

# Collection of Granite Creek Obituaries

By Diane Sterne

## **Pruden, Robert (*Victoria Daily Colonist June 2, 1886*)**

Granite Creek, May 25.

Robert Pruden died here on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, after three weeks illness. He was well known at Kamloops, Yale, and at other points on the railway.

## **Rody, George (*Victoria Daily Colonist March 8, 1887*)**

George Rody, a well-known prospector and miner, better known as "Poker George," who was brought from Princeton to Granite City with a foot and hand badly frozen, crossed the great divide on the 2<sup>nd</sup> inst., and was buried the following day. A large concourse followed the remains to the grave.

## **Gunderson, Peter (*Similkameen Star September 29, 1900*)**

A VERY SAD ACCIDENT

A Well-known Resident Is Called Away.

Crushed to Death by a Falling Tree---Was Well-known in Princeton-His Comrades Narrowly Escaped.

A deplorable accident occurred in this vicinity Sunday night, which resulted fatally to a well known prospector named Peter Gunderson. A party of three consisting of Peter Gunderson, John P. Cunningham and J. A. Fitzsimmons, were prospecting for coal about two miles from Otter Flat and having struck camp were making their usual preparations for the night. Mr. Gunderson had gone out to care for his horse, when a large limb from a tree broke away from the forks and came crushing down upon him. The remainder of the party hearing the crash of the falling timber called immediately to each other, but hearing no response from Gunderson sought and found the poor man doubled up under the tree pinned to the ground. After strenuous efforts, the tree was lifted, and dashing water in his face, he was brought back to consciousness and fearful agony. After morning broke his comrades carried him upon an improvised stretcher to the Otter Flat Hotel and Doctors Whillins and McPhail were sent for. Upon examination the fearful extent of his injuries were ascertained. It was found that he had sustained a compound fracture of the left leg and the right foot was nearly severed from its base. The short ribs had been fractured and driven into the lungs, causing intense agony. Upon consultation the doctors decided upon amputation of the foot, which was successfully performed, but from the fearful injuries sustained no hope of life could be held out and after a few hours of great suffering, peritonitis set in and soon ended the agony which made life unbearable.

The remains of the unfortunate man were interred at Granite Creek, adding one more to the long list of those wanderers, who in making the glorious future of our province are dying far away from home. Mr. Gunderson was by birth a Swede and left no relatives in this country as far as can be ascertained.

### **Gilmore, Frank (*Similkameen Star February 16, 1901*)**

A VERY SAD SUICIDE

FRANK GILMORE SHOOTS HIMSELF AT GRANITE CREEK

Temporary Derangement of the Mind Said to be the Cause of the Act---Deceased a Well-Known Miner and Prospector.

Granite Creek was startled out of its wonted quiet on Tuesday evening when Geo. Aldous drove in to town and reported finding the body of a man lying on the road with a gun beside him, about 500 yards from the hotel. Half a dozen citizens started out to investigate, and discovered the dead body of a well known miner and prospector named Frank Gilmore. The dead man arrived in Princeton about three weeks ago from the Nickle Plate mine at 20-Mile creek, where he had been working, and after staying in town for a short time he left for Granite Creek on a visit to his friends. During the time he was in town he drank considerably but was seldom seen intoxicated. He was noticed to act strangely at times, becoming morose and sullen and was constantly brooding over some fancied wrong done to him. When he arrived in Granite his friends there did their utmost to stop him drinking. Although successful, his despondent fits occurred frequently and he got in the habit of taking short walks by himself when affected. On Tuesday afternoon he called at the cabin of Dan Ross and asked for the loan of his carbine as he intended taking a walk and might run across some game. Dan had not seen much of him while he was in town and heard nothing of his strange behavior, so he at once complied with the request giving him the gun and five cartridges. The unfortunate man walked only a short distance from the cabin when he fired a shot, evidently to try the gun, then elevating it, he placed the muzzle close to his heart and pulled the trigger. When the body was found a messenger was at once dispatched to Princeton to notify constable Hunter. The officer, accompanied by Dr. Willans, drove to Granite early on Wednesday when the doctor made an examination of the body to find the cause of death. As it was unmistakably a case of determined suicide, no inquest was held and the remains of the unfortunate man were buried at Granite creek on Thursday afternoon.

Gilmore has been mining and prospecting in the Similkameen for the past three years and owned considerable mining property in the district. No letters or papers were found on the body indicating where he originally came from. He was known to have been in Greenwood and the Boundary district for some time and is said to have come there from New York state, some where in the vicinity of Ogdensburg.

**Bourassau, M.P. (*Similkameen Star November 24, 1906*)****DEATH OF PIONEER**

M. P. Bourassau Passes to the Beyond on Friday, the 16<sup>th</sup> Inst.  
Came to California in 1854 and to Similkameen in 1883-Followed Placer Mining.

The death occurred at Granite Creek at noon on Friday last, the 16<sup>th</sup> inst., of M. P. Bourassau, one of the pioneers of the Similkameen, at the advanced age of 84 years, the cause of death being inflammatory rheumatism, from which the deceased had suffered for some time. Mr. Bourassau was a native of Quebec and in the spring of 1854 left his home to seek his fortune in California, where he remained till 1883. In that year Mr. Bourassau pulled up stakes in the Golden State and moved to British Columbia settling in the Similkameen, taking part in the Granite Creek gold excitement. In 1887 he moved to the coast making his home in New Westminster, following his trade of blacksmithing at which he was rated A1. But having followed the exciting and elusive game of searching for the hidden treasures of mother earth, the humdrum existence of city life proved too slow for a man of his disposition, and he returned to Granite Creek in 1896, engaging in placer mining, until shortly before the grim reaper claimed him.

The funeral took place on Sunday afternoon at Granite, the remains being followed to their last resting place by a number of deceased's old time friends. In the absence of a clergyman Judge Murphy read the burial service at the grave.

**DeBarro, Charles (*Similkameen Star July 28, 1909*)****OBITUARY.**

The fast thinning ranks of the old Argonauts or goldhunters who came to B.C. in the early days was lessened by one on Monday night in the death of Charles DeBarro, at the home of his old friend, D. McKay, Otter Valley. The deceased was one of the first placer miners on Granite Creek and struck it rich. He went to South America and South Africa in search of bigger diggings, spending most of his little fortune, returning to Granite Creek in broken health, which he never regained. He was a man whose word was 'as good as gold' and had many friends. Little is known of his early life or relatives. He was about 60 years of age. Funeral today at 11 o'clock at Granite Creek. Requiescat in peace.

**Ross, Alexander Daniel (*Similkameen Star July 17, 1912*)****LAID TO REST**

All that was mortal of Alex. Daniel Ross, who passed away at the general hospital last Friday morning, was laid away at the cemetery Sunday afternoon. The funeral sermon by Mr. J. A. Stewart, Presbyterian missionary student, was well attended, many coming from Granite Creek, where the deceased resided, and the

upper country. The late Mr. Ross was a pioneer of the country, following chiefly prospecting and at the time of his decease had mineral property bonded in Summit camp valued at about fifty thousand dollars. The deceased was held in high esteem for his integrity and honesty and a large number of friends gathered to pay a last tribute of respect to the departed. The pall bearers were Robert Stevenson, T.H. Murphy, John McDonald, P. Russell, F.P. Cook, T. Harrigan. The executors of the will of deceased are Hugh Hunter and J. B. Wood. Several floral emblems were placed on the handsome casket, the arrangements being made by D.M. French, undertaker and funeral director. Deceased was a native of Nova Scotia and was 66 years old. A memorial service was held at Coalmont by the Rev. G.A. Wilson. (*Note by D. Sterne: According to his death certificate, Alexander Ross was buried at the Princeton Cemetery*)

### **Frenchy (Similkameen Star February 28, 1913)**

'Frenchy,' an oldtime Chinese goldhunter died at Granite Creek last Wednesday, 71 years old. He had many striking characteristics and was supposed to lead a charmed life, according to a local biographer.

### **Eplett, Ernest (Coalmont Courier August 5, 1912)**

Miner Bunt to Cinders at Granite

Shortly after two o'clock this morning (Tuesday) F.P. Cook, the Granite merchant, awoke the hamlet with cries of "Fire," and in a twinkling all the Creekites were on deck to see what was happening. When they got outside their houses it was seen that the gaol was a mass of flames, the heat from which was so intense that they were unable to approach the building closely.

Ernest Eplett, a miner in the employ of Charles Harrigan, slept in the gaol house and is known to have gone home from Coalmont about 10 o'clock last night. It is supposed he must have fallen asleep on the table and thus have overturned the lamp, the unfortunate fellow sleeping on unconscious of his impending doom, or he may have fallen to the floor and stunned himself, or been taken with a fit. At any rate, Charles Harrigan states that he saw his body lying face downwards across the floor of the burning building, with one leg and arm entirely burnt away, and undoubtedly dead at the time.

Eplett was an experienced miner well known around the Boundary and had spent several years in Nelson. He was a man of about 50, in perfect health and good spirits last night – this morning he lies in the burnt out shack a charred heap of cinders.

At one time Eplett owned considerable land in what is now the very heart of Vancouver, but sold it for a song and blew in the proceeds. Had he held on to this property he might now be classified among Canadian millionaires, but he was just a typical easy going miner always ready to help a comrade when he was flush with money, and these good fellows always did poor. He was a Cornishman by birth, but had spent many years in the western states and Canada.

### **Cameron, Hugh Blaine (*Similkameen Star April 16, 1915*)**

Funeral Held Sunday

The funeral of the late Dr. Hugh B. Cameron was held last Sunday afternoon, Rev. J.A. Gillim officiating. Dr. Cameron was on Granite Creek in 1885, and is said to have been the first man to discover platinum on the creek. He sent samples to Paris to be tested, and they proved to be genuine. Some years ago he went to Atlin, ran a newspaper for a time and was afterwards mining recorder. He again returned to this district and settled on a ranch near Tulameen. In his younger years he was a practicing physician and was for a time in charge of the general hospital at Melbourne, Australia. At the time of his death he was 74 years old.

### **Cook, Foxcrowle Percival (*Princeton Star August 2, 1918*)**

PIONEER MERCHANT CLAIMED BY DEATH

F.P. Cook Dies at Vancouver General Hospital Following Serious Operation

The Similkameen district has lost another of its pioneer residents in the passing of Foxcrowle P. Cook, who died at the Vancouver General Hospital Wednesday afternoon at 3 o'clock, following an operation for an abscess on the brain. His eldest daughter, Miss Adeline, was with him when the end came. The remains were brought to Granite Creek, his home for 33 years, and the funeral will be held there Sunday afternoon at two o'clock. Mr. Moody of St. Cuthbert's Church, Princeton, will officiate. A request has been made that no flowers be sent.

The late Mr. Cook was born in Bedford, England, 57 years ago, and came to this country and to Granite Creek in 1885. That was when the placer gold excitement was on, and the town had a population of 2,000 people. It was then the third largest place in British Columbia, being only exceeded by Victoria and New Westminster. Some time ago he told the Star that when he came to Granite Creek carrying his blankets it was with difficulty he made his way along the crowded main street. Mr. Cook was one of the first merchants in that place, and in 1894 opened a branch in Princeton, and a few years later another branch at Coalmont. He was successful in business and accumulated considerable property. He was always a friend to the miner and prospector, and assisted many a man who was struggling along to develop his claims. He was public spirited and in every way a fine type of citizen. Some years ago he was thrown from a horse and suffered an

injury to his head, which caused him great trouble for the past two or three years. He is survived by his widow, four daughters and a son, and to these the sincere sympathy of all is extended.

**Holmes, Lucie Clemintina (nee Laurence)**  
*(Princeton Star September 18, 1930)*

Obituary  
HOLMES

Death Sunday afternoon swooped down on the family residence above Granite Creek's gurgling waters, and snatched away another of the Similkameen's revered pioneers, and one of the most beloved. Mrs. Lucie C. Holmes beloved wife of W.H. Holmes was a mother to many a weary voyageur through life's troubled ways.

She was one of the most picturesque characters in all the province. Born in Yale, B.C., on the seventeenth day of June 1860, the late Mrs. Holmes lived a hardy pioneer life, first with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jackson Lawrence, and later with her husband. Pioneers in the Cariboo, they came to Granite Creek in the days of the gold rush in '85.

A charming and motherly little woman, Mrs. Holmes was known throughout the valley. Her sudden death from pneumonia, came as a great shock. Besides her husband she is survived by two sons, Hugh Jackson and Thomas W., and two daughters Mrs. J. Smart and Mrs. W.W. Ramsay. There are many grand children.

Only six weeks previous friends from the entire valley and beyond gathered to honor Mr. and Mrs. Holmes on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary.

**FUNERAL**

The funeral was held from Coalmont Sunday. Rev. A. W. Robinson officiating assisted by Rev. J. Reid. A touching episode was the singing of her favorite hymn, "There's a Beautiful Land on High," which she delighted to teach to the children.

Cross – W.H. Holmes.

Harp – Jim and Ethel.

Heart – Edna and Wes.

Wreaths – Tom and Grace, Ad and Wes and Mrs. A.A. Rossiter, Mr. and Mrs. M.J. Matheson and family.

Sprays – Mr. and Mrs. Silas Smith, Mr. and Mrs. E. Burlon, Mr. and Mrs. Prendergast, Mr. and Mrs. R.V. Shaw, Mr. and Mrs. E. Reilly and Bill, Mr. and

Mrs. R.N. Caulfield, Mr. and Mrs. W. McKinnon, Mr. and Mrs. G. Murray, Mr. and Mrs. J. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Vallance, Mr. and Mrs. D.R. Boucher, Mr. and Mrs. Cuthbertson, Mr. and Mrs. F.T. Pilling and Winston, Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Dodd, Mr. and Mrs. Waterman and Dolly, James and Edna Brown and family, Mr. and Mrs. Wagenhauser, Mrs. T White.

Pallbearers: J. Amberty, A. Price, W. Rossiter, L.A. Dodd, W.A. Davis, A.C. MacKenzie.

### **Murphy, Thomas Herbert (*Princeton Star November 27, 1930*)**

Colorful Career of Pioneer ‘Judge’ Ends  
VETERAN “JUDGE” MURPHY GOES TO LAST REST AFTER NINETY  
ACTIVE YEARS

\*Note – For this excellent account of the life of Judge Murphy we are indebted to “Jay Ell.” To adequately cover such a story one must be reporter, friend, and historian, and in contributing the following Mr. Lugheed has done us all a real service.

Finis was written at the end of a long and eventful career when on Nov. 19 Judge Murphy passed over the “big divide.” For three years he had been failing, not from any particular ailment, but simply because he had long passed man’s allotted span of life and was slipping down the last decline that ends life’s journey. He was faithfully attended by Mrs. James, a kindly matron, whose self-sacrificing ministration helped him during his time of need.

For two weeks prior to his death he was often in a semi-conscious condition and it was evident that the end was not far off, so, when he passed peacefully away on Wednesday afternoon his demise was not unexpected. There was hardly a tremor to mark the passing, just a little sigh like a child going to sleep, then the heart that had beaten for nigh a hundred years, was still. Judge Murphy was dead.

Like many other pioneers and men of the wanderlust who adventured into far places a considerable part of Judge Murphy’s life history was veiled in obscurity. He was born in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, about the year 1830. He went to sea at an early age and for a number of years worked before the mast as an A.B. seaman. Latterly he rose to be first mate of a coaster running out of Halifax.

During his seafaring years he visited many parts of the world. He had lived in South America, India, Australia and Great Britain. At the time of the Australian gold rush the ship he was sailing on arrived outside an Australian port. In those days it was not an unusual thing for a whole crew to abandon ship and head for the goldfields. To try and circumvent the sailors and prevent their taking French leave, the captains used to anchor their ships outside the ports. This happened on the ship that Sailor Murphy was on, but it did not deter him from getting ashore.

In the middle of the night he and a companion named MacLeod commandeered a ship's boat and pulled into the port. In the morning they headed for the gold fields and ere long were mixing with the miners in Balarratt. They cleaned up about two thousand dollars each and then the longing to get back to the seaboard impelled them to give up their mining venture and return to their regular vocation. For some years after returning from Australia he followed seafaring but finally gave it up and for a time was a longshoreman at one of the Atlantic ports.

About the time of the Comstock boom Judge Murphy had moved West and was then in Nevada where he acted as deputy sheriff during some of the hectic years when that state was wild and woolly. So far as the Judge is concerned little is known of the happenings in those days but one can surmise that the life must have been somewhat strenuous and certainly not "all beer and skittles."

He arrived in Granite Creek in 1886 and for a number of years followed placer mining. Along with John Jackson he worked the "Pogue" property which for a time paid fairly well. In 1892 he was in charge of operations for the Tulameen Improvement Company which had claims near Eagle Creek on the Tulameen River. Work continued till 1894 and the claims were then abandoned as the returns were not up to expectation. Twenty years ago the Judge took up residence in Tulameen where he resided till the time of his death.

Judge Murphy had been a keen reader and was blessed with a retentive memory. He had dipped into the classics and would occasionally quote from Socrates or Aristotle names which to some of us were only names and nothing more. He was particularly well posted in world history and considered Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" one of the best books that was ever printed.

The Judge was in his element during an argument and while he was generally urbane and genial, he was a past master in the use of irony and could overwhelm an opponent with scathing satire.

Although he voted the Conservative ticket he, strangely, argued in favor of communism and woe betide anyone who had the temerity to stick up for the old regime. He was reticent about the past as the writer has reason to know, for on one occasion when we tried to get him to reminisce for the benefit of the readers of the Princeton Star he judicially informed us that a man's past life was his own business. Having had our own share of ups and downs in this mundane existence we did not (?) his contention, in fact it was obviously logical.

Although not generally known the Judge could speak Gaelic fluently and what is a more rare accomplishment, he could also write it.

#### FUNERAL

On Friday afternoon the many friends of the deceased Judge gathered at the home where the body rested to pay their last respects to the dead. A service was

conducted by Rev. J. Reid of Coalmont United Church. At the conclusion of the service the pallbearers took charge of the casket the rest of the mourners fell in behind and then "with solemn mien and silent tread" the cortegue of mourners marched along the snow clad road that leads to the little cemetery where Tulameen buries its dead. Around the grave the mourners stood with bowed heads while the Rev. J. Reid read the burial service for the dead. The solemn words, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, were intoned by the minister and when the final amen had been spoken the last rites which are accorded to the dead had been consummated, the mourners turned from the grave to wend their way back to their respective homes, leaving the old Judge to sleep his last long sleep on the hillside that overlooks the little village of Tulameen, where he had spent the most peaceful years of a long and strenuous life.

The pallbearers were Dave Forsythe, Dan Rabbitt, Archie Chisholm, Dave Arnold, W. Britton, Geo. Schubert, W. Coots and Andy Jensen.

Among those who attended the funeral from neighborhood points were G.P. Myron, Mr. and Mrs. John Holm, J.H. Holmes, Mike Gaynor, \_\_\_\_\_ Price, Wes Rossiter, Constable Hatherill. (*Note by D. Sterne: Thomas Murphy was not as old as this obituary implies. He was born on November 8, 1842 which made him 88 years old.*)

### **Holmes, Walton Hugh (Similkameen Star March, 1940)**

DEATH OF OLD TIME RESIDENT  
W.H. Holmes, 88 Tulameen Pioneer Dies Here

Walton Hugh Holmes, well-known in Similkameen ever since he came to Granite Creek in 1885, passed away, after a brief illness, on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup>, in the Princeton General Hospital, to which he had been admitted on March 12<sup>th</sup>. In recent years he was prominent in mining circles, and was a familiar figure at the annual banquets of the Similkameen Historical Association. Of this body he was one of its two vice-presidents. With the passing of Mr. Holmes another link with the pioneer days has been broken. A very kindly, genial soul has crossed the Great Divide. Besides the members of his family circle, he leaves to mourn a host of friends. He was one of "the Grand Old Men" of our valley. His mind was alert, and his memory retentive almost to the last. At the 1939 supper gathering of Similkameen pioneers he delighted all present with reminiscences of his 88 years.

The late Mr. Holmes was born on March 20, 1852, in the town of Bury, Lancashire, England, and died the day after his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. He came of a good family, and after a liberal education, and a brief apprenticeship at office work he answered the call of the sea. During several years he made voyages on sailing ships to India, South America and the west coast of the United States. After he had seen Portland, Oregon, he grew dissatisfied with life at sea. Returning home he passed his nautical examinations, then determined to emigrate to America.

Crossing the Atlantic, he travelled overland from New York to Oregon and California. There for a number of years he was employed railroading, and in 1880 came to British Columbia.

When Mr. Holmes arrived in Victoria, the C. P. R. was in course of construction, and he took ship for Yale. For the next few years he was railroading and boating on the Fraser River. He had many vivid recollections of Hope and Yale and New Westminster in these early days. Then in 1885 he followed the gold bugs to Granite Creek, just when the rush was at its height. Granite Creek was believed to be the third largest town in British Columbia.

For the next 55 years Mr. Holmes was a familiar figure in all parts of Similkameen. In mining, farming and business, he was a pioneer.

Soon after coming to this Province he was married to Lucie C. Lawrence, who died on September 14, 1930 in her 71<sup>st</sup> year. Funeral services for Mr. Holmes were held in the Coalmont United Church and conducted by Rev. J.C. Goodfellow, who paid fitting tribute to the life and work of the "Great heart of Similkameen" Interment took place at Granite Creek cemetery.

Mr. Holmes had a ready pen, and in another column we print a vivid story which he prepared telling of the shooting of Jim Newland during the gold rush days at Granite Creek.

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