

VALLEY HISTORY
AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM
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Samuel Hope Brewer

Samuel Hope Brewer, first white child born in the East Kootenay, is a pioneer in his own right and so was his father, Samuel Brewer who came to the valley first in 1882.

Samuel Hope Brewer was born at Perry Creek , May 30, 1886, where his father was placer mining. The mining settlement boasted neither doctor or nurse but Hope survived like most babies did and thrived in the rough and ready life of the early settlers.

He was three years of age when the family moved to Fairmont and his first memory is of crawling beneath the old sawmill at Hot Spring Creek , to try to catch the falling sawdust with his hands.

His father's first experience with this valley had come before he settled at Perry Creek with two other valley pioneers, Paddy Ryan and Tenas Bob (Robert Jackson) . Samuel Brewer had come on horseback in 1881 to Canoe River. It was early winter and the snow was too deep to continue. They built a log shack and wintered there. They

built two canoes during the long winter. In the spring of 1882 they started up the Columbia. It was a long trip, broken where they pleased to prospect a little. That winter they spent north of Golden.

Early in the spring of 1883 they pulled their canoe on ice on a toboggan up the Columbia river. It was quite a trek and they were nearly out of supplies when they found a place where an RCMP boat had upset. They fished out some of the supplies. Ham and bacon which had been in the cold water all winter tasted fine to the hungry men and sustained them until they got supplies from Baptiste Morigeau at a little store he kept near Windermere.

Sam Brewer stayed in the general area of what is now Cranbrook. He had left his wife back in Wisconsin when he started his adventuresome journey. She had not heard from him for five years and was on the point of marrying again when a letter arrived from the St. Eugene Mission. In the spring of 1885 Sam left for Sandpoint, Idaho with saddle and pack horses. He had written Mrs. Brewer to meet him there. She made the trip, a long and arduous one for a lone woman in those days, sometimes by stage, sometimes by saddle horse and lastly by freight wagon to Sandpoint. They returned to Perry Creek and lived there until after the birth of their son , Hope. They continued north and were welcomed to Fairmont by George Geary who was ranching there and running a stopping place.

Sam Brewer went into partnership with Geary and two years later bought him out and kept the stopping place running for the stage coaches which made regular runs from

Golden to Fort Steele.

Brewer also branched into cattle ranching. Beef was worth five cents a pound for hind quarters and four cents for the front.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Brewer kept the stopping house at Fairmont until 1909 when they sold out to James Hankey and moved to the Chamberlain ranch northeast of Windermere.

Young Hope attended the first school in the district, a log school house built in 1894. The teacher was Mary K. Smith and Mr. Brewer has a Bible given him in 1895 as a prize by the teacher. Indian and white children attended together.

When his father purchased the Chamberlain ranch, young Hope bought a livery stable at Athalmer from A. R. White but two years later he saw that livery stables were about to be supplanted by automobiles, and went in with his father on the ranch. He remained with his father on the ranch until Sam Brewer died in April, 1921 at age 84. His wife died six years later.

Hope married Mrs. John Spencer of Manchester, England at Wilmer in 1916. The wedding was a gala affair with 100 guests. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Thatcher, the much loved Anglican clergyman. Hope Brewer sold the Chamberlain ranch to Alec Ritchie and went to work in Kootenay National Park as a forest warden. He stayed with the park 10 years and then moved to Invermere.

They had one son, Carl, and when the boy was married, his father gave him a \$2.00 gold nugget taken from Perry Creek on that day in 1886 when Hope Brewer was born.

The days of the steamboats of the Columbia hold rich memories for Hope Brewer and he now has a cabin at the head of Windermere Lake made of the original timbers of the sternwheeler "North Star", one of the early boats to sail under captain Armstrong.

(Wynn Weir- Museum Files)

The Shuswap Indian Cemetery and Burial Customs **By Shelagh Dehart**

I have done a bit of research about it, but no one seemed to know much about it. So, I will state what I remember about the cemetery from when I was a young girl in 1915 and also from what the old people used to tell us.

My mother, Amelia (Kinbasket) Palmer was five years old in 1862 when her grandfather, Chief Paul Ignatious died and he was one of the first ones to be buried there.

The cemetery since then has been extended three times and each time it had to be blessed by a Catholic Priest before it could be used.

The monuments or crosses all faced west because the heads of the dead were in that direction. Years ago the dead were wrapped in hides or woven mats of cedar, reeds or grasses, for burial. In later years, Francois Morigeau taught the Indians how to make lumber with a two man saw and how to make coffins.

It was very seldom that a Catholic Priest would be present at a funeral because there were no resident priests in this part of the country. People who neglected to make their Easter duties, or who had been away from church service for a whole year were buried outside the cemetery when they died. I can remember two graves that were outside the St. Eugene Mission cemetery, with no markers.

The Indians in those days did not put flowers on the graves, but they usually left the person's rosary and the dead person's holy water cup on the grave. The Shuswaps worshipped in the old original log church (1862) until Father Coccola had St. Paul's Church erected in 1890.

When a man died, his remains were washed, groomed and dressed in his best

clothing, by men. When a woman or child died it was the duty of the women to do the same. The person who prepared the dead for burial was not allowed to prepare any food or do any cooking for one week.

In the old days, they held a 'wake'. The body was kept in the church over night with candles burning on each side of the coffin. People took turns to go in and pray or talk to the dead person. The next day, after the noon meal, the people would all go to the church to sing and pray. From there, the procession starts for the cemetery with the hearse (or wagon) in the lead. The church bell kept ringing. All the dogs started to howl. The sound of the bell, they say, hurt their ears. At the grave site in the cemetery, there were long speeches by the Kootenay and Shuswap Chiefs. Then the people all prayed and sang hymns for the dead. Finally, the coffin was lowered into the grave and the people took handfuls of soil and dropped it on top of the coffin. After that , grave diggers would start to do the burying.

At the village, all the mourners would have dinner at the Chief's house. After dinner the mourners sat on the floor in a circle. In the middle of the circle were all the deceased person's belongings—blankets, clothing, cow-bells, tools, saddles and guns. The reason was so that these things would not be a daily reminder. Then a woman would wrap up an article and offer it to anyone who would accept it. The taker had to pray for the repose of the dead person's soul. The remainder of the belongings that were not claimed were taken and piled under the tree near the cemetery.

Every year for as long as I can remember, on All Saint's Day , the last day in October, the people would go to the church to pray for the souls of the dead. From there they all went to the cemetery with their shovels, axes and hammers to clean up. There they built a huge bonfire and heated

the food that they had cooked the day before. They hung all kinds of pots or tins of water above the fire to make tea. Most of the old people had dried berries or leaves for tea. After the meal, they started doing the graves. Weeding, scraping the earth and reshaping the graves and mending the fences. Some of the crosses that were starting to rot were taken home to be replaced. This was always a sad time. Some were weeping , some of them sang or prayed as they worked. The children that were old enough helped. Some others baby sat. For days after that, the Indian people were in a state of mourning and there was love and understanding among them.

In my time, the chief was the leader and his word was law, but at the same time, he was kind and gentle. He was Chief Pierre Kinbasket. But as the years went by and the old people died, the whole system changed. Today I am sorry to say that the Shuswap cemetery is badly neglected.

There is a difference between the Shuswap and Kootenays in their activities after a funeral. It used to be that the Kootenays put up a feast and dancing. This was supposed to drown their sorrow. The Shuswaps mourned for days and the relatives kept going back to the cemetery to pray.

(Museum Files)

“The Columbian” - August 8, 1911 Wilmer, B.C.

Mr. Ford has secured a contract from Col. Poett, of West Lake Farm, at Lake Lillian for a fine residence to be built at once. The house will be complete in every respect and furnished with all the modern improvements.

**Invermere Kinsmen Club
October 13, 1960**

At the annual installation ceremony of the Invermere Kinsmen Club, Donald Campbell of Invermere was installed as president by visiting District Governor Harvey McLeod of Penticton. Vice president is Dick Lim. The secretary is Carl Jones and the treasurer is Peter Shukin of Canal Flat. Lester Goodwin is registrar and directors are Roy Broadfoot, Donald Tunnacliffe and Edward Woolston. Ron Collieu is in charge of publicity.

New members welcomed into the club were David Bowen, Dale Osterlund, Curtis Wilder, Reno Goodwin and Pat Follick.

The same evening the newly formed Kinnette Club of Invermere was presented with its charter by Mr. McLeod. The first president of the organization is Mrs. Wayne Lacy. The vice-president is Mrs. Stanley Frater (Anita); Mrs. Donald Cameron is secretary and Mrs. Donald Tunnacliffe is treasurer. Directors are Mrs. Joe Conroy , Mrs. Roy Broadfoot and Mrs. Ed Woolston.

Other charter members are Mrs. Carl Jones (Marion), Mrs. Reno Goodwin (Mary), Mrs. Curtis Wilder (Myrt) Mrs. Alan Tegart (Eileen), Mrs. Clarence Degerness (Marg), and Mrs. Jim Chabot (Grace).

Chairman of the skating rink project is Joe Conroy and Curtis Wilder is in charge of entertainment which includes the annual Halloween party sponsored by the Kinsmen for district children.

(Museum Files)

December 1944

Jim Johnston, Jack and Billy Taynton and other old-timers are maintaining a good average attendance at the “ Stockdale Discussion Club ” which meets most afternoons shortly after lunch at the Hardware Store.

Museum Summer

Hi, my name is Alex Weller and I am one of the summer students at the museum this year. I was born and raised in Invermere and graduated from DTSS in 2007. Since then I have been working towards a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Alberta with a major in History and an Anthropology minor. I will be going into my fourth and final year in September. Outside of school I enjoy hiking and climbing, as well as running during the school year. For those of you who know my dad (Herb), no I do not run to work everyday. I will be here until the end of August. Feel free to stop by any time and say hi.

My name is Erin Bonner and this year I am taking the reins on creating and running our Meet Me at the Museum program.

I am going into my fifth year taking psychology at the University of Lethbridge. I have, however, jumped around a bit; I started my first year in a program called Class Afloat, where I sailed around the world while working as part of a sailing crew and maintaining my full time studies. I then moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia and studied at Dalhousie University for two years. I finally landed in Lethbridge, for the time being, and will finish my Bachelors degree in June.

For fun I ride and train horses, go hiking with my dog (Jack) and draw. I live up on the K2 Ranch and have thoroughly enjoyed learning all about its history while working here!

September General Meeting will be Friday Sept. 17 @ 2 p.m. Program will be Show and Tell. Bring a family historical piece and share it with the membership. Some artifacts that arrived over the summer will be on display. We now have a website.

windermerevalleymuseum.ca