

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 342-9769 November 2006



THE SEYMOURS

(PHOTO-1960)

Jean was born on November 8, 1893 in Kimball, Minnesota to Ezra and Cara Campbell. Jean's father was a cabinet maker. Her mother, toting a black medical bag, travelled around the country side nursing the sick and delivering babies.

Jean herself required intensive nursing when she contacted a poison while picking berries during her 8th grade year. She battled with pain and an extremely low tolerance to light for a year, making it impossible to finish her schooling.

When Jean was sixteen, her family moved to Big-muddy, Saskatchewan. Two years later she tells about carrying kindling from their yard when a young man by the name of Jesse Seymour stopped by to ask if he could help.

Jesse, a native of Springfield, Illinois, had slipped into Canada at the age of eleven, helping to drive mule trains. He had worked his way to Winnipeg where the elderly owner of the Ashdown Hardware Company saw to his formal education. He was looking for

work when he ended up in Big-muddy, at the house of Ezra Campbell.

Three years later, Jean and Jesse were married in that house. But the only Minister available was from the little town just over the border in Montana. The resourceful preacher led the couple right up to "Man and wife" at which point he walked them down the hill to Montana to legalize the ceremony!

Jean and Jesse lived in Rouleau, south of Regina, for many years. Jesse was the town constable and he also ran the powerhouse. When the 1930's hit Rouleau, the Seymours decided to leave the electrical lights and telephones to homestead.

They took their seven children, Hubert, Gladys, Alvin, Howard, Isla, Lorne and Gayle to Lintlaw, Saskatchewan.

While Jesse ("Jack of all trades, master of none") built their home, the family lived with an elderly bachelor, Andy Towns in a sod roof abode. It was here that the youngest member of the family, Alice, was born.

Their closest neighbours were a half a mile away. So was the school. "We were so back woodsy that sometimes it was impossible to get a teacher," Jean's daughter Isla Broadfoot recalled.

In the summer, a student minister might arrive. United, Anglican, Baptist or Pentecostal, it made no difference. The whole community would turn out.

The Fitzpatricks, (now of Athalmer) were neighbours 4 miles away.

In summer the huge gardens were tended. The children snared partridge or hunted for rabbits. They recalled a collie, the family pet, " who had a different bark for people or

partridge. If it was a partridge bark, we'd grab our snares and run!"

In March of 1948, "the year of the big flood", the Seymour's moved to Athalmer. Someone had told Jesse in Calgary that Simon Ronacher was hiring at the mill.

In 1950 Jesse and sons Howard, Alvin and Lorne formed "Seymour and Sons." It was a bush operation with their own lumber mill using horses to help fall or haul the trees.

After Jesse started the business he left it in his son's hands and retired, with Jean, to Westside Road outside Invermere where he lived until 1963. (house presently owned by Daniel Zurgilgen-2006)

In November 1983, Jean was 90 years old. Her family enjoyed dinner at the C.E. Centre. Coq au vin and other delicious dishes were prepared by Jeff and Colleen Fraser. Well wishers arrived for cake and coffee and to wish Jean a happy birthday.

(from The Lake Windermere Valley Echo-1983)
Museum Files
(Thank-you Alice (Seymour) Stewart)

TOBY CREEK

The following information is from a postcard from Elizabeth Parker, Winnipeg, to B. G. Hamilton, Invermere, dated February 21, 1912.

"Captain Armstrong told me that Dr. Toby came in 1864, the first white man after, and so long after- David Thompson. I made a note of it immediately. I have been told by some whose names I forget that he was a rough sort- a prospector and adventurer- but I think Captain Armstrong would tell you how he came by this information."

With kind regards,

E.P.

Further information is from a letter dated February 6, 1912 from Mr. Fleet Robinson

of the Geographic Board for British Columbia:

"The name was given so many years ago that I have been unable to find its origin. I have asked Mr. William Fernie, formerly Gold Commissioner to the E. Kootenay as to the origin of the name, but he could not tell me. He says the creek had that name when he first saw it in 1864.

David Thompson who wintered near the present Athalmer in 1807, shows the Creek on his map, made at that time, but does not give it a name. Thompson does show the mountain directly west of Wilmer (with two peaks) and it is marked on his map as Mount Nelson."

(Museum Files)

PICTOGRAPHS

Pictographs are drawings made by young Natives long ago on rocks or cliffs as a part of a sacred puberty ritual. Young men and women thirteen years and older were subjected to a series of rituals which included fasting and praying in hopes of seeing a spiritual vision. Pictographs are believed to be drawings of events seen in these visions and dreams.

The main color used to draw the figures was red, an omen of good luck. In this area, the pigment ochre was collected from the Vermillion Paint Pots in what is now Kootenay National Park. This was mixed with animal fat and affixed to the rock or wall with fingers. Young men left their drawings mainly above water or near streams, while girls found secluded places near trails or behind bushes.

Several pictographs exist at Columbia Lake and in Kootenay National Park. The location of the drawings found near Iron Gates Tunnel has been lost and the

pictographs have not been located for a number of years. At Columbia Lake, they are found on the east side of the lake. These pictographs may be over 300 years old and were left by members of the Kootenay Tribe, who were the first people to settle in the district.

It is said that when the highway through Sinclair Canyon was constructed, a Native pictograph on the canyon wall was destroyed. It is supposed to have depicted the Native legend of how Flying Bird, son of Chief Eagle Wings, fell to his death in Sinclair Canyon, known then as "The Place of Silence," while the young man was on a hunting trip.

(Museum Files)

COLUMBIA VALLEY TIMES NOVEMBER 31, 1912

"A well attended regular meeting of the Farmers Institute was held on Thursday afternoon in Frank Richardson's dining room. Sam Brewer, vice-president presiding. Among those present were Capt. and Mrs. Phillips, Messres. Alex Ritchie, Frank Richardson, C. D. Ellis, G.C. H. Coleman, Charles Johnston, Joe Lake, E. Tunnacliffe, G.F. Stalker, H.H. Peters, B.G. Hamilton, J.N. Dunn, Walter Stoddart, A.G. Cuthbert, Alfred Mitchell and T.W. Turner, Secretary.

CAPTAIN HOULGRAVE

(TOBY BENCHES)

Captain Houlgrave brought a little wife out from England who had never been used to doing her own work. Capt. Houlgrave had a hot temper and was always fighting with Jack Barbour! The Houlgraves had 3 children and after the 1914 war, they moved to Wilmer for schooling. Mrs. Houlgrave died in childbirth and the ranch sold several times. It is presently owned by Albert Cooper. (2006).

(Phyllis Falconer Files)

MR. AND MRS. OSWALD MCGUINNESS

Mr. Oswald McGuinness was born in Liverpool, England on June 11, 1889. He left England in May 1891 to move to Belleville, Ontario with his family. His father, Robert Augustine McGuinness, and his mother, Catherine Theresa McGuinness— nee Morgan— settled there with him and three of his brothers.

He first came to British Columbia in May of 1907 in search of adventure and a career. He found both and has lived in British Columbia ever since.

His first adventures occurred on the trip into this valley. He came down the Field hill in an old steam-engine train, which often times ran away. He made the last leg of his journey on the sternwheeler Ptarmigan which travelled up the valley to Wilmer. He arrived in the Valley when it was barely known.

His first employers in B.C. were Haffner and Wurtele. This partnership aided him in his training as a civil engineer. While working for them, Mr. McGuinness located and helped construct the Banff-Windermere Highway, now Highway 93. He named Lake Olive, near the summit of the pass in honor of his aunt.

In 1915 he married Catherine Grace Inglis. They had 2 sons and 2 daughters.

Mrs. McGuinness was born on September 7, 1890 in Wilkinson Washington. Her parents David and Elizabeth Inglis moved their family of two boys and four girls to the Vernon area in the summer of 1891.

Mr. McGuinness was involved in many projects to open up the west. He helped build the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad out of Edmonton and aided in the establishment of an irrigation system in the Okanogan

For his own pleasure he traced the exploratory routes of Father Desmets and David Thompson. He found historical relics left by both.

While with his son and brother, Father Robert McGuinness, he found a cross erected by Father Desmets. He also found an undercut made by one of David Thompson's party.

Locally he supervised the development of the first water system, helped establish a school and assisted in establishing the Athalmer Church.

Before moving to Invermere the McGuinnesses owned a cabin at Dutch Creek and in 1948 built the Totem Cabins at Fairmont which they operated until Mr. McGuinness retired.

His main complaint, other than the usual increasing postal rates, cost of living and taxes, is that most people misspell his name!

(Museum Files)

SCHOOL TIMES

(BY FRANCES ASHWORTH)

The Athalmer-Invermere School, which opened on September 1926, provided the bare necessities for learning: 2 classrooms, plus 2 basement play rooms with adjoining toilet facilities. The sexes were segregated during recess. There was no library. I don't recall one during my entire school career in Invermere. We used our own or friends' books for information beyond what the texts supplied.

Sporting equipment consisted of a couple of footballs, some baseballs and bats. There was no gym and as we got into high school we enjoyed basketball with the David Thompson Fort providing the indoor court. The winters were very cold in the 1930's so the huge fireplace provided the only source of heat. Some girls were hardy enough to wear shorts. Henry Newcomen was one of our coaches.

Of course there were no school buses. Students walked from Wilmer, the Benches and across the ice from Windermere. Often

weather was a very legitimate excuse for staying at home !

Teachers in those days were expected to lead an exemplary life and one of the first questions a prospective teacher was asked was " Do you attend Church and if so, which one?" It seemed to me that there was a high ratio who were members of the United Church; the same public spirited citizens served on both boards. (my father included) Teachers were expected to become involved in extra-curricular activities, often spending Saturdays accompanying groups on hikes then on Sundays teaching Sunday School.

An outstanding example was Winnifred Harrop who arrived in September, 1927. She introduced us to Mt. Swansea , the Blue Lakes, and Panorama, mainly through group outings of the C.G.I.T. which she formed.

The most lovable teacher was Miss Margaret McQueen. Because of her kind and forgiving nature, she was the target of many practical jokes and her students never forgot her. Thirty years later, on the death of her husband, she received a sympathy note from each of her 1932 Grade 8 students.

Miss McQueen was subject to head colds, as most of us were. In the thirties we used handkerchiefs, (nothing fancy, perhaps a piece of disposable rag, except for Miss McQueens) as this was before the advent of Kleenex..... Separating two grades in a lower classroom was a pot-bellied stove ,a large one, and the protective ring around the perimeter doubled as a super efficient clothesline for her hankies..... The adjoining washroom had been used first of course, for rinsing them out. I can still see her, feeling the hankies on the rail, finding a dry one for re-use.

By – Fran (Ashworth) Jeffery

(compiled by—Sandy McKay)