

VALLEY HISTORY
AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM
BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 342-9769 FEBRUARY 2002

THOMAS STARBIRD
MOUNTAIN VALLEY RANCH

“A Resort of High Standard. Always in Season.”

Thomas 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 and to the head of Horsethief Creek. The Ranch became very popular with visitors enjoying hiking.

In a letter to B.G. Hamilton dated March 14, 1913, Mr. Starbird writes:

Dear Mr. Hamilton,

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 the

Lake that he fairly raved about it. Later the same year, I took 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. All the visitors were again enthralled. Mr. Gleason named the lake after Mrs. Starbird, who to my knowledge, the first white woman who had ever seen the lake. In July or August of 1912 I had the pleasure of taking Mrs. Adami, the wife of Dr. Adami of McGill University of Montreal, along with Miss Adami, her friend Miss Dorothy Martin of Winnipeg and Master Donald Adami in to visit the lake.

In regard to the naming of “Mount Sally Serene”, it was in the year 1901 that I was engaged in building the Horsethief wagon road. Towards the last of July that year I was visited on the worksite by the Hon. W.C. Wells, then Provincial Minister of Public Works. He was accompanied by Mr. E.J. Scovil, the government representative at Wilmer. We took lunch at the roadside at the place where seven mile creek crosses the road. Mrs. Farnham, wife of Pauldine Farnham, of New York who was one of the owners of the Ptarmigan mine, a most attractive woman, was one of our party. As a mark of honor, the Hon. Mr. Wells told Mrs. Farnham in an off-hand manner that he would have named after her any physical feature which she might select. He asked her the name by which she had been known to her schoolmates and she said it was “Sally the Serene.” Sally, being her Christian name and Serene she said she thought had been added on because she was proud. “Very well”, said Mr. Wells jokingly “Make your selection and as the representative of the Government I will do what I can to make the name stick.” Mrs. Farnham then made as her selection the mountain on the east side of the Horsethief Creek. It was at this junction that we turned off to reach the Ptarmigan Mine and she

was quite familiar with the sight of it. Sure enough , the Hon. Mr. Wells made his promise stick and the name “ Mount Sally Serene ” appeared upon the maps of the District.

Yours Truly,
Thomas Starbird.

Invermere, B.C. April 13,1914.

The community was shocked last night by a report of finding Thomas Starbird of Wilmer dead in his bed in his own home. From a note which he left behind and evidences of a bottle found near his bed, the jury brought in a verdict of suicide. The deceased was a prominent mining man who resided in this neighborhood for two decades. Starbird was manager of Ptarmigan mine until it closed. He had wide experience in this work throughout the Western States. He was born in Maine and lived during his boyhood in Haverhill Massachusetts. He leaves a widow and two small sons in the Valley and some relatives in the East. He was a prominent Mason and very much respected.

B.G. Hamilton.

A. E. Fisher General Store

LOCAL CAMERA SHOPS

Cameras have captured and preserved history.

1910-1912- The C.V.I. Purchased the townsite of Invermere in 1911 and it emerged as a business center. Offices and some businessmen relocated there. Such a businessman was Goldie Stewart who had operated a drug store in Wilmer in 1910-1911. In 1912 he built a store in Invermere and moved his stock. “ Goldie Stewarts” store was open for business. He sold drugs, stationary, tobacco, magazines and Kodak Supplies. He also had the latest fashions for men.

1916- The store was sold to Mr. A.E. Fisher. Mr. and Mrs. Fisher had come to Canada from England on the same ship as W. Heap Holland, owner of Fairmont Hot Springs. He was with the work crew coming to Fairmont. Fisher was an accomplished photographer and was responsible for taking many of the early photographs of Fairmont and District. He became the Valley’s professional photographer. A.E. Fisher added Kodak cameras to his stock in his general store and built a dark room and established a film developing service. An able businessman, he joined the Windermere District Board of Trade in 1916, the district Agricultural Association and the Farmers Institute in 1919. He was Secretary of the Windermere District Hospital Association in 1922 and Secretary of Columbia Lodge in 1938.

Mrs. Kitty Fisher was also enthusiastic about his business and supported him and accompanied him on all his outings. They lived above the store and later built a comfortable bungalow on “ Rotten Row” (5 the st.) . In 1929, F.W. Hillier was hired to assist Mr. Fisher in his growing business. Mr. Fisher built a new, larger store in 1935.

Mr. Fisher retired in 1946 but continued to photograph. He was making transparencies (slides) in the 1940’s . Mr. Fisher died in 1959. He had been in business for 30 years. F.W. Hillier carried on the film developing business for a few years.

HAL BAVIN- PHOTOGRAPHER.

Mr. and Mrs. N.T. Bavin and their three teen-aged sons, Ted, Jack and Harry (Hal) arrived from Vancouver in 1922. They bought the Sunshine Ranch, established by Ed Johnston in 1889. Mr. and Mrs. Bavin owned the Ranch for 24 years. They built a comfortable home with a wonderful view, surrounded by lawns, flowers, a lilac hedge and a tennis court. Sunshine Ranch was a popular place for the youth of Athalmer, Windermere and Invermere.

The Bavin boys were very athletic and attended high school in Athalmer.

The Ranch was irrigated and the crop was hay and mixed farming. Mr. Nat Bavin was a carpenter and continued his trade. They sold the farm in 1945 and moved to Invermere.

By 1945, Ted had married and moved to Edmonton. Jack had died. He had become very interested in photography and took pictures of athletic events, the scenery from the Ranch and the surrounding mountains and rivers when on hikes. The family was devastated by his death.

Hal Bavin became a professional photographer from 1942 until his death in December of 1982. He did his own darkroom work. Hal Bavin's sons, John and Patrick, gave their father's entire collection of negatives and slides to our Museum and Archives. Hal Bavin's photos were published in many magazines and won prizes at juried photography shows.

(From the Museum Archives.)

1914- Mr. Arthur Newton

Mr. and Mrs. Newton arrived in the Valley from Scotland. They resided in Wilmer with their children, Jean, Neil and Bunty.

Mr. Newton taught Highland Dancing to the children of the District. He taught the Highland Fling, Sword Dance, Grand March, Flowers in Edinburgh, Eightsome and Four-some Reels, and Sir Roger de Coverley.

He held classes in homes and in the old Svendsen Store building. For many years

he taught on the houseboat that was the R.R. Bruce residence. It was located on the beach at Pynelogs.

Mr. Newton was foreman of Road Construction for the Kootenay National Park.

The Highland pipe Band from Kimberley often came up for the Fall Fair. The members of Mr. Newton's Dance Class performed at the Fall Fairs in Athalmer in the 1920's. In 1926 Paul Bennett and Norah Thompkins were judged to be the best dancers.

Dancing Parties in Homes in Brisco and Edgewater

Fred and Mack Mitchell often held dances. The parents took their children to these dances and there was room for the children to sleep while the parents danced. The Walter Nixon's often held dances too. On October 20, 1920, there was a dance at Stanley Harrison's. The musicians at the dances varied. Sometimes Mrs. George Mitchell on the piano or Stanley Harrison on the organ, Johnny Thorson and his accordion, and Bob Hale and Pat Kelly on the fiddles.

1917- Mr. and Mrs. George Warner of Edgewater gave a Red Cross Dance at their Ranch on Friday night. Some 40 couples were present, coming from all parts of the Valley. Many visitors attended from Athalmer, Windermere and Wilmer on the K.C. Railway speeders. Mr. and Mrs. Sandilands of Wilmer, Miss Gladys Pitts and her sister, Mrs. Owen of Windermere, Mrs. Arthur Taylor of Wilmer, Mrs. Frazer-Criere, J.E. Cornwall and C. Kemprud all of Athalmer were all among those who attended. The evening was so enjoyable that the whole party asked the host and hostess to repeat it at an early date and they would bring a larger crowd.

GOLDEN STAR- MARCH 17, 1933

Edgewater- In spite of the bad traveling on Saturday night, a good crowd turned up at the community hall for the masquerade dance. Some old time dances under the capable management of Walter Nixon were much enjoyed

and the music was kept going in fine style by Hugh Sutton with his drums and H. Voorhoeve at the piano assisted by Mr. Yorke with his violin for the old time dances. Judging the costumes was not an easy matter. There being so many good ones. However, Mrs. Daniken and Mrs. Lorentzen of Luxor, judges for the ladies, finally decided that the Turkish Harem dress was the best and Miss Thompson was awarded the ladies prize. Mr. Yorke, of Invermere, the men's judge, fixed on Kai Nielsen in a clever comic get-up. Mrs. Snyder was in charge of refreshments which were served at 11 o'clock.

WORKING FOR THE C.V.I.

The men who were farmers, up on the Benches,
Are all complaining about dry trenches.
McGuiness said "There's no reason to fret,
Because your fields will soon be wet.
You'll soon get water, you'll all be rich,
We'll abandon the flume and dig a ditch."
When we went up to that flume of tin,
We saw where the sheets had all caved in.
We drove down some hubs, and paced off the
length,
Then began digging with all our strength.
We picked and shoveled and blasted on stone
Till we had an ache in all of our bones.
Then along came McGuiness (that old devil)
He fooled around and set up his level.
He looked down that ditch, we thought was fair,
And said "Now boys, down just a hair."
Just a hair you might think was the surest of
cinches,
But a hair to McGuiness meant about ten inches!
The ditch is finished. Still not enough water.
The rage of the farmers is getting hotter.
The irrigation system is one big joke!
But what can you do when the C.V.I. is broke?

By Ed Merrill - 1943

What's new at the Museum?

In January 2002 Herbert Blakley of Invermere and his daughter Barbra (Buffy) Blakley ,donated an original "Blakleys Bungalow " cabin to the Historical Society in Invermere.

A Short History of Blakley's Bungalows

The first lease was granted to Thomas Alton of Parson B.C. He was a friend of Captain John S. Blakley, son of Alexander Blakley of Golden ,B.C. Mr. Alton built nine bungalows, one being a duplex. They were numbered one to ten. Thomas Alton came to see Captain Blakley to arrange for the Blakley's to run the Bungalows for him. As a result of their conversations Captain Blakley bought them. They were just four walls with no plumbing, heating or wiring. Captain Blakley installed cold water plumbing with one tap and kitchen sink and a bathroom with a flush toilet . (The later over the objections of the Parks people.) They were wired with one light in the main room. Mr. Alton built two more the following year and Captain Blakley built two more the next year. After that, several more were built by the Blakleys at different times up until 1937. After the war, Herbert Blakley built three more cabins and a large house. Captain Blakley gave the bungalows and his other businesses to his three sons and Herbert bought the bungalows from his brothers in 1947. He and his wife, Peggy ran them until April of 1976 when they sold them to Mr. and Mrs. Roland Price. Since then they were sold several times. The last owners were Mr. and Mrs. Ed Hornby, who sold them to Parks Canada. The Parks removed much of the furniture, fixtures and linens etc. then put them up to auction, selling all but eleven of them and selling the remainder of them for \$1.00 each. Buffy and Herbert bought three of them from a subsequent owner and donated Number 19 to the Historical Society.

(Herbert Blakley - January 26, 2002.)

(compiled by Sandy McKay- 2002)