



Ranching

*Now, Then,
And Way Back When...*

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Chapter 1.....	Introduction
Chapter 2.....	The Okanagan Valley
Chapter 3.....	The Similkameen Valley
Chapter 4.....	Merritt and the Nicola Valley
Chapter 5.....	Kamloops and the Thompson Valley
Chapter 6.....	The Cariboo and Chilcotin
Chapter 7.....	The Boundary and Kootenays
Chapter 8.....	North Central BC and the Peace River area
Chapter 9.....	Colony Farm in the Fraser Valley
Chapter 10.....	Cattlemen's Organizations
	Epilogue

Bibliography & Index

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Cover photo: Shuter Family Ranch at the Springs, Shulus, near Merritt.



"A fine team of Douglas Lake Clydesdales, they probably weigh 1800 pounds each. The harness was made right on the ranch. Bill Godley was the harness maker for the Nicola Ranch, Guichons, and Douglas Lake Ranch. He made all the harness by hand, even stitching the thick traces by hand." Ray Graham. Lorna Rounds' photo, 1930.



A lift of hay being placed on a haystack with a boom stacker. The wagon was used to bring the crew and their dinner to the hay field if they were a distance from the cookhouse at noon. The people in the wagon are probably visitors. Lorna Rounds' photo, 1930.

was so impressed with the country that he went back to England for his family, and emigrated to Canada and the Nicola Valley.

William moved to what is now the Pooley Ranch on the Mamit Lake Road and raised sheep. Bill Pooley, Gordon Pooley's father was born there. The Pooley brand was 6P, so named for William and his wife and the four children. Bill Pooley was the seventh member of the family, so the brand was not accurate. The Stephen's brand was 7B which stood for seven brothers. At that time it was suggested that the sheep farmers be away from the valley bottom and the cattle raisers. William Pooley had a band of two thousand ewes. Their range was to the north of the present ranch and followed the grass to higher elevations, on a much smaller scale than the Herons of Kamloops, who had an estimated band of 10,000 sheep."

Gordon Pooley worked with his father, Bill Pooley, at the ranch when he was a lad. They lived in Merritt and commuted to the ranch. "My first job that I can remember was rolling the bales away from the edge of the field so my dad could go back and bale the first round against the edge of the field. The going rate of pay for farm workers at that time was \$6.00 per day and board. I got \$3.00. I learned to survey ditches from my father, Bill, who taught me, and had learned from his father. My dad looked after the day to day operations of the ranch.

To survey a ditch for ditch irrigation one uses two sticks, one six inches longer than the other, and a small hand held level, and two people. Start at the water source or lake and the person with the shorter stick walks off twenty five paces from the person holding the level. The person with the level puts it on the top of the stick and sights the person twenty five paces away, who goes up and down the hill till he reaches a level sighting. At that point he puts a stake in the ground to indicate the course of the ditch. That will give the ditch a six inch drop in twenty five paces, which will never erode or silt in. The grade is such that the water in the ditch will carry any silt with out filling in the ditch, and the water will not flow so fast that it will erode the bottom of the ditch.

My mother, Barbara's family, Bart and Beatrice Dodding, came from England in 1901 with their five children. My grandfather, Bart Dodding, was a contract thresher and went around threshing grain for the landowners. He was more of a farmer than a rancher, in that he used irrigation and grew crops. They did have hayland and Hereford cattle. In the Nicola Valley one cannot make a living farming or ranching without water. Huge tracts of land are useless unless they are irrigated. The valley also depends on rains in the early summer for moisture.

My father told me about the Heron Brothers who were sheep ranchers near Kamloops. They ranged their sheep toward Knutsford and Napier Lake, and then to the open grassland of Stump lake through to Merritt and beyond down toward Lower Nicola. There was a little ferry across Petrei Creek, and from there the sheep were grazed up to Honeymoon Pass and Hoosham Pass country, which overlooks the Thompson River Valley near Boston Bar. The Herons had a huge house with a verandah all around near what is now the Aberdeen Mall in Kamloops.

The sheep ranchers, when they were ready to take their bands on the summer migration to the higher elevations, would buy sacks of grass seed. The herders were given sacks and sacks of grass seed which they sprinkled on the backs of the sheep in the morning. The sheep did all the seeding! The cattle ranchers are capitalizing on that seeding to this day In the mountains one can find timothy grass growing courtesy of the sheep ranchers."

Ray Graham

Ray Graham is presently retired and living in Cochrane, Alberta. "I worked with the Douglas Lake Ranch, starting as a foreman of the Chapperon Ranch in 1949. I became manager of the north end of the ranch in 1972, and took over the management of the Norfolk Ranch. I supervised that, and had a foreman working for me. I retired from Douglas Lake in 1984.

The objective of the Norfolk Ranch was to improve the irrigation system and grow as much hay and grain as possible. That was the focal point actually, the more hay the better! The ranch had a lot of cattle to feed and we didn't have to buy hay at that time. When I started out as foreman in 1949, it was at a time of transition from horse drawn machinery and hand work, to machines. Instead of horses we were using side delivery rakes, square bales and bale wagons. In the early 1950's the horses were phased out. The horses had been used for plowing, haying, and any agricultural work.

The ranch kept the herd of horses for quite a while. They were used to retrieve the bales from the field and stack them. We had bale stacks all over the fields in strategic places where we fed the cows. The stacks were fenced, and we fed with tractors and big manufactured sleighs. We did have some teams and bob sleighs used for feeding in the wintertime. The bales were dropped off in flakes rather than bunches, because the cattle will trample hay and waste it.

The ideal feeding herd was around five hundred head. As time progressed we had three bunches of a thousand head that we were feeding at Chapperon Ranch. This was not successful, as we found the weaker stock in the thousand head would never get enough to eat. There was always aggressive and stronger cows who got more than their share. We did a lot of fencing, and broke the herd into five or six hundred head bunches, and fed them that way. That method utilized the hay more efficiently and the cows did better. The Chapperon had three thousand head, plus we fed twelve to fourteen hundred heifer calves. The Norfolk Ranch had twenty five hundred head. The cow herd at Douglas Lake at that time was between five thousand and six thousand head.

The early balers that we used had motors on them, but as the tractors improved we had live power take off to run the balers. We had six John Deere tractors at Chapperon Lake. To start with we had two Massey Harris Pony tractors to do the mowing, but as swathers came in we replaced the Pony tractors. At the Chapperon we went for one big hay crop a year because of the irrigation system. It was all flood irrigation. The Chinese



"A four horse team moving camp. Everything to set up a camp would be on this wagon." Ray Graham. Blondie Ellingson, horseback, Herman Earnshaw, and George Sickmen driving. Nicola Valley Museum Archives photo.



Three camp wagons heading out. L-R; Guichon camp wagon, Joe Coutlee's family rig, and a Douglas Lake wagon. "These wagons were possibly heading to the Hamilton Range for a roundup on the Commonage, a range between Minnie Lake and Quilchena. Before my time all the ranchers turned their cattle out on the Commonage and there was a huge roundup and sorting of cattle from the different ranches in the fall." Ray Graham. Nicola Valley Museum Archives photo.



Douglas Lake Hesston hay making equipment. The ranch has since switched to large square bales, and a different equipment company.

D. Cox photo.



Chuckwagon at night; cowboy with a pan over the fire, candles on the box, and a horse in the background. "Probably a photo set up by the Toronto Star." Guy Rose.

Nicola Valley Museum Archives photo.

irrigators were phased out in the 1960's, the older men retired and the younger men didn't want to be irrigators.

I was born on the Chapperon Ranch in 1924. My father, Lawrence Graham, and my mother, hired a teacher for us. She stayed in our quarters, not in the bunkhouse, and ate at our living room table. My mother and the teacher were the only two women on the ranch. In the summertime there would be about thirty men in the haying crew when haying was done with horses.

The cowboy branding crew had about twenty men at Minnie Lake. The cowboys were laid off in the wintertime and a skeleton crew of ten to twelve cowboys did the winter feeding. The cowboys came from all over British Columbia and Alberta. There were a lot of Indian cowboys that went back to the Douglas Lake Reserve. They knew that cowboying was seasonal work. The farm crew did not do any hiring of cowboys. The home ranch was their headquarters when the cow camps closed in the fall. The individual ranches had one cowboy all winter for cattle health reasons, they doctored sick cattle, and moved cattle from one feed ground to another.

In my time we probably lost three head of cattle during the winter to cougars. At turn out time we had trouble with grizzly bears and black bears. The black bears are worse than the grizzlies for killing cattle. A grizzly will kill and not kill again until that carcass is all gone. A black bear is a lot more aggressive than a grizzly, once they get started killing. There are a lot of black bears that won't kill, but once a bear starts after calves, he can do a lot of damage. Charlie Shuttleworth was the predator hunter on the Douglas Lake Ranch when one was needed.

In the early 1950's, when I first took over as foreman, I did a lot of riding. I got my experience as a cowboy for the first ten years I worked at the ranch. I started cowboying in 1939, when I was fourteen years old. My first cattle drive was to Westwold. The Douglas Lake Ranch used to buy hay at Westwold, and the ranch would take over about twelve hundred head to have them fed during the winter. The feeding was contracted to Robert Clemitson. In the spring the cowboys would have to ride over and bring the cattle back before they calved.

When the work in one area was completed the crew and camp would be moved to another location. The whole cow camp would be in a camp wagon, usually pulled by a four horse team, the groceries, the tent, the stove, and the cooking utensils. Not all of the camps used tents. The north end of the ranch used tents. The cowboy crew would start out at McDonalds, close to Norfolk, with all log cabins and big barns, which the crew used. They then moved to Jenny's Flats, and the camp there was completely tents. The next move was to the head of Chapperon Lake, where they had an old granary that was used for a cookhouse, and the sleeping quarters were tents. From Chapperon Lake, the move was to Lewis Corrals, near Hatheume Lake, south and quite a bit higher in elevation than Chapperon lake. Those camps were all tents.

The tents used on the Douglas Lake Ranch had frames and four foot high lumber walls with canvas on top of that. Two of