BEAMES, Rev. and Mrs. W. S

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From the 50th Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society (1982)

Another golden summer Sunday was drawing to a close and the service in St. Saviour's Anglican Church in Penticton, British Columbia, murmured comfortably along as William Stanley Beames prepared to mount the pulpit. Six feet tall, wearing full canonical vestments of black cassock, snow-white surplice, preaching scarf and academic hood, Mr. Beames was an impressive and well-loved figure. The congregation sat relaxed as their rector placed the Bible on the book rest and cast a speculative look over their heads. Suddenly he raised his hand - a strong hand that had known how to handle an axe - and brought it down on the open Bible with a thwack that smashed book and book rest from their place and shot them into the air, only to be snatched back and slammed down triumphantly on the pulpit's ledge.

Bristling at the indignity of such a shindig the congregation jerked upright, shoulders straightened and heads turned towards the source of the commotion. "Well," beamed the rector from his stance above them, "better a wave of righteous indignation than a sea of apathy!" And began his sermon. Later, speaking with friends, the rector's wife, Gertrude, smiled and said, "You know how Will is." And if you were not fortunate enough to know how Will was, you had missed an unique experience.

William Stanley Beames was born April 30, 1886, to Catherine Mary Beames in London, England. Within three months he travelled with his mother to join his family in the Indian hill country near Darjeeling where his father, Henry Blunt Beames, was a non-indentured civil servant. At the age of six the boy was sent to England to be educated. He travelled on one of the early steam vessels with side paddle-wheels and remembered the silence that ensued when the engines were shut down and the ship surged forward under canvas. In England, Will was enrolled in a dame school - a small private school run by a woman - until old enough to enter Dulwich College for Boys, where he studied to become a military engineer specializing in mining.

In 1905, his imagination fired by highly coloured immigration information which promised fortunes in the gold fields of B.C.'s Kootenay country, the young man left school and set off for Canada, despite the pleas of relatives and teachers that at least he complete his graduation. Even the discomforts of a C.P.R. immigration car did not dull his enthusiasm. The immensity of the prairies fascinated him as did the harvest activities he witnessed.

By September Will was in Rossland, then a booming, wide-open, gold-mining town. The shops and saloons lining the steep main street, noisy and lantern-lit at night, seldom closed. Despite the activity Will could not find work. Upon hearing of a job hauling supplies for a teamster in Greenwood, Will set off on foot for the town. He arrived late the next afternoon and found the teamster at one of the hotels. "Do you know anything about horses?"

"Of course, just about everything," came the reply.

"Very good. The bays at the end of the stable are my team. Have them fed and harnessed by six o'clock tomorrow and you're hired."

By 5.30 Will Beames was in the barn still struggling with a tangled pile of cruppers, hame straps, reins and traces. By six o'clock he had the collars on but one was upside down. The teamster took one look and doubled up laughing. "You may know everything about horses," he gasped, "but you know damn all about harness!" Despite the rude beginning he found the rawboned youth ready and willing to learn.

Other jobs followed including work for the West Kootenay Power and Light Company. When in Rossland, Will attended the Anglican Church. There he met the Rev. John A. Cleland and his family. An invitation to share the Cleland's Christmas dinner marked the beginning of an enduring friendship that grew through nearly eighty years.

Will worked for the famous LeRoy II mine and in various capacities for the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company. In 1906 he was drawn to the lovely Slocan country where he rawhided silver ore from the Alamo Consolidated Mines. He tried his hand at baking and later worked as an ore sampler. Over the next few years he ranged from Sandon to Phoenix in the Boundary country as the fortunes of various mines rose and fell.

In spite of the unsettled nature of his life, Will was an active churchman, serving when opportunity afforded as church warden, lay reader and as lay delegate to the Anglican synod in Nelson. In 1910 Will found steady employment in the assay office of the C. M. and S. Company. He batched with his friend and mentor, the Rev. H. W. Simpson, rector of St. George's Church, Rossland. This friendship was to have a profound influence on Will. No longer a greenhorn but a husky, often brash young man, he continued to work actively in the church as server, lay reader, Sunday school teacher, member of the choir, the church committee and the first Anglican Young People's branch in B.C. Again he became a delegate to the church's synod.

During this period Will met the bubbling, attractive Gertrude Elizabeth Brown. Gertrude had been born in 1895 in Tacoma, Washington and, while still an infant, had been brought to Rossland where her family hoped that the mountain air would heal Mrs. Brown's tuberculosis. Unhappily Gertrude's mother died in childbirth. Mr. Brown, unable to manage the care of Gertrude and her older brother, Bill, in Rossland, returned with the children to his home in Hull, England. After a fruitless search for work he left Gertrude with an aunt and returned to Rossland with his son. Two years later Mr. Brown remarried and brought his daughter back to Rossland where he had established a dry goods store.

In 1901 Gertrude started school in the new Cook Avenue School and attended Sunday school in the original Father Pat Church on Columbia Avenue. She was an active girl, skating, cheering at hockey matches, to say nothing of enjoying clandestine runs down the infamous "Zip" where toboggans raced in winter. In a note she reminisced, "Father must have been a DON'T man. Don't go near the Chinese laundry (next door). Don't go near the Hoochie Coochie (sic) tent when the circus comes to town. Don't go near the saloons and don't look at the ladies walking the streets on payday!"

After completing high school Gertrude worked as a reception assistant in a doctor's office. Like many others, she doubled as a nurse during a 'flu epidemic'. While teaching Sunday school she met the brash young Englishman with the red hair and rich baritone voice. It was the start of a lifelong romance and working partnership. By 1914 they were engaged.

The outbreak of World War I forced major decisions on Will. By then he was determined to enter the ministry of the Anglican church yet all his training and traditions demanded that he defend his land and all that it stood for. He missed the counsel of his friend, the Rev. H. W. Simpson, who had returned to England. Finally, he applied and was enrolled in St. Mark's College, a forerunner of the present Vancouver School of Theology. While a student he was placed in charge of St Stephen's, West Vancouver. An inscribed silver watch bears appreciative testimony to his work, especially as Sunday school superintendent.

By July, 1915, the need to serve his country directly took precedence and he joined the Royal Canadian Engineers, 2nd Division. On October 14, Gertrude and Will were married in St. James' Church, Vancouver by the Rev. F. E. Perrin, Vicar of North Lonsdale. He was 29 years old and for the next three years, in the mud and blood of the trenches, he absorbed more wisdom about men under stress and the value in inner faith than he could ever have learned in college. Fortunately he came through the war with nothing more serious than a minor wound and a light dose of mustard gas. After the armistice he stayed in Europe to serve with the army of occupation.

During the war years Gertrude worked at Fry's chocolate factory; did various kinds of war service and, with a friend, took alternate nights tending the light at the mouth of the Capilano River that marked the entrance to Vancouver Harbour. This latter duty required rowing out to the light regardless of weather, filling the lamp with oil, trimming the wick, cleaning the globe, relighting the lamp and rowing back to shore, often against a heavy tide.

Will was demobilized June 11, 1919. Difficult months followed during which he cut shingle bolts, wheeled cement for the Capilano suspension bridge, cleared land for Spencer's store or did any work which came to hand. The couple established a home in North Vancouver and on March 1, 1920, Thomas Bernard was born.

Will was then working in the drafting offices of Wallace's Shipyards in North Vancouver. In 1921 the Canadian Pacific Steamship line decided to use the coastal service. Wallace's Shipyards received the contract. This necessitated the young couple's first move and Gertrude's first experience - one often to be repeated - of packing up her home and unpacking at a new location. Everything had to be packed by the householder, crated and shipped at his expense.

On September 9, 1921, Henry Denys (known as Denys) was born in the land of eternal rain and muskeg. Shortly after, work petered out and the family returned to West Vancouver. Following their return Will, with his wife's full support, made his final commitment to study for the priesthood. He re-entered St. Mark's College where he continued his theological studies until the students transferred to the New Anglican Theological College on the U.B.C. campus. There, he completed his studies under such eminent theologians as Dr. H. Trumpour and Dr. Vance.

After his first year of study, Will's drafting job closed down. To keep food on the table he assisted in local Vancouver churches. During the summer holidays the young couple undertook mission work at Athabasca Landing on Lesser Slave Lake. The town was the transportation hub of the north country. Flour and other supplies moved north during the brief summer to various Arctic ports. Furs and minerals flowed south to Edmonton either by the easterly Athabasca River route or by the westerly Peace River route. In summer travel was by boat, horseback or horse and buggy. In winter, though horses were used to some extent, travel was mainly by dog team and sled. In addition to the Anglican and Roman Catholic missions, the town consisted of the Mounted Police barracks, a post office, a few stores, two hotels and the ubiquitous blacksmith shop and livery stable.

Church buildings existed in a few small towns but sectarianism was of little importance. Priests were few and far between and when one arrived a service was soon arranged in schoolhouse or home to which all the neighbours came. Mission work involved touring the country in a buckboard in back of which lay two squirming urchins bedded in a suitcase, its lid propped open, the whole double-wrapped in mosquito netting to keep the babes from flies. At two cents a dozen, eggs were used for barter or were fed to the horses with their mash which kept their coats glossy.

During those two summers of mission work the embryo priest began to develop that ecumenical approach which was to mark his whole life. An Anglican by training and tradition he was first and foremost a Christian ministering to Christ's people. He was ordained Deacon in St. Mark's Church, High Prairie, Alberta in May, 1925.

At the end of his final year, Will received his Licentiate in Theology degree as well as a prize for scholarship and another for Hebrew and Greek studies. Posted to High Prairie the family cheerfully returned to take up its work. This demanded long, hard hours in the saddle through every kind of weather. Will was always grateful for the gift of a buffalo riding-coat from a Mountie friend. In winter he more than once reached home by giving his horse its head lest both be lost. All winter a lifeline ran from the back door of the house to the stable so there would be no danger of getting lost in a blizzard while caring for the horse.

1926 was an eventful year for the Beames family. In May, Will was ordained priest at St. James' Church, Peace River. On June 3, a daughter, Katherine Mary Elizabeth (Betty) was born. Then during that summer Will was forced to leave the people and land he had come to love.

Conditions in the north were primitive. Water was usually hauled in a wooden barrel from the nearest slough to the back door of the farm house. There it sat, an enamelled dipper beside it, until the barrel needed refilling. Like others, the new priest drank contaminated water and came down with the typhoid fever that all but ended his life. Gertrude's loving care kept Will alive when the standard fare for typhoid patients was a raw egg in a saucer of brandy. As well as caring for Will she was nursing her new baby. At this inopportune time both Bernard and Denys developed measles. Nothing but mutual love and their strong faith in God could have carried the young couple through such a trial.

To convalesce, Will was ordered to leave the Peace country. Gertrude was left with an infant daughter, two young boys and all the packing arrangements. With the help of Gertrude's father the family was reunited in Rossland where they stayed long enough for Will to begin to get back on his feet. In August they packed tents, pots and pans and, with Gertrude's sister, (Mrs. E. Paul) and the family cat, entrained for Slocan City where Will's old friend and former mining partner, Mr. J. Owen Clay, met them with horse and wagon to take them to Valhalla Ranch. That summer of rest and sunshine on the banks of the Slocan River strengthened Will.

His health restored, Will accepted an appointment to East Trail. An easy move. In 1927 the parish extended from the present Fruitvale, to Ymir and the Boundary. Slowly spirits rose, life regained some semblance of normality and old debts began to be repaid. When a church was needed in East Trail, Will used his engineer's training to design the little mission church-hall that was built on a site donated by the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company. The last of the boys, Hugh William (Bill) was born on November 13, 1927 in East Trail.

The following spring Mr. Beames was appointed to the parish of St. Peter's, Revelstoke, where he served throughout the bitter days of the great depression. Gertrude's sense of humour and ability to cope with day-to-day routines punctuated by assorted emergencies ranging from the humorous to the sad were tested to the full. There was son, Bill, the escape artist. Tied in his harness and tethered to a stake on the front lawn, he'd be gone in twenty minutes only to be found scooping at the bottom of the last jar of jam or visiting a neighbour in search of a handout! Once he was herded away from the river bank by Laddie, the family dog.

At Revelstoke there were no northern lights and howling huskies; no Mounties in their white and green parkas¹ arriving by dogsled to maintain the law during the great days of the moochigans², no excited watching and waiting for the arrival of the boat from Fort Vermilion, rather the endless procession of cold, hunger and, too often, ill-clad men stumbling off the freights in search of warmth, food and shelter. The rectory became one of the major calling points for men in need in need of food, clothes and spiritual sustenance. Life became a grim struggle to find work for willing workers; to maintain their courage and self-respect. Friendships from those frustrating times endure to this day.

The children were accustomed to wearing hand-me-downs or bargains from jumble sales but when unexpected guests shared their meals they rather resented their mother's signal, "N.M.I.K., kids!" no more in the kitchen, so no second helpings.

But it was not all bitterness and hardship. Again, Mr. Beames put his early training to use by designing and overseeing the construction of St. Peter's church hall and raising much of the money either directly or indirectly. A fine string of concerts remains a fond memory for participants still alive. A splendid choir and a strong Sunday school were established. Badminton became a part of community life. Boy Scout outings and hearty bean feeds that followed are recalled by many.

Early one Sunday morning the peace was shattered by the roar of the rector's voice: "Gertrude, where the deuce is my clean shirt?"

"Will, I told you yesterday that if you gave that shirt away you would not have a clean one for today."

"Don't be ridiculous, woman. Where's my clean shirt? You know I can't go into the sanctuary in this filthy thing I wore

yesterday."

"Then you'd better wear your nightshirt because you simply do not have one clean shirt left. There is one in the wash, there's the one you wore yesterday and the other you have given away." Probably for the first time in his life the rector entered the sanctuary of the Lord wearing a shirt that was not spotlessly clean.

In that old brick rectory in Revelstoke Mrs. Beames' strange ability to predict the visits of dignitaries was manifested, especially those of the Bishop. This same ability was reflected, too, in her uncanny facility in guessing games which were so cheap and hence so popular.

1932 was a banner year. The family with Gertrude's sister, Elsie, luxuriated in its first ever holiday at Okanagan Landing. All enjoyed the swimming but none more than Mrs. Beames as she floated flat on her back, a straw hat tilted over her eyes and a book propped on her breast. Laddie was a constant companion on the beach, in the boat or in the hills. Strange birds were observed, turtles found, neighbours enjoyed. Some sort of truce prevailed between Laddie and a family of skunks which "lived in": the Beames above, the skunks below. Hours were spent lazily watching the stern wheelers, *Okanagan* and *Sicamous*, majestically plying the lake streaming smoke in the sky and spume in their wakes.

In the following year the last big family move was made from Revelstoke to Penticton, with all the excitement of the trip by Chapman's truck to Okanagan Landing and the glorious trip down the lake on *S.S. Sicamous* with Captain Weeks at the helm. Mr. Beames was installed as Rector of the parish of St. Saviour's on June 26, 1933, and the family settled into its new life with relish.

But the country was still suffering from the depression and Penticton, a divisional point on the K.V.R., had its share of men seeking work, food and shelter. The new rector soon made an arrangement with Messrs. George and Sam Drossos at the old Kandy Kitchen: they agreed to feed men sent with a note from Mr. Beames and submit the bills to him. The arrangement worked especially well because those two bighearted citizens charged only half the menu price.

People in trouble and in joy came to the rectory door. One day Public Health Nurse Joan Appleton³ arrived with a fretful ailing baby whose distracted young mother needed rest. Mrs. Beames cuddled the infant as the nurse set down a box of medication to relieve colic and other symptoms with appropriate lists of instructions. Mrs. Beames listened to the nurse's instructions as she rocked the baby. When the mother had recovered, Miss Appleton reclaimed a happy, gurgling baby from Mrs. Beames' arms. "And the box of medicine?" Mrs. Beames was puzzled. "What box? Oh yes, I remember. I put it under the crib."

In 1937, the last of the Beames family, Caroline Helen (Carol) was born on December 11, in the old hospital (now the Haven Hill Retirement Centre). The family continued living in the old rectory on what had originally been part of the Tom Ellis Estate off Fairview Road and is now Preston Avenue. Although the house had been enlarged it was still far too small for its many occupants and functions. At the beginning of World War II, it was replaced by a large, comfortable house opposite St. Saviour's Church on Winnipeg Street⁴.

In addition to his services in the city during this period, Mr. Beames was responsible for the parishes of Keremeos, Oliver, Okanagan Falls and Kaleden to the south as well as Naramata to the north. Sunday was indeed a busy day, especially before the Rev. F. C. Briscall took over duties in Oliver. Tales of those days are legion, memories of the rector's escapades on the road are endless.

Joan Norris recalled a Christmas when the Beames family was to enjoy Christmas dinner with her family. Father Beames was late returning after a morning service in Naramata. While chatting, Mrs. Beames was inwardly praying for his safety and hoping the worst explanation was that the rector had forgotten. When he finally arrived he explained that he had skidded into a ditch to avoid a flock of sheep. He was quite happy stuck there because the pastoral scene had stirred thoughts of what Christmas was all about and how much could be learned from sheep.

After considerable discussion in 1934 the surviving members of the Ellis family gave permission to move the original St. Saviour's from Fairview Road and attach it to the south wall of the new church. Again, Mr. Beames' experience proved valuable as he supervised the dismantling of the original Ellis Church. The transept inserted by the Rev. J. A. Cleland⁵ to

enlarge the church in 1908 was removed. And so the little church, restored to its original design was re-erected and dedicated on September 23, 1934 as the Ellis Memorial Chapel to the memory of Thomas Ellis, his wife, Wilhelmina, and her brother, Alfred Wade. The charming proportions of St. Peter's Church in Naramata were designed by Mr. Beames who supervised its erection. It was consecrated by Bishop Walter Adams on June 28, 1926. In 1936 the rector designed St. Saviour's parish hall which still serves as a useful part of the Anglican Church establishment.

Throughout these years and for years to come the rectory doors were always open, tea or coffee always brewing. You never knew how many were going to sit down to a meal. Guests varied from the feisty former mayor of Ottawa, Charlotte Whitton, to disillusioned war brides heading back to England, from the Archbishop of Canterbury to little old ladies needing warmth, nourishment and a little bit of love. And there was a constant stream of young people. To double up or move out to friends was never a novelty to the family children.

Carol Robb, née Beames, recalls: "Miss - - - -, a spinster whose water pipes had frozen and burst so that the floors in her little house were a sheet of ice, was brought home by dad. He wrapped her in quilts and put her by the fire to thaw out. Mum put a potty under her bed in case she couldn't find the bathroom in the night. Brother Bill came home from a late shift at the radio station and heard strange noises emanating from the guest room. He peeked in to find poor old Miss - - - struggling to get off the potty. Mum of course, rescued her."

The years of World War II were full of terrible stress, not least in the rectory. Tom enlisted in the RCNVR and Denys joined the RCAF. Denys was reported missing and months of uncertainty were bitter indeed for the rector and his wife until their son was declared dead, killed in action. Characteristically throughout this ordeal their first concern, their thoughts and prayers, were constantly with Denys' wife and child in far-off England.

The fearful stream of telegrams advising families that loved ones had been wounded or killed had to be delivered many, many of them by the parish priest. Displaced persons needed help to adjust to their new surroundings. Using his knowledge of classical Greek, Mr. Beames picked up enough modern Greek to be able to offer services in their own language and in their own form of religious service to Greek refugees. As well as the shared griefs and fears there were shared prayers and hopes for the safe return of others, shared thanksgiving for those safely returned. Life went on: always interesting, often tiring, endlessly rewarding.

At the end of the war the family endured another heavy blow when their eldest daughter was killed in a car accident. Again their grieving was matched by their concern and love for the driver of the car. Still remained the unmitigated joy of reunion when friends and loved ones returned on leave or discharge. Those enriching moments of lives deeply shared were recalled by Betty Burgess on her return from overseas service.

Over the years the Beames had been supportive friends of the Burgess family and when the widow Burgess died, sister Betty and Kay came to live in the rectory. Betty remembers that the house was always full of music. Dad starting "La donna e mobile" in his study on the ground floor, Mum Beames picking it up while making beds on the second floor, and Bill joining in somewhere in the attic! The only house rule that Betty recalled was that you went to church - the church of your choice - but to church. When she left to return to Europe she asked, "How can I ever repay you for all your kindness?" Dad Beames replied, "Pass it on, Betty dear, just pass it on to someone else." When Betty boarded the *Queen Elizabeth* there were five letters from five members of the Beames family, one to be opened each day of the crossing. She read the first and it cheered her so much she opened the flap of the second to read: "Quit cheating: this ain't Tuesday!"

The Beames continued to live in the big rectory until Mr. Beames' retirement from St. Saviour's in 1951. In spite of its size it was often too small for the people it had to serve, but none was ever turned away and it never lacked for the warmth and companionship of the Rector and Mrs. Beames. As Mary Costley has said of Mrs. Beames, "If you happened to meet her in the street, or at tea, or coming in or going out of the church, she had a way of doing you good just with her greeting . . . Mr. Beames' compassion was absolute for those who mourned or suffered intolerable stresses but at weddings and baptisms his eyes sparkled with the joy he shared with those present. Nevertheless he was stern when the principles or rules of Mother Church were trampled."

When Father Beames retired as Rector of St. Saviour's in 1951 he certainly did not retire from life! He continued his active ministry for another fifteen years in parishes as far apart as England and St. Mary's, Oak Bay, as well as throughout the Kootenay and Okanagan country. And always by his side Mother Beames walked her own unique way, supporting and counselling. She continued dismantling and remaking homes one after the other, her sense of humour never failing. And through it all her service with the Women's Auxiliary continued. She was recognized in later years with an honorary life membership. She also enjoyed her participation with the Women's Auxiliary to the Royal Canadian Legion and the many friendships formed among the ladies. Like his wife, Mr. Beames was a longtime Legion member and for years was chaplain of the Penticton branch. He, too, was honoured by his comrades with the presentation of a framed certificate of merit, a silver ash tray and a life membership.

While the Beames served Naramata from 1964 to 1966, a generous Anglican donated the lumber to build a cottage on the beach looking north to Peachland. This was the first home they owned. Will, of course, designed it and was prepared to build it on his own but when construction started, people from every walk of life from miles around turned out to help build the Beames' retirement home. It immediately became another parish home where Mr. and Mrs. Beames continued to welcome friends and to share the ever ready tea, the pot of Mother Beames' famous "beach stew," the music and pleasures of shared reminiscences.

In 1966, Mr. Beames finally retired from active service in the ministry of his Lord and Church. From 1906 to 1966 - sixty years of faithful, willing service and almost as many of shared life and love. To quote from one of his letters: "Throughout my ministry, my wife and I have worked as a team..." And again, "In Athabasca and Peace River we were paid at the end of each quarter. Hence, we were continually out of funds. Since nobody in the north had funds, we were sharing the common lot. The people's only riches were their hearts of gold. Driving (by team) and riding hundreds of miles, in temperatures ranging from 105° in summer to 62° below zero in winter, gave considerable, and sometimes exciting variety to life. Farmers often used to fill our larder. On mail days they came back and helped us eat the last crumb. So the round began again. Above all our memories are the people their courage and their friendliness."

When no longer able to drive from Naramata the couple moved permanently into Penticton, to a snug ground-floor apartment a stone's throw from St. Saviour's and the former rectory. In March, 1982 the Rev. W. S. Beames died in the Penticton Regional Hospital after a long illness during which he was tended with the compassion and loving care his own life had exemplified. His passing was celebrated in a triumphant funeral service conducted and attended by old and young, by family, friends, Legion comrades, rich and poor. They came from Vancouver Island and from the northern reaches of the land, from the Kootenays and the Okanagan to pay their last respects to one who had in some way enriched their lives.

Death came mercifully swiftly to Gertrude on May 16, 1983. Only the day before she died she asked to be taken for a drive along her favourite waterfront, past the old beached hulk of the *Sicamous* as if she knew the end was in sight and wanted one last look at the scene she had enjoyed so often. Once again St. Saviour's Church was packed as loving friends from across the land came to say farewell to one they had known as an abiding friend and faithful companion.

Acknowledgements:

Miss E.M. Burgess, Mr. Hugh Cleland, Mrs. Mary Costley, Mrs. Joan Greenwood, Mrs.

T. C. Melville, Mrs. Joan Norris, Mrs. Elsie Paul, Mrs. Carol Robb.

¹ The Curator, RCMP Museum, Regina: "It is very possible that the parkas of the (detachment) members stationed at Athabasca were white trimmed with green, possibly made by someone in that locale for the detachment."

² Dances.

³ Mrs. Jean Norris, nee Appleton.

⁴ O.H.S. Report No. 28, p. 100-101. According to Hugh Cleland church records give the date as 1908.

⁵ Will's rector in Rossland.

⁶ O.H.S. Report No. 34, p. 72. According to Hugh Cleland church records give the date as 1908.