

alone, to sustain diversity within a small area. But we have done some minor things to provide for ecological diversity such as native species planting.

I think we have a responsibility to understand our environment. I am really concerned about lack of ecological knowledge in our society, even though it has increased from when I went to school. But we are still very ignorant of the interactions within and between different species. We also have to recognize that we cannot control or manipulate or manage everything. We tend, for utilitarian reasons, to be partial to certain characteristics and to manage with a focus on those. But nature is the best "manager" of native ecosystems.

Thelma: So many of our interventions have been misguided, it's hard to know what to do.

Kerry: One thing your readers might want to take away, is that we can all do something even with a small piece of land. Where the land is undisturbed, we can avoid interfering and let nature flourish on her own. Where there has already been some disturbance or where we want to garden a little and at the same time have a good influence, we can plant native species that bring back native birds. For example, choke cherry trees provide food for about 20 species of birds. Now that's the sort of positive influence we can have!

I think it was Thoreau who said "In wildness is the survival of the world". In wildness we will maintain more of the genetic biodiversity of our environment. And that means we too will survive longer because we are part of that and we can't separate ourselves from our environment.

IN PIONEER TIMES

The Mitchell Clan: Part Two

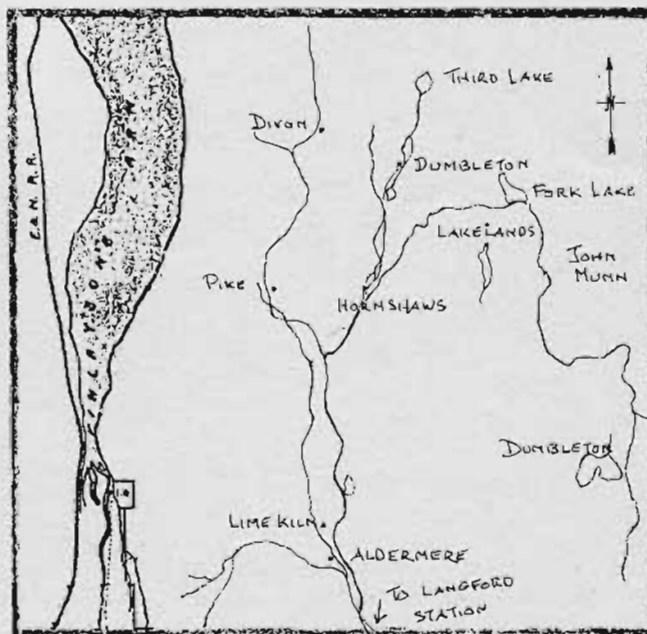
Jesse & George Bernard, from a Turn of the Century Diary*

Nancy McMinn

Almost a century ago on a damp, grey February day, young Jesse Bernard, elder daughter of the Mitchell's, began her daily journal of life in the Highlands. Her first entry was "came to live at Hornshaws".

From its junction with a track leading to Pike's farm and the Dixon homestead, the narrow road from Langford Station snaked up a long hill, crossed a creek and passed through "Hornshaws", a small house set on a rocky outcrop and surrounded by maples and tall fir. Half a mile further on, the road ended abruptly at the cabin of Charlie Dumbleton, near the south end of Second Lake.¹ Just short of Hornshaws another track led eastwards up a switchback, over a ridge, past the fire-blackened high point known as Burnt Top, and down to Lakelands², the homestead of Frank and Sybil Gregory at Fizzle Lake. From there it skirted the south end of Fork Lake and meandered in a southerly direction to John Munn's farm and the Dumbleton house at Pike Lake.

The rugged, rocky landscape limited subsistence farming to where sizable swamps could be cleared and drained. But the country was beautiful with its mix of dense forests, lakes, streams, and flower-laden rocky hilltops. Game was abundant. Scattered cabins, dotted among the hills, sheltered hunters in season or the handful of miners who worked with pick and shovel in search of iron and copper ore.



Adapted from a map of the South-Eastern Districts of Vancouver Island, 1910

¹ Also known as Lake Lorna, it was sometimes called Middle Lake by Jesse Bernard.

² The caretaker's home at the Caleb Pike Homestead is a replica of the house at Lakelands.

³ Sybil Gregory was the younger daughter of the Mitchells and sister of Jesse Bernard.

* Many thanks to Nadine Hill for permission to print excerpts from her grandmother's diary

Arriving in late winter with a young baby, Jesse and George busied themselves with settling in. It was a difficult time of year. There was much to be done—fences to mend, firewood to cut and haul and a garden to plant, to feed the family. But both came from ranches in Alberta and were used to pioneer life. Jesse's diary is clear, straightforward, and matter-of-fact.

1903

- Feb 21 Came to live at Hornshaws:
" 27 Bought rig & harness from Captain Boyd's
Mch 2 Bought two prs pigeons from Mrs. Wales: 730 lbs baled hay: bag of chop: 50 lbs cracked corn
" 3-7 Hotbed: gate: chicken house: radish & lettuce sown (5th)
" 8 Frank & Sybil came to dinner: snow storm began
" 9 Sleeting all day: made wheelbarrow & flour bin
" 10 Frank came down for bale of hay—120 lbs—which we owed him: snowing hard all day—18" by nightfall:
" 11 G. made workbench:
" 12 G. rode to Lakelands for milk: cut green tree down in the afternoon & sawed part up: clear day but cold & snow deep:

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- " 27th Bought rig & harness from Captain Roydo:
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" 9th Sleeting all day: made wheelbarrow & flour bin:
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Thursday was market day, a day to look forward to, when the family went to town. They sold their weekly produce, occasionally visited a doctor or dentist, and often made a round of social calls. They drove a horse and buckboard which though roomy—a pioneer version of the pickup—was open to the weather. So on wet or snowy days, George went alone.

We drove to town & sold 2 2/3 doz eggs
240¢; 5-lb butter 27 1/2¢; & 18 c. cheese
& I went to see Dr. Roy Dier about my front tooth & at 1.30 he put some arsenic in to kill the nerve
I have to go again on Monday.

George & I drove to town at 11 a.m., & after going to P.O. etc. I went to Dr. Dier's office that my tooth sawn off—have to go again on Thursday as the nerve isn't dead—it feels awfully funny without it—

I went to the dentist that a tooth put in (not mentioning the knocking about of my gum & the awful drilling!!)

We drove to town and sold
2 2/3 doz eggs @ 40¢;
5lbs butter 27 1/2 ¢; &
18 cream cheese. I
went to see Dr. Roy
Dier about my front
tooth & at 1.30 he put
some arsenic in to kill
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courtesy of Nadine Hill

George & I drove to town at 11 p.m. [11 a.m.?] and after going to the P.O. etc. I went to Dr. Dier's office and had my tooth sawn off—have to go again on Thursday as the nerve isn't dead—it feels awfully funny without it—

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By the end of the summer, the hand dug, shallow wells were often dry, and fires, started by the settlers themselves during clearing operations, sometimes got away.

Aug: 20: fires are burning heavily round Aldermere, and the two houses at lime kiln [near the new Municipal Hall site] are gone
Raining off & on all day: I hadn't any water so I could only wash a very few of Baby's clothes
Sep: 14 G. & Bert carried me some water up from the lake:

Aug: 20th fires are burning heavily round Aldermere & the two houses at lime kiln are gone:

Sep: 12 Raining off & on all day: I hadn't any water so I could only wash a very few of Baby's clothes:

Sep: 14th G. & Bert carried me some water up from lake:

Babies were usually born at home, but there was little help at hand if the birth was difficult.

Apr 12th : Frank called us out of bed at 12.15 P.M. as Sybil was ill & he was off for a Dr. - we dressed, & drove to Lakelands getting there at 1.15 A.M. - Sybil is bad: Frank brought Dr Hart at 5 A.M. & he stayed till 3.40 P.M. when Sybil's baby, a boy, was born: I did the housework etc: George came up for me at 9 a.m. but went back again, & came in the evening at 7 P.M., he & I had dinner at Lakelands, getting home at 8.30 P.M.: poor old Sybil is very pale & quiet & the baby looks strong: 16 eggs: lovely day but spitting with rain at night: G. fencing far side of swamp all day:

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A later picture of Jessie & three of their five children.

courtesy Nadine Hill

Homesteaders were dependent on their animals for food, transportation and heavy work.

Sep: 20th Nora got into the manger during the night & lay there dead when George went to feed up - he skinned her & I helped a bit: 13 eggs: broken the record for eggs - Minorca's laid 9 of them: sewing:

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Nov: 5th. Harold Pike came over & asked George to go & help them with a yearling heifer, it has got its foot stuck under a log - George went, slung the beast up, but it was all fly blown & died two hours after.

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Despite the problems and the hard work, they enjoyed one another. It was a good life!

In the afternoon we drove Mr. Bernard to Lakelands - the Grieg family walked - they all went bathing in Fork Lake & then Sybil gave us tea & cake:

: in afternoon we drove Mr Bernard to Lakelands - the Grieg family walked - they all went bathing in Fork Lake & then Sybil gave us tea & cake - home for dinner: sat round the camp fire at night:



Sybil, George & Jess at Fork Lk.

home for dinner: sat round the camp fire at night: Nice day - the Gregorys drove down, so we got some lunch cut & drove Roy to 3rd lake - put saddles on the two horses & then Mrs H., Syb & I took turns at riding them - P.C.H. & George walked all the way - had lunch there and then scrambled up the steep path again.

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photo courtesy Nadine Hill

The perfect post-card Christmas—falling snow, a family gathering, plenty of rich food, and no commercialization.

Xmas Day.
Baby's 2nd birthday - he was rather cranky all day owing to excitement over his toys & the addition of some sweetmeats: I gave George "Tom Brown at Oxford" & he gave me a lily root - we gave Baby a trumpet & a book: The Gregorys came down in a sleigh as it was snowing heavy flakes & was an ideal Xmas Day - Syb gave Baby a jolly sailor hat she has made him & it is awfully nice suits him - Robin gave him a train - Frank gave me a nice photo frame - Syb a jolly piece of red ribbon - Syb & Frank gave George "The Romance of Two Worlds" & Robin a Christmas paper: we had dinner at 6.15 consisting of barley soup, willow grouse, mutton chops & sausages - rice potatoes - plum pudding - mince pies - Baby's cake, nuts & apples - nice day. They stayed until about 11 P.M. then resumed their sleigh drive: 10 eggs: Baby & Robin gave one another rubbers:

Dec 30th - The last day of shooting everything except ducks: home for dinner: knitting George's mitts: egg 40¢ goodbye 1904

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George with winter transport for babies

Dec 30th - The last day of shooting everything except ducks: home for dinner: knitting George's mitts: eggs 40¢ goodbye 1904

FEATURED ADVERTISER

Martin's Septic & Drainage

Born, raised and educated in Esquimalt, Rob Martin worked at various jobs for some years after leaving school. An enthusiastic gardener, he purchased a Bobcat in 1979 to work his own garden. Neighbours and friends began asking him to work on their properties, and a new business was born.

Certified as an installer of septic systems, Rob puts in sewers and water lines and does some excavating as well. With the expertise that twenty years of experience has given him, he enjoys his work, and gets a lot of satisfaction from a



photo courtesy Rob Martin

job well done.

Rob and his partner, Cathy Dumont, live in Langford with their two children, Ashley and Jennifer. Rob's hobbies still include gardening, as well as carpentry and welding. He enjoys mending equipment and doing construction.

Rob Martin
 Martin's Septic & Drainage—1990
 Tel 474-2755
 Fax 474-4814
 See ad in "General Store".

The Barrettes, a Young Highland Family

A Conversation with Thelma Fayle

Thelma: Your little girl gave me a nice welcome in French. Do you usually speak French at home?

Paul: Both of our fathers are bilingual, but neither of us speak French although we both wish we could. We thought it was important to make sure our kids can speak it. Nicole is in grade three and has been in French immersion from the start.

Paulette: I like French but I am not just stuck on French. I think there is great value just having any second language. In our district, French is the only option and it happens to be part of our family background. If another language was offered, I'd introduce the kids to it.

Thelma: Is your daughter teaching you?

Paul: She is. We have to help her with her homework and when we don't pronounce the words right she lets us know.

Paulette: Oh yes, she taught me to roll my r's! I could never do it, and then one day she shouted, Mom you did it, you did it! She was very excited.

Thelma: What part of the country are both of you from?

Paulette: I was born in Surrey and my family moved to Slocan Valley when I was six. That is where I met Paul. I lived in a place called Lemon Creek. The houses were sparsely scattered and there were no street lights. Still aren't any.

Paul: I moved to the Slocan from Ontario when I was 14; so my teen years were spent in that valley. It's very, very rural. Paulette and I were childhood sweethearts, and we both cringe at the thought of living in an urban area, although we have done that. When we first got married we lived on Cook Street and remember feeling like it was a real rat race. It wasn't long before we moved up to Shawnigan Lake. We like the open spaces and the privacy of a rural place. We both feel very strongly about the Highlands. I would love to have grown up

here. I grew up in a mining town, Timmins, Ontario; and my Dad was an outdoor man. We did a lot of camping, fishing and hunting. I was always outside in the bush. In the summers we would go to the outskirts of town and just play and I remember how much I loved it. When I lived in Ontario, I used to watch Beachcombers on TV and I would dream

about moving to BC and climbing mountains. To move to B.C. in my teens was a dream come true.

We had no intention of moving from our last home, but a friend of ours, who enjoys building houses, like us, found some properties in the Highlands and said I had to come and see them. The moment I walked on to this lot, I fell in love with the place. It was a beautiful day, just like today,

not a cloud in sight. I raced back home to Paulette and said you have to come and look at this. Right away she said, we are not moving again!

Paulette: And then when I came up here, there were ladyslippers growing on the property, and this brought back fond childhood memories of my parents acreage in the Slocan Valley.

Paul: That's right. It was spring and all the flowers were in bloom. And you know what that looks like in the Highlands. And we couldn't hear any urban noises. Nothing.

Thelma: So you just fell in love with it right away?

Paul: Yes, but we really loved our other place. What followed was two weeks of debate. At first we worried that it might be too isolated up here on Millstream Rd.

We know that we will be doing a lot of driving as the kids get older but that's ok. Some nearby friends with older kids tell us it is definitely a pain, but they found an interesting side effect that they never expected. They said between driving their

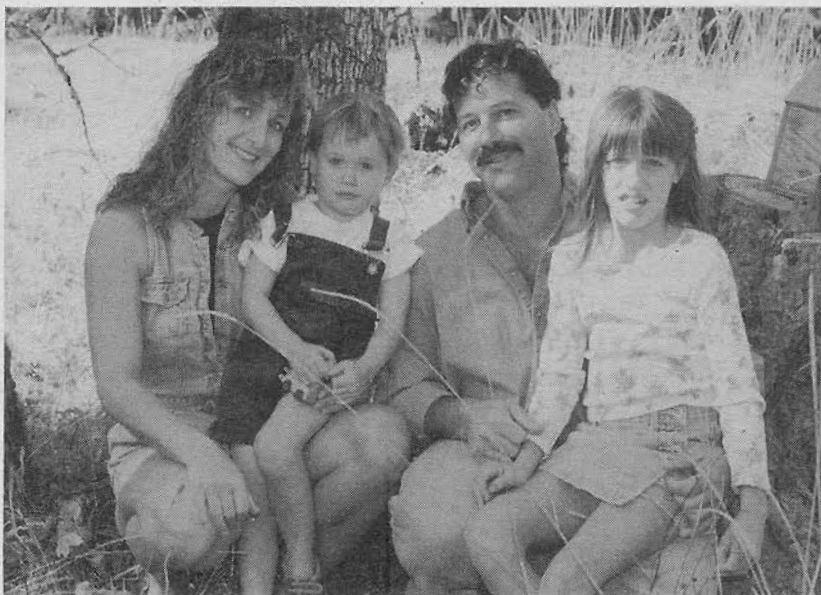


photo by Don Beun

Paulette, Joel, Paul and Nicole

own kids and their kids' friends, they spend a lot of time getting to know the friends and the parents of friends. Whereas in the city, parents don't often get that opportunity.

Paulette: We seem to have more intimate relationships with people connected to our children. We feel that living in the Highlands can only enhance their childhood.

We also have our best friends living next door. We both decided to build up here, and their two kids are our kids' best friends. The kids have a ball together around here.

Paulette: We are grateful that in the Highlands we are only 20 minutes from town if we need something. That is important for a family.

Paul: I honestly feel that the Highlands is the best place to live on southern Vancouver Island. It just couldn't be better, and we feel really lucky to have bought this piece of property. Our property was one of the first attempts in the Highlands to put covenants with the Nature Conservancy of Canada on the lots. Of the five and a half acres that we own, we can only build on less than one and a half acres.

The council arranged for the developer to hire a naturalist/biologist to do a survey-study of the flora and fauna here. In fact there are three Garry oaks that are unusual at this elevation, and they are protected. There is also a white pine that is very rare. That is also protected. They identified an area somewhat in the centre of the property that preserves the views and minimizes the impact on the ground. Outside of an area they call the residential use zone, we own the property but we can't cut trees down, we can't build any structures, or alter the landscape in any way. Some people would find that restrictive, and to some degree I guess it is, but it means that our immediate neighbours are bound by the same covenants and so that preserves the green space in between us.

Thelma: When did you start building your house?

Paul: We started construction August 25 of last year.

Thelma: Good experience so far?

Paulette: Well it was our fourth house and it was the best ever and it is going to be the last.

One of the things that attracted us to the Highlands was the fact that no one can clearcut to their property line and destroy the ambience of the neighbourhood. This is the first place that we have

ever lived where we don't care about arbutus trees dropping their berries and bark. It looks perfect—au natural.

Paul: Nothing compares to spring here. I wander around looking for flowers in bloom and trying to identify them. The smells are great, and there are billions of stars at night.

Paulette: We still have a lot of finishing work to be done on the house, but we love being here. We have enough space to enjoy our friends and family. And it seems very right to be here.

One of our favourite things here is that in spite of what some people think is a remote location, we can have great pizza delivered from Columbo's in Langford. It's our favourite restaurant in all of Victoria. They have menu items for the kids too.

Paul: We even had the ice cream truck come by!

Thelma: Were you worried about the water at this high point of your property? I've heard lots of different stories about water in the Highlands.

Paul: We got really lucky. Our well is just over 200 feet deep and it tastes beautiful. Much better than Victoria water. It runs about six gallons per minute and so far in our first year, and it's been a hot one, we haven't had problems.

Paulette: And the thing I like is that it's not chemically treated. It's just pure, right out of the ground.

Thelma: You mentioned that you were hiking recently?

Paul: I try to do backpacking every year. Last year we couldn't because of

building the house, but this year I planned a trip to the Olympics—for months actually—right down to satellite photos of the area.

Unfortunately we had to cancel on

the last day because of a serious bear problem with some of the hikers. We ended up going to Strathcona.

Paulette: It was a good decision. Bears were actually tearing apart people's camping gear.

Paul: We climbed Mt. Goldenhinde—the tallest peak on Vancouver Island. Never quite made it to the top, it just got too difficult. It was the most gruelling hike I've ever been on. It was three hours the first day, about 3300 feet. The next day we hiked 12 hours to get to the base camp and then ten hours to the mountain and back. It was rigorous but still beautiful. Anyway, we try to get into the high country at least once a year.

Paulette: I'm more of an alpine hiker. I like the



"We did a lot of hunting and fishing. I was always in the bush."

photo courtesy Paul Barrette



Paulette, aged 15 at Wildwood cabin in the Slocan

Valhalla range near Slocan.

Thelma: When you're not building and hiking, what kind of work do you do Paul?

Paul: I look after the computer networks for the Superannuation Commission. The pace is always frantic but I enjoy it. We moved to Victoria so that I could go to school and I graduated in computing technology in 1988.

Thelma: What do you do, Paulette?

Paulette: I work evenings and weekends at the Juan de Fuca Rec Centre in the administration office and I'm busy with the children during the day. Nicole is taking piano lessons, swimming lessons and has been in the PACE program.

Thelma: What is PACE?

Paulette: It is a school district musical program that puts together three wonderful musical productions a year at Isabel Reader Theatre. It is a great confidence builder for children.

Paul: We decided to arrange for Paulette to stay home with the kids because we both feel it is important to avoid day-care, besides, our son Joel can be quite precocious.

Paulette: He is a great kid. I love him to bits, but he is an envelope pusher. When he was still crawling our friends called him Hoover because he just motored around after everything he could get his hands on.

Paul: The schedule is tough on us, but at least we don't have to put the kids in day-care. Having Paulette working has been a real adjustment for me. I have always depended on her to do so much in the way of taking care of the kids and the house, and when she went to work I had to bathe the kids, and feed them and read to them.

Paulette: He does a lot.

Paul: We both work hard, but she works harder. We have our rough moments but most of the time it works.

Thelma: When you have any spare time at all Paulette, what do you like to do?

Paulette: Aside from running, I like to do crafts, but I haven't had much time lately. I like to make my own Christmas cards and decorations. My life really revolves around the kids. One day, when they are older, I would really like to study astronomy or earth sciences. There may not be financial benefits to that kind of study, but at some point I am going to want to take some of these courses just for my own interest. At the moment my

job is really convenient for our lifestyle, and the people at the rec centre are really great, but eventually I would like to move into something more challenging. I used to work for BC Systems Corporation, but left after taking a maternity leave.

On the fun side, I love to run, and am planning on running in the mini-marathon. I also have a 10 K Highlands route mapped out in my head.....one of these days.

Thelma: Is there anything you would like to say to your neighbours in the Highlands?

Paulette: Yes, I would like to say that it would be really great if the new pool goes in. I tried to get my son and daughter into swimming lessons and it was really tough, and I'm sure if we had a better pool we would get more interest from people as well. I guess I am biased since I work there, but I've heard other people from the Highlands say they would like it too.

We really enjoyed the Highlands picnic day in the summer. When it began to rain, we went in the Caleb Pike House and it was such a great family event. We were singing songs and just having fun.

Paul: I could never imagine such a family day happening in the city. The Homestead house lends itself to sitting around and singing. It was really neat.

Paulette: Everyone was watching out for each other's kids and there was such a sense of togetherness, and that is what the Highlands really means to me. It is just a group of people who feel the same way about our quality of life. It is unique and very special. Everyone wants their privacy, but they still want a sense of intimacy within the community.

Paul: I'd like to say that what's important to me is what appears to me to be the mandate of the council—to preserve what we have forever. We never ever want to see the kind of development that has gone on in some areas. It is not that I am opposed to that, it is just that we moved here for the reason that most people seem to value our unique environment. I hope it never changes. Sometimes the covenants on our property seem restrictive, but how else do you protect what we came here for?

Thelma: How do you feel about the current talk about amalgamation of municipalities in Victoria?

Paul: It might be appropriate for the core urban communities, but it could never work in the Highlands. Without actually living up here, one would not likely understand the issues which are important to those of us who do live here. How can you explain to someone who lives in Oak Bay and has never even visited the Highlands why five acre lots need to be a minimum?

Paulette: I believe the Highlands are unique, and I don't think city politicians would have a true understanding of our rural community needs.

Photo courtesy: Paul Barrette



"I try to get into the high country at least once a year."