VALLEY HISTORY

AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

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A STAGE RIDE By noon of the first day the stage w

A STAGE RIDE FROM GOLDEN TO FORT STEELE IN THE YEARS 1897-98

from Cranbrook Courier
June 15, 1933
written by mel stewart following a letter from an early
day pioneer friend

Golden, B.C. was the stage terminal for the North Columbia in those days and Fort Steele the terminal for the South. At these junctions, a jolly crowd was always assembled to see the arrival and departure of the stage. Within the waiting room and around the entrance were men and women discussing every topic of the day. These were exciting days, when prospectors, mining promoters, drummers and tinhorn gamblers were going to the "Wild Horse boom", then on at Ft. Steele. The rate collectable for each adult passenger was \$20.00 for the through trip, while express was rated at charges of 10 cents per pound.

When all were aboard at Golden, they were a happy crowd. Humorous old-timers and jolly young adventurers, amid whom might be seated several precise old ladies. There would be merry-making miners and lady-shy old bachelors, comprising the group of south-bound passengers.

From Golden, the road wound around the precipitous curves following much the same route as it does today. The passengers then, however, had time to view and meditate upon the splendour of the enchanting valley, from the loftiest peaks of the snow-clad mountains to the depths of the Columbia river bed below. Sometimes the trip would be doubly enjoyable when some one would start up the old-time songs, accompanied by the sweet strains of the jews harp. Along the Canyon Creek Valley, the driver would drive the quick-slipping Cleveland bays, while the merry voices sounded and re-echoed through the deep forests of the Columbia Valley.

By noon of the first day the stage would arrive at the late Ed Johnston's homestead, the famous old "Hog Farm" where Mr. Johnston would welcome so many old-timers with whom he had been so long acquainted. Mr. Johnston was himself an old pioneer of exceptional humour, beloved by all, and he made welcome young and old during his years at the "Hog Farm."

However, before the flourish of 1897 arrived, Mr. Johnston had left the spot, the farm then being owned by Mr. H.G. Parson, and run by his manager, Mr. H.G. Scully. It was after Mr. Parson the village there took its name.

After a splendid noon meal which everyone enjoyed at Mr. Parson's (and there were hearty appetites developed by the stage ride) the happy travellers would proceed with fresh horses to complete the first day's fifty mile journey to Mr. Atchison's.

The late Mr. Atchison, often known as "Shorty," was one of those original characters with an inspiring personality. Everyone was made at home there, and often he would tell to the many passengers, the story of the wonderful operation he performed upon his partner, "Red." It was a cold winter's day when "Red" returned from his trap line with his toes frozen solid. So after a thorough diagnosis of the case, Mr. Atchison cheerfully advised him that only by immediate amputation of his toes could his foot be saved. And so, poor "Red," glad to obtain relief, agreed to undergo the surgical operation. The dinner table was used and the operation began. As an anesthetic, "Red" was given a cup of Hudsons Bay Rum, followed by a fill-up of chewing tobacco. Upon the kitchen table the poor soul lay while the would-be doctor, with the aid of his medical appliances composed of a pair of horse-shoe pinchers and a razor, amputated the toes. As each toe was snipped, "Red" spat tobacco juice upon the ceiling indicating another toe done.

The following morning, bright and early, while the thick dew was yet upon the grass, and the cool, calm atmosphere was scented by the great variety of sweet-smelling shrubbery, the party would start out for the day's journey to the Lake View Hotel at Windermere. How inspiring it was along the cool lanes in the very early morn where one saw a roadside of wild roses covered with morning dew and, ere you stopped for a second you would hear the shrill call of the loons as they glided upon the waters below. Merrily the party rolled along until the lake area at Windermere came into view.

From here the trip seemed all too short. As Windermere neared, many were the stories unfolded for all, for it was around this spot that history and romance shone as far back as ninety years before, when our first early explorer discovered the wealth and beauty of Windermere Valley. The Lake View Hotel at Windermere was run by Messrs. W. Taynton and Hugh Gordon. There was always a clan gathered here waiting for the arrival and departure of the stage. A jolly crowd they were and if nothing special arose, there was always a horse race, dog fight, or cock fight to amuse the public.

At Windermere, a story was often quoted of how the late Colin MacKay brought to town a fifty dollar gobbler. One evening it appears someone exchanged the fifty dollar gobbler for the barn yard gobbler belonging to the late J. Stoddart. However, greatly to the amusement of all, neither Mr. Stoddart or Mr. MacKay saw any change. Some time later, the 'cat was out of the bag' however, and Mr. MacKay and Mr. Stoddart, hearing of the exchange, traded their gobblers to right things. But, never sure of the truth of the affair, and knowing no difference in the appearance of the gobblers, they made exchange after exchange, trying to solve who had the fifty dollar and who hadn't. For years the gobblers floated from Mr. MacKay's barnyard to Mr. Stoddart's being carried around incessantly, trying to seek a solution of ownership until at last the gobblers, old, worn and tired of being carried around, died of old age.

After two hour's rest at Windermere, the stage would move on the Canal Flat. The hotel there was under the management of Mr. John Bulman, a well-known Thunder Hill rancher. Here there was a merry reception awaiting all and Thunder Hill and Canal Flat experiences were of interest from North to South. On the third day the stage travelled from Canal Flat to Fort Steele, stopping only for a luncheon at Wasa.

Upon arrival at Ft. Steele there was great excitement to meet everyone, for the town was in her boom years then. So here our three-day travellers ended their southern journey, a happy one --- a memorable one. Probably at that time little did the people realize the joviality and friendship that developed upon these trips, for there were greater interests in view then.

So, drew my old friend's letter to a close. Just what he thought, I do not know, but I am sure he, in fond memory, rode again on his 1897 stage, making every moment a cherished one, and every second a recollective one.

Three of the best known stagecoach drivers in the valley were Rufus Kimpton, Vaughan Kimpton and Hope Brewer. The stage carried the mail as well as passengers. The stagecoaches came to an end when Jim McKay ran the route in 1910 with a car. The railway brought competition for the freight and mail when the Kootenay Central Railway was completed in 1914.

PIONEER PEN SKETCHES

by Winnifred Weir from the Valley Echo date of clipping unknown

A pioneer of the district who returned last year and again this past week to revisit his old haunts is J. William (Billy) McNeill, now of Haney who was accompanied by Mrs. McNeill.

He was a nephew of James McKay, a name familiar to all early day settlers and his sister, Miss Pearl McNeill, was the first telephone operator at Wilmer. Now Mrs. Monte Kelly, she resides at Okotoks, Alberta. She also visited the district last year.

Mr. McNeill first came to the valley in 1890 via Golden. He recalls that there was only

one hotel at Golden at that time, owned by a Johnny Connors> He came up the Columbia River on "The Pert" captained by Frank Armstrong. He lived for a time on the McKay Ranch, near Edgewater, then returned east to attend school at Boston. He returned in 1903 and worked with his uncle on the ranch.

In 1905 the Stony Indians had left their encampment at Morley, between Banff and Calgary, and had come to the Windermere to trade. They were accustomed to doing this periodically. They would hunt on their way through the mountains, camp at Stoddart Creek and trade with the local Indian bands.

But when the federal government proclaimed that the forest lands of the Banff Kootenay Parks were protected areas for game the Stony Indians were deprived of one of their favorite hunting grounds. They came to the Windermere and declined to return to their reserve. The authorities decreed that they must return. They said they couldn't that they didn't have any grub.

Billy NcNeill was appointed a special constable to accompany the Indians returning to their reservation. The other deputy accompanying him was George M. Willard. They bought two tons of grub at Joe Lake's store and said "Here's the grub, now let's get going." But the Indians said they didn't want the grub.

Nevertheless the Indians, who occupied about 30 tepees, were rounded up with their 150 head of horses and escorted back by Billy McNeill and George Willard. At least they took them as far as the Alberta boundary where they were met by four Mounties who took over the escort duties from there.



MORIGEAU FAMILY

Francois Morigeau, a French Canadian, was the first known white settler in Windermere. He was here in 1845 when Father Pierre De Smet visited the Valley. Father De Smet married Morigeau and his Indian wife and

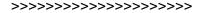
baptized the children including their son, Baptiste who continued to live in the Valley. He died in 1942 at the age of 96. His wife died in 1946 leaving six sons, four daughters and many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The Morigeau children attended the first school in Windermere. Hope Brewer once reminisced that it was an everyday occurrence for 22 to sit for dinner at the Morigeau table.

The Morigeaus had a large farm and were progressive farmers. Baptiste the Junior was the second farmer in the district to own a threshing machine.

Members of the Morigeau family played a prominent part in the official opening of the David Thompson Memorial Fort in 1922 and in the re-enactment of the arrival of David Thompson that was part of the celebration.

The first store at Windermere was one kept by Baptiste Morigeau about 1883. Remains of it can still be seen near Windermere Creek.



NEWSCLIPS FROM THE PAST

The Cranbrook Courier, 1950

"Invermere, January 27 --- Fire completely destroyed a building on Invermere's main street, housing Government liquor store, restaurant equipment and upstairs apartments on Tuesday morning.

Apparently a flash fire started in the liquor store shortly before noon.

Damage is estimated at \$25,000 including \$8,000 to restaurant equipment and \$12,000 to liquor stock

Liquor bottles in the Government vendor's store popped like shotguns; only cash in the safe was saved.

Tenants of upstairs apartments saved only the clothing they wore.

The newly completed Masonic Temple on the north side, housing the Lake Windermere Clinic quarters, was saved by volunteer fire fighters. Residence of the Futa family, next door on the south side, caught fire but was extinguished with slight damage.

The liquor store stock was a complete loss. The Chuck Wagon restaurant was closed, but all

equipment was destroyed. All property in the apartments was lost."

Origin of the name TaTa Creek

One Norman McLeod confined to jail at Golden escaped and made his way south. He was intercepted by two special constables at the mouth of a creek. They told him he was under arrest. He was still on his horse, but the constables had dismounted. McLeod saw his chance and said "Ta Ta" to them

An article in the Canadian Alpine Journal of 1911 makes interesting and amusing reading in the light of later development of the Columbia Valley. The article is written by Elizabeth Parker.

"This part of the greater river (The Columbia) is now a comparatively idle waterway but in a few years it will not be so though its craft will be employed in pleasure rather than in pure commerce. For the speedier railway soon to connect the Kicking Horse and the Crow's Nest Pass will carry the ore and all the merchandise of trade. An occasional motor boat is now seen where fleets of this modern craft will soon be familiar and always as hitherto the river will be the happy waterway of the canoeist."

Of Invermere the article says, "A commodious hotel has been built there and before many years it will be a place of country houses for persons from nearly every city in Canada. A houseboat with a capacity for twenty guests is now stationed at Athalmer."

Further the article continues.

"The only limitation in this Happy Valley is the white dust which in summer drought rises form its roads with every putt of wind and every step of man or beast. But dwellers there and lovers of that fascinating country are greatly impervious to its discomfort. Besides it is absolutely free from microbes. It is rare to die in Happy Valley save from old age or accident."

On the subject of Soda Water Springs up Toby Creek, Miss Parker's prophecy has not been fulfilled.

"......Elysian Soda Springs which prophesy a flourishing Hydropathic when the fame of the country spreads abroad." **********

1898 McLure's Magazine snippets

An 1898 copy of McLure's Magazine was found in an old shack in the Goldie Creek area by Bob Pritchard of Invermere while on a prospecting trip.

While sheltering from a blizzard in the old shack, Mr. Pritchard was intrigued with the advertisements, among which was an ad for fashionable high boots for women made of the best leather for \$3.50, women's suits and cloaks \$5, custom made men's shirts, white or coloured for \$1.50.

An Ostermoor Patent elastic felt mattress was advertised for \$15. Linene collars and cuffs, "stylish, convenient and economical for men's shirts", ten collars and five pairs of cuffs for 25 cents. These were to be used on both sides then discarded.

A winter cruise to the Orient on the Hamburg-American line by the superb Twin-Screw express steamer "August Victoria" leaving New York January 26 and returning April 3 cost \$450. The trip of 69 days included stops at Madeira, Gibraltar, Algiers, Genoa, Nice, Syracuse, Malta, Alexandria, Cairo, Jaffa (Jerusalem), Smyrna, Constantinople, Athens, Palermo, Naples and return to New York.

One dollar down payment would get you a Royal Grand high grade model organ shipped to your nearest freight depot. A Wellington typewriter cost \$18 and a man's suit \$10.

The magazine carried sensational advertisements offering cures for cancer, baldness, alcoholism, hayfever, asthma, obesity and consumption to name a few.

Most amazing of all, a discovery which should have put the medical profession out of business entirely was the "Oxydonor Victory", a device giving vigorous health through self-treatment by causing the human body to attract and absorb oxygen from the air. This caused, according to the caption with the

accompanying photograph, "the natural cure of all forms of disease in men, women and children."

The photograph showed a tube of "Oxydonor Victory" lying in a basin of water while a tube or wire attached to it was also attached to the ankle of the patient. Just as simple as that.

from the Valley Echo.