

FAME OF ST.ELMO

AS TOLD BY
EUPHEMIA LORRENZETTO RABBITT
TO M.B. RABBITT

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THOMAS RABBITT
BY THOMAS PETER RABBITT

EARLY TULAMEEN BY EUPHEMIA LORRENZETTO
RABBITT



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Fame of St. Elmo

The little girl was about three years old. Somehow she had managed to climb to the top of the split rail fence. There she perched in childish dignity, very pleased with her accomplishment. Her merry brown eyes danced as she quietly hummed to herself. She was so filled with the pleasure of the moment that she did not notice the approach of the man on horseback.

He sat tall and straight on a magnificent black horse. His face was shadowed by a wide brimmed hat and a large sandy mustache drooped over his smile.

"Hello," he said, very quietly.

The child made no answer, but stared at him with large round eyes. The horse tossed its head and moved a few steps closer to the fence. The child was startled by its approach and started to climb down.

"Don't go yet" the man called. "Is your father home?"

Brown pigtailed flew in negation.

"I'm sorry I missed him," he said. "I wanted to see him this trip. But if I can't visit with him, at least his daughter can talk to me. Can you talk yet?" he teased.

She nodded vigorously.

"If you talk to me for awhile I'll give you a dollar," he said. "My name is Frank Souprise and your father and I are old friends. Is your name Kate?"

She could no longer be quiet. "Kate is my big sister" she replied.

"Then you must be Molly".

"No ! I'm not Molly. She's older 'n me."

Laughing, Frank Souprise reached into his pocket and brought out a shiney coin. "You are a good little girl, and here is your dollar."

"What is a dollar ?"

"Oh, it's something to buy candy with" he said. "Now climb down and I'll throw you the money."

She climbed down as quickly as she could and took a few steps back from the fence.

"Throw it " she said, holding up her chubby hands.

"Yes, but first you must tell me your name".

"No, after" she teased. Suddenly the bright coin looped through the air and landed at her feet. She picked it up and carefully examined it.

"It's pretty" she said solemnly. Then she smiled. " Thank you, and goodbye." Turning to run home, she glanced back over her shoulder and called out clearly: "I am Fame."

THE ANDREW LORRENZETTO FAMILY

Andrew Lorenzetto was born and raised in Trieste, Italy, and completed his education in Florence. After graduation he sailed for three years as Chief Steward on a trading vessel of Italian registry. His ship made calls in the Orient, and he became intrigued with the mysterious lands. Obtaining his release from his ship, he opened a small store in Hong Kong which he operated for three years.

When news came of the California gold strike, the lure of adventure and the dream of finding a fortune overcame Andrew's fondness for the East. He sold his store and took passage for America. In California Andrew met with only moderate success. When news came of the gold strike on the Fraser River in British Columbia, he quickly sold his claims and was among the first to take passage north. Once again his claims were profitable but did not contain the fortunes that others were finding. The beautiful green valley of the Fraser seemed an ideal spot to settle. Andrew sold his claims and bought eighty acres of land on the south bank of the Fraser.

A crew was hired from the nearby Indian reserve at Ohamel and the first ten acres were cleared. Some of the felled trees were split to make the cedar fences around the fields, other trees were stock piled for future use. He erected a home and the necessary farm buildings. and planted his first ground crops. Many of the seeds and fruit trees Andrew wanted to plant were not available in the area, so Andrew 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.

By mid-summer of 1862 he was comfortably situated. He then met and married Mary, one of the twin daughters of a chief of the Stah-Lo Indian Band. She was a good wife and mother. She was also an excellent business

woman. With the farm and small store left in her capable hands, Andrew turned to the profitable business of packing freight to the Cariboo gold fields. He hired four Spanish cowboys to assist him on the long and arduous trips. Much as he loved his wife and his children he thoroughly enjoyed these dangerous journeys.

Upon reaching the gold fields he was paid for his goods in gold nuggets or gold dust which he shipped to Victoria for 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 stern-wheelers.

Andrew and Mary Lorenzetto had ten children, five of whom survived: Kate, Andrew, Peter, Mary (called Mollie) and Euphemia, who was known as Fame. Little Fame quickly became her father's favorite. It was she who snuggled on his knee of an evening while he recounted stories of sailing ships and strange lands and peoples. It was she who tagged his steps each day as he labored in the fields or prepared for his next trip up north. And it was she who stood tearfully watching his departure until the last sight of the pack train vanished. Then Fame would turn to the quiet mother whose own face was wistful and they would both find consolation in the snug home and security of the farm.

The recollections of Fame's childhood are many and varied. The following pages are written from notes taken down as Grandma Rabbitt recounted her stories to us when she would come to visit. They are recorded here in the first person and as nearly as possible in her words.

ON THE FARM AT ST. ELMO

Life on the farm, as I remember it, was busy and exciting. Like many farms of that day, it was very nearly self-sufficient. There was a large fruit orchard with the then standard varieties of cherries, apples, pears, plums and prunes, plus some Italian varieties which father had imported. One of my favorites was a large yellow plum that was very sweet, and when it ripened on the tree the syrup burst through the skin and dripped like honey. Mother used to can them for a delicious treat in the winter. The large Italian prunes were dried in the sun and stored for winter. The drying process was quite long and it was the duty of my sister and me to turn the fruit often. If the wind blew too hard, carrying sand or dust, we had to cover them quickly. If it started to rain the fruit had to be taken indoors until the sun shone again.

Some of the nearby Indians were hired to work in the large vegetable garden, especially the seeding, cultivating and harvesting. There were long rows of corn, potatoes and just about every vegetable that grows in this climate. The ground was new and rich and the corn grew taller than the men's heads. There were huge squash and pumpkins that seemed immense to me as a small girl. Mother used to take canoe loads of fruit and vegetables to Fort Hope, and always sold everything.

There were animals on the farm, too. A huge brood sow, which we called Sookie, always had one or two piglets too many to feed. We children were always delighted to hold the bottles for these little ones. Pigs were used for clearing ground as they made a good job of rooting out the ferns and brush

and roots after the trees were cut. The fields were then plowed using teams of oxen. The felled trees were cut into cordwood which was sold to the river boats for fuel.

Before the paddlewheelers came into sight their whistles could be heard echoing up the valley. Father would then harness the team of oxen and hitch them to the sledge which had already been loaded with cordwood and would drive to the river bank. When the boat came alongside the deck hands threw out a gang plank and carted the wood aboard. It took a lot of wood to get up the full head of steam required for the passage upstream to Yale.

In addition to the farm and pack train, my parents sold staple articles of foodstuffs, hardware and assorted household effects. The sales were mostly to neighboring Indians, placer miners, travellers and the Chinese railway workers. Butchers from the lower valley came to buy pigs, calves and chickens.

Father used to go to Oregon to buy his oxen, purchasing them as calves and training them to harness himself. He always had one strong team for farm work and younger teams in the process of raising and training. When the young ones were well trained they were sold for a good profit. Father also raised horses selling them for pack and saddle use after they were broken to rein or saddle.

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. Her 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 a faster form of transportation than the pack trains, and far more comfortable for passengers. Due to competition among the various owners, mail and freight charges were reasonable. The Indians had used the river from their first arrival in the area. Every family had canoes. The big war canoes were very beautiful. When the Europeans came they constructed the sternwheel river boats, so typical of early north America. These boats went only as far as Yale as the rapid water and rocks prevented further safe passage. One small steam boat made a single trip beyond, probably going as far as Lytton. The work and trouble of winching the boat through the rapids and the damage it received to the hull precluded any more trips beyond Yale.

A new boat on the run meant better service and everyone was glad to hear of the advent of the Cassiar. My mother brought us to Hope the day of the maiden voyage. We lined up on the river bank along with all the town folk to see this new boat arrive. It was a magnificent sight as it came into view. Buntings hung from the deck rails. Streamers fluttered in the wind. The whistle echoed from mountain to mountain across the valley. The paddles threw great sprays of water which glistened in the sun as the Cassiar plowed a steady course against the strong current of the river in flood. There was much cheering, shots were fired into the air. Someone fired a blast from the old canon which stood in front of the Fort. The passengers who lined the railing waved scarves and flags and shouted boisterously.

Some people were taking the passage to Yale, just for the day's outing. My sister Kate begged to be allowed to join them. She made a great fuss when mother would not permit her to go.

When the Cassiar left for Yale, mother went about her business in Hope, ending at DiSilva's green grocery store. She was visiting there and we children were playing outside when a great commotion was heard from the river bank. We dashed down there to see what was happening.

Floating downstream came pieces of cargo, deck planks and railings, still festooned with bunting. There was great concern for the safety of the passengers and crew. Immediately young men from town joined with several Indian lads who had a big canoe. Paddling hard, they fought the heavy current as they scanned the water closely in case any survivors should be clinging to the floating debris. More canoes followed as townsmen volunteered to help with the rescue.

It was late afternoon before we received news of the accident. The river was very high and swift and the captain had misjudged the current which swung the boat broadside onto a big rock outcropping. A large hole was gouged in the hull. The boat listed badly and water rushed over one side of the deck. Fortunately, the crew was able to secure the boat to shore. Passengers were transferred safely to dry land, thankful to be alive.

When the Oblate Fathers came to say Mass for the Indians they, too, travelled on the river. I believe they came from Mission, going as far North as the Cariboo missions. They came in long canoes which were paddled by young Indians from the valley. On the way upstream they stopped at every settlement. They ministered to the Indians and whites alike. The word spread like wildfire, "The priest is coming", and children ran from house to house to pass the message on. My father considered it a great treat to have conversations with the priest after Mass was over, and frequently entertained him at our house.

The return of the priest from the Cariboo was far different. The big canoe made no stops. Long before it came around the bend of the river we could hear the clamor. The young paddlers were singing hymns at the top of their voices. With each paddle stroke they gave a great thump on the side of the canoe, keeping time to the hymn. It sounded like a lot of drums accompanying the singing. They always chose the fastest part of the current on this homeward journey.

As soon as we heard the first faint rhythmic beat of the paddles we all rushed down to the river bank to wave and cheer. This attention delighted the paddlers and they then sang louder and paddled even harder until they were out of sight. It was considered a great honor to make the trip as a paddler for the priest.

Tee Willa and his family lived near us. He worked on the farm for my father and was very reliable. Perhaps it was because I was very young, but he and his wife always looked very old to me. I have forgotten his wife's name, but she was a frequent visitor to my mother's kitchen. She seldom bought any goods from us as they were very saving and spent little. Usually when she came to the door she said, "I haven't had a cup of tea in a long time" - the word "long" was stretched out in the Indian way of emphasis. While mother fired up the cook stove to boil the kettle Mrs. Tee Willa spread her wide skirts and seated herself on the floor, and no cajoling from mother could induce the old lady to use a chair.

Usually Mrs. Tee Willa came on a pleasant day with her request for tea. As soon as the iron kettle came to a good boil, mother ladled the steaming water into a large teapot, sliced some bread and put out jam and butter. Then she spread a Chinese rice mat, or a washed flour sack on the floor in front of the old lady and served the tea there. When the visitor had drunk several cups of tea and had her fill of bread and jam, she wrapped any remaining bread in a large red handkerchief that she always carried, and took the bundle home.

These frequent visits from Mrs. Tee Willa proved too time consuming for my industrious mother, so I was taught how to entertain and serve her the tea. It was a great concern to me that I could not put everything on the table where we took our meals, but I followed instructions carefully. This I did on many occasions leaving mother free to do her chores or oversee the work about the farm.

The Tee Willas had a little granddaughter who stayed with them. She suffered a deformity of her foot and leg which slowed her down so much that her Indian playmates often forgot to wait for "Lame" Sally, as they called her. Since she was mostly left to play by herself, Tee Willa sometimes brought her with him when he came to work in the fields.

Sally was older than I but she played quite happily with me. We became great friends and she gradually spent more and more time at our place. My chores were finished as 'quickly as possible so we would have more time to play. Sally taught me many legends of her people and how to speak the Stah-lo language. When I went to school in Hope I did not see much of Sally anymore except during the summer holidays. When I came home for the summer months we were very happy to see one another again.

Once when father was away on a pack trip, and mother had taken a canoe load of produce to the trading post at Fort Hope, Tee Willa had the sledge loaded with wood and the team hitched ready to drive down to the river as soon as he heard the boat whistle. That day the boat was late so Tee Willa decided to go home for lunch while he waited. It was a hot day and the oxen became restless as they stood in the sun. Finally, Molly and I heard the whistle.

When the steamer came quite close and there was no sign of Tee Willa, Molly decided that she and I should take the team down to the river ourselves. We untied the oxen and started out. All went well at first. As the team neared the river they became eager to get a drink and started to run. Molly had the reins and she pulled as hard as she could while I had a stick and whacked them over the nose. Try as we did we could not slow them down, let alone stop them. On they ran right down and into the river and waded in to drink. The sledge was pulled into the water too and started to float sideways, spilling the wood into the river and becoming lodged against the steamer.

The arrival of Tee Willa at that moment was fortunate indeed. He and the deck hands saved the oxen and the sledge, though of course, the wood floated away downstream. It took Tee Willa and the boat men an hour to get another load of cordwood down to the steamer.

Molly and I kept out of sight until the steamer departed and Tee Willa had gone home. We learned that day that two small girls could not handle a span of oxen.

When father was due home from the Cariboo there was an air of happy anticipation about the place. Usually canoe men brought us word of the approach of the pack train.

The house seemed clean to me, but mother and my sisters scrubbed, dusted and polished. I carried out ashes and shook dusters outdoors. Soon the good smell of fresh baked bread and molasses cookies wafted through the house. My brothers filled the wood bins and raked the yard in addition to their regular farm chores. They filled the boiler on the back of the kitchen stove to the brim with water to heat for father's bath. Mother laid out his clean clothes and cut fresh flowers to decorate the house.

It seemed that wonderful things happened when father was home. He loved to entertain and we had many interesting visitors. Other times there were trips to shop, or to buy or sell livestock. I liked it best when I could tag along in his footsteps as he inspected fences and crops, or prepared his packs for his next trip up north.

The winters were the best times of all as he did not go north after the ice and snow made the trails too dangerous for travelling. Then in the long winter evenings, after the animals were cared for and the chores were all done, there was an immensely happy family hour or two before my bedtime when I could snuggle on my dad's knee while he told us stories of his adventures on ship-board, or in the orient, California or the Cariboo.

Father said the arrival of the pack train at a mining camp was greeted boisterously by the miners. Work for the day stopped immediately. The men ran as fast as they could to line up to get their choice of fresh vegetables and staples. One of the miners used to buy a whole bag of onions on father's last trip in the fall. In the spring he bragged to father that he was the only man in camp who had been healthy all winter. He attributed this to the fact he had eaten onions every day.

Some of the other packers had trouble with a few of the miners but father did not experience any. They always paid him promptly, usually in gold dust or nuggets. Some of the packers imported camels, but these animals were poorly suited to the rocky terrain. The camels were the two humped Bacrian type from the Amoor River district in Mongolia. I never saw one of them myself, but I remember seeing the half shoes with which they were shod.

After the gold rush was over, I remember as if in a dream, following my father in the field while he repaired a cedar "snake" fence where some of the neighbor's farm animals had broken in. Mother was away that day, having gone to Chilliwack to collect for a team of horses she had sold. When my dad had finished fixing the fence we walked back towards the house. At the little gate into the yard he fell to the ground with a stroke. Peter and Mollie struggled to lift him up and were finally able to get him into the house. Father was unable to speak and we were terribly afraid. Peter sent an Indian friend to fetch mother. The next day father was taken on a stretcher by river boat to hospital in New Westminster where he stayed for about two years.

When father came home from the hospital we were delighted to see him again, but still there was great sadness in the house. He was unable to speak and was paralyzed on one side. With the aid of crutches he was able to get around the house and yard. As the months passed, mother could see that he was gradually failing. She sent word for the priest to come to him.

Father Le Jeunne arrived in due time and was ushered into the bedroom where father was. Mother closed the door to give them some privacy, but she was still able to hear the priest's voice as he spoke to her husband. She was amazed to hear father reply to the priest in a clear steady voice. She told me years later that they had conversed in French for some time. Afterward father was again unable to speak, and soon passed quietly away. He had only lived about a year after returning from the hospital. He died in June, 1979.

Typo- 1879?

After Father died Mother would sometimes tell us stories in the evening. Mostly they were about when she was a young girl. The story we always asked for, over and over, was about a gala evening she had attended with Father.

They had been invited to a banquet in Yale in honor of Governor Douglas. It was the social highlight of the year. Mother went to New Westminster to have a formal gown made. It was a beautiful creation of heavy green silk with gold braid and much lace. Occasionally she would put the gown on and walk about the house to please us. She looked very lovely in it.

The banquet was held in the hotel which was run by an Italian man named Bossi, who was renowned for the excellent wines he made from the local berries. His wife was a very fine looking woman and a very clever linguist. She had learned the local Indian language quickly and was highly esteemed by the Indians for her quick wit and gentle ways.

Mother was quite awed by the many courses of splendid foods, the lively conversations and the general gaiety of the guests. As the evening progressed she realized that a lot of the laughter and chatter was in proportion to the amount of red wine that was being consumed. She herself had tried some of it and felt its effects very quickly as she was not used to any type of drink. She wisely decided that one glass was enough for her.

All in all, she had a splendid time. Every now and then she would remember some little incident, some compliment she had received, or some conversation she had with people she had met that evening.

Mother also told us about our grandfather, Seekwaleah, Stahlo Chief. He had beached his canoe at Yale and was mending it with pitch and moss. He was kneeling on the floor of the canoe when he was struck in the back by an arrow that pierced his heart. He was killed by a Thompson Indian scout and was the last man killed in that Indian war.

Mutch-ka was a cousin of mother's and she was very fond of him. He was a good natured person who loved to joke and play tricks on his friends. He was short of stature and stocky of build. Because he was an excellent paddler he was in great demand for the racing teams and his canoe usually won races. He could always be identified at a distance from shore because of his red hair. When he came to visit us he would give us a vivid account of some of his races or tell us of his latest pranks played on his pals.

Another cousin of mother's had become blind. Her daughter had died and the old lady was caring for her two grandsons. The older boy had a 22 rifle. He took his little brother with him and went out to shoot some crows. They were not out long when the older boy accidentally discharged the gun. The shot hit his brother in the head, killing him instantly. The little fellow had been the "eyes" for his grandmother who was inconsolate over his death, and she, too, died very shortly thereafter. This double tragedy greatly grieved mother.

When I was about eleven and my sister Molly was thirteen, mother left us home with our older brothers Peter and Andrew while she went to Yale to sell some produce to the store and the hotel keeper there. She was hardly out of sight when Sally arrived with an invitation for Molly and me to go with her grandparents and some other Indians to pick huckleberries in the mountains. We needed little persuasion and were ready to leave early the next morning. Neither of us had been on such a trip and we did not know what to take with us. With nothing more than sweaters and bonnets we took our berry pails and set forth in our light summer clothing.

The trail, we soon found, was very steep. We slipped and slid on the rocks and moss, bruising and skinning our knees and elbows. Even Sally did not have as much trouble as we did. Like the other Indians she was wearing mocassins, while we had on stiff hard soled shoes. We lagged behind and would have lost our way except for Sally. We finally caught up when they all stopped for lunch. The rest was so welcome that I hoped we could just sit for awhile, but the meal was a hasty one and we were soon climbing again.

Here and there Tee Willa would stop and throw a rock. Each time he threw he knocked over a little rock rabbitt. Soon he had a small sack full. I felt sorry to see him kill the little things.

Just before dusk we tottered onto a flat to find the Indians making camp. Molly and I were tired beyond words and were amazed by the energy of the Indians. They quickly set about raising a tent and built a big bon fire. The heat from the fire was most welcome as the air had become quite chilly. Mrs. Tee Willa made a smaller cooking fire nearby. It kept getting colder and colder. Finally snow started to fall as we ate our supper. Filled with a hearty stew made from the rock rabbits, and tired as we were, we were happy to crawl into a bough bed with Sally as soon as supper was over.

The next morning the sun shone brightly and the sky was clear. By ten O'clock the snow was all gone. We set out immediately to pick berries. We were on a plateau, with pine trees growing here and there. Below we could see Jones Lake gleaming like a jewel, and in the far distance we could see as far as the salt water. It was here that I saw ptarmigans for the first time. They were about the size of pigeons and were already starting to turn white.

We picked berries until around three in the afternoon. Then Mollie, Sally and I started for home. I had about a gallon of berries. Molly had a lot more. The descent was a lot faster than the climb up. As we neared home I raced ahead of the other two girls, as I wanted to get home before mother did. My legs ached and shook all that night from the climbing we had done. I was fine the following day. Even though mother did not get home that night, we still got a terrible scolding for having gone without her permission.

After this episode we girls were careful to stay close to home for quite a long time. There was a great deal of work to be done during the autumn when all the harvesting had to be done. Even small hands were put to good use so there was not much time for playing or mischief. However whenever mother was away, we used to race through our chores so we could have some play time.

Sometimes brother Andrew would put me up on his shoulders and run about, bouncing me up and down. It was a ritual that I never tired of. Peter was much quieter. He loved to play marbles and he taught me to play, too. I was not much interested in it so he bribed me to play by making a tea set for me. He cut empty tin cans with tin snips and rolled the edges. Then he carved little wooden handles and fastened them onto the shaped tins. Each time a cup or some other piece was completed, I had to play a game of marbles with him.

If my father had lived, Molly, Peter and I would have probably been sent out to boarding school, as were Kate and Andrew. However, Father's two year hospital stay had diminished the family resources, and boarding school was out of the question for us. When it was time for me to go to school I was sent to stay with my sister Kate who was by that time married to Salvinus Walker and living in Hope. Mr. Walker had fairish red hair and I remember him as a very kind man. He operated a sawmill on the river bank. The mill was powered by a water wheel on a big ditch that had been dug from the Coquihalla River. When the mill was working the high pitched squeal of the turning wheel could be heard across town. The saw logs for the mill were floated downstream on the river.

My sister was very strict, and I had little idle time. When I was not in school I had many chores to do, and Kate taught me many things she had learned when she went to school to the sisters. I learned to knit, chrochet, make clothes, card and spin wool. I already knew how to keep a neat and tidy house, but Kate taught me to be more particular about small details. The best part about living with Kate was that I could attend school and learn to read and write. My best subject was arithmetic.

My first day at school was not a happy experience. Kate dressed me in my best clothes and I had a pretty bonnet on my head. I was very shy and a little afraid as I came close to the school and saw all the children in front of the building. Kate had given me a note for the teacher and I started into the school house. Some bigger boys were on the porch, talking and laughing. As I passed them one of them stuck out his foot and tripped me. I fell flat on my face. The note flew in one direction and my lunch tin bounced down the steps, spilling my lunch. I was so embarassed when I scrambled to my feet that I ran home to my sister in tears. Kate marched me right back to the school and saw that the boy who had tripped me was punished. His name was George McConnell and I heartily disliked him from then on.

That was not my only humiliation on my first day of school. I was a year late in starting school and big for my age. There was no other grade one pupil, and as the teacher, Mrs. Flood, had all eight grades to teach, she assigned a little girl, not even as big as I, to start teaching me the alphabet. I felt this to be a great indignity so I tried very hard to learn everything as fast as I could so that I could take my lessons with the grade two children. As the school year wore on I became fast friends with my little tutor and her sister.

Kate had a cow and sold milk to a few people. One of my favorite chores was the evening delivery of milk to the Anglican minister's wife. She was a lovely lady and very kind to me. She would always invite me into her kitchen while she emptied the lard tin of milk into a big white pitcher. She always gave me a couple of cookies or some dried fruit or some other little treat to eat on the way home. Once in a while she would sing for me a hymn or two and I thought she sang like an angel.

When I was about seven, some American ex-soldiers made a trip through Hope. They came up from Oregon, camped in Hope, then went on through to the Okanogan and back into the States. I've never read any historical account of them or their trip. They were renegades who had had some trouble with American Indians. At any rate, they were not the kind of Americans we know today. They were a rowdy, brawling group. They paraded up and down the street shouting and firing their guns. Everyone stayed home behind locked doors. In a day or two their liquor ran out and they were unable to get more from the barackaded stores. Then they packed their tents and left in the night and life got back to normal in Fort Hope.

There was great excitement when the pack trains or a cattle drive reached town. Eli Lequins had a large pack train of a hundred or so horses. Frank Souprise was another packer and he carried goods from Fort Hope to the Okanogan. He was the first to take small apple and other fruit trees into that district. The small orchard he planted on his homestead there was the forerunner of the present orchard industry.

There was a great clamor when a cattle drive arrived. A dust cloud was raised as the sweaty animals trotted into town, bellowing for water after the day's drive. The cowboys shouted and cracked their great whips in the air as they herded the cattle into the holding pens at what is now Third Avenue and Hudson Bay Street. The cattle were held there until the stern wheeler arrived to transport them to New Westminster or Victoria.

The cowboys were a colorful lot, mostly of Spanish origin. They rode beautiful horses and used saddles that were fancifully tooled. They had hand woven saddle blankets in brilliant shades. Their hats were high crowned, and banded with snakeskin showing the "diamonds". Red kerchiefs covered their noses during the trail ride, but were carefully arranged around their necks when they reached town. Each rider seemed to have a different style of chaps. Some were wooly, and of different colors, others had intricate designs tooled into the well polished leather. The saddles and bridles for their horses were inlaid with silver. Those cowboys knew they made a striking picture and they embellished their actions like actors on a stage.

One day the teacher took us all to the river bank for what was to be the biggest thrill of all my school years. It was a day long awaited, not only by children, but by all the adults as well. Everyone was dressed in their best clothes and there was a festive air to the laughter and excited chatter as people sought the best viewing spot. Finally, on the far bank of the river, we saw the first Canadian Pacific passenger train come through our valley. It was May 23, 1887, and CPR Engine 374 was taking the first passengers west to the coast. The steam whistle seemed to echo from the very tops of the mountains. Everyone shouted and clapped and waved. Someone fired off the old cannon that used to sit in front of the Hudson Bay Post. The rest of the day was celebrated as a holiday. For days afterward folks talked of little else. Until then the river had been our link with the outside world, but now we had train service that would take us to the coast in a few short hours.

The winter I was twelve we had a very severe winter. The river froze over and there was thick ice from shore to shore. Mother used to take salt salmon, put it in a rice sack, then in a burlap sack. After making a hole in the ice she lowered the sack on the end of a rope into the water. She left it there overnight to remove the excess salt. Once in awhile some animal would steal her fish, and once she was sure that a sturgeon was the culprit.

That same winter a young Indian logger took his team of horses across the river to Katz. It was a sight to see him set off with team and sleigh across the ice. He did this daily for over a month until one day he heard the ice groaning and crackling. He quickly threw his tools on the sleigh to start the return trip. As he got to the middle of the river, the ice beneath his horses gave a loud bang and began to crack open. The team was so startled that they gave a huge leap forward which carried themselves, sleigh and driver clear of the opening. I overheard the driver telling my brothers about the experience. "I am certainly lucky to be alive and have my team", he said.

When the summer came and the river had gone down to a normal level, this same fellow swam his team across the river. There was an island across from our place. He took his team up river from our place, then had them swim with the current to the island. There he let them rest for a couple of hours, then he had them swim the second half of the river. One horse swam with his whole back out of the water. The other horse swam very low in the water, with only his head showing. When he brought them back in the fall he would reverse the process. I watched the poor beasts stagger up onto the shore in front of our house. They were so tired they could barely stand up.

My brothers were quite friendly with this Indian from a very young age. They often got into mischief together and once they were well paid back.

There were some Chinese placer miners in a camp near the reserve. One of them had died and was buried nearby. As was their custom, his friends

had placed many delicacies on his grave. This proved too great a temptation to the three boys. After dark they raided the banquet left for the poor dead man.

One of the miners must have seen the thieves and hatched a plan. They threw white sheets over themselves and quietly approached the boys. When near the boys they began making high pitched moaning sounds, Some of them groaned as though in great anguish. The culprits thought they were seeing ghosts and became terribly frightened. They ran away from the little graveyard as fast as they could. Telling of this experience in later years, Andrew and Peter were thoroughly ashamed of their pilfering.

One summer day when I was home from school I was left alone at the farm. It was a lovely summer day and I played outdoors with my dog. Spot was a good retriever. I threw sticks and he quickly returned them to me. After awhile we tired of the game and I looked around for something else to do.

Mother's fish dipping pole was hanging up in the shed. It was a very long slender sapling and had a woven net on the end to snare salmon. I knew I shouldn't, but I nevertheless took it off the peg and went down to the river with Spot at my side. I had watched my mother use it many times and I thought I could try my luck.

At first nothing seemed to happen. I was about ready to give up when there was a tremendous jerk on the pole, nearly tearing it out of my hands. I dug in my heels and tried to pull the pole in but made little headway. When I found I did not have the strength to land the fish I was scared. I began trying to back up, hoping to drag the netted fish onto the shore. It was slow work and I was getting so tired and nervous that tears were starting to come. Just when I thought I would have to give up, Spot came to my rescue. He seized the pole in his mouth and the two of us were able to pull the salmon onto the shore. I dragged it on up to the house and laid it on the back step. Then I hung up the pole on the same peg I had taken it from.

I was so exhausted I went to my bed and fell asleep with Spot at my side. When my Mother came home she was pleased to see the salmon and woke me up to ask if I had seen anyone come by. I was able to answer truthfully that nobody had been there while I was outside and that I had come in and gone to sleep. Fortunately I was not asked any further questions for I was afraid to confess what had really happened.

The early settlers endured long days of hard work to wrest a living from farms, river bars or trap lines. When the national holiday came round it was celebrated with great enthusiasm. Even the American holiday of July 4th was observed by the many American miners with the rest of the population happy to join in the festivities.

There were races for the children, for ladies and for men. The children's race winners were rewarded with cash prizes. The three legged race and the wheelbarrow race were the most fun to watch as there would inevitably be a few spills. Some of the men placed bets on their favorites, so loud cheers and groans were usually heard at the end of each race.

Some of the races would not be acceptable in today's world. There were contests to catch a greased pig, or climb a greased pole. I remember vividly the sorry spectacle of grease stained men trying to take hold of a slippery squealing half-grown pig.

Later in the afternoon the ladies served a lovely picnic lunch. Men who were single were invited to join families and share the meal. Usually there was some music, too. As the fiddlers and harmonica players began playing, some of the men would get games of horseshoes going nearby. The rivalry for a final win was intense as it bestowed bragging rights until the next holiday.

The Indians were not outdone by the townsmen. Their biggest celebration was on the Feast of Corpus Christi. They had many of the same races, but the special event was the canoe races. Some canoes held six men, other held eight. The canoes were carved from a single large cedar tree and had a raised bow. They were painted red, black and white. They would line up on the opposite bank. Someone would fire a pistol into the air and the race would begin. It was a most impressive sight to see the canoes racing towards us with all the paddles dipping in unison as one man called the tempo. My brother Andrew was often in a winning canoe and I was very proud of him.

The races were followed by a huge feast. Venison and salmon were prepared over open fires. There were large bowls of vegetables, rice and baked beans. Trays were piled high with bannock. Some of the Indian ladies were excellent bakers and they brought delicious pies with fillings made of raisins, dried apples or peaches.

When the meal was over there was much visiting and good fellowship. Sometimes a hush would fall over one group or another as a respected elder recounted some story or legend. I wish now that I had listened more closely but I was very young and ran off with other children to play.

The year I turned fourteen was the end of my childhood. Kate wrote Mother asking for my help at her place on the Similkameen. Having never been further from home than Yale, I was most agreeable to the arrangement.

Peter and I set out on horseback with two pack horses. Our first day was an easy ride and we camped at Lake House (now called Sunshine Valley). Peter tethered the horses to graze, then raised a small tent. I gathered firewood and made a small cooking fire on the sandy shore of the creek and began to cook our supper.

I was kneeling by the fire, cooking some bacon, when Peter leaned over my shoulder and dropped some fresh caught trout into the hot frypan. The hot grease sizzled and spattered. Peter laughed as I jumped back. The trout were delicious and I soon forgave my brother for startling me.

The next day we were up and away early. Much as I loved riding, there were places on the trail where I would have been much happier to be on my own two feet. Some times the trail skirted the edge of a bluff and was very narrow. My knee scraped against the rock face as my pony picked his way along the ledge. The pack animals had to be carefully loaded so they could safely travel the dangerous spots.

As we rode further inland I was greatly interested in the change in the vegetation. Even the air seemed different. Each day was a new delight for me as we passed from rain forest to mountain woodlands and on to pine country.

It was with mixed emotions, when on the fourth day, I rode into the yard of Kate's stagecoach stop. The trip with Peter had been such a pleasant, carefree time, but it was over. I knew that from then on I would be expected to act as an adult. I was sad to leave my childhood behind, yet excited to be having this new experience, and full of wonder about the future.

I remained with my sister Kate and attended each school term until Mr. Walker sold his sawmill. Kate arranged to return to the farm while her husband relocated. That was the end of my school days. Mother came to get us in her canoe. I was elated to be returning home and was very excited. Mother and Kate were busy packing and I was given a good many errands to run.

There were a number of retired miners living in small cabins in town who always greeted me when I passed by. Since I would not be seeing them again I stopped to say goodbye to each one. After a short chat they would reach into their pockets and give me a coin or two for candy. I did as told and soon had a big bag of sweets.

Soon we were in the canoe skimming down river. I started sampling the various kinds of candy I had bought and ate far too much. Mother had cautioned me not to eat too much but I had not listened to her and I had a very sick stomach. My supply of candy lasted for a very long time as my appetite for it became considerably diminished.

One of my errands had taken me to the store. While I waited for my package to be ready I stood by the jewelry case admiring a brooch and matching earrings. Mr. Worth noticed my interest in them. He bought them and gave them to me. I treasured them for a very long time.

Mr. Walker finally took up land at what is now called Bromley Rock and Kate joined him there. The stage coach stopped at their place and Kate catered to other travelers as well. Mr. Walker died a few years later from Bright's disease. Kate found it hard to manage the ranch and the coach stop all alone. She hired John Hatton Bromley to work for her, and eventually they were married.

One day after Kate had left for their new ranch on the Similkameen, Maggie McLinton and I were playing and ended up down by the reserve. Along the bank of the river we discovered a small canoe, just big enough for the two of us. Maggie suggested that we get into it and paddle out a little way, just for the fun of it. I had a better idea and suggested that we go over to the island where Andrew and his wife Margaret were camping. I wanted to see my little niece Katheryn.

We untied the canoe and got into it. The river was in full flood and running very swiftly. We were at the island in a very short time. Andrew was at work on the railroad but Margaret was at camp and I got to hold the baby. She was croupy and she had learned to walk since I had last seen her.

Margaret was not happy to see us. She scolded us for taking the canoe and for being out on the river alone. Then she gave us detailed instructions about getting back safely.

Accordingly, we paddled upstream about a quarter of a mile, then we started across the main current. We worked very hard and when we got about a hundred yards from shore we began looking for the mouth of the small creek Margaret had described. Unfortunately we had missed it and could not make an easy landing, and the river carried us further downstream.

Soon some Chinese placer miners saw us. They began calling to us, no doubt intending to help us. We could not understand them and became frightened by their shouting and waving, so we paddled furiously past them.

Further downstream Maggie caught hold of some willows that were bending over the water. She managed to pull the canoe close enough to the bank so that we could scramble out to safety. In our excitement we neglected to

hold tight to the rope on the canoe. It slipped away from us and was soon far from shore, bobbing along in the current.

Maggie and I were now terrified. We had taken a canoe and lost it. Also, the Chinese were between us and home. We made a wide detour through the woods and came out on a path that lead us to the reserve. From there we were soon home. I don't know if Maggie told her mother what we had done that day. I certainly didn't tell mine. I think Margaret told mother years later when I had left home.

Before I left for Bromley Margaret and Andrew had a son. I was at the Baptism in the Catholic Church in Laidlaw. Margaret was very slow in giving the name for the baby to Father Petevan. Finally the priest said "I'll give him my own name". And so the baby was named Edmond Anthony Lorenzetto. Catheryn (later to be Mrs. Eccles) was about 2 years old.



Sketch of Thomas Rabbitt found in the papers of
Mary Julia Rabbitt

COPIED FROM THE FAMILY BIBLE OF Mrs. E. RABBITT

REGISTER OF BIRTHS

Michael Andrew Rabbitt	April 11, 1892
Mary Julia Rabbitt	October 13, 1893
Euphemia Ann Rabbitt	October 28, 1896
Bridget Catherine Rabbitt	October 30, 1898
Thomas Peter Rabbitt	November 8, 1900
Honora Theresa Rabbitt	January 30, 1903
Daniel Lorenzetto Rabbitt	April 30, 1905
Eliza Margaret Rabbitt	October 24, 1907
Bridget Antonia Rabbitt	July 14, 1910
Catherine Rose Rabbitt	November 6, 1912
Patrick Joseph Rabbitt	February 19, 1915
Leona Rita Rabbitt	March 3, 1919

THOMAS RABBITT

A History written by THOMAS P. RABBITT,
Son of Thomas Rabbitt

Thomas Rabbitt was born May 5, 1859, at Lingan, Nova Scotia. After completing his schooling there he was employed in the shipyards for nearly two years. He then decided to seek greener fields and sailed for Montreal in the spring of 1878 where he soon found employment as a bridge builder. His skill as a ship builder proved an asset and within three months he was promoted to foreman. He worked for the American Bridge Company for over six years building bridges from Eastern Canada to Arizona to the lower Fraser Valley. When the Canadian Pacific Railway reached the Pacific, he was offered the opportunity to transfer as a bridge maintenance foreman, but he resigned.

Thomas Rabbitt then bought a third interest in the first hotel in Vancouver. He also purchased one of the first dairy farms in the area. He sold both the hotel interest and the dairy farm after about six months, realizing a good profit on both.

Following this he was a guard at the B.C. Penetentiary for about three months. The father of Sir Richard McBride was the warden there at the time. While there he received word from his brother Daniel Rabbitt asking him to come to Spellamacheen to help him expand the business there. Dan already had two partners, Robert Wood and James Cargyle, the firm being Wood, Rabbitt & Cargyle. The firm held a large acreage of land in the north Okanogan Valley and produced wheat, corn, barley, fruit and tobacco. They had the first flour mill, fruit evaporating plant and cigar factory in British Columbia. They also cured bacon and hams.

Shortly after his arrival Thomas realized that the firm was greatly overproducing for the requirements of the surrounding district, and he decided to look for markets further afield.

Riding horseback, Thomas left from Landsdown near present day Armstrong, then through Vernon and Penticton. The latter place was at that time a large cattle ranch owned by Tom Ellis. He arrived at the Tulameen placer mining district , stopping at Otter Flats on January 10, 1886. He found the winter very light, and having ascertained the necessity there for a general store, he returned to make his arrangements. His second trip to the area was February 1st of the same year. This time he encountered about 30 inches of snow and temperatures below zero. This did not discourage him, and he hired two men to help him hew and square timbers to build his store in Otter Flats.

Meanwhile, excitement was directed towards Slate Creek where a great deal of coarse gold and platinum was being recovered. So two years later, there in the heart of the flourishing industry, he bought out the Hudson Bay Trading Post at Slate Creek from the Factor, one John Cameron. Here he built a new store adjoining the trading post. Lumber for the new store was whipsawed locally, priced at \$85.00 per thousand board feet for rough lumber and \$150.00 per thousand dressed by jack plane. The supplies for the store were packed in on horses and mules from both his brother's firm in the Okanogan and from the Hudson Bay Co. wholesale supply at Hope where it was brought by steam boat.

While operating the store at Slate Creek, Thomas applied to the government to have a trail built along Trout Creek and Osprey Lake from Okanogan Lake near West Summerland to Allison Range in the vicinity of Jura, just east of Princeton. His request was refused, so he built the trail at his own expense. This gave his pack trains a short cut from Freight House Point on Okanogan Lake where they could pick up the goods produced by the Wood, Rabbitt & Cargyle Co.

In 1891 Thomas Rabbitt married Euphemia Lorenzetto. By this time he had built a very comfortable two storey dwelling of square-hewed logs. The placer gold rush dwindled down and only a few white men continued to work the river, so the store was closed in 1895. The house and the store were destroyed by fire in 1907, and the family moved to a small house in what is now Coalmont.

Thomas Rabbitt then turned to mixed farming and cattle ranching. He discovered coal which developed into the mine at Blakeburn several years later. In 1910 he sold land he had pre-empted to the Columbia Coal and Coke Company. This became Coalmont Townsite. He then built the nine room house which still stands today one and one-half miles east of Tulameen. He lived here with his wife and children until his death on July 18, 1926.

FROM CAMPE DES FEMMES TO OTTER FLATS TO TULAMEEN - Recollections

By MRS. Euphemia Lorenzetto Rabbitt

The earliest stories of Tulameen were told to me by the famous old French Oblate priest, Father LeJeune." When his predecessor first visited this area, there were no resident white people. There was however a large encampment of Indian women, children and old men.

The whole flat was covered with tall pines, like a park, and on the grass beneath were many tents and cooking fires. The priest was told that all the strong men were away at war, and that this was the safe place where they left their families when they had to go to fight the notorious chief from Lilloet whose exploits in battle made him feared from the Thompson River to the sea. Thus it was that the Oblates gave this beautiful flat the name of "Campe des Femmes".

It is said that when the Brigade Trail was cut through from Hope, it was found that some individual fur traders had camped here as early as 1845-46.

The discovery of gold in Granite Creek by John M. Chance brought miners flocking into the area in great numbers. Soon another strike was made at Cedar Creek, with the miners quickly following to the new area. Granite Creek was the first gold town to flourish locally, but soon the boom moved to this area, by then re-named Otter Flats. Stores, saloons, hotels, even a bakery were rapidly built and put into operation.

My husband, Thomas Rabbitt, came to Otter Flats in January, 1886, coming by horseback from Armstrong. He returned in February to build a store in Otter Flats. He hired two men to assist him to hew and square the timbers for the building. His merchandise was packed in from the Hudson Bay Wholesale store in Hope and from the Wood, Rabbitt and Cargyle store as Spellamacheen. The gold strike at Slate Creek followed, so

Tom Rabbitt bought out the Hudson Bay Trading Post at Slate Creek from the factor, Mr. John Cameron. By this time it was possible to purchase whipsawed lumber, and Mr. Rabbitt built a comfortable home adjoining the Store.

The first true rancher in the area was Mr. Jack Thynne from Liverpool, England. He took up holdings in the Otter Valley and after building a suitable home he was joined by his wife Mary and small daughter Ethel.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rabbitt had also taken up land with an eye to farming. In 1891 we were married. We continued to operate the store until 1895, by which time there were few white men still mining. The Chinese, who were more ingenious, continued to take gold from the river and creeks for several years by going over the old workings. They built wing dams and used huge water wheels.

In 1908 the first school was opened in Otter Flat, with six Rabbitt children and two Waline children as pupils. The first teacher was Miss Olive Wilson. She taught in the small log school near Mr. Thomas' present location. The present large school grounds were obtained through the efforts of Mr. Rabbitt and Mr. J. Schubert, of the original school board.

After closing the store at Slate Creek, Mr. Rabbitt turned to farming and cattle ranching. He also discovered coal which was to develop into the mine at Blakeburn several years later.

In 1909 the Dominion geologist, George Camsell, changed the name of Otter Flats to Tulameen.

In 1910 Mr. Rabbitt sold the land which was to become the Coalmont Townsite to the Columbia Coal and Coke Co.

Other ranchers were to follow Jack Thynne and Tom Rabbitt. Mr. Myron and Mr. Frempt were the next two settlers. Hard rock miners and prospectors followed the placer miners, and their names are still recalled when one reads a map of this area. There was Jim Kelly, Mr. Sutter and Mr. Doerenberg. It is strange that no real landmark was ever named for the pioneer prospector of them all, a Mr. Jerry O'Donnell, and only a ledge on a mining claim bears his name.

With the coming of the G.N. Railroad in 1910 the ice industry was born. Men who were idled by winter cold and snow were able to have winter employment. Many carloads of ice were shipped out each winter until ice making plants made the operation unprofitable.

Logging started with the first saw mill of Mr. Waline and partner, in 1886, and continues today. The gold and minerals that first enticed men to this valley are still being sought with enthusiasm. The original ranches of the area are still productive.

This beautiful area is summer host to many holidayers and retired folks. Tulameen seems likely to start its second century in as auspicious a manner as it did the first.