

# VALLEY HISTORY

## AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 342-9769 FEBRUARY 2005



**Eiji and Sadako Kamikawaji**  
December 15, 1934

Eiji and Sadako Kamikawaji, more fondly known as “Casey and Emily” to their friends, were long time residents of the Valley. After moving to the Valley in 1945, they lived and raised their children in the little town of Athalmer.

Like many Japanese Canadians, they had a very interesting life. Eiji was born in the tropical town of Ibusuki in Kyushu, Japan, in 1906. Sponsored by his uncle, he came from Japan at the age of 16 and worked at the sawmill in Golden, B.C. A few years later, his uncle returned to Japan but Eiji decided he wanted to remain in Canada. After seeing his uncle off in Vancouver, he remained in that city for a number of years. There he worked as a ‘house-boy’ in wealthy Vancouver homes so he could attend night school to learn English. In subsequent years, he learned sawmill skills working his way up

until he became a sawyer, a job he had until he retired many years later.

In 1934, he married Sadako Higo, a Canadian born Japanese. Sadako came from a fishing family. Her father had 3 gill-netter boats and her brothers worked with their father. They lived in Eburne, which is now Richmond, B.C. As a young woman, Sadako worked at many jobs such as housework, berry picking and at the fish cannery. When she married Eiji, she became a housewife and mother.

Eiji and Sadako had a family of six children. Their first son, Hideki ( Dick ) was born in Vancouver in 1936, followed by daughters Sachiko ( Sally ) and Mineko ( Minnie ).

When World War II broke out, the Japanese on the West Coast were thought to pose a threat to Canadian Security. Consequently, all Japanese in this area were evacuated to inland communities with only the few personal items they could carry in a rucksack and a few suit-cases. The majority of their belongings, which included homes, vehicles, boats, furniture and monies, were confiscated. Never to be seen again.

Eiji and Sadako and their three children were sent to a remote town called Popoff in the Slokan Valley. During that time, Eiji was sent to a road camp with other young single and married men building roads in the interior. The life in Popoff was a hardship for all. The rows of small single-roomed un-insulated houses were home to many for several years. During this time, the Kamikawaji’s had another daughter Tokiyo ( Suzanne ).

When the war ended, Simon Ronacher

of Athalmer, recruited quite a number of evacuees from the Popoff area to work in his lumber operations. Eiji Kamikawaji was one of them. He moved his family to a small house he rented from Frank Richardson, postmaster and general store owner in Athalmer, which he bought several years later.

Life in Athalmer was a new starting point for the Kamikawaji family. Due to the strong discrimination at the time, the three older children were refused public schooling in May and June of 1945. However, by September, with much support from Simon Ronacher, the children were able to enroll in the Invermere Elementary School.

Eiji worked in the bush camps in the early days, coming home only on weekends. Therefore, the responsibility fell on Sadako to raise the family by herself. It was not an easy task. Many years later, Eiji was able to work in the sawmill in town and share in the responsibilities of raising a growing family. Two years after moving to Athalmer, Naomi ( Nancy ) was born and then several years after that, Hiroshi ( Harold).

Eiji and Sadako raised their children through some very hard times such as the yearly unemployment due to spring thaw or IWA strikes. The one thing that was very important to Eiji and Sadako was that their children get a good education so they could lead productive lives. To this end, they promoted and encouraged their children to be good learners and good citizens. All their children graduated from high school; one went to technical school, one to secretarial school and three earned university degrees.

As the children grew and moved away from home, life became easier for Eiji and Sadako. They grew into a more comfortable lifestyle. They traveled back to Japan and made numerous trips to Alberta and to the coast to see their children. Eventually, grandchildren and great grandchildren came into their lives. All but one of the children

eventually moved away from the Valley, but Eiji and Sadako stayed on in the Valley they adopted as a 'new home' for their family in 1945 and to be with the friends they made over the years.

Eiji ended his sawyer career at Revelstoke Sawmills in Radium Hot Springs at the age of 68. He enjoyed his retirement until he was suddenly stricken with heart failure at the age of 82. After his passing, Sadako moved from the family home in Athalmer to a condominium in Invermere. She passed away in Vancouver in December 1997.

*( written by Sally Lawrence )*

*( picture- Sue Steele )*

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## WEATHER

The late J.S. Johnston, pioneer resident ( and father of Joy Bond ) kept a diary and recorded many interesting weather facts. Among them:

“ In the winter of 1898-99 for 2 weeks following Christmas the temperatures registered -40. Our thermometer would go no lower.”

“ Snow came very deep that winter. It came on November 10 and by April 10 only odd spots of ground showed bare on the south side of the hills. In May, much of the ground was still covered with snow.”

“ On April 10, 1899 Hugh Gordon hauled 1000 lbs. of potatoes from Invermere landing to Windermere, across ice on the lake.”

“But the winter of all winters was the year the elk all died, leaving the Valley strewn with elk antlers. It was about 1866 when there was 12 feet of snow on the level, all over the Valley.”

“ February 15, 1900 , -60 was recorded at the Ptarmigan Mine on McDonald Creek.”

*( J.S. Johnston Diaries- Museum Files.)*

## LONG DISTANCE PHONE

( The Columbian, Wilmer , B.C. Sept. 14, 1911 )

We hear that an extension of the long distance phone is contemplated from Windermere to Cranbrook. This much needed extension will connect the business man of the Valley with its other nerve center just as they are now in touch with Golden.

The Dominion government installed the telegraph between Windermere and Golden in 1901. On December 12, 1905, it was extended to Wilmer where it remained in the charge of Miss McNeil until 1907. It was taken over by Mrs. Allan Pierson and changed into a telephone line doing no telegraph work.

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## Horse Racing Association 1904

The early ranchers had every kind of horses: work horses, pack horses, carriage horses, race horses and riding horses.

Horse Racing and Sports Days were events that were attended and participated in with enthusiasm. The Racing Association was formed and they sold tickets on all races. One such event was held in Windermere in 1904. A half-mile oval in front of the Windermere Hotel was marked out with a plow furrow. A Cigar Race was run, June 11, 1904. Frank Nicholson was up on a horse owned by Alfred Mitchell and Lane Joe, a Kootenay Indian, was on a Cayuse. He and his horse were the winners of many a race between Fort Steele and Golden. Walter Stoddart was up on "Old Goldie" owned by George Goldie. "Old Goldie" was declared the winner that day.

Another Sports Day and Race meet was held in 1904 in Windermere. Jim Stoddart's 'Lightfoot' was ridden by Walter Stoddart. Percy Lake was the jockey on Joe Lakes

'Grey Eagle'. Frank Nicholson was on Alfred Mitchell's "Prince Albert" and Dad Bales horse "Sleepy" also ran.

The Race Track, close to Invermere, ( where the Industrial Park is currently. 2005 ) was constructed by the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitland's Ltd. ( CVI ) in conjunction with the Racing Association. The area was also used as a polo field.

Races were held annually and other festivals were held there. Race horses were brought from Tobacco Plains, Montana and from Golden. Many of the local ranchers entered their race horses. The Indians always raced Cayuses. The Racing Association took bets on the various races.

In 1911, Alex Ritchie's 'Dainty Morsel' took first prize, Jim McKay's 'Fortune Plume' took second and Frank Richardson's ' Friars Charm' claimed third.

Rose Kinbasket, daughter of Chief Kinbasket loved horses and owned many. She always raced one of her Cayuses in every race up and down the Valley. She died in 1917 at the Vancouver racetrack when a horse stumbled and crushed her.

Frank Nicholson, better known as the 'Swede Kid', was one of the most popular and successful jockeys. He had returned from the Boer War where he served as a member of the Strathcona Horse Brigade.

( Museum Files )

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**J.C.PITTS**  
**Windermere ,B.C. 1911**  
Dealer in

**All kinds of Men's Wear**  
**Groceries and Provisions,**  
**Hardware, Tin ware**  
**Stoves of all Kinds**  
**Paints and oils**

**Agent for The Canada Life Assurance Co.;**

## William Heap Holland

Holland was a very wealthy man, descended from generations of English cotton manufacturers.

It was through a friendship in Great Britain with Randolph Bruce that Holland came to Canada in 1910 and purchased R.L.T Galbraith's ranch. Galbraith, who was based in Fort Steele, was selling his land in this valley. Bruce bought the property which included the springs and natural pools. ( Fairmont, B.C. 2005 )

By 1912, Holland had purchased other properties in the Fairmont area and owned 1800 acres which included the Stopping House on the main wagon road which had belonged to Samuel Brewer and his wife. That year he returned to England to organize men and supplies for his new venture. He was convinced that the soil and climate of the Windermere Valley would lead to a successful venture. A representative of Holland recruited men to come to work on the Holland property. Ernest ( Dapper ) Ede was one of the recruits. Head of the project was J.Crawford, Civil Engineer. They proceeded to build the large barn which is near the Mountainside Golf Course. ( 2005 ). They created the most productive ranch in the Valley at the time and had the best available equipment.

At the time Galbraith was divesting himself of the Fairmont property, he was also selling the Windermere Town site which he owned. Bruce and several partners, including Heap Holland and J. Crawford, purchased the property under the company name, Windermere Orchards.

In 1915, Bruce sold the hot springs to Holland and Holland set about developing a "spa" which was popular in Europe. He built a concrete pool, restaurant, tent camp and bungalows to accommodate 70.

Holland visited his property as often as he could but he lived in England and continued to run his cotton mills. In 1947 he transferred the title of the Fairmont property to his son Gerald William Holland, who also chose not to live in Canada. The property was once again sold in 1957.

*( Jaryl McIsaac Files )*

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Many thanks to all of you for renewing your 2005 membership. An extra thank-you for all the generous donations.

*( compiled by Sandy McKay )*