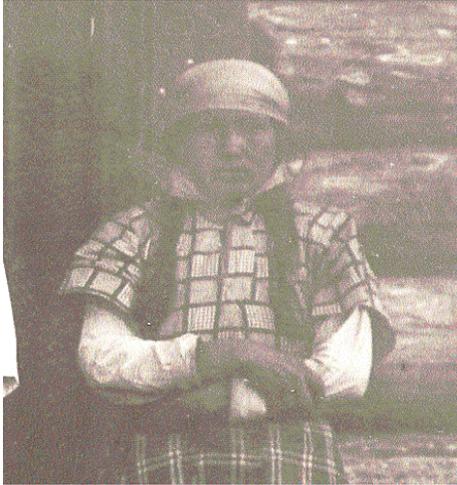


**VALLEY HISTORY**  
**AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM**  
**BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 250-342-9769 November 2011**



**Sophia Sam**  
**( Mrs. Dominic Nicholas )**

The woman with the sweet , kind face, her hair in neat braids on her shoulders, does not speak English. She sat quietly in my office while her husband translated my questions in English into their Kootenay dialect and then her face would lighten and her hands would illustrate what she wanted me to know, as she replied in her Kootenay tongue.

She is Mrs. Dominic Nicholas, and her hands are in themselves a picture of this woman's life. Long and slender, they are careworn and wrinkled. It is easy to imagine that they have soothed many a child, worked with axe and buckskin needle, tended many fires and cooked many meals. They are beautiful hands.

Sophia is the daughter of Sam David and Mrs. Catherine Sam. Her mother was born in the Findlay Creek country and her father was a local Indian but she does not know where he was born. They were married by a mis-

sionary priest at what is now Cranbrook. Eight other couples were married at the same time. They lived at Sam's Creek ( now known as Madias Creek- 2011 ) and Sam's Landing at the southern end of Lake Windermere which was named after him. Mrs. Sam lived to be 103 and her daughter cared for her for many years.

Sophia Sam was born in a little log cabin in June, 1888. One of her first memories is of snow shoeing in the mountains while hunting with her parents. She remembers their gardens, three small patches of ground where the earth was broken with an axe because there was no plough, and peas and corn were planted there, and she remembers how salmon were speared in the lakes and smoked and dried on racks and then put in sacks and hung on racks high in the tree-tops where wild animals could not get them. She has ridden horseback since she was three.

Sophia was the youngest of six children. She was a sickly child so was never sent to the Mission School. That is why she does not speak English. But sickly though she may have been, she has outlived her two brothers and three sisters. She herself has borne seven children.

Mr. and Mrs. Dominic Nicholas live on the Columbia Lake Reserve near Fairmont. They are Kootenay Indians. The word Kootenay in their own tongue is K'Tunaxa ( pronounce Tunaca ) and meaning strangers or people from beyond the hills. They met at the St. Eugene Mission and were married in the Mission church. Afterwards they returned to the Valley and lived on the farm belonging to Mrs. Nicholas' parents.

She told me stories of her childhood. "We wore mostly buckskin and of course moccasins. There were no beads to be obtained for decoration so they died porcupine quills with grasses and roots and decorated their garments with them. She remembers having one doll made and dressed entirely in buckskin. The boys played with bows and arrows and a favorite game was to shoot a target with an arrow through a rolling hoop. Birthdays were reckoned by the new year. After every new year, they were one year older. They knew about the new year, she said, by watching the Peigan Indians celebrate it with special dances. The Peigan Indians came from Alberta, stole horses from the Kootenays and were enemies.

Mrs. Nicholas recalls a particular Prayer Dance that was done also. The prayer was to the Sun God because at that time most of the Indians were not Christian.

The Kootenay Indians have the reputation for doing the best tanning in the world and I asked Sophia about it. She described the long slow process. First the hair was scraped from the skin using a rock scraper. Then the skin was soaked in rain water to clean it of blood. When clean, it was hung up and left throughout zero weather, then it was put in rainwater again and scraped well. Then the rubbing process began and only the flesh side was rubbed. Never the skin side. That, she says, is what produced the softness for which their tanning is renowned. Sophia has done a great deal of bead work and has taken many prizes at the Fall Fairs.

I asked her about the brush piles on the Armstrong Range where a passing Indian, by tradition, always places a twig or branch. It is a prayer that the travelers would travel with-out mishap.

Before Mrs. Catherine Sam( Sophies mother) died in 1950, I saw a little paper notebook, kept like a family Bible. It recorded her age in circles representing each year of her life. The months had been counted with beads hung on a buckskin thong. One

bead for each moon until it became a year.

Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas celebrated their Golden Wedding in June 1957 with a family banquet at their home. They have nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

There are few others in the Valley whose family history goes back farther than Mrs. Nicholas' within the confines of the Rockies and the Selkirks. She cannot recall much of her parents' early life but she knows they were local Indians.

( Winn Weir Files )

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### **Colorful Life of John Jaeggi**

( By Berta Moore )

John Jaeggi came from Switzerland to Banff in 1924 and worked as a mountain guide for the Alpine Club. Later he became an outfitter for travel riders, a guide for hunters, and a farmer on some land near Edgewater, where he grew potatoes and alfalfa . It was a Valley that reminded him of his native country . He was also the operator of the highest tearoom in the Canadian Rockies-at 7500 ft. on Sulphur Mountain near Banff.

Water had to be carried by packhorse from a spring on the mountainside and provisions brought up the same way. His customers were happy to pay the 5 cents a glass charged for water. Some 1200 persons a year climbed up to John's teahouse. They were presented with a certificate when they reached the top under their own steam.

In 1946 John began operating a Fordson tractor pulling a two-wheeled trailer which carried about twelve persons up to the half-way house from which they walked the rest of the way to the top.

In 1949 John married Edith Ashton, owner of the Upper Hot Springs Hotel. Together they dreamed of seeing more thousands of people enjoy the view from the top of Sulphur Mountain.

In 1957, John's tender, bid by a group of Swiss Investors, was accepted ( Canadian Investors were not interested.) In 1958 the gondola lift was completed and since then hundreds of thousands of people have seen the view John loved so well. The little tea-house has been replaced by a modern chalet. John saw his dream in action only 3 years. In 1961, while holidaying in Las Vegas, he was struck down in a traffic accident and Mrs. Jaeggi was badly injured.

A plaque is affixed to the wall of the tea-house atop the mountain honoring the memory of John Jaeggi. It was unveiled by Regional Superintendent, B.I.M. Strong before company officials and friends of Mrs. Jaeggi on July 17, 1964.

John used to tell stories of when he first started work in Canada as a guide. He found his duties included other duties, such as saddling and packing horses—of which he knew little. So , he used to get up at 3 a.m., before daylight to practice these arts.

At Edgewater, on his farm, was a pig which followed him everywhere. One evening when he was walking to Edgewater for a dance, he looked around to find the pig following him so he had to tie it up to a fence and collect it on his return home.

Conrad Kain advised John to find a home in the Columbia Valley. Kain lived at Wilmer. Thus John bought the Archie Smith farm.... 'The Chinese Ranch' near Edgewater, B.C.

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**December 17,1938-** "You will be pleased to learn that Harry Peters made a nice clean-up of prizes in potatoes and field crops at the Vancouver Winter Fair. He got a first and second in Netted Gems, Certified Seed and fourth in commercial potatoes. Kenneth Marples got a third in Columbia Russet certified seed."

## History of the Paradise Mine

( by B.G. Hamilton 1926 )

" It is just ten years since the old miner and prospector, Tom Jones, passed over to the real Paradise, from the early paradise he named, perhaps rightly, but spelled wrongly."

Tom Jones, familiarly known as 'Blanket Jones' because he never carried a tent, only a blanket when out prospectin, had been amongst those men at the WildHorse gold rush, but not finding a good enough stake, he had gone on all through the South-eastern Kootenays. He struck Toby Creek and worked up into the headwaters of Spring Creek. At this time he had grub-staked two men, Johnnie Watson and John Jeffrey. They first staked the claim Royal Stag, then another claim close by. They brought down samples of the sand to show Tom Jones who was acknowledged as the best authority on prospects. Watson and Jeffrey gave Jones 1/3 interest in their claims in return for past kindnesses he had shown to them. Jones decided to call the claim "Paradise" because it was so near the sky and if they did well, they would be able to pave the streets with gold. However, as Jeffrey and Watson were the original finders, they went down to record the claim and being more familiar with the game of chance than with the spelling book, they spelled it paradise with a 'c' as in dice.

About this time, a mining engineer named R .Randolph Bruce was working through the Kootenays in the interests of Messrs. Osler, Hammond and Nanton, Mining Brokers of Toronto and Winnipeg. Mr. Bruce got in touch with Tom Jones who sold out the three claims to Messers. Hammond and Bruce under the name Paradise Mine.

A wagon road was built to Pinehurst ( Jackpine ) where stables, bunkhouses and

general storehouses were built for the mine. From there an 8 mile switchback wagon road was built to the mine in the basin of Spring Creek. A workers camp was built at the mine site comprising of a cookhouse, bunkhouse, store houses, an office and a recreation house.

In the early years, the ore was mined in the summer and raw-hided from the mine to Jackpine then hauled by sleigh in the winter to the loading site for the river boats. In the spring it would be shipped to Trail for smelting.

Because of the high cost of shipping and a financial panic in the U.S., the mine was closed in 1907 and didn't re-open until 1916 following the completion of the Kootenay Central Railroad.

In 1917 Mr. Bruce became the sole owner and upon becoming Lieutenant Governor in 1926, he divested himself of his mining properties. The mine was sold to Mr. Pat Stewart and Associates.

( Museum Files )

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#### **Valley News— Invermere 1942-1945**

“Travel has never ceased to thrill Pte. Molly Engler of the Canadian women’s Army corps, whose adventuresome spirit has led her into practically every European country. Born in Holland, Pte. Engler received her education in Holland, Italy, Switzerland, France and Belgium. After graduating in Animal Husbandry she embarked on an independent tour of Spain, Yugoslavia, Italy, Greece, North Africa and the Balkans. In Feb. 1939, she came to Canada as a tourist and traveled through British Columbia in a Model A Ford.

Versatile in her talents as in her travels, Pte. Engler worked for a short time in every country she visited-raising chickens, translating, teaching French, weaving and finally settling in Invermere to raise angora rabbits. Pte. Engler enlisted in the CWAC in August 1943.

## **Home Children in Canada**

Do you have a granddad, or uncle or just an acquaintance who seems to have no background and like ‘Topsy’ just ‘grewed’? In the early to mid 1900’s many children, boys and girls, from the United Kingdom were labeled orphans and sent to Canada and other Commonwealth countries. Upon arrival they were assigned to a family and began a new life. That new life was dependent on the new family.

Some of these orphans were treated poorly, working long hours on farms, sleeping in sheds, barns or porches and not receiving an adequate amount of food. Others were fortunate and arrived in loving homes, immediately becoming an accepted part of the family unit.

Whatever their fate these youngsters knew little of their ‘real’ background. Brothers and sisters were separated and knowledge of other relatives suppressed. The result was that many chose not to divulge the fact that they were Home Children. Their ancestry was lost.

Today doors have opened allowing descendants of the Home Children to search out parentage, siblings, and even ship documents. Today the descendants of Home Children are learning about their ancestry and putting whole chapters in their Family Stories.

If you have an individual you think may have been a Home child, contact the museum and Dorothy or members of the Genealogy group will aid you in your search. Who knows what you will find !

Remember.... You can choose your friends but you are stuck with your family. Maybe it’s time you got to know them !!

( Dorothy Blunden— Curator )

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( compiled by Sandy McKay )