

The first white man to settle in East Kootenay was David Thompson who, with his wife and three children and six men, established a North West Company's Trading Post on the bank of Toby creek, near the present town of Invermere, in July, 1807.

Before that time the two bands of Upper and Lower Kootenay Indians were the only inhabitants, and they roamed at will the district now bearing their name as they obtained their livelihood by hunting and fishing. We have little or no reliable history of these Indians prior to about 1730, their stories being that before that time they came from over the mountains, but first of all they came out of a hole in the ground. This lack of information may be explained by one of their stories of a great plague (thought to have been small-pox) that wiped out all their people except one man of the Upper Kootenays and two women of the Lower Kootenays, but we are reasonably sure that they have been here much longer for there are many legends among them of events before the advent of the horse in this part.

Each year they journeyed to the prairies in charge of a war chief to hunt the buffalo and to trade their furs and flints with the Piegan for goods obtained by them from the white men. It was through the Piegan that David Thompson first learned of the Kootenays and determined to leave his quarters on the Saskatchewan river and establish a trading post in their country. The Indians were then able to trade directly with the white men and in exchange for their furs received guns, knives, pots, kettles, cloth, blankets and beads.

In 1845 the Reverend Father DeSmet entered the Kootenays by way of a mountain pass from Alberta. Before he reached the Kootenay valley he found some very rich silver ore and erected a cross to mark the spot, but although prospectors spent many months searching for it in later years it was never found. It was through letters written by Father DeSmet to friends in the east that it became known that there were enormous seams of coal along the Elk river, and many showings of precious metals elsewhere in the Kootenays.

A half breed named Finlay, son of one of David Thompson's men who had settled in Washington, discovered gold on Finlay creek in 1863 and took out about \$ 1000.00 which was sold to Mr. Linklater, the Hudson's Bay Factor at Tobacco Plains. Through him news of the strike reached Walla Walla and the following spring Bob Dore with four companions left for the Kootenays. They did not reach Finlay creek, however, for on the way they stopped to do some prospecting and discovered gold on Wild Horse Creek. The first claim staked was called the "Dore" and it yielded as high as \$ 7000.00 in one day and averaged \$ 3500.00 per day. In three years \$ 521,750.00 was taken from this one claim, and in all some fifteen millions was taken from the creek.

Supplies became very scarce in the fall of 1864 and before spring flour rose to \$ 125.00 per bag and tobacco \$ 17.00 per pound and very little was to be had even at these prices. About eight hundred men wintered in the district and most of them were forced to hunt and fish to enable them to live until supplies were packed in the

following May. The year 1865 was the most prosperous on Wild Horse creek and it was estimated that between five and eight thousand men were in the district. Perry Creek, Moyie river and Palmer's Bar were also worked in 1867-8-9 but the highest yields were from \$ 20.00 to \$ 30.00 per day to the man.

In 1865 the Hudson's Bay Post that had formerly been near the old Jesuit Mission south of Gateway, was moved to Fort Steele with Michael Phillips as Trader in charge. Posts were also established at Wild Horse and Perry Creeks. In the early days of the Posts the beaver skin was the medium of exchange when trading with the Indians, a large beaver being worth \$ 3.00, a medium \$ 1.50 and a small one fifty cents. Mink and red fox were worth half a skin or one dollar and fisher and dressed buffalo robes brought two skins or four dollars each.

During the gold rush supplies were packed in at great expense from the United States but in 1886, the year after the main line of the C. P. R. was constructed, river steamers began plying between Golden and Windermere and supplies were freighted from there to Fort Steele. A few years later steamer service was established between Jemings, Montana, and Fort Steele and continued running until the C. N. P. Railway was completed in 1898

Cranbrook was formerly known as Joseph's Prairie and was first settled by the Galbraith brothers who cultivated a considerable acreage along Joseph creek. They later sold their holdings to Colonel Baker.

In 1887 two prospectors were murdered, presumably by Indians, at Dead Man's Creek, some thirty miles north of Windermere and, a general uprising of the Kootenays being feared, Captain Steele of the R. N. W. M. P. with 84 non-commissioned Officers and men were sent in from Alberta and established a Post on the bank of the Kootenay river above Galbraith's Ferry. They remained in the district until the following year when they left for Fort MacLeod guided by Mr. R. L. T. Galbraith.

In the earlier days of East Kootenay there was an abundance of game almost everywhere, and even today it is considered a hunters paradise. Nearly every variety of big game on the Continent is to be found in the Rockies and Selkirks and, with the carefully guarded game preserves we now have, we are certain there will never be a real shortage. The biggest herd of Elk in Canada, estimated at over two thousand animals, is in East Kootenay, and the Kootenay river and it's tributaries is noted as the home of the big horn sheep, goat, bear and deer.

It may be interesting to know that the State of Washington had a careful estimate made in 1924 of the game and fur bearers in that State and the value placed on them was two hundred million dollars. In the same year the Province of British Columbia also made a careful estimate of the game by districts and their value to the Province was placed at one billion three hundred million dollars. These figures were arrived at by placing a value of \$ 25.00 on each estimated head of big game, the amount paid by hunters from other parts for each animal they kill. The money left in the country by outside hunters was not taken into consideration and this is estimated at from fifteen hundred to five thousand dollars for each grizzly or sheep.