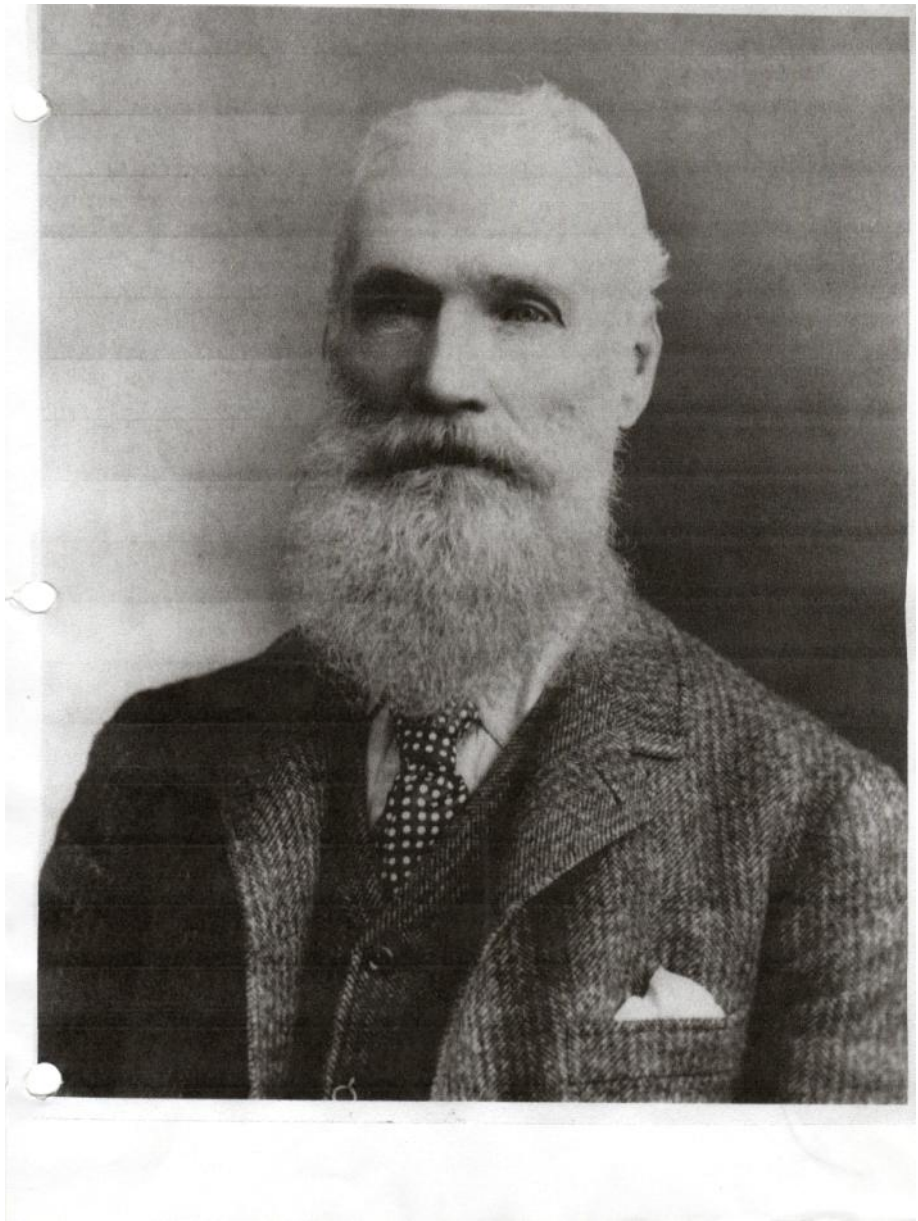


HISTORY ;
PHOTOGRAPH
THOMAS ~~ALVA~~ VWood

History & Photograph

Thomas Wood



From 1860 a steady settlement of the Valley took place and among the first four cattle men who came in was Thomas Wood. He first had a cattle ranch with Cornelius O'Keefe, north of Vernon but soon moved to the Pelme wash lake, now known as Wood's Lake, utilising the rangeland on the east side of the lake for grazing his herds of cattle. Thomas Wood was the son of a clergyman in Newfoundland. He built a long and whip-sawn lumber house and named his ranch "Winfield Lodge" from which the district has taken its name. Mr Wood married a sister of Mr. Whelan, an early settler in the Ellison district and father of Mrs. Clement, Sr. of the Winfield store. There were three daughters of the Wood's family--Florence, May, and Ruth.

Mr. Woods ranching was chiefly in stock but he planted a small orchard around the house and there are still a few trees remaining. Tom Wood brought in the first plow and hay mower into the district, fetching them from Sicamous, where they were taken to pieces and brought the rest of the distance by pack horses. The Wood's ranch house was demolished in 1923 for the Canadian National right of way and some of the wood was used in construction of the house at the corner of "lower road". There are a few hand-hewn timbers still in splendid condition. Mr. Thomas Wood was the first Justice of the Peace.

This chair was made by Thomas Wood c. 1880's.
"Taken from Early Days of Winfield, B.C."
Compiled by Mrs. W.R. Powley.

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- 1839- Tom Wood was born at St. John's ,Newfoundland, son of an Anglican clergyman.
- 1861- At age 22 he sailed to Aspinwall(now Colon) on the east side of the Isthmus of Panama. He then took the railway to Panama City and boarded ship to Victoria.
- 1862- Stayed a short while in Victoria. Sailed to Cassiar Mines 100 miles up the Stikine River. Unsuccessful in mining he returned to Victoria for the winter.
- 1863- He travelled to the Cariboo gold fields wintering at Lac La Hache.
- 1864- Employed hauling freight from Lytton to the mouth of the Quesnel River via the Cariboo Trail.
- 1865- Decided to go into business for himself. Went to California where he bought 120 head of cattle which he intended to drive up to the mines of B.C. In the Okanagan Valley he used the Indian trail on the west side of Okanagan Lake all the way through to Kamloops.
- 1865-6 He wintered his herd in Kamloops.
- 1866- En route from Kamloops to the mines at Big Bend,B.C., on the Columbia River north of Revelstoke he met Cornelius O'Keefe at Little Shushap Lake. He also was planning to bring cattle from the south to sell to the B.C. miners for food. O'Keefe joined him and together they drove Wood's herd through swamp,thick timber and snow. Before reaching Big Bend they lost 15 head. Eventually they sold all the beef at a profit to the 2000 miners.
- 1866-7 Wood and O'Keefe as partners headed south to Oregon City where they bought 176 head in April. Returning north they met Thomas Greenhowe at the Dalles on the Columbia. The three men tied 8 cattle at a time to a raft to swim them across the Columbia at Longview. They drove them through Washington State to Penticton where they met friendly Indians. Wood piloted the expedition north using his original route to Head of the Okanagan Lake. Averaging 12 miles a day they arrived in June of 1867, having lost only one steer, and that because of a rattlesnake bite. Here they pitched their tents to rest. However the land showed such promise that they decided to stay to establish a potential cattle ranch instead of undertaking the rest of the drive and sale to miners.
- 1867- The three men built their first cabin just west of the present O'Keefe house. For four years they batched together.
- 1871- Tom Wood sold his share of the ranch to Greenhowe and moved to Felmewash Lake(Wood Lake) 20 miles south.
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1871 - After leaving Head of the Lake (O'Keefe's) Tom Wood pre-empted 160 acres on the south-east of Pelmevash Lake. This area was eventually extended until he owned 3600 acres, and here he grazed his cattle. He built a house of logs and whip-sawn lumber. He married a sister of Mr. Whelan of the Ellison district as it was later known. They had three daughters: Florence, May and Ruth.

Around the house they planted a small orchard. The house itself was enlarged later to become known as the Winfield Lodge. Alveston became the town's name. (Alva was Wood's middle name.) Until 1875 the only road was a trail passing through his cattle ranch northward along the east side of the lake, thence across 'The Railroad' (isthmus) to the west side of Long Lake.

1875-T.A. Wood was made Justice of the Peace for the whole community to which was being established by Woods, Postills and Bill Frank.

1892 A sawmill was run by the Postills. Charlie Lawson carried the mail from Priest Valley (Vernon) to Okanagan Mission. As he rode through he would shout and wave but they had to travel themselves to the Mission to pick up the mail.

The first telephone line was run between Wood's Ranch and Postill Ranch.

Wood used pack-horse to bring the first hay mower and plough after dismantling them at Sicamous to be taken in pieces.

Rev. Jaffrey held services at the Winfield Lodge and the whole district soon was known as Wood Lake.

In 1892 the very severe winter resulted in death by starvation of thousands of heads of cattle between Penticton and Kamloops. However, Tom Wood saved many of his cattle by cutting brush of willow, pine and fir and strewing it around for feed.

We note that he also gathered the bunch grass which was then so lush, flailed it, then had the grain ground into flour at Brent's grist mill on Mill Creek to the south.

1892- At age 63 Tom leased some of his land to Price Ellison. In the Spring he subdivided his ranch.

N.H. Caesar bought lots in the middle and East side of the Flat. Sidney Edwards and Jack Grady bought some of the lots.

1903- As the lot sales were slow an auction was held.

M.P. Williams bought 1750 acres at the south end of the lake for a stock and sheep ranch.

1906- Wood's Range was sold to the Wood Lake Fruit Company to be planted into orchards, and content with his accomplishments Thomas Alva Wood then retired to Victoria.

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Thomas Wood's House