

VALLEY HISTORY

AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

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



BEN ABEL
AN EARLY SETTLER

An early settler in the Valley was William (or Willis) Benson Abel. Old Ben first came to the Brisco area about 1890 and farmed what was later the Watkins Place. (Now the Alfred Trescher farm.) Later, he moved to the property now owned by John and Lisa Niddrie on Westside Road in Invermere. This property was developed by Arthur J. Walker in 1925. The Gordon family owned the property in the 1940's and in 1948 it was purchased by Jim and Peggy Statham. They sold to Joe Conroy in the 1960's. On the south side of Abel Creek, Pat and Ron Cope and their family live on the property that Jack Walker owned. It was here, it was reported, that Mr. Abel planted the

first apple trees to be grown in the valley.

In 1896, Ben Abel went to Golden to purchase supplies for the carrying out of some work at the Swansea Claim near Windermere.

In the latter part of 1897 Ben was returning from Golden to Windermere to complete assessment work on his mineral claims. Samuel Brewer, who holds a two-fifth interest, and Ben Abel,

J. Lake , and G.S. McCarther who each hold a fifth interest in the Swansea Claim have given G.B. Kirk an option on the claim until September. Ben Abel intends on doing some development on the Swansea Claim this season.

Early in 1899 the " Red Lion" group of mineral claims, located on McDonald Creek, (a tributary of Horsetheif Creek) has been bonded to Thomas Starbird for a stated price. This group is owned by Abel, Kinnie & Scott. Rufus Kimpton has arranged a bond on the Mineral King up Toby Creek to W.J. Dowler of Victoria. The Mineral King is owned by Ben Abel of Windermere.

Mr. Abel also did a great deal of prospecting on Dutch Creek and had many claims filed in his name. Ben Abel Creek and Ben Abel Lake are named for him.

Statement given by Ben Abel to B.G. Hamilton on April 12, 1913.

Invermere- Born in Benson, Vermont U.S.A. in 1846, Mr. Abel's restless spirit took him to the Wild West and in 1867 he started out as a driver of a "bull team" across the great American desert.

"In those days, we went in companies of seventy to one-hundred and fifty men, all fully armed and ready to fight at any moment. When the railroad was completed, I found myself out in Denver with my old work of driving bulls all finished and the wagons put upon the scrap heap. I had to hunt for a new job and took to prospecting for minerals. At this work, I wandered all over most of Washington and Oregon and finally came up into the West Kootenay country when the development work was going on, in the year 1884."

From the West Kootenay he sought new fields and came over into the Windermere Mining Division in 1890. From that time until his final illness overcame him, Mr. Abel has devoted his time to prospecting and latterly to farming. He was highly thought of by reason of his straightforward manner of living and was well known locally by his drollness of speech. He had the distinction of being the sole and only owner of the first "Beaver" hat which has ever made the Windermere Mining Division its home.

Mr. Abel died at the Windermere District Hospital on May 22, 1915.

**From The Golden Star
February 3, 1933**

Invermere- The second ice carnival put on by the Hockey Club on Saturday last was very well patronized as was the hot dog and coffee stand under the charge of the Girls Club of Christ

Church, both organizations being well pleased with the proceeds. The prizes were won by the following:

Ladies First- Elizabeth Walker as a witch.

Second- Marjory Foyston as a fairy.

Gents First- Cam Gibson and Alex Martin as Sambo and Sally.

Second- H. Yorke and Joe Pietrosky as hoboes.

Boys Prize – Jack Jones and Leigh Nixon as two Grenadiers.

The skating contest was won by Joe Pietrosky.

**The Building of Galena
Church- Brisco, B.C.**

In the year 1889, Tom Pirie from Ingernall, Oxford County, Ontario arrived in B.C. He decided to stay and took up land in 1894. His fiancée, Agnes, arrived in 1893 and they were married by Rev. Ross, a minister at Donald. They built a large two-story house, built of lumber, on the hill on the southern boundary of the Pirie homestead. (Now the X-N Ranch.)

Agnes Pirie was a staunch Presbyterian and missed her church. She decided a church was needed and necessary in the District so she wrote to the Presbytery of the Canadian Presbyterian Church and asked for advice. As a result, Tom Pirie donated a piece of land at the northern end of the farm. With the help of seven neighboring farmers and volunteer labor, land was cleared, logs cut and some of the logs taken to Golden to be sawn into lumber. 'Building Bees' were organized and the log building was erected. W. Logan, another pioneer, built the pews. Much of the money was raised by Mrs. George McMullain and Mrs. P. Laller who made a signature quilt. To have your

name on the quilt, showed a contribution to the church funds.

On June 18, 1896, the Church was ready. Mrs. Pirie wrote Mrs. Watkins informing her of the service on that day and asked her "To be sure to come and bring refreshments for the lunch after service." Rev. A.D. McKinnon took the service.

Mrs. Pirie died in 1903 when her fifth child was two months old and she is buried in the churchyard. Hers was the second burial to take place there. Mr. Pirie left the Valley he loved and took his five children back to Ontario. He died in 1939 at the age of eighty.

(From – Museum Pioneer Files.)

INTERESTING LOOK AT THE PAST FOUND IN A WHISKY BOTTLE

*(ECHO- 1978)LAKE WINDERMERE
VALLEY*

Dear Editor: I'm forwarding this for the Echo, which may be of interest to some of the "old-timer" Valley residents.

During the month of August 1978, Benjie Martin of Spillimacheen and a couple from Calgary, ventured to explore the "Shangri-la" on the head waters of Dunbar Creek. The weather was deplorable, so they took refuge in my camp. The following day, when the weather broke, Benjie went on a hike. He came upon an old campsite and spotted an old whiskey bottle imbedded in the heather and pine needles. On picking up the bottle, he found these two notes plus a dozen matches wrapped firmly in a cake recipe. The notes are written on two "Dairy Butter" wrappers and the

spelling is exactly as the notes were written.

Note # 1

"Arrived here Sept. 14th 1950. We have been all over the bason. From the north end of it, we looked down into Templeton Creek from off the glacier. Then we turned south and climbed to the somit on the south end of the bason and looked down into No. 3 Creek. We also dun some prospecting but this country is so big a grizzly bare would have to take a lunch to cross it. We are breaking camp tomorrow."

John and Gordon Hart

Note # 2

"You will find a gold pan in this tree if you care to try your luck at panning. But we must warn you to stay off those sandbars on those lakes. They mite be quick sand. You see, the sand bars ar quorts sand, deposited there from the Glacial wash .

Wishing you all the Best of luck,
John and Gordon Hart. "

The Hart Brothers are now both deceased and were a pioneer family of the Brisco area. I am now in possession of the notes, matches bottle and rusty old gold-pan.

Lioel Thompson
Edgewater, B.C. 1978.

A REUNION OF INTEREST

(By Yvonne (McKay) Doane.)

" It happened at the Vandusen Gardens in Vancouver. We gathered for lunch..... looked at old photos and took lots of pictures. Some hadn't seen others for 40+ years. Nine of the early fifties group enjoyed reminiscing and we had some good laughs remembering the old times. Funny how easy you slip back to those "Good Old Days." It was like we had never been apart!

At the gathering was Alice (Duke) Klassen, (she married Lee Klassen who worked at the bank), Mae (Guey) Lee who lived in Athalmer and was cousins to the Lims , Sally (Kamakawji) Lawrence, Ursula (Wehrli) Recksidler from Brisco, Barb(Laird) Pederson, Betty-Ann Rogers , (who was the bank managers daughter in the 50's),Lynn (Tunnaclyffe) Phillips, Myrna (McKay) Buckland, Julie (LaGrand) Denis from Windermere, and Yvonne (McKay) Doane. The day went by too fast, so we plan to do it again next year in mid June. If anyone (including the guys) is interested in joining us for next year's get-together, they should contact Yvonne at: # 28-4460 Garry St.

Richmond, B.C. V7E-2V2.
Or E mail to kdoane@telus.net

We now have a new computer and we are connected to the internet 'free' for one year thanks to the B.C. Connect Program.

Our E-mail address is:
wvmuseum@rockies.net

(compiled by: Sandy McKay)

Youth Canada World Participants

(submitted)

Two young adults participating in the Canada World Youth Program are working at the museum from September 4 to November 15.

They are **Derek Erasmus** from the Northwest Territories and **Sampath Dandeniya** from Sri Lanka.

The program offers the youth a unique international experience. They learn about and develop social and cultural awareness, leadership and work skills.

Both are very keen and skillful and they are learning a lot about the history of the area.

They have restored an ice-box and sewing machine cabinet, built a "rocker" for the mining display, painted posts and signs, and built picnic tables.

Internet
