

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

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**Katharine Lucy Walker
(Kitty 1935)**

On December 27, 1904 in Claxby Pluck-acre, Lincolnshire England twins were born. Katharine Lucy 1904-1986 and Basil George Coleman 1904-1978. Their parents were Emily Jane Walker (nee Hensman) 1871-1937 and Arthur Joseph Walker 1863-1929. There were already three children in the Walker family, Arthur John Turney 1899-1981 (Jack), Margaret Ellen 1900-1958 (Margaret Fuller) and Cecil Thomas Hensman 1903-1978 (Tom). After Katharine's family arrived in the Columbia Valley her youngest sister Elizabeth Mary 1913-1947 (Beth Campsall) was born.

Arthur Joseph Walker was a gentleman farmer in England who was excited by the promotional material from the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitland's Ltd. Crop failure two years in a row on their farm in England caused Arthur and Emily to look for a new place to raise their family. They purchased a piece of land northwest of Wilmer from the Fruitland's Company and set off on their

Canadian adventure.

The Walkers departed from England in April of 1913 aboard *The Empress of Ireland*. They landed in Montreal and traveled west to Golden, British Columbia on the Canadian Pacific Railway. There they were met by Basil G. Hamilton and traveled by Cadillac with him to Wilmer.

The Walker family lived in a house in Wilmer for the summer of 1913. Upon discovering that the land they purchased was not suitable for farming, Arthur negotiated a trade with the company and by the fall of 1913 they had settled into their new home. Their farm was the Ben Able Farm located by Able Creek in Invermere. A large proportion of the Walker farm was given over to potato production. The entire family worked to produce prize winning potatoes, which placed first at the PNE.

Katharine, fondly known as Kitty, embraced her new life in the Valley and left the prim and proper ways of her English home behind. The mountains were the first thing that captured her imagination when she arrived in the Columbia Valley. Kitty had a lifelong love of the outdoors. Her favorite was a hike up Castle Rock with friends and siblings. In her early years, Kitty was often found on the back of a horse taking a ride to Fairmont and the Dutch Creek Hoodoos. She also loved to bicycle with her family and friends. Kitty, George, Tom and Margaret attended the new, two room school in Invermere which was completed in 1913. Susie Nixon was a dearly loved childhood friend of Kitty's and they remained good friends all their lives. As a teen, Kitty worked at Blakley's Hotel in Radium Hot Springs. At the age of nineteen, Kitty left the Columbia Valley for the first time since she arrived. She traveled to the coast and took a Children's Nurse course at Vancouver General Hospital in 1923. Kitty spent

many years working for families in Victoria before commencing her contract with the Count and Countess de Suzannet of Paris, France. She lived in Victoria and France with the family until 1935. Katharine loved the six de Suzannet children and the adventure that traveling back and forth from Victoria to France brought.

In 1936 Kitty returned to live the remainder of her life with her family in Invermere. Life was not always easy, especially during the depression years of the thirties, but she always made the best of what she had. Kitty was a creator; whether it was a Fall Fair float or hand knit and sewn clothing for herself and her family or costumes or toys, she was always making something. Over the years Kitty not only raised her two daughters Sybl and Sylvia, but also took into her care forty-eight foster children. They never forgot her and over the years she received visits from many of them. In addition to raising these children, Kitty also did laundry for the Mineral King Mine.

Kitty spent many hours with her seven grandchildren and there was nothing better than doing crafts, playing bingo or sleeping under the stars with their Gran. She was always looking for and finding the best in people. Kitty had a warm heart and cherished all of her relationships. Tracy Williams and Lillian Gee were two of Kitty's close friends.

Kitty was a life long member of the Anglican Church and a member of the Anglican Women's Church Guild. She was also a member of the Windermere Valley Historical Society. In her elder years, Kitty lived in Lakeview Manor and was a member of the Invermere Seniors' group.

Those who knew Kitty will remember her for her bright smile, sense of humour and great laughs.

On October 11, 1986, Kitty was the last member of the pioneer Walker family to pass away.

(By Sylvia Walker and Dianna Tegart)

Autumns Call

By Kitty Walker 1922

When it is Autumn in the Valley
 When leaves begin to fall,
 And young coyotes are yapping to their parents thrilling call,
 That's the time I long to go
 To where the heart forever lurks
 Where the Columbia River runs through the
 Rockies and Selkirks.
 Where the leaves start turning yellow and
 berries on the hill
 With dear old Bruno striving, his mouth with
 them to fill.
 That's the time I long to be in those mountains by the river
 With nature's wondrous works forever and
 forever.
 Where the sky above is blue and air so clear
 and still,
 And piercing wild goose calls sounding over
 vale and hill.
 That's where the spirit rests in the hills and
 by the river
 With coyotes, bears and geese and Autumn's
 clear crisp weather.

Highways in the Valley

1800-1822.....Indian trails followed the Columbia River.
1884..... Pack horses and pack trains brought supplies to miners.
1887.....the B.C. Government Department of Highways was widening and improving the Indian Trails to wagon roads. Settlers were pouring in and were using the wagon road from Galbraith's Ferry (Fort Steele) to Canal Flat.
1893.....Regular stage coach and freight service was established from Golden to Fort Steele.
1896-1900.....Wagon roads were built to the mines and to the Benches.
1912.....Car travel had begun with regular service from the Invermere Hotel to Golden. This accommodated travelers on the train.
1914.....Mail and freight were carried by Kimpton Stage drivers.
1912-1923.....The Banff-Windermere Highway was built during these years.

“Yesterday”

from an article written by C.D. Ellis
1944

1885— The golden spike had been driven at Craigelachie. Regina, Moose Jaw, Medicine Hat and Calgary were the only settlements where law and order had been established in the West by the NWMP. This was the era into which Windermere was born. Other than the CPR mainline, links with other settlements were by Red River Cart, pack train or boat.

Among the throng on the platform of the newly completed CPR could be found Isaac Noland. He was a large man; his body seemed muscled with steel. The number of ties or timbers he could cut and hew was legendary. He wore a harness fitted to his head and shoulders and often delivered the trees he cut to the road himself.

Isaac enjoyed a drink when it was available and because of his size, no one dared refuse him !

The railway being completed, the workmen went into business in new settlements; took up homesteads; followed logging and sawmill crews and found growing markets for their products.

Isaac Noland and a number of others worked in Golden but when the Columbia River Lumber Company moved up the valley, Noland followed. At the same time, miners and prospectors were leaving Wild Horse Creek and coming here seeking their fortunes. Loggers, miners, speculators came and went. Laborers drifted in, grubstaked, drank, gambled and drifted away. Intoxication, the only common relaxation, change or escape, was indulged to the paralyzing limit.

The road house, saloon or stopping places were scattered sometimes days distant on horseback but were the gathering point of their district. These places offered shelter, refuge and hospitality to all. Without question if circumstances were bad, without price ! No physical weaklings or moral cowards, they lived and loved and fought. They did their part in blazing the trail over

which our world today races along.

One evening in Athalmer, in the crowd temporarily, like birds resting, were Isaac Noland, Erick Sundin and Gus Lehman....blue eyes and fair hair betrayed their Scandinavian ancestry.

When the credit of the customer or the patience of the hotel proprietor played out, it was necessary for the thirsty to walk 3 miles to Wilmer or canoe the same distance up the lake to Windermere. Daily such expeditions came and went.

Windermere, the oldest settlement , the oldest hotel and the best known proprietor in Jim Stoddart, was the most respectable. There, like at a bank, one kept face.

Among those who live hard and fearlessly, tragedies frequently occur. Isaac Noland, long since past his prime of his tie-hacking days on the construction of the CPR, worked in lumber camps. On pay day, drink affected him more and more. In the middle of one of his worst sprees, Paddy Ryan and Tenas Bob arrived. It seemed a hopeless job to sober up Isaac so the boys, Tenas and Paddy, were persuaded to take him out to their ranch with a jug of ‘sober-up-elixir’. Slowly climbing the steep hill out of Athalmer, the horses rested frequently. At one point Isaac was being sick through the spokes of the hind wheel. The horses started up suddenly and caught his head in the revolving wheel, breaking his neck.

Isaac was duly and respectfully laid out. Neil Patterson made the coffin. Ordinarily the box was uncovered but this time a heavy cashmere shawl, a standard trading item in the local store, was tacked on top. His friends had the satisfaction of a job well done. Although a fringed shawl or a rain-bow round his shoulder was all the same to Isaac.

It was late afternoon when the wagon bearing the mortal remains of Isaac Noland pulled in. He was given a funeral, not wet with tears, but with a respect he would understand.

(Museum Files)

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Sykes

(By Helen (Sykes) Bryant)

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Sykes came to Spillimacheen (Galena) from Ontario in July, 1929. They came by way of the Kicking Horse Trail in a one ton truck. They stayed at the Golden Lodge which was owned and operated by Mr. E. Valentine. My father worked and freighted out of Golden for the Ruth Vermont Mine and for the Giant Mascot mines.

They purchased their 160 acre farm in December, 1930 from Mary J. McIntosh whose house had previously burned. I was born in Calgary and then we moved to the farm. We lived in an old building that had been a chicken house until Dad was able to skid the logs down with horses and build a log house. This took many years to finish. They grew a large garden, milked cows and raised chickens to live. Mother traded vegetables from the garden to stores for groceries.

These stores included those owned by J.S.Blakley at Spillimacheen, Rolston at Golden, and Thos. Alton at Parson. Mr. Bert Beamish of Edgewater was in the trucking business and hauled produce to Banff. They sold a lot of produce to the Silver Basin Mining Syndicate, operating in the vicinity of the Bugaboo Ski Lodge. Trips were made by horse and wagon with Bill Romaine at the reins.

In 1935-36 the farmland was just too dry, so Dad decided he had to get irrigation down. He went to the Forster Ranch (Firlands) to buy some old wooden flumes from Mr. Forster to carry water down to irrigate the hay land. To transport this pipe he decided to put all the small wooden pipe inside the larger ones, make a raft, and float it down the Columbia River to Spillimacheen. In a couple of years he had water running. The original ditch is still in use. Some of the wooden pipe has rotted away and is replaced with 8" aluminum pipe.

Father applied for water rights from Washout Creek in 1938. He cleared more land and ploughed the fields with horses and seeded them to hay to feed more cat-

tle. In later years, they shipped cream to the Columbia Valley Creamery Assoc. of Golden.

Valley History

(By Yvonne McKay Doane)

While working on my McKay genealogy in February of 2013 it occurred to me that although James Lorenzo McKay had been a significant force in the building of Athalmer, there was nothing in the town that acknowledged his contributions. It seemed only fitting that he deserved to be recognized for his significant part of Valley history.

On March 25,2013 I contacted the District of Invermere Council and asked if they would consider naming a street or building in his honour. With input from Sandy McKay and Margaret Christenson at the Museum we were very pleased that the council agreed to rename Third Avenue to Third Avenue (McKay Lane). The new sign was put in place at the lights in Athalmer in the spring of 2016.

Museum Updates

On Saturday May 27th from 1-4p.m. the Library is hosting an "Historical Day" on the Museum grounds with live music, refreshments, games and activities depicting life in Canada 1867 to celebrate Canadas 150th Birthday.

May is also spring cleaning of all the cabins on the Museum Grounds. If you can help at any time please let us know. (Marg - 342-9434)

The Museum opens in June with the curator full time Monday to Friday 10-4p.m. The Museum has been approved for a summer student for July and August, at which time the Museum will be open 7 days a week.

Sunday July 16th, the 'slow foods' Committee is hosting a meal on the Museum grounds using the 1923 menu of the Opening of the Banff-Windermere Highway. Watch for their posters !