



# Heritage News

CENTRAL OKANAGAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

Spring 2021

## IN THIS ISSUE

- ◇ The Story of Jack Robertson
- ◇ Benvoulin Heritage Park Designation
- ◇ Whelan/Bulman House
- ◇ 2021 Heritage Awards
- ◇ Myra Canyon National Historic Site
- ◇ City of Kelowna Heritage Grants Program
- ◇ News in Brief
- ◇ COHS News



Top photo: House built for the Jack Robertson family c. 1946 in new VLA neighborhood known as Bankhead, in the District of Glenmore. (J. Henry photo 2021)

Bottom photo: Three of the four Robertson children: Phyllis, Jimmie and Judy standing at the southeast corner of the house c 1950. (Photo Robertson family fonds)



## Who was Jack Robertson?



On July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1942 the Canadian Parliament passed the *Veterans' Land Act* (VLA). The VLA followed a long tradition of wanting to help war veterans settle and reacclimate, by providing them with a range of housing. Of the over 144,000 ex-servicemen who took advantage of these opportunities, the majority sought assistance in acquiring small suburban or exurban building sites.

In greater Kelowna one such area was within the District of Glenmore (not yet part of Kelowna). Registered in 1945, the newly created area was called Bankhead and consisted of 70 lots, most in the one-acre size range. Today, when driving through *Old Glenmore*, as it is now called, you can see the residential transformation and densification as houses built in the mid/late 40s sold off a portion of their large lots. Newer in-fill construction took place creating an eclectic assortment of housing styles and vintages in the neighborhood.

One such serviceman who took advantage of the VLA opportunity was John Robert Robertson who went by the name Jack. Along with his wife Lavinia and their four children, they settled on Lot #35. The original house with a few later additions still stands. Long time CHBC weatherman Mike Roberts and his family have called this home for the last number of years.

Jack was many things in the winter of 1953. He was an ex-service man who had served Canada with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). He was a husband to Lavinia and a father to Phyllis, Judy, Jimmie and Linda. He was a hockey coach for the Kelowna Midget Packers who won the BC Provincial Championships in 1952, and an assistant superintendent for the S.M. Simpson Mill. He was also a community volunteer.

The highlighted areas on the map show lot #26 the park and lot #35 the Robertson's property.



## Jack Robertson

When the Bankhead subdivision was laid out, the plan showed lot #26 as a pond and non developed space. The 1.77 hectare area was swampy with a heavy growth of rushes and fed by several free-flowing springs. Jack was one of the main organizers of the ex-servicemen from the neighborhood to volunteer their time to transform the lot into a park and recreation area.

Early on the morning of Sunday December 13th, Jack and others made the short trip from their neighborhood homes to the future park. They worked until lunch, broke off, and returned in the afternoon to finish laying pieces of tile into a drainage ditch. The ditch was large at eight to ten feet deep and 14 feet across.

As darkness was falling, lights from a tractor were used to illuminate the project. Without warning at approximately 4:45 pm, the sandy soil gave way with four men working in the ditch. Three men, (including Bill Hoffman), were able to get themselves out with little effort. Jack was buried. His fellow volunteers had him out within minutes, but Jack had died as a result of his crushing injuries.

Just minutes from home, volunteering his time for the betterment of his neighborhood and community, Jack had lost his life at the age of 40.

The impact on Lavinia (Vene) and the children was devastating. In recent correspondence with Linda (Robertson) Faulconer, the youngest of the four Robertson children, she says of the accident, *“I just know that we were all equally devastated,. The struggle through the following years was very real for our mother and each child. A tragedy like this is not something a child ever forgets.”*



L-R: Judy, Linda, Jimmie and Phyllis Robertson c 1952.

Following his death, the Royal Canadian Legion established the **Jack Robertson Memorial Fund** with the goal of raising enough funds to pay off the mortgage on the Robertson's VLA home. The headline from the January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1954 Kelowna Courier reads *“Jack Robertson Memorial Fund around \$2,000.”*

Strongly supported by fellow veterans in the Bankhead subdivision and Branch #26 of the Royal Canadian Legion, the recreational area that took Jack Robertson's life would bear his name.



## Jack Robertson

Following the amalgamation of Glenmore with the city of Kelowna in 1960, the expanded municipality continued to improve the area. Today a well used neighborhood park is a popular place for recreation. Spring, summer and fall the park is used for tennis and softball, a space to throw a football, read a book, or walk a dog. A small children's playground rounds out the amenities. Unlike some parks that often sit empty, Jack Robertson Memorial Park is well used and enjoyed by the neighborhood a broader community.

One of the unfortunate things about history, is that it is often forgotten. Currently there is no easy way to find information on who Jack Robertson was and why there is a park named after him. With this research we hope to change that.

Many thanks to: Claire Smith Burns, Bob Hayes, Jim Robertson, Linda Faulconer, Michele Whalen and Evan at the Kelowna Branch of the Library, Amanda Snyder at Kelowna Museums and Cameron Henry (BCLS) for their research and assistance in the writing of this article. Written by and photo credits to Janice Henry.



### Benvoulin Heritage Park—Designated

The Benvoulin Heritage Park is now protected by municipal Heritage Designation Bylaw No. 12143. Kelowna City Council passed the motion unanimously on February 2nd, 2021.

COHS made its request for designation to ensure that the site is protected and conserved for community benefit today and for the future. While the 1892 Gothic Revival Benvoulin Church was designated in 1983, the rest of the park and buildings were not protected. The recent creation of a heritage conservation plan for the McIver House, lead to the desire to protect the c.1904 farmhouse along with the park and the Reid Hall addition, similar to the designated Guisachan Heritage Park.

The Benvoulin Heritage Park is on the original 1.26-acre site that was donated in 1891 by developer G.G. Mackay for the first Presbyterian Church. The site became a park after COHS restored the church with its hall addition. The park has become a well-loved wedding and event venue over the past four decades. Heritage designation will ensure that the site remains as it is and that the park will continue to provide context to the very significant Benvoulin Church and the McIver House. (by Lorri Dauncey)

For more on the history of the Benvoulin Heritage Park, please check out the virtual exhibit entitled: Benvoulin Church— A Building that Reflects its Community

[www.communitystories.ca/v1/pm\\_v2.php?id=exhibit\\_home&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000815](http://www.communitystories.ca/v1/pm_v2.php?id=exhibit_home&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000815)



## The Whelan/Bulman House

Ellison District's historic Whelan/Bulman House – also known as Cloverdale Home – is one of the oldest continuously-inhabited private residences in the Central Okanagan. Arguably, it is the oldest locally-inhabited residence in its original form. After 128 years, little has changed.

George Whelan was born in England in 1844, son of Irish-born Peter Whelan (originally “Whaleyn”) and Sarah Cordell Burr. Peter Whelan was a trained gardener, passing along some of his skills to young George, which served him well in his future in the Okanagan Valley.

In 1865, a young George Whelan left England, spending five years in New Zealand in pursuit for gold. He came to the Crown Colony of British Columbia in 1870, continuing his hunt for gold in the crown colonies northern regions. Following a stint with a CPR surveying crew, George Whelan came and settled in the Central Okanagan in 1873. His first employment being with Eli Lequime. For several years George was engaged in a range of pursuits: owning property near present-day Capri Centre Mall and running a trap line with John B. Moore. George moved to Ellison in 1875, taking over the former Henry Lindley property.

In 1875, George Whelan established the Cloverdale Ranch. The name was drawn from the fact that he was the first person in the Okanagan to grow clover as feed for his ever-growing herd of cattle. Cloverdale Ranch was also expanding in size, eventually encompassing 3,000 acres of fertile bottom and surrounding range land.

About this time, George constructed a commodious log home, in preparation for a family. It consisted of a combined living room, kitchen and two bedrooms on the main floor, and an upstairs sleeping area under the pitched roof.

In September of 1882 at Spallumcheen, BC, George Whelan married Lucy Freeman. Lucy was also born in England, daughter of chimney sweep Samuel Freeman and Lydia Purkiss. A trained cook, Lucy was “in service” in London. She made the voyage from England to British Columbia on her own, spending much of her time in her cabin. Her father Samuel had warned young Lucy of the perils of “talking to strange men onboard.” It was a long and lonely journey.

Following their marriage, George and Lucy Whelan spent the first 11 years of their married life in the log home. It was there that their seven children were born.

As the Whelan family grew, the log home was not as convenient as it had been. Financially comfortable, George and Lucy decided to have a large, more permanent residence constructed.

The October 5, 1893 edition of “The Vernon News” reported:

*Geo. Whelan has commenced the construction of what promises to be one of the finest residences in the valley at his farm on Mission Road. Mr. [H.W.] Raymer of Kelowna has the contract.*



Whelan family first home circa 1886—Hayes family fonds

## Whelan/Bulman House

After living in the house for 14 years, the Whelan family sold much of the Cloverdale Ranch, including the house, to Thomas Bulman and family in 1907. The Bulmans owned and loved the home for more than 60 years, maintaining it with its original form and features.

Other owners of Cloverdale Home include the Keglovic family, Jim and Helen Stewart, and the Duncan family. Norm and Lenore Duncan have owned this historic home for close to 40 years, preserving and restoring it and ensuring the continued existence of one of the Central Okanagan's architectural gems.

**By Robert M. "Bob" Hayes**

*Note: Bob Hayes is proud of his family ties with the Whelan/Bulman House through his maternal grandmother Margaret Whelan and her parents, George and Lucy Whelan.*

*The Whelan/Bulman House received a COHS award for Continued Conservation in February 2021. The Heritage Awards Committee was impressed with the high quality of the conservation of the original Queen Anne style and elements of the house. There have been few changes to the exterior of the house, repairs and maintenance have been undertaken to the high standards of heritage conservation, and the rural context of the house has been largely maintained. The committee was especially impressed with the repairs of the roof and the three chimneys after they sustained extensive damage when a tree fell on the house.*

Photo L. Dauncey 2021



### 2021 HERITAGE AWARDS :

The 2021 Heritage Awards were presented at a zoom meeting, hosted by the Okanagan Regional Library. COHS director Carol Millar, created the informative PowerPoint presentation on each winner and included a look at the history of corner stores in Kelowna. Thank you Carol and the Heritage Awards committee for all your hard work each year to make these awards a reality.

The **Conservation project on a heritage building currently in residential use** was presented to the **Kincaid House**, 924 Laurier Avenue. The award was presented to Michael Morrow and Margot Pridham, who undertook the restoration of the front porch balustrade and staircase that had been replaced with a modern version when the house was moved in the early 2000s. A historic photo of the original balustrade and stairs was used to recreate the original design while ensuring that it complied with the BC Building Code for heritage buildings. The project had received a City of Kelowna Heritage Grant towards the work, in addition to the help and expertise of the staff and committee. The Heritage Awards committee was pleased to see a well-researched and successful conservation project.





## Heritage Awards

**Conservation project on a heritage building currently in non-residential use:** The **George Ward Family Packing House** located at 2287 Ward Road, in south-east Kelowna, received this award. The apple packing house, built in 1922, has been in the Turton/Ward family for five generations. The packing house has been sensitively rehabilitated into the View Winery/Wards Cidery tasting room.

**Continued conservation of a residential heritage building:** The **William J. McCelvey House**, 560 Cawston Avenue, was the recipient of this award. The construction of this log house by William McCelvey began in 1934 and wasn't completed until 1947. The house has undergone few changes and is well maintained by the owners David & Lynne Cousins. David is a grandson of William McCelvey.

**Continued conservation of a residential heritage building:** The committee gave out two awards in this category. The second recipient of this award was the **Whelan/Bulman House in the Ellison Area**. The homeowners, Lenore and Norm Duncan accepted the award. (see previous article)

**Continued conservation of a non-residential heritage building:** The **BC Tree Fruits Building**, 1473 Water Street, award was accepted by the BC Tree Fruits Cooperative. This well-maintained 1946 Moderne style building has had few alterations or updates. The building was recently sold after BC Tree Fruits moved staff offices to a new location.

**Conservation of a neighborhood or area:** The **200 to 300 Blocks of Bernard Avenue** in downtown Kelowna received this award. The brick and stone commercial buildings, 13 of which are on the City of Kelowna Heritage Register, tell the story of early Kelowna. The streetscape gives one a sense of place and a connection to Kelowna's early roots. The award, accepted by the Downtown Kelowna Association, included \$500 generously provided by the Central Okanagan Foundation.

**Special Heritage Project:** This award was given to **Advance with Courage: Lord and Lady Aberdeen in the Okanagan Valley, Community Stories Exhibition**. This virtual exhibit revealed stories of the Aberdeen's time and influence on the fruit growing industry in the Okanagan Valley. The virtual exhibit was created for COHS, by Lorri Dauncey with the help of many community members.

**Distinguished Community Service:** The last award given was to **Marguerite Berry**, who has been involved with heritage for many years. Several of Marguerite's many accomplishments include: grant writing for the Father Pandosy Mission; the heritage building plaque program, as well as creating/conducting many heritage walking and biking tours of Kelowna's historic neighbourhoods. As an owner of a designated heritage house, her passion for heritage is evident.



L-R The View Winery L. Dauncey 2021 ~ Photo of Marguerite Berry contributed ~ BC Tree Fruits L. Dauncey 2021

## Myra Canyon National Historic Site

Kelowna has a world-class heritage site and recreation corridor in its own backyard. The 12-kilometer Myra Canyon trail, trestle, and tunnels built by engineer Andrew McCulloch began construction in 1912 with completion in 1914. McCulloch Road in East Kelowna is named after Andrew McCulloch.

In 1980 the CPR removed the rails from Midway to Penticton and turned over the right-of-way to the provincial government. The trail and the trestles soon fell into disrepair, neglect and victims of vandalism. When several serious accidents occurred, the BC government contemplated closing the entire trail to the public.

In response, the Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society (MCTRS) was formed in 1993 with the goal of making the trestles safe for the public and promoting the historic, heritage and environmental features of Myra Canyon. Over the next three years, its volunteers decked each of the trestles with a four-foot boardwalk and erected guard rails. Community groups and individuals came forward to sponsor the trestles with labour, funds or both. Everything was done through volunteers and donations.

In 1995, with the trestles now safe for visitors, MCTRS turned its attention to other repairs. This included work on the trail, building cribbing for one of the tunnels and arranging scaling on the rock cuts and inside the two tunnels. Visitor numbers began to increase significantly. MCTRS installed toilets and built benches at viewpoints and convenient rest areas. Interpretive signage followed as did electronic counters to tally the people passing through the canyon. In 2003, over 30,000 people visited Myra Canyon from all over the world as the canyon became a destination for adventure tourism. A major cycling magazine rated it as one of the 50 best bike rides in the world.

MCTRS also saw the need for protection of Myra Canyon long-term. After five years of lobbying the BC Government, Myra Canyon and its trestles were declared a part of the new Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park. Then, to recognize the history of the Kettle Valley Railway and in particular, Myra Canyon, MCTRS applied to the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada for designation of the canyon as a place of national historic significance. That designation occurred in January 2003.

In mid-August 2003, lightning struck in Okanagan Mountain Park starting a fire which over a 30-day period consumed 270 homes,

Myra trestles  
burning  
August 2003  
Contributed  
by MCTRS.

Trestles burn-  
ing view from  
Kelowna, J.  
Henry 2003





26,000 hectares of forest and parkland and 12 of the Myra Canyon's wooden trestles. Two steel bridges, the trail itself, rock faces and many amenities were also damaged. Heart break for those volunteers who had done so much.

The Premier of BC formed a task force that included MLA Rick Thorpe, representing the province, Senator Ross Fitzpatrick, representing the federal government, Kelowna Mayor Walter Gray and Ken Campbell, past president of MCTRS. Ken was credited for his can-do attitude, gentle persuasion and helped set the tone for the committee. The Task Force recommended rebuilding the trestles to resemble the original structures, both for historic reasons as well as to showcase the versatility and dependability of BC forest products. The reconstruction costs were eligible for the Federal/Provincial Disaster Financial Assistance Agreement.

The trestle rebuilding was managed by the Myra Canyon Reconstruction Project Management Committee comprising members of MCTRS and BC Parks. Government funding was restricted to replacing the trestles plus any collateral damage directly related to the fire.

Trestle 18 was the first to be rebuilt in the fall of 2004, just one year after the fire and the final trestle rebuilt in early 2008. Other improvement projects were and continue to be provided by MCTRS volunteers with donated funds. These enhancements include resurfacing the trail, clearing it from overgrowth and tree falls, installing interpretive signage, and repairing the decking and railings as needed. MCTRS provides equipment, tools, insurance, first aid, safety vests and supplies, at an average cost of \$30,000 per year. This money comes from annual donations, two donation boxes on the trail and from drawing down on the significant funds that came in post-fire.



Photo Credit: Mandy Hicks- 2010

To formalize their work MCTRS entered a ten-year agreement with BC Parks on January 1, 2014 to maintain the trail and the trestles "from the ties up", along the entire 12 km trail.

MCTRS has added another objective to its mandate: the preservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of Myra Canyon. For example, partnering with the UBCO the two organizations sponsored two historical archaeological digs at two of the original CPR construction camps. In speaking with Maury Williams, MCTRS director he says, "We are ready to go with plans for the interpretation of these early construction camps. We're just waiting for the green light from BC Parks".

Myra Canyon trail continues in its role as a crucial link in *The Great Trail* (formerly the Trans Canada Trail). In 2011 the MCTRC received a COHS award for the conservation of a Neighborhood or Area. In November 2017, MCTRS was awarded the BC Parks 2016 Volunteer Group of the Year award.

Visitors continue to come to Myra Canyon from all around the world, currently over 70,000 visits a year. (For more information on volunteering or making donations check out the MCTRS website at [www.myratrestles.com](http://www.myratrestles.com). Maury William's book *Myra's Men* is available at local bookstores or through the MCTRS)

## Heritage Grants Program

### Kelowna Heritage Grants Program



This is the fourteenth year that COHS has managed the City of Kelowna Heritage Grants Program (CoKHGP) for the City. The program, created to recognize the value of heritage in the community, provides financial support to buildings on the Kelowna Heritage Register. Grants assist with a portion of the costs in maintaining and conserving the building's exterior, including foundations.

The 2021 CoKHGP Information Session was held on March 3rd as a zoom meeting. Lorri Dauncey, CoKHGP manager, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the ins and outs of the program including the 2020 projects that received a grant. James Moore, City of Kelowna Long Range Policy Planning Manager was also available to answer questions on heritage from the city's perspective.

**Anne Stirling House - 2178 Pandosy Street:** The Anne Stirling House, built in 1910, is valued for its association with two prominent families in Kelowna, the Stirlings and the McLarens. The house was built for Anne Stirling, the mother of T.W. Stirling a well-known fruit-grower and investor in Kelowna, who also had Cadder House (2124 Pandosy St) built for himself. The McLaren family, who were in the lumber business, owned the house from 1924 until the 1950s.



This large two storey house is also valued for its mix of Tudor Revival and Arts & Crafts styles in addition to its architectural prominence on Pandosy Street. The original style and form are clearly visible in spite of minor alterations and additions. The homeowners recently received a heritage grant towards the repair of the four porches and decks on the house including new paint using the True Colour heritage palette.

All granting decisions are made by a committee of community volunteers with heritage expertise. The Kelowna Heritage Register can be accessed at: <https://www.kelowna.ca/our-community/arts-culture-heritage/heritage/heritage-register>.

For more information on the program contact ~ Lorri Dauncey at [ldauncey.cohs@telus.net](mailto:ldauncey.cohs@telus.net)

## News in Brief

### J.N. Thompson House - On the Move

Shona Harrison the owner of J.N. Thompson house has sold the lot at 1875 Richter Street and purchased an acreage where the house will be moved over the course of the next several months. The house was featured in a COHS newsletter in the fall of 2015, and an update will be available in our fall 2021 issue.



### Ken Waldon - Friend of Heritage

Ken Waldron passed away on February 6, 2021. With Jan, he founded the Friends of Fintry Provincial Park Society, and served on the board of the North Okanagan Naturalists, the provincial federation, the North Okanagan Historical Society, Okanagan Historical Society, Mackie Lake House Foundation, All Saints Anglican Church, North Okanagan/Shuswap Crime Stoppers, and the Prostate Cancer Support Group, North Okanagan Community Concerts Association, and Emergency Support Services. Ken and Jan, were awarded the 2008 Central Okanagan Heritage Society Award, a life membership in Friends of Fintry and in 2011, he and Jan were named Vernon Citizens of the Year.



### Viven John Raybould - passed December 3, 2020

John Raybould's obituary states that he was "one of a kind." For those of us that knew him, that was undoubtedly true. Among John's many achievements and interests were: a founding member of the Frazer Institute; a published author; worked on projects related to indigenous self-government and reconciliation and locally was instrumental in founding the Friends of the Westbank Library. John and his wife Heather enjoyed putting up numerous displays of materials from their extensive collections. They supported COHS through several of these types of events including Christmas at Benvoulin. John was particularly proud of his daughter-in-law Jody Wilson Raybould the first indigenous Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.



### William Lloyd Jones House

In Kelowna's north end neighborhood, the lovely Edwardian William Lloyd Jones House was recently used as a film set for a romantic comedy. Set in the fictitious town of Romance Oregon the hope is that when the film is complete it will be sold to Hallmark.



### Fleming House—at Brent's Grist Mill

Despite efforts by COHS and others, the logs from the Fleming house have been removed and disposed of, leaving nothing but the concrete foundation.



## HERITAGE NEWS

### BOARD MEMBERS & ADVISORY BOARD

#### President

Don Knox

#### Vice President

Cheryl Spelliscy

#### Treasurer

Wayne Bridges

#### Secretary

Carol Millar

#### Directors

Mary Browne Clayton

Dave Elliot

Tara Hurley

Ernie Park

Margot Pridham

Janessa Rash

Ron Smith

#### Advisory Board

Peter Chataway

Janice Henry

Robert Hobson

Lorainne McLarty

Michelle Rule

### STAFF

#### Managing Director

Jim Burkinshaw

#### City of Kelowna Heritage Grants Program

Lorri Dauncey

#### Office Administrator

Kathy Hyrnuik

#### Site Caretaker at Benvoulin Park

Percy Lujan

Newsletter Editor—Janice Henry

### COHS NEWS

#### COHS welcomes three new Board Members:

**Margot Pridham** is a retired Registered Nurse , a nursing educator and also a Director of the Okanagan Historical Society.

**Ron Smith** – is a lawyer (QC), formerly a partner with Smith Peacock Lawyers in Kelowna, and since 2013 focusing on mediation and arbitration in the area of family law through *Just Family Solutions*.

**Wayne Bridges** is a Certified Public Accountant, very involved in Kelowna not-for-profit organizations and now serving as our COHS Treasurer.

These accomplished folks will build on the strength of our board.

#### COHS Website

COVID provided the time and impetus we needed to refresh and update our COHS website. We added some bright new pictures, a blog post feature, updated the rental calendar and the new Heritage Grant information. Check it out at 'okheritagesociety.com'. We are also continuing our Instagram account; for interesting Heritage-related updates sign up to 'CentralOkanaganHeritage'.

#### Kathy's Back!

As some of you know our beloved Admin Assistant, Kathy, had a bit of an accident mid-December and sustained some pretty painful injuries. But she's back in the office ready to take your calls. And since 2021 Memberships are due anyway why not give her a call and say hello.

#### Annual General Meeting

Mark your calendar for our 2020 AGM April 21st, 7:00 p.m. Check out our website or call Kathy for more info. Meeting is virtual.



COHS thanks the **City of Kelowna** for an Arts, Culture and Heritage Operating Grant for 2021

COHS acknowledges the financial support of the **Province of British Columbia**

The Central Okanagan Heritage Society acknowledges that we operates on the unceded territory of the Sylix Okanagan Peoples.

