

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 February 2018 250-342-9769



Henny Pye A Dutch War Bride

Henny was biking to a dentist appointment in war torn Holland when she first saw her future husband, William Pye. Bill, an officer in the Canadian Army and his Dutch translator were sitting in an army jeep. Henny had never seen a jeep before so she decided to go over and have a look. Bill started talking to her through the translator. When she was getting on her bike to leave, the translator said that Bill asked if he could come over to her parent's house. Henny gave the address thinking the Canadian soldier would never find it. But he did, and that was the beginning of their life together.

Henny was born in Hilversum Holland on May 10, 1913.

Up until the start of World War 11, Henny was a hairdresser in her father's barbershop in Hilversum. The family was fairly well off and things were going well. The war changed everything. One day while she was riding her bike to get some oatmeal and eggs for her sick father, (he later died of starvation), a German Officer stopped her and asked where she was go-

ing. When Henny told him the purpose of her trip, he spit in her face. She spit back at him. Unbelievably, he let her go. She was tough then and , at 92 years of age, is tough now.

Henny lives in her own house in Golden, B.C. She does all her own shopping, cleaning, banking and most of the gardening. She attends church every Sunday. Henny has lots of friends in the little town where she has lived for 40 years. All of Henny's friends, including me, get cards sent to them on their birthday, Easter, Mother's Day and Christmas. Henny often gets up at 6 am to make muffins.

But back to the year 1947. A few months went by and Bill and Henny were in love. In the fall of 1946 Bill was discharged from the army. He was returning to his home in Athalmer, B.C. He asked Henny to marry him. Henny said yes. Bill bought their wedding rings and her plane ticket. Henny said she would not buy her own ticket because she had heard of Dutch girls paying their own way, but when they arrived in Canada the guy was either already married, or not rich like he said he was, or even worse as Henny said, that " he was a bad guy."

Henny was married before and had two sons by this marriage. Her Mother said she would take care of the boys for awhile. The plan was that she would join Henny later in Canada when Henny was sure that all was well.

So, when Henny prepared for the trip to Canada, the main thing was for her to improve her English. She continued taking her weekly English lessons which she started as soon as she met Bill. In January , 1947 she flew from Amsterdam to Preswick and then on to Montreal where she boarded the train for Vancouver.

Another Dutch girl, who was also going to meet her future husband, accompanied her. Bill and his sister Kay met Henny in Vancouver where they caught the train to Athalmer, B.C.

Henny said the train had a little pot belly stove in the middle of the passenger car. There was a native woman sitting across the seat from Henny who asked where she had come from and where she was going. Henny told her story.

Henny and Bill were married on February 20, 1947 and lived with Bill's mother while Bill saved money for their own house. One day she was in the kitchen with her mother-in-law when she saw the Indian woman she had met on the train coming toward the house on a horse. Henny went to the door. The woman said hello and said "I just want to know if you are ok." Henny said she was fine. Her new friend rode off on her horse. A few days later Henny saw another woman coming toward the house. It was a Chinese neighbour, Mrs. Lim coming to pay her respects to the new bride.

Bill moved them into their new little house in Invermere and they settled in. Henny's English was getting so good she obtained a job as a waitress in the Coronation Hotel in Athalmer, working for a family called the Ronachers. Bill did book keeping for the same people and also some part time bar-tending. He was also a carpenter.

Life in Canada was good. In 1950 their son Bobby was born and in 1952 Henny's mother came to Canada with Eddy and Ben.

Henny felt lucky. She had heard horror stories of other Dutch War brides. One arrived in town with her child. The man who was the father of the child and the man she hoped to be her husband was nowhere to be found. She was getting ready to return to Holland but the new future mother-in-law said, "Please stay, he will be back. I know it." So she stayed and Henny said he did return. But she heard other stories where it did not work out. The women arrived in Canada to find the men were already married, or did not own the homes or farms they said they did or they were drunks or abusive. Henny

felt blessed.

Henny and Bill had a good and long life together. He called her his "Honey Pye."

She is the proud mother of 3 sons. Bob is a Sheriff in the Interior of B.C. She said he phones her every day. Another son Ed, is retired from the CPR and lives in Calgary. The third son, Ben, lives in Switzerland. Henny told me she has been there twice for a visit.

Henny was the waitress in the Coronation Hotel which my parents owned in the early 50's. I loved to work with her and I learned so much about how to serve food and run a restaurant.

Bill and Henny moved to Golden in 1963 where they managed the Golden Lodge and then the Selkirk Inn.

We met again last week for tea in her house in Golden. We had not seen each other for over 40 years. I thought she would never stop hugging me! It was great! I gave her daf-fodils. She poured tea into little Petit Point china cups and served lovely little cakes and cookies. When I left she gave me Dutch chocolates.

(By Elizabeth Flett- 2005)

Henny passed away on April 5, 2011. Predeceased by her husband Bill on April 27, 1971.

Golden Star- 2011 (Museum Files)

Thankyou Colleen Palumbo
Golden Museum

1912

Regular car service to Golden began in this year. This was the end of the stage coach business which had transported passengers, mail and freight from the CPR train at Golden. When the stage coaches were operating, the horses legs would be wrapped with burlap in the winter to prevent the crusty snow from bruising or cutting their legs. To bring the mail by horse, snowshoes, or stage coach was always a challenge. The roads were rough, bridges basic, and there was usually either snow and ice or mud or dust to contend with.

Legacy Meadows

This is a property more correctly described as Lot Number Two Hundred and Seventeen, Group One, Kootenay District. It is a good illustration of the corruption of a word by passing from mouth to mouth. The correct spelling and the correct name is Legassi. According to Edmund T. Johnston, my informant, Legassi, front name Joseph, came in to this part on or about 1884. His home was the East, possibly a French Canadian, but of his antecedents Mr. Johnston knew but little. At any rate, Mr. Johnston says that he himself was the original owner of Lot 217 and that it passed into the hands of Mr. Joe Legassi and from him to John Hopkins Taynton.

The interest in the name of Legassi, to my mind, centers in the fact that in the year 1800, David Thompson, then staying for a time at Rocky Mountain House on the North bank of the Saskatchewan did some time about the middle of the year 1800 send two men, La Gassie and Le Blanc, back across the mountains into the Columbia River Valley with a party of twenty-six men and seven women of the Kutenai tribe of Indians who had come east that far to trade. La Gassie and Le Blanc were to spend the winter with that tribe in their mountain home. In this way, La Gassie and Le Blanc, were possibly the first white men to cross the mountains at the headwaters of the Saskatchewan River and to reach the headwaters of the Columbia River.

B.G. Hamilton Invermere, B.C.
June 21st, 1922

1912

Miss Dora Bodecker was a very fine music teacher who came to Invermere at this time. She taught many of the local children to sing, act, play piano or violin. She used to walk to Windermere to give music lessons there.

Johnston Road Ranch

The first owner of the Ranch was Louis Robideau, who in 1905 homesteaded a half section (320 acres) of crown land. It was about one mile from the Invermere Junction of the Westside Road and Johnston Road. Mr. Robideau, sometime later, went back to the United States.

Mr. and Mrs. Fitzsimmons were the next to live on the Ranch. Walter Nixon and his son, Gordon, worked on the Ranch during that time. There was a residence and out-buildings. They engaged in mixed farming with mainly hay for crops.

In 1932, Mrs. Dorothy Lee bought the property from Louis Robideau. Her children were daughters Nancy, Mary and Joan. The sale consisted of 4 head of cattle, 3 horses and all the equipment necessary to run the farm. The purchase price was \$1000.00. They named the Ranch the "B-Arrow." The Ranch also had a garden and hay fields. The home burnt down and a garage was renovated for a new residence. In 1936, Mrs. Lee and her daughters left the farm.

Jack Brennan lived on the Ranch from 1937-1939. Jim Champion lived there from 1940-1944.

In 1946, George Rennenkampff bought the Ranch but he did not move there until 1948. The water for the Ranch came from Ben Abel Creek. It was pumped onto the property. Mr. Rennenkampff had horses and cattle. He also had a garden and hay fields. George ranched there until ill health forced his retirement.

In 1982, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. McIntosh purchased the Ranch. By this time, two pieces of property had been sold. These were across the creek. The Ranch is now 306 acres, 45 under cultivation. The remaining acreage is in Christmas trees. The McIntoshes harvest trees each year. The corrals and fences have been rebuilt and a new family home has been built on the hill overlooking the Ranch.

(Museum Files)

Athalmer 1956

The seasonal floods of the Columbia River at Athalmer make the village a veritable Venice each spring and Athalmer at sunset in flood time is a lovely spectacle viewed from the top of the eastern hills.

The floods of 1916 and 1948 made history. The story is told of how Mrs. Joe Lake in 1916 twice daily paddled here canoe across inundated land to milk her cow marooned on a small mound. Mrs. Lake sat in the canoe, so the story goes, while Bossy patiently allowed her to milk.

With the years have come many improvements to Athalmer. The attractive Church of the Canadian Martyrs, built in the style of a Spanish Mission, has brought many comments from visitors to the Valley. Athalmer business premises, too, have refurbished their establishments to keep pace with the times.

In 1954 an Improvement District was formed in the village to obtain street lights. First trustees were Rev. Father Agnellus, Howard Seymour and Alex J. Purkis with Ronald Bradshaw as secretary.

Golden Star, December 8, 1933

St. Andrew's Night was fittingly observed in traditional style by the Scots of this district at the Invermere Hotel. The big dining room had been cleared and twosome, four-some reels and Strathspeys were danced with great enjoyment to the music of the pipes and modern dances also had their place to the music of the orchestra. The really big event was the 'piping in' of the haggis. Graham Croll, lately out from Nairn, Scotland, headed the procession with the pipes, and the haggis was marched around the room borne on the shoulders of four stalwart Scots, Graham Watt, George Watt, Alfred Laird and T. Weir, with the kilts swinging and pipes skirling made even the English present realize that the "Thistle canna be sat on" with impunity. With due ceremony the haggis was placed before William Weir who gave with impressive rendering Robbie Burns "Address to the Haggis." The haggis was the gift of the Honorable R. Randolph Bruce.

Movie Night at the Museum Sunday evenings at 7:00 pm.

March 18 - Blood and Sand **1922**

Rudolph Valentino in his greatest role, a young Spaniard who achieves his boyhood ambition to become a celebrated toreador.

April 22 - Saskatchewan **1954**

Set in the Canadian Rockies of 1877 this technicolor film has RCMP, Indian troubles, a love affair and beautiful mountain scenery.

Museum Update

Thursday, January 18, the monthly gathering, heard a very informative historical speech on "Valley Newspapers" by Bob Ede. He and his wife Lisa provided museum coasters for each member attending. They also supplied a door prize which was won by Donna Tunnacliffe.

Bob's family was responsible for the weekly Valley Echo for many years and the museum is the proud owner of a complete collection (cross-indexed) in its archives. This collection is thanks to Joy Bond, the collector.

The Windermere District Historical Society hosts monthly gatherings on the third Thursday of each month at 2pm in the museum with a program and refreshments.

Winter hours for the Museum are from 10 am to 4 pm on Tuesdays.