

# VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 342-9769 - MAY 1999

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## *RICHARDSON'S RECOLLECTIONS*

*by Harry Richardson*

from The "Valley Echo" Mar. 5, 1981

A look back to my growing up days in the area when many of the necessities of life were supplied to the area by the social service of the Steamboats from the north. They operated from the late spring, through the summer months and early fall.

During the late fall, through the winter months and early spring, such essential food supplies as required in the area were brought in by four horse teams on wagons or sleighs from both the north and south.

With the arrival of each steamboat through the season at the large warehouse, located on the historic Windermere Point, many of the local residents, especially the children who lived close by in the community, would be there to welcome both the ship and the very efficient crew. The Steamboats as they entered Lake Windermere on the north end, would always blow their whistles as they proceeded up the lake. The sound of the whistle would alert the natives of the area of the ship's arrival at the point.

All freight would be unloaded and stored in the large warehouse to be picked up later by those to whom it was consigned. Local mail would be picked up by those who had the contract for its delivery.

During the summer time when there was high water and the road to the point was under several feet of water, the steamboats unloaded their cargo on the high bank of the bay immediately east of the warehouse. Such cargo would be left in the open and unattended until picked up by the owners. On one very hot summer day a large steel barrel, painted red and full of gasoline was unloaded and left sitting on the bank for several days before it was picked up. We children of the area were warned to

keep away from that area as the barrel of gasoline, standing in the hot sun might explode.

The freight teams, with their heavy loads from both the north and south, as they arrived, would unload their freight at the doors of the local store and hotel. At times, during the winter, as the teams arrived from the heavy snow area of the north, the horses' legs would be wrapped in burlap to protect them from being cut and bruised from the heavily ice crusted snow along the northern route.

In addition to the heavily loaded and slower moving freight teams which serviced the area, there was also a Stage line which carried the mail and passengers along the way from Golden to Windermere. One of the valley's early pioneers was Claus (Clessom) Hawley. Hawley drove the stage from Golden to Windermere for many years.

Throughout the Windermere area in those far off years there were several motor cars and a few motor boats which supplied transportation. A few people had a horse and buggy as a means of transportation. Several had Peterborough Canoes, while the majority had nothing except their legs as a means of transportation.

The Richardson's had no car, no motor boat, no horse, but they did have a fine row boat, thanks to our father who was a fine boat builder and boat repair man in the area for many years. The row boat was Father's main means of transportation morning and night as he rowed himself to work in Invermere, Athalmer, to Dr. Adami's and to the Joe Lake and G. Coleman ranches on the south west side of the lake. Many a night us children sat shivering in the cold down on Windermere Point as we watched and waited for our father's return during stormy nights. Some nights as darkness approached, we returned home to await Father's arrival, sometimes as late as midnight. Next morning,

back to work he would go to put in his ten hours on the job.

Each Sunday, weather permitting, Father would take the Richardson five for a boat ride across the lake to Salter or Goldie Creek, down the lake to Brown's Bay or up the lake to Sand Point where we would have a picnic and swim.

We children of those far off days had to devise our own type of amusement as there were no fast food chains, cars, movies, or any other form of social activity in the area. There were very few sports except those held during school hours to take part in. Radios were unheard of and there was the very odd gramophone with the cylinder type records and a very large horn. On occasions, such an instrument would move from one home to another where all could gather to listen to near worn out records of very early recording.

Aeroplanes, of which very little was known, was an interesting subject for discussion in the school with our teacher as something in the far distant future.

Amusement and recreation for most of the growing boys of the area in those days was to be found out in the large agricultural fields for ten hours a day with a pitch fork, shovel or hoe in one's hands. If you were slow and uninterested in that type of work you would soon learn from the rest of the boys that you had a responsibility in the work along with them. Starting out to weed and thin a row of vegetables several hundred feet long, the slow and uninterested boys would be placed on the middle row with the more interested and hard workers on each side of you and you had to keep your end up with the rest. The same reasoning applied to sawing fire wood with a cross cut saw. You had to work on the one end along with the boy on the other end of the saw, All work in the area was done with human labour, assisted by domestic animals, usually horses. About 1912, small stationary gasoline engines were brought over from England for work on the farm at Fairmont Hot Springs. Some eight years later, these still new engines were still stored at Fairmont, still unused as late as 1920. There was nobody in that area with the knowledge to

start or operate them at that time. They could have been used to generate electricity for the farm buildings. Instead they sat safely stored and idle over those many years.

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## **CEMETERY UPDATE**

You will remember that the Historical Society began a program last year to mark graves at the Windermere Cemetery. Each year one unmarked pioneer grave will be marked with a plaque. Last year we did the Bodecker grave. This year we have chosen the Thomas Starbird site.

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## **THOMAS STARBIRD**

Tom Starbird was born in Maine and lived his boyhood in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Mining brought him to the valley, and he eventually became the manager of the Ptarmigan Mine. He had a wide experience in mining throughout the United States.

In 1904 he purchased land and established a ranch on Horsethief Creek, known as the Mountain Valley Ranch. In the early years it was the gathering place for packers taking supplies to the mines in the area.

In 1910, he changed his ranch to a hunting and tourist guest ranch. From there he took his guests on pack trips to the Lake of the Hanging Glacier, to the Ice Caves, to Starbird Glacier and to the head of Horsethief Creek.. The ranch became popular with visitors enjoying hiking, camping, horseback riding etc. Many prominent people from around the world visited the ranch. In 1910 it is recorded that the Prince of Hesse and other German dignitaries visited. The local people would go out by horse and buggy or by horse and sleigh to weekend parties at the ranch.

Starbird was a contemporary of Harold Forster, Paulding Farnham and other avid mountain climbers. Starbird discovered the Lake of the Hanging Glacier which was named Maye Lake for his wife, Elsie Maye Lewis.

Starbird Glacier was named for him. The following is a statement made by him:  
*"I discovered what is now known as Lake Maye, near the glacier of my name, which empties into Horsethief Creek. I first visited it in August 1899 on a trip after some mineral prospects. I came across the lake by mere accident. As a man familiar with mountain scenery and every day seeing much that is beautiful, I rather let the subject of it pass out of my mind until eleven years later when I had Lord Stafford as a guest at my home on a hunting expedition. This was in the early fall of 1911. I was anxious for Lord Stafford to be sure of getting a mountain goat to shoot and knowing that to be a favorite haunt I took him to the small lake. Sure enough he got his goat. He was so delighted with the gem of a lake that he fairly raved about it. Later the same year I took in Mr. H.W. Gleason of Boston, the famous artist-photographer with some friends to view it. At her special request I also took in Mrs. Starbird, whose Christian name was Maye. Mr. Gleason in spite of my remonstrance named the lake after Mrs. Starbird who to my knowledge was the first white woman who had ever seen the lake."*

After his death, the ranch was operated by the Ptarmigan Mine for a short time and later the land was leased to ranchers. The ranch house burned during a bad forest fire year in the early 1930's.

He died tragically after being in the valley for 2 decades. He was a prominent Mason and was much respected by all in the community. He left his widow and two young sons. He died April 11, 1914, Easter Eve. Nothing is known of his family after his death. It is presumed that they returned to the United States.

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**NEWSCLIPS FROM THE PAST**

**The Columbian, Wilmer, B.C.**

**August 8, 1911**

"Quite an amount of building is being done at Wilmer and vicinity by contractor Ford. A large bungalow having a verandah and which will be well finished in the most modern style for a

building of this class is built for Dr. Turnor (Madeline's family). It will cost in the neighbourhood of \$1600.00.

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"Mr. B.A. Geuterback is opening out a boat house at the famous summer resort, Invermere. This will no doubt be greatly appreciated by tourists who may rest assured of gentlemanly treatment at the hands of Mr. Gueterback."

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"Miss G.M. Pitts of Windermere passed with honour the first civil service examination for stenographers ever held in B.C."

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**August 22, 1911**

"Near Windermere there may still be seen the remains of a log hut built by David Thompson, astronomer and surveyor, the first white man to enter the Valley some hundred years ago. Deserted by the friendly Indians, he passed one winter here alone in the heart of the forest."

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**Jimmy**  
 When you need a Haircut  
 or shave  
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 ---  
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**MEMORANDUM TO R.R. BRUCE**  
**FROM E. MALLANDAINE, mgr. CVI**  
**April 22, 1912**

"My whole time is taken up with making arrangements for people to get around and see our land and with the supervision of the general work that is going on.

Mr. Starbird kindly loaned me his little car so that I could run people about here in it. The influx of settlers is so great that it is impossible for us to get any work done on the "Royal" (a mining operation)

We are short of supplies in the valley and nothing to be secured in the way of supplies for our camps in the way of provisions or meats. I have all the work in its proper channels and running smoothly now and am making good

progress and it will take my whole concentrated time to keep it going so. Things will go on all right provided I get the supplies and equipment.

I am greatly put about in regards to the housing of people and it is troubling me considerably. I took the liberty of borrowing from your house for a few days a bedstead, mattress and camp stove for the accommodation of Capt. and Mrs. Phillips who wanted to get on their land at once. I trust that you do not mind my having done this. I feel like going out and foraging for everything I can get. The whole staff is working hard both inside and outside and at all hours.”

( *The Phillips are the subject of the book, Letters from Windermere, and had property on the Benches.*)

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#### WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MUSEUM

Thank you:

- to all who took part in the spring cleaning at the Museum;
- those who volunteered for June to keep the Museum open;
- to those who will help with school programs
- to the Tuesday evening workers who have accomplished so much this year;
- to the executive for all their work;

***well done everyone!***

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Dorothy Blunden, Jessie Lockhart and Jean Cartwright have the summer display all ready to go. This year's theme is "***Dolls and Teddies***". There was a great response from the community and there are approximately 60 on display. It makes a great display!

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Arnor Larson has worked hard over the winter on the Hal Bavin collection of negatives. The black and white negatives have been sorted and catalogued and the next phase will be to make contact prints.

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Kristen Vogel and Dorothy Blunden have worked all winter on preservation work on our map collection. The maps --- many in poor condition --- were all rolled for storage. They have been flattened, encapsulated in mylar and identified. It makes them

much more accessible for use and will prevent further damage to them. A good project well done!

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We have had electricity put into the school house and the notary building so displays can be seen better on dark days or in the evenings. Thank you to Deck Electric for their contribution to the project and to Arnor for his participation.

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We are pleased that we have been given funding for two students this summer. For the past few years we have had only one and it is a big responsibility for one person to look after the Museum.

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I am pleased to tell you that Sandi McKay, a descendant of the McKays that settled at the Upper Ranch and who developed the townsite of Athalmer, is going to do the Newsletter starting in August. If you have any suggestions for topics, send them to her at the Museum. I have enjoyed doing the Newsletters but am looking forward to reading them in the future.  
*Jaryl*

**The Museum opens June 5 for the season. Come for a visit.**