

# VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 250-342-9769 February 2010



## **Christ Church Anglican**

Christ Church Anglican at Invermere was known as “The Little Church on the Hill” when it was erected in 1923. It has a magnificent view across the Columbia River Valley to the towering rocky Mountain Range.

The church was designed by George Allan Bennett with the guidance of the then rector, the Rev. Bertram Atkinson. It was built on land donated by the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitland's.

Many gifts were bestowed on the new church. The bell was given by Robert Randolph Bruce, then Lieutenant-governor of British Columbia, in memory of his wife, the Lady Elizabeth Northcott, who died in 1915 in Invermere.

The altar was made by early day resident Gilbert Cartwright with the wood carving by Cuthbert. The font was made of ore from various mines in the valley. It was augmented by stones collected by the Sunday school children under the supervision of their teacher, Miss Dora K. Bodecker, who was also the church organist. Pioneer citizen John Taynton made the font. Many gifts were given by Major and Mrs. Frederick Young. Mrs. Young was the daughter of the Very Reverend Prebendary A.J. Ingram of St. Paul's, London. A book rack made of olive wood brought from Jerusalem by her father was one gift; also a Bible that had been his. They donated two prayer desks and a foot pace mat in front of the altar, which had been made by Major Young while he was a prisoner of war in Germany during world War 1. A reading desk was presented by Christ Church at Cranbrook.

The church was dedicated by the Right Rev. Alexander John Doull, D. Bishop of the Diocese of Kootenay, in October, 1923.

The first wedding in the church united Charles Howell and Catherine Stewart on August 6, 1924.

Before the church was built, Anglican services had been held wherever arrangements could be made. The Rev. Ernest Thatcher, who lived at Spillimacheen, would come by

train to Invermere to officiate. He would spend the night with friends and hold the service on the Benches west of Invermere wherever arranged. At one time services were held in the golf club house, now a private residence. At one service the clergyman arrived late and his church warden later. The warden came hurrying down the aisle with the communion wine in a beer bottle. This so incensed Mrs. B.G. Hamilton, a devout communicant, that she determined a church would be built with the proper accoutrements. Church services were often held in the schoolroom until the church was built.

A handsome wood and leather bound Bible, a first edition King James version, which had been donated to the church is now housed for safe keeping in the University of British Columbia Library archives. ( Now encased at Christ Church Trinity. 2010 )

The first stained glass window was a memorial to the young daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Richardson. Two others in the nave were erected in memory of Herbert Northcott and his wife, Lucy, devout worshippers in the church. Behind the altar are fourteen beautiful stained glass windows depicting the twelve disciples, Mary with the Christ Child and John the Baptist. These , except the Richardson window, are the work of Michael Nutgens of Cowichan Bay.

*( Museum Files )*

### **Mrs. Catherine Sam**

Mrs. Catherine Sam, of the Kootenay Band, died in 1950 at the age of 103, having lived in the Columbia Valley all her life.

A great – great grandmother, Mrs. Sam could remember this country before the white man settled here. Neither she nor her daughter could speak English and when I interviewed her shortly before her death a young granddaughter translated my questions into the Kootenay tongue and her grandmother answered them.

Record of the 103 year old woman's age was kept in a little paper book she had started herself. Kept like a traditional family Bible it records not only her age but the names and ages of her children and grandchildren, when they were born and when some of them died.

Her own age, Mrs. Sam recorded in small circles, one circle for each year of her life. Since she could no longer see well enough to mark the book herself, her daughter marked it for her.

Mrs. Sam had lived in this country all her life. She was born in the Findlay Creek area near Canal flats and was married by a priest at what is now Cranbrook. Following her marriage she returned to this Valley. She bore seven children.

Mrs. Sam had been midwife on the reserve for many years when she was younger and had delivered more than a hundred babies. The sick and wounded also turned to her nursing skills. With herbs and roots and Indian teas, she seemed able to cure most of their ills.

Until only three or four years before her death the old lady helped with the tanning of hides, but the last years of her life, she just sat most of the time.

One traditional rite the Indian centenarian insisted upon, although the modern generation offered no explanation for it. As her teeth fell out they were preserved carefully in a little bag. Into the same bag went her nail parings and hair combings and she made the family promise that when she died the bag would be buried with her.

A grandson's wife told me how the old lady used to tell them tales of the olden days in the Valley. There were no matches, fires were lighted primitive fashion by rubbing sticks and flint to get a spark. There was no cloth of any kind . Tipi's and clothing were made of buckskin . There were no guns. Only bows and arrows. No horses. Loads were carried on their backs over mountain trails.

In June 1950, Mrs. Sam recorded her first and only vote at the federal election. Since then she had not left the reserve. Too frail to stand for more than a moment at a time , she crawled about the house and the wooden stoop outside. But she was far from helpless. Although almost completely blind she attended to all her personal needs herself, groping from place to place with gnarled, toil- worn hands that at one time were amazingly long and slender and finely boned. Outside she crawled on the ground following a low wire.

She died at the home of her

daughter, Mrs. Dominic Nicholas.

One grandson, Toby Nicholas, was killed in Sicily in June 1943. Other family members also served overseas.

Funeral services were held from the little Indian Church on the reserve close behind the house where Mrs. Sam had lived. High Mass was sung by rev. Father Celestine of Canal Flats and Rev. Father Agnellus of Invermere also officiated. Rev. Father Kelly and sisters of Charity from the St. Eugene Mission were also in attendance.

( Winn Weir Files )

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### “ Bird Tale ”

( From Jim Johnston's diary- 1944)

“ I have a pair of little bluebirds here that have been nesting for five years in a box I nailed up on the side of our barn. They returned last spring and one morning the little hen bird came to my bedroom window and fluttered up against the pane.

I went outside and stood by the woodpile and the little female brought the male and they both stood about 2 feet away from me. Suddenly they both made a bee-line for their box at the barn. I followed up and found that when they left the nest last fall, a squirrel had taken over and filled the box so full of pumpkin rinds that there was no room for the birds to get in.

I cleaned out the nest box and in less than an hour, the bluebirds were busy building.

## **Alfred Mitchell Ranch Brisco, B.C.**

“My father’s two uncles, Alfred and Hilliard Mitchell had come to Canada from Ipswich, England in the 1870’s to settle at Duck Lake , Saskatchewan.

Alfred Mitchell, after some years with his brother, decided to split up and move west. The CPR ( railway ) was now finished to the west coast. Alfred Mitchell made his way to British Columbia, ending up on property at Brisco, B.C. , he called Fortress Ranch.

The Mitchell's had a friend living near Paris, France. He was a horse breeder by the name of Captain C.W. Thorold of French descent. Capt. Thorold came out to visit his friend Alfred Mitchell at the Fortress Ranch. Capt. Thorold liked the Columbia Valley so well he bought a large acreage up Dutch Creek so he could breed and raise horses here in British Columbia. And this he did, up to the beginning of the war with Germany starting in 1914.

My dad’s brother, Macullam Mitchell came out from England about 1902 and worked for Capt. Thorold at the Dutch Creek Ranch for several years. Now, from the memories I have of Uncle Mac’s Ranch, all breeding stock had been imported from France under a French name I can’t remember. They were known for their many good features for riding as well as light draught work.

Dad’s Uncle Alfred, of the Fortress Ranch at Brisco bought a

stallion from Dutch Creek Ranch about 1903, and called him Yellowstone. This stallion became well known for the good colts he sired. Horse racing was a popular sport at this time and Yellowstone won many races during his lifetime. Frank Nicholson of Golden, B. C. always rode Yellowstone in the races for Alfred Mitchell. As soon as the war in 1914 broke out, Capt. Thorold returned to France and went on active duty with the French army. Sometime later, he was reported missing and nothing was ever heard of him again.

His staff at the ranch, being mostly French, soon abandoned the Ranch and returned to France. The horses were left to run free. ...And free they were for many years on the Dutch Creek range.

The Shuswap and Kootenay Indians used to round up a few for the fur farmers of the Valley.

I thought this might be of interest to you.

**(By Hector Mitchell 1995 )**

*( Museum Files )*

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### **Golden Star- September 1928**

“Count and Countess Cisterna of Italy spent the weekend at the CPR Bungalow Camp at Lake Windermere leaving again by special automobile. The Count is first cousin of the present King of Italy.”

“ Registered at the CPR Lake Windermere Bungalow camp are visitors from Edmonton, Swansea, Wales, St. Louis , Missouri, Chicago, Banff, Los Angeles, and Madrid, Spain. ” ( Museum Files )

*( compiled by Sandy McKay )*