

History of Blenkinsop Lake & Trestle

In the Valley

In 1858 the Victoria District Office issued maps showing Blenkinsop Lake as Lost Lake. A name reminiscent of days when the lake was surrounded by a forest of trees. The maps also show a line dividing the lake into halves, the western property, 125 acres owned

by Henry Von Allman and the eastern property, 258 acres owned by George Blenkinsop. One story suggests that the lake was named by a British Naval officer who lost his way. At some point in the early 1900's the name Blenkinsop was substituted for Lost Lake.

A Family Farm

Farming has been the primary function of the Blenkinsop Valley since 1906 when the valley "officially opened." William Mercer bought 125 acres from Adam Glendinning early in the 1900's for his small but growing dairy business. With the move to the valley, the Mercers expanded into mixed farming, opting to sell their milk on

the wholesale market. In 1906, only 5 acres of the Mercer farm were cleared. Later when the railway crews arrived to construct the bridge, all the timber for the trestle came from the Mercer farm. By 1909, William owned 200 acres which was farmed by the Mercer family until 1981 when the last of the land was sold.



Blenkinsop Lake (Lost Lake) looking west at the north end, c. 1905. K. Borden Photo.



Blenkinsop Lake Trestle c. 1930's (2nd youth down believed to be former Saanich Councillor Frank Waring) Top to bottom Dick Cummings, Frank Waring, Early Sarsait & Wilf Pelland. Saanich Archives Photo.



Blenkinsop Lake (Lost Lake) looking west, c. 1905. K. Borden Photo.



CN 2104 on Burnside Trestle crossing the Colquitz River & Burnside Road. E. White Photo.



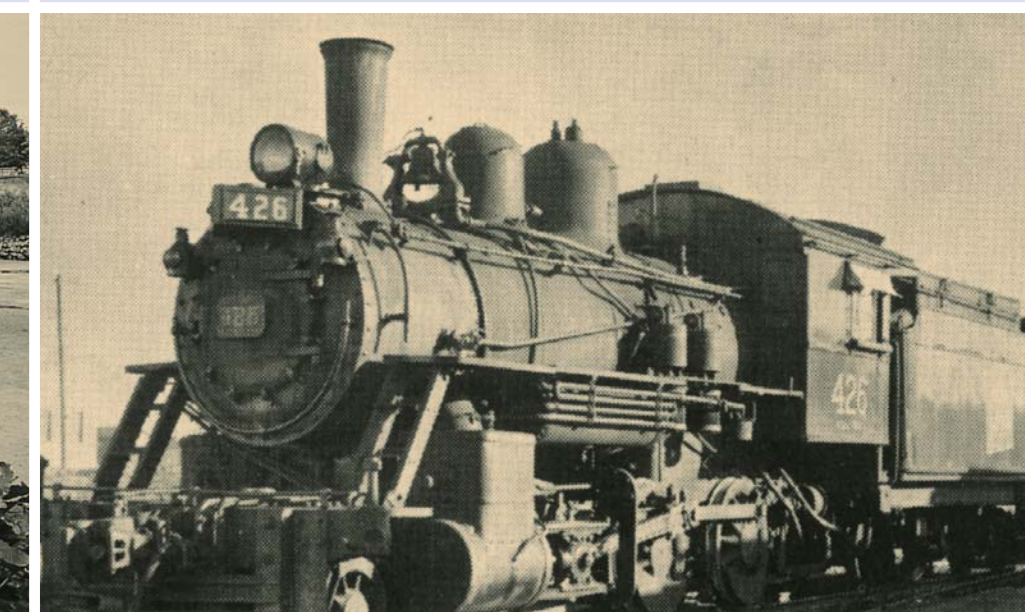
General Electric Gas Car No. 500 c. 1918 competed with the V&S for local passenger trade but was withdrawn within a few years.



Simmonds Brothers on Lost Lake c.1910 K. Borden Photo.



Remains of Blenkinsop Lake Trestle, c. 1999. Saanich Parks Photo.

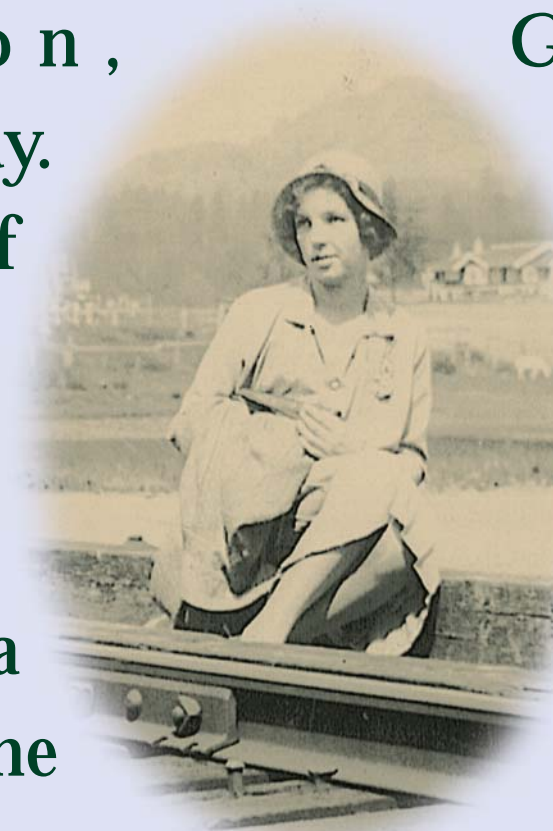


C.N.R. heavy freight locomotive No. 426 on Patricia Bay Line is the type of engine used once the passenger service ended. E. White Photo.

Memories of the Saanich Trestles

At one time there were twelve wooden trestles in Saanich. Almost all of the trestles have been destroyed through road construction, scavenging and decay. Only two of Saanich's trestles still stand today, (Swan Lake and Brett Street) as a testament to a time

when the railway was the established method of transportation. Victoria's well known Selkirk Trestle which crosses the Gorge Waterway was one of the largest wooden structures of its kind in the region and was modified for public use in 1996.



Eileen Simmonds (1913 - 1981) rests on the trestle, Simmonds' ranch and Mt. Douglas in the background, c. 1930. K. Borden Photo.

Canadian Northern Pacific Railway

The original railway trestle was built during the First World War in conjunction with Victoria's third railway line - The Canadian Northern Pacific Railway. The route chosen for the C.N.P.R. was a route originally surveyed in 1892 for the Victoria and Sidney Railway (V&S). Although this route was ideal from an operating standpoint due to its level grade, the V&S rejected it

because it missed most of the settled areas such as Saanichton, Keatings and Royal Oak. The Gas Electric Locomotive No. 500 began daily return trips in April of 1917. By 1935, trackage north of McKenzie Avenue to Patricia Bay was abandoned leaving only a short spur line from the Trans Canada Highway to Quadra Street which remained active until 1987.

Acknowledgements

Geoffrey Castle, Municipality of Saanich Archives, Karen Borden, Saanich Resident, Darryl Muralt, BC Historical Railway Society, BC Provincial Archives, George A. Hardy, BC Provincial Museum, Ron Burnham, Daily Colonist - 1976, Ken Stofer, the Islander - 1982.