

# VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

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## Cyril Stanley Ratcliffe 1882-1982

Cyril Stanley Ratcliffe lived in Wilmer from 1910 to 1912 and in Invermere afterwards until August 1914.

He was born December 21st, 1882 at Great Yeldham, Essex, England where he received his education. Following that, he helped in his father's foundry and workshop prior to joining his brothers making bicycles and motor cycles and also repairing motor cars.

He gives no particular reason for emigrating to Canada in 1910 but he said he was venturesome and wished to broaden his mind. Along with a friend he was interested in acquiring and farming land in Canada but eventually followed some advice to stick to his own trade.

In Wilmer Mr. Ratcliffe did not do much but was a partner with George A. Stark in some small undertakings. ( Mr. Stark was then manager of the Delphine Hotel in Wilmer where Mr. Ratcliffe stayed .) He

enjoyed the excellent shooting in the district. On one of his shooting expeditions he got lost for very many hours but eventually came to the C.V.I. sawmill where Frank Stockdale loaned him his own horse to get back to Wilmer. He says that much of his shooting was in the area of the old Tom Starbird Ranch. He much enjoyed curling and playing hockey in both Wilmer and Invermere .

After George Starke gave up management of the Wilmer Hotel he took over the Invermere Hotel and was succeeded by Al ( Dinty ) Moore who became very close friends with Cyril. Al's son Frank, during his overseas service in the Second War spent a week of leave with Cyril at Colchester in England.

In 1912 Cyril was engaged by Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruit Lands Ltd. to drive and maintain their large Packard motor cars which were to be based at Invermere and their main purpose was to be used when showing potential settlers to the companies irrigated lands on the benches. The Company moved from Wilmer to Invermere in 1912 and afterwards had a new garage built for their motor cars. Cyril then moved to Invermere and stayed at the Invermere Hotel. While in Invermere he often went with Mac Craig, in season, to shoot ducks for the Invermere Hotel. In 1913 Cyril's brother William joined him at Invermere. At first William drove cars for George Stark and Cyril, and also worked on the C.V.I. cars from time to time. The brothers purchased and brought to Invermere a new Franklin car. It was air cooled and was for their private and taxi use. There is a cast iron sign plate in the Windermere and District Museum at Invermere with names " Ratcliffe Bros., Invermere. B.C. "

The brothers are Cyril and William but in 1982 Cyril says he knows nothing about it. Cyril speculates that it was probably obtained by William from his father's foundry in England but for what purpose he has no idea. Upon declaration of the First Great War in August 1914, Cyril offered his services to U.K. forces and was accepted. He then returned to England permanently and during the war was engaged on munitions and food production.

After the war he went into business for himself and was very successful.

In September 1982 he lives in the Balkerne Rest Home in Colchester, Essex, England. He is very alert mentally but has limited use of his legs. He speaks in most glowing terms of the Lake Windermere District and his experiences there.

His daughter, Mrs. June Bishop visits Cyril often and takes him out in her car two or three times a week. Mrs. Bishop has a son Richard, living in Calgary.

Cyril Ratcliffe died on November 2, 1982.



William Ratcliffe was born in 1889 at Great Yeldham, Essex, England. He was educated there and became an engineer in his father's foundry and workshop. He was unusually adaptable. He came to Invermere in 1913 to take care of taxi transport for his brother Cyril and George Stark. He also helped Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruit Lands Ltd at Invermere with their motor cars. He had greatly impressed the Company by doing a very tricky job on a motor car axle.

In 1916 he went to Cranbrook and entered a garage business partnership with Thomas M.R. Stewart who was then a bartender at the Invermere Hotel. ( By the way, Tommy was at one time saved from drowning by William

Ratcliffe. )

Their business was sold in 1948 and William later acquired the Bluebird Inn property in Cranbrook.

William had been quite ill for some time prior to his death in 1953. He was a long time member of Columbia Masonic Lodge No. 38 at Windermere and he was buried under Masonic auspices in West lawn Cemetery at Cranbrook. He was unmarried.

( Submitted by D. Charles Howell following a visit to Mr. Ratcliffe at Balkerne Gardens Rest Home at Colchester, Essex, England on September 8th, 1982. )

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## R.L.T. Galbraith, Indian Agent

Robert and John Galbraith were renowned businessmen at Ft. Steele in its boom time. R.L.T. Galbraith was also the first owner of Fairmont Hot Springs and the town site of Windermere. The following information is from an interview B.G. Hamilton had with Gallbraith.

### December 31, 1919

“ Mr. Galbraith told me that he was an Ulster Scotsman. That he had had six years in the court of the Chancery as clerk and that his health broke down and that he was told he must go to a dryer climate which finally landed him in the Kootenay River Valley. He arrived at his present home of Ft. Steele in 1870, his brother John having arrived there four years before him.

They had four trading posts, one at what is now the mouth of the Wild Horse, one at St. Joseph's Prairie which is now Cranbrook and two others not far away. He said the medium of exchange was entirely gold dust, that the Hudson's Bay paper money had not penetrated to this post. The unit of trade with the Indian was a beaver.

In speaking of the Shuswaps who occupy the reserve to the North of what is now Athalmer, he said that he could not definitely determine the date of their arrival but that they had come in under Kinbasket. That he had learned through conversing with him

( Kinbasket ) that he had had a dispute with the Chief at Shuswap and had come across the Eagle Pass with his immediate family. This he calculated to be between the years 1830-1840. The Kootenays told him that when they first saw the Shuswaps that they were clothed in the skins of wild animals. The Kootenay, Mr. Galbraith said, never had keekwillies, that they always lived in tipis. It was only the Shuswaps who lived in keekwillies and that the Kootenays confirmed this statement. ”

**December 11, 1923  
From R.L.T. Galbraith**

The following is the correct information regarding the camels in B.C. obtained from Mr. James R. Anderson ex Deputy Minister of Agriculture. He writes:

“The camels were brought here to B.C. in 1863 by Frank Laumeister, Adam Heffley and Henry Ingram. They were purchased from the U.S. Government in Arizona . They were a complete failure. Their feet were not made for rocky roads. The long hills up and down were against them. Twenty head in all were brought in . They were only adapted for sandy soil. They were brought overland through Kamloops. Adam Heffley took up a farm on the North River 12 miles north of Kamloops and was prosperous. He dropped dead on Yates St. Victoria in 1872 in front of the American Hotel.

Henry Ingram took up a ranch at Grand Prairie 40 miles east of Kamloops and was successful. He bought good property which has since been squandered by other families. He took some of the camels to his place. In 1881 there were 3 females left. In a few years afterwards they all passed away. Ingram and Heffley were Americans.

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**Athalmer Bridge– March 15, 1913**

The highway bridge over the Columbia River on Sifton Ave., Athalmer, is being built. Twelve men under the supervision of David Bales are doing the work. 100 piles, 20 feet wide, 139 feet long and 30 feet above the river.

**Information related by Ed Johnston, August 1922 for the Vancouver Province:**

“ What a West it was ( with a sigh ), in the days when we were young. West of Mississippi the plains to Saskatchewan were black with buffalo and the whisky-runners and free trader were filling every boat on the Missouri-Mississippi with deck loads of their hides. First killed for meat, then for its robe, and lastly as a means to confine the Indians to reserves, the noble beast was almost extinct when I came to B.C. They crossed the Rockies, too, further south, where the range is broken. Up here even, I have found their skulls, mostly of old bulls driven out by the younger ones. Buffalo meant wolves, thousands of them, and they were a dreadful plague to the first cattle men. All the northwest states and this province were, before the CPR came through, in the eighties, a placer miner’ and cattle raisers’ home was only stopping places on travelled pack train routes. And though there was a boundary line, it meant little to the stampeders and packers until customs officers were placed on it.

Delphine, the famous wife of George Starke, first white woman prospector in the Kootenays, died but last summer, but she will be remembered for long in the high peak and glorious glacier named in her honour. It lies just behind David Thompson’s Mount Nelson, which you can see in the near distance guarding this lake of his first fort west of the Rockies. George Starke was a fine fellow, worthy of such a wife. He was born in Quebec in 1854 and came west in 1880. From 1882 he made this valley his home. He met Delphine in Golden in 1894 and took to liking her. She wasn’t ready to marry, however. They separated and met again at Pilot Bay in 1895 where George renewed his suit. This time she took him and they were married in Nelson in 1896. The following year they returned to this valley, coming over by Wells or ( now ) Earl Grey Pass and purchasing the Morigeau claim. George re-christened it, as he did

most things and places, the 'Delphine'. He built the first hotel at Windermere, Wilmer, Athalmer and Invermere and his help and hope of success was ever Delphine.

When I sold my original location ( Elkhorn Ranch ) to Hon. Fred Aylmer in 1884 I established the Hog Ranch and George Starke joined me there. But wait a minute, let me tell this experience first. Canyon Creek, like Toby, a feeder of the Columbia, was the scene of a rush in 1884 by miners from Wild Horse. Few reached it, the season being unseasonable for a stampede. In 1884 came some buffalo hunters into this valley and reported finding gold in Canyon Creek. With Tom Lildeck and Jeff Adams, I made for it and it paid about an ounce a day, above the Pot Hole, for a time. If the records are looked up , the Discovery claim may bear my name."

( Museum Files )

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### From " Valley News "

#### March 1943- Canal Flat

"The Solid Fuel Control project of salvaging tie ends and lumber waste in the Canal Flat vicinity for the past two years closed down this month with completion of the Marwell Construction Co.'s contract. As orders come in, shipments from the 40,000 cord slab stockpile standing in the Canal Flat depot will continue with local men and trucks on the job. In operation for emergency fuel for the past couple of years, the project has supplied city emergency stockpiles for many Western Canadian centres. All this winter's shipments went to Saskatchewan."

#### November 1945-

" A deal of interest in Windermere is the purchase by Vaughan Kimpton from Alexander Ritchie of Invermere of the old Windermere Race Course, known as the Clark Place, which adjoins the Windermere Town site. This property, which joins the Kimpton Estate , gives Mr. Kimpton considerable frontage on Lake Windermere."

## 1914

The idea of a railroad running up the Kootenay-Columbia Valley was first considered early in the century ( 1900 ) not long after the Crows Nest Pass Line was completed. Col. Hungerford Pollen, a well known figure in the area at that time, was head of the company formed for this purpose. Little action was realized though, and it was not until the charter was sold to the Canadian Pacific Railway that any real action came about.

The C.P.R. survey called for the new line to branch off from the Crows Nest Line five miles south of Wardner and continue along the Kootenay Valley, close to the river, to Fort Steele. From there, it was to go to Wasa, Canal Flat, the Windermere Lake area and all the way to Golden where it would connect with the main line.

It is not certain when construction actually began, but by 1912 the line had progressed as far as Fort Steele and a train service was inaugurated from there to Fernie.

In 1913, the survey had progressed as far as Invermere and on December 3, 1914, the last spike connecting the steel on the Kootenay Central was driven a few miles south of Athalmer. At this time, a biweekly service was inaugurated from Cranbrook right through to Golden.

( Museum Files )

The Windermere Valley Museum's Summer Theme is " 100 Years of the Kootenay Central Railway " which has connected the Valley to the main C.P.R. tracks in Golden and Cranbrook. We are looking for pictures that your families might have taken of trips on the train or arrivals at the Station in Athalmer. Also, we are interested in memories of the train, whether it was a ride, or purchasing tickets, or meeting family at the station or being met at the station or just watching the train go by.

( compiled by Sandy McKay )