



Westbank Express...



Milton Reece standing beside the 1940 two-ton truck taken in 1945. Due to a shortage of apple boxes, his father asked him and Adrian to pick up a load of fruit boxes from Vernon. This load consisted of around 1000 apple boxes.

T.B. Reece Founded Westbank Packers in 1930

by Gordon H. Ficke

“My dad, Thomas Benjamin Reece and his wife Eleanor and three children Adrian, Temie and Nelson moved from Scotia, Manitoba to Westbank in 1922.” Milton stated. He had immigrated to Canada from Wales in 1905 and had worked in Manitoba as a farm labourer for a number of years. Later he and his brother-in-law were employed with the C.N.R. in British Columbia building and repairing bridges and trestles. “My father later was trained in carpentry and he had the opportunity to work on the construction of the Saskatchewan Legislature Building in Regina in 1910.” Reece recounted. After that job was finished he returned to Manitoba and would contract out, using his carpentry skills building barns, finishing houses, etc. In 1917 Thomas married Eleanor Angus, born in Canada to Scottish immigrants.

Around 1919 or so Reece, along with some other fellows decided to drive out in a Ford Model T and explore British Columbia. It was quite an adventure traveling those narrow winding mountain roads in those days. When they arrived in Westbank, Thomas liked it so much that he decided to buy 4 acres from Mr. Hurlburt on Main Street where Westridge Mall is today. Reece remodeled the old home on the property. He also bought a one-acre lot adjoining the back of that lot where he eventually built a packing shed.

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Westside Daze June 29 - July 1



Okanagan Day Celebration
Photo from Westside Daze Facebook

Westbank's largest annual celebration returns for another year! This event is **FREE** and includes:

Kids Fair Show n' Shine
Parade Okanagan Day
Visit westsidedaze.com for the full
schedule for Westside Daze 2018.

Art in the Park - Vineyard Trails



Meet local artists and enjoy their talent among the vines! All events run from 10:30am - 4pm.

June 30 - July 1: Grizzli Winery
July 15: Quail's Gate Winery
August 12: Quail's Gate Winery
August 25 - 26: Grizzli Winery

When he first moved to Westbank, he had the contract to move the Westbank Co-op Packing House from its location where the Westbank Lions Community Hall is today to a new, larger site near present-day Hoskins Road. There were a number of packinghouses in town at the time, including ones owned by B.C. Fruit Shippers, R.A. Pritchard (located by the lake where Pritchard Drive is now) and Grieve Elliott. These independent farmers sold their own fruit as far away as Saskatchewan. They didn't necessarily have their own labels on their fruit boxes, but by law they were required to stamp each box with their name to indicate the fruit grower that produced the fruit.

During the 1920s Reece was also contracted to build the irrigation flume that ran from the Powers Creek intake to connect with other flumes that provided water to the various Westbank orchards. In 1930 T. B. Reece built the first packing shed on their property on Elliott and Main Street. It was an open structure and the workers spread the apples out on a table. The packers were trained to sort and pack the apples according to size and they had to do their job quickly. Three more children, Gwenith in 1925 (later married to Ken Harding), Milton in 1926 and Elizabeth in 1932 (later married to Phil Weddell) were born to the couple. "Dad used to say that every time we have another child we needed to buy another five acres!" Milton chuckled. Mr. Reece bought Mrs. Daisy Hardwick's adjoining orchard and home, John Dobbin's orchard, property where Western Financial Services is now located (including the land where Westbank Towne Centre Shopping Centre is now located) on the south side of Dobbin Road. This was necessary to expand both their fruit growing and packinghouse operations.

Around 1934 Thomas built their first packinghouse on Brown Road. Long time residents referred to this property as old John Robinson's 'shack town.' This site would be the home of Westbank Orchards. The operation started small and over the years more buildings including a cold storage facility and controlled atmosphere area were added. Modern sorting equipment was installed and allowed them to put out more tonnage than the old system. Up to 210 bins in a 7½-hour shift or the equivalent of 5000 apple boxes of fruit! "In the early 1940s dad purchased Harry Grant's diesel plant that had provided Westbank with its first electrical power. The new role for this generator would be to supply the power required to run the packinghouse. Around 1946 this power plant was sold to the B.C. Power Commission. In 1947 Adrian, Nelson and Milton were handed the reins of the business from their father. In 1956 Adrian sold his interest to Nelson and Milton. The two remaining partners continued to expand their land holdings by purchasing ten acres across from where Alpine Helicopters is today. It was here that they operated a fruit stand into the early sixties.

Thomas and his wife Eleanor now had the freedom to travel, and they did on numerous occasions. In 1959 the couple had planned another trip, this time to include Australia, when tragedy struck. They were heading to Kelowna to pick up their passports when they were involved in a two-car accident. Four people were killed, including Eleanor. As a result of the crash Mr. Reece was hospitalized for a long time. The Westbank community was shocked. Mrs. Reece was very active in the community, especially with the Westbank United Church and Westbank's Women's Institute, of which she was a charter member. Thomas had drawn up plans for the Westbank United Church and was instrumental in overseeing its construction. In 1973 Thomas Reece died.

Nelson and Milton continued to expand and modernize the packinghouse operation and a revolution in fruit growing took hold. Hedge rowing of the apple trees by grafting the tops of the new trees onto dwarf rootstock and then planting those trees close together resulted in shorter branches, thus allowing the sunshine to reach every apple on the tree. This new method replaced the large trees that were spaced thirty feet apart where the sunlight was impeded from reaching the apples growing on the lower branches. As a result too many 'C' grade apples were produced. In 2002 Nelson and Milton leased the packinghouse to another company and they kept the operation going until 2006. For the 2006 to 2007 season the company sent the fruit to Kelowna and the Westbank Packinghouse ceased its operations. In the late spring of 2007 a fire set by an arsonist burned the building to the ground, destroying the last packinghouse in Westbank. The Heritage Retirement Resort now stands in the place where the packinghouse once was.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN JUNE

WESTBANK

Siya Celebration

June 1, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

1900 Quail Lane, Pine Stadium

Sncəwíps Heritage Museum is excited to announce our new responsibility as hosts for the siya celebration. Our annual celebration first took place in 1990, when Westbank First Nation School (now sənsisyustən) was first opened. The celebration was later named siya?. Since time immemorial syílx people have celebrated natural land resources. We honor our land and resources provided in order to ensure that we have a fruitful year to follow. At this celebration we welcome you to share in our very special tradition.

Westside Daze

June 29 - July 1

Various Locations

For a full schedule of events, see westsidedaze.com

Kalamoior Community Breakfast

June 2, 9:00 am - 11:00 am

Kalamoior Regional Park, Collens Hill Rd

Regional Parks and the Friends of Kalamoior Regional Park Society invite you to join them on the beach near the lower parking area. For a donation of \$3 you'll receive pancakes, sausage and beverage breakfast served up by the members of the Westbank Lions Club. Then at 10:00 am, join a park interpreter for a guided one and a half hour loop hike through the park to learn about the unique features of Kalamoior.

The Toyota Boucherie Grind

June 24, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

2781 East Boundary Rd

This is an Event open to all ages and levels of competitiveness! The courses will take you along some of the most popular trails on Mt Boucherie. Choose between a 3.4 km (\$10), 6.5 km (\$20), or 9.2km (\$30) course.

Register online at <https://zone4.ca/register.asp?id=17563&lan=1&cartlevel=1>

Art in the Park Vineyard Trails: Grizzli Winery

June 30 - July 1, 10:30am - 4pm

2550 Boucherie Rd

Join us to celebrate local wine, art and history all in one place! Art in the Park Vineyard Trails is an annual event that promotes local artist in the setting of a Westside Winery. For the first time, the Westbank Museum will be hosting this event.

BUSINESS SECTION



Featured Business:

Mad Hatter Used Bookstore

Tucked away off of Main Street in Westbank is a reading nook with a 35 year history. Maurice Breault, the owner of Mad Hatter Used Bookstore, operates the business with his wife, Paulette, and daughter in law, Char. Maurice has passion not only for books, but for education. His philosophy is: “Make the best of life; learning is enjoyable!” As it turns out, Maurice

is a bit of a self-help Guru too. When men come into his store and tell him, “My girlfriend says I don’t get anything,” Maurice recommends the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie.

The Mad Hatter Bookstore offers a rewards program that recycles books and saves book lovers money. They have a wide selection of well-priced books for all ages. Next time you are looking for a new series to devour, consider buying used books to help the environment and a small business. The Mad Hatter Team will be happy to recommend something to fit your needs!



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