



Message from the President

A new year is upon us and our manager, Robin Irwin, and the Museum's board are preparing for the year's activities. One of our most urgent goals this year is to digitize the Museum's collection of Princeton newspapers going back to 1900. Some of the papers are literally falling apart and if they're not digitized soon we will lose a vital link to our past. We hope to be able to begin the process very soon. The archives in the basement have many other vital documents which we also hope to digitize in the future.

- Rika Ruebsaat

Message from the Editors

It has been a year since we began publishing this version of the Museum Newsletter. We have really enjoyed the process of finding and telling stories from our history. Thank you to all who contributed articles. Thank you to Robin Irwin, our Museum Manager, for the fine job she has done designing and laying out the Newsletter over the past year. Thank you to the Town of Princeton and its staff for printing copies of each issue. We look forward to working with you again in 2016.

This month we are pleased to feature a piece about Euphemia Rabbitt, one of the area's pioneers. Thanks to Lori Weissbach for tracking down so much of the story of Euphemia's life. There is, of course, much more to say about her and we're sure there will be more Euphemia stories in future issues of the Newsletter.

-Jon Bartlett & Rika Ruebsaat

EUPHEMIA RABBITT, By Lori Weissbach

Euphemia Lorenzetta/Lorenzetti/Lorenzetto was born at St. Elmo BC on January 14 1875. She was the fifth and youngest child of Andrew Lorenzetti and Mary Aletolouette. Her father Andrew Lorenzetti was an Italian man who came up to the Fraser River Gold Rush via San Francisco about 1858. In approximately 1862 he preempted 80 acres of land adjacent to the Shxw'ōwhámél First Nation (Ohamel) village at St. Elmo BC near Laidlaw. Mary was one of twin daughters of a chief of the Sto:lo Indian Band. Andrew and Mary were officially married by the church on November 5 1873. Here along the banks of the Fraser River on their acreage they grew wonderful vegetables, fruits and flowers for market.

Many of the seeds and fruit trees Andrew wanted to plant were not available in the area, so he journeyed to Oregon to obtain them. He returned with a forty-mule team which he had purchased, all laden with farm implements, fruit tree saplings, berry bushes, household furnishings and supplies for a small general store. Mary was a good wife and mother. She was an excellent businesswoman. The farm and small store were left in her capable hands while Andrew turned to the profitable business of packing freight to the Cariboo gold fields. He hired four Spanish cowboys to assist him on these long and arduous trips. Upon reaching the gold fields he was paid for his goods in gold nuggets or gold dust which he shipped to Victoria to be converted into currency.

The gardens grew wonderful produce in the newly-cleared soil, and there was a ready supply of fresh vegetables for him to pack to the interior. The dry goods, staples and small hardwares that he required were brought from Victoria by the sternwheelers that journeyed up to Hope.

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EUPHEMIA RABBITT cont...

In 1877 Andrew suffered a stroke and died in 1880 at approximately 50 years of age. Mary worked very hard before and after the death of her husband. She was still a young woman, and she remarried, to an Indian Shaman. Euphemia recalls that “in the summer and fall Mother would often take a canoe full of fresh fruit and vegetables to the storekeepers in Yale or Fort Hope. Often she would take one of us with her and I was always anxious to go. Mother’s cousin Mutcka and his friend were her regular paddlers.”

“The paddlewheelers of the Fraser River were our connection to the outside world. These river boats were faster transportation than the pack trains and far more comfortable. The Indians had used the river from their first arrival in the area. Every family had canoes. The big war canoes were very beautiful.” Euphemia’s older siblings were Kate (Walker, Bromley), Andrew, Peter, and Mary (Molly) Herrling. Euphemia was known as ‘Fame’.

In 1955, at the age of 80, Euphemia Rabbitt was interviewed at her home in Tulameen for a story by the Vancouver *Sun* reporter Ian MacDonald. Euphemia recalled that as a young child she helped her parents deliver vegetables to Andrew Onderdonk’s camps along the Fraser Canyon during construction of the CPR. She tells of her father: “Andrew Lorenzetta came from Trieste, Italy, by way of California, and drove a forty-mule team on the Cariboo road during the gold rush. My mother was an Indian girl from near Chilliwack. After the boom died we all rode horseback over the Hope-Princeton mountains to the Similkameen.”

The reporter remarked that his own “nerves were shaky after a half hour of hugging the bank along a mountain road of endless hairpin turns, with the edge of a 1,000 foot precipice close to the outer wheels” as he had just driven from Princeton over the Coalmont-Tulameen road to her place. (1955, remember?) She replied, “To me, it’s perfectly safe. Many’s the time I’ve ridden it horseback along a six-inch deer track, when the precipice didn’t even have an edge.” She went on to tell him that when she arrived over the mountains from Hope “there were few white settlers, the valley being an Indian Reserve. The Indians, however, were very easy to get along with. Here I met my husband from Nova Scotia whom I married at sixteen.”

Thomas Rabbitt was born in Lingan, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia on May 5 1858. He came to Granite Creek about 1886. He purchased an established store at Slate Creek, ten miles west of Granite Creek. This consisted of a 2-storey log rooming house as well as a general store and liquor store combined. Thomas and Euphemia were married on October 5 1891 by Father LeJeune from Kamloops, on his annual trip to the Nicola and Similkameen districts. (*British Colonist*, November 11 1891). Thomas Rabbit made a pre-emption for 320 acres (on Otter Flats, Okanagan) on June 24 1886. This Crown Grant was awarded to him on May 20 1902 as Lot 151.

On Labour Day 1908, Mrs. Rabbitt was in Hedley and received a message from her husband that their house at Slate Creek had burned down but that the children were safe. After the store and house burned they moved to Coalmont, where Mr. Rabbitt worked at clearing land that he rented to a Chinese man. In 1912 he sold the Coalmont land to Pat Burns and Blake Wilson (of Blakeburn fame). Very soon he had a new house built for the family on Lot 151, just east of Tulameen. The family was very proud of their new home, with all the new furniture and a lovely piano. This home still stands on the present day Brewer Ranch.



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Mr. Rabbitt died at Tulameen on July 18 1926 at age 68. He is buried in the Rabbitt Family Cemetery on his beloved ranch.

During the Vancouver Sun interview Mrs. Rabbitt stated that they had 12 children.” My husband died 29 years ago but with more than 70 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild, I have lots of company.”

The reporter then asked her is she was bothered by animals raiding her chicken pen. She replied, “Occasionally, by coyotes. I shot one the other day at 150 yards, and not long ago I had to shoot a bear.” The original ranch comprised 1,000 acres with a considerable herd of stock, and for eight years Mrs. Rabbitt managed it until one of her sons took over. She and Mr. Rabbitt settled there long before the Kettle Valley Railway line reached Coalmont, Tulameen and Brookmere in 1912.

Just 3 years after this interview, in 1958, Euphemia Rabbitt was crowned B.C. Centennial Queen in Princeton. The *Similkameen Spotlight* reported that “she was selected over four other very wonderful princesses.”

Mr. and Mrs. Rabbitt played a large role on the school board for Tulameen and area students, even doing the janitor services for no pay. She was the first to make a bid for hydro in 1954 through the MLA of the province and the B.C. Cattlemen’s Association. She also did much toward road improvement with petitions and letters.

Euphemia had many Lorenzetto relatives living in the Princeton and Hedley areas. Her older sister Kate Walker moved here from Hope in 1886. Her husband Sylvanus Walker died in 1887: she afterwards married John Hatton Bromley and spent many years on the Old Hedley Road. Euphemia’s brother Peter Lorenzetto moved to Hedley in the late 1880’s and married Edith Price, daughter of Barrington Price of the Keremeos Grist Mill.

Euphemia Rabbitt died April 26 1974 after living a long and satisfying life at the good age of 99. She is buried beside her loving husband in the Rabbitt Family Cemetery on their ranch. A true British Columbia pioneer!



Euphemia Rabbitt



Social life in Tulameen, included many dances. On Saturday 16 March 1929 there was a St. Patrick's Day dance attended by 150 people at the Britton Hall in Tulameen, which was reported five days later in the Princeton Star. People came to the dance from the whole area – Coalmont, Blakeburn, Princeton, Hedley, Keremeos, Merritt, the upper Otter Valley and Manning's Siding. There was no orchestra booked but "there were volunteer players galore so that one was surprised to learn that there were so many talented musicians in the Similkameen district". Typical of almost every dance reported on in the papers until the Second World War, the dance "lasted until daylight". The dance was sponsored by "Mrs. Rabbitt and family". The Rabbitts were a prominent ranching family who had settled in the Tulameen area around the turn of the 20th century. Euphemia Rabbitt is honoured as the "Tulameen Mother" in the poem St Patrick's Dance by "Wapella Bill". We don't know who Bill is – perhaps an immigrant to the Tulameen from Wapella, Saskatchewan.

The Princeton Museum is very busy getting ready for the 2016 season. We are in the process of applying for grants to ensure that we can offer all the activities and services planned for the coming year.

"Princeton Citizens" Exhibit

On Saturday January 30 from 1 until 4 pm the Museum will host an exhibit of photographs taken by Allan Gill, veterinarian at the Princeton Animal Clinic from 1967 until 2013. Allan has had a lifelong love of photography and has channelled that passion into a curiosity about Princeton's citizens. The result is the wonderful collection of portraits featured in this exhibition. Allan set up a photography studio in his veterinary practice and arranged impromptu portrait sessions with a goodly number of Princetonites. These black and white photographs are striking and almost old-fashioned in their delightful formality.

Allan Gill comes by his passion for photography honestly. Those of you who visited his practice will have seen a collection of beautiful black and white photographs of Manning Park on his walls. These were taken by his father who was also a fine photographer. We look forward to having you join us on January 30 for coffee, tea, snacks and good company. Allan will be there as will many of the people in his portraits, some of whom may be seeing these images for the first time.

**St Patrick's Dance
by "Wapella Bill"**

The Bunnies had a dance last night,
All sporting on the green;
Shamrock and clover leaves,
Predominate the scene.

The crowd was very large,
The floor was extra slick;
The girls, they all were there;
Each man, his choice to pick.

The music was supreme,
The dancers, just the same;
All with a different 'hop',
Which makes other dances tame.

On the program of the evening
Came a dance that's full of pep;
The 'Tulameen' concoction,
The famous 'Brownie' step.

Old timers, they were there,
Real men and women they;
From near and far they came,
To help the youngsters play.

To snare Bunnies seems a shame,
But boys, you'd better step;
There's a live trapper in the game,
And he's making quite a rep.

Now for that sumptuous supper,
Sandwiches and cakes galore;
And steaming fragrant coffee,
A second cup, and more.

To several we give credit,
For the good time given all;
But foremost on the list,
Is the hostess of the ball.

Tulameen Mother' she is called
By many who know her well;
And she lives up to her name,
As true as the old church bell.

I don't belong to the mountains,
But since I came here,
I've met some good-hearted people
Who deserve the best of cheer.

Princeton Star, 28 March 1929