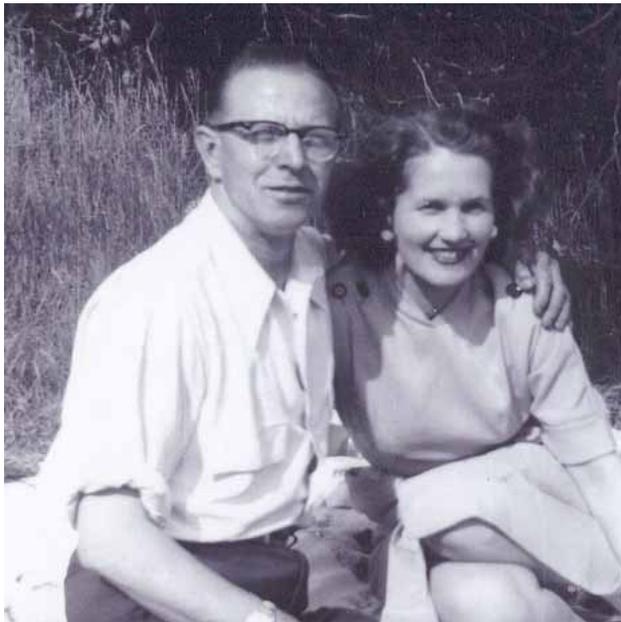


# VALLEY HISTORY

## AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 342-9769 NOVEMBER 2004



### GEORGE AND MAY WILLIAMSON

George was born in Yelling Manor, Bedford, East Anglia England on 7th December 1899. He was adopted by the Williamson's in Norwich City, Norfolk County. He left home when he was 14 and apprenticed at Harland and Wolf, ship manufacturers until he was 16. He returned to England and tried to enlist in the British Navy but was turned down due to his age. He then applied to the Royal Flying Corp which was a brand new service and needed men immediately. Although George reported his age as 18, the attending doctor knew better but approved him anyway. His basic training was minimal and before he knew it, he was a "gunner-observer" flying in Sopwith Camels and Nieuports. He sat behind the pilot in a wicker basket and of course, no parachute. He was involved in

several crash landings and suffered many broken bones. ( In those days biplanes could fly at very low speeds, so they would get close to the ground in the "shot up" plane and then jump out at 40-60 mph.) He re-enlisted after the war in 1918 and spent 2 years in Egypt. After his discharge in 1920 he went back to England and with a partner went into gardening for estate owners.

The CVI in Wilmer was advertising in England for farmers to come to Canada where they were promised fruit farming. One of George's estate owners, a wealthy widow, had a son whom she wanted to move out, so she asked George to take him to Wilmer and financed a farm plot. She told George that she would pay his expenses to B.C. and return to England or anywhere in the world he wanted to go. However, George fell in love with the mountains and liked the rugged newness of the area. He worked at the Paradise Mine (allegedly called the "Pair-o-dice" mine originally) from 1922 until sometime later when Mr. Howard Cleland brought him to the Ford garage operated by the Invermere Contracting Company. He worked there for many years and also operated the town lighting plant. During the second world war when all the eligible young men left to join the services, he became the maintenance man for the Invermere Hotel and the Lake Windermere Campground, as well as movie projectionist for the Saturday movies. (The proceeds of which went to sending cigarettes to the servicemen from the valley.)

In 1927 George met May Starke.

May Starke was the adopted daughter of George and Delphine Starke and as a child,

lived in Wilmer in the house with the water-tower. After her adoptive father died, she and Delphine moved to Montreal. Three years later, 1918, her adoptive mother died. May lived with a French Canadian family and attended a local convent school as a day student. She graduated from the convent and in 1926 she passed the examination by the Academy of Music of Quebec with a laureate in piano, with distinction.

May moved back to Invermere sometime after 1926. May and George were married in Calgary on 22 of June 1929 by Rev. Father John Smith and were attended by Mr. Howard Cleland and Colonel Dennis. After their honeymoon trip in Alberta, they took up residence on the second floor of the CVI building. They later moved next door to the old livery stable offices which were renovated and where their sons Dennis and Derrek were raised.

In 1958 May and George moved to Markham, Ontario and entered the service station business with their son Derrek. They also opened a Dairy Queen franchise.

George eventually retired and after several moves, they settled in Amherstview, Ontario, near Kingston where their son Dennis and family lived. George died on 23 November 1982 at the age of 82. May passed on 10 January 1977 at the age of 89.

*By Dennis Williamson  
Kingston, Ontario.*

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## **Delphine Hotel** **Wilmer , B.C. 1912**

**Commercial and Tourist Hotel**  
**Cuisine and Service a Specialty**

**Rates: \$1.50 and \$2.00 per day**

**George and Delphine Starke, Wilmer,B.C.**

## **THE BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN**

*( by C.D.Ellis )*

John Burman is dead after a turbulent life from within of 84 years. He was born in Sweden, although no one knows his antecedence. He came to the Valley in 1897 as a prospector. Even then he was an eccentric which did not lessen with the years. Perhaps in a more tender and compassionate age he had been affectionately caressed by a rolling pin giving him a quirk in the cranial cavity. Some day maybe a psychiatrist, through the process of psychoanalysis, may find the psychosis ( loose screw ) and standardize mere-man into an obedient faithful servant, but that “ undiscovered bourn ” will be too late for John.

In 1899 John Burman, Sinclair Craig and James McLeod made many mineral locations on Boulder Creek ( now Slade Creek ). In fact, Jim McLeod made so many on his own that the legislation assembly discussed it. It smelled of monopoly in embryo. The most famous claim of the three prospectors were the Heavenly Twins #1 and # 2, Ground-floor and White Cat. They soon dissolved partnerships and the White Cat eventually became the property of the J.C.Pitts Estate.

Things went from bad to worse for John until 1914 when he found himself mixed up in a dispute with an absentee land owner on the lake.

John feared neither God nor man and told them so in the most lurid English at his command. Frequent threats of violence under arms to trespassers, the law decided to take a hand. John came across the lake to J.C.Pitts store at Windermere for his mail. Connel-Moore, sheriff from Golden, assisted by local policeman Wes Dawson were waiting, looking through the window. The sheriff said said to Vaughan Kimpton, “ Do you know that man? ” “ Yes, ” said Vaughan , “

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said to Vaughan Kimpton “ Do you know that man?” “Yes”, said Kimpton, “ that’s John Burman”.

“We may need your help,” said the sheriff. “I don’t want to get mixed up in this”, returned Vaughan. “ You stay here”, said the sheriff and Vaughan stayed.

Just then, John came out and Vaughan said, “ John, this is sheriff Connel-Moore of Golden. Without further ceremony the sheriff grabbed John by the collar. Things began to happen.

John was not a big man but he was strong as dynamite. He swung on the sheriff– who measured six foot four on the rough board floor. John stumbled in his attempt to follow up and fell on top. At this point Dawson came round the corner, giving the prostrate John a vicious kick in the ribs. In excitement , he delivered one to the sheriff– then he heroically piled on top.

The first round over, there appeared to be no second. The group walked peacefully to the Hotel well where they proceeded to wash their blood stained faces. Vaughan, a good Samaritan, lent his handkerchief to wash John’s face. John saw an opening to escape, and he took it. He ran among the buildings, Vaughan followed, leaving the arms of the law more or less folded at the well. He caught up with John at the Blacksmith Shop. Reasoning with him as sometimes a young man may. He was persuaded to give himself up and take his medicine. Which he did.

The next day, manacled hand and foot, he was taken by train to Golden. Vaughan happened to be going down by the same train and he persuaded the police to loose him. As good as his word , John never again gave trouble. He languished in Kamloops jail in the winter, signed a bond to keep peace and he returned home in the spring. During the summer he worked on the Potlatch Claim, joining the Paradise. In August he found a claim of his own–

joining the Paradise on the North. On that claim, for the next 30 years he spent every day of his time and every cent he could secure in pursuit of his rainbow. All those years worn and torn by labor of mind and body. Those who knew him in recent years will only remember the funny old man who walked bent over with two sticks.

In the last twenty years of his life, John Burman drove in through dolomite and quartz a tunnel two hundred and eighty seven feet in length losing himself in the folds and faults of the formation.

John had delusions, a dementia, a dream. Call it what you will. He knows now, perhaps in the future that part of the mountain which seems to be impregnated with ore will come true. In a happier more independent time the silver threads of metal that hold our golden bowl of mountains together may lead to great mines a blessing , a surety of employment to the people.

John belonged to nothing but the simple old-fashioned race. Seven fellow men saw him to his last resting place.

( *Museum Files* )

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***From B.G Hamilton Files***

“ THE SALMON USED TO COME UP TO THIS POINT IN HUGE NUMBERS DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST. THAT MONTH IN THE YEAR 1884 MARKED THE LAST GREAT RUN.

FOR YEARS, THE FLATS WHERE NOW STANDS ATHALMER, USED TO BE COVERED WITH INDIAN TIPIS AND THE SMALL FLICKERING FIRES, TOGETHER WITH THE MOVING LIGHTS IN THE BOWS OF CANOES ON THE COLUMBIA RIVER MADE A WEIRD SIGHT. THE LAST “ GREAT SMOKE ” TOOK PLACE IN 1884”.

( J.L.MCKAY. MAY 13, 1924.)

### Ride on a Handcar

( by B.G. Hamilton. March 19, 1926 )

“ The written information was given me by Eric Gustavus Erickson, the ‘Big Swede’ mentioned”. BG H.

“ Many a man of mark discloses his characteristics at an early age. His determined manner of getting there comes out, and people say he ‘ will be heard from.’ Probably some such remark was made in the fall of 1883, when two dusty figures walked into the primitive settlement of Calgary, then a mere outpost, but full of energy and ambition. It was the period of construction on the Canadian Pacific, with steel at some points, and construction trains operating here and there. But it was a time of grave financial difficulty for the railway, and a new trouble was added by the locomotive engineers going on strike.

A lawyer having an office in Medicine Hat and another in Calgary found himself in the “Hat” with an urgent case coming on in Calgary, over 150 miles away. It was the day before Christmas in the year 1883. He appealed to Paddy Burke, the road master at the “ Hat”, according to the story as told by the ‘Calgary Albertan.’

“ Can you let me have a handcar to make the trip to Calgary?”

“ Sure I can, but you will never make it,” was the reply.

The hand car was produced, manned by section-men out of a job, and Tilley was reached. The crew balked on going farther, and things looked bad. Along came a gigantic Swede, whose nationality was apparent to the most casual listener by his accent , seeking passage to Calgary. The man of muscle and the man of law joined forces and pumped their way toward the sunset. At Shepard they jumped a switch and were delayed but they righted car and soon proceeded on their way. Years afterwards it came out that the men are now known to the world as Sir James Lougheed, Conservative leader

in the Senate, and a leading Calgary lawyer from earliest times, and Gus Erickson, Western Superintendent of the CPR.

( *Museum Files* )

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### **HENRY BONE LEAVES ISOLATED CABIN AFTER 33 YEARS AS TRAPPER**

( Columbia Valley Echo Oct. 28, 1955 )

Henry Bone, who for 33 years has led an isolated trapper’s life in a lonely log cabin near the headwaters of the Kootenay River, has left his wilderness home , to accept a position as caretaker of Wilder Bros. Lumber mill at Radium.

It will be the first winter since 1922 that the 74 year old Mr. Bone has not been in his colorful one-room log cabin near the boundary of the Kootenay National Park. For years Mr. Bone operated a 26 mile trap line from the Park Boundary to where the White River joins the Kootenay, and is the last known professional trapper in the area.

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### **Museum Update**

( *submitted from executive meeting* )

We had a very successful summer, thanks to our summer student, Melissa and our curator Dorothy. They planned three children’s programs, guided and entertained three Elderhostel groups , toured one group of First Nations children as well as greeted 1040 visitors. The theme, “When Nurses Wore Caps”, was very well received.

Year 2009 is the 100th anniversary of Conrad Kain coming to Canada. On Sunday, November 7 at 7 pm, Arnor will be showing slides at the Museum and a discussion will take place as to activities or memorials that could be planned for the anniversary. Every-one welcome . Come with your ideas.

( compiled by– Sandy McKay )