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Fire!

A History of the Eastgate Fire Protection Society

Ronald A. Shearer

This is an incomplete and preliminary report on research in progress. It is subject to revision and should not be cited without consulting the author.

This incomplete draft is circulated as an invitation for comments, objections, corrections and suggestions

3514 West 36th Avenue
Vancouver, BC, V6N 2S2
604 266 2852

rshearer@interchange.ubc.ca

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Fire! It is a cry that incites fear anywhere, anytime. For the inhabitants of a small, isolated community, with residences of log and frame construction, many heated by wood-burning stoves with stove-pipe chimneys, surrounded by forest and without fire suppression facilities, the cry of fire! can be starkly terrifying. A forest-bound community of wooden houses with wood burning-stoves is a combustible community. Of course, a fire might simply damage or devour a single house. However, in the absence of fire-fighting equipment and trained fire fighters, the risk is not just that a house will burn -- as devastating as that would be -- but also that a fire will spread and involve both other houses and the forest. Fire can spread directly from house to house; or, fire can originate in a chimney, spread to a house, spread to surrounding bush and trees and then to other houses (and beyond); or, fire can originate in the forest and consume the community. Fire is contagious. Members of the community will of course do what they can to contain a blaze, but lacking the necessary resources there will be a sense of helplessness and in the extreme a need to evacuate. In the early 1980s, it was concerns like these that led the residents of Eastgate, a small, isolated and forest-bound community that straddles Highway 3 just outside the eastern border of E.C. Manning Provincial Park, to organize to promote fire protection. In the beginning, they joined together as the Eastgate Residents Association, but in 1993, following the purchase of a fire truck, this informal organization was succeeded by the Eastgate Fire Protection Society, the subject of this essay. The promoters of the Association and the Society were under no illusions that they could protect the community against all fire hazards -- and particularly against those in which the forest was engaged. However, they were convinced that properly equipped and trained they could successfully suppress some fires and limit the spread of some others that they could not suppress -- and they could educate themselves and others on safe practices that would minimize the risk of fires and the risk of contagion. Those were the ambitions of the founders of the society.

This essay is a history of the Eastgate Fire Protection Society. However, the history of the Society is bound together with the history of Eastgate itself, so this essay is to some degree a history of that community. The community as we know it today is the joint product of an old, privately-owned ranch-cum-homestead, the establishment of Manning Park and the development of its recreational facilities, and the construction of the Hope-Princeton highway. As a preliminary to the discussion of the development of the Fire Society itself, I trace the development of these three key elements in the creation of Eastgate.

I. SOME PRE-HISTORY

I don't know when prospecting began in the upper Similkameen Valley, but in 1900 a Swede and a Belgian, Charles Bonnevier and Gustav Pouwels, obtained crown grants for two copper-gold mineral claims, the Red Star and the Anaconda. They later developed other claims as well and in this activity they were not alone in the valley. Others prospected and registered claims along the Similkameen, its tributary creeks, including the Paysaten River, and on the hillsides around.[1] However, it was the Bonnevier-Pouwels partnership and the Red Star and Anaconda mines that were the beginning of Eastgate.

The Homestead

Not surprisingly, given the comparative isolation in which they lived, the details of the lives of the Eastgate pioneers are murky at best.[a] Moreover, the little information that is available is sometimes inconsistent or contradictory.

Charles (Charlie) Bonnevier was born in Sweden in October 1865[2] or 1866[3] and emigrated to North America in the late 1880s[4] or early 1890s[5]. Landing at New York he worked his way across the continent until he arrived in Vancouver. Like many immigrants of the time, he worked at whatever jobs he could find, including road and trail construction, and in the process he made his way to Princeton (1894?) where he was infected by gold fever. He took up prospecting and began to pan for gold along the Similkameen and its tributaries. In a charming story, the Vancouver Sun reported that he put the first flakes of gold that he found in a small jar.[6] Subsequently, as more flakes appeared in his pan he added them to the jar. When he had accumulated an ounce, he placed a stopper in the jar which he then kept with him at all times on the principle that he would never again be broke. It is said that he kept the small hoard until he died. Is the story true? I don't know, but if it is it adds a dimension to his personality.

Gustav (Belgie) Pouwels was born in Belgium in 1862 and emigrated to Canada in 1892[7]. I don't know when he came to the Princeton area, but apparently Charlie and Belgie met up while prospecting along Friday Creek, sometime in the mid- to late-1890s. They became partners and together they prospected along the upper Similkameen River before settling in the area that is now Eastgate. Charlie built a log cabin that still stands (with a new roof but empty interior) behind the Eastgate Service Station.[b]

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[a] *The main sources of written evidence about Charles (Charlie) Bonnevier are his death registration and obituary (information for both was provided by Roy Tower, a friend), entries in two Canadian censuses, 1901 and 1911, a couple of contemporary newspaper stories and Bill Tower's memories. Perhaps because he died in the Provincial Mental Hospital at Essondale, no one wrote an obituary for Gustav Pouwels and the Census of 1901 seems to have missed him. He died in 1939, long before Roy Tower acquired the Bonnevier homestead. As a result, few details of his life survive, only those provided by the census of 1911, his death registration and the stories related to Bill Tower by Charlie Bonnevier.*

[b] *It is not clear that this is the original Bonnevier cabin or, more likely, one that was built later. In 1901 the Provincial Mineralogist reported that the Red Star-Anaconda property had a six man cabin (BC (1901a). Annual Report of the Minister of Mines, year ended December 31st, 1901. D. o. M. Province of British Columbia. Victoria). The area of the mining claims would have been much smaller than the homestead, and a considerable distance from the present cabin. A 1950 story in the Vancouver Province stated that Charlie had built the cabin "by himself" in 1910 [Province (1950b). All his life he sought gold. Vancouver Daily Province. Vancouver.]. This suggests that it was built to satisfy one of the requirements for pre-empting the land. A story in the 1955 Vancouver Sun asserts that it was the original cabin, but the story, written several years after Charlie's death, contains improbable dates ("In 1884 Charlie Bonnevier ... arrived in Princeton" and "Early in 1885 he set off seeking the 'Big Strike'" -- by Charlie's own*

When they had a serious disagreement that resulted in two years of silence between them, Belgie built his own cabin on the hillside above the valley, close to what is now called Bell Creek (I am told it was originally referred to as Belgie Creek),[8] and just outside the Bonnevier homestead. The cabin's remains are still visible. By 1937 Belgie's health and strength were failing. The Similkameen Star reported that the partners had done no mining that summer because "Belgie's legs had played out, and Charlie is getting on too."[9] Belgie may have been hospitalized in Princeton around that time, but in any case he was admitted to the Provincial Mental hospital on September 15, 1939, suffering from senile dementia. He died 16 days later, of pneumonia.[10] According to Bill Tower's memory of the story that Charlie told him, the estrangement happened near the end of Belgie's life. If so, there may have been later reconciliation. In a 1950 interview Charlie reported that he had "bid his final farewell" to Belgie, in Vancouver, in 1939;[11] Charlie either accompanied Belgie when he was admitted to the hospital, or visited him there.

The Swede and the Belgian were serious, one might say obsessive, about their search for copper and gold along the Roche River (the Similkameen above its junction with the Paysaten was then known as the Roche River[c]). In 1900 the Department of mines made a promising report on the potential of the Red Star claim[d] and the following year the Provincial Mineralogist made a special visit to the so called Roche River camp, noting that Bonnevier and Pouwels had dug a 25 foot open cut and a 15 foot tunnel on the Red Star and a 10 foot tunnel on the nearby Anaconda claim.[e] The Mineralogist's sampling was not encouraging, but the pair continued their efforts and in 1908 it was reported that they had "an excellent showing of copper-gold ore."[12] By 1915 the Department of Mines noted that the camp was "deserted the greater portion of the time," but Bonnevier and Pouwels continued to burrow into the mountainside at various locations. The Department of Mines reports in the 1920s offered favourable assessments of the potential of the Bonnevier-Pouwels property, but pointing to the transport problem noted "its inaccessibility has retarded its progress."[13] Over the years several tunnels (adits) were dug into the mountainside, some between 1000 and 2000 feet long. Some were abandoned and collapsed, but new ones were dug. This was amazing given that they had no sophisticated mining machinery; it was all done by hand labour. In the 1940s and early 1950s, with Belgie dead and buried and Charlie an old man,

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testimony he immigrated in 1894) so I distrust the "facts" presented [Goodchild, R. (1955a). Oldtimer's Vision Gave Others Gold. Vancouver Sun. Vancouver.].

[c] Apparently, the name derived from Lt. Richard Roche, RN, who was in charge of the British team that surveyed the international boundary in 1860 [{Fraser, 1989 #151}]. Occasionally the name of the river was spelled Roach. By another report it was Chuwanten Creek that was called the Roche River. Perhaps it was both. The geography of the region was not well documented at that time and it may have been thought that the Chuwanten was actually the headwaters of the Similkameen, rather than a tributary.

[d] It was reported that they had "3 feet of solid ore exposed in the face of an open cut, assay returns on which give a value of $53 in copper and gold" [BC (1900a). Annual Report of the Minister of Mines, year ended December 31st, 1900. D. o. M. Province of British Columbia. Victoria] $53 per ton of ore was a good return at the time. The issue, of course, was the volume of such ore available, which could not be known without digging a tunnel .

[e] They had been busy, having also dug a 12 foot pit on their Sailor Jack claim and a 70 foot tunnel on the Gold Crown across the river near the junction of the Paysaten River [BC (1901a). Annual Report of the Minister of Mines, year ended December 31st, 1901. D. o. M. Province of British Columbia. Victoria]. There was no bridge across the Similkameen. It was reported that they crossed the river on a cable car. If so, it must have been one of their construction. The Mineralogist also noted work in the area by other prospectors.

the Towers were infected by Charlie's mining bug. They formed a mining company, sold shares on Howe Street, conducted a diamond drilling campaign, and did more digging.[14] Little if anything came of the Tower's mining venture. In more recent times several companies have explored deposits in the Red Star group and in 1964 and 1965 some 36 tonnes or ore were shipped with gold, silver, copper and zinc recovered.[15] The value was not reported, but the project could not have been profitable. It was not continued. Several companies did more exploratory work in the 1980s and early 1990s.[16] Most recently (1997) Teck-Cominco undertook exploratory drilling but there is no record of ore being extracted and shipped.[17]

Although the digging went on for an incredibly long period of time, it is not apparent that the Bonnevier-Pouwels mining venture was remunerative. But Charlie and Belgie had to make a living and acquire the tools and supplies that miners required. I don't know the sources of their incomes. The homestead (see below) was probably important in this regard, but at times they were likely employed in other mines in the region. One instance is known. In 1900-01 Charlie worked in the mines at Fairview, a mining camp south west of Oliver in the southern Okanagan. According to the 1901 census, Charles Bonnevier was living in a boarding house at Fairview with 24 other men.[18] He reported that in 1900 he earned $900 as a miner, which was about the going rate for full-time employment as a miner at that time.[f] Beyond earnings from other people's mines, they may have shipped some ore from their own diggings. There was no wagon road into the valley until the 1930s, but it is reported that Charlie (probably Charlie and Belgie) built a trail northward to join with the Dewdney Trail in the Three Brothers Mountain area.[19] This was probably the forerunner of the present Bonnevier Trail. In the early days, if any ore was sold it would have been hauled over this trail to Princeton by pack horse or mule, to be taken by train to a smelter.[g] In the prospector's lingo of the day, it would probably have been "raw hided" out of the valley, wrapped in an animal skin and dragged behind a horse or mule. Their life at what was to become Eastgate must have been hard and marginal at best -- but like all prospectors they must have had dreams of striking it rich, that the next hole that they dug would be the "big one."

At some time, probably early in his stay in the valley, Charlie Bonnevier pre-empted 160 acres of crown land. Certain regulations governed pre-emptions.[20] The maximum that could be claimed was 160 contiguous acres, in a square or a rectangle, with the boundaries running true north and south and true east and west. These rules probably explain the configuration of the homestead and why it was diamond shaped, with one point up the hillside and another point on the other side of the river. Given the geography of the location, this had to be done to claim the flat land along the river, fit in 160 acres and

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[f] Belgie is not listed in the 1901 census, but in the 1900-1901 Henderson Directory, and in several subsequent ones, a miner named GC Powel is listed in Fairview. Pouwels name was sometimes recorded as Powell; it is possible, but not certain, that this was Belgie.

[g] Where it would have been taken, I don't know. There were several copper smelters in British Columbia. The closest was probably at Greenwood but while Princeton was connected by railway to the coast in 1909, it was not until 1915 that the Kettle Valley Railway arrived from the Kootenays. A mill was built at Allenby, between Princeton and Copper Mountain, in the mid-1920s.

conform to the rules regarding orientation.[h] Land could only be pre-empted for agricultural purposes and under the 1897 statute at least 10 acres had to be cultivated before the pre-empter would be granted title to the land. Beyond that, over a five year period a minimum value of improvements ($2.50 per acre), like the construction of a residence and other farm buildings, had to be completed. If all of the conditions were met, title could be obtained within five years on the payment of $1 per acre and certain other fees. Charlie operated the homestead as a ranch, raising some animals, cutting some timber and probably growing hay.

I don't know when Charlie registered his pre-emption, but to be eligible for a crown grant of title to the land the pre-empter had to be a British subject (there was no formal Canadian citizenship at that time). Charlie reported that he became a British subject in 1906, which suggests that the pre-emption occurred early on in his time in the valley, probably between 1901 and 1906[i], and that title was received at the latest by 1911.

There were other homesteads in the valley. By one report, Belgie owned 320 acres adjacent to the Bonnevier homestead.[21] He reported becoming a British subject in 1909, so he may have filed a pre-emption of 160 acres around that time. Where the additional 160 acres came from, I don't know. There was also a homestead to the west of Charlie's, held by a widow, Mrs. Angela McDiarmid, who spent summers there with her family and winters in Princeton.[22] It later became a pasture in Manning Park, called McDiarmid meadows. It may have been the McDiarmid's cabins that Bill Tower reported that they dismantled when building the Tower restaurant and motel.[23] Apparently there was also a homestead near Similkameen Falls, at what later came to be called Circle K Ranch. I don't know if this was part of Belgie's property.

After Belgie's committal to Essondale in 1939, Charlie's life must have been lonely, although there were others living close by and work camps and highway construction crews often put a lot of people in the valley. Moreover, Charlie was getting older (he was 73 when Belgie died); operating the ranch must have become very difficult for him. He let it be known that he wanted to sell.[j]

Roy Tower was living in Admiral, Saskatchewan, where he was a John Deere dealer, when the great depression and dust bowl of the 1930s hit the prairies. With low prices and almost no crops, it was not a happy time for farmers or for sellers of farm equipment. Like many others, his business in tatters, Roy Tower packed up his family and left for Vancouver in 1933. He operated various businesses and worked at various jobs in the lower mainland until, in 1943, he heard of the availability of the Bonnevier homestead. With a friend he went to see it, taking the then standard but long way around, up the Fraser

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[h] Because he acreage had to be contiguous and a square and the borders had to run north-south and east-west, given the geography of the area, to claim 160 acres the Bonnevier homestead had to both go up the hillside and cross the river.

[i] He had to be a British subject when the pre-emption was filed or within five years after it was filed (i.e., before he could receive a crown grant to the land.

[j] In 1937 "some mining men" made a special trip to inspect the Red Star and Anaconda mines [Star (1937a). Mining men visit Bonnevier property. Similkameen Star. Princeton.]. It seems likely that Belgie and Charlie were attempting to sell out at that time. Apparently the mining men were not impressed with the mines; no deal was reached. .

Canyon, across to Merritt, down to Princeton and out to the homestead. He liked what he saw and purchased the homestead for $2,000. From then on it was known as the Tower Ranch. Charlie was then 77 or 78 years old - a ripe old age for the time. He remained living in his old cabin on the ranch until he died of stomach cancer, in the Princeton hospital, on October 29, 1952, at age 86 or 87.[24]

For several years the Tower family (Roy had eight children, including four boys) operated the ranch, making a living by raising animals, cutting timber that they hauled to Princeton to sell, and working on the Hope-Princeton highway.[25] Bill was still a school student when the family moved to the ranch from Langley. He remained in Langley living with friends and attending school until 1946 when he joined the family at the ranch. He completed high school in Princeton, part of the time boarding with a local family and part of the time living with his own family in a small house that Charlie Bonnevier owned. Summers were spent on the ranch.

With serious construction going forward on Hope-Princeton highway, the Towers recognized the ranch's potential as a recreational facility. They cut and stacked timber until it was thoroughly dry, set up a small sawmill near the river at the end of the airstrip and sawed lumber to make a restaurant and eleven cabins. The restaurant, which seated 43 people, was completed and they were ready for business a week before the opening ceremony at Allison Pass.[26] The Tower Ranch became a landmark on the Hope-Princeton highway. It was not only a popular place for tourists to stop, eat and perhaps stay over, it also became a popular recreational facility, winter and summer. Bill fondly remembers the annual Vancouver-Tower Ranch, two-day automobile rally sponsored by the Sports Car Club of British Columbia. It was not a race in which speed was central, but a controlled trip, over winter-roads (the rally was held in February), with each car having to pass designated control points at appointed times. Points were lost for being early or being late; the winner was the car that lost the fewest point, conforming closest to the specified schedule. Each car had a driver and a navigator so when they reached their destination the ranch yard was full of sports cars and the cabins bursting with overnight guests. 116 cars, some from the States, participated in the 1955 rally[27]; for the fifth annual rally in 1958, over 150 cars were involved.[28] From a business perspective, the annual rally was an important event for the ranch and presumably also for Manning Park. But the rally also had broader importance, calling attention through personal exposure to the winter recreational potential of the area.

The Tower ranch also offered hiking and horse riding, including trail rides into the surrounding mountains and sleigh rides in the winter. Skiing had long been a popular activity at Princeton, which, indeed, hosted two ski clubs. However, the first ski hill in the upper valley was built by the Tower boys on the slope across the river from the restaurant and cabins. They cleared a ski hill, installed a rope tow and brother Les Tower went east to take a ski-instructor course in order to provide lessons for guests.[29] That the Tower facility was popular is suggested by the enthusiastic 1954 report of a group of Hope "young people" who held a weekend birthday party there, "skiing, tobogganing and dancing ... till the small hours of the morning".[30] They wound up a Sunday of "sleigh riding, skiing, tobogganing and horseback riding"

with "a delicious Turkey supper served in the Towers Cafe." In providing the facilities for festive skiing holidays that attracted skiers from the Fraser Valley and the coast, the Towers anticipated Manning Park by several years.

Manning Park installed a competing ski hill and rope tow in 1954. These facilities were closer to the Fraser Valley and to Vancouver and with the installation of a Poma lift, by 1960 offered more attractive skiing facilities than did the Tower ranch. The ranch became less viable as a ski resort. However, it still had the restaurant and cabins. Then, the destructive power of fire revealed itself. In 1964 the Tower restaurant burned down in what must have been the area's first, major, structural fire. The restaurant was a total loss, although the cabins were saved. By that time, however, Manning Park was taking over as the popular destination for winter recreation. It was time for the Tower enterprise to move on. The next step would be the subdivision of the ranch and the creation of Eastgate.

The Highway

The second basic element in the establishment of Eastgate as a community of recreational and residential properties was the construction of the Hope-Princeton highway.

For the devotees of a more direct route from the southern interior of the province to the coast, the campaign for the Hope-Princeton highway was long and frustrating. Nineteenth century pack trails and a partial wagon road, first to facilitate the fur trade and later to provide an all-Canadian route to the gold mines of the interior, opened the first part of the route out of Hope in the mid- to late- nineteenth century.[31] However, these trails turned north at what is now called Rhododendron Flats, went through the Hope Pass on the northern side of what was to become Manning Park (or went even farther north to the Tulameen River), rather than through the Allison Pass, en route to Princeton, and so did not provide access to the upper Similkameen valley.[k] Although the "engineers road," built in 1862, permitted wagon traffic as far as Rhododendron Flats, from that point on the trails were only passable by horse and by foot. Agitation for a wagon road between Hope and Princeton along the Similkameen route began in the late nineteenth century. By 1900, the Vancouver Board of Trade had commissioned a report on the route and was giving serious consideration to the merits of such a project.[32] There were also rumours that the Great Northern Railway would build through the valley (they put a survey team in the field), rumours that apparently stimulated speculative private acquisitions of land in what was to become the park area.[33] However, the first serious measures were not taken until 1911 when a complete survey of the route through the Allison Pass declared it feasible.[34] Some work was then done at both ends. A false start was made outside of Hope, starting at Silver Creek with the intention of following the Skagit River. At the same time, from Princeton a rough road was built to the south for about 12 miles. World War I stopped all work on the road.[35] Extensive surveying was again undertaken in the early 1920s,[36] but no new

[k] *In 1904, as an effort was made to definitively locate the international border, a trail was cut roughly along the border [Harris, R. C. (1991). Early trails. Reflections of the past: Manning Park memories. . V. Haberl. Victoria, B.C., Ministry of Lands and Parks.]. Part of it was incorporated into the present Skyline Trail (which itself was an ancient Indian route). This trail was in parts steep and rugged, not designed for commerce. Although it reached the area that is now Eastgate, it did not provide effective "access" to the valley. .*

construction occurred until 1930-31. At the Hope end construction progressed along the route of the Engineer's Road, but the Skagit bluffs loomed as a major obstacle. A plan to build the road along the Skagit River in the canyon below the bluffs was considered, found too costly and the proposed road too difficult to maintain. It was rejected in favour of a route over top of the bluffs[37] where a dangerous track that passed for a road was built. On the Princeton end, a rough road was pushed through to Copper Creek.[38] The following year, the road was extended "for a distance of 5 miles ... (from) Copper Creek to Belgie's cabin and was practically completed to permit of supply trucks and equipment to be taken to a point 34 miles west of Princeton."[39] The Bonnevier cabin and what was to become Eastgate were now at the end of a narrow, winding, rough but passable dirt road that led to the outside world. In 1932-33 a further nine miles were completed, and in the following year the road reached the vicinity of the present headquarters of Manning Park, 45 miles from Princeton[40]. However, the Public Works Department noted that the road, "is not yet built to grade or to full width," and by the standards of the day "full width" was much narrower than today's standards. Some years later it was still the case that near the prospectors' cabin the road was not wide enough for two cars to pass.[41]

Although the British Columbia Department of Public Works was directly involved, particularly in surveying and engineering, the work done during the early 1930s was by crews of otherwise unemployed men, living in relief camps along the right of way, largely financed and supervised by the federal government (much of the time by the Department of National Defence).[42] Then, in 1936, the system of federally funded relief camps came to an abrupt end.[43] The following year some provincial money was used to fund work at the Princeton end, employing men from the Princeton relief roll at "standard wages" rather than the minimal stipends of the federal relief projects, but the money soon ran out.[44] Although agitation by interior Boards or Trade and newspapers continued, some suggesting construction of the road as an urgent matter of national defence,[45] little more was done on the highway until 1942.

Beginning in 1942, and continuing for several years, the president of the Princeton Board of Trade annually led an expedition over the route to generate publicity for the cause. The 1942 expedition, which went from Hope to Princeton, provides us with a verbal picture of state of the road at that time.[46] For the first ten miles out of Hope the road was "good," apart from a rough detour because a bridge had not yet been built over a creek -- but we have to remember that the concepts of "good" and "bad" were relative to rather primitive road conditions at the time and consequent low expectations. At mile ten, the built portion of the road ended. The party then had to travel sixteen miles on the nineteenth century engineer's road. Built for horse drawn wagons, it was narrow, winding and undulating, with sharp crowns on hills, such that contemporary automobiles with relatively low undercarriages had serious difficulties, sometimes getting hung up. Then came the bluffs where the road went up and over. It was reported that to avoid this obstacle a new road was planned along the Skagit River, down in the canyon, that would cross the river and go up the other side before it crossed back beyond the bluffs. However, it had not been built. Cayuse Flats was next, but at the junction of the Skaist and Skagit rivers, all semblance of a road ended. It was possible to get a wheeled vehicle to this point "with a little work," but for the remaining

section to Allison Pass there was only "what passes for a trail." Because of the heavy growth of trees and brush it was virtually impassable "even for pack horses." The trip from Cayuse Flats to Allison Pass, where the party was met by vehicles, took over eight hours. The remaining 50 miles or so to Princeton took a further two hours and, with the four hours involved from Hope to Cayuse Flats, the total elapsed time, Hope to Princeton, was over 15 hours. In other words, there were two sections of road at either end, with a large gap between them. "Close the gap" became rallying cry of the Hope-Princeton campaign.

After Japan entered World War II, immigrants from Japan and Canadian-born people of Japanese ancestry were banned from coastal regions, dispossessed of their property and dispatched to interior locations. Beginning in March, 1942, some of the men were placed in the old relief work camps along the Hope Princeton highway and put to work building the road.[l] The Hope-Princeton lobby, whose priority was closing the "gap," stated emphatically that they would not be satisfied by work that merely improved the existing sections of the road.[47] However, with little reliable road building equipment available, most of the Japanese were working with picks, shovels and wheelbarrows[m] and the work assigned to them was improving the existing sections of the road -- widening, straightening and smoothing the surface. More equipment was brought in over the summer of 1943, but it was old and unreliable, requiring frequent repairs.[48]

Road improvement by Japanese workers continued. Late in the summer of 1942 however, a camp was established at the Allison Pass summit, staffed primarily by workers from Princeton, to extend the road as a national defence measure.[49] A "tote road" -- a rough, one track road, suitable only for trucks -- was built a few miles into the gap. In 1943 the work continued and by October the tote road closed the gap.[50] The first vehicle(s) through the gap contained a woman, a baby, a tourist and seven men from the Princeton work crew. When asked why they made the tortuous trip (it took about three hours) they replied that "they just wanted to be the first."[51] The road was immediately closed to the public,[52] but many people ignored the "road closed" signs.[53] Although for the adventurous, the Hope Princeton road was in a sense "open," it was a narrow, rough road, not a highway, and travelling it was not for the faint of heart. When an "official" vehicle, containing engineers and a federal official, went over

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[l] *The Similkameen Star reported in mid-March, 1942, that 101 Japanese men had arrived in Princeton by train and were sent to the first labour camp about 12 miles along the road [Star (1942b). 101 Japanese sent to Hope road camps. Similkameen Star. Princeton.]. In early April, an additional 50 men arrived [Star (1942c). More Japs on Hope road Similkameen Star. Princeton.]. By mid-summer 160 men were working on the Princeton end of the road, divided between the first camp and the second camp at Copper Creek, and perhaps 130 on the Hope end [Star (1942a). Southin presents Hope road report. Similkameen Star. Princeton.]. The number working on the Princeton end seems to have remained steady, between 160 and 170. On the Hope end there was a large Japanese encampment called Tashme at what is now Sunshine Village housing between 3,000 and 3,500 men, women and children in "acres and acres of uniform wooden houses, row on row." [Star (1943b). Party hike over Hope trail Monday; enjoy trip. Similkameen Star. Princeton.]. Perhaps 250 to 300 men worked on the Hope end of the road, 1943-1945.*

[m] *In 1842 it was said that the equipment consisted of one compressor at the first camp and a bull dozer and power shovel at the difficult section around Copper Creek [Star (1942e). No word received here re finishing of Hope highway. Similkameen Star. Princeton.]. In 1943 it was reported that the equipment on the Princeton side consisted of 2 gas shovels (18 years old),3 air compressors, 2 bull dozers, 5 old provincial government truck and 3 rented trucks [Star (1943b). Party hike over Hope trail Monday; enjoy trip. Similkameen Star. Princeton.].*

the road a couple of weeks after the first one, to signify that it was officially finished, it had rained and they had to be pulled through muddy sections by a tractor.[54]

Work continued on the road through 1944 and 1945, although the number of Japanese workers was reduced in mid-1945 when they were assigned elsewhere.[55] A surveyor traversed the road in April, 1945. His report provides a dispassionate assessment of the state of the road -- partly gravelled but mostly dirt -- on the eve of its final reconstruction.[56] The first 16 miles, to Friday Creek, was said to be "good," but from there to Copper Creek, and indeed, to the Manning monument at the falls, it was "bad." "From Manning Park monument (Similkameen Falls) the road is good but narrow, with not enough room for cars to pass except at certain spots." Beyond Allison Pass the road "drops sharply ... (and) ... is narrow and difficult." Cars had to go in second and low gear and cross the Skagit River several times "without benefit of bridges." Over the bluffs the road was "steep and rough." He suggested that a different route would be desirable. "If the highway were to follow the present tote road it would be unfortunate."[n] This was the state of the road when the government announced that the Hope Princeton was the first priority in highway construction after the war. There was a lot of work to be done. Indeed, virtually the whole road had to be reconstructed and in places, like the bluffs, a new route found.

Through the 1930s and early 1940s, all construction work on the road had been done in bits and pieces by "day labour," that is workers on the Department of Works payroll or in the relief or Japanese internment programs. In 1946 the government got serious. Two major construction contracts were awarded, one of each end of the highway. The two companies, Emil Anderson from the Hope end and W.C. Arnett from the Princeton end,[57] were to build toward each other and meet in 1947 -- then in 1948 -- then in 1949. The highway was finally opened in November 1949 at a ceremony at the Allison Pass. Charlie Bonnevier was by now recognized by the government as the resident pioneer prospector, a fitting symbol of the region's past. He had earlier been chosen to unveil the Manning memorial plaque on the opening of Manning Park. He was now chosen to open the highway. When the dignitaries were assembled, Charlie appeared out of the crowd with his pack horse in tow. He presented flowers to the female dignitaries in the grandstand and then, as the gate was raised, at the invitation of the Premier he led his horse across the line between the two sections of the road.[58] Thus, Charlie Bonnevier officially opened the Hope-Princeton highway; a dream that he shared with other residents of the Similkameen valley had finally come true.[o] The Tower Ranch -- Charlie's homestead -- was connected by a paved highway to both the interior and the coast. One of the preconditions for the creation of Eastgate and the development of Manning Park was in place.

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[n] *Picking on the favourite target of mountain people's jokes, another commentator suggested "If a Saskatchewan farmer took just one look over the bluffs he would have to be taken home on a stretcher." [Star (1944a). Local business men inspect Hope road. Similkameen Star. Princeton.]*

[o] *In fact, the highway was not quite finished. A short section on the west slope of Allison Pass was not yet paved.*

As a sad but prophetic footnote, five hours after it was opened the highway claimed its first casualties as a car went off the road on a curve about 4.5 miles out of Hope.[59] Three people were killed and two were injured.

The Park

The Bonnevier homestead provided the location and the Hope-Princeton highway provided access, but the development of Manning Park and its recreation potential was also essential to the growth and prosperity of Eastgate.

There had long been interest in the Forest Service (then responsible for provincial parks) and among sections of the general public in establishing a park in the upper Similkameen Valley. The first effective step was taken in 1931 when a small reserve was created in the vicinity of Three Brothers Mountain that prohibited hunting and trapping, closed the area to private pre-emption of land and, from 1934, stopped grazing by cattle and sheep.[60] The reserve was doubled in size in 1936.[61] Residents of the Princeton region regarded the Three Brothers Reserve as a provincial park, even though access was difficult. Indeed, there was some local criticism of the establishment of Manning Park on grounds that it was not necessary to set aside so much land when there already was a park in the area.[62] Of course, for the broader public, a remote game reserve was in no way comparable to a large, accessible park. Some work was undertaken developing trails to provide for public access to the Three Brothers Reserve, but it was not until June, 1941, that the larger ambition was achieved. A provincial park of 171,500 acres (69,400 hectares)[p] was established that enveloped the old game reserve and much more. It was named for E.C. Manning, a popular chief forester and advocate for provincial parks, who had died in an airplane crash in Ontario earlier that year.[63] The park was dedicated in a ceremony held at the promontory overlooking Similkameen Falls on a rainy Sunday, September 17, 1941. With many provincial dignitaries in attendance, a cairn with a plaque commemorating E.C. Manning was unveiled by the area's resident, pioneer, prospector and settler, Charlie Bonnevier.[q]

When Manning Park was created, the eastern boundary followed the Similkameen River as far as Copper Creek and then followed the creek northwest to the Three Brothers area. Thus, Charlie Bonnevier's homestead, apart from a small point on the south side of the Similkameen River, was inside in the park. This had profound implications for Charlie and later for the Tower brothers, because park regulations restricted the use that could be made of private property within park boundaries. I don't know what negotiations went on behind the scenes, but in July, 1950, the government excluded from the park a three mile wide strip of land at its eastern edge that included what had been the Bonnevier homestead

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[p] *The size of the park varied from time to time as land was added or deleted. This figure is the reported size when the park was established [Lyons, C. P. (1945). "The planning of Manning Park." The Victoria Naturalist 2: 35-39.] Currently the acreage is reported to be 175 059 acres(70,844 hectares)(http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/ecmanning/).*

[q] *I don't know if Charlie made a speech (it seems unlikely). However, he later received a graceful "thank you" note from Mrs. Manning, apologizing for her failure to meet and talk with him on the occasion of the dedication, but promising to see him on her next trip to the park [Star (1941a). Park dedication marred by rain. Similkameen Star. Princeton, Star (1941b). Mrs. Manning sends thanks to Charles Bonnevier. Similkameen Star. Princeton.]. The cairn and is plaque were later moved to stand outside Pinewoods Lodge*

and was then the Tower Ranch. The rationale given was that "park restrictions were handicapping the owners in their plans for development."[r] The conditions were now set for the subdivision, piecemeal sale and residential development of the land that became Eastgate -- but those developments were still some time in the future.

When the park was opened there was a rough road into the area from Princeton and, of course, the historic fur trade and mining trails that cut across its western and northern sections, but, despite the work that had been done, the Hope-Princeton highway was still essentially a dream. Public access was difficult. However, the development of the network of nature and hiking trails in the park continued and, when, after World War II, it became clear that a modern Hope-Princeton highway would be a reality, serious work began to develop facilities for large numbers of park visitors and park staff. Several camp grounds were built as were trails and roads into various parts of the park. The Pinewoods Lodge and a collection of motel-type cabins were built on a flat area on the south side the highway at what was called "Cambie Crossing" and a combined service station and store, a forest ranger station and administrative buildings were built on the north side of the highway. Necessary water and sewerage systems were developed.

Pinewoods lodge and its associated cabins were opened in June, 1950,[64] but, although the park ranger, Bob Boyd, envisaged it as a year-round recreational retreat,[65] it was essentially a summer resort. An 800 foot ski hill had been cleared on the side of Blackwall Mountain across the highway from the lodge in 1950, [66] but then the development of skiing facilities stalled -- Pinewoods was not open during the next four winters. Dissatisfaction with operations under the initial concessionaires led to a new tendering of the contract in 1953[67] and the result was an energetic, innovative new manager, Rene Pelletier. In accordance with Boyd's vision, Pelletier worked enthusiastically to make Pinewoods an attractive destination for winter as well as summer recreation. In 1954, a rope tow was installed on the hill[68] and soon after a Poma lift.[69] Skiing was now established at Manning. Transport from the coast for skiers was always a problem. I don't know if Pelletier was instrumental in making the arrangement (I suspect he was), but on at least one occasion, a ski train was run from Vancouver to Hope, with the passengers then taken by bus to the park.[70] However, I have found no evidence that the venture was a common occurrence. At the park, an outdoor skating rink and horse-and-sleigh rides became popular entertainments. To enliven the winter holiday period, a gala New Year's Eve party was held in the lodge.

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[r] [Province (1950a). Manning Park reduced to aid private firms. Vancouver Daily Province. Vancouver.]. The alternate explanation is that "the boundaries were changed to accommodate the mining interest." [Harris, L. (1968). Manning Park, before and after. Victoria Colonist. Victoria, B.C, Cameron, J. N. (1970). History and Natural Resources of Manning Park. Forestry. Vancouver, University of British Columbia. B.Sc. (Forestry).]. Harris also notes that when the land was excluded from the park, "not one claim was registered." The clear suggestion is that a flurry of claims staked between 1941 and 1950 was a means of putting pressure on the government to exclude the land from the park. In 1968 the park was again trimmed by 2880 acres (1165 hectares), this time on its western edge and quite explicitly to accommodate mining [Province (1968a). B.C. chops park for mining firm. Vancouver Daily Province. Vancouver, Sun (1968a). Manning Park cut for mine. Vancouver Sun. Vancouver.] As a "Class A" park, industrial and commercial activity was prohibited within Manning Park's boundaries. Canam Mines was a then dormant but pre-existing mining property for which its parent, Giant Mascot Mines, had development plans that were frustrated by the inclusion of the mine in the park. The exclusion of the area from the park for commercial purposes was controversial [Sun (1968b). Time to switch effigies. Vancouver Sun. Vancouver.].

On occasion, the lodge advertised in Hope and Princeton newspapers. These were all important measures to attract visitors to Manning Park. However, in search of wintertime park development, Pelletier's launched an even bolder venture.

The Winter Olympics?

How he got the idea, I don't know, but in 1960 Pelletier mounted an aggressive campaign to have Manning Park selected as the Canadian candidate to host the 1968 Winter Olympic Games.[71] The venue was to be Mount Frosty, a 2400 metre mountain, the highest in Manning Park, located a short distance south of the Pinewoods Lodge. The plan involved the creation of an extensive new ski area on a towering mountain that was easily accessible from Pinewoods and the Hope-Princeton highway and had exciting potential ski slopes. If the bid for the Olympics had been successful, in the long run, the result would have been to convert Manning Park into a first-class destination ski resort and, with the construction of private dwellings prohibited in the park, Eastgate would have become a modern ski village.

Winning the nomination was not a trivial matter. Pelletier required the approval and support of the provincial government and to that end he built a political base.[s] He obtained endorsements from politicians in surrounding ridings and from important business people from the Fraser Valley and southern interior.[72] He met with boards of trade and took members on a tour of the site.[73] A committee to sponsor the bid was organized, headed by the chairman of the Hope Board of Trade and including representatives from other valley Boards.[74] Not surprisingly, the proposal was endorsed by the Towers. Their ranch would become much more valuable in the event of a successful bid and, even if the bid was unsuccessful, the publicity for the area would not hurt. Pelletier also sought endorsements from well established skiing authorities.[75] One of the most vocal was Bert Irwin of Princeton, who had been a member of Canada's 1948 Winter Olympics team.[76] In addition, a group of over 50 that included both ski experts and media people was invited to inspect the facilities. A flyover was arranged, with a number of small planes flying out of the Hope airport for a tour of the park,[t] followed by a banquet at Pinewoods Lodge.[77] In a series of interviews and speeches and in a 17 page brief, Pelletier extolled the virtues of Mount Frosty and decried the liabilities of the main competitor for the nomination, Whistler Mountain in Garibaldi Provincial Park (normally referred to as the Garibaldi proposal).[78] It was argued that an expensive road would have to be built to Whistler whereas Manning already had highway access and that access was to both the coast and the interior. As a result, the cost of preparing the venue would be much

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[s] Pelletier was from Alberta where, as a young man, he had been part of the Social Credit political wave that swept over the province, federally as well as provincially. He was elected to the Canadian parliament in 1935 as the Social Credit member for Peace River at age 27, to then the youngest person elected to such a position [Globe (1935a). Elected and defeated candidates. Globe and Mail. Toronto.]. He served until 1940 when he joined the Canadian army. As a former Social Credit politician in Alberta, Pelletier may have thought that he had an in with the provincial government, not realizing that it was Social Credit in name only. When he visited Victoria in 1953, he was treated as a minor celebrity [Colonist (1953a). Socred "original" visits in Victoria. Victoria Colonist. Victoria.].

[t] It was originally planned to base the airplanes at the airstrip at the Tower Ranch, but it was decided that the landing strip was too short for some of the planes. One of the planes was to be flown by Stan Tower, one of the Tower Ranch boys. The Tower Ranch, of course, had much to gain from a successful bid (and even if the bid was unsuccessful, the publicity for the area would not hurt).

less at Frosty and the games would be more readily accessible to people in the interior. Moreover, Whistler received much more rain in a typical winter and, with a milder climate, had excessive amounts of wetter snow. Frosty was blessed, most of the time, with "interior powder" -- "eight to ten feet of dry powder snow."[79] As a final stroke, the cabinet was persuaded to meet at Pinewoods Lodge to see the glories of the park first hand while hearing briefs from the four contenders for the nomination.[80] Not mentioned by Pelletier, of course, were that Whistler was a much larger mountain, had a longer potential ski season, was accessible by rail, had an old, established, summer lake resort at its base and, crucially, was much closer to Vancouver.

The cabinet meeting was held on November 7, 1960, but the outcome was inconclusive.[81] Representatives of the four contenders -- Frosty, Whistler, Fernie and Rossland -- made presentations. The premier was said to have been impressed with the potential of Manning, but he refused to designate any of the venues as British Columbia's nominee. Presumably sticking out his political nose and smelling a sensitive a local issue that, by seeming to demean three regions of the province by choosing one, could cost votes in a forthcoming election. Alternatively, perhaps he was concerned that if any site was selected the provincial government would be seen to be committed to funding its development. In any case, Premier Bennett refused to endorse of reject any of the proposals. Nor did he appoint an independent assessor to recommend a British Columbia nominee. Rather, he said, the four should get together and decide which proposal was best[82] -- surely an impossible challenge.

Despite all the game playing, it is clear that the government favoured Whistler -- particularly if someone else would bear the cost. The obstacle was always the cost of providing highway access. A road existed to Squamish, but from there to Alta Lake there was only a rough, service road for the hydro-power line. In 1958 there were discussions between Ottawa and Victoria about funding the development of Garibaldi Park. The federal government made it clear that they would only provide funds if it was given "unconditional control of the area ... (with)... no strings attached."[u] [83] The issue arose again in early 1960 when there were discussions began about bringing the 1968 Winter Olympics to Garibaldi. An elaborate "master plan" for the park had been developed a year earlier that saw intensive development of downhill skiing facilities at Diamond Head,[84] but the promoters of the Olympics plan soon shifted the focus from Diamond Head to Whistler. Again Ottawa was approached for help. The federal government was asked to bear half of the cost of developing downhill skiing facilities on the mountain to winter Olympics standards.[85] Ottawa's answer was the same as earlier; it could not spend the sums required on developing facilities in a provincial park. It would have to have unencumbered control over the whole park. Under pressure, Premier Bennett then made a verbal offer to turn the park over to Ottawa. [86]

[u] *This was not the first proposal to convert Garibaldi Park into a National Park. Such an idea was mooted in 1932. I don't know how serious the two governments were, but the provincial investigative committee concluded that the park did not meet National Park standards, at least with respect to size [BC (1932b). Report on Garibaldi Park and contiguous area. D. o. L. Province of British Columbia. Victoria]. The provincial government then added areas to the south, extending to Golden Ears and Alouette Lake, to the area to be transferred [{Sun, 1932a #148}]. In the end Ottawa demurred, perhaps because there were already four national parks in British Columbia, perhaps because of the cost [{Province, 1933a #150; Sun, 1933a #149}].*

Nothing happened. When queried, Ottawa officials said that they were waiting for a written proposal and commitment from the provincial government. Victoria people said that they were waiting for a written proposal and commitment from Ottawa.[87] An impasse! The issue died, possibly by design, but the Whistler people remained in contention for the Canadian nomination as 1968 Winter Olympics host, presumably in full knowledge that if they won, the funds for development would be forthcoming.

Of course, it was highly improbable that either Whistler or Frosty would win the Canadian nomination let alone be selected as Olympic host location. To have had a realistic chance of being selected as the Canadian nominee by the Canadian Olympic Committee, Frosty, or any of the proposals, would have had to have the enthusiastic endorsement of the British Columbia government, but all four British Columbia proposals were presented to the Canadian Olympic Association without a specific endorsement by Victoria. Against the advice of the Canadian Olympic Association,[v] the Frosty group raised funds to send a representative to the meeting in Toronto to lobby for its proposal.[88] The effort came to naught. Banff was selected.[89] It already had well developed skiing facilities, had devoted several years in the preparing its proposal and was strongly support by Alberta. Although thus nominated, Banff did not succeed; the Olympics went to Grenoble, France.[90] Despite its failure in the selection of the venue, Canada had a great victory at those games that elevated international appreciation of skiing in British Columbia. Nancy Greene of Rossland (one of the candidate locations for Canada's nomination to hold the Olympics) won gold in the women's giant slalom and silver in the slalom.

When the Frosty group realized that winning the BC nomination was not in the cards, they set off on a different track. Perhaps this was the primary intention all the time and the Olympic bid was just to stimulate interest in the potential of Mount Frosty as a world-class ski hill. They applied to the Parks Branch to open a privately owned ski resort on Mount Frosty. When that proposal was rejected as too ambitious, the group responded with a scaled down version of the proposal, still involving the development of Mount Frosty.[91] This was probably seen as the small edge of the wedge; the revised proposal was not accepted. The government had earlier announced that "the provincial government plans to permit private capital to develop ski facilities in Manning Park," but the minister had made it clear that "he was not thinking in terms of a resort suited to the 1968 Winter Olympics." [92] Although he was willing to have private operators of skiing facilities in the park, he was not opening the door to skiing on Mount Frosty. Rather, he had in mind a much more modest development in the Gibson Pass area. By this time, the development of Whistler was almost a fait accompli. A road from Squamish to Whistler was under construction, the government had approved the installation of privately-owned ski facilities on Whistler Mountain and a company had been formed to implement that development.[93] The government may well have believed that two ski resorts of this scale, both directed primarily at the lower mainland market, was one too many -- and Whistler had most of the advantages.

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[v] *In a telephone call, the chair of the Association stated that the selection would be based on the report of the engineering firm (Foundation Canada Engineering Corporation) hired to evaluate all of the proposals. For this reason, he "didn't see that such representation would serve any useful purpose" [Standard (1961a). Manning group backs delegate to the east. Hope Standard. Hope.]. Clearly, the decision had already been made based on the FENCO recommendation.*

For Eastgate, what didn't happen was as important as what did. The critical failure was not the failure to win Canada's nomination for the host of the 1968 Winter Olympics -- that was never in the cards. It was the failure to obtain permission to develop Mount Frosty as a private ski resort. Had that application been approved, the necessary funds been raised, Eastgate would have been a very different community than it came to be. Rather than a collection of people, most of whom relish the relative low-key development at Gibson Pass, it would have been a ski village more like Whistler, with more elaborate commercial and residential buildings and correspondingly more elaborate fire protection facilities than those offered by the Eastgate Fire Protection Society. Because it has much better snow for skiing, would the development of Frosty have impaired the development of Whistler? Probably not, it only because of its location. However, it would have offered much more serious competition, at least for skiers in the Fraser Valley and the eastern side of the metropolitan area and have had a telling impact on Manning Park and on Eastgate.

Gibson Pass

It was probably simply the next step in the evolution of Manning Park based on the master plan prepared in the 1950s[94] and not a response to the Mount Frosty Olympics initiative, but in any case in the early 1960s the Parks Branch turned its attention to the Gibson Pass area for the development of skiing facilities. Indeed, perhaps it was the long established plan for the development of Gibson Pass that underlay the rejection of the 1963 bid to privatize Frosty. By then development of Gibson Pass was underway. A rough "jeep road" had been built through the area in the mid-1950s, providing access over the mountains to Paddy Lake (now called Poland Lake).[95] In 1961 work began to convert the jeep road into a general access road to the pass,[96] work that continued over the next couple of years. In the winter of 1964/65 careful reconnaissance was made, both by land and by helicopter, to determine the best pattern of development of ski hills in the Gibson Pass area and in the spring plans were drawn.[97] Over the summer, a warming hut was built and a twin rope tow installed. That winter the Gibson Pass ski area was a reality, if only on a very modest scale.

The following year the ski hill was extended upward and a Poma lift placed alongside the double rope tow. The major leap forward was made in 1967 when a large allocation of provincial funds ($350,000) permitted further clearing, the installation of the area's first chair lift ("blue" chair), the addition of a beginner's rope tow and the construction of new buildings at the ski hill and at the Pinewoods site (15 six-person cabins, designed for skiers).[98] Installation of a second chair lift ("orange") was finished in 1970, and with a T-bar at the base of the beginner's slope and the beginning of grooming of cross-country trails, the construction of ski facilities at Gibson Pass was substantially complete (apart from later improvements to some of the trails).[99] The result was a far cry from the development that Pelletier had envisaged for Mount Frosty. In place of a world class ski resort, Manning Park had a modest, family-oriented, ski hill.[100] For many of those who bought property at Eastgate, that was the attraction. From the outset, the ski hill was immensely popular, with large crowds on weekends and difficulty in finding a parking place. It was not to many winter before that popularity began to wane.

While the development of Gibson Pass was ongoing, the staff did not neglect summer time recreation. In 1961 they began a three year process to build a dam on Little Muddy Creek that would convert a small lake, long popular with area fishermen,[101] into a much larger one, that would be the venue for water-based recreation in the park. The project was finished 1966, with a landscaped park, picnic facilities, a boat dock, canoe rentals and a large camp ground.[102] The Lightening Lake recreation area was another amenity that was attractive to potential purchasers of Eastgate properties.

With the completion of the Lightening Lake and Gibson Pass projects the development of major recreational facilities at the park was at an end. What remained were marginal improvements to trails and other installations.

Adversity: Competition, Restraint and Privatization

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the development of recreational facilities at Manning Park continued at a rapid pace, funded by the provincial government and operated by Parks Branch staff. Then matters beyond the park staff's control intervened. In part, it was competition from other ski areas, in part government policy that stalled development of the Gibson Pass ski area.

The first, and perhaps most basic competitive issue, was the emergence of Whistler Mountain ski resort and the associated amenities in the village and around. Whistler had not won the competition to be Canada's candidate for the 1968 Winter Olympics, but the people behind the Whistler project were persistent. A road was built into the area, government approval was obtained for the development of the ski area, funding was found and the resort was built. It opened for public skiing in February 1966.[103] Development continued at a rapid pace, including the creation of ski facilities on a second mountain (Blackcomb) and the Whistler complex became one of the outstanding ski resorts in the world. Early in its history, Manning Park had led in the development of skiing facilities for the lower mainland of British Columbia. With Whistler on the scene, Manning became something of a skiing back water, attractive to people in the Fraser Valley, to some families in the metropolitan area and to Nordic skiers, but not in the forefront of ski hills for the young, for advanced skiers, and certainly not for competitive skiers. Nor could it cater to the glamorous, international jet setters, or to those who enjoyed all of the amenities that a world-class ski resort had to offer, possibly including challenging skiing.

But it was not only Whistler that offered competition to Manning Park. Mount Baker, in Washington State, was a much older ski area that was closer to Vancouver than was Manning. In the 1960s and 1970s Mt Baker underwent a major development, involving the construction of new chair lifts and the opening of new ski hills.[104] It offered an attractive option to residents of the Fraser Valley and metropolitan Vancouver. In addition, in 1969 another "family-oriented" ski area opened at Hemlock Valley, in the hills across the river from Chilliwack.[105] Although hampered by difficult access roads and from time to time by problematic snow conditions, by the late 1990s it had three chair lifts, other amenities, a residential community and ambitious plans to be the largest ski resort between Whistler and the Okanagan.[106] Although Hemlock has had financial difficulties from time to time, it offered serious

competition to Manning Park for family skiing in the Fraser Valley. In this context, it is also important to note that major skiing developments occurred in the Okanagan Valley, from Osoyoos north to Vernon. In other words, as a ski area, Manning Park has been faced with strenuous competition from both sides, the coast and the interior, and little has been done to counter that competition. There had been substantially no improvement in the skiing facilities at Manning Park since the mid 1970s, and in recent years attendance at Gibson Pass has sagged.

The park's difficulties extended beyond competitors eroding the customer base. Actions of the government soon became a prime concern. In the early 1980s the provincial economy was caught in a deep recession. Although the extent of the financial difficulties of the provincial government was a matter of hot debate,[107] the government's reaction was strenuous. The watchword was "retrenchment", particularly after the 1983 election in which the government of William Bennett was returned on a program of fiscal restraint. For Manning Park, and hence for Eastgate, there were important consequences. Budgets and staff were slashed and further development of park resources using government funds became unthinkable. Following financial irregularities, the Pelletier concession over Pinewoods had been terminated in 1968.[w] In 1974 the basic facilities were privatized, but this was not just a return to the pre-1968 status quo. Gibson Pass Resorts, Inc., was awarded a 50-year lease on the lodge, motel, related facilities and the Gibson Pass ski area and its equipment, with an option to extend the lease for another 50 years.[108] In effect, the operation had been sold to a private company, with strings attached. From time to time, the manager of the ski area was heard to ruminate about mysterious major developments that were planned (another mountain?). However, by the terms of the lease Gibson Pass Resorts had to conform to "park conservation and recreational goals."[109] In other words, the Parks Branch had a veto. Were the planned developments just idle talk? If not, and if Gibson Pass Resorts was serious about new developments and was able to fund them, the Parks Branch did not concur. In any case, to date no significant new development has occurred.

One recession ushered Gibson Pass Resorts into the management of the Gibson Pass ski area; another recession ushered it out. In 2008 Gibson Pass resorts, which by then had an extensive enterprise in park management well beyond Manning Park, was forced into bankruptcy following a nasty confrontation with the provincial government.[110] The area is now operated by a receiver.

When, in 1986, Bennett stepped down as premier, he was succeeded by William Van der Zalm, whose objective, in large part, was "to reduce the role of the state in British Columbian's lives."[111] Within the park, this led to the privatization of campgrounds. Outside the park, but including provincial roads in the park, it involved privatization of highway maintenance. The government works yard at Allison Pass became a private works yard.

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[w] Pelletier and his company were convicted of income tax evasion. Apparently, some company funds had been placed in his private bank accounts and he had not declared them as income for tax purposes. He paid a fine and lost his concession at Pinewoods. The Parks Branch then assumed operation of the lodge and cabins and did so until 1984 [Sun (1968c). Ex-MP admits he took money. Vancouver Sun. Vancouver, Sun (1968d). Gov't takes over Manning Park lodge. Vancouver Sun. Vancouver, BC (1969a). Report of the Department of Recreation and Conservation, year ended December 31st, 1968. P. o. B. Columbia. Victoria]

The development of recreational facilities in Manning Park was important to Eastgate in two ways. On the one hand, the number of park employees expanded and some purchased property at Eastgate and built houses, providing a small core of year-round residents in the community. On the other hand, and much more important in the long run, the recreational possibilities -- winter and summer -- attracted people from various places, particularly in the Fraser Valley and greater Vancouver areas. The community began to build, at first on the flat lands next to the river on the south side of the highway, and later, when the subdivision was extended, on the hillside on the north side of the highway. In this sense, Eastgate is the progeny of Manning Park. Similarly, restraint, privatization, and downsizing in the park put a damper on the development of Eastgate, as did (perhaps even more forcefully) the gradual encroachment of competition from other ski areas. Nonetheless, Eastgate has survived and expanded, and with that expansion the need for fire protection has grown.

Fire

From the perspective of Eastgate and the Eastgate Fire Protection Society, there is an instructive footnote from the recent history of Manning Park.

Wildfires are common place in Manning Park and the surrounding forests. Almost every year there is at least one wildfire that has to be controlled and doused. The most dramatic -- and undoubtedly the most famous -- was a 1945 fire that consumed _ acres of trees on both side of the Hope Princeton highway west of Allison Pass. The scene of devastation and later of regeneration came to be known as the "burn." Other wildfires have been smaller, but some of them quite threatening.

However, in November, 1970, a different type of fire occurred the Park. A spectacular structural blaze at Pinewoods that started in one cabin and spread to others, destroying 24 cabins and demonstrating both the fire danger in wooden structures and how a fire started in one building can spread to others.[112] The Park, lacking specialized fire-fighting equipment, was almost helpless in face of the contagion. With the horse was out of the barn, the barn door was then shut. In 1972 a fire hall was built and a fire truck was ordered.[113] The fire truck and an ambulance arrived in 1973.[114] *(Question: What became of the fire hall, fire truck and ambulance?)*

The Pinewoods fire occurred when Eastgate was still in its early stages. Few houses had yet been built, but it was an object lesson for the small community on the risk of contagion.

II. THE EASTGATE FIRE PROTECTION SOCIETY

The Fire Society and its predecessor, the Eastgate Residents Association, were not the first organizations in the upper Similkameen valley with an important community purpose. They were preceded by a society concerned with improving the quality of the education of the community's children.

The Allison Pass School

By the early 1950s the thirty-kilometre stretch of the upper Similkameen valley between Allison Pass on the west and Similkameen Falls on the east was home to a number of families and some of these families had school age children. By one count, in late 1952 in addition to between 20 and 35 unattached men, there were 13 families living at the Highway Department's works yard at Allison Pass.[115] There were others at the park, the ranch and the falls. The nearest school was in Princeton, some 75 kilometres to the east, over a winding mountain road. A campaign began to establish an elementary school at Manning Park. The Princeton School Board was willing to provide a teacher for a school, but, because the park area was "untaxed," it was unwilling to build the school.[116] The Parks Branch was unwilling to have the school located in the park -- it was not appropriate use of park lands -- but in 1951 an agreement was reached under which a one room school with living quarters for a teacher would be jointly built by the Parks Branch, the Public Works Department and the Department of Education at the Allison Pass works yard (where most of the potential pupils resided).[117] The school opened in 1952 with 13 children in grades 1-7.

Organized in 1954, the Alpasso Community Club was engaged in both social and fund raising activities that were occasionally reported in an Allison Pass gossip column that appeared irregularly in the weekly *Hope Standard* newspaper. The club's primary purpose was to raise funds to enhance the educational experience of students in the school -- "to provide funds for the annual school picnic, concerts, etc., and for playground equipment."[118] It began with 32 members from "Allison Pass, Pine Woods Lodge, B.C. Forestry, Tower's Ranch and Falls Cafe."[119] I don't know how successful it was or how long it lasted, nor, later on, how many (if any) residents of Eastgate were involved. The only source of information, the gossip column, vanished in the late 1950s, probably a victim of the turnover of residents of the Allison Pass and hence the lack of a reliable correspondent.

Regardless of the success, or lack thereof, of the Alpasso club, the school was an important institution in the valley, providing a basic education to an ever changing group of children.[x] Enrolment through 1980 is shown in Figure 1. It was small and very irregular, particularly in the early years, hitting a high of 18 pupils in 1956/57 and a low of 4 in 1958/59. From the mid-1960s on enrolment was less unstable, normally in the range 9-12, but reaching a high of 15 one year. Not apparent in the chart was the feature of the school that must have made the position of teacher immensely challenging. Not only did she live in an isolated "teacherage," without the support of colleagues or a library immediately at hand, but also she was faced with small numbers of students, at the same time and in the same classroom, in a variable selection of the grades from kindergarten through grade 9.[y] Usually there was only one and seldom more than two pupils per grade. When enrolment dropped in the late-1980s the school was

[x] *That it was a changing group of children is obvious in the enrolment patterns. One year's enrolment does not appear to follow from that of the previous year. Clearly, children were coming and going.*

[y] *Kindergarten was not added until 1973. In two years,1959/60 and 1964/65, a student was enrolled in grade 9. After 1966/67 grade 8 was dropped, setting the maximum grade at grade 7. One year, 1964-65, there was one student in a category "special or occupational."*

closed (*Note: enrolment levels in the 1980s and year of closing to be confirmed by the School Board or the Ministry of Education*). The Alpasso club presumably disappeared at that time, if not earlier.

Subdivisions

Eastgate was created about 1968 when Bill Tower began to subdivide the Tower Ranch, initially offering for sale 20 lots along the river on the south-eastern side of the ranch. This was the period of rapid development of the recreational facilities in Manning Park, which created strong interest in property in this area. The lots sold quickly. Bill then extended the subdivision, offering 33 more lots along the river to the west of the original group. What is now Rivers End Road is the western boundary of this subdivision. Again, the lots sold quickly. The success of this venture encouraged further development. Beginning in 1972, 39 lots on the lower part of the heavily forested hillside across the highway from the original development were offered for sale and in the 1980s another group of 21 lots were made available still higher up on the hillside. Finally, in 2007, the lots on the remaining land on the south side of the highway were offered for sale, primarily on land previously occupied by the airstrip. In the meantime, another subdivision was laid out, on the flats, around the bend of the river, to the east of the former Tower Ranch, with some 16 lots. Several houses have been built in this subdivision. (*They used to call this little Ladner. Am I correct in thinking that they now call it Bonnevier? Do the residents consider themselves to be part of Eastgate?).* Finally, there is a substantial property at the falls, which is also within the area serviced by the Eastgate Fire Protection Society.

The hillside was a development with a difference. Whereas the lots on the south side of the road depended on wells for water, the lots on the hillside were serviced by a piped water system. The Bonnevier Water Company was incorporated at the same time as this part of the ranch was subdivided and it built a reservoir and system of water mains to service the various properties. This was important for fire protection because fire hydrants were located at strategic points along the system of mains. However, there was also enhanced fire danger because of the trees and brush and the slope of the land. Many trees were removed as houses were built, but most householders chose to keep trees around their houses for aesthetic reasons. Other things equal, wildfires tend to burn up hill. A fire that started on the lower part of the hillside, whether in a house or in the brush, could easily spread upward, through the brush and trees, taking out houses along the way.

This is the context in which the Eastgate Fire Protection Society was established. It faced obvious challenges. The unique fire danger posed by the hillside was one. The problem of an adequate water supply was another, both because of the limited capacity of the reservoir on the hillside and because the development south of the road and to the west depended on wells for water. The limited number of full time residents, those available most of the time for firefighting purposes, was a third. The Society organized to meet these and other challenges.

The Eastgate Residents Association

(Section to be filled out following interviews with old timers.)

The first stage in the organization of the Eastgate Fire Protection Society was a less formal organization, the Eastgate Residents Association. Organized about 1981, the Association had a broad, if informal, mandate to foster social activities and the development of other amenities for the community as well as to develop means for self-protection against fire. Various fund raising activities were conducted, including auctions and popular Oktoberfest and corn roast celebrations. For a small organization, limited to community-based fund raising, the Association's accomplishments were notable. Portable pumps were acquired to obtain water from the river as well as fire hoses. On the north side, elevated boxes to hold fire hoses were erected adjacent to fire hydrants. Beyond acquiring firefighting equipment, the Association was active in developing plans for a locally owned and operated electrical system and when that project was blocked in negotiating to bring hydro power into the valley. While obviously of much broader importance, this also reduced the fire hazard by reducing reliance on open flames (oil lamps, propane lamps and candles) for lighting in those cabins that did not have their own diesel generators. Then, the Association climaxed its activities with a major acquisition that essentially forced it out of existence.

The First Fire Truck

In November, 1992, expecting the delivery of a new fire truck, costing about $180,000[120], the town of Princeton offered one of its old fire trucks for sale at a sealed bid auction. It was a small 1954 model truck, equipped with a pump and a 450 gallon water tank, that the Princeton officials thought "would be ideal for a smaller community."[121] For Eastgate a fire truck that carried a substantial amount of water would be important in the event of a fire, particularly on the south side where there was no piped water system and no fire hydrants, but also on the north side to supplement the water available from the reservoir. Moreover, the fire truck carried other equipment, including appropriate fire fighting clothing, and was of symbolic importance as a rallying point to stimulate interest in the Association and promote training in fire suppression. The Eastgate Residents Association counted its pennies and submitted a bid of $3,275.[122] It was the winning bid (competing bids, if any, were not reported).

The acquisition of a fire truck meant that the whole organization for the development of fire protection at Eastgate had to change. A fire truck with a full load of water had to be kept in a heated fire hall to be useful in the winter in a climate in which the temperature could dip to -20^{o} or -30^{o} Celsius. A tank full of ice -- or a burst tank spilling out ice -- would not be useful in fighting a chimney fire. But, to build, equip and operate a fire hall required funds well beyond what the Eastgate Residents Association had been able to raise, and fund raising on that scale called for a new, more formal organization, with a legal status that charitable donors could relate to. And so the Eastgate Fire Protection Society was born.

The Eastgate Fire Protection Society: The Formative Years

With the fire truck in hand, the community swung into action. A ginger group of Lois Woodhams, Sid Smith, Dave Cook, Ed Peterson and Don Robertson drafted a constitution and on February 9, 1993 applied for incorporation of the Eastgate Fire Protection Society under British Columbia’s Societies Act.

[123] *(I assume that they were the retiring executive of the Eastgate Resident's Association; this has to be confirmed.)* The five constituted themselves as the interim Board of Directors and at the first recorded meeting on March 28, 1993 began to organize the Society. [124] Smith was elected president, Cook, vice-president, Robertson, secretary, Woodhams, treasurer and Peterson (who was not present), director at large. There were several major items of business that had to be attended to immediately. At the top of the agenda were finances and the care and maintenance of the fire truck.

By setting the membership fee at a nominal $1 per residence, it was implicitly decided to fund the Society primarily from fund raising activities and grants. The membership fee yielded only $63 in the first six months,[125] far short of what was required operate the society let alone acquire additional equipment. This meant that the burden would fall on the executive and other volunteers to come up with innovative ways to raise money. A fund raising target of at least $5,000 was set for the following year.

The fire truck was another matter. Sid Smith, who had a glass shop in Princeton, arranged to inspect the truck in Princeton and bring it to Eastgate. It was decided to store the truck at Sid's place at Similkameen Falls for safekeeping until facilities were available at Eastgate. The quest began for a site for a fire hall and for plans for a suitable fire hall together with an estimate of the cost. At the next meeting it was announced that Ken Tate, a builder who was a member of the community and who had constructed several of the cabins, was drawing up plans and making the estimate.[126]

It was agreed to have a general "information" meeting on April 10, 1993, at the gas station, at which time the fire truck would be on display and volunteers sought for committees to consider fund raising approaches and finding a site for the fire hall. No minutes of the general meeting survive, if they were taken (it was an information meeting, so presumably no business was transacted).

Fund Raising

In fund raising the Society followed three paths. It solicited donations from members, held a variety of local fund raising events and sought major grants from granting agencies.

It is a measure of the enthusiasm of the community for the project that at the end of its first six months the Society had received $1746 in donations from members -- a kind of voluntary super-membership fee. and had raised $10,500.[127]

Site For The Fire Hall

The first plan was to lease land from one of the land owner and, indeed, a lawyer was consulted on the feasibility of this plan.[128] However, this proved to be unnecessary as a generous member, Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Bracewell, offered to donate land for the fire hall, subject to the Society having the land surveyed and rezoned.[129] The Bracewell offer was accepted,[130] rezoning was applied for an approved[131] and the Highways Department was approach for authorization for access from the fire hall to the highway. (*Why was the Bracewell offer then rejected in favour of the Tower offer? Did it have to do with direct access to the highway from the Bracewell lot?)*

Fire Trucks

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