

VALLEY HISTORY

AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 342-9769 NOVEMBER 1998

MISS DORA BODECKER

from the Valley Echo

There is a grand piano sitting in a windowed alcove in Invermere which has had more scales laboured up and down its keyboard than any other piano in the village. And in this same home there is a bookcase made from a piano which came from England in 1912 but did not take kindly to the Canadian climate and finally saw fit to stand down gracefully in favour of the baby grand.

It is unlikely that there is a home in the district in which music has been a more consistent part of the life therein or where a spark of musical ability in children has been more patiently fanned.

This is the home of Miss Dora K. Bodecker who for thirty years held, as a labour of love, the post of music teacher in the village.

Miss Bodecker came to the Valley in 1912 with her mother, arriving on one of Captain Armstrong's riverboats. She recalls that the boat had a variety of difficulties getting up the river, one of which was a crate of chickens getting loose so that passengers and crew had a wild chase to get them back in captivity.

They built their home at Invermere and settled happily into the social life of the community. There was a definite social life she says, the women each had an "At Home" day and "calling" was the order of the day.

Parties were frequent and everyone was invited. She remembers the first swimming party she attended in Lake Windermere. The women all wore black bathing suits fashioned with sleeves and bloomers. In winter they travelled to parties in sleighs, in summer if the party was at a distance in pony traps.

Born in London, Miss Bodecker attended English schools and had special instruction in music. Later, because it was her father's wish, she travelled extensively on the continent. She lived with a French family in an old chateau in France for more than a year, then with relations in Germany. They were professors in Berlin and here her love of music was given great opportunity. The family had a box at the opera and attended every week. Later a winter in Italy and one in Monte Carlo broadened her education still further.

I could not help wondering what had brought such a widely travelled and cultivated young woman to Invermere. "It was a family wanderlust," Miss Bodecker explained, "sparked, perhaps, by all the talk of war." She and her mother decided to see the Western Hemisphere and read of this Valley in old country publications. They thought it would be fun to be part of the growth of a small community.

That is something that Miss Bodecker has, indeed, achieved. Her first impression of Invermere, she said, was "dust and mosquitoes." these two impressions have yet to be eradicated. But there have been many other signs of progress. Through the years no single advancement has been of greater benefit, Miss Bodecker thinks, than the B.C. Power Commission.

But to get back to music which is uppermost in this pioneer citizen's mind. Miss Bodecker says "Some people think of activity for the young and activity for the old but music has no age limits." She says, "Music is more important than reading and writing and arithmetic because music is the expression of people themselves." She believes firmly in music as a part of home life, and not just "canned music", but family music with everyone participating in some way.

Many children have learnt their music from Miss Bodecker. Her first pupil in Invermere was Mae Starke, now Mrs. George Williamson and a fine pianist. Many others took honours in examinations set by the Royal College of Music in London. Because of her painstaking and patient training many young local people today are able to take pleasure in their musical ability.

and any pupil of Miss Bodecker learnt more than scales and the theory of music. They learnt the appreciation of good music and along with it the importance of good manners, for this kindly teacher by her own example and by tactful comment gave each pupil something of herself along with the music lesson. The shy child was encouraged and the bold child "squashed"; the conscientious pupil was praised and the lazy one likely to have his fingers tapped.

Not only children have benefited from Miss Bodecker's love and knowledge of music. For years her "Tommy Tuckers" met on Monday evenings and "sang for their supper." Later another group evolved

from this to play chamber music. Miss Bodecker plays both the piano and violin and the chamber music group has given many hours of keen delight to those participating.

In other ways, too, Miss Bodecker has made a rich contribution to the life of the community. She started the first girl Guide company in the district and was its first Captain. Her interest in Guiding has never diminished. She was organist for Christ church for many years and in fair weather or foul was to be found at her post week after week. No one could have been more conscientious. Many a radiant bride has proceeded to the altar to the strains of a wedding march played by Miss Bodecker.

And as the years march on it must be a great source of pride to this woman to know she has given so much of herself to so many children and young people.

Mrs. Theo (Sarah) Bodecker died May 18, 1924. Miss Dora K. Bodecker died July, 1960.

Both are buried in the Windermere cemetery. The Windermere District Historical Society has undertaken an on-going project to repair grave sites in disrepair. We have committed \$200 a year to do this work. The first to be done was the Bodecker graves. Harry Steinwand did the work and kept the costs to a minimum. We appreciate his contribution to this project. Another grave will be chosen in the spring to be done in 1999.

THE PIPERS

WRITTEN BY BERTA MOORE, 1981

The Pipers, Helen and Ray, came from Fillmore Saskatchewan in 1940. Helen's brother Emil Johnson, had come to Edgewater in 1936. His report sounded pretty good --- you could pay for your farm by cutting Christmas trees. The farms were small but that sounded pretty good after the dusty dry prairies and so many crop failures.

Edgewater seemed such a small community at first but they soon got used to it and liked it.

The Pipers did market gardening the first few years, with produce trucked to Banff and other locations. It took a lot of preparation: washing vegetables, bunching, shelling peas until late at night by gas lights. But this paid well.

They sold their farm to Charlie Kohorst in 1939 and moved into town. Ray worked for Edgewater Sawmill and Kirk's Christmas Tree Co. for years and later for Banaid mine in Spillimacheen.

Helen cooked at Radium Hot Springs Lodge for several years. She now does a great deal of handwork --- knitting, crocheting, liquid embroidery. Her table at the Open Market every season is a prime drawing spot, loaded with all the lovely things she creates, and she always has orders for more.

Helen and Ray Piper will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary on July 18, 1981 in Edgewater. Family and friends will gather at the Legion Hall to wish them many more happy years together.

Early Canal Flats Businesses

1889 - A small settlement called "Grohman" sprang up around the sawmill built by William Adolph Baillie-Grohman to provide timbers to build the locks to connect the Columbia River to the Kootenay River. Grohman built a store, with a post office and the Grohman Hotel where he lived and entertained many distinguished guests. He provided bunk houses and tents for the work force. Mr. and Mrs. Grohman returned to England in 1893. The lock was destroyed and there was little activity in "Grohman" for many years.

1927-28 - Don Roberts built a general store and was the first postmaster in Canal Flat.

1928 -29 - Frank Nemrava and Joe Pietrosky Sr. built a hotel on the east side of Main St. and served meals. After a short time they turned the building into a Meat Market. It burned down the winter of 1931-32.

1928 - a General Store was built by Ben Weston. It burned down in 1930. Two more

stores were built in 1928 by Albin Johnson and Paul Nodgren, both on the west side of Main St.

1929 - A popular General Store was built by Mrs. Harrison from Yahk and her nephew Archie McLeod. They operated this store for many years. They sold out.

1950 -Mr. Simpson owned the Harrison store at this time. He sold to Percy Lake who operated it until 1956. Shortly after it was demolished.

1956 - Grocery store operated by J. Doherty sold to Charles Churchill who ran "Canal Flat Mercantile."

1959 -J.A. Doherty owned J&E Dry Goods and Hardware.

ODDS AND ENDS OF SCHOOL HISTORY

Athalmer Invermere School Cheer - 1930's

Boom chick a boom

Boom chick a boom

Boom chick a rick a chick a boom, boom, boom

Sis boom ba Sis boom ba

Athalmer Invermere Rah Rah Rah.

EDGEWATER - 1935-43

Teachers - Miss Ellen Wright, Miss Hester Wright, Don Bilmore, Lois Kinley.

In 1935 there were 4 pupils in grades 1-8 and in 1943 there were 7. Teacher had to go early to light the fires. Christmas concerts were the most special time and included the whole community. Parents and teachers all helped to make it a great evening.

WINDERMERE 1937

There were 20 students in the one-room school.

ATHALMER-INVERMERE

The school purchased War Savings Stamps and Victory Bonds to the value of \$557 and received a certificate in June 1945. The money was contributed by the students and was sufficient to pay for:

2 collapsible assault boats

7 seamen's life jackets

5 hand grenades.

The Athalmer school was built as a dance hall but became a school in 1911.

Invermere's first school opened November 1913, the second in 1925 and rooms were added to that school in 1934. The school built in 1925 was known as the Athalmer Invermere Consolidated School.

RADIUM SCHOOL

1929 - \$19.50 paid for the textbooks. The \$10.00 rent on the building for the three summer months was paid by the parents of the children attending the school. \$3.00 was paid for splitting wood for heating the school. \$4 was paid each December for someone to clean the school. The rest of the year the teacher, pupil or parents were responsible for keeping it clean.

1937-38 - Miss Lucy Northcott, teacher, earned \$21.70 a month. \$8.10 was spent on textbooks and \$5.57 on school supplies. \$450 was received from the Provincial Government for the whole year.

NEWSCLIPS FROM THE PAST:

COLUMBIA VALLEY TIMES

Mar 15, 1913:

"The Aladdin mantle lamp is one of the greatest and most practical inventions of the age. It is the highest achievement of science in connection with artificial lighting. It has solved the lighting problem for rural homes, giving them a brilliant white light superior to the gas or electricity used in big cities. A light that makes evenings reading, writing or sewing a pleasure. It's as far ahead of the ordinary oil lamp as the ordinary lamp is ahead of the candles used by our forefathers. These can be seen in the Athalmer Pool room. V. Houghton, Athalmer, is the sole agent for the district."

COLUMBIA VALLEY TIMES

Mar 15, 1913:

“The highway bridge is being built over the Columbia River, along centre line of Sifton Street, Athalmer. The bridge is now taking great shape, there are twelve men working on it, under the direct supervision of David Bale, contractor. It will rest on 100 piles, will be 20 feet wide, 139 feet long and about 300 feet above the bed of the river.”

COLUMBIA VALLEY TIMES

Mar 22, 1913: excerpts from an article in the *Nelson Daily News* Jan 6, 1913:

“The present commercial centres of the district are all situated in and around Windermere Lake. Of these Windermere takes precedence for age, Athalmer and Wilmer following next in order and Invermere as the youngest of all. *There are chartered banks in all.* (italics mine, J.M.)Each place has its advantages, notably Athalmer with its business houses and electric light system; Wilmer with its local government office and Invermere with its comfortable tourist hotel and gravity system of water works. The future destiny of all these places lies largely in its own hands and that of the oncoming Kootenay Central Railway.”

WHAT'S NEW AT THE MUSEUM

Tuesday evening workbees are back in action. Why not join them from 7-9 p.m.? They have a good time and accomplish great things.

Did you hear that we came third in the Swansea International Plow Anchor Throw. This event was sponsored by Swansea, Wales and was open to Swanses around the world. There was participation from Australia, Ontario, the United States and Wales. The winner received a trophy and a bottle of Scotch from the Member of Parliament for Swansea Wales. Next year we aim to win this prestigious event!

Our Annual General Meeting will be in November with some changes in our slate of officers. Our sincere thanks to everyone who gives so generously of their time to keep the Museum and Archives operational. We had a successful summer with our student Kristen Vogel. We

always get lots of compliments on our little Museum and everyone should feel proud of they job they do. At the meeting we will have a “show and tell” of member’s interesting or precious family treasures.

Business Meetings are the second Friday of the month at 2 p.m. The General Meetings with a program are the third Friday of the month at 2 p.m. Come and join us.

We have a collection of 78 rpm records and would like to acquire a gramophone (record player) to play one. If you have one you could donate to the Museum we would be most grateful.

We have received notice that we have been awarded a \$1500 grant to purchase acid free materials to store our archival collection in the new vault. We must match to grant with money or volunteer time.