

**VALLEY HISTORY**  
**AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM**  
**BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0    342-9769 May 2003**



**THE BLAKLEY FAMILY**

One of the display cases in the Windermere District Historical Museum was donated by the Blakley Family of Radium Hot Springs in memory of Alexander and Barbara Blakley ( pictured above) and Captain John S. Blakley, early Columbia River pilots. The Blakley name in the valley dates back to 1898.

That year, Alexander Blakley came west. He was an experienced engineer on the Great Lakes. He came to Golden to captain the stern-wheelers that plied the Columbia from Golden to Invermere. He built the Selkirk, the Pert and the Isabel.

John Blakley came west in 1887, a boy of 10. He had been with his Dad on the Great Lakes and when he came to Golden he naturally accompanied him on the Columbia River trips. By 1911, at the age of 22, he was a captain in his own right taking command of his first river boat, The Selkirk, which he had rented from H.E.Forster, a well known Wilmer rancher.

Two years later Alexander Blakley was drowned, a victim of the river he knew so well .Young John took over command of the Riverboats but the next year brought an end to the saga of the paddle-wheelers with the shrill whistle of the engine of the Kootenay Central Railway proclaiming heavy competition.

In 1914 Captain Blakley operated one of the last of the commercial steamboats on the river,

the F.P. Armstrong.

But that did not end John Blakleys career with boats. During the First World War he worked with the cross channel supply transport from England with the Royal Engineers and later operated a river transport boat on the Tigris in the Far East carrying men and supplies for the Mesopotamia Campaign. ( Then he took flying lessons and served with the Royal Flying Corps) He did a lot of flying in the next 10 years. Even owning his own plane when he returned to the Valley. But once a river man always a river man and in the Second World War the captain was back in harness, this time as a river pilot for the U.S. army boats in northern Alberta and Northwest Territories.

When the war was over , Captain Blakley came back to the Columbia .Operating a tourist resort with his wife and being postmaster at Radium Hot Springs served their term as occupations but John Blakley was a boatman and couldn't keep off the river.

With his sons, Captain Blakley built a stern-wheeler, 54 feet long with a 100 horsepower engine, named The Radium Queen. For 33 years the shrill whistle of the steamboats had been gone from The Columbia but the hills echoed once again when the Radium Queen's whistle shrilled on hunting trips and week-end trips with the Blakley family.

John had married Jessie Weston from Golden in 1916 and their first son Jock was born when he was overseas. His son Herb was born in 1921 and Blair was born in 1924. By 1929 he was extremely active in his flying career. He purchased a Gypsy Moth, but because of blindness in one eye he was unable to operate a commercial license. He then hired other pilots to fly for him and started his business of selling rides. For \$5.00 you went up, around and down and he became well known for landing in many fields throughout B.C.

Jessie Blakley ran the Hotel while her husband John developed his interest in flying and also turned it into a profitable living. In the early days the hot pools were used by certain people trying to clear their heads, as well by local road working crews and Natives but its reputation as a health resort was spreading. Previously only the Natives had believed in its curative powers. Now , the Blakleys felt that the benefits to be gained from the hot pools was the most important aspect.

In the early 1930's , Captain Blakley made the first unofficial non-stop flight from Alberta to Vancouver and back, with only one refueling stop. In those days he was operating a garage in Radium, an airfield in Windermere ( on Kimp-ton's land ) and a flying school in Vernon.

Meanwhile, back at the Hotel, Jessie was keeping the fires burning with sawdust fuel that cost \$ 3.00 a truck load and guests such as Myrna Loy and Bing Crosby were being entertained. There was a story of Bing Crosby nearly being turned away because of his unruly appearance after a hunting trip of some duration.

The Blakley Family has a rich history in our Valley. Jock, Herb and Blair raised their families here and many family members continue to make the Valley their home.

( Museum Archives )

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### **Time Capsule to be Opened in 2058**

( Winn Weir- Valley Echo- 1958 )

The time capsule sealed and buried Saturday evening at a ceremony in David Thompson Memorial Park ( Lions Clubhouse at the Cross-roads ) will, it is hoped, make history. It will be opened at the 147th Annual Fall Fair in the year 2058.

The capsule was buried in a cement vault in the entrance step. It contains articles of local and historical interest presented by various groups.

Hal Bavin, Windermere photographer,

placed within it a photo of Friday's flag raising. Messages from Rev. Aubrey Small and Rev. R.D. Kimmitt were read and presented.

E. Adams of the Imperial Bank of Invermere placed a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, 50 cent piece, a dollar bill and a centennial dollar in the capsule.

Four David Thompson stamps, first day issue 1947 were also placed within.

Following the presentation the capsule was sealed with moisture proof cement and lowered into a small cement vault in the step.

A detailed account of the capsule and its situation and plan for unsealing have been sent to the Provincial Archives at Victoria.

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### **“ Golden Star ”**

January 28, 1938

And now for a report on one of the best..... with a capital “B”..... hockey games witnessed in the district for a long time, when the “old timers” and the junior team of the district went into battle on Saturday, January 15, in Invermere. Charlie Wolfe, in goal for the old timers, put up a great game. Charlie played senior amateur hockey in Alberta some years ago, and he and a hockey stick are quite at home together. R.G. Newton and Vaughan Kimpton, playing defense, skimmed over the ice like professionals. John Blakley had not played hockey for thirty years.....but secrets like that shouldn't be divulged! Fred Foyston, W.H. Cleland and Rev. J.L. Clerihue were forwards, first line, and Percy Lake, John Blakley and Walter Elmes were the second line. Foyston and Elmes got the goals for the old timers in a resulting finish of 5-2 in favor of the juniors. The junior team was composed of Johnnie Blake, goal; Jack Jones, Frank Foyston, defense; Jim Ashworth, Dave McGuinness, Filmer Coy, first line; Carl Jones, Ralph Tobiason, Gordon Cleland, Herb Blakley,second line. The older men certainly showed the boys that they know what a hockey stick is for! There were no chipped noses nor were any penalties inflicted.

## ST. MICHAEL'S HOSTEL

Windermere, B.C.

For Members of His Majesty's Forces  
Operated By Lieut.-Col. and Mrs. A.K. Hemming

Situated on the Shores of Lake Windermere in beautiful surroundings and climate. Swimming in warm Lake Windermere.... Boating, fishing and pony rides available at \$1.00 / day. Hiking and Mountain climbing tours out your door!

**Rest and Play in the Beautiful Rockies**

**Rates**— Transportation from Banff to Hostel and return, 100 miles of scenic drive.

For a party of 5 or more, meals and bed-

Per Person-\$10.00 per week

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**Mrs. A.K. Hemming**

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### Earl Grey Cabin

During the summer of 1908, Earl Grey, Governor General of Canada and a party made the trek from Argenta in the West Kootenay to Wilmer over the Earl Grey Pass. The following are excerpts from a letter to Premier Richard McBride of British Columbia:

“ I am already considering whether it may not be possible for me to bring Lady Grey and my daughters to a camp at Toby Creek next year. I sincerely hope that you may be able to make this area into a National Park. I think that perhaps the best way in which I can help you is if I settle now to make a camp there next year and I am accordingly instructing Mr. Oliver to make ready for me, by September 1st. Next, a camp on a spot I have selected at a cost not to exceed \$500.00.....I will ask you to regard this action as my contribution towards the establishment of a National Park.”

## DANISH SETTLERS

Dr. Gaddes sought the Danes to settle his Columbia Valley Orchards farms because he knew they would be experienced at farming small parcels of land.

The Lutheran Church was instrumental in getting some of the families to Edgewater.

Chris Carlsen came in 1926 to farm.

Rasmus Jensen came in 1928 to farm.

Elof Madsen came as a Master Carpenter.

O.P. Nielsen came in 1928 and helped develop the Whitehouse in Edgewater.

Helge Oxholm came in 1928 to farm with Jens and Wally Lautrup. He left in 1929.

Peter and Astrid Jacobsen came in 1929 and farmed until 1937. Emil and Margie Johnson bought their farm.

“ Big Paul” Christensen came in 1928 to farm.

Gordon Ferguson bought his farm .

Martin Rasmussen bought the farm from the Hewitts in 1939.

Sven Jensen arrived in 1928 and farmed until 1932, when he returned to Denmark.

Viggo Pedersen came in 1928 and cleared land near Lautrups. Their home burned in 1933 and they returned to Denmark.

“Little Paul” Christensen and wife Anna came to farm in Edgewater in 1929.

Big John Madsen and his cousin Little John Madsen also settled in the late twenties.

Carlo Svendsen and Niels Nielsen also farmed.

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## JOE JIMMY

Joe Jimmy's dog treed a cougar which Joe attacked and killed with a jack-knife. This is according to an oath taken on a stack of bibles (shooters bibles- - - like Stoeger Arms catalogues and Dominion Ammunition handbooks.)

The two story tellers, Jack Sparrow and Carlie Baldry were in town for the winter.

The brave Indian, Joe Jimmy, was a big game guide who worked with Charlie at the Elkhorn Guest Ranch at Windermere.

Here's their account of Jimmy's fearless attack on the mountain lion somewhat as they got it from the guide:

One cold day last month, ( this is sometime in the early fifties), while Joe was out looking for some horses, he crossed a fresh cougar track. He put his dog on the track and in a short time the cougar was treed.

Only when Joe arrived on the scene to shoot the ' cat ' did he realize he'd left his rifle back at the ranch. At this point most of us would have done an about-face and gone for the rifle, not even hoping too much that the cougar would sit and spit till we returned.

Not Joe Jimmy! Not a true son of Indian heroes who decades ago taught the invading whites many a trick with a hunting blade!

Joe lashed his pocket knife to the end of a pole and forthwith shinned the tree where-in growled and glared the cougar, in full bloom of mature scratchiness.

Joe got up the tree about 40 feet with the cat on one side, himself on the other and ten or so short feet between them.

With some rapid calculations , Joe stabbed straight and hard at the cougar's heart.

The cougar screamed and scrambled to the top of the tree, Joe hanging on, ready for any further required thrusting.

But his aim had been true, his trust deep. Loss of blood quickly weakened the huge cat and he crashed down breaking branches as he went. It got to it's feet when it hit the ground and ran off with Joe's dog in hot pursuit, but by the time Joe could get down from his perch, the cougar had travelled 150 feet and expired.

Joe guides hunters after mountain sheep and goats, elk, moose and grizzly bear. He says he will not attempt to get a grizzly bear with his hack knife. He is resting on his laurels for a while at least.

*( Jaryl McIsaac Files.)*

## Fire Levels " Tin House" Hotel

*( VANCOUVER SUN- DEC. 29, 1969)*

ATHALMER- A weekend fire destroyed the 62 Year old Coronation Hotel here- and with it a colorful page of British Columbia history.

The 16 room building- once known by its rowdy clientele as the "Tin House" was leveled but no one was injured.

The Tin House got its' name from the sheets of corrugated tin nailed to the outside walls some time after it was built in 1907.

Hope Brewer, 83, the first white child born in the Windermere Valley, recalled Sunday, the Tin House in its' heyday was a no-holds barred saloon patronized by miners and loggers and steamboat passengers.

" A wild bunch used to hang out there," he said, " they were mostly loggers who cut timber for the CPR all winter, then came to town in the spring."

Built by George Stark and his brother Bob, the Coronation was later taken over by Thomas Barry, who nailed the tin sheathing on the walls. During the 1940's and 50's the Tin House gained a wide reputation for its cuisine under the Ronacher family who owned and operated it. The Ronachers also operated a mill and gave employees a full meal at the dinner table.

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### ANNUAL APPLE SALE

ONLY \$1.30 / BOX

SAVE 50 CENTS BY SUPPLYING YOUR OWN BOX

### HEFTI'S DAIRY

ATHALMER

PHONE 5 T

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The unveiling of the David Thompson/ Charlotte Small Statue will be on July 18, 2003 in Invermere. Everyone is welcome.

( compiled by- Sandy McKay)