

# Farming in the Blenkinsop Valley



View from Mt. Douglas to the Blenkinsop Valley. (Early 1900s)  
The previously forested land was cleared for agriculture through the mid to late 1800s.

## First Nations

For thousands of years, the area now known as Saanich was home to the First Nations. They moved freely through the area hunting and gathering from the land and sea. Their seasonal settlements were located close to the valley, along the shores of Cordova Bay.



Sheep on Harrap Farm, Glendenning Road. (Early 1900s)

This is the traditional land of the Esquimalt First Nations and the Songhees First Nations.

### Record of European settlement:

#### 1858

- Victoria District map labels the lake 'Lost Lake.'
- George Blenkinsop recorded as the first European landowner in the valley.

#### 1860s

- George & John Nicholson purchase land on the west side of 'Lost Lake.'

#### 1876

- Adam Glendenning purchases land on the east side of 'Lost Lake.'

#### 1894

- Arthur Simmonds purchases land from A. Glendenning for mixed farming.

#### 1906

- Access through the valley is opened with the clearing of a dirt trail.
- William Mercer purchases 125 acres from A. Glendenning and moves his family and dairy operation from Burnside Road to the valley.

#### 1910

- Regular milk delivery from Blenkinsop Valley to Victoria by horse drawn wagon.

#### 1915

- Canadian National Railway begins construction of a rail line through the valley.

#### 1947

- Ed Lohbrunner purchases 50 acres from Robert Mercer and develops Lakeview Gardens nursery. Dr. Ed Lohbrunner becomes an internationally known 'plantsman'. Later the UBC alpine garden is named after him.

#### 1960s

- Charles Pendray operates a dairy farm in the valley.
- District of Saanich creates the Urban Containment Boundary to protect Saanich agricultural lands.

## European Settlement and Farming

In the mid 1800s, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was responsible for the British settlement of Vancouver Island. HBC began purchasing lands from the First Nations for this purpose. Records show that in 1850, George Blenkinsop, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, owned several hundred acres of land on the east side of Lost Lake, now known as Blenkinsop Lake. Early land owners in the valley included George and John Nicholson, R.P. Rithet, and Adam Glendenning.



Threshing on Glendenning Farm. (circa 1905)

Adam Glendenning may have been the earliest farmer in the area, arriving around 1876. Early farming included mixed crops, livestock, and dairy farming. Dairy farming was a significant industry in the Blenkinsop Valley, with farmers such as Charles and John Pendray operating in the valley into the 1970s.



Fanny Simmonds cycling along Blenkinsop Road right-of-way. (circa 1906)



Horse drawn Cedar Hill school bus and children from Blenkinsop Road and Cordova Bay. (circa 1900s)

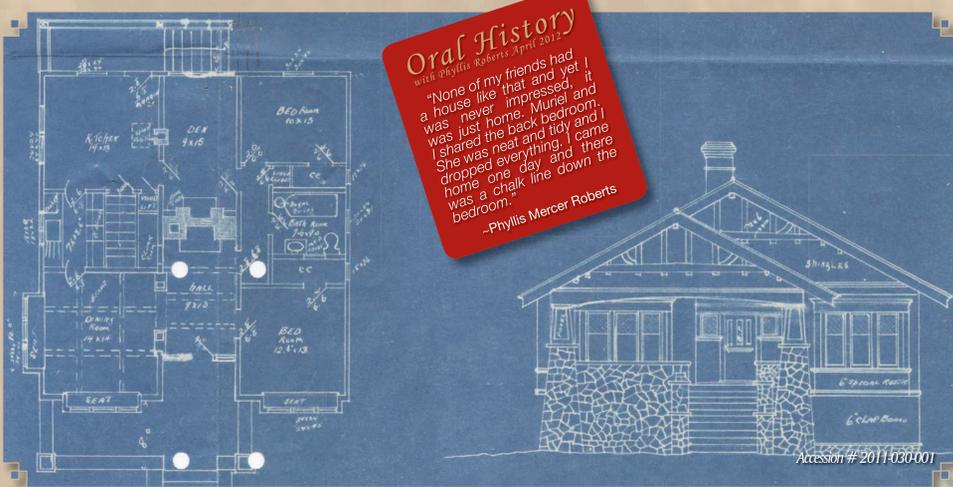
In 1894, Arthur Simmonds arrived from England and purchased 150 acres from the Glendenning family. By 1906, Arthur's three younger brothers had followed and started farming in the valley as well.



In 1951 Blenkinsop Road was straightened and widened.



Photo of Harry and Thomas Simmonds in their rye field near Mt. Douglas. (circa 1910)



Oral History  
with Phyllis Roberts April 2013

"None of my friends had a house like that and yet I was never impressed, it was just home. Muriel and I shared the back bedroom. She was neat and tidy and I dropped everything. I came home one day and there was a chalk line down the bedroom."  
-Phyllis Mercer Roberts

Blueprint of the home at 4366 Blenkinsop Road, built in 1916 by William Mercer as a wedding gift for his son Robert and bride Gertrude. - W.J. Drysdale, Designer/Builder



### Royal Dairy advertisement

Source: British Colonist online addition 1856-1910 Sept. 2, 1908

Milk from the Blenkinsop Valley was delivered to Victoria daily. Robert Mercer delivered milk by horse and buggy to residents and the Royal Dairy on Broad Street. The trip into town took one hour each way.

Date	Landowners
A 1850s	North Dairy Farm (Fur Trade, Sec. 32)
B 1850s	George Blenkinsop (Circa 1858, Sec. 51 & Sec. 7)
C 1857	Henry Van Allman (Sec. 66)
D 1858	Lost Lake, (Blenkinsop Lake, by 1862)
E 1860s	George & John Nicholson (Part of Sec. 66)
F 1876	Adam Glendenning (Sec. 51 & Sec. 7)
G 1889	Mount Douglas Park officially protected
H 1894	Simmonds Brothers (Part of Sec. 51)
I 1906	William Mercer (Part of Sec. 51 & Sec. 7)
J 1906	Blenkinsop Road Established
K 1917	Canadian National Railway Construction Complete (Lochside Trail)

Note: Some planned subdivisions on the 1917 map did not actually occur.



## Early Landowners of the Blenkinsop Valley



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