

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 August 2017 250-342-9769



Gerald and May Cuthbert

Gerald Cuthbert was born in Londonderry, the only son of Dr. Alexander Cuthbert. The Cuthberts' origins were in Londonderry and Coleraine. His mother, Margaret was the daughter of Robert Dunn, Dunfield House, Londonderry. Their origins were Tyrone and Donegal. When he was five years old his father died of typhus, and his mother had a hard struggle to bring up her three children.

Gerald Cuthbert was educated at Foyle Collage, Londonderry. It was suggested he might become an architect, but it was felt his mathematics were not sufficiently good. His gifts were artistic; painting, drawing and making and carving furniture. His interests were outdoor games and shooting. He had a good voice. When he left school the family moved to Edinburgh, where he trained as an engineer with the firm of Stevenson— this belonged to the father of the famous author, Robert Louis Stevenson.

Some years later the Cuthberts moved to Belfast where Gerald had obtained another job. There he met May (Marion Elizabeth) Kennedy. They lived opposite each other in Kings Road, Knock, a suburb of

Belfast. On his part it was love at first sight; her brother had a workshop at their home and he quickly got to know them. She was small, very pretty, a wonderful housekeeper, a needlewoman and a beautiful dancer. She was the 2nd child of a family of 10. She speaks of a very happy childhood in her beloved home Belvedere, devoted to her brothers and sisters, especially the babies. Her father was a linen merchant and as was the pattern of the period, he spent six months of the year in the U.S.A.

Shortly after Gerald and May met, she became very ill and had to have an emergency operation for appendicitis. This was a dangerous operation in 1904. She describes how the guest room furniture was removed, the room washed down, the kitchen table scrubbed and re-scrubbed. The doctors arrived at 7:30 am as her elder brothers were leaving for the linen mill, and when they returned for lunch at 1:30, the doctors were just departing! She made a good recovery and, as had been long arranged, went to New York for a year to stay with her father's partner. However, sadly, after six months her mother wrote her to come home as she had cancer. A few months after her return her mother died, and she took over the care of the house and the children. Fortunately in those days good help was available. A little over one year later her father became ill and died. Her much loved brother Robert, one year her junior, took over the providing for his eight brothers and sisters.

Before her father died, he told her she must go ahead with her marriage and the family would have to look after themselves. They were engaged for a few years. She did not want to leave the children while they were so small. They were married in 1907. She was 25 and he was 36.

They went to live at Cheedlehume, near Manchester, where he had a job with one of the large engineering firms. He disliked the dirt of Manchester, and the endless winter fogs. May says they had a lovely home, good help and a beautiful garden, and the 5 years they spent there were very happy. Unexpectedly, Gerald's mother died and he felt free to leave Britain which was, as is now, in a bad economic state. British Columbia attracted him greatly and he wished to take up fruit farming. They sailed for Canada in February 1911. May was not happy at parting from her large family and many friends.

They had a very bad voyage. May was seasick all the way and so was Gerald. As a little girl, I had always heard the story how she was kept alive on champagne.

They came across Canada by the C.P.R., stopping at Edmonton to rest and recover. May remembers the chill that struck her when a shop keeper they were talking to said that he had not seen the pavement for some months and would not see it for some months more. She always hated the snow. They arrived at Golden and stayed at a noisy and uncomfortable hotel and when the weather improved, they moved on to their own land at Invermere. They lived in a tent and started at once building their house. Shortly after their arrival one of Mays younger brothers, Douglas Kennedy, joined them. He was an accountant but had always suffered from asthma. He loved the outdoor life. He was killed in the 1914-1918 war.

May was such a good housekeeper that she found the new life most difficult, but looking back over the years, she felt the experience had knocked a lot of sense into her. A great hardship was the lack of baths. She did not enjoy washing in the creek ! During the winter snow was melted in a large vat on the stove. May bathed first, then Gerald then finally Douglas. All necessary supplies were very slow in coming from the East.

May had some comments to make on the settlers who came to Invermere about the same time as they did. Many of them were ex-army officers and often less experienced than the Cuthberts and often most impracti-

cal. Many were the children of aristocratic families who had been brought up with plenty of servants and of course nannies and they had no idea how to care for their children. May was often shocked how often they were neglected. When the first World War broke out most of this group returned to England.

She speaks of many kind friends—The Peters, their next door neighbours, the Gibbons who came for the summer months, the Turners and many others. Gerald acted often as secretary for the other settlers, and in this connection got to know Mr. Bruce very well. They were both very grieved at the tragic death of Bruce's wife. She had made her maid promise that if she was ill no doctor was to be called, and sadly at last when her husband got medical help, it was too late.

They worked from dawn to dusk growing potatoes and vegetables and soft fruits for the C.P.R. while they waited for the apple trees to grow. She never got to like the snow and the bites of the mosquitos made the first summers miserable sometimes with her face so swollen she could hardly see.

The depression following the 1st World War made life an increasing struggle for the Cuthberts. They had no family to consider, so they sold up and moved to Nelson.

Gerald died in 1953. One year after his death, May went back to Ireland to stay with her youngest sister who had been recently widowed. May died in 1983.

Cuthberts bought Lot #8 (30 acres) situated on the left hand side of the road going to Wilmer, opposite the David Thompson Memorial, in 1912. In 1913 they cleared 11 acres and planted 350 apple trees. The land in the raw, with available water was worth \$100.00.

The Wormsbecker family owned the farm in the 1920's.

In 1930, Walter Nixon became the next owner. When he died in 1952, the ranch was passed down to his son, Leigh Nixon. It was later sold to Dr. Tressider, a dentist from Banff. The present owners are Tom and Silvie Statham.

(Museum Files)

Things I Remember About the Stewart Family (By Jessie Lockhart)

When they arrived in 1913, William Stewart, who was a plowman in Scotland, became employed at the Dominion Experimental Farm in Invermere. They lived in a large grey house in Athalmer. It was situated on the east side of the road leading to the big McKay House (Lakeside Inn .)

Here is one story of that time:

Aunt Jessie Stewart had experience in cooking, but never in bread-making in Canada. However, Mrs. Stark and others told her how to do that. So, Aunt Jessie went over to the Chinese Bakery to buy the cake yeast. No one had told her how long it takes cake yeast to work. She was anxious to have freshly baked bread ready for Uncle Bill's lunch, but it was not ready for the oven, and she decided it was a failure but she did not want Uncle Bill to know that ! So, she took the dough out into the yard and buried it in the ground. It was a warm day– the sun was hot. When Uncle Bill was reading the paper and eating his lunch, he glanced out the window and with a surprised look said, "Well, well, Jess, the mushrooms grow really big and they are early in Canada ! "

Well, truth had to be told and Uncle Bill was so amused he went back to work and told the men about his daft wife, and the story was told and retold much to Aunt Jessie's mortification and anger.

By the end of 1915, the Stewarts moved to Invermere into their new home built on the corner of 13th Ave. and 14th St.(across from J. A. Laird School.) It was a nice home, with a lawn on each side of the path leading to the front door, bordered by Sweet William flowers. There was a big garden at the back. The Jimmy Scotts were their next door neighbours and the Willie Weirs were nearby on 13th St.

Barbara Scott (Pietrosky) and I spent many happy hours playing together and visiting with Aunt Jessie who treated us like

queens and always we got " a piece" or another goodie. I often ran away to Aunt Jessie's when I was supposed to be weeding the row of carrots.

The Stewarts supported all community projects– schools, hospital, church and the St. Andrew Society.

Their children were all born in Scotland– Billie, Katherine, Grace, Robert and Noel. They were all much older than Jim (Frater) and myself.

Uncle Bill had a heart of gold but was a man of very few words and expressed himself gruffly. But if you were quick, you saw the twinkle in his eye. We were always in awe of Uncle Bill. Aunt Jessie was a loveable lady. Always gracious, friendly, hospitable and very devoted to their children.

Uncle Bill Stewart is buried in the historic Windermere Cemetery. Aunt Jessie died at the lower mainland but her funeral urn was placed on Uncle Bills grave. Several family memorial plaques have been placed around it.

(Museum Files)

Beginning at the turn of the last century, each village had its own sports teams and there was great rivalry among the various communities. There were hockey, baseball and football teams. Wilmer, Athalmer and Invermere all had curling rinks. There was a polo field in Athalmer and race tracks for horses in Athalmer and Windermere. Invermere and Windermere each had golf courses. A community hall was built early on in most communities. These would be used for community concerts where everyone would participate , for dances and for meetings and other gatherings. If there was no hall, then the schoolhouse was often used. By 1912 in Athalmer, there was a Social Club. This group sponsored weekly dances. In Windermere and Wilmer there were drama groups that put on plays and musicals. Parties were held in family homes and nearly every household had someone who could play an instrument.

The Mavilles

I was born in Golden, B.C. in 1934. My parents were Hugh Maville and Grace (Henry) Maville. My mother later married Vernon Campbell. My family which consisted of my mother, step-father, sister (Joy) and younger step-brother (Bob) moved to Invermere from Hope in 1950. Our move to the Valley was the result of a job transfer for Vernon. His employer, B.C. Power, wanted him to supervise their newly built power plant in Athalmer. I attended the Invermere High School for 2 1/2 years, graduating in 1952. Following graduation from high school I attended Vancouver Normal School and returned to Invermere for my first year of teaching. What an incredible experience! Alice Curtis (former High School Principal) and her staff gave me a great start to my teaching career. I married Stirling McLeod, a Highways' Construction Engineer, at Invermere in 1954. We lived briefly in North Vancouver where I taught for another year before moving to Revelstoke. Sterling's job required us to move several times over the years with most of the moves between the coast and Revelstoke, until our final move to Penticton in 1973.

I was a stay at home mom until our four children were in school. I did some substitute teaching in Coquitlam and returned to full time teaching in Revelstoke. I was one of the first Kindergarten teachers in the area and continued with that age group for the next 25 years. When time permitted I also took some summer sessions and courses at UBC to upgrade my certification. Since retiring in 1994 I have been involved with the Penticton Business and Professional Woman's Club, served as their president for two years and I now act as Board Chair for our local Women in Need Society. My volunteering has become almost a full time job. Retiring wasn't quite what I had anticipated. Activities, such as traveling, have been put on hold for now. Our grandchildren are now number 6. Our visits are fairly frequent and greatly enjoyed.

(Pauline (Maville) McLeod)

September Specials at the Museum

Elizabeth Scarlette from Kaslo has developed a travelling historical Earl Grey Pass Display which will visit the Windermere Valley Museum from September 7th to September 28th.

In September the museum is open week days 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Please stop in and 'take in' the visiting display. This is a fitting way to end our summer theme which has been "The Mountains."

Our September Gathering will be Thursday September 21, at 2:00 p.m. at the Museum with the film, " The Valley of 1000 Peaks ."

Fall 2017 Program Movie Night at the Museum

**Scheduled for Sunday evenings at
7:00 pm.**

**Sept. 24– Blind Husbands-1919
(for 1882)** A story of climbing (and more) in the European Alps with Erich von Stroheim. Band W non-talkie with intertitles.

**Oct. 22– Summer Magic– 1963
(for 1900)** Hayley Mills, Burl Ives, Dorothy McGuire-from Boston to Beulah, Maine and the old yellow house. G . All ages admitted.

Nov. 19– Vertigo-1958
James Stewart, an acrophobic detective, and Kim Novak take us through a dreamlike thriller that is considered one of Alfred Hitchcock's greatest cinematic achievements.