

VALLEY HISTORY

AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 342-9769 FEBRUARY, 1997

OUR SCOTTISH HERITAGE

The Historical Society hosted a luncheon program February 21 to celebrate Heritage Week and to acknowledge some of our local Scots. Here are some highlights of the program.

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To the migrating Scots, leaving by choice or pushed by necessity, hardship was hardly a consideration! It was mental and physical toughness, nurtured in their northern homeland that made them excellent pioneers. Some of our local pioneers are:

Harry and Braidy Williams: from Perthshire. Mr. Williams came to Canada in 1901. He returned to Canada and brought his wife out in 1914. They came to a house on the Firlands Ranch which had been built in ten days and still had no windows and doors when they moved in. They spent the first winter under very difficult pioneer conditions. After six years on the ranch they moved into Wilmer. Mr. Williams was a cook and carpenter. They had one daughter, Bessie

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Alec and Elsie Dobbie: Alec Dobbie was born in Australia to Scottish parents. The family returned to Scotland where Alec grew up. Mr. Dobbie came to Canada with William Weir and Cecil Davidson in 1911. He returned to Scotland when WWI broke out and he stayed there until 1920. Mr. Dobbie was a carpenter and many of the older homes still standing were built by him.

Elsie Tait was from Greenoch. She came to Halifax in 1921. Mr. Dobbie met her there and they were married. The Dobbie's had three children - Sandy, Kay and Avril.

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Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Scott: From Aberdeenshire. The Scotts came from Aberdeenshire. They settled in Invermere in 1912. They had one daughter, Barbara. Mr. Scott was a finishing carpenter and much of his handiwork still exists. He made the communion table in Trinity United Church. Mr. Scott played the bagpipes and was always an enthusiastic participant in Scottish celebrations.

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Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Newton: The Newton family came to the valley in 1914. They came to look after Captain Phillips property when he returned to England. The family moved to Wilmer where their children Jean, Neil and Bunty grew up. Mr. Newton taught Highland dancing to the children of the district. He was foreman of Road Construction for Kootenay Park.

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Mrs. Joe Lake: Mrs. Lake's mother was born at Fort Churchill, Manitoba, where her father was Governor for the Hudson Bay Co. He had come from Scotland in 1820. Mrs. Lake, whose maiden name was Margaret Sutherland was born at Kildonan, in the Red River Settlement in 1861. She came west in a covered wagon.

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The Laird Family: The Lairds came to the valley in 1921, settling at Westlake on Lake Lillian, the former home of Capt. and Mrs. Poett. Their son, Alfred, and daughters, Alice and Gladys came with them. Alfred married Mollie Marples and Gladys married George and Alice married Graham, Watt brothers who had been born in Ceylon to a Scottish family.

The McKays: John McKay and Ann Calder married in Durness, Scotland. They came to Canada and settled in Prince Edward Island in 1815. In 1886 their son John and his wife Mary and their sons Jock, James and Cham came west to the Columbia Valley. They bought 15,000

acres of crown land for an estate they called "Elk Park." John McKay settled on the Upper Ranch north of Radium. James McKay bought the townsite of Athalmer and built his family home there. It is now the Lakeside Inn.

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Tom and Isabella Frater: The Fraters came from Leith, Edinburgh County. They came to the valley in 1913 with their two daughters Annie and Jessie. They came to the Sinclair Ranch on the benches. In 1914 they moved to Invermere. Three more children, Mary, Jim and Stanley were born there. Mr. Frater was a carpenter and worked on the K2 Ranch and on Commander Powles Ranch. They were active participants in the local St. Andrews Society.

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William and Jessie Stewart: From Dalkeith/Newton. Mrs. Stewart was Mr. Frater's sister and the two families came out together on the "Empress of Ireland." Mr. Stewart worked on the Dominion Experimental Farm and at the Paradise Mine. They brought five children, William, Katherine, Grace, Noel and Robert to Canada with them.

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The Blake Family: Alex from Peebles and Grace from Ellon, Aberdeenshire, settled first in Rapid City, Manitoba after emigrating from Scotland. In 1932 they brought their four children, Jean, Jack, Lillian and Dorothy to the Valley. When they arrived they lived one week in the Wilmer Hotel which was then run by Mrs. Thompson, (Mrs. Tunnacliffe's sister). The family of six stayed for \$7.00 a day food and lodging. Mr. Blake worked at lumbering.

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Alex Ritchie: Alex Ritchie was born in Scotland in 1872 and came to Canada in 1891. He came to the valley in 1894. He lived in the valley for 50 years. He was a stagecoach driver and farmed. He built the home that is now "Strands Restaurant."

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Colin and Rosina McKay: Colin was from Sutherlandshire and Rosina was from Perthshire. They came to the Valley in 1890 with his cousins, Jim and Hugh Gordon. They homesteaded the "Morinish Ranch", property

later owned by Harold Forster. It was Colonel Baker that induced them to come to the valley. At the time they arrived there was not even a wagon road. They lived in a log house on the property with Jim Gordon and his wife. Colin McKay died in Wilmer in 1926.

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The Cameron Family: The family seat was at Lochiel. The first Cameron of this family settled in Peterborough County, Ontario in 1820. He was the great-grandfather of Mrs. Berta Moore and her brother Don Cameron. Don Cameron married Dorothy Blake, daughter of another Scottish family.

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Thomas N. Weir: Tommy Weir was born 1893 in East Kilbride, Scotland. He accompanied Jean McMartin to Canada in 1913, when she came to marry his brother William. He married Winnifred Beale and they had four children, Marjorie, Christine, Judith and John (Jock.)

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William and Jean Weir: The Weir family home was East Kilbride. Willie Weir came to Canada in 1911 with Alec Dobbie and Cecil Davidson. he lived first in Wilmer. He spent most of his working years as a partner in the Invermere Contracting Co. Jean McMartin came from Cove, near Glasgow. She trained at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Glasgow. She came to Canada in 1913. The Weir had 2 children, Ian and Jenny.

Did You Know?

That marmalade was invented by a Scot?

A shipment of oranges from Seville, Spain was so bitter that nobody would buy them. A family named Keiler bought them and made marmalade after adapting the family jam recipe. They sold it from a grocer's shop. James Keiler set up the world's first marmalade factory using his mother's recipe.

That the Scots invented the cheddar process of cheesemaking?

The cheddar process was established in Ayrshire 200 years ago and a hundred years before that a

similar process produced Dunlop cheese in the Ayrshire village of that name.

That the Scots created brogues?

The shoe that is still fashionable today, was created by the Scots for practical purposes. They were leather shoes made with holes pierced through so that when walking through boggy terrain, the water could drain out.

That the first Presbyterian Missionary was in the Valley in 1893-95?

Rev. Alex Mackinnon was stationed in a field extending from Golden to Ft. Steele. He was interested in education and established schools at three points, including one at Windermere. 1895, a Presbyterian Church was built at Windermere. 1904, St. Andrew's Church was built in Wilmer. 1912, St. Columba's Church built in Athalmer.

That golf was originally called "Gowf" or "Goff". It was played with a knobby headed club and a leather-covered ball, stuffed with feathers?

That wherever Scotsmen gather and a strip of ice is to be found, there will be curling?

The clatter of the "stones" have echoed around the world since the sons of Caledonia migrated to make empires. The "Roarin' Game" of the Highlands is now played throughout northern North America and Europe. The game was played on the lakes and ponds of Scotland. History says that in 1607, in the Orkneys, that there were "plenty of stones for curling." Rough blocks of granite and whinstone were used in the early days, rounded at the base. A groove for finger and another for thumb served as a handle. It took a powerful grip to swing the stone in those days. They ran from 30 to 115 pounds. The average stone today weighs 35 pounds.

That Sanford Fleming was the CPR's first engineer-in-chief?

Born in Kircaldy, Scotland in 1827. He proposed a workable plan for the CPR. To survey possible routes, he and a small party

including a Scottish Presbyterian Minister travelled over 5000 miles in three months, often on foot.

That a Scot began the Canadian Bible Society?

James McGregor was born in Comrie Parish, Scotland in 1759. He was sent to Nova Scotia as an unpaid missionary. He was the founder of the Canadian Bible Society.

That Simpson of Simpson-Sears was a Scot?

Robert Simpson from Morayshire, was a merchant who came to Canada in 1854 after completing his apprenticeship. In 1855 he owned his own dry-goods store which rivalled T. Eaton. His company later merged with Sears and was a catalogue business along with the department stores. There are still Simpsons Stores in Eastern Canada.

NEWSCLIPS FROM THE PAST

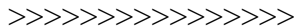
Golden Star, December 8, 1933: "St. Andrew's Night was fittingly observed in traditional style by the Scots of this district at the Invermere Hotel. The big dining room had been cleared and twosome, foursome reels and Strathspeys were danced with great enjoyment to the music of the pipes and modern dances 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.” As in former years, the haggis was the gift of the Honorable R. Randolph Bruce.”

Golden Star, December 7, 1928: “The men from the Land o’ the Heather assembled in force at Hotel Invermere on St. Andrew’s Night and did honor to their patron saint. The haggis had an important and imposing position. Then there were Scotch reels, sthrathspeys and a goodly display of kilts. William Weir gave the address to the haggis as it was born in on high by kilted attendants. Orchestral music was furnished by E.E. Tunnacliffe, F.W. Hillier and William Weir.”

Golden Star, August 11, 1933: “His Honor, R. Randolph Bruce has presented the Windermere Branch of the Canadian Legion with four fine steel engravings, one of which is the well known ‘Scotland For Ever.’ This generous gift has been accepted by Commander J. Copley Powles, RN, with thanks, on behalf of the District Legion, and they will occupy the vacant spaces on the walls of the Legion Hall at Athalmer.”



What’s New at The Museum:

The Tuesday night workbees are still happening. If you are interested in learning more about local history by filing photos, indexing files from the archives, working with new acquisitions etc. join the group. Contact Marg Christensen for more information.

We have exciting plans for a June event at the Museum. We are planning a “Branding Party” and will be inviting all local ranchers to come share their brand with us. There will be a bonfire, refreshments, games, displays, tall tales and fun for all. We are hoping this will be a family event. Watch for more details.

Acquisitions keep coming in. We appreciate people giving us archival information and artifacts. If you have old photographs we would be happy to have them either to keep or to copy for our files. As generations change, information is lost so if you are thinking of doing something “someday” it is important that you do it now! If we haven’t got your family history, we do want it if you have roots in the valley.