

Isabel:
Thought you might be
interested in my submission.
Rosemary.

July 4, 1998
Victoria, B.C.

I have been asked to write my memories of the history and founding of the Princeton Museum. I am well aware of the tricks memory can play and how subjective is personal recall. Many things have been forgotten and with some of them its a fortunate and merciful loss. What I do recall most keenly is the incredible enthusiasm with which the people of Princeton rallied to the the project. The interest and enthusiasm became infectious and spread well beyond the boundaries of the town.

In writing this I have had my memory jogged by the patience of my long-deceased mother, who unbeknownst to me, abstracted segments of all the letters I wrote home for many years. These letters included numerous comments and adventures related to the museum.

It was in Febuary 1958 that Gloria Stout suggested we should start a pioneer museum in Princeton. Princeton had been in the doldrums for some time following the closure of Copper Mountain mine and the subsequent loss of hundreds of jobs. Other than tourism there didn't appear to be much on the horizon for Princeton's future ability to attract industry. We were aware that tourists either drove directly through the town or if they stayed over, there was nothing to do, especially in the evenings.

Gloria's mother, Mrs. Anderson, was the owner/operator of an auto court or fishing lodge at Allison Lake. Gloria mentioned that each summer people from the coast would register to stay in these comparatively rustic cabins. Many of these urbanites had never before seen a wood and coal stove, let alone knew how to light or control it. Forty years ago pre-dates the resurgence of interest in such nostalgia.

To the best of my knowledge, forty years also predated the popularity of museums, or others, collecting pioneer 'artifacts'. We were not aware of any pioneer museums at that time in B.C. and our main term of reference was to Knox Berry Farm in California - the only one we had heard of.

"We should save these old things and start a museum to show younger people how the pioneers lived," suggested Gloria. The idea was not brand new to Gloria as she had already started to collect a few things out at the Lodge, such as an old sit-down bathtub, a foot-warmer and several other interesting items. As the evening wore on our enthusiasm and ideas tumbled forth. In the morning Isabel Howse (Catermole) was contacted and with her usual verve she jumped on the band-wagon and the project took over our lives for some months. Eleanor Hicks and Jean Burr agreed to work along with us and we were off and running.

From forty years away its now impossible to credit everyone who participated and contributed so generously to the cause.

Some very obvious problems confronted us. The 24th of May was always the first big tourist week-end in the interior of the Province. That was the date we set for the opening of our museum.

All we had to do was get some money, find a building, find some items, inventory and label them, obtain some showcases, arrange displays, provide security, find caretakers, do some publicity and then open the door. That was all - and we had three months to do it! It was fortunate we were all so young because only youth usually has such unbridled optimism.

The first major problem was where to house the infant museum. In the centre of town was a large vacant lot, then owned I believe, by Mr. Elmer Burr. Many years before this lot had been the location of the Similkameen Hotel which had proudly boasted being "The Best Hostelry in the Interior of the Province". Like so many of its kind it had burned to the ground and never been replaced.

We approached the owner of the property for permission to use his lot for a year, since at that time we had no idea how we could ever raise money for a permanent structure and it was to be some years in the future before the government made funds available for such community projects. He agreed immediately and we faced the next problem of providing a building. Considering the pioneer element, it was obvious that a log cabin would best fit the bill.

All of us knew that the surrounding hills were dotted with old cabins, long abandoned and just waiting to be reborn. Not so! Investigation by many people, Tom Stout in particular, soon proved that many of these structures were well beyond redemption. Some that were remembered as in excellent condition had fallen prey to the elements while others that had stood proudly in their wooded solitude had been victimized by careless hunters and burned to the ground.

After many hours and miles of searching a suitable cabin

was located. All it would need was new lower logs, a new roof, new floor, new door and windows and of course, wired for electricity. All that would come after the cabin had been dismantled, each log carefully numbered, transported to Princeton and reassembled on our borrowed lot.

The next problem was not hard to figure out. Money ! We heard that the Centennial Committee had some and we thought it might be wise to offer to help them spend it. Isabel, Gloria and I arranged to attend a meeting of the Committee and to add credibility to our request we asked Dr. John Goodfellow to accompany us. Dr. Goodfellow had been a resident of the town for many years and was a highly respected citizen and historian. We knew his sympathies were with the establishment of a museum and were rewarded by his delivery of an impassioned plea for assistance.

Gloria assured them we could move the cabin for one hundred dollars. We had been told that the entire budget for the Centennial Committee was \$250 (a fair sum in those days!) so we were asking for forty percent of their funding for one dream that was yet to get off the ground! There were some dissenting voices. Dr. Goodfellow spoke up and referred to we three women as "Faith, Hope and Charity" There was no shortage of faith, hope was running high and fortunately the Committee chose to show the charity and awarded us the \$100.

As we waited for our building to arrive we busied ourselves with advertising and promotion. A number of items already collected were displayed in the window of the Stedman's store and generated much interest. Appeals were made to the public for any items and because we were uncertain as to the viability of long-term survival of our museum and since we could not guarantee security on a year round basis, we asked the public to lend us items they valued, for the summer season only.

Weekly articles about our progress were submitted to the newspaper. Articles were taken to various classrooms to gain

the interest of the young people. Service Clubs, Lodges and every organized group was addressed and enrolled in assisting. Wherever we spoke, either formally or informally the ideas were met with enthusiasm and offers of help. Many new and good ideas were put forward and incorporated into the overall plan.

We worked at spreading the word of our project to distant areas in hopes of obtaining interest and items from people who may have left the area. We wrote to C.B.C. radio and received an invitation to appear in person on a popular morning radio show with Eileen Laurie. Isabel and I travelled to the Coast for the show since Gloria was indisposed for some time with the impending arrival of Tom Junior.

Killing several birds with one stone we paid a visit to the Managing Editor of the Vancouver Sun and complained that the only news coverage Princeton ever received was when someone was killed on the Highway. He promised us he would see that anything we submitted would be printed and he proceeded to do so.

Museum at Princeton Draws Many

PRINCETON—Almost 9,000 persons have signed the visitors' book in the Princeton museum.

The museum, housed in a 60-year-old log cabin, contains century-old clothing, a confiscated whiskey-still and a great many other relics of the area of 100 years ago. The museum is this community's centennial venture.

The still, confiscated by RCMP, was shown only after special permission had been obtained from Ottawa. Both ends of the worm had to be plugged with lead before the liquor-making device could be displayed.

The museum, as a centennial project, was started by three Princeton residents, Mrs. Rosemary Pesut, Mrs. R. Stout and Miss Isobel Howse.

The log-cabin housing was transported from its original site to a downtown lot.

The visitors' book boasts names from Honk Konk, Tel-A-Viv, Japan, New Zealand, and all parts of the U.S.

On our return trip we were accompanied by our new (but very old and exceptionally tall) second-hand mannequin whom we dubbed 'Judy' An elderly, former Princeton woman gave Isabel \$25 dollars toward our cause and this we spent to purchase Judy. The company from whom we purchased Judy donated her somewhat old fashioned wig so although she simulated Lady Godiva in her nudity, she rode to her new home in Princeton, no longer bald. It was a memorable trip because Judy was completely unbendable. She would only fit into the back seat at an angle which either required her feet to project into the rear window or her head to rise at an awkward angle toward the car's roof. We chose the head and hoped that no short-sighted police officer might see us and assume our rear passenger was suffering from rigor mortis.

In the meantime, Tom Stout and his band of volunteers were surging ahead with moving the log cabin into town. Over a hundred volunteers worked to a greater or lesser degree on the building.

The building needed a roof and the Volunteer Firemen were there to do the job. We needed windows and the glass was given by a local merchant. We needed flooring which was obtained from a dismantled vat at an old mill. We needed a sign - one of the sawmills voluntarily cut a large piece of planking, leaving the bark on the outer edges to give a more rustic appearance. Then the grade eleven boys took over under the guidance of two teachers and made our excellent sign.

Isabel had spotted some fluorescent lights in an abandoned building so after getting permission to remove them an electrician came forward and donated his time and material. A local carpenter made the doors and installed the windows. A painter came and antiqued the new wood to blend in with the ancient building. Heavy gauge wire was needed to cover the windows for security since by this time we had accumulated some valuable pieces for exhibit - a welder offered his services

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and also hung the sign for us. Another welder made the stand to hold 'Judy', the mannequin, firmly on her feet.

Showcases were donated from an old store (Staffords' Dry Goods, I believe) The fence was donated and put up by the Rotarians, who wisely delegated the task to the four new members in the club.

We needed a visitors register and the Women's Institute came to our assistnce. A donation box was made by one of the Senior Citizens. Bricks for the chimney were donated by a hardware merchant and a volunteer bricklayer completed the job. It was decided a flower box would brighten the front window and a nurseymen provided it.

When the building was completed litter and refuse covered the lot and before we knew it the town's Garbage Collectors had raked it up and carted it away.

Some of the help was not so visible. A woman who helped support herself by doing needlework did some necessary sewing for me then refused payment, saying since I was working for the Museum the sewing would be her contribution to the project. And not to be forgotten, the Brewery offered free beer on some of the work parties.

Donations continued to arrive as well as family heirlooms on loan, such as General Sherman's sword from the Allison family. Our search for items of interest took us many miles from home. Isabel drove the Fraser Canyon as far as Barkerville and found more items to add to her own personal and valuable contributions to our displays. I drove to Kelowna, Vernon and Kamloops investigating such possibilities for treasures as the O'Keefe family, who at that time hadn't even considered the possibilities of a collection. A lot of time was spent in Keremeos and Cawston where many oldtimers became as enthusiastic in their donations as were the Princeton people.

As September closed in and the tourists went home we closed the door on a very successful season. All that was left to do was return the family items that had been provided on loan and secure the other display material that would be spending a chilly winter in the old cabin.

I think all three of us must have been surprised to receive notification that we were to be awarded certificates from Premier W.A.C. Bennett in appreciation for our contribution to B.C.'s Centennial Year. I can speak only for myself when I say that the project was challenging and a great deal of fun and although it may have contributed to the Centennial spirit, that was not the reason I became involved. It opened many new doors for me and exposed me to the history of B.C.

Forty years later I still pursue this interest in history by acting as a tour guide and researcher with Victoria's Old Cemetery Society. Some of the people to whom I was introduced through my work with the Museum, such as Billy Barker, of Barkerville fame, Dewdney of Dewdney Trail, Barnard of BX stages and Sir James Douglas himself, all rest in Ross Bay Cemetery where this afternoon I will be telling the stories of these pioneers and their contributions to B.C.,

This enriching legacy was born 40 years ago when Gloria Stout made the statement, "Let's start a Museum."

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemary Crawford". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.