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Photo cover: Restoration of the Hedley Mascot Mine buildings overlooking Hedley, Greyback Construction Ltd. of Penticton was the general contractor with helicopter service supplied by Eclipse Helicopters Ltd., also of Penticton.

CHAPTER 11: ROCKSLIDE OF 1939 & 1948 FLOOD

The following article was taken from the Similkameen Star in Princeton, Wednesday, January 25, 1939:

TWO DIE IN ROCK SLIDE

Graphic Story of the Hedley Disaster

Five Houses Struck as Tons of Rock Hurlled Upon Sleeping Town site

Two persons are dead, and property damage estimated at several hundred dollars was occasioned as huge boulders, loosed by expanding ice, crashed 1200 feet down the precipitous west side of Stemwinder Mountain, onto the sleeping Mascot town site below, about 1:30 Tuesday morning.

THE DEAD;

PETER STRAND, 54 or 56, native of Norway, resident here about 25 years. Employed as watchman of slag pond, Mascot gold mill Hedley, about three years. Unmarried.

JOHANNA SOPHIE GREEN, 54, born 26th April, 1885, Norway. In Canada about 30 years. Survived by husband and two married daughters, in Princeton. Entered service of Strand as housekeeper just before Christmas.

Five buildings were struck by huge boulders, loosed from a gaping socket high on the summit of the west slope of Stemwinder Mountain, which rises almost perpendicularly above this section of the town, and catapulted in gigantic leaps, at terrific speed in a 1200 foot drop. Twelve boulders came down, averaging twenty to twenty-five tons, and showers of smaller rocks accompanied them.

Wrecked buildings include:

STRAND COTTAGE: Huge rock smashed through bedroom wing, killing two sleeping occupants.

BERKMAN PLACE: Two big rocks ploughed through yard, demolishing woodshed. One came to rest a sparse three feet from back door. The other cleared house and glanced off pine tree.

MOORE RESIDENCE: Rock smashed bedroom just after Betty, 14, and Helen, 12, had evacuated. Damage considerable.

RUDOLPH HOME: Sitting room demolished by huge rock while family slept in bedroom. Damage con-



Curly Phillips, Bill Corrigan, and Art Rowe beside a rock from the Stemwinder which killed two people as it went through a house. The Vancouver Sun's caption to this photo read: Tons of rock, in pieces weighing 20 to 25 tons, crashed 1000 feet down the southeast side of Stemwinder Mountain to sleeping Hedley, B.C. early Tuesday morning and brought death to Peter Strand and Mrs. Johanna Green. The picture indicates the force of a 20-ton boulder that nearly decapitated Strand and Mrs. Green's neck as they lay asleep in the house. The boulder tore through the home and came to rest a distance outside. The rock, which killed the two, is shown in the foreground. Dave Innis photo collection.



Pete Berkman, the Great Northern Section foreman, and his wife standing by a boulder which stopped blocking in their back door. Dave Innis photo collection.

siderable.

TURNER RESIDENCE: Bedroom plundered by boulder. Family were in front room. Damage considerable.

In addition, damage was done to the McCourt garage and an 800 pound stone struck the Tremaine garage.

Fear of further slides caused the entire section to be evacuated tonight, as residents were jumpy and un-nerved. It was, however, the first serious slide in 40 years, although minor slides are common.

Dr. Daniel McCaffrey, Princeton coroner, announced after visiting Hedley Tuesday afternoon that an inquest will be held Thursday at 2:30 at Hedley. An autopsy of Mr. Strand and Mrs. Green will be held Wednesday morning at the Princeton morgue, where both bodies lie.

Strand was killed instantly as he lay asleep. Mrs. Green was unconscious and died on the steps of Dr. Wride's office where she was being carried for treatment.

The rock which dealt double death ripped with razor sharpness, born of terrific speed, a clean hole through the frame building and came to rest 25 feet from the house. At the southerly end of an area of about one acre, it was one of the first to come down during the terrific 15-minute bombardment.

Startled by the roar which was heard for miles around, a crowd immediately gathered to witness the devastation. The clang of the fire bell accentuated the dramatic atmosphere. Fire was a distinct menace, though only one minor outburst threatened, when an electric stove in the Rudolph place collapsed and short-circuited.

Victor J. Creeden, secretary of the Hedley Mascot Mining Co. was en route from Vancouver tonight to investigate the company's losses. Most of the damaged houses are owned by the company. It is understood that insurance of this kind was not carried. Residents too, lost heavily in damage to furniture and private property.

It is believed that alternate soft and freezing weather were responsible for the disaster. Water is presumed to have gathered in the cracks, and its expansion while freezing caused the fissure.

Stemwinder or Striped Mountain (so called from its variegated contours) rises abruptly from the Twenty Mile valley on the northwest, and slopes gently from the Similkameen Valley on the north. It was prominent in



The Jack Moore residence in Hedley after the rock slide from Stemwinder Mountain January 24, 1919. The Vancouver Sun, January 25, stated, "...photo shows what remains of the bedroom of two of the four children of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Moore. The children were asleep in the room when the slide started and ran from the room just before a huge boulder crashed into it." Dave Innis photo collection.



The Tremaine home with a huge rock that stopped beside their house. The opening on the side of the house is a coal chute. Coal and sawdust were used to heat homes.



Flooding devastated Hedley in 1948 as it did many communities. The house at the left is a good example. Levees and dams were constructed to contain the waters of Twenty Mile Creek which were swollen with flood waters caused by a heavy snowfall and late spring. Ed Aldrege photo.



The torrent of water coming down Twenty Mile Creek devastated some of the homes in Hedley. Joe Harris photo.

the news as the location of the notorious Hedley Amalgamated Mine.

The coincidence of a 'Major Bowes' entertainment in the town hall was perhaps a happy factor, in that many had attended and were either still up or had gone to bed late.

There is a diversity of opinion as to the exact time of the avalanche. Neill McLeod, who says he stood on his verandah as the rock flashed by not ten feet away after killing his two neighbors, says that the slide occupied a fifteen minute period between 1:15 and 1:30 a.m. Mrs. J. Ferko, who had not retired, agrees. Other neighbors are vague. Const. F. Lines says it was almost 2 o'clock when he arrived, one of the first on the scene.

McLeod says there was a roar like thunder, and that the huge rocks shot through the air in mighty leaps like a bullet. It was little short of a miracle how some of the residents escaped. A huge rock stopped dead a scant three feet from the Berkman door.

Betty (14) and Helen (12) Moore, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Moore, were asleep in a downstairs bedroom when awakened by the rumble of rushing rock. As they went upstairs to rouse their 11-year-old brother, a rock splintered their room.

The Rudolph's were asleep in the bedroom when a rock shattered the living room. Mrs. Rudolph suffered three cracked ribs scrambling among the wreckage for her pet cat.

Mrs. Floyd Turner was awakened by the noise and roused her husband. A few minutes later their bed was a crumpled mass, pushed into the front room. Mrs. McCall awoke and roused her twin sisters; her guests. Mr. and Mrs. J. Alcock had moved from the neighborhood a few hours before.

The terrific speed attained by the massive boulders in their 1200 foot plunge can only be conjectured. Evidence is graphically seen in the cleanness of the paths they cut. The huge boulders did not crush; they sliced and splintered.

One huge fragment hurtled over fences, in 150 foot hops, churned through the vacant yard between the Berkman and Heeney places, struck the street and bounded almost 200 feet to come to rest harmlessly in the alley.

A naked cup-shaped gouge high on the marbled face of the hill clearly tells the story. The rock is of hard, igne-