

VALLEY HISTORY

AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 342-9769 FEBRUARY 2001



THE DOBBIES

The intricacies of a nomination day and election in accordance with requirements of the Municipal Act are confusing to the man or woman on the street but not to Mrs. A.J. Dobbie who has been returning officer for all elections in the Village of Invermere since the 1951 incorporation. Mrs. Dobbie has also served in that capacity at all provincial and federal elections for some years.

She says she finds the job challenging because she enjoys seeing that every detail is handled to the exact dictates of the law. Mrs. Dobbie says it is amazing how easy it is to slip up on some small detail that might disqualify a nominee.

Mrs. Dobbie faces the challenges of legal terminology and the intricacies of the election act with considerable experience behind her. For four years she was secretary of the Hospital Association which administers the local hospital. This was a complicated job during the period that the B.C.H.I.S. took over and it required more than average ability to cope with all the new regulations. She was Village Clerk for three years and collector and assessor for two years. Jobs which also required considerable ability.

Born Elsie Tait in Greenoch Scotland, she was educated at Greenoch Academy. She met Alec Dobbie on a golf course in Glasgow when he had just received his discharge from the British Army. He had come to Canada and to this Valley in 1912 with Willy Weir but returned to Scotland to join up at the start of the war. He remained there until 1920 then decided to return to Canada. In 1921, Elsie Tait sailed for Halifax where Alec met her and they were married.

They came to Wilmer to reside and remained there for two years. Mr. Dobbie built a house on McLeod Ave. in Invermere, (8th ave.), (at one time the Ray Tegart home, now Camelle's Hair Design,) where they lived during the years that their children were growing up. In 1959 they lived in a modern home on Rotten Row (5th.st.) that Mr. Dobbie built a few years earlier. Alec often joined forces with Gil Cartwright Sr. and they were in popular demand as builders in the Valley.

The Invermere Contracting building, (now Buds Social Club,) Fishers Store, the first school in Edgewater, the Lodge at Fairmont, Dr. Tripps home, (later the Charles Osterloh home,) the bath houses at Radium and countless homes up and down the Valley can trace their roots to the fine workmanship of Alec Dobbie and Gil Cartwright Sr.

The children, all married are Alex J. (Sandy), well known at the Invermere Motor Transport, (and later the Invermere Hardware) , Avril Jeanne, (Mrs. William Mintz,) and Kay, who's real name is Elizabeth McKay, (Mrs. Alfred Larson.) Between them, they have presented the Dobbies with seven grandchildren.

"Readin', Writin' and Rithmatic" are all hobbies of Mrs. Dobbie. She is one of the most ardent supporters of the local district Library, which she says is an excellent source of both

fiction and non fiction. She manages to read three or more books a week. Writing, at which she is also trying her hand, comes naturally. Her brother was the late John Tait of Nova Scotia, a well known contributor to Toronto Saturday Night. His stories were extensively printed abroad and recorded by the C.B.C. Arithmetic she enjoys in the form of bookkeeping.

Her art shows in other ways too. The interior of her home shows a particular delight in color and she has a flair for making over hats to suit herself or her friends. Also, she has made countless garments for her own children when they were small and now for her grandchildren, showing an originality of idea and a deftness of hand. Considerable embroidery and other needlework has also come from her nimble fingers.

In another form of art, her ability has received recognition. She was a member of the local Little Theater Group before the war and presented some noteworthy performances. Since the formation of the group, now known as Lake Windermere Players, she has been a popular actress in their casts. In 1955 she won the Best Actress Award in the East Kooteney Drama Association Festival with her portrayal of Leonora in "Ladies in Retirement" and in 1959 as Mrs. Dowey in "The Old Lady Shows Her Metals". She presented an outstanding performance and received high praise from the adjudicator. Of her acting experience, Mrs. Dobbie says "I enjoy getting the best interpretation of every line; the exact timing and the most effective gesture or lack of gesture. And rehearsals are fun."

Mrs. Dobbie says she owes a lot to Canada. "Because in Canada I have tried my hand at all sorts of things I might have had no opportunity to try at 'home'. In Scotland, my family just never thought of me as capable of doing the variety of things I have since enjoyed and I have even surprised myself."

There's one other art Mrs. Dobbie has that cannot be ignored. Coming from a line of Scottish confectioners she had never tried her hand at their skill until she came to Canada, but

she had seen plenty of it. She soon made a reputation here as a skilled pastry cook and bazaars and community teas benefited from her ability. She has not kept track of the number of Brides cakes she has decorated but it is a generous number..... Typical of British understatement, coupled with Scottish lack of enthusiastic expression is Alec's response when some particularly delectable confection has been sampled. From him, high praise is his not infrequent remark "It is quite edible."

From: The Valley Echo- December 17, 1959.

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Golden Star- December 29,1933

The spirit of Christmas was made a practical thing by the actions of four little girls, none of them over 13 years of age. Some months ago, Frances and Margaret Ashworth, Audrey Cleland and Avril Dobbie formed a little club of their own, choosing as their name "The Rinky Dinks" and meeting every Monday night in the playroom of the Cleland home. They put in as many cents a week as they could from the money given them by their parents. With this they bought colored mosquito netting which they made into Santa stockings and sent for little things to put in them, bought oranges, apples and candy to go around and invited eleven youngsters who they knew would not have much for Christmas and held a party in the playroom. Cakes were provided by the mothers but the girls did the rest.

OUT OF THE PAST

Valley News- September, 1943

Pte. Carl Jones, Overseas, has continued the excellent record he made last year in the sports arena. This year "Somewhere in Scotland", he won a collection of trophies that won't all go in one duffel bag. These include a gold medal, a silver medal and a silver cup.

Roy Clement is now acting-sergeant. Leigh Nixon has been promoted to Corporal. Jim

Ashworth won his commission in the field as Pilot-Officer. He is serving in India.

When the old high level flume on The Benches was dismantled recently for the building of a new one, the names of several local boys were found carved on the old structure. Among them were Jack and Dave Nixon, Sandy Dobbie, Bud Coy, Bud Cleland, and Alex Johnston. The flume was re-built in 1943.

Work is progressing on the new bridge over Toby Creek. The new erection is up stream of the old bridge. Construction is under the direction of Ed Tunnacliffe.

At the Fall Fair the Indians took part in a costume parade and tribal dances. Gabriel Paul won first prize for costumes.

A Memorial Service was held at St. Eugene Mission for Pre. Toby Nicholas, killed in action in Sicily.

Dr. A.E. Kydd, who has served the district as medical practitioner for two years, has left.

Miss Audrey Cleland will be married to Mr. Charles Osterloh of Kimberly this month. She has been on staff at the Imperial Bank. Miss Dorothy Blake has joined the staff in her place.

Work at the Paradise Mine is progressing favorably. The mine is now owned by Sheep Creek Gold Mines Ltd. in Nelson.

PICNICS

September 18, 1911

Rev. Colquhoun of the Anglican Church and Rev. Wedderburn of the Presbyterian Church were the promoters of a successful picnic held at Invermere for the benefit of the young people of the Windermere District.

Mr. Joe Lake acted as Master of Ceremonies while the sports were in progress.

Boys Race (age 8-10) winners were Maurice Chamberlain, Len Turner, and Dennis Corby.

(age 5-8) Arthur Peake, Fred Ball, and Philip Larrabee.

Girls Race (age 12-14) Sarah Brehaut, Ada Bennett, and Edna Ball.

(age 10-12) Elmie Lowerison, Renie Corby, and Kathleen Niles.

Babies Race- Ellen Niles, Mary Turner, Baby Lowerison, and Katie Dawson.

Young Ladies Race- Sarah Rauch, Edna Ball.

Boys Three- Legged Race- Fred Harris and Robert Hawthorne, Philip Larrabee and Willie Ball, and Dennis Corby and Maurice Chamberlain.

Boys Tug of War was won by Willie Balls team. After the sports a great picnic feast was enjoyed.

Wagon at "The Meadows" Owned by Captain James Ogilvy-Wills

Ogilvy-Wills' wagon is said to be the oldest wagon in the Kootenays. Its wheels are old mill wheels: wooden felloe, iron bound and bold. Four wheels are intact. (1952). The wagon is about 12 feet long and an ordinary car gage in width. It has been at the "Meadows" for about 50 years.

" The Meadows" was originally part of the Joe Young property. Joe Young was killed by a runaway team about 1915. The house on the property is thought to be the oldest inhabited house in the district. Ceilings of split birch in excellent condition, they are thatched with birchbark and clay and roofed with shakes. Pegs were used instead of nails throughout the building which is estimated to be about 75 years old. (1952).

Hope Brewer, when asked about the wagon in 1954 said " It was made at Fairmont Springs for Sam Brewer by a carpenter named John Grassick and the wheels were made by George Geary at Fairmont in 1894. Two years later, Brewer let Joe Young have the wagon.

Did you know ?

In 1938 , a “ License for Airharbour” was granted J.S. Blakley, and the Windermere Airport was born.

SPILLIMACHEEN BEGAN AS WAYFARERS’ STOP

Romance surrounds the history of Spillimacheen, one of the oldest settlements in the Columbia Valley.

Even its name derives from days before the white man. Spillimacheen is an Indian word meaning swift running water or white water.

Early in November, 1808, David Thompson came up the Columbia with his party in canoes to Spillimacheen River mouth. It is likely that they disembarked on the sand bar. The journey to Kootenai House on Toby Creek was continued on foot.

When the gold mining on Wild Horse began to peter out, the miners moved on, seeking new fields, and many came up the Kootenay and into the Columbia River Valley as far as Spillimacheen.

In 1884 when Ed Watkins came through the valley there was a flourishing roadhouse at Spillimacheen operated by “ Chicken Pete”, so named because he was always in the market for chickens. It was also the boat landing and on the upstream trip (south) during low water in spring and fall the boat usually tied up for the night at Spillimacheen Landing with Spilli House offering accommodation to the passengers.

The first train arrived in Spillimacheen from Golden during the summer of 1913.

In 1913 Spillimacheen had a station agent and freight agent. The first store was opened about 1912 by Hughie MacDonald.

Of recent years, Spillimacheen had a burst of activity with the re- opening of the Giant Mascot Mine. It was originally recorded by Fred Wells as the Giant mine and was the first hard rock tunnel in B.C. It took six years to make the tunnel. Then the mine closed down with a resulting decline in Spillimacheen economy.

But Spillimacheen has other attractions. The B.C. Hydro powerhouse is situated near the

confluence of the Bugaboo and Spillimacheen River. It serves the entire Columbia Valley.

*From: The Lake Windermere Valley Echo
1973*

Golden Star- 1912 Calgary People Plan Summer Residences

“ Metropolis of Alberta will be only 9 hours run from the Windermere District. Work on the Banff-Windermere automobile road which, when completed, will place Calgary’s four thousand automobiles within 9 hours of the Windermere District. It is to be proceeded with as quickly as possible and already many Calgary people are planning the construction of summer homes....in anticipation of the completion of this motor road.”

Golden Star- 1918

On Toby Creek, a tributary of the Columbia River, a rich deposit of platinum and placer gold has been discovered - which is apparently quite extensive an area as it is known to extend along the creek for four or five miles.

A rush has started to the new gold fields and men from Cranbrook, Golden and nearby towns are rushing to Athalmer to look over the new properties and to stake claims along Toby Creek.

The platinum is found in flakes and as small nuggets mixed with course gold. With platinum worth \$150.00 an ounce and weighing heavier than gold, it requires only a small bottle to hold an ounce of this precious metal.

A note from Doreen (Sinclair) Lamond - November, 2000

“ I remember going into Wing Lees store and seeing all the ‘clutter’ and the cat in the window with the cheese!! I can’t quite remember why we went in- can’t have been for anything to eat! I seem to remember going for fire crackers- the red ones, about all we could get in those days.”
Thank you Doreen, nice hearing from you!