

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 February 2017 250-342-9769



Ethel and Howard Cleland 1912

When Dorothy and I said we'd do this "Irish" program, I thought I'd find several Irish pioneers to tell you about. It turns out that the Irish didn't get to this valley early on. So, I'll tell you about my Grandparents, Ethel and Howard Cleland.

I'm not sure if he qualifies as Irish as he was a fifth generation Canadian. John Cleland, the first to immigrate, brought his family to Canada before 1830, from county Armagh, Northern Ireland. The Mullin side of the family came in 1846..... Also from County Armagh.

The Clelands settled in Lachute, Quebec and many of them were house painters. Howard, however, went to business school in Ontario. In 1909, he came west to Calgary to work in the CPR Lands Department office. He came with B.G.Hamilton to Wilmer in 1910. They worked in the C.V.I. office. In later years he was private secretary to Randolph Bruce (1915) and was in partnership with him in several business ventures. Howard Cleland had several businesses..... The Ford dealership, Invermere Garage, Building Supplies, and Imperial Oil Bulk sales.

Howard Cleland worked hard for the

progress of this community and its organizations. He was a friend to all in their time of need.

He was active in nearly all district activities: Masonic Lodge, Board of Trade, Farmers Institute, Fall Fair Board, Rod and Gun, Hospital Association, United Church, School Board, Red Cross and Legion.

He was a driving force in the building of the community Hall as a memorial to the veterans of WW11. He worked diligently for the overwhelming success of the War Savings Drives in this valley and he was editor of the "Valley News", which for 5 years was sent monthly to those from the valley who enlisted in the Armed Forces during the war.

Howard played hockey in his younger years and was an avid curler. He loved fishing.

He and many of his contemporaries put their heart and soul into the development of Invermere. Their dream was that we would have what we have today.....a prosperous community. We can thank those pioneers for the strong foundation of community spirit that they created.

It was said that his outstanding attribute as a citizen was his desire to serve and he was always among the first to contribute his energy, ideas and time to any cause.

Mr. Cleland was keenly interested in the history of the Windermere District and had collected much information about pioneer days that would have been lost without his careful records.

Hospitals and related associations were a lifelong interest of our mother and grandmother, Ethel Wood Cleland. She began her involvement in 1906. In the spring of that year she completed the ten years of schooling which was then required for High School graduation. She had just turned 17 but was too young to begin Nurse's training

so she worked at the hospital in Kelowna as a Nurse's Aide for a year.

In September 1908 she began her three years of training at the Kamloops Hospital, later to become known as the Royal Inland Hospital. She was part of the first group to receive training and was the fourth graduate of the school.

She graduated from the Nursing School in January 1911 and in February left for her job in Wilmer. What a challenge for a new graduate ! Dr. Hannington was the doctor in Wilmer when she arrived. Mrs. Hannington had been a nurse before she married and assisted Nurse Wood on occasion. Ethel Wood was the first nurse in the hospital and the only one at the time. She was a very intelligent and strong lady who had endless compassion for others. These traits made her an excellent nurse. She lived in the hospital and was on duty twenty-four hours a day. She was responsible for patient care, laundry, cooking, hauling water, cleaning, and gardening. In short, the general care and maintenance of the hospital as well as the patients.

Supplies were basic. The ladies of the community sewed the pillowcases and sheets as required. They did the mending and helped with cooking and cleaning when necessary. They made bandages as well. The men brought meat when an animal—wild or domestic— was killed. The local families brought produce from their gardens during the summer and from the root house in winter. The standard hospital equipment was beds and bedpans. The water was brought in barrels twice weekly. Gas lights provided the only illumination. In the spring of 1912, the hospital moved to a new location. It had a men's ward with six beds and two private wards. Conditions and equipment were gradually improving. Some of the babies that I remember Nana telling me she delivered were Gordon McKay, Roy Lake, Charlie Crook and a Palmer. She always referred to them as " my babies."

Ethel Wood married Howard Cleland in November 1912 and gave up nursing. Her interest in hospitals was still vital, however. When she arrived in 1911 she joined the

newly formed Hospital Ladies Aid. Ethel was once quoted in the Valley Echo as saying: "These women were wonderful. Their concern for the hospital was keen and constant. They turned up to help whenever possible, at whatever task needed their attention the most."

Ethel was involved with the Hospital Aid for the rest of her life. In 1959 she was presented with a lapel pin from the B.C. Hospital Association in recognition of her 48 years of service. In 1966 she was made a Life Member. By then she had been an active member for 55 years. She was very proud of those honors. Still she continued until the age of 96 when she was hospitalized and ended 74 years with the association.

(By Jaryl McIsaac— nee Osterloh / Cleland)
(Granddaughter of Ethel and Howard)

1926 Lincoln

Did you ever wonder about that wonderful old Lincoln you see occasionally, as it is driven around town on its rather proud tour of duty ? Well, it is owned by the Cleland family, and carefully maintained by the Cleland grandsons, all of whom respect its history and its value.

The 1926 Ford Lincoln was owned by Randolph Bruce, who left it to Howard Cleland, in recognition of Cleland's contribution to the Columbia Valley Irrigated Lands Company. But the history of that car goes back even further.

It was designed by Henry Ford for use by Queen Marie of Romania for her tour of the United States. It was purchased by Randolph Bruce when he was Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and the names of some of those who have been passengers in that beautifully leather upholstered antique is enough to make one want to just gaze at it a little longer. The duke of Windsor, when he was still the Prince of Wales rode in it; the Duke of Kent, Lord and Lady Willingdon, Premier Bruce of Australia, Austen Chamberlain, a former Prime Minister of Britain, and even Sir Winston Churchill.

Eight Years with a Dull Scalpel The Country doctor

By Dr. Ken Williams

So there we were –Joy, age 29 and an RN, Brian, age 3, Maureen, age 1 and myself, Ken at 34 and having only just learned to drive two weeks previously—heading out of Horseshoe Bay on Howe sound in British Columbia up to the Windermere Valley in the Rocky Mountain Trench— fresh out of medical school and ready (sort of) to cure the ails and alleviate the suffering of mankind in the town of Invermere, B.C. It was 1949.

A lot of Baggage

We carried all our biases, pride, prejudices and personal possessions, including sleeping bags, crib and all sorts of medical and surgical how-to books. Also in our baggage was a fair share of doubts about ourselves, concerns and worries about rural life and what awaited us. Plus a load of debt.

That debt to my logging buddies and friends who had been so helpful over the preceding six years was sizable. Also there were all the recent acquisitions- car, furniture, household needs, etc. made possible through the selling support of Invermere's major political and economic influence— Mr. Howard Cleland— who had his own agenda, plus a truly effective and time tested power base. He was the controlling figure in the Invermere contracting Co., a spin-off of the Columbia Valley Irrigation Co.

Some New Realities

At first glance one might have thought Invermere in 1949 was isolated and had been passed over by the march of science and all the aids to gracious living. After a couple of months we were quite certain of it . B.C. Hydro had not yet entered the area. The source of electricity, owned and operated by the Invermere Contracting Co. (ICC), was a diesel plant which, when it was working, provided us with only direct current— and only to 9:00 pm, but all night to the hospital. Telephone service was not yet part of the Bell system.. It depended on the hand crank— one operator, and service closed

down from 4:00 pm to 7:00 am. Our domestic water supply was a benefit bestowed on Invermere's 700 people by the ICC's Columbia Valley Irrigation Co. (CVI), an entrepreneurial land company, which at the turn of the century, used its large land holdings in the Columbia River Valley to attract would-be farmers, *remittance men, and anyone willing to purchase land surreptitiously marketed as fruit growing land.

Fire protection was essentially non-existent. Public security consisted of a B.C. Provincial Police Station with two jail cells, one policeman and an aging coroner / magistrate. Justice was pretty much in the eyes of the beholder.

Health Care Essentials

The hospital was an attractive log cabin type building, but much more than a cabin. It was the former residence of Lt. Governor Randolph Bruce which he had gifted to the community. There was only one practicing physician in the district and when we arrived, the skills and practices of this physician had come under harsh public scrutiny and severe criticism. He had recently announced he was leaving the Valley. Hospital equipment was considerably below minimal— like the old, very old, 20 milli-amp x-ray machine which required exposure time bordering on the unconscionable when one thinks of those x-rays bouncing around. Yes, modern medicine had by-passed the Windermere District. So too with things like refrigerators. These were nonexistent in the hospital, only ice-boxes. Ice was cut from the frozen lake, stored in sawdust and large blocks were brought to the kitchen icebox.

Nor was there any ambulance service. Transportation of the sick and injured was by car, truck and quite often by horse and wagon, if coming from one of the two Indian reserves. Injuries— industrial, traffic, Saturday night fights, hunting accidents, etc.— in need of medical / hospital care were usually transported through the combined efforts of the policeman, game warden and my station wagon. Nor was there a resident public health nurse or social worker in the

district. Cemeteries— yes, in the church yard and on both the Shuswap and Kootenai reserves. But all in all, it was literally very much as officially posted— an Unorganized and Unincorporated Town.

*Remittance Men: Individuals from Britain, often the well-connected ne'er do wells of well-to-do families. They were not considered to be practical at farming or working in the bush. Not at all uncommon to find some who had been trapped by real estate scams. Many subsisted on funds remitted to them from back home.

(Museum Files)

“ 1912 ”

(By Dapper Ede, as told to son Ron)

That was the year that England was flooded with leaflets about the Windermere Valley , the land of orchards and golden opportunity.

That was the year the Kootenay Central Railway began to thread its way up through Athalmer on its trek from Golden to Cranbrook.

That was the year the Titanic crashed into an iceberg and sank.

That was the year that a representative of Mr. Holland, owner of Fairmont, made the rounds in England with the question, “How would you like to go to Canada ?” And many of us who had seen the beauties of Canada in the advertising leaflets, but could only dream of that land. “Land of milk and honey”, said , “ Sure, let’s go !”

After the excitement of getting ready and the sadness of breaking family ties, we were scheduled to sail on the mighty Titanic- but fate intervened- we were third class passengers and the bookings for the mighty ship were so complete there was only room for holders of first class tickets; and we sailed on the next boat over five days later and eventually arrived in camp, at Fairmont. Spring, 1912.

On our boat were two immigrants who became well- known Valley residents: Miss Dora K. Bodecker, who made a name for herself in music circles throughout the district; and Ernie Fisher, who came out

with the specter of death but who stayed around for forty-eight years and became a popular Invermere merchant and Valley photographer.

(Windermere Valley Echo, Dec. 21, 1961)

Spring 2017 Program Movie Night at the Museum

Scheduled for Sunday evenings at 7:00 pm are:

Feb.19-

The Other Side of the Mountain 1975/1978

The true story about a 1950’s skier striving for a place on the US Women’s Olympic Ski Team and the aftermath of her tragic accident.

March 19-

The Epic of Everest— 1924

Official record of Mallory and Irvine’s 1924 Expedition. Hoping to have Pat Morrow with us to comment on the culture of the locals as well as aspects of high altitude climbing.

April 23-

Call of the Wild—1935

With Clark Gable and Loretta Young. Off in the wilds during the 1900 Yukon Gold Rush.

The November Membership renewal response was great. We thank you all for your support.

Our summer theme is :

“Our Mountains”

So watch for future dates concerning events. If you have anything that you would like to share with us for display please let us know.

Marg: 250-342-9434

J.D.— 250-342-9769

**The Museum is open
Tuesdays 10 am-4pm (main building)
And 7pm—9pm (archives only)**

(Compiled by— Sandy McKay)