**Commander
John Powles
1925**

**"Fur Farming in the Rockies"
By Crawford Hamilton**

There is an old saying that " a deep-sea Sailorman never can make good on land". That may be so in imagination, but whoever invented the adage, never paused to realize that , if it had not been for the lure of furs to lay at the feet of Kings, Princes, Governors and fair women, half the present world would still be an unknown and uncharted wilderness. For, it was on account of the beautiful and rare skins of little-known animals brought to the European Courts in olden times, that fired the imagination of the adventurers to set sail in their small craft, and sail the uncharted " Seven Seas" to find these furs to flaunt before the eyes of the covetous mortals.

Hence the voyages of Hudson, exploring the Northern Atlantic and of Cook and Vancouver exploring the Northern Pacific in search of the land that would lead them to the mouth of the mythical River, which was supposed to be a 'short-cut' to the land of untold wealth in furs and precious stones.

So after all there is a close bond between sailormen and furs. Now, one cannot obtain furs from the seas only, because there would not be enough to go round, and they would only be one of a kind, therefore the land must be reached in search of other fur-bearing animals, to satisfy the insistent demand for furs.

And this is how one deep-sea sailorman has made good in the Canadian Rockies, far enough away from the sea to qualify in defying the old adage.

More than that he was the Pioneer in starting a Fur Farm and not only is he making good, but his success is having the inevitable effect of the sincerest form of flattery, that of being copied in his venture.

Commander John Copley Powles, Royal Navy, joined the H.M.S. Britannia as Midshipman, and one of this first experiences was in rescue work after the sinking of H.M.S. Victoria.

Whilst second in command of H.M.S.Sparrow, he was actively employed in suppression of the slave-trade off the East Coast of Africa. Then was engaged in the South African War, and the Sierra Leone Rebellion as well as the operations at sea against " The Mad Mullah".

He was also attached to the Naval War College, where he concentrated on bringing his command   up to the head of the Navy in Gun Practice.

Retiring from the Navy in 1909, he came to Canada and settled in the Columbia Valley, right in the scenic heart of the Rockies.

When the first World War broke out, he immediately went to London and as on the plea that if he could dig ditches in Canada, he could surely dig trenches in Flander, and enlisted in the Royal Fusiliers.

Whilst serving in France as Sergeant, he was promoted to a Commission for " Service on the Field". He was severely wounded during the fighting in Deville Wood at the battle of the Somme. Being invalided from the Army, after convalescing , he returned to his Ranch in the Columbia Valley.

On looking over his ranch again and with a sailor's eye to it's "water points" he decided to go in for preservation of the fur-bearing animals.

Then it occurred to him that as so many old-timers were trapping regularly every winter, soon this part of the lower Valley would be depleted of its smaller fur-bearing animals, then why not utilize his own ranch with its available water ways and slough parts of the Columbia River as a breeding ranch for these animals.

He carefully studied out the situation, and with his knowledge of wire-entanglements and his previous knowledge of the habits of the wild animals on his ranch, before the war, he soon set to work on the necessary enclosures for holding in the profitable fur-bearing animals.

On the slough parts where the River overflows in summer and where it is most like their own wild homes, he erected wire fences to keep in the muskrats , mink and beaver. As there were already families of these animals located on this part of his ranch, all he had to do was to conserve them and their homes, being careful not to disturb them.

Nearer his house, he erected the proper kinds of fences and dens for his start in Silver Foxes, of which he obtained several pairs.

Then he made plans for the proper care and feeding of these, and now after three years of hard work he has reached the point where he can sell pairs of Silver Foxes for breeding purposes to other fur farmers.

This past season he was also able to pelt nine of his foxes which he sent to the fur market and for which he obtained a highly satisfactory price.

So, the " Deep-sea sailor-man" in the person of John Copley Powles R.N. has made good on land.

The Royal Zoological Society of London England has made him a Fellow of their Society, being only one of the many honors he has to show for his active work on land and sea. Of the honors for the latter he has many medals and decorations , but the one that appeals to him most, is the one which was given him as a midshipman for his rescue work in the early days of his Naval Career.

To do honor to his first ship he has called his ranch after it's name. His ranch is known all over the West as the
                 "Britannia Fur Farm"
Located just across the river, (west) of Radium Hot Springs, B.C.

(Museum Files)

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Passing the Buck
(by Bob Pritchard)

About the summer of 1926 an old recluse named ' Morpeth' had a cabin on the south boundary of the Kootenay Park near Radium Hot Springs and was accused of setting a brush fire and the manager of the park with his game warden came down to investigate and found the blaze right on the boundary, so they telephoned the forestry warden at Invermere to come over. His name was ' Monroe' , a veteran of the first war, and when he arrived he was told by the park officials that Morpeth was in his cabin and in the meantime the fire had been extinguished. The warden went to the cabin probably to give Morpeth a calling down and soon after, shooting was heard resulting in the death of the warden.

The Constable at Athalmer was notified and he came over with his deputy and saw a small crowd had gathered at a safe distance from the cabin and amongst them was George Langlands of Golden who happened to be working for the Public Works close by. Without hesitation and

with his pipe in his mouth, he went to the cabin and gave "Bill" a bawling out and ordered him to come along, and he was turned over to the minions of the law.

Afterwards, the revolver that was responsible for the tragedy had been stolen from the barracks of the Mounted Police at Radium when Corp. Summerfield was in charge.

William Morpeth was tried on a charge of murder at Fernie and the jury claimed he was insane so was incarcerated for the rest of his journey in this world.

(Bob Pritchard was a former Provincial Police officer in the Valley.)
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Old-timers return to Visit Valley
(By Helen Bavin– September 9, 1955)

It was most unfortunate that Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Lalley from Spokane were unable to stay in the Valley for the Old Timers Night at the Fall Fair. They would have loved it ! As it was, they stayed two nights at Windermere Manor, the first time they have visited here since they left in 1914.

Mrs. Lalley is the daughter of John Jordon (of Burns and Jordon), who built the railroad through here from Fort Steele north, from 1907 to 1914. She spent two summers here in 1910 and 1912, living on the houseboat " Isabel", that was later sold to Randolph Bruce. She recalled many humorous incidents of life on the houseboat, and told of a huge old Negress cook who struck terror in the hearts of everyone. She was finally caught in the act of almost murdering a white girl, but being such a good cook, they fired the white girl!

Mass was held every Sunday on the top deck, and Mrs. Lalley knew many of the Indians who came in their Sunday best. In those days , there was a little winding trail up from the station to Invermere. The town consisted of Mr. Stockdale's Hardware store, Wing Lee's restaurant and the C.V.I. Offices.

Mrs. Lalley was at one time the guest of Count DeCrepnay, at his home on the river flats opposite Firlands. The DeCrepnay's home was a veritable museum, with trophies and family treasures from all over the world.

Mr. Lalley journeyed up from Spokane as often as he could, but as he was courting, his recollections of the Valley were understandably hazy.
(Museum Files)
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Xavier Schnider arrived in Edgewater in 1929 via Edmonton from Switzerland. While in Edmonton he read an ad in the Free Press advertising Columbia Valley Ranches. Xavier came and he liked the mountains. He worked in Luxor before purchasing land in Edgewater. In 1934 he returned to Switzerland to get married. Xavier and Hedwig returned to Edgewater to farm and raised a family of seven—Frank, Walter, Hiedi, Ben, Cecilia, Annie and Ron.

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Nathan and Charlotte Bavin came from England in 1905 to the prairies near Stettler. They came to Windermere in 1921 with three children, Nat, Reg, and Grace. Nat Jr. was a carpenter. They first lived in Old Alec Robb's cabin on Windermere Creek and then on the Kimpton Ranch. Nat Jr. married Sadie and they had three sons, Ted, John and Hal. They lived at Sunshine Ranch for 25 years. Hal was a carpenter and a photographer.

(Museum Files)

Paddy Ryan and the Omelet
(By Winnifred Weir)

Paddy Ryan was one of a group of three who were among the first settlers in the Valley. Like Samuel Brewer and Tenas Bob, he too hailed from the States and like Tenas Bob there seems to have been some little doubt as to his actual name. Some say it was Jack Walsh, but the more popular belief is that his name was Jack Harris.

He and Tenas Bob were partners on the land later bought by Hammond and often referred as today as the Hammond Ranch, and when they sold out Paddy Ryan started out on his own on the property near where the Paddy Ryan Lakes are today. (2007) He was well liked and those who remember him speak of his wit and fondness for a joke. Which no doubt accounts for an amusing anecdote told of him when he was on the Hammond Ranch.

Another old-timer, who had recently come to the Valley went to the Ranch in search of fresh eggs. There were plenty of eggs to be had there, but Paddy wasn't eager for a sale. " Where I come from," he said, " Eggs were a dollar a dozen; I can only get seventy-five cents here. They're not worth bothering about." Evidently they did not bother because there was a barrel in the kitchen full of eggs.
" I won't sell you any, but take what you want and the next time you are over this way bring me a bottle of whiskey. Help yourself," he told the would-be purchaser, motioning to the barrel, " but dig down a bit, don't take the top ones." So the top eggs were laid aside and ten dozen from further down were carefully removed, packed and transported to their destination.
Alas for the omelet. With the sale of eggs not worth bothering about, it was evidently the habit at the ranch to place them in the barrel layer upon layer, perhaps in the hope that eventually there might be an order from China for antique eggs. When the cook cracked them, they were beyond the powers of description.

So the would-be purchaser went without his fresh eggs and the men went without the omelet and Paddy Ryan was the only one to gain from the episode. He had his joke and because the old-timers were good sports, he got his bottle of whiskey.

(Museum Files)

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GENEALOGY GROUP

Ever wonder how many branches are on your family tree ? There is a group of individuals in the Invermere area who regularly seek answers to this very question.

On the third Monday of each month these genealogy detectives gather at the museum to share their ' finds' and to help each other in the quest to solve the mysteries of their family trees. Some have managed to trace their tree back to the 16 and 1700's. Others have found living relatives they hadn't known about !

In addition to their own mysteries, the group has begun data basing the births, marriages and deaths of individuals within the Valley for the use of other genealogists and historians.

The group is open to any-one interested in genealogy. Call the Curator at **342-2005** to confirm the next meeting date and come along.

(Compiled by– Sandy McKay)