



# TRAPPERS LANDING NEWS

*A Special Edition of the Sorrento Wave—2012*

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**The Original Spes Bona—the Kinghorn Home**

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY SORRENTO CENTRE

## Shuswap's Own Slice of Italy

*By Jim Cooperman*

The annual Shuswap Lake Festival of the Arts is the most notable event for the Sorrento community and its hall, which was built in the late 1950s. Although farmers and orchardists initially settled the south Shuswap in the same way as the rest of the Shuswap, the hamlet of Sorrento has a unique history, as it began as an intentional community planned by one prosperous settler.

Back in the days of early settlement, the area was called Trapper's Landing, as this is where trappers from around the lake brought their furs to take up to the Notch Hill railway landing for shipment. In those days there was just one settler, Henry Brainard, who began homesteading in 1889, before the

Shuswap was surveyed. And it was Henry who planted the area's first orchard which helped promote settlement of the region.

It was likely the promise of fruit growing that attracted the wealthy industrialist James Kinghorn from Ontario to the South Shuswap. When he arrived in 1907, he renamed the settlement Sorrento after the Sorrento in Italy as Copper Island reminded him of the Isle of Capri.

Kinghorn chose a 36 acre plot for his orchard and formed a development company that sold ten acre parcels of land. His estate home, which he called Spes Bona, meaning 'good hope' took three years to build and when it burned down in 1927 it was rebuilt with bricks imported from Ontario. After Kinghorn died in 1944, the estate passed through several owners until it was purchased by the Anglican Church in 1958 which

developed it into the successful Sorrento Centre.

The Sorrento townsite was another one of Kinghorn's projects, with the plans for the lots and water system designed in 1918 by a famous town planner in England. However, it wasn't until the early 1960s that the pie shaped lots were sold and the water system was installed.

From its early days as Trapper's Landing, Sorrento has been a transportation hub because of the ferry service to the North Shuswap and its proximity to the railway station at Notch Hill. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the old Sorrento General Store building located one block below the highway. The first community centre was built in the 1930's near where the Lighthouse Market store is today. In the mid-fifties, this hall had to

*(Continued on page 2)*



# SORRENTO BUILDING CENTRE



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*(Own Slice of Italy—Continued from page 1)*

be removed to make way for the new highway that was to go directly through the townsite. The province provided the land for the new hall, which was built with donated materials by volunteers.

The relocation of the highway which at first went through Notch Hill to Carlin and then to Tappen, has been a controversy since it was first proposed and is now even more of a concern. A group of Sorrento residents, under the leadership of Don Mogridge formed the South Shuswap Action Committee and made a concerted effort to advocate for relocating the highway, as its current location creates safety problems and impedes growth.

There is no shortage of organizations

working for the betterment of Sorrento. The Sorrento Community Association operates an Info Centre and deals with issues such as finding a proper Greyhound bus stop, developing a trail to the lake and beautifying the community. The Sorrento Business Improvement Association was formed in 2001 to foster the economic, cultural and social welfare of the community. Meanwhile, the board that runs the Memorial Hall suffers from a lack of volunteers and needs directors to maintain its service as a centre for the community.

The Memorial Hall is one of the largest halls in the Shuswap and is popular for dances, weddings, family reunions, funerals, meetings, craft and pottery sales as well as the annual art

show. Attached to the hall is the Sorrento Drop-In Society, formerly known as the OAPO Hall (Old Age Pensioner's Organization), whose members use the facility for quilting, card games, pool games, bingo, weight loss meetings and line dancing. The B.C. OAPO formed in 1932 and was the first advocacy group for seniors in North America and about thirteen years ago, the Sorrento OAPO group hosted the annual provincial convention.

As the population increased with retirees and the economic base switched from farming to tourism, much has changed in Sorrento. But as Kinghorn envisioned, the attractive Mediterranean-like view of the lake is still Sorrento's charm.

## Harry Brainard, Sorrento's First Fruit Grower

*By Jim Cooperman*

The Shuswap region, from 1884-1930, was part of the railway belt, a strip of land twenty miles wide along the track which had been set aside by the province as a subsidy for the building of the railway. Because little of the land was fit settlement, the CPR refused to accept it and consequently the Dominion Government retained the block and granted the CPR land in the Peace River. When settlers began to

arrive to settle at the Shuswap after the railway was complete, they had to fill out numerous forms with Dominion Government, detailing the work they did on their homesteads. Today, these pre-emption files are in the Provincial Archives in Victoria and they contain valuable information about our early pioneers

Henry W. Brainard, Sorrento's first settler, began homesteading here in 1889, before the Shuswap region was surveyed. He was an American who quite possibly came north to work on the construction of the CPR. The first year he built a 16 x 22 foot log house

and began clearing land. He lived with a Blackfoot Indian woman from Montana named Kitty Birk. They had three sons, Harry, Charlie and Fred. Kitty had children previously, who became rather well known in the district; Nancy Hopwood, Tommy Foster and Mrs. Frank Ouelette.

Harry, (often men named Henry were called Harry) gradually cleared more land and in 1893, he built a new 21 x 22 foot house worth about \$250. Eventually, they had 15 acres under cultivation producing apples,

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Harry Brainard—Continued from page 2)

raspberries and strawberries. For water, Harry dug irrigation ditches and built a wooden flume that ran for 150 yards from where the Dilworth farm is today. J. Vicars, an early surveyor, reported in 1892, "The part of Twp. 22 R. 11 surveyed by me is fairly good agricultural land with plenty of water which may be easily obtained for irrigation purposes. It is, however, heavily timbered, which will make the clearing slow and expensive work. Many of the settlers are taking up fruit culture and with very fair success."

Sorrento's reputation as an orchard area began with Harry Brainard in the 1890's. Settlers needed other sources of cash than what their small farms produced, so many of them worked in the forests. Harry cut cordwood with John Dilworth, which they rafted down the river to Kamloops to sell. Sometimes they cut wood where they were not allowed. On April 22, 1892, Harry received a letter warning him against cutting wood on Dominion lands.

In 1894, Harry became a naturalized citizen of Canada. His fruit farming was becoming more successful. He shipped his produce via the CPR to Donald,

B.C. where the railway divisional point was then located. A livery business owner, Charlie Baines, loved the Shuswap apples and decided to move here in 1900. He purchased 20 acres of orchards from Harry and began farming here. Harry finally received the patent for his 147 acres in 1901. Shortly after, he sold the remaining acres to the Kinghorn's Land Development Company.

Little is known about what happened to Harry then. Kitty moved to Squilax and Harry worked in some lumber camps and then possibly moved back to the U.S. His son, Harry Jr., tried homesteading at Lee Creek in 1908, where he cleared land and built a log house. Unfortunately, he had a lame leg and had difficulty working the rocky land so he abandoned the homestead in 1913 and then left for California with his brother Charlie.

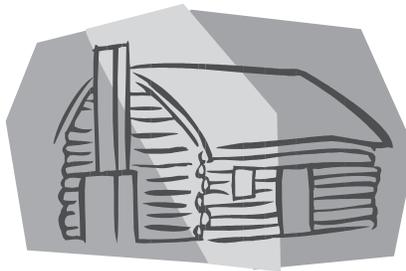
Harry Brainard was the first of many Shuswap pioneers who cleared and settled homesteads and then sold out to move elsewhere. Harry's major contribution was that he was one of the first settlers to grow fruit successfully, thus demonstrating to the incoming settlers the potential the Shuswap had as an orchard area.

## First Sorrento Home

*Reprinted from Trappers Landing News*

Around the turn of the century, the South Shore of the Shuswap acquired a settler. Harry Brainard built a log home and tapped water from a creek for his orchard of apple trees and raspberry canes. Brainard's home was the first permanent dwelling east of here.

Billy Henstridge, neighbour and friend of Brainard's, named the area 'Trapper's Landing' because all the trappers from the Shuswap area came here with their furs and then transported them by wagon to Notch Hill, where the closest railway station was at this



time.

During the time between 1907 and 1912 J.R. Kinghorn renamed the area. The Shuswap Lake and Copper Island had so much reminded him of the Bay of Naples and the Isle of Capri, he thought "this town shall be Sorrento".

## Trappers Landing News

*A Special Edition of the Sorrento Wave*

Published in 2012 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Sorrento. 1200 copies printed and distributed at local businesses.

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### From the Editor:

The Trappers Landing News was an annual paper published from the mid-1980's to mid-90's by Brian Hurstfield and the Chamber of Commerce. It included many articles on the history of Sorrento and area. In this, Sorrento's 100th anniversary year, we are reprinting some of these articles along with others of historical interest in a special commemorative issue.



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**The Original St. Mary's Church**

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JIM COOPERMAN

## Church of Capri

Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Sorrento  
*Reprinted from Trappers Landing News 1988, written by Nowell Sadler Brown*

Our geographically vast community of North and West Shuswap was indeed sparsely populated back in the early 1900's when its residents decided they needed a church building on which to pivot community worship and social affairs.

In those days most of the settlers here were of British origin who missed the traditional parish church they had grown up with in the Old Country, when they moved to this wild new land. Soon, however, with permission from Anglican Church authorities, the community began work on a church building at Trappers Landing (the old name for Sorrento) as being most central to this vast region.

Accordingly, in 1910, Alexander McKay, a skilled journeyman living on the North Shore of the main arm of the Shuswap Lake, with the help of other local settlers, cut the logs for the new building, which was finished in mid-summer 1911. The day it was dedicated, the new Church of St. Mary's was the scene of the christening of six children of local families, including two of the

McKay's. (We are happy to have a link with that memorable day in that one of those children, Barbara McKay, now Mrs. E.A. Wood, is still with us, well-loved, living in the Village of Chase).

Until the first World War, the large area was served by the Reverend Mr. Grice-Hutchison as pastor, but as the war progressed, he returned to England to join the Chaplain Corps, and the little church was without a proper incumbent until peace was declared. During the war years, however, the parish was not forgotten by the Church authorities, being served from time to time by visiting clergy and lay-readers and finally consecrated by the Most Reverend A. De Pencier, Archbishop of New Westminster, in the late summer of 1916.

After the Great War, Grice-Hutchinson returned to the Shuswap and worked vigorously traversing his vast parish from end to end until he finally retired, in 1923, leaving as his permanent memorial, 'Grice-Hutchison Mountain' named after him, at the confluence of Seymour Arm and Anstey Arm, north of Cinnemousun Narrows. (Mrs. Edith Salter, of Hilltop Road Sorrento is one of the remaining

pioneers of those days. She was married in the St. Mary's Church in 1923, at the first wedding ever performed in the Church.)

During the Church's early years, although without a pastor, it was faithfully served by its laity, one of who, Mr. W. Sissons, was the first Rector's Warden. An historic part of the church's furniture, the small lectern, was carved by Mrs. Sisson's uncle in England from a piece of oak salvaged from the great Nonsuch Palace, when the palace was dismantled and sold by the mistress of King Charles II, the Countess of Castlemaine. This lectern provides another link with the English History, in that Nonsuch Palace was built by King Henry VIII and paid for largely by treasure ransacked by the King from the tomb of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral.

Another layman, John Kinghorn, also made a great contribution to the new church. He had bought property adjacent to St. Mary's where he intended to build his manor and plant his orchard and leave his roots. A wealthy Scot, he had the name of the community changed to the more respectable Sorrento and was unceasing in his work of trying to establish St. Mary's as a pillar of the new Diocese of Kootenay. When his wife died, Kinghorn moved away from the area and his property passed through several hands until it was finally bought by the Anglican Church to be the site of the Sorrento Centre for Human Development. Although not part of the parish, the Sorrento Centre is a useful partner in the Church's work of serving the religious needs of the community, combined with its work of supporting the spiritual growth of the whole Anglican Communion in Western Canada.

After a sturdy beginning St. Mary's underwent a long period of semi-

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Church of Capri—Continued from page 4)

neglect, being without a regular clergyman and from lack of interest on the part of a largely itinerant population. However, as the district began to build after the Second World War, the developing population supported a renewed growth of interest in the Church, which began to have a regular pastorate in the early 1970's. This regular pastorate came about as a result of an inspired idea that had grown in the community for an agreement between the Diocese and the district Presbytery of the United Church of Canada; briefly, the two Church bodies agreed to provide alternate ministers to the shared ministry of Shuswap Lakes, in theory an Anglican priest will take the incumbency for four years, being succeeded for the following four years by a United Church minister. In practice, the plan has not been totally successful, owing to shortages of clergy of one denomination or the other but in general, it works quite well. The present Shared Ministry of the Shuswap Lakes comprises the Chase Village parishes of All Saints (Anglican) and St. Andrews

(United) the North Shuswap parish of St. David's (Anglican) and the Sorrento parish of St. Mary's.

From an active congregation of about fifteen parishioners in 1970 to its current congregation of over sixty, St. Mary's has shown steady growth. In 1975 the Church Board established a fund to enlarge and modernize the church building to accommodate the foreseeably increased population and a Sunday school. During the Depression, a Kamloops architect, Ian Morrison, oversaw the removal of the log walls – suffering from dry rot – and their replacement by a frame structure with a plaster and half timber finish, in the British style. In 1986, the building committee, with the help from the Diocese, ordered the construction of an addition to the body of the church. A Sorrento contractor, Terry Ramsay, with local sub contractors and volunteers, undertook the work.

The finished building now has more than double the capacity of the original, with an extended chancel and ample office and vestry space. The new downstairs has a hall and kitchen and modern plumbing with lots of room for church and Sunday School activities.

## A Blind Bay Pioneer Story

By Jim Cooperman

It is always a joy to discover articles or books about Shuswap history. Thus, when the copy of "In those Days – The Reedman Family Story" arrived in the mail, the thin book was read quickly with interest. John Reedman, who was often called the "mayor" of Blind Bay, was one of the first to homestead there.

One of the most fascinating portions of this book, written by Isabelle Reedman who was married to Ken, one of the family patriarch's many grandsons, is the description of why the Reedman's decided to emigrate and how they ended up in the Shuswap. Her research included interviews with

family elders and was aided by the diaries and journals of John's son Archie who passed away in 1958. Stories like these, of how the pioneers arrived in the Shuswap, provide us with insight about the motives of the original settlers and help us understand how our communities formed.

The Reedman family hailed from Stamford, England, where they had lived for generations. It flourished in the Middle Ages as one of England's prime wool towns, but although it later declined in importance it was still recognized as one of the country's best-preserved medieval towns. John was born in 1855 into an upper-class family

(Continued on page 6)



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*(Pioneer Story—Continued from page 5)*

and he ran the family furniture business. As well, he was an auctioneer, an occasional tea-taster and a government representative who helped levy taxes in five parishes.

It was when the government passed a new bill imposing an unpopular poll tax that life in England began to unravel for John. When investigations under the new law uncovered massive gambling debts for a good friend and respected businessman, who then committed suicide, John began to have serious doubts about remaining in England. After his second wife died, John hired Florence as a housekeeper to help with his three young sons from his first marriage. He grew fond of her and they soon fell in love and married. This union set “tongues wagging” in the class-conscious England of the early 1900s and some former friends were hurtful to Florence.

That was the last straw for John and the emigration posters, such as one that

said, “Go to British Columbia” depicting an apple tree with silver dollars on its branches, began to look very attractive to him. He sent Harry, his oldest son, first, to reconnoiter and report back. His letters were filled with enthusiasm and he found both Alberta and Saskatchewan particularly appealing. Meanwhile, back in England, John and Florence started a family and began making plans to leave.

Finally on April 6, 1905, John and his family boarded the steamer “Virginian” and sailed to Canada. It took ten days to cross the Atlantic and another six days before they arrived by train in Calgary, where they met Harry and a few days later celebrated John’s 50th birthday. Their plan was to journey to Lloydminster, Sask., where Harry had found good farming land, but fate intervened when a fellow lodger at their hotel introduced them to another recent immigrant from a town close to their hometown of Stamford, Frank Barnard.

Frank had a son, Arthur, who had also scouted out potential areas to

homestead the previous year. He along with a friend had travelled to Salmon Arm and Fortunes Landing (now Enderby) and explored the Shuswap on logging trails using a rented wagon and team of oxen. They were most impressed with Blind Bay and thus the Barnards decided to homestead there after completing work in Calgary. When Frank heard about John’s plans to settle in Saskatchewan, he told him, “You can’t take a young wife there, you’ll kill her!”

As luck would have it, the Reedmans missed their train and the next day they joined the Barnards and journeyed to Notch Hill. Finally, on May 6, 1905, John and Harry left the others to set up the tents and after taking a few wrong trails they emerged at Blind Bay to witness the pristine beauty of the lake with the mountains in the distance still covered in snow. Deciding then that this is where they wanted to make their new life, they proceeded “to have a bath,” obviously not minding the cold water.

## New Townsite at Sorrento

Artistically Planned for Summer Homes and Local Centre

*Reprinted from 1912 Salmon Arm Observer*

Acting for a syndicate the Kamloops Trust Co., of Kamloops, have acquired the Sorrento townsite, consisting of Lots 13 and 14 on registered plan 690,

and comprising 37 acres. The Dominion Government have already built a wharf on the shore front of this property which has cost over eight thousand dollars.

With the Change of the grade on the Notch Hill the new double track of the C.P.R. will pass close to the property, and it is expected a station will be

erected at some point in the immediate vicinity. The general feature of the plan of the townsite is a horse shoe crescent on the bench. The shore front will be laid out in larger lots, to cater to those who wish to make summer homes.

It is understood the Kamloops Trust Company have associated themselves

*(Continued on page 7)*

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(New Townsite—Continued from page 6)

with a prominent real estate firm in Vancouver for the sale of this property.

Sorrento is situated on the beautiful Shuswap Lake 12 miles east of Chase, and 18 miles east of Salmon Arm by the railway, and will serve a large and rapidly growing community. The Sorrento, Water and Power Co. have already developed a gravitation scheme whereby water can be obtained for municipal purposes.

## Heart of the Shuswap

*A poem by Lee Fraser*

*Reprinted from Trappers Landing News 1987*

I've discovered the Shuswap, where dreams are conceived,  
Where visions are given a true chance to grow;  
With oldtimers' stories of victories achieved,  
With potential as strong as the mighty lake's flow.

The 'heart of the Shuswap' is healthy, alive,  
And beats with a rhythm that's strictly its own;  
The young ones can learn here, the old can survive,  
As long as they know that the Shuswap is 'home'.

Our hearts can encircle this wonderful lake,  
And by taking the time to show others we care;  
We can all be united, not make the mistake,  
Of ignoring the value in learning to share.

Then working together, with neighbors beside,  
The 'Heart(s) of the Shuswap' can fill us with pride!



## Time to Redo Regattas

*By Jim Cooperman*

In the twenties and thirties, Sorrento's largest yearly celebration was the July 1st Regatta. Hundreds of people came, some from as far away as Kamloops and Kelowna to participate and watch. There were boat races, side shows, aquatic events, refreshments and a dance to end the day in style. The early Shuswap pioneers were mostly British and when they celebrated they did it with class and refinement.

The first Regattas were organized by the Reverend Grice-Hutchinson, who was himself an accomplished athlete, as well as a very sociable gentleman. He supervised the construction of a twenty-foot high diving platform from which he won the contest with his famous swan dive that he always performed with "grace"!

Lee Creek pioneer, Barbara Wood, has fond memories of the Regattas. She recalls how everyone came for miles. "I

## July 1st Regatta

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JIM COOPERMAN

entered a ladies' rowing race". There were three boats, she drew straws to see who got which boat. "I came in second with a big rowboat, the first place winner had a canoe! The motor boats raced to Copper Island from the wharf. There was ice cream, pop and running races for the kids".

At one time, Regattas were held all over the lake – in Salmon Arm, Sunnybrae, Sicamous, Chase and Blind Bay. A 1912 issue of the Chase Tribune reported, "For people of leisure, the Blind Bay Regatta robs the Sorrento School of most of its pupils for the day".

With today's growing tourist business, Shuswap communities should consider reviving the Regattas. Certainly we could learn to enjoy ourselves today, as well as our pioneers did in the early years.

Who do you think would win the diving contest today?

## History Notes

*Reprinted from Trappers Landing News*

August 8, 1935—Sorrento Ladies Guild held their monthly meeting on Friday 26th at the home of Mrs. Newman.

The continuing rain in the Sorrento area is doing damage to the crops. The hay cannot be cured and the grain crops are already lodging badly. The raspberry crop at Notch Hill is not a great success as so much rain is making berries almost unfit for shipping.

## The Wisdom of Our Elders

By Jim Cooperman

My fascination with local history began in the mid-1980s due to an overwhelming curiosity about our community's namesake, Billy Lee, for whom the creek was first named after. I quickly realized how fortunate we are in that the history of settlement is so accessible because it is so recent, especially when compared to most other regions in North America. My research in those years included interviewing a number of sons and daughters of the original North Shuswap pioneers and my appreciation of their stories became strengthened in part because of the parallels between their lives and my own.

Knowing that most of the children of our community's pioneers have long since passed away, I was surprised to

receive a very thoughtful letter in March of this year from Phyllis Parkes, who was one of the first babies born in the then new Royal Inland Hospital in 1912! Phyllis wrote the letter to add her disapproval of the decision to allow houseboats to continue dumping greywater sewage into Shuswap Lake, as this was where she grew up as the daughter of South Shuswap homesteaders, Walter and Kate Dunne.

Born in Fort Morley, Alberta in 1883, Walter Dunne first arrived in 1903 to homestead near Sorrento, after returning from the Boer War. In 1906, he married Kate, the daughter of another nearby homesteader, Frank Barnard. In addition to planting the first apple orchard in the area, Walter built log houses, cleared land for his neighbours, operated a sawmill, ploughed the roads in winter, and cut

timbers used for construction projects such as the Red Bridge in Kamloops.

In the summer of 2010, I had the opportunity to meet and interview Phyllis, who still spends summers in one of the cabins her father built on the homestead. Although frail, her mind is still sharp and she cares deeply about the need to protect the quality of our water. She still remembers her childhood years: walking to the Blind Bay School, sometimes through four feet of snow; stacking lumber and firewood for her father; travelling on sleighs across the ice on the lake in the winter; picking cherries and currants; and helping with many of the farming chores.

While the winters were indeed colder then than now, the summers were just as hot. Fires were also quite prevalent

*(Continued on page 9)*



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## Old Time Recipe

### Baked Beans



Throughout our early history, Canadian explorers, trappers and lumberjacks, as well as our armies, all depended on baked beans.

- 2 cups navy beans
- 2 tsp salt
- 3½ oz salt pork
- 1 cup maple syrup
- 2 cups liquid from beans
- ½ tsp dry mustard
- ½ cup chopped onions
- Dash of pepper

Soak beans overnight in 6 cups water. Drain. Add 6 cups fresh water and 1 tsp salt. Bring to boil. Cover and simmer 30 minutes or until skins split. Turn beans into pot, chop pork in 3 cm pieces, add pork, onions, ½ cup maple syrup and liquid from beans and seasonings. Mix lightly. Cover and bake for 5-6 hours. Uncover, add rest of maple syrup and bake for 30 minutes.

*(Wisdom of Our Elders—Continued from page 8)*

and often caused by the homesteaders themselves from land clearing fires that went out of control. Phyllis fondly remembers the rich social life that her family enjoyed with the other community members, including the big picnics at Reedman Point, where people arrived in boats from all over the North and South Shuswap. Sometimes, famed Reverend Grice-Hutchinson would show up with his portable organ to provide a church service at these picnics.

The Reverend was a key person in her life, as she was the first baby he christened in Saint Mary's Church in Sorrento. And in 1939, the Reverend married Phyllis and her husband Vincent Parkes in England, where they moved as he had inherited the Moor Abbey Estate in Herefordshire. This large farm and mansion was open to evacuees from the cities and many Canadians including soldiers on leave and nurses.

There was still a sparkle in her eye when Phyllis recalled the well-attended Christmas parties hosted by Sorrento "founder" James Kinghorn at their estate home, Spes Bona. Although Kinghorn was often characterized as being aristocratic, Phyllis found him friendly and remembers how at a New Year's Eve dance, he took her hand and they led the march around the old Sorrento community hall's dance floor.

In those early days, the homesteaders found many remnants of the

Secwepemc people, including the remains of their pit houses or kekulis along the lakeshore and many arrowheads and scrapers as they cleared the land. During the summer, some Secwepemc people came to camp on the nearby Barnard property, when they picked berries in the hills. Phyllis used to watch Susan Arnouse make baskets from cedar roots and birch bark. She also remembers turning off their lights at night so they could watch the native people spearing fish from their canoes using torches to attract the fish.

Phyllis cares deeply about the lake and is concerned about the declining quality of our water. As a naturalist and a long time member of the Woman's Institute she has helped bring clean water to people in third world countries and is aghast because our water here is deteriorating. Having now endured a heart attack and a stroke, Phyllis carries on with the "hope that others will continue to fight for clean water."

As time moves forward, it becomes ever more important to record and maintain the history of our communities while the details are still attainable. Thankfully, the South Shuswap has recently joined the group of local communities that have a written history, as Ann Chidwick has recently published "Voices of Settlers, Stories from the South Shore of Shuswap Lake."

For more of Jim Cooperman's articles, plus images and videos, visit [www.shuswapassion.ca](http://www.shuswapassion.ca)

## History Notes

*Reprinted from Trappers Landing News*

June 7, 1934—In Sorrento fishing is improving and people are getting a few. Everybody is busy making hay around the area, crops are very good. Leslie Dunne make a trip down to Keremeos with a load of hay in his truck last

Friday. He made a 188 mile trip back on Saturday in 6½ hours.

December 9, 1937—The Trans Canada Highway route was discussed in Legislature and found to be approved west of Revelstoke, through Sicamous, Salmon Arm, Kamloops, Cache Creek, Hope and on to the eastern boundary of Vancouver.

# Century 21

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## History Notes

*Reprinted from Trappers Landing News*  
 June 1912—A very enjoyable Book Social and Dance was held in the hall at Blind Bay... The chief interest of the evenings' entertainments was the badges, of which there were a number of very clever and amusing worn... The balance of the evening was spent in dancing, which was continued til nearly day break.

## The Lee Creek Connection

*By Jim Cooperman*

In 1912, a new post office in what was then called Trappers Landing first used the name Sorrento for the cancellation stamp. Early land developer James Kinghorn had chosen the community's name because the area reminded him of Sorrento, Italy. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated this year with a variety of events, including "Gates Open," a tour of pioneer homes on July 19<sup>th</sup> and a street party on July 21<sup>st</sup>.

Many of the original homes and buildings in Sorrento and Notch Hill were built by Lee Creek homesteader Alex McKay, including the Walter Dunne Home, the Coubeaux home, and St. Mary's Church. McKay also designed the original church, while the log work was mostly done by Tom Foster, who was half Blackfoot Nation and whose half-sister was married to another Lee Creek pioneer and remittance man, Harry Hopwood.

In 1986 and 1987, I interviewed Alex McKay's daughter, Barbara Wood, who lived at the time in Chase. She provided some fascinating stories about the lives of the first settlers in this part of the Shuswap. Her father's skills as both a carpenter and mason became well appreciated throughout the region, as he was often away constructing homes and buildings in Salmon Arm and Kamloops, including the CNR Station and the Masonic Hall. When he first worked in Sorrento, he traveled there by

boat, as there were no roads in those early days.

The first, long-term settler at Lee Creek was Oliver Freeman, a bachelor from Ontario who arrived in 1906 by sailing up the Thompson River. He was joined briefly by his sister, Isabel, who returned in 1910 to homestead an adjacent section of land with her husband Alex. A few years later, Alex's brother Bill arrived with his family to homestead the property where the Cottonwood Campground is now. The last family member to join the group was Oliver's father, James, who arrived to homestead here at the remarkable age of sixty-three.

Just as the old saying goes, Alex was too busy building other people's homes to do a decent job on his own, although his family was also plagued by calamities. They spent their first winter in a tent on the beach, when Barbara was a baby. He then built a rather rugged looking log home that unfortunately burned down in 1921.

Although he quickly built a new house, his youngest son Kenneth, was playing with matches and burned it down after they were only in it for a few weeks. Fortunately, the house he had built for his brother Bill was available, which at the time only had three rooms. He spent years finishing it. This house later became known as the Hunt Gallery and is still there today.

Lee Creek, in those days, was like a suburb of Sorrento, as it was the closest community, accessed by boat during most of the year and by crossing over

the ice in the winter. Lee Creek families bought their supplies in Sorrento and Blind Bay and the children attended school there until they built the Lee Creek School in 1919.

Sorrento and Blind Bay were also where the Lee Creek settlers often went to attend parties, dances and other social gatherings. As Barbara recollected, "The big Do's in those days were the box socials. I remember going to one in Sorrento once, it was a concert as well as a dance. In those days there were no babysitters, so people used to take their children to the dances. Once we came home in a wagon in the daylight."

One of the social highlights of the year was the July 1st Sorrento Regatta. "Everyone came for miles," remembered Barbara. "Once I entered a ladies rowing race. There were just three boats, so we drew straws to see who got which boat. I came in 2nd with a big rowboat and the winners had a canoe!"

The Shuswap has certainly seen many changes over the last 100 years. As we take time to reflect on Sorrento's anniversary, it is also important to understand the role of the nearby community of Lee Creek in its development and how small communities were often linked together with strong social ties. Could it be that in those days, before mass culture distractions and high-speed communication and travel that people had more fun and knew each other better?



## Shuswap Loses Its Ferry Service

*Reprinted from Trappers Landing News*

Controversy has risen on whether or not the ferry service should continue. A vote was taken by the residents on the Scotch Creek side with the majority wanting it to continue. Despite this the government plans to close the ferry system down, effective April 1956.

Resident Smokey Hurstfield pointed out that the ferry ran from Sorrento to Scotch Creek not Cottonwood. A one time employee, Hurstfield gave some interesting facts about the 'Rolf Bruhn' ferry (named after a member of parliament). The 52 ton vessel was capable of carrying passengers, cargo and six big cars and was also used to transport logging trucks. It had a passenger cabin and a toilet on board. It once plied the water of Francois Lake in Northern B.C. Sometime in the early 50's the ferry was dismantled and shipped to Chase. There it was re-built and re-fitted and brought up river to Sorrento. It replaced a ferry that had been running for many years, referred to as the 'wood ferry'. According to Smokey, the idea of a ferry probably originated around the turn of the century, "when the Bischoff boys used to pole across the lake on a raft."

## Sorrento-Scotch Creek Ferry

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY BRIAN HURSTFIELD

The ferry was very important to the settlers on the north side of the lake. A rough gravel road was built around the lake and was eventually improved but the loss of the ferry came as a blow to the economy of the area.

The ferry docked at Hurstfield's Holiday Ranch and Smokey, who was also the postmaster at Scotch Creek, worked as a deckhand on the ferry. He has a copy of the old ferry schedule indicating that the Province of British Columbia, Department of Public Works ran the ferry. There were 12 trips a day (summer schedule) running on the even hour out of Sorrento and leaving from Scotch Creek on the half hour. The trip itself took 11 minutes and the ride was free.

Hurstfield's record shows there were at least four captains: Captain Disney Poole, Captain Newman, Captain Percy Lang (who had also operated the ferry at Francois Lake) and Captain Bill Middleton (who used to operate the Kelowna ferry and later ran the Balmoral Store). Other deckhands besides himself were Wilf Nelson and Carl Zinck. The ferry proved its usefulness in many ways. There were flourishing strawberry farms on the north side and a strawberry processing

  
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plant at Magna Bay. The ferry was a vital link in getting the highly perishable crop out quickly. According to Hurstfield, the strawberry industry rivalled that of the lower mainland.

The demise of the ferry service dealt a crucial blow to the flourishing strawberry farms. It also forced people to use the highway which took longer and cost them more. Even though the ferry is no longer running in the Shuswap lake, Hurstfield said, "last I heard, it is still running somewhere up the coast".

## History Notes

*Reprinted from Trappers Landing News*  
July 9th, 1936—Mr. M.D. Stepan arrived here on Thursday from Dawson Creek...he will open up a blacksmith shop here, second to none. Welding and everything in the blacksmith line will be attended to. This will be a great asset to the Notch Hill district.

## Sorrento General Store and Post Office

By Louise Barber

The General Store was built in 1910 by its first proprietor, Eric Syson. The original side is the west side. In 1921 an addition was made to the east side by Eric's brother, Fred. "As a typical general store, it provided groceries, candies, hardware, stovepipes, fuel – coal oil and gas. As transport methods changed, the store added to its wares, car-gas from a hand-pump and various car parts and tires. ....Store owners on record are: Syson, Bayliss, McEwan, Marriott, Kovach, Prouty, Reed, Hurstfield and Warren. ....The General Store is still in use as a commercial space and in good repair. The two-story building has a flat roof, clapboard wood siding and a wood plank front porch with a shed roof. Most of the ground floor windows are the original four panel sash windows with four large rectangular panes." The photo is circa 1957 and the people are (L-R) Mrs. Bessie Prouty (co-owner with husband Al) daughter Donna Prouty and son Dale Prouty. The Prouty family operated the store from approximately 1957 to 1961.

Parts in quotes Reprinted from "Voices of Settlers" by Ann Chidwick.



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY ANN CHIDWICK

Sorrento General Store

### Shopping in Notch Hill 75 Years Ago

By Harry Copeland—Reprinted from *Trappers Landing News*

In 1922 I had what was then called a general store in a place called Notch Hill, 50 miles east of Kamloops on the main line of the CPR. Notch Hill sits on top of a hill, hence its name. Stationed there were three pusher engines, used to push the trains up the grade into Notch Hill. There were three pusher crews to run the pushers and three station operators. There was coal chute which one man operated and a water tank. There trains took on water and coal at Notch Hill. The surrounding country was good farming country with mostly mixed farms, in winter the farmers logged, cut fence posts, ties and telephone poles. All this stuff was brought to Notch Hill for shipment, which made a lot of work. There was a road from Notch Hill for two and a half miles that went to Shuswap Lake. It stopped at a place called "Billy the Trappers Landing" now known as Sorrento.

Settlers around the lake planted apples, which they shipped to Calgary and Edmonton. In those days there were lots of homesteads and miles of beautiful beaches. You could go for miles and never see anyone. All these people, if they wanted to go anywhere, had to come to Notch Hill to catch the trains, which brought business. There was a school which had two teachers, a hotel where the passengers could stay

overnight and the tie inspectors, so Notch Hill was a busy little place.

Now I will describe to you what a general store was like 50 years ago. The front door was the middle and when you got inside there was a counter the length of the store. On the left side were groceries all displayed on the shelves. In those days there wasn't much that came from overseas' most of our stock came from down east. On that end of the counter was a stand with a roll of brown wrapping paper on it and from the ceiling hung white string; everything was made into parcels with them. Along the front of the counter were chairs for the customers to rest while the storekeeper got their order up. Where the groceries ended was the hardware; peavies, axes, cross-cut saws, nails and staples, pots and pans, etc. Past the hardware was the dry goods: men's shirts, stocks and overalls, underwear, boots and shoes. Then came the ladies' and kid's stuff: dresses, stocking, night wear and house dresses and everything for the young folks. Twice a year I would ship in some ladies' dresses and coats. These we would display for two days and what didn't sell we sent back, but very little went back. This let the ladies see the latest fashions from Vancouver. Outside the store we had a rail for people to tie their horses. People came in wagons, buggies and buckboards and they would bring a little hay for the horses.

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Department of Public Works	
SORRENTO-SCOTCH CREEK FERRY	
SUMMER SCHEDULE	
(to Sept. 30th)	
<b>Leave SCOTCH CREEK</b>	<b>Leave SORRENTO</b>
8:00 a.m.	8:30 a.m.
9:00	9:30
10:00x	10:30x
11:00	11:30
1:00 p.m.	1:30 p.m.
2:00	2:30
3:30	4:00
4:30x	5:00x
5:30	6:00
7:30	8:00
8:30	9:00
10:00	11:00
<small>x. Note: On Thursdays the 10:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. from Scotch Creek and the 10:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. from Sorrento will carry Gasoline and Explosives only. No passengers or private cars.</small>	
SUNDAYS	
<small>(Tolls will be collected on Sundays)</small>	
8:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.
10:30	11:00
1:30 p.m.	2:00 p.m.
3:30	4:00
5:30	6:00
7:30	8:00
8:30	9:00