

LYTTON MUSEUM

and ARCHIVES

August 2004

420 Fraser Street, Lytton, B.C.

Issue 5 Number 2

Lytton Ferries



*The Lytton Ferry
Photo courtesy Joe Chute*

THE THOMPSON RIVER FERRY

In 1867, tenders were invited for the right of the ferry route across the mouth of the Thompson River. This was to be the first authorized ferry, with owners allowed to charge for services, between the government of B.C. and the successful applicants.

The tender of a 3-man partnership was accepted, and a contract was drawn up between Constable A.S. Hall, as agent for the Government of B.C., and Messrs James S. Anderson, William McWha, and Patrick Kilroy, all business men of Lytton.

The terms of the contract were as follows:

1. An annual rent of one hundred and thirty-five dollars shall be paid in quarterly installments (\$33.75).

2. The rates of Toll shall not exceed the following:

Passengers with personal baggage	\$.50
Man and horse	1.00
Cattle per head	.50
Pack trains — each animal	.50
Sheep and hog	.25
Freight per 100 lbs	.25

3. A good and proper boat for the transport of foot passengers shall be kept and a person for working of the same shall always be in attendance, also a large boat capable of ferrying

animals across not less than 6 packhorses at a time. Boats must be kept in good repair.

4. All government officers, government animals and government baggage to be crossed free of charge.

5. Rates to be posted in conspicuous place.

6. If a bridge is built, ferry owners shall not be entitled to claim recompense, and on completion of the bridge the ferry must cease.

7. Lease started Jan. 1, 1867. Conditions to be strictly adhered to. If in default all boats forfeited to the government.

8. The right of the ferry shall extend one mile up the Thompson River from its mouth, and one-half mile up the east bank of the Fraser River, commencing from boundary lines of Byron Earnshaw ferry on said river.

The Thompson River ferry only operated for 6 years, as the first Thompson River Bridge was built in 1873/4. We have no record of the operating successes or failures of this venture.

THE FRASER RIVER FERRY

Although the Thompson Indians of the area had been crossing the Fraser for many years by canoe or rowboat, the first documented ferry across the Fraser River at Lytton was a private one dating back to 1863.

It was built by Byron Earnshaw, an Englishman, who, in 1858, joined the gold rush to British Columbia and mined for gold at Texas Bar, below Yale.

He came to Lytton in 1862, married a

local girl, Amy Raphael, and proceeded to build his ferry and a small supply store.

In 1867, he made an agreement with the Constable at Lytton who represented the B.C. Government, which assigned Earnshaw: Quote:

“The exclusive right of ferrying passengers and freight for hire across the Fraser River at a point opposite the Town of Lytton and within the following limits viz running northerly from said point upstream to the mouth of the Thompson River and one and a half miles southerly downstream measured along the bank of said Fraser River - Together with the exclusive privilege of taking levying and collecting Tolls from all persons ... other than by swimming or wading or crossing over the ice in winter at the rates following that is to say —

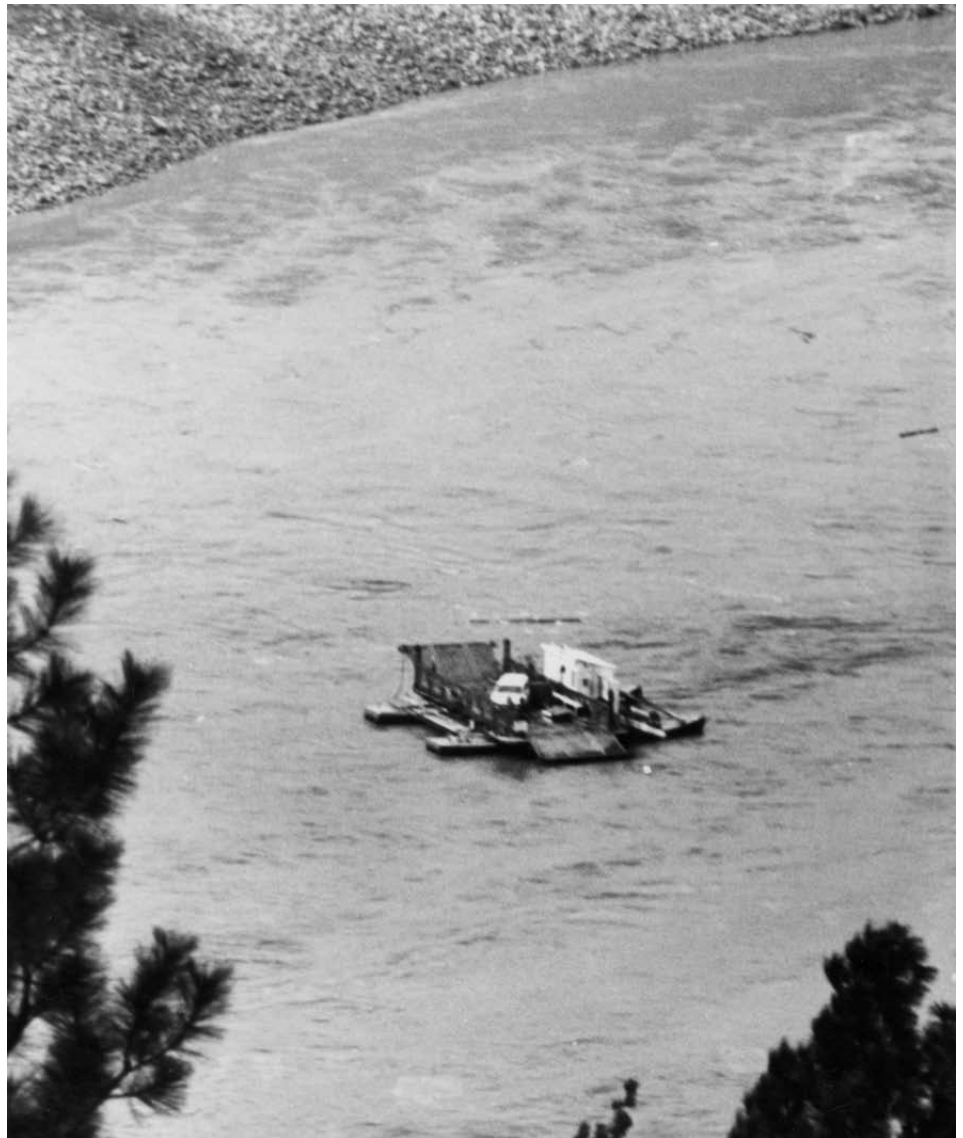
For each passenger with personal baggage not exceeding 50 lb50 cents
For every 100 lb. avir dupois of goods, merchandise and stores production of chattels.....25 cents”

There were two exceptions to the agreement. One allowed the government officers on business to travel free and the other was that Earnshaw could collect a toll from all persons and goods crossing over the river on the ice in winter and by swimming or by wading across at one half the respective rate.

For the privilege of the ferry license he paid the Government \$25.00 per year.

In 1870, Earnshaw sold his interest to Robert Irvine, who operated the ferry until January 1, 1871. Others operated the ferry from 1871 until 1894, when it became publicly owned. In 1904, the ferry was moved from it's original site to the present location.

For a time a reaction scow (a flat bottom vessel with square ends) was used, but large boats of 10m using the reaction principle did most of the ferrying until 1942, when a five-ton capacity wooden boat was put into use. Since that time larger ferries have replaced the preceding one until the present twin 17 metre



The Lytton Ferry on the loose
Photo courtesy Lytton Museum and Archives

steel pontoon ferry was put into use.

From 1989 until 2004 the road maintenance contractor , EMCON , took over management of the Lytton Ferry.

(Ed note: Most of above history contributed by EMCON)

Over the years the Lytton Ferry has had it's share of protests and tragedies. In the 1960's the main cable line broke at anchor on the West side. Luckily, that time the clamps on the cable kept the ferry from going down river. It banged on shore on the east side of the river, was caught and pulled aground with the

Highways grader - the boat was much smaller at that time. There were passengers on the ferry: Justice and Mary Williams and Tony Logan. They were unhurt, but poor old Tony Logan would not use the ferry for nearly five years!

Parents and schools joined in protest to the government, fearing for the safety of the school children. The school buses went over twice a day carrying approximately 40 children morning and night. There was a great deal of 'talk' but not much action for years.

Then, in 1967, a tragedy finally made everyone, including the government,

sit up and take notice. A car with 4 passengers rolled off the end of the ferry, into the river, killing all four. There was no telephone at the ferry, no vehicle available to go for help in case of emergency, so one of the ferry operators rode his bike into town (1 1/4 miles away) to report the accident. It took a total of five weeks to find the car and it's passengers.

Later that same year, Sept. 1967, two men were discovered shot to death aboard the drifting ferry. One of these men was the ferry operator who, only months before, had ridden his bike to town for help regarding the previous accident, in which two of the victims were his grandparents. According to a 1967 Province Paper article, no man-hunt was attempted because it was not known where to start the search! (Ed. note: I do not know how true that was, but there is nothing further on this subject in print)

1979 was also a banner year! In May of that year, the ferry actually broke loose! The main cable snapped within 5 minutes of the foot passengers disembarking, hence no injuries. Two employees, Fred Earl and Lester Charlie, and passenger, Ralph Williams were on the ferry but were able to get into the attached safety boat and beach at the joining of the Thompson and Fraser rivers, and watched while the ferry and Mr. Williams car went gaily on their way! The ferry was caught near the mouth of the Kwoiek river by a logging tug boat and towed to Boston Bar. Mr. Williams retrieved his car and the ferry had to be dismantled and trucked back to Lytton.

No wonder people became irate and protests were the norm. The ferry was of course out of service for weeks, but was there any compassion shown by the District Manager of Highways? His comments, as quoted by the News, were: "Although the accident has cre-

ated a significant inconvenience, the users of the ferry are not stranded. They can drive out through Lillooet (Ed. note: The road on the west side from Lytton to Lillooet is no picnic at the best of times!) or make use of the railway bridge at Lytton. It's a fairly long walk, but with nice weather it won't be too bad." Talk about insensitive! We are talking 'children' here, and also the CNR people threatened to fine anyone walking the bridge and you get the feeling that there was a definite lack of communication here.

Since these 'incidents' the ferry has had considerable upgrades. The pontoons had been extended by 12 feet, a new motorized life boat has been added, cable specialists were brought in, civil engineering consultants were brought in for the new towers, naval architects were consulted, and everything was brought up to standard.

There will always be inconveniences. There are usually closures in the Spring due to high water and debris, and sometimes ice, floating down the river. However, these can be expected and planned for.

Over the years the building of a bridge has been discussed, both by locals and by government officials. However, no consensus has ever been reached - some are for and some are against. So, we have our ferry. One thing we can brag about is that it does not use any fuel, so there is no pollution.

To give some idea of how hard our little ferry works, included is an excerpt from an EMCON NEWS information article (1994):

The ferry operates on the Fraser River, shuttling people and vehicles from one side of the river to the other. Last year the water-flow powered craft on cables transported some 42,000 vehicles and 120,000 people across the Fraser. On average, the small ferry makes 65 trips per day, carrying approximately 80

vehicles on those trips. Though the distance across the Fraser River is just 300 metres, which takes just five minutes, the daily service and the extended operating hours require the work of nine Emcon Services employees, based at the Lytton yard site.

Thanks to those people who have helped put this little history together: HMC and EMCON for a short history of the ferry; Nonie and Chuck McCann for correcting some errors picked up from Newspaper articles; and most of all, Lester Charlie for his eye witness account of the ferry escapes. It takes many people and several sources to put together past events.

NORTH BEND AERIAL FERRY

The North Bend Aerial ferry was installed in 1939 and officially opened on March 15, 1940. It replaced the rowboat crossing on the Fraser River that transported mail as well as passengers to Boston Bar from the CPR on the west side of the river.

The Ferry was a steel cage suspended on cables 1,200 feet long. Suspension was 90 feet above low water. The ferry weighed 9 tons and could carry a 3-ton vehicle or 40 passengers. It was originally operated by a diesel donkey, and later by electric power with diesel as a standby in case of power failure.

It was operated by a foreman in the powerhouse (ferry shack) and a deckhand who manned the gates and collected fares when tolls were on. The ferry operated till 6:00 pm, and later on till 11:00 pm.

The cost was 25 cents for a car & driver and 5 cents per passenger, with children riding free. Also, a ticket good for ten trips could be obtained at a cheaper rate.

In later years the ferry was considered



*The North Bend/Boston Bar Aerial Ferry
Photo courtesy Lytton Museum and Archives*

as a part of the Highway system and the tolls were taken off. On special holidays such as May Day in North Bend or July 1st in Boston Bar, a group of 20 people attending dances could pay in advance \$1.00 for an extra run at 2:30 am, and additional passengers paid 5 cents. If you missed the run you were stranded until the next day.

The ferry cage was only 3 to 4 feet above the Fraser River in the June flood of 1948.

For a short period of time the workers on the ferry were considered as Marine Workers and were issued official Ferry uniforms. The ferry staff were listed as part of the B.C. Government Ferry Fleet.

Then it was brought to the attention of the government that the aerial ferry never touched water, so once again it became part of the B.C. Highway Department.

The ferry cage can be viewed on the North Bend side of the bridge a half-mile from the Trans-Canada Highway.



THANK YOU!

A great big thank you to everyone who helped with the museum book sale, either by donating books, buying books or helping to sell them. A special thank you goes to Mr. Dave Peaker, who allowed us to use his empty store on Main street, free of charge, for three days! We collected a grand total of \$259.00, and a credit of \$42.00 with the Book Man in Chilliwack. The balance of the unsold books were donated to the Rotary Club in Chilliwack.

Thank you, everyone, for your wonderful support!



WHO CAN SUPPLY THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION?

First, we are looking for some history of the piano that was in the St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

The piano is dated 1895, and is presently housed in the Village Chambers. It is being properly cared for, where the whole community can benefit by its use.

It was in the Nurses Residence for many years, then moved into the hospital itself.

When the hospital closed in 2001 the piano was accessioned into the Lytton Museum records.

Does anyone have any idea whether or not this piano was purchased by the Hospital Board and when?

Or was it donated?

Any information would be welcomed by the Museum (455-2254 or 455-2268)

Second, we are still looking for photographs of the following men for an historical display with a scroll these men signed in 1934 in honour of Rev. Stanley Higgs:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| John Michell | George Thomas |
| Jim Quinn | Henry McCarty |
| Harry McKay | Jimmy Stone |
| William Sampson | Arthur Skuki |
| George Wish | |

If anyone has photographs of the above and could share them, you would really make our day!!!

(We just want to COPY these pictures and return them to you)



AN EXCITING NEW DONATION!

We have just received a donation from Violet Liivam - a very valuable donation!

It is a book titled: “**The People’s War Book - History, Cyclopedia and Chronology of the Great World War**”, by James Martin Miller and H.S. Canfield; and “**Canada’s Part in the War**”, by W.R. Plewman. 1920.

It is an autographed edition by W.A. Bishop (‘Billy Bishop’), who was officially credited with bringing down 72 enemy planes, unofficially his record was over 100 planes.

This book was included in a box of belongings from Mrs. Liivam’s mother’s estate, and it nearly got thrown out!

Fortunately, a closer examination of the contents convinced Mrs. Liivam that this article deserved another look, *SO* - let this be a lesson to all of us! What may look like junk to you may actually be an important part of our history. PLEASE let our museum staff be the go-between from your basement to the dump!



Photo courtesy Richard Forrest

SOMETHING NEW HAS BEEN ADDED!

Have you noticed the new display/shelter being built in the back yard of the Museum?

We have many items stored away in various sheds, attics and basements, and we have also recently had the Lytton Firewheel repainted, so a shelter became a definite necessity.

The Village Council has generously donated the funding and Lytton Lumber is

donating 50% of the cost of the lumber, with Gordon Ablett contracted to do the construction.

This shelter/display area will enable us to safely display many more artifacts from our area to the benefit of the community and our many visitors.



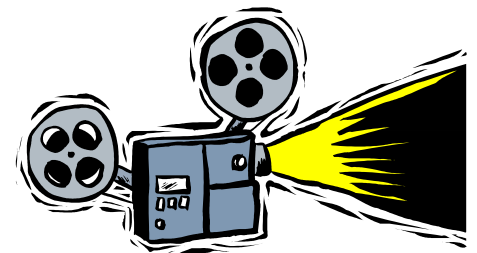
DO YOU KNOW THESE PEOPLE?

This photograph was received from Rev. Robert Preston, who was the Anglican Minister in Lytton from 1953/1954. The babies were baptized in St. Mary and St. Paul’s Church during that time.

Please contact the Museum (455-2254) or Dorothy Dodge (455-2268) if you know the identities of any of the people in the photograph.



WANTED



We would like to borrow a working 8mm movie projector to transfer some old movies to DVD format. Please call the Museum at 455-2254 if you have one we can use.

Music in Lytton



Lytton's Teenage Band!

*Left to Right: Ronnie McMillan, Steve Shorsky, Ron Doynega, Lois Russell (now Lois Brooks). Back: Vic Shorsky on drums. [ca 1950's]
Photo courtesy Lytton Museum and Archives*

Then...

The Lytton Athletic Association was a group that was formed under the auspices of the Village to run the Community Hall.

I was a member of the group for years, until we finally folded for lack of funding and of interest.

In the beginning, when people could not move around so freely, we had many great times in this hall: whist drives, dances, square dancing, Rod and Gun dinners, etc. etc. We brought in several small bands, mostly western music, but we also had our own locals, which included the Lytton Teenage band, and they were good!



Now...

Riversong Lytton's Community Choir

In November of 2003, at the inspiration of Alice Munro, a small group of people decided it would be fun to get together and practice some carols to be sung at Christmas.

We started with traditional carols, with familiar tunes, but thought we would like to try some two or four-part harmony pieces. One of the members, Gerald Mulligan, had some experience with directing, so we asked if he would lead us.

He accepted the challenge.

After the holiday season was over, we

started meeting regularly on Tuesday evenings at the Parish Hall. Our first public appearance was at the May 24th Community Dinner.

Our first concert – “An Evening With Riversong and their Special Guests” was June 18th, 2004.

Guests included a rich assortment of local talent:

Lytton Mountaineers
The Siska Hand Drummers
The Ruth Mundall Family
Nathan Vogel (classical piano)
Eric Siwik (classical guitar)

Riversong currently has nineteen members and hopes to welcome new voices in the fall.

The members of Riversong are:

Director: Gerald Mulligan

Sopranos: Gabrielle Kingston
Micha Kingston
Alice Munro
Denise O'Connor

Altos: Jean Dall
Carey Davidson
Maggie Lord
Jennifer Murphy
Ann Shultz

Tenors: Kelly McArthur
Nonie McCann
Rafael Kingston
John O'Leary

Basses: John Liivam
Ron Loring
Peter McArthur
Chris Winsor
Rafe O'Donavan

Submitted by Jean Dall



THE LYTTON HOT SPOT HAS A COOL SPOT!



*The Bert Erickson - Expo 86 Legacy Fund - Village of Lytton Swimming Pool.
Photos courtesy Dorothy Dodge*

Judging from the screams of joy and the noisy splashing next door, the swimming pool has to be the most popular spot in town on these hot days.

Our pool has a little history of it's own.

Our children used to swim in the Fraser, near the mouth of the Thompson River, a very dangerous practice. The man who owned Earls Court Farms (1950's) was Colonel Victor Spencer. He decided to make a gift to the Village of Lytton, consisting of the materials to build a swimming pool in Lytton. His idea was to have volunteers build this pool, so that the town would appreciate the gift and their part in the building of it, thereby taking good care of it.

Colonel Spencer asked only that the pool be named the 'Bert Erickson pool' after the ranch herdsman, Bert Erickson.

According to Elder Eddie Charlie, his father, Justice Williams, used to work for Col. Spencer. Eddie's brother, Jerry

Williams, was one of the children who lost his life swimming in the Fraser, and that was one of the reasons that Col. Spencer went to the village with his proposal.

Volunteers did build the pool, and it was enjoyed for many years. However, nothing lasts forever, and the pool was no exception. Over the years several repairs were needed, some of them major. In 1986, the Village Recreation Commission applied for an Expo Legacy Grant specifically to replace the pool. A Grant of \$95,000 was received, and in 1988 work started on the new pool. There was also a pathway around the pool and a small wading pool included.

One of the specifications of the Expo Legacy Grant Commission was that they be recognized in the naming of the pool. They even supplied the sign that was supposed to be erected, but still sits in the ticket wicket of the pool! Somehow, as these things happen, the pool became known as the Lytton community pool. There were actually two serious oversights here, as far as the

history of the pool goes: First, the original name: Bert Erickson, was dropped, and second, it never has been called the Expo Legacy pool, so there is actually no recognition of either major donation that gave us our pool



Note: The Expo Legacy sign reads as follows:

EXPO 86 LEGACY FUND VILLAGE OF LYTTON SWIMMING POOL

A Community project supported by
the Expo 86 Legacy Fund
Commemorating the year our
Province welcomed the world.

Honourable Bill Reid
Minister Responsible

Two further notes of interest: A Lytton pioneer, Lewis Davis, left a sum of money in care of the Village when he died in 1991, to be used for recreation. This money has been very carefully managed, and was finally used up when the new filtration system was put in the pool recently.

The other note of interest is the wading pool. Yes, it was put in, and it was used for a few years, but the filtration system for this pool did not work for some reason and it sat empty for years. Finally it was used as the base for the Information Centre.

You just never know what goodies you'll find in the Museum Newsletter!!

COMMUNITY MEMORIES

Our **Community Memories Project** is progressing as hoped.

We are fortunate to have had several people participate in our interviews so far, including Doreen Arneson, Lloyd Dodge, Bud Crowston and Victor & Ruby Belknap.

Doreen Arneson, formerly of North Bend, was able to give us considerable information on the railways, including several photos (one of which is reproduced at right) of her father, Bill Greatrex and the train wreck of April 18, 1930, where her father was killed.

This wreck was near Siska on the CPR tracks, and appears to be still visible, as the locomotive was never completely removed.

Lloyd recounted memories of attending school in Botanie Valley, and coming to Lytton for late night shopping on Saturdays.

Bud gave us information on the effects of highway traffic on the local economy before Lytton was by-passed by the present Number 1 Highway, as well as memories of working on the highway.

Ruby and Victor wrote down several details like the following for us:

It was 1948, the year of the big flood. I was working in the telephone office with Muriel Floyd. I had to get my teeth operated on in Vancouver, but the trains weren't running. This guy left his car with Johnny AG because he was scared to drive it through the Fraser Valley with the flood. When the flood was over, he asked Johnny to find somebody to drive it to Vancouver, so Johnny asked Vic to do it.

Johnny came into the telephone office and I told him I needed to be in Vancouver. He said "Vic Belknap's going down to Vancouver. Ask him for a ride." I said "Not in a pig's ear! I don't even know the fellow!" Next

thing I knew Vic came into the office and introduced himself and asked if I wanted a ride to Vancouver. So we went down in the car and came back on the train. That was the beginning of a long, happy life! 55 years of marriage.

Ruby Belknap

Many thanks to everyone who has participated.

We are still looking for photos of traditional dip-netting, salmon drying and early life in Lytton, including residences and businesses. We would particularly appreciate "overview" photographs of the Village.

Anyone wishing to contribute can contact the Museum at 455-2254.



The wreck of CPR 3626, which claimed the life of Bill Geatrex in 1930.

Photo courtesy Doreen Arneson



The Lytton River Festival is a celebration of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers and the role these two great rivers have played in our village's past and present.

Like many community events, this celebration has evolved. From informal discussions, which many people have had for a number of years, to a group of like-minded individuals focusing on a vision, this event involves representatives from the entire community.

The Village of Lytton, Siska Indian Band, Nicomen Indian Band, Lytton First Nation, Lytton & District Chamber of Commerce, Royal Canadian Legion, and Kumsheen Rafting Resort are active partners in this river-oriented, fun-filled event, two-day celebration.

We invite you to be part of this event that celebrates the important role that these two great rivers have played in our village's history and culture.