

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 August 2016 250-342-9769



Walter and Melrose Hawke

Walter Lawson Hawke was born at Medicine Hat, Alberta in 1884. After early years in school there he went to Ontario Veterinary Collage in Guelph, Ontario. He graduated with a degree in Veterinary Science. He returned to practice that profession in Alberta, mostly at a Veterinary Laboratory under Department of Agriculture near Lethbridge.

Mary Lillian Melrose Hargrave was born on July 5, 1882 in Manitoba. After attending school there, she attended nurses training in Regina Sask. She did not complete the course because of health problems. In 1914 she married Walter Hawke at Medicine Hat, Alberta.

After the marriage they lived at Lethbridge where Walter was practicing his Veterinary profession. After some time there, Walter found that working with animals caused him to have asthma so they returned to the family farm near Medicine Hat.

Some time later, he decided his health would be better in a high mountain atmosphere. He found a ranch for sale near Invermere, B.C. (Royal Antler Ranch). Walter and Melrose lived there from 1921 to 1943.

After that, they moved to Victoria and lived there until Walters passing in 1970. Melrose moved back to Medicine Hat where she lived until her death in 1972.

Just-a-mere-Ranch 1933

(Rev. William Stott, B.A.)

Twenty odd miles away in the bottom of the valley lie the wee towns of Windermere and Invermere, so when the narrow road passed under the rustic arch bearing the legend, "Just-a-mere-Ranch", we knew that a sprightly soul lived here.

The road we had come over was scarcely a road. Even on the level one had to proceed with unusual care. And there wasn't much level. Starting from a three thousand foot elevation it was climb, climb, climb. Four gates to open down near the public road, then up past where there was an old sawmill and a tie camp, named "Waverly Station" by the cheerful carload passing through. Up and still up. And then down, down a steep hill, car in low, single track road absolutely—a shelf on the side of the mountain—miles long. At the foot a little bridge crossing a lively stream. Then our sign. Then up again on more shelf road. At last a field of grain. Soon after a flock of turkeys, some of them carrying little bells. As we stopped at the garden gate, Walter and Melrose Hawke were there to meet us. There was no question of the genuineness of our welcome.

There was an old log house with rambling addition.

"We bring our guests in through the kitchen" cheerily announced Mrs. Hawke. Off the kitchen, separated by an open arch without pillar, the coziest, roomiest nook we had ever seen. A fireplace quite unique. Everywhere evidence of culture and ingenuity.

And through the window one caught one's breath at an unsurpassed view of the Rockies fitted into the v-shaped opening in the nearer mountains.

And, what do you think? One of the most conspicuous objects in that entrance room, standing on the high arch base, was a Cent-a-meal-box. Across on the fireplace top (no, not a mantel) lay a friendly, attractive looking Bible.

Just before the delightful supper was served, I stood outside gazing down the ravine landscape. Mr. Hawke came to join me. The inevitable city question came to my lips: "Do you not feel cut off living out here?" Quietly came the answer. "No, not at all. We did for a year or two when we first came from the prairie, but now we like it." "But supposing one of you took sick; you have no telephone. The other would have to leave the sick one to go for help." The answer came simply, directly: "We have found in our experience that there is One who looks after us."

"That is good," I said questioningly. "Yes," he continued, "again and again we have been assured of it."

The call to supper came just then. But other corroborative stories came along in the course of subsequent conversation, stories of forest fires that swept the mountain sides, and how on one occasion all the furniture had been taken out as a precaution, of how a spring freshet had threatened the bridge that meant contact with the rest of the world, and how on that very day a chance visitor had come out and discovered the accumulation of debris, and the two men had worked all day in the water and saved the bridge; and of how in all the years they had lived on this place they had never met another car on that one way road.

Over the teacups, we talked of the World's Championship in garden peas having been won at Regina by the local experimental farm, and of how the Dominion Government was now offering this experimental farm for sale at a sacrifice price. The suggestion was made that perhaps the farm had been laid out on too lavish a scale.

"Made to match our mountains," someone remarked. "Would we have had men to match our mountains," ventured another. Our host, Mr. Hawke replied, "We have them." "But," said the other retreating, "I was thinking of the confused political situation in British Columbia, and of how no personality emerges behind whom the people will rally confidently." Simply, yet directly, came the reply:

"We do not appreciate our public men at their true worth. If they make one mistake, all the good they have done goes for nothing."

One came away from Just-a-mere-Ranch with the feeling that our friends live above the clouds in more senses than one. If you visit in this community you will find them every Sabbath day during the season that the car can be run, worshipping in the house of God, and a welcome guest at someone's home afterwards. The charge with which they are associated is one of those assisted through the Missionary and Maintenance Fund. We pass on to others associated with them in the support of the fund their testimony to the goodness of God.

(Museum Files)

Lake Maye

(from a letter from T. Starbird)

March 14, 1913

"I discovered what is now known as Lake Maye near the glacier of my name which empties into Horsethiet Creek. I first visited it in August 1899 on a trip after some mineral prospects. I came across it by accident. I let the subject of it pass out of my mind until eleven years later when I had Lord Stafford as a guest at my home on a hunting expedition. This was in 1911. I took him to the small lake. He was so delighted with the gem of a lake that he fairly raved about it. Later the same year I took H.W. Gleason of Boston, famous artist-photographer, with some friends to view it. At her special request I also took Mrs. Starbird, whose Christian name was Maye. Mr. Gleason, in spite of my remonstrance named the lake after Mrs. Starbird who to my knowledge was the first white woman who had ever seen it.

Invermere Forestry May 1953-Feb. 1961

(By Vern Hopkins)

Ranger sequence - Joe Johnson, then Ray Tippie, Vern Hopkins then Les Taft.

Timber— Portable bush sawmills, some very small and primitive, some large and complex, were the vogue in 1953. Simon Ronacher and Son, operating in Frances and Forester Creeks, Wilder Bros. Lumber Co. in the Kootenay Valley, just south of the Park boundary, and a host of smaller portables, most of these on private land, were active. Only Edgewater Sawmills Ltd., and H. Seel and Son had stationary sawmills, as I recall.

Products produced by these mills was chiefly railway ties and dimension lumber.

By 1958 both S. Ronacher and Wilder Bros. had converted to stationary sawmills, one at Athalmer and one at Radium. Utilization was not improved until the advent of the pulp mill at Skookumchuck and the introduction of "Smallwood policy" by the province. Small portable mills continued as before with several increasing in size and importance. These included Wenger and Kellough, the Baltic Sawmill (Ojars Ukass), Joe Kirsch and Sons and Tegart and Larsen. Waste in woods and mill was serious.

A very bad thing for the future of private land forestry at this time was a continuing market for small, second growth fir logs as 'stud' logs for the manufacture of 8 foot 2x4s, chiefly to the Radium mill. This practice stripped most of the accessible private land in the district of a future crop of more valuable larger trees.

At the end of my stay in Invermere (1961) the forest industry was very much in a state of transition. Quotas had been established causing limits to be placed on starting of new plants and expansion of existing ones. Lumber companies were vying for timber stands in hither to remote areas known only to guides and mountaineers— eg: Beaverfoot, Upper Horsethief Creek, Brewer Creek, Windermere Creek, Shuswap Creek,

and the Cross River.

Logging to 4 inch tops, emphasis on utilization to produce wood chips from what was previously wasted changed everything and these changes ere just commencing in 1961 when I was transferred to another district and lost touch with the Columbia Valley.

Fires- My stay at Invermere was marred by a number of large remote lightning caused fires. The policy of letting 'back country' fires burn was finished, and new technology of aerial attack on such fires was in its infancy. Use of helicopters and air tankers (water bombers) commenced with very primitive equipment and little knowledge of how to use it. The pack horse was put out to pasture.

Recreation— During this period, the Provincial Parks Service was established, taking over the roadside campsites commenced by the Forest Service,, eg: Dry Gulch Campsite, and later remote Provincial Park Areas such as Mt. Assiniboine Provincial Park.

In Summary, my stay at Invermere covered a period of great changes in Forestry which were far from complete when I transferred out in 1961.

It should be noted that the last river drive on the Spillimacheen River took place at this time. I think that it was 1954. I recall observing the drive about that time.

Spillimacheen was a separate ranger district at that time. The Ranger was Jack Snyder.

January 27, 1950

Invermere Liquor Store burned.

Fire completely destroyed a building on Invermere's main street, housing government liquor store, restaurant equipment and upstairs apartments. Damage estimated at \$25,000.00. Liquor bottles in the government vendor's store popped like shotguns. Only cash in the safe was saved. The liquor store stock was a complete loss. The Chuck Wagon restaurant was closed, but all equipment was destroyed. All property in the apartments was lost.

Thompson Family Farm

Mr. and Mrs. William Thompson and children Bob, William, Kay, Jim, Jack, Ellen and Lioel lived across the Columbia river, Edgewater, at Thompson's Landing in 1914. They had a flourishing farm and comfortable home. The children went to school in Edgewater, crossed the river in a boat, walked across the flats, took another boat and then walked up the fields to the school, which was on the Eric Smith property. (the U5 Ranch).

When Barbara and Dolly started school, they were quite small and not as strong as the older children so it was very tiring for them. Mr. Thompson decided it was best to move to Edgewater in 1932, and they moved into the Planta house, built in 1912. They all hated to leave their old home, but it was for the best.

Mr. Thompson still had his trap line, which he operated from Edgewater until he was 75 years old. Prices were good in the 30's for muskrat, beaver, lynx and coyotes. The Thompson boys got employment at the portable mills. Some were big game guides, packers and outfitters and they all had large gardens.

Invermere Mercantile

C.E. Osterloh and M.E. Tunnacliffe built the store in 1947.

C.E. Osterloh, in 1944, purchased E.M. Taylor's Dry Goods business which operated out of an addition on Frank Stockdale's Hardware. The business was renamed C.E. Osterloh Ladies, Gents and Children's wear.

Mrs. Taylor had started a Dry goods business in Wilmer in 1908 opposite the Union Hotel. It occupied the main floor of the building and the Town Hall was above it. In the 1920's the Wilmer store closed and Mrs. Taylor opened the Invermere Store. In 1947, Osterloh and Tunnacliffe built a building 50' square which was built by Nat Bavin and cost \$6000.00 to put up. Half was Dry Goods and half was M.E. Tunnacliffe Furniture and Electric. Lots for

the building were \$10.00 each at a tax sale. In 1953, Osterloh and Tunnacliffe sold to R.D. Askey and P. Haman and purchased the Invermere Hardware from Joy and Bill Bond.

In 1968, Des Askey bought out P. Haman and continued the business until 1973 when he sold to Jim Kester. The Kesters enlarged and renovated the store. Later became known as Daves Book Bar.

Movie Night at the Museum

Scheduled for Sunday evenings at 7:00 are:
September 18— Lost Horizon—1972 with Liv Ullmann and Peter Finch. A trip to the mysterious Shangri-La.

October 23—The Doll—1919 and Parisian Love—1925. The Doll is a German film directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Parisian Love is from the Killiam Collection, stars Clara Bow! English inter-titles on this double bill of B&W non-talkies.

November 20—David and Bathsheba—1951 with Susan Hayward and Gregory Peck. Back to 1049 BC during King Davids reign.

All not to be missed. Mark your calendars.

The next meeting for Members and guests will be September 15th, 2p.m. at the Museum. The program will be Show and Tell. You're welcome to bring something to show or just come and see some of the new artifacts that the Museum has acquired during the year. Circle the date on your calendar. Refreshments served.

The Executive of the Windermere District Historical Society is still in need of a Vice President. Phone Marg if you need more information. 250-342-9434