

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 November 2016 250-342-9769



Hope and Nellie Brewer

(pictured with son Carl . October, 1967)

Fifty-seven years have shown many changes in the Valley and that is the time that Mrs. Hope Brewer has lived here. She came from Manchester, England, her birth place , in 1902 to live with her aunt, Mrs. Douglas Grainger. Here she met John Dennon Spencer, better known locally as Jack Spencer, who was a cattle rancher at Findlay Creek on the property now owned by Captain Jeffery, where he had 200 head of cattle. After a brief courtship they were married.

Life was fun on the ranch, too busy for loneliness. They rode 12 miles on horseback for the mail and rounding up the cattle was a chore Mrs. Spencer enjoyed helping with, so she rode a good many hours a week. They had two daughters, Nellie, named for her mother, who lived only a few days, and Helen, now Mrs. Vernon Craig, known to many in Windermere and Invermere.

Mr. Spencer suffered a serious fall one evening in his loft. He was treated at Cranbrook for a spinal injury and then was taken to Victoria where he died 18 weeks later.

Nellie had been called to Victoria to be with him and after his death she returned to the Findlay Creek Ranch where her brother

Andrew Ogden helped her with the cattle until she sold the property two years later.

Shortly afterwards, she moved to Wilmer to live.

Nellie had been a friend of the Sam Brewer family for many years and after she moved to Wilmer, the friendship deepened between her and Hope Brewer, the son of the family. (The Sam Brewers were true pioneers of the Valley. Mr. Brewer arrived in 1882 and their son had been born in 1886 at Perry Creek and had come to live at what is now Fairmont three years later. They kept a 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 1885 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 the age of 84. His wife died six years later.

Nellie and Hope Brewer were married in 1916 in the Wilmer Hall by the late Rev. Frederick Thatcher . The wedding was a gala affair with 100 guests. They lived on what is now the Swansea Ranch, but was known then as the Chamberlain Place. Here they raised cattle. They owned one of the first cars in the Valley, a Hupmobile, in 1916. It had been run as a mail stage by James McKay.

They sold the ranch to Alec Ritchie in 1926 and went to Kootenay National Park where Mr. Brewer was a Park Warden at Marble Canyon for the next ten years. Their son, Carl, was three years old when they moved to the Park. The first night they were there a bear took the little boys milk off the back porch. Mrs. Brewer says they had to keep an alert eye for bears and that Mr. Brewer shot several.

In 1936, they moved to Invermere where they purchased a small house on “ the pipe line”, and Mr. Brewer has been engaged in trapping and farming in a small way since.

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.

Mr. Brewer has gained recognition as being the first white boy born in the East Kootenay and at the Centennial celebrations at Invermere last summer he was presented with a certificate of long residence signed by the Lieutenant-governor. (1950's).

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.

Mrs. Brewer has ten grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. One of the granddaughters is Mrs. Frank Olds who is well known in Invermere, where her husband was with the forestry.

Fifty-seven years is a long time to have lived in the Valley.

Nellie passed away June 11, 1968 and Hope passed away October 13,1971.

Carl married Myrna Barbour who was the daughter of Harry and Hazel Barbour of Wilmer, B.C.

(Museum Files)

Reminiscing

(By Ron Ede)

1930's- Christmas at home started with the plucking of the turkeys outside, coincided with the feverish round of baking indoors.

The tree was tinselled, house decorated, verbal invitations for a party Christmas night had been extended to everyone in Windermere. The benches and tables from the community hall had been transported via horse to our living room.

Christmas Day- Sampling the content of stockings in the middle of the night, the opening of presents first thing, the round of farm chores, getting the wood and water in. Then off to church at 9:00. After church Dad made his rounds of nearly everyone in Windermere to wish them a Merry Christmas and to make sure they would be at the party Christmas night.

The Party- what a meal and what a crowd. A double table the full 20 foot length of the living room. Turkey with all the vegetables, jellies, Christmas cake, plum pudding covered with farm fresh whipped cream and loaded with lucky coins. After the supper cleanup, everyone did his or her bit. Always an orchestra of local musicians and wandering minstrels. George Okell and his guitar, Walter Fredericks on the violin, Abe, a professional drummer from Vancouver. There was always an assortment of accordions and mouth organs and everyone danced.

One of the men decided it was time I learned the ‘two-step’. We got started but somehow he had forgotten how to stop— until we came into violent contact with the Quebec heater. Heater, stovepipes and dancers all ended up in a sooty heap. This didn’t slow the party up long. After a few laughter filled minutes, all were back at it.

Memories of the Good Old Days !! Year after year, Mom and Dad held their Christmas parties. Dad loved the companionship and friendship and even considering all the work, Mom did too. But I believe there was something deeper. In 1928 our house burned to the ground and we lost everything. Perhaps those Christmas parties were a grateful couples way of saying “thanks”.

Chariot Racing in the Columbia Valley (By Denis Tegart 2016)

There were 7 or 8 chariot drivers who met Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings in the early 1960's to help raise money for the annual rodeo.

A racetrack was built at the crossroads. There were many spectators and very few wrecks over the years.

Competitors were Jim McKay, Denis Tegart, Jack Nichol, Bruce Nichol, Fritz Maurer, Jim Tegart, Jack Jones, John Wells, Buzz Martine and a couple others I don't recall.

There were 2 horses per team and each race had 2 chariots on the track at a time. Times were recorded. Five dollars was put in the pot for each race with the winner receiving a ribbon and a small portion of the pot. The remainder went to the Rodeo fund.

Chariots were made out of 45 gallon drums with top and bottom cut out and a floor was built. Then a section of the drum was cut out to fit the driver. The chariot was then welded to the front end of an automobile axel and painted bright colours. (Mine was bright yellow with black horses painted on it .)

In November 2015, **Jack Nichol** stated: "I am pretty sure we started chariot racing around 1967. You might want to contact Denis Tegart because we put a team together for him. One horse was his and the other was a horse I broke for the Elkhorn Ranch. I still have my chariot and its still the way it was when I raced it."

Jim McKay had a team and said **John Wells** was a trainer and driver. Jim donated his chariot, which was sponsored by Invermere Hardware, to the Museum in 2015. The chariot was painted and restored to its original state by painters Kurt Reichle and Hal Fleet in 2016. John Wells is pictured with Jim McKay's team, 1967.

Chariot Races Added to Rodeo Program

(Valley Echo August 1969)

The first All Girl Rodeo to be held in the valley is a featured event on Saturday's David Thompson Days program. Added to the list of rodeo events this week are chariot races with locally constructed chariots and a half mile flat race. All entries in the track races must be members of the Columbia Valley Racing Association.

Stock for the rodeo is being supplied by Bob Tegart and Phil Geiger. June Fox of Edgewater is supplying goats for the woman's goat tying contest.

Judges will be Happy Tegart and Jack Nichol.

Local officials are happy about the cooperation they have received from many sources.

Sharon Tegart, show secretary, reminds participants that all entry fees must be paid before noon August 23.



Settlement in Edgewater

Settlement began about 1910 when Columbia Valley Orchards was formed.

In 1926 Mr. and Mrs. Pete Hansen came to Edgewater. Dr. Gaddes asked her to be postmistress. He handed it to her, she said, "in a cigar box." she was postmistress for 31 years.

The Edgewater flume was built prior to WW1 and took two years to construct. The small Edgewater community hall was first a Columbia Valley Orchards warehouse. It was also a school from 1928 for a short time and in other years when there was an overflow of students. It was used as a church and as a clinic when Dr. Williams came once a week.

Helen and Ray Piper did market gardening with produce shipped to Banff. They sold their farm to Charlie Kohorst.

In May 1936, Bert Beamish, son Ora, daughter and son-in-law, Margie and Emil Johnson came from Saskatchewan. Ferguson bought a farm for market gardening and Beamish began a trucking business to take produce to Banff, Lake Louise and Field.

In the 1930's, John Madsen had an ice-cream stand in Edgewater during the summers.

Mr. and Mrs. O.P. Nielson ran a boarding house in Edgewater. They also had a small store and had a silver fox farm.

Dr. Gaddes knew Danish farmers had experience in making a living on small farms and tried to get as many Danish settlers as possible.

In the 1930's, Edgewater's population was 2/3 Danish— 4 Madsens, 3 Nielsens, 2 Petersens, 2 Jacobsens, Hansen, Jensen, Larsen, Thompsen, Lautrup, Krogh, Ploughman, Andersen and Christensen. The Planta house was built in 1912. It was home to the Thompson Family and then the Moore Family.

The Thompson family moved into Edgewater from their homestead on the Columbia river in 1932 so daughters Barby and Dolly could attend school. They moved into the Planta house.

In 1942, Edgewater had 19 homes.

In 1940 when Heinz Seel started his mill, the timber was cut by crosscut and buck saws. The logs were skidded from the bush by horses. They ran the portable mill for 30 years then made it stationary in its present location.

In 1942, Edgewater had a one-room school with grades 1-8. There was also an Anglican Church, Community hall, Columbia Valley Ranches Office, Blair's General Store, 2 cars and one telephone.

In 1946 Harry Moore bought Columbia Valley Ranches from Dr. Gaddes and Dr. Thompson.

Carlo Svendsen came to Edgewater in 1927. He had a farm. In 1947 he traded his farm for a coffee shop in Invermere with Mrs. Edith Kennings.

Harry Moore and Bill Harrison built the first log-jammer in the Valley. In 1947 Harry Moore purchased land and created the Edgewater airstrip.

The Edgewater Sawmill burned to the ground in February 1948. It was re-built and in 1950 a planer was added.

Edgewater in 1966 had 80 houses, 3 churches, 3 stores, 2 coffee shops, Elementary and high school, post office, clinic, an apartment building, fire hall, shoe repair shop, Legion Hall and Credit Union.

In 1966 Harry Moore sold his Edgewater Sawmill and timber holdings.

From the 1930's to the 1950's, Edgewater had a flourishing vegetable and produce market.

Mrs. Edith Kennings had the idea for the Edgewater Open Market. It started in 1970 with a Board formed to operate it.

The Timms had a greenhouse and nursery in Edgewater.

Movie Night at the Museum

November 20, 2016

David and Bathsheba—1951

With Susan Hayward and Gregory Peck.

Back to 1049 B.C. during King David's reign.

(Compiled by Sandy McKay)