

THE WESTBANK EXPRESS

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THE LEGEND OF THE SPANIARDS IN THE OKANAGAN

Adapted from an essay by Jeremiah Ryder
Edited by Ellen Spacey



Dennis Oomen, curator the City of Penticton Museum, holds a Spanish sword that was discovered on the grounds of the O'Keefe Ranch in B.C.'s North Okanagan.

Among the residents of the Okanagan-Similkameen region exists a legend. The legend states that sometime before the arrival of the Northwest Company (NWC) fur traders in 1812, a group of Spaniards explored the area. These Spanish explorers supposedly moved throughout the Okanagan region before they disappeared. Though at present this tale is nothing more than a legend, if verified it would present a new picture of the exploration of British Columbia (BC) and the Pacific Northwest by the Spanish.

In his book, *Gold Creeks and Ghost Towns: East Kootenay, Boundary, West Kootenay, Okanagan and Similkameen*, BC historian Neville "Bill" Barlee shared the story:

Sometime in the 1700's, a band of strange-looking men with white faces wearing 'metal' clothes marched up the Similkameen from the south and set up camp near Keremeos.

The strangers remained at this campsite until an altercation erupted between an Indigenous man and a Spanish soldier. The quarrel quickly turned into a small-scale battle between the Indigenous tribe and the Spaniards. In this fray, the Spanish managed to inflict heavy losses on the local tribe, and afterwards, the Spaniards, along with several Indigenous prisoners, retreated to the North-East and disappeared up the valley of Keremeos Creek.

The Spaniards continued up the creek, over the divide, and then down the Shingle Creek draw. They crossed over the flats at the foot of Okanagan Lake near Penti'kten then followed the lake north to Nxokosten and established a camp close to a little creek to the north of a large Indigenous village near present-day Kelowna. Here they built strong permanent quarters.



Indigenous pictograph of a Spanish Conquistador on horseback.

Image Credit: Stanley Copp

The following spring, for reasons unknown, although probably because their ranks had been decimated by disease and clashes with the local Indigenous peoples, the Spaniards left the area and retraced their steps southward. Several days later, so the legend states, the Spaniards marched out of the hills and camped on a small flat overlooking Keremeos Creek near where the stream enters the valley proper. Forewarned of their arrival, the Similkameen tribe waited and when the unsuspecting Spaniards finally made camp, they were suddenly ambushed in overwhelming numbers. This ended the conflict once and for all, as the Spanish explorers were killed to the last man.

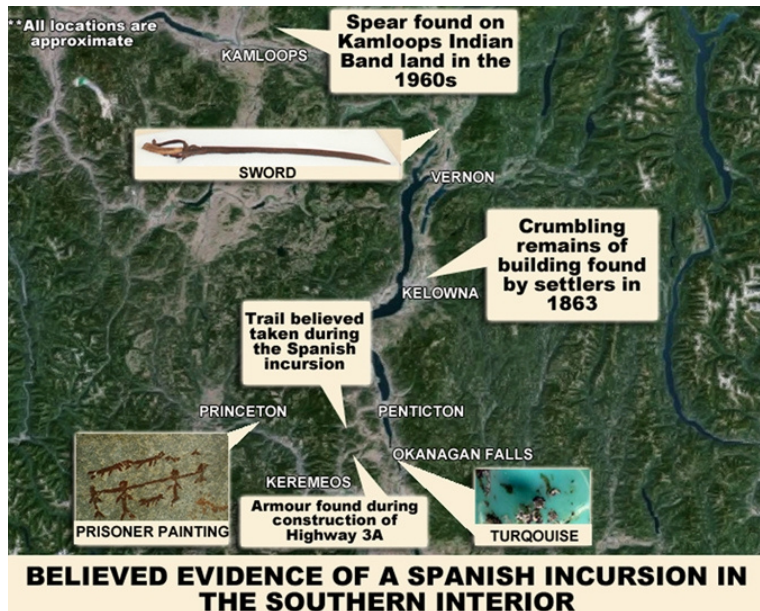
After this epic struggle, the Similkameen then buried the strangers— along with most of their armour and weapons — in a small mound somewhere between the last Spanish camp and the Kereme'us village. They are still there to this day, in this long-lost and unmarked burial place known as the 'Spanish Mound.'

Because of this legend, many archaeologists and professors have searched the area for this burial site. So far, no evidence of the Spanish being present in the area has been uncovered. Is there a possibility that Spaniards reached the Okanagan before the arrival of the fur traders to the region? Of course. Is there anything within the existing data that would count as irrefutable evidence to this visit? No. Until the remains of the Spaniards are discovered, the legend will remain an interesting part of Okanagan oral tradition and local curiosity.



Indigenous pictograph of a 'Prisoner Painting,' in the Similkameen area. One interpretation of this pictograph is that it depicts the Spanish taking Indigenous prisoners; However, when local Indigenous tribes would win a battle, they would often take prisoners of war from other tribes and teach them their language and way of life until the opposing chief agreed to their terms. Thus, the pictograph may not have any connection to the Spanish being in the Okanagan.

Image Credit: Stanley Copp
Special thanks to Sncewips Heritage Museum for information on this pictograph



BELIEVED EVIDENCE OF A SPANISH INCURSION IN THE SOUTHERN INTERIOR
 Image Credit: iNFOnews.ca

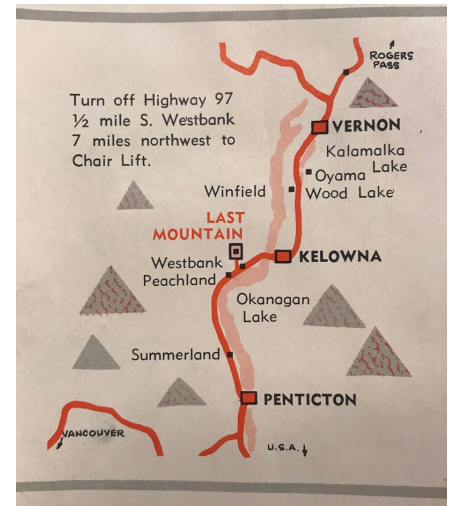


Local metal detectorist Brett Johnson found this 1807 Spanish coin in a school field in Lumby, BC. He believes it was lost by a prospector during the gold rush, but wouldn't it be interesting if it had a connection to Spanish settlement in the Okanagan?
Image Credit: Brett Johnson, Okanagan Treasure Hunters Club



LAST MOUNTAIN SKI RESORT

FEATURED ARTIFACT: LAST MOUNTAIN SKI RESORT SIGN - DONATED BY JORDIE BOWEN

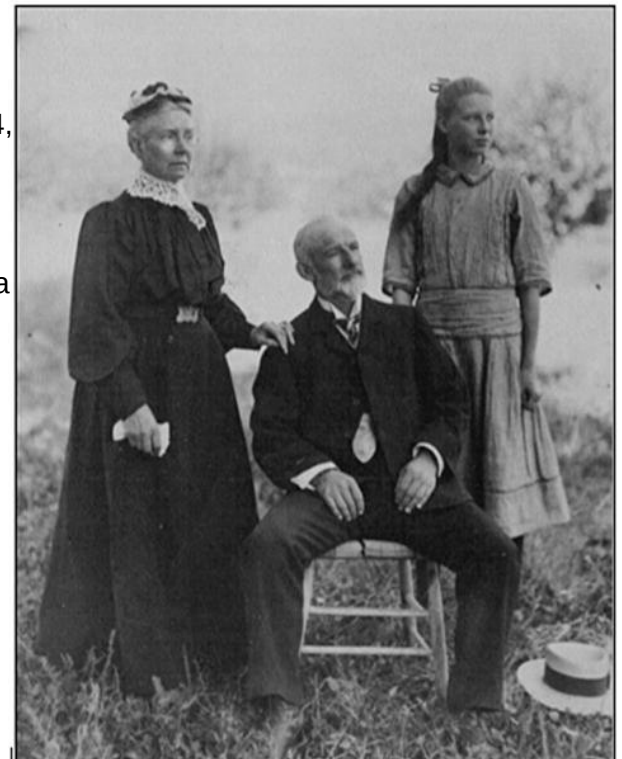


Emigrating from London in 1909, the Last Family - Herbert, his wife Charlotte, and their daughter Marjorie - were among the first Glenrosa European settlers. Upon arriving, Herbert opened a general store as well as purchased a piece of mountainous land. In 1921 the family moved to Westbank and opened a larger grocery store to serve the developing community. When Herbert and Charlotte passed away, the mountainous land was sold to Pat and Allan McLeod. They opened a small ski resort in 1967, calling it Last Mountain Ski Resort as tribute to this influential pioneer family.



W. Manning created the Last Mountain Ski Club sign for the resort. The sign hung in the Nancy Greene building even after the ski resort changed owners and was renamed Crystal Mountain in 1992. In 2014, a chairlift collapsed and injured several people. As a result, the resort has remained closed ever since. The resort fell victim to vandalism after the closure. Jordie Bowen and his family, who hosted outdoor education programs on the mountain, did their best to protect the area from vandalism, but soon became overwhelmed by the constant acts of vandalism. They salvaged the Last Mountain Ski Resort sign that once hung in the Nancy Greene building at the resort and donated it to the museum. You can find this sign displayed at the museum, alongside other pictures and artifacts from both Last Mountain Ski Resort as well as the Last family.

Since 2016, local Don Journeay and a dedicated team have been working tirelessly to reopen the resort. In 2019, he announced plans to reopen the hill under the name "Bull Mountain Adventure Park." Check out their Facebook page for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/bullmountainbc>

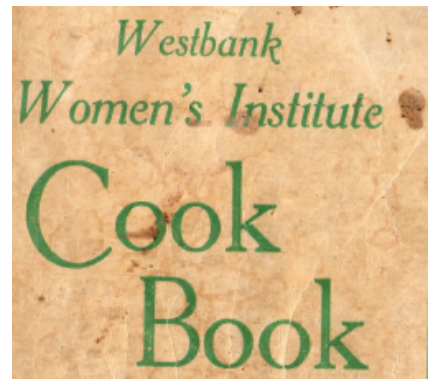


Charlotte Last with her husband Herbert and daughter Marjorie

RECIPE RELIC

Jazzy Gelatin

A colourful and refreshing spring dessert that will leave your guests wanting seconds!



Ingredients:

1 package (6 ounces) orange gelatin, 2 cups boiling water, 1 cup ice cubes, 1 can (15 ounces) mandarin oranges, drained, 1 can (8 ounces) unsweetened crushed pineapple, undrained, 1 can (6 ounces) frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed, Green grapes and fresh mint, optional

Directions:

1. Mix and sift flour, salt, and baking powder together
2. Cut in the shortening and add milk to make stiff dough
3. Roll out on well-floured board to about a quarter inch in thickness, and cut in square or oblong pieces to make blanket for sausage
4. Place sausages in centre of square, roll up, and press edges to seal firmly (Sausage should be showing on either end)
5. Bake in a greased pan for 15 minutes

This recipe was taken directly from the Westbank Women's Institute Cook Book, created by the Home Economics Committee. Date of publication is believed to be the 1930s. The cook book is a collection of recipes that were submitted by residents of Westbank and the area.

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References:

EVENTS

WINTER MAGIC AT GELLATLY NUT FARM

Celebrate the holiday season and enjoy the lighted paths through the orchard at Gellatly Nut Farm Regional Park

December 18--22 from 4:00 pm-7:00 pm
Gellatly Nut Farm
2375 Whitworth Rd

STORYTELLING: THE FOUR FOOD CHIEFS

Listen to local storytellers talk about the Four Food Chiefs. These programs are led by Knowledgeable Carriers and Elders of the syilx Nation. This program is great for kids and families, as well as anyone looking for a deeper understanding of this story.

January 25 from 10:00 am--12:00 pm
Okanagan Heritage Museum
470 Queensway Avenue

PUBLIC ICE SKATING & STICK & PUCK

Whether you're looking to socialize with other adults, practice your skating or hockey skills, or looking for a day of fun with the family, the Jim Lind Arena offers a variety of programs this winter. For schedules and costs, visit westkelownacity.ca/recreation

All Programming ends by Mar 13, 2020
Jim Lind Arena
2760 Cameron Rd

TRAVELLING EXHIBITION: HOCKEY

This exhibition is a celebration of one of Canada's most beloved sports. It will showcase how hockey has influenced us--as individuals and as a nation.

December 7 -- February 29
Okanagan Heritage Museum
470 Queensway Ave

FESTIVAL OF TREES AT MISSION HILL WINERY

Mission Hill estate transforms into a forest of beautifully decorated trees. You can even vote for your favourite tree! All proceeds will benefit the BC Children's Hospital.

December 1 at 11:00 am --January 4 at 6:00 pm
Mission Hill Estate Winery
1730 Mission Hill Road

KELOWNA HOMESCHOOLER

SCHOOL LEVEL HERITAGE FAIR

This nation-wide fair is an educational initiative that encourages the exploration of Canadian heritage with a dynamic and hands-on approach.

February 18 @ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Okanagan Heritage Museum
470 Queensway Avenue