

# Westbank Express...

## Keeping Westbank's Past Alive

By Gordon H. Ficke



Clare Small and his wife Billie, who owned an orchard on the west end of the Powers creek 'Fill-in' on the outskirts of Westbank, had a vision. By the mid 1970s, many of the heritage houses and some of the businesses downtown were being torn down to make way for shopping malls and housing developments. Something had to be done to preserve what was left of our local history. Small wanted to donate a half-acre of his farm property for the purpose of establishing a museum. When he presented his proposal to the Regional District of the Okanagan (the governing body of our unincorporated area at the time), the idea was favourably received, and it would take a few more years before his idea came to fruition.

In the meantime, Small's family formed the Westbank Museum and Arts and Crafts Society in 1978. Clare traveled to Victoria to visit the provincial museum. Museum officials advised him to request a Recreational Facilities Assistance Programme grant. This agency provided up to one third of the cost of materials to a maximum of \$30,000. This grant was in addition to the Young Canada Works grant that provided the labour to construct the building to house the artifacts. However, there was a glitch in the approval process, as the half-acre of land had to be removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). That did not occur until December 1980.

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

For our November/December issue of the Westbank Express, we want **YOUR** Christmas/holiday stories! The next Express will feature excerpts of your most memorable moments from the holiday season. If you grew up here, what were winters like in the Okanagan? If you come from another place, what was your first winter like here? What kinds of traditions do you practice? We want to know what you have to say! Please keep stories under 200 words. Stories can be emailed to [info@westbankmuseum.com](mailto:info@westbankmuseum.com) or mailed to The Westbank Museum at 2376, Dobbin Rd. Westbank, BC V4T 2H9. Deadline for submissions is October 23, 2017.



### Want Westbank Express?

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#### With membership, you will receive:

- Personal invitation to special events
- The Westbank Express Newsletter
- Complimentary ticket to our Christmas Craft Fair
- Exclusive access to our resource archives including complimentary copies

Your contribution goes towards the running of this publication and the museum. Thank you!

As expected, there were further delays and finally, Mr. Small was permitted to sell the half-acre plot to the Westbank Museum and Arts and Crafts Society for the nominal sum of \$1.00. The building construction had actually begun previously, in June of 1979, and stopped over the winter months. The cornerstone of the concrete block building was laid on June 16th, 1979. Sealed in the stone was a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation for the society, plans for the building, a copy of the second edition of 'A Bit of Okanagan History' by Dorothy Gellatly, and copies of our local newspapers.

On Thursday, July 15th, 1982 Premier Bill Bennett cut the symbolic ribbon and declared the museum open. The premier praised Mr. and Mrs. Small for their insight in providing this facility for the Westbank residents to enjoy, and their vision would become more valued with the passing of time. Clare's dream finally came true! There was now a repository for the artifacts of Westbank's early history, a meeting place to serve the local arts and crafts groups, a community cultural centre for arts and trades displays, collections of local school history projects, and future programs of Westbank's cultural history. Clare and his wife continued to operate the museum until 1990, when the burden of running the museum became too great for them. Billie's health was failing and Clare spent a lot of his time caring for her. Clare asked his daughter Margaret Jackson for help. She, like her father, was passionate about vintage memorabilia and volunteered as the secretary, kept minutes of the meetings, and did the paperwork. She graduated from Okanagan College in 1978, one of the first graduates from the arts program there. She packed her bags to work in Medicine Hat, Alberta and did accounting work for an electrical contractor. Later she managed an insurance company. Margaret made a life decision and moved back home to take over the museum full time. She also bought a personal tax and financial services business that processed 1200 tax returns a year. As a volunteer she initiated a number of community projects of which her board was very supportive. One of the more popular projects was establishing a video library of the local pioneers. A change in local government resulted in reduced funding for the museum. To make the museum more user-friendly for both the new operator and guests, the Westbank Museum received a complete makeover. The future of this valuable community resource was up in the air, and in the interim the facility was kept open for the public to enjoy. Margaret was committed to Westbank as she said, "Moving back home to raise my son in the same environment I grew up in was the best thing I have ever done."

An appeal to our local District of West Kelowna council led to an opportunity that yielded a better museum facility with greater public exposure. Today the Westbank Museum Arts and Crafts Society provides a window into our local community's past, and the new facility also provides valuable information to the many tourists who pass through or stay to visit our many attractions. Clare Small would be amazed to see what his dream has become!

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SEPT./OCT.

### WESTBANK

#### Culture Days

Westbank Museum

September 30th, 10am - 3pm

A Canada-wide celebration of Arts + Culture! We have 2 activities coming to the museum for Culture Days: Metal Forging with Blacksmith, Bruce Armon and an art presentation by the Kelowna Watercolour Guild. Fun photo ops are available!

#### Westbank Farmers' Market

Westridge Shopping Centre,  
September 2nd, 9th, and 16th

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!

#### Fall Wine Festival

Various locations in West Kelowna, Kelowna, Lake Country, and Penticton  
September 28 - October 8th

Starting on Sept. 28, Okanagan Wine Festivals brings back the annual Fall Wine Festival. The festival is meant to showcase the reason why the interior of B.C. has earned the nickname, "Wine Country". The Fall Wine Festival has a bounty of events ranging from dinners, to grape stomps, to a more traditional festival. Don't miss out on this event!

### PEACHLAND

#### 98th Annual Fall Fair

Peachland Community Centre,  
September 9th - 10th

### SUMMERLAND

#### Coffee Club

9919 Main Street, every 2nd and 4th Wed. of the month (starts Sept. 13th)  
An informal gathering to share ideas about current events, the economy and investing, along with a few cups of coffee.

#### Ryga Festival

Various locations, September 1st - 4th

An annual arts and theatre festival featuring works and performances in creative media, including storytelling, poetry, theatre, music, and much more! The festival is inspired by the late George Ryga, one of Canada's most important playwrights.

#### Great Train Robbery + BBQ

Kettle Valley Steam Railway,  
September 3rd, 17th & 24th

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

#### Penticton Dragon Boat Festival

Skaha Lake Park  
September 10-11

Formerly of Kelowna, spectators can take in the annual races while enjoying a wide array of food and merchandise vendors + beer garden.

# BUSINESS SECTION



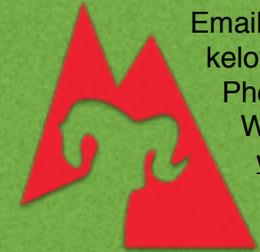
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