

# A Ship's Carpenter Names our Town

by Gordon H. Ficke

Agnes Humphrey (Davidson) was called 'Teenie' as a child at home growing up in Westbank. Agnes, living in Vernon now, recalls the story about her family from the time her grandfather immigrated to Canada.

Humphrey's grandfather John Davidson was born in 1850 in Rutherglen, Scotland. As a youth he went to sea during the final years of the sailing era. He learned the trade of ship's carpenter and left his home in Glasgow, Scotland in search of work.

After he traveled to several places in the world, including South Africa, he immigrated to Canada in 1884. Landing in Port Haney, B.C. he met and married Christina Dockstader, who was only seventeen at the time. John was 34. The couple lived in Vancouver for a short time and William, their first child was born on February 23rd, 1886. The family moved to San Francisco, California following the ship construction jobs. While they were there Annie was born on July 8th, 1887. In 1890 Christina and the two children returned to Vancouver to be near her family. On September 9th, of that year she gave birth to her third child Allan. In the meantime, John had signed a contract to work aboard the ship Scottish Hills on April 12th, 1890 that traveled from San Francisco to Liverpool, England. While he was there, Davidson took some time to visit his relatives before returning to Canada.

In 1892 when the Shuswap and Okanagan railway lines were completed, The Canadian Pacific Railway identified a need to develop an adequate shipping service on Okanagan Lake. John learned that ships were to be built in the B.C. southern interior and the couple with their three children packed all their belongings and headed to Okanagan Landing near Vernon to help construct the platform and keel for the S.S. Aberdeen.

They stayed in Vernon only a short period of time before John pre-empted a piece of property in May of 1893 by Shannon Lake in Westbank, B.C. They developed the land and grew hay and raised milk cows. Christina was renowned for her butter that was sold in the Westbank General Store. She kept the small rudimentary log house very tidy, despite a notorious leaky roof. Today that property comprises the northern part of Shannon Lake Golf Course.

Christina was left at home for long periods of time and led a lonely life while John worked on the construction of various ships in both the Okanagan and Kootenay areas.



In the summer of 1893 John dug a well, cleared a lot and started constructing a new house log house to replace 'the shack', as they referred to it. The new residence was finally completed in June the following year.

On August 24th, 1894 Christina gave birth to another son the couple named John Clarence. In 1901 another daughter, Lillian Maisie Mae was born to the family.

Agnes Humphrey's father Allen, the third child born to John and Christina, was three years old when they moved to Shannon Lake. He and his two brothers attended the log school that opened in 1897, and formerly stood near where McDougall Creek crosses Highway 97 today.

After Allen completed school he acquired a farm in Saskatchewan. On May 3rd, 1920 Christina wrote Allan to inform him that the government was planning to bring water to their ranch that consequently should bring a good price when they sell the property. Sadly, Christina died on May 22nd at Vancouver General Hospital following an operation. Allan did not receive the telegram from John informing of his mother's death, and therefore did not attend her funeral. Christina's death was a shock to everyone in the family, especially John who stated in a letter to Allan, "for me no one to confide in. It looks black."

When Allan eventually sold his property in Saskatchewan he returned to Shannon Lake to take over the ranch. He married in December of 1921 and brought his bride there. John lived in the log house while his son Allen built another home on the property.

In 1929 when Allan moved his family to the community of Westbank John moved with them. He died that November at the age of 79.