

Westbank Express...

Hattie Webber, Keeper of her Husband's Family History

By Gordon H. Ficke

Harriet Webber moved to Westbank with her parents Douglas and Lena Griffin from the farming community of Michichi Alberta in 1921 when she was almost eight years old. "Ever since I was a baby," she recalled, "My parents called me Hattie." To this day that name has stuck. They settled in her Mother's uncle's place in the oldest house in Westbank, often referred to as the "Goldie house". On March 15th, 1944 Hattie married Douglas Webber, whose family had moved to the hamlet of Glenrosa in 1912. The couple was married for over sixty years before Doug passed away on November 30th, 2005. Over the last twenty years Harriet developed a keen interest in discovering more about her family history and also researching the genealogy on her husband's side.



One interesting incident on Doug's side of the family took place on the wedding day of his parents John Irwin Webber and Bertha Spicer in April 1905. "Both of them moved to Cochrane, Alberta where they met. John courted Bertha." Hattie related. "When they decided to get married Bertha was 19 years old at the time. They rode horseback into Calgary to get their marriage license and had a civil wedding." Webber continued, "Their request for a marriage license was turned down because Bertha was not of legal age. Twenty-one was the legal age in Alberta at that time." Hattie chuckled. "John had to ride back to Cochrane to get her mother's written consent to allow Bertha to get married. Then he rode back to Calgary with the requisite signature to enable the couple to marry. The write-up in the newspaper said that the wedding was delayed for a few hours!" The wedding guests were obviously a patient and understanding lot!

The newly-weds returned to John's homestead and set up house in a tent until Jon could finish building their house. There was no place to store the vegetables from the garden over the winter, so they covered them with snow, which kept them frozen. There was the occasional Chinook that resulted in some of the snow melting, but nevertheless they had enough food to eat. John worked on a ranch as well as a brickyard until 1907 when he secured a government job. He helped build bridges, install culverts and performed general maintenance, all for the princely sum of \$0.25 per hour.

Westbank Farmers' Market

Every Saturday until Sept. 16th!



The local Farmers' Market masterfully captures the essence of Westbank, showcasing the sense of community and friendliness that the locals possess. The quirky event has plenty of vendors supplying fruits, veggies, baked goods, and crafted goods, essentially it has something for everyone. Onsite music and hot food make it a fun outing for the whole family. There are also giveaways and prizes!

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John's sister Minnie and her husband Tom Hockey invited them to come out to the Okanagan. In 1912 the Webber family packed up their three girls, Mary-Ann, Estella and Gertrude, along with their household belongings and a cow and headed by train to the hamlet of Glenrosa. The Hockey's greeted them and John was able to work hauling logs with a team of horses for the Hitchner Sawmill and picked fruit when it was in season. Freda, their fourth daughter was born in Glenrosa. They tried to farm their property (located next to where Dr. Powell's horse farm is today on Turnbull Road) as John attempted to grow an orchard as well as raise cattle, but that venture failed.

The next move in 1914 took them to Peachland to pick fruit and it was here that their first son, George Irwin was born. John was also employed to move houses in Peachland. In 1915 the family moved again to Glenrosa. This time to a property on what is now Fenton Road. It was here that John implemented his bridge building skills that he acquired in Alberta by constructing a two-story log house with a chimney at each end. The upstairs was an open area. The surrounding fields produced hay for both dairy and beef cattle. The cream was shipped out. John also worked again at Hitchner's Sawmill felling trees with crosscut saws and hauling logs to the mill with a team of horses. The family grew to include Irene, Ethel, Harold Douglas and Stanley Maurice. All of the children attended the Glenrosa one-room school.

In 1931, while the family was still living in the log house, John and Bertha bought 137 acres in lower Glenrosa (where McIver and Webber Road is today) nearer to Westbank, which at the time was growing faster than Glenrosa. In 1932 the Webbers left the log house and once again lived in a tent until their house was built. This time they operated a mixed farm, which included cows and horses. As their land was partly forested, it had to be cleared and the ground ploughed to enable them to plant crops. Lack of water was always a drawback to growing good crops due to the fact that the area always experience long, hot, dry summers. In 1937 while John's son, Douglas, was fighting a forest fire, he found a depression that looked promising and could perhaps be dammed to hold water. A small group of residents decided to undertake the project to construct a dam. Everything had to be packed in on foot or with packhorses. The project took several years to complete as the men had their regular jobs to do as well.

Once the dam was built John decided to sell his cattle and planted an orchard. Thus began a new era in Glenrosa history as orchards were planted extensively in the lower Glenrosa region and flourished for years because of the irrigation system that was now in place as a result of the hard work of these early pioneers.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN JULY

WESTBANK

Westside Daze

Various locations, June 30 - July 2
Westbank's premiere community event will feature lots of live music, a midway, food, arts and crafts, a show & shine, and much more!

Westbank Farmers' Market

Westridge Shopping Centre, every Saturday

With vendors supplying fruits, veggies, baked goods, and crafted goods, the Farmers' Market has something for everyone. Onsite music and hot food make it a fun family outing. There's also giveaways and prizes!

Art in the Park

Various wineries throughout July/
August, 10:30 am - 4 pm

Experience creations by local artists while you sip win!

July 1 - 2: Grizzli winery

July 8 - 9 Volcanic Hills Estate Winery

July 29 - 30 Indigenous World Winery

SUMMERLAND

Community Challenge Art Show

Summerland Arts Centre, weekly
(Mon to Fri)

Pieces crafted by local artists, artisans, and more are on display during this exhibition with themes based around Canada's 150th anniversary.

Wednesdays on the Water

Peach Orchard Park, every
Wednesday 6:30 - 8:30

Free concerts in the park featuring local talent every Wednesday through July and August. Bring a lawn chair or blanket, relax and enjoy! Friendly event for all ages.

Great Train Robbery + BBQ

Kettle Valley Steam Railway, July
2nd, 9th, 23rd

Experience the "Old West" with the notorious Garnett Valley Gang at the Great Train Robbery & BBQ. You'll enjoy their antics on and off the train as they rob passengers for local charities. There is a large BBQ meal afterwards, which is included in cost.

Penticton

Beach Vending Bazaar

Okanagan/Skaha Beach, July 1 -
September 7

Exciting local vendors set up and offer their services on the beautiful beaches. Vendors include The Henna Hut, The Treasure Tent, and Penticton Paddle Surf.

Peach Classic Triathlon

Okanagan Lake, July 16

Participate or spectate this event featuring many great athletes. There is also an onsite BBQ for event-goers.

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