saved. And so, poor "Red," glad to obtain relief, agreed to undergo the surgical operation. The dinner table was used and the operation began. As an anesthetic, "Red" was given a cup of Hudsons Bay Rum, followed by a fill-up of chewing tobacco. Upon the kitchen table the poor soul lay while the would-be doctor, with the aid of his medical appliances composed of a pair of horse-shoe pinchers and a razor, amputated the toes. As each toe was snipped, "Red" spat tobacco juice upon the ceiling indicating another toe done.





equipment was destroyed. All property in the apartments was lost.”

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### Origin of the name TaTa Creek

One Norman McLeod confined to jail at Golden escaped and made his way south. He was intercepted by two special constables at the mouth of a creek. They told him he was under arrest. He was still on his horse, but the constables had dismounted. McLeod saw his chance and said “Ta Ta” to them

*An article in the Canadian Alpine Journal of 1911 makes interesting and amusing reading in the light of later development of the Columbia Valley. The article is written by Elizabeth Parker.*

“This part of the greater river (The Columbia) is now a comparatively idle waterway but in a few years it will not be so though its craft will be employed in pleasure rather than in pure commerce. For the speedier railway soon to connect the Kicking Horse and the Crow’s Nest Pass will carry the ore and all the merchandise of trade. An occasional motor boat is now seen where fleets of this modern craft will soon be familiar and always as hitherto the river will be the happy waterway of the canoeist.”

Of Invermere the article says, “A commodious hotel has been built there and before many years it will be a place of country houses for persons from nearly every city in Canada. A houseboat with a capacity for twenty guests is now stationed at Athalmer.”

Further the article continues.

“The only limitation in this Happy Valley is the white dust which in summer drought rises from its roads with every putt of wind and every step of man or beast. But dwellers there and lovers of that fascinating country are greatly impervious to its discomfort. Besides it is absolutely free from microbes. It is rare to die in Happy Valley save from old age or accident.”

On the subject of Soda Water Springs up Toby Creek, Miss Parker’s prophecy has not been fulfilled.

“.....Elysian Soda Springs which prophesy a flourishing Hydropathic when the fame of the country spreads abroad.”

### 1898 McLure’s Magazine snippets

An 1898 copy of McLure’s Magazine was found in an old shack in the Goldie Creek area by Bob Pritchard of Invermere while on a prospecting trip.

While sheltering from a blizzard in the old shack, Mr. Pritchard was intrigued with the advertisements, among which was an ad for fashionable high boots for women made of the best leather for \$3.50, women’s suits and cloaks \$5, custom made men’s shirts, white or coloured for \$1.50.

An Ostermoor Patent elastic felt mattress was advertised for \$15. Linene collars and cuffs, “stylish, convenient and economical for men’s shirts”, ten collars and five pairs of cuffs for 25 cents. These were to be used on both sides then discarded.

A winter cruise to the Orient on the Hamburg-American line by the superb Twin-Screw express steamer “August Victoria” leaving New York January 26 and returning April 3 cost \$450. The trip of 69 days included stops at Madeira, Gibraltar, Algiers, Genoa, Nice, Syracuse, Malta, Alexandria, Cairo, Jaffa (Jerusalem), Smyrna, Constantinople, Athens, Palermo, Naples and return to New York.

One dollar down payment would get you a Royal Grand high grade model organ shipped to your nearest freight depot. A Wellington typewriter cost \$18 and a man’s suit \$10.

The magazine carried sensational advertisements offering cures for cancer, baldness, alcoholism, hayfever, asthma, obesity and consumption to name a few.

Most amazing of all, a discovery which should have put the medical profession out of business entirely was the “Oxydonor Victory”, a device giving vigorous health through self-treatment by causing the human body to attract and absorb oxygen from the air. This caused, according to the caption with the

accompanying photograph, “the natural cure of all forms of disease in men, women and children.”

The photograph showed a tube of “Oxydonor Victory” lying in a basin of water while a tube or wire attached to it was also attached to the ankle of the patient. Just as simple as that.

*from the Valley Echo.*