

He stood, arms folded, a smile on his handsome face, as he talked to his old friend, Geoff Lodwick, about the big house in front of them that he had finally completed. It had long been an ambition to build a comfortable home for his family and his eyes misted when he spoke of how his dear “Eth” would have enjoyed the comforts here. She had been gone these ten years and he still missed her so. But he had his children and his grandchildren now, and how they loved him – so it wasn’t quite so hard. Besides, he had finished the house and they all lived in it, so he felt he had accomplished his goal.

It had been a long time since learning the plumbing business in the cities of New York and Boston. He had served his apprenticeship in the rat-infested tenement district of New York in the 90s; spent a few years out West, then returned to write for his Master Plumber’s ticket in 1905 thinking this might be his life’s work and earning power. But now, fifty years later, he had had the first opportunity to put all this knowledge to use; he had “plumbed” his very first complete dwelling house – his own, and She was not here to see it all. In fact, he had done more than that; he had planned and built all the fine cupboards copied from the latest plans he could find and he had done all the interior finish work and built the foundation of cement, the sturdy walls and roof. This house was built to withstand the weather and furnish its occupants with comfort.

As he showed his old friend around, he pointed out the neat “45” corners on the door and window casings. “Can you see them, Geoff?”, “Just a faint line, eh”, and a tear of pride rolled down his face. “Lots of fellows don’t bother too much with that, you know; but I gotta have ‘em perfect – looks better!” “Have a look at these drawers”. “Try one with just one finger. See how easy they slide? And all the way out without ever dropping a bit. That’s the way you want to build things; so they work properly!” “Might as well do it right if you’re going to do it at all, I says.” Then they went to the basement where he could show all the pipes and especially the clean-out where he had thought the metal too porous, so he soldered the whole face of it, making doubly sure of no leaks. “See, this joint, here; they don’t do plumbing work like that anymore, Geoff. When I served as an apprentice in New York, we had to wipe our own joints and make a lot of our own fittings ourselves, but it’s all different now – so easy. But I’m glad I had this chance to do a full job; just to prove to myself that I could still do it.” And again, the lips quivered, and a tear rolled down his cheek. “Come on out to the garden, Geoff, and I’ll show you some real good stuff, strawberries as big as your fist almost, and raspberries that will bring us in a few dollars this year.”

“Gardening down here in the Okanagan is a lot different than where we used to be up there at Pike’s Mountain you know. I guess you remember the great gardens we used to grow up there. That was all done by cultivation – tons of turnips, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, beets and lettuce heads as big as cabbage. When Wheeler moved his sawmill to Myron in the Otter Valley, I used to supply the little store there with vegetables. Took it all out in groceries and that was a rare treat for us then. I used to load the buckboard in the evening then leave about 4 in the morning to be down there when they opened at 7:30. The storekeeper used to tell me he’d never seen such fine garden stuff. But the mill was only there for two years and that was ended. Here we have lots of water for irrigation from this flume; when it is our turn, we just open the bungs.

But then there are lots of pests too and I don't like all this spray we have to use; I don't think it is healthy. Still, that's the way to do it they say."

"George, let's take a drive up to the old place on Pikes Mountain tomorrow where Edith and I first lived near you & Ethel. I'd like to have a look at the old log house and see what's left of it. I believe the Government named the lake after me, I saw "Lodwick Lake" on the map. We can stop in at your old place and have a look around too if you like."

Geoffrey Lodwick had been one of the "Gentleman Emigrants" of the 1890s who came to British Columbia from England, and sought out another "Gentleman Emigrant", Jack Thynne in the Otter Valley. After working on Thynne's Ranch to learn the rudiments of how to ranch Western style, he took up his own homestead on the "Bald Hill" on Pikes Mountain where he erected a fine log cottage and proceeded to raise horses. This underway he returned to the "Old Country" and brought back his Edith as a bride. Many a tear she was to shed in learning how to cook, bake her own bread, wash, iron and mend clothes in this rugged land. In the winters at 40 below waiting for clothes to "freeze dry" on the line and stoking wood stoves to keep the house warm was a test for the strongest girls and she often called on her friends, Mary Thynne and her daughter Ethel for advice and comfort. After a few years struggling in vain to make enough money to live, the horse ranch was abandoned, and the Lodwicks moved on to more profitable things like raising asparagus near the Town of Kamloops to the North and thence to Vancouver Island. Now, 50 years later, with his old friend and neighbour, Geoffrey Lodwick was going back to see this place that bears his name – because he was the first to try to eek out a living there.

"Yes, Geoff, I'd like that. Do you remember when Ethel and I were married? You and Edith went away for a few days and gave us the use of your home for our honeymoon. Wasn't that something? There we were with hardly a penny, starting out together with just that old buckboard and bay mare and I think we had one cow to start us out in the ranching business. But we were young then and the future looked so great....." "You remember, I was planning to take Ethel back home to Boston and go into the plumbing business with my brother, but Ethel's folks wanted her to stay near so gave us a half interest in their ranch on the One Mile – it was known as the "Harry" place then. Thynne had bought it from Harry McCullough. We changed the name when we got our brand later to The Diamond 'H' Ranch because that's the brand that was issued to us. I think you had left your place by then."

"I often wonder now if it might have been better if I had gone back to Boston to work. But then, Eth may not have been happy in the city, and I doubt if I could have forgotten this great outdoors here. It's been lean and tough, but there was a lot of it I sure enjoyed.....I just wish Thynne had been a better business man so we might have made a "go" of it together – but there was not much chance. We stuck it out and he finally went broke, and I had to sell out and come down here to make a fresh start...."