

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

**BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0
DELPHINE LODGE AND
HOTEL
Wilmer, B.C.**

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The history of towns in the Windermere Valley began in Wilmer. The first white people to settle in the area permanently were brought to Wilmer by steamer beginning in 1896. This was the era of a second mining boom in British Columbia when little towns were formed overnight. By 1899, Peterborough, as it was first called, had a population of over 100. The bulk of the people were single men who had come to work the Paradise and Ptarmigan Mines.

The year was 1899. Survey work was completed for a planned townsite, and the first public buildings were erected. Miners now ate and drank at the new Delphine Lodge.

George Alexander Starke was born in Farnham, Quebec in 1854. He headed west in 1880 and arrived in the East Kootenays in 1882. He spent some time in the Nelson area but returned to the Valley in 1897, determined to be a part of the Windermere Mining Division. Delphine, his new bride, followed later. He purchased the Morigeau Mining claim and was a pioneer Columbia Valley Contractor. He built the first Hotels in Invermere, Windermere, Wilmer and Athalmer.

“ His help and hope of success, was ever Delphine.”

(Related by Ed Johnston. Aug. 1922, for the Vancouver Province.)

In 1901-02, Wilmer was a thriving community. The offices for the Paradise, Ptarmigan and Delphine Mines were opened. A settlement plan was devised by

the newly organized Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitlands Co. Ltd. in 1907. It was the start of a great influx of settlers. In 1913, the population of Wilmer was 382. This was a busy logging and mining community. The only branch of the Imperial Bank of Canada was in a small log building. There were two general stores, The Peterborough Trading Company, operated by F. Ball and the Wilmer Mercantile, run by Mr. Arthur Taylor and Mr. Horace Jones. There was a Post-office and Goldie Stewart had the Drug-store. A Laundry was owned and operated by Wing Lee and the blacksmith shop was run by Billy Hautf. There were two Hotels. The Delphine, owned and operated by George and Delphine Starke, and the Windsor (or Green Hotel.). The Livery stable belonged to Gordon Palmer.

Delphine, the famous wife of George Starke, was a big part of this busy world. She was a popular Innkeeper and contributed greatly to the projects of the community. Born Delphine Francour in Quebec City, she came west in the early 1890's.

“ I first met Mr. Starke in Golden in 1894. We separated and I went to the West Kootenays in 1895. We met again in Rossland and married in Nelson in 1896. After getting Baptiste's mining claims from him, Mr. Starke called the property after me. I was in the habit of going to the property with him before the trails were even cut. I was about the first white woman to go to the Selkirks and my trips often occasioned surprise. The Delphine Glacier, Mt. Delphine, and Delphine Creek were also named after me through Mr. Starke. From the money which we made from the Delphine Mine, Mr. Starke started in business again by building the Delphine Lodge at Wilmer B.C. in 1899.”

signed...Delphine Starke
Invermere, B.C. 1918.

As well as assisting her husband in the mining operations, Delphine was involved with the hospital, the Church, and the School. Delphine was known to “touch up” the miners, loggers, and ranchers in the bar at the Delphine Lodge. The funds that she collected were in aid of the new buildings of the community. Delphine hosted concerts, teas and other meetings in the Presbyterian Church built in 1903. In 1911-12, Ethel Wood (Cleland) was the nurse at the Wilmer Hospital. The Delphine Lodge helped to supply linens and bandages to the hospital.

The Delphine Lodge welcomed every newcomer to the valley and many ranches were soon established. In 1893 H. E. Forester bought the West Firlands Ranch. The Mountain Valley Ranch and Ptarmigan Mine, owned by Thomas Starbird, was a popular guest Ranch. In 1912, Miss Minnie Joss came to the Mountain Valley Ranch to visit friends. She met E.E. Tunnaclyffe and they were married in 1913. A sister of Mrs. Tunnaclyffe took up management of the Delphine Lodge in 1922.

In 1936, Hubert Statham and Tony Staberg arrived in Wilmer from Saskatchewan. Hube said the first meal they had in B.C. was at the Delphine Lodge. He remembers clean white linen tablecloths and real good food.

The first diamond wedding known to be celebrated in the district was that of Mr. and Mrs. Alec Archibald of Wilmer in 1952. They were married in 1892.

Later, the Durhams took over the Delphine Lodge. Eleanor Statham worked for them in their General Store and Post-office in the early to mid 60's.

The Lodge stood empty for a few years until it was bought by Dorothea Dean in 1971. Hal and Patrick Bavin of Windermere did repairs to the foundation and floors. Mrs. Dean served gourmet meals to small groups and ran a quilting school in the Lodge at this time.

In 1988 Geoff and Cindy Callaghan bought the Delphine. By now, extensive renovations were in order. Geoff said they replaced the fireplace and chimney, put in new doors and windows, re-insulated and re-did the plumbing. The main building was called the Delphine

Lodge and the small building to the north of it was the Delphine Hotel. This smaller building had been un-used for many years and had to be totally renovated and a bathroom had to be added. Callaghans lived in the smaller building while they ran their Bed and Breakfast in the Lodge .

. Kurt Reichel from Invermere re-painted the “Delphine Lodge” from the original lettering. The Callaghans sold the Delphine in 1991 to the present owners Anne and David Joy

The history of towns in this Valley began in Wilmer. Delphine and George Starke built a Lodge and business in 1899 that continues to thrive 100 years later. The people in these early towns worked hard to build and maintain schools, hospitals, and churches. They exposed their children to music and dance and they laid the foundations for the communities we call home.

- From the files of B.G. Hamilton and Winnifred Weir

- Thankyou: Jessie Lockhart
Pat Bavin
Geoff Callaghan

August 4, 1911
A MOONLIGHT CRUISE DOWN
THE LAKE ON THE
STERNWHEELER "NOWITKA"

Captain and Mrs. Armstrong, Charlotte and Ruth with some young people from Golden including Tom King, made the trip. The steamer left Wilmer dock at 8:30 called at Athalmer and went on to Windermere. Vaughan Kimpton was among the young people ready to board. He was escorting his cousins Greta and Gladys Pitts. Mrs. C. Kimpton came along to chaperone the young people. Miss Nellie Jones (later Mrs. A Taylor,) was not long out from England. Hope Brewer from Fairmont was aboard. Captain John Blakley was receiving the congratulations of the guests on having received his Captains papers and being in command of the "Selkirk". Music was provided by Ed Tunnacliffe's violin, Mrs. Kimpton or Mrs. Troyer at the piano, relieved by Gladys Pitts. Ed Johnston raided the galley for a dishpan to serve as a drum. There were 20 couples dancing and others just sitting on deck enjoying the trip. The Nowitka returned about one in the morning to Athalmer and on to Wilmer where it tied up for the night.
(From " Tales of the Windermere" by Winn Weir.)

1917 RED CROSS TEA HELD
IN WILMER.

A Red Cross Tea was held at the Wilmer Hall by the ladies of Wilmer. The hall was decorated with the National Colours. Among the varied attractions there was a Mother Goose for children presided over by Mrs. Sandilands and Mrs. Hannington. This proved to be as attractive to the children and grown-ups as the ice-cream and candy stall with Mrs. Tunnacliffe.

Mrs. Taylor sold the raffle tickets at the raffle table. The lucky winners were:

Mrs. Forster- sofa pillow
Mrs. Barbour- embroidered pillow cases
Mrs. Bell- crocheted yoke
Mrs. Starke- patriotic center-piece
Mrs. Ball- gold bangle
Frank Jones- ring
Mr. Sandilands- decorated cake.
The fancy work stall was in charge of Mrs. Munson and Mrs. Martin.
Beau contest was won by J. McLeod.

Thankyou to the people who brought in the 1999 acquisitions:

Jan Posylvzny , Sybil Knight, Win Weir, Earl Barbour, Ted Fuller, Joe Fuller, Helen Annis, Donna Traub, Dot Smith, Fred Hunt, Frank Keely , Brian Stade , Chris Maundrell and Lillian Ballard.

Christmas at the Windermere Hotel
1890- 1945

The Windermere Hotel held a Christmas and New years celebration every year. Prospectors, trappers, ranchers without families, or any-one without home ties, would gather. Food

and liqueur were available and song and dance continued far into the night and the revelry might last one night or three!! Sometimes the revelers would leave on sleighs and make for a remote farm to continue their celebrations.

1912-

Never did the walls of the Windermere Hotel echo with more gaiety than they did the Christmas night of 1912. The Congenial host was Edgar Stoddart. Holland's construction crew from Fairmont were issued the order to stay in camp and not one drop of "Cheer" was to be had in the bunkhouses. Jack Hooper smuggled in a case of the "best" into camp and someone suggested going to Windermere. The crew piled into Jacks sleigh, pulled by a team of greys and off they went over the fourteen miles of snowy trails. The Crew - Dapper Ede with his accordion, Jack Woodcroft, pianist, who had a homemade banjo devised from a frying pan, Ernie Dernier, who played the tambourine, Sid Brown, another excellent pianist, Onsworth, Harry Bone, Charlie Onion, Teddy Keeling, Burt Chubb, Dick Ridgley, Johanssen, Joe Grainger, and Sid Powell were a merry bunch. Never was a singsong more lusty as the Fairmont crew was joined by fellows like Fred Cadwallader and Harry Smith, Bert Schofield, Gaffney, Harry Richardson, Ernie Bryan, August Johnson, Ole, six or more Italians from the KC Railway gang, and the Chinese cooks. So instead of a bleak and lonely Christmas, they were showered with merriment and companionship. That Christmas, the singsong was lusty. They learned a new song that night- they discovered that "Land of Hope and Glory" mixed with the National Anthems of Sweden, China, Italy and a few other

countries comprised a new song, " Oh Canada."

from " The Legacy of Fairmont." by Janet Wilder.

At the Museum.....

Twenty-two members enjoyed an interesting field trip to Wild Horse Farm (Fort Steele) on Friday, Sept. 17. Kristen Vogel has completed her 100 hours of volunteer service under the Youth Community Program. Our Curator, Dorothy Blunden, supervised the project.

Grant Howse spoke at our business meeting on Oct. 8. (first cousin to Joe Howse). He is an artist that is interested in our Millennium Project of some recognition of David Thompson. Fran Jeffery has formed a committee that is investigating funds for the project.

One thousand one hundred ninety-one (plus) visitors stopped at our museum during 1999.
