

## Boosting in British Columbia: The Creation and Rise of Invermere

Thomas C. Meredith

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### Article abstract

Boosting has been shown to have been significant in determining urban landscapes in Canada, particularly in relatively homogeneous regions where the environment provides little local comparative advantage. The mountainous southeast of British Columbia is an area where stark physiographic contrasts suggest that the potential for effective boosterism might be small.

In 1904 Randolph Bruce — a young Scottish surveyor and mine owner — became land agent for CPR holdings around Lake Windermere. Bruce, the CPR establishment, and eventually a company called the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruit lands Company (CVIF) were dominant forces in local development. The advantages of controlling the regional urban centre were sufficiently evident that in 1911 Bruce, through the CVIF, created the Village of Invermere. Oral history, company records and contemporary journalism demonstrate that the booster ethic was present. It is a testimony to the role of this force that despite locational disadvantages, Invermere became, and remains to this day, the dominant community of the region.

# Boosting in British Columbia: The Creation and Rise of Invermere

Thomas C. Meredith

## Résumé/Abstract

*Il a été démontré que la promotion est significative dans la détermination de l'aménagement urbain au Canada, particulièrement dans des régions relativement homogènes où l'environnement fournit un petit avantage local comparatif. Dans le sud-est montagneux de la Colombie britannique, une région riche en forts contrastes physiographiques, le potentiel pour une stratégie de promotion effective semble faible.*

*En 1904, Randolph Bruce, un jeune Ecossais géomètre et propriétaire minier, devient le régisseur des terrains détenus par le Canadien Pacifique autour du lac Windermere. Bruce, le Canadien Pacifique et par la suite une compagnie appelée Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitlands Company (CVIF) deviennent les forces majeures du développement local. Les avantages de détenir le contrôle du centre urbain régional sont suffisamment évidents pour que Bruce, à travers la CVIF, crée en 1911 le village d'Invermere. L'histoire orale, les registres de la compagnie et les journaux du temps démontrent la présence d'une éthique de promotion. Le rôle de cette force se vérifie dans le fait qu'en dépit des désavantages de site, Invermere devient, et continue d'être aujourd'hui, la communauté dominante de la région.*

*Boosting has been shown to have been significant in determining urban landscapes in Canada, particularly in relatively homogeneous regions where the environment provides little local comparative advantage. The mountainous southeast of British Columbia is an area where stark physiographic contrasts suggest that the potential for effective boosterism might be small.*

*In 1904 Randolph Bruce — a young Scottish surveyor and mine owner — became land agent for CPR holdings around Lake Windermere. Bruce, the CPR establishment, and eventually a company called the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitlands Company (CVIF) were dominant forces in local development. The advantages of controlling the regional urban centre were sufficiently evident that in 1911 Bruce, through the CVIF, created the Village of Invermere. Oral history, company records and contemporary journalism demonstrate that the booster ethic was present. It is a testimony to the role of this force that despite locational disadvantages, Invermere became, and remains to this day, the dominant community of the region.*

The notion that boosting has played a significant role in shaping the urban landscape has been most clearly and convincingly advanced for prairie towns, particularly during and immediately following the period of railroad building.<sup>1</sup> This

was a time when within a relatively homogeneous and generally amenable natural landscape seminal decisions were being made about the template of growth points and “umbilical” supply lines that would impose a heterogeneity with respect to economic opportunity and community viability on large, and hitherto largely undifferentiated regions. As the environment permitted a great range of development alternatives, there was wide latitude for subjective, perhaps

arbitrary, decisions and consequently, there were significant incentives for vocal interest groups, lobbyists and promoters.

The case for boosting has been less comprehensively developed in other milieu. Knight<sup>2</sup> for example considered the factors which led to the placement of Canada's capital in Ottawa, a city whose ontogeny is conspicuously related to unique geographic and socio-economic circumstances but whose selection as capital was, Knight argues, affected by boosting activities. Johnson<sup>3</sup> and Bloomfield<sup>4</sup> describe later boosting activities in two other Ontario urban areas — Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo respectively. Both of these are in the "Golden Triangle" of Ontario. Johnson describes the success of Guelph as:

a triumph of a business community over an environment which yielded few natural advantages over . . . rivals.<sup>5</sup>

This reference to the natural landscape — relatively rich but homogeneously so — implies that within the Golden Triangle, as on the prairies, boosterism was a tool of influencing choice among approximate equals. Boosterism was clearly a competitive activity:

. . . dedication to continued municipal self-improvement [was] necessary for (Kitchener) to compete with other Ontario towns and cities in the pursuit of economic growth.<sup>6</sup>

Boosterism in Quebec has not been widely studied, perhaps, as Rudin<sup>7</sup> argues, because of a predisposition among researchers to the view that French Canadians have a "general disdain" for making "good use of local government" (as in boosting), or perhaps because the major urban network of Quebec is organically related to both the heterogeneity of the environment and to a long and varied socio-economic history. Nonetheless, Linteau<sup>8</sup> shows the boosting mentality present in Maisonneuve and Rudin provides evidence that the boosting ethos was present in such towns as St. Hyacinthe and St. Jean, and that financial constraints rather than the lack of motivation prevented its impact being greater.

In general, boosterism appears to have been most effectively demonstrated for circumstances characterised by two attributes: firstly, motivation — a perceived potential for significant and profitable urban expansion; and secondly, competition — the perception that several sites are endowed with natural and socio-economic attributes which make them at least reasonable contenders for possible urban growth. Thus, it is most likely to have occurred during periods of rapid growth in relatively homogeneous environments.

A measure of the potential importance of boosterism may be the extent to which it can be shown to have operated outside of these conditions, for example in a physical environment which greatly limits development options. Such is the case in the mountainous regions of British Columbia.

While MacDonald<sup>9</sup> has presented boosterism as a significant factor in the urban history of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, and Meredith<sup>10</sup> provides evidence for the view that the growth and development of the Upper Columbia Valley was influenced by the booster mentality, there has been no attempt to show its importance to the urban map of the British Columbia hinterland.

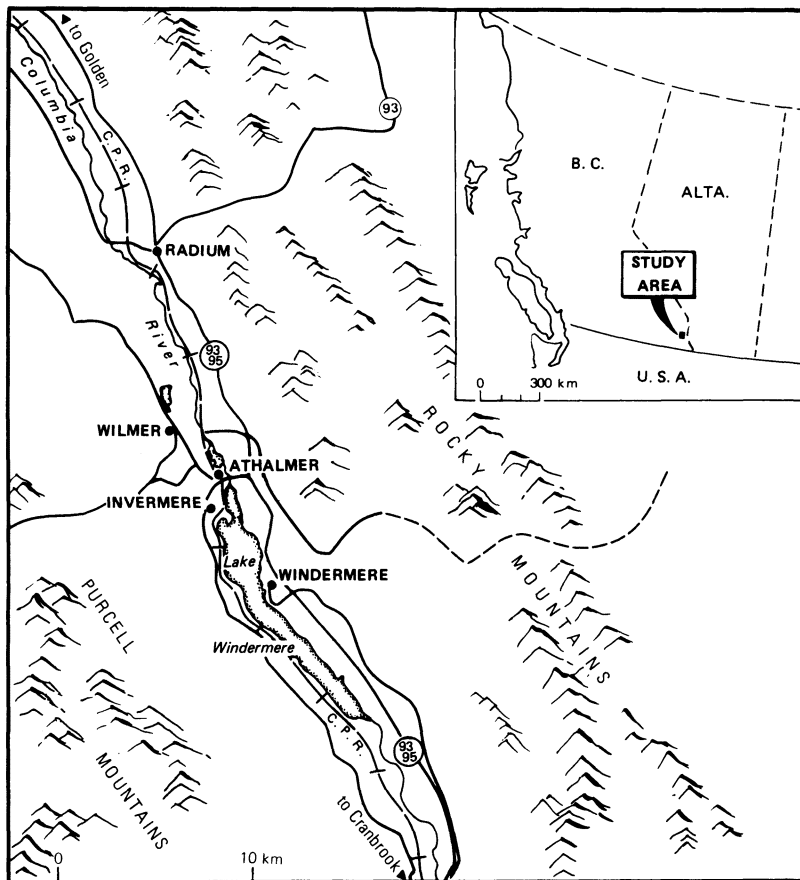
It is the purpose of this paper to review evidence relevant to the establishment and development of the village of Invermere in southeastern British Columbia. Information is taken from personal files, company transactions and municipal records as well as from contemporary journalism. The evidence is used to assess the relative importance of boosterism in determining the fate of Invermere and, ultimately, the urban geography of the region.

It is appropriate to note that despite the fact that the formative years are so recent — still within living memory — there are difficulties associated with amassing comprehensive documentation on events. Towns were not incorporated and so no archives exist; personal and corporate records may have been kept for various periods and for various purposes but, of course, much of that is lost. Most of the principle actors have died, those who survive may have incomplete, biased, and/or unverifiable recollections. As the evidence to recreate a complete picture is simply lacking, it is essential to build understanding on the basis of what information there is. Through private local collections of personal papers and company records as well as through the archives of contemporary local and national periodicals, it has been possible to get clear outlines of development forces, processes and events. This provides a basis for analysis of urban landscape evolution and, consequently, for regional comparisons.

The following discussion focuses on the role of the CPR, the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitlands Company, and an individual named Randolph Bruce in the establishment and development of Invermere. If it can be shown that the location of Invermere and its enduring economic dominance in the region are a result not of natural advantage but of the deliberate actions of local boosters. It will provide support for the view that local initiative can be a significant urban determinant, and, moreover, that even where relative advantage may have favoured one location for urban growth, the actions of aggressive and capable boosters could prevail.

## I. The Setting

On the main north-south traffic artery through the Rocky Mountain Trench in British Columbia, there is a large, and some would say grotesque, sign planted at what is otherwise a fairly desolate one-gas-station highway junction. The sign, picturing the pleasures of both summer and winter recreation, attempts to lure travellers off the main highway to the northwest tip of Lake Windermere to the town of Inver-



**FIGURE 1.** The region around Invermere. The width of the valley between the Purcells and the Rockies - known as the Rocky Mountain Trench - provides a scenic landscape as well as an important corridor for north-south travel by land and water.

mere.<sup>11</sup> It attempts to overcome the economic handicap of isolation: the road to Invermere is the road to nowhere else.

It is surprising that, despite this isolation, the town is the principal commercial centre for the district, dominating four other towns, three older than Invermere, two on the main highway — one at an important junction — and a third which had local primacy before Invermere existed. This domination is not a relict of an obsolete transportation network: Invermere has neither railroad station nor good access to the docks that were used by river boats before the railway opened in 1914.<sup>12</sup> The location of the town was selected by the managers of a development corporation who, presumably, were motivated by the desire to influence and capitalize on regional growth that was seen as being inevitable.

The rugged local terrain limited development options. Nevertheless, perhaps because of the clear and constant example of the boosters on the prairies, or perhaps because of institutional linkages through the CPR and development companies, the boosting mentality was evident in the mountain communities.

## II. Windermere District and the CPR<sup>13</sup>

The vital role of the CPR in influencing the development of the urban structure of British Columbia is recognized.<sup>14</sup>

Its influence in the Windermere District became inevitable with the ceding of a land grant seventy miles by seventy miles, that covered all of the habitable land in the Rocky Mountain Trench near Columbia Lake and Lake Windermere. The land grant was contingent upon a rail link between the CPR mainline through Kicking Horse Pass which crossed the Rocky Mountain Trench at Golden, and the line through Crows Nest Pass, which crossed at Cranbrook. The two settlements within this area at the turn of the century were Wilmer and Windermere. Wilmer (originally called Peterborough) was set high on the benches on the western side of the valley at a point that permitted access via Toby Creek to mining properties in the Purcell Mountains. Windermere was situated on the east side on Lake Windermere on the main road between Golden and Cranbrook. Althamer was a smaller community at the north end of Lake Windermere at a fiord and, later, bridge site on the road between Windermere and Wilmer. All of these towns were within the CPR land grant, but Wilmer was selected for the CPR land office, perhaps because it was the residence of the local mining magnate who was to become their land agent.

R. Randolph Bruce, was owner and manager of Paradise Mine, a successful lead-silver mine in the Selkirk Mountains. He was born in Scotland in 1868, son of a Presbyterian minister, and came to North America in 1887 where he became a surveyor on the CPR's Crow's Nest route. He was

enticed by the beauty of the Windermere district and more particularly by the mineral potential of the Selkirk Mountains. He returned to McGill University for a degree in mineralogy and subsequently, with funding from Hammond, of the investment company of Hammond, Osler and Napton, Bruce was able to establish himself in mining. In addition, on November 30, 1900 he concluded an agreement with CPR that made him local land agent and would earn him a 5 per cent commission on all land he sold.

In 1901 Bruce was asked to collect testimonials from local farmers to be used in promotional literature for Eastern Canada and especially England, and to run advertisements in the Wilmer Newspaper. Bruce, at the time a junior and conscientious agent, undertook to place a \$10.00 advertisement in the paper called the Wilmer *Outcrop*. A series of letters from Mr. J.L. Doupe, Assistant Land Commissioner of CPR, Winnipeg, reveals either honest incompetence or patronizing sarcasm; the paper was referred to variously as the "*Outlook*," the "*Outpost*" and the "*Outcry*." Wishing to demonstrate the vitality of the region, Bruce, to his later regret, sent copies of the paper to the CPR office. He was told to keep his papers and reduce the advertisement from a \$10 to a \$5 format. Apparently the CPR did not treat the settlement of the area as a high priority.

In 1903, J.S. Dennis, who was then assistant land commissioner but later became president of C.P. Irrigation and Colonization Co., Calgary, and a key figure in the company which developed the Invermere site, came to visit the area and assess its development potential. In 1904 he wrote to Bruce requesting an overview of development objectives. Bruce indicated problems: while the promise of the railway stimulated sales, as did the start of surveying in September of 1904, Bruce felt that the railroad, as surveyed on the east side of Lake Windemere, would not optimize CPR land sales. A letter to W.M. Pearce, chief surveyor for the CPR, dated September 30, 1904, Bruce provides insight into the rail planning process:

Grant, the engineer in charge . . . says that he has no instructions . . . and so is running it on the east side as it was handiest. I pointed out the advantages . . . [but] . . . he was quite indifferent about the matter. It is a serious matter not only for those of us who are shipping ore, but also for the CPR themselves on account of the large block of land they own on this side and of their timber belts. . . .<sup>15</sup>

The matter was not to be resolved easily because the advantages of proximity to a rail line were obvious. Bruce prevailed, however, and the line was built along the west shore of Lake Windermere.<sup>16</sup>

A second and perhaps more serious problem facing Bruce was that water on CPR land was limited. In fact, on October 8, 1904, Bruce wrote that all the land that had adequate

water for farming had been sold. This problem of water was one that shaped the development of the area over the next decade.

The remedy proposed initially was simply to acquire well drilling equipment. On September 12 of 1904, Bruce wrote to Dennis requesting \$1,000 for the purchase of a well digger.

. . . such an outfit is comparatively inexpensive and might be made to pay for itself by renting it out to purchasers of our lands, with which to sink their own wells.<sup>17</sup>

However, Pearce, in offering his advice to Dennis later that month reported, accurately, a very poor potential for drilling.<sup>18</sup> He did, however, acknowledge a good potential for the development of gravity irrigation systems which would be fed by the constant flow of melt waters from the snow-peaked mountains to the west.

A lack of water would end Bruce's land sales, so he investigated CPR's interest in irrigation. By September 29, 1904, Dennis had sent a copy of Pearce's report to Bruce, adding that "it is not [the CPR's] intention to do anything relative to the construction of this irrigation system." The files of the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitlands Company (CVIF) show that by September 20, 1905, Bruce had given voice to the idea of a private irrigation company.

Bruce was committed to the idea of economic growth in the area and saw agriculture as the base for that growth. In 1904 during Pearce's visit, the recommendation for an experimental or a demonstration orchard was made. Through that year and the following year Bruce engaged in correspondence with the British Columbia Deputy Minister of Agriculture (J. R. Anderson) and the manager of a Federal Department of Agriculture demonstration farm in Agassiz (Thos. A. Sharpe).

Following one of Anderson's visits to the valley, Bruce wrote (August 27, 1904):

I think there are great possibilities in the way of fruit raising. . . . Your visit has done a great deal in stimulating this, for instance the Agent of a Salem, Oregon Nursery passed through here in your wake and sold over \$500 in orders for fruit trees.<sup>19</sup>

Bruce hoped that Sharpe would create a demonstration farm in the valley and wrote to encourage him. But, in addition, Bruce was willing to take initiative himself to promote the viability of the fruit-production/rail transport system he envisioned. Bruce wrote to Sharpe (June 3, 1906) that he had planted 350 fruit trees and expected that these would be ready to harvest when the rail line was completed.

But Bruce's ultimate interest was in the investment potential associated with development, and in 1905 Bruce



**FIGURE 2.** This clubhouse (ca. 1910) still stands in what is now a densely settled residential area.

SOURCE: *Windermere Valley Echo*.

corresponded with two lawyers in Golden, O'Brien and Scovill, about a joint venture for the creation of the townsite to be called Canterbury, and to be situated on a point overlooking Lake Windermere.

Bruce's perception of an economic opportunity associated with the creation of a new townsite, as well as his belief in the fruit growing potential of the area, his recognition of the need for irrigation, and the refusal of the CPR to undertake the irrigation project, were the factors which determined the events which predominated economic activity and urbanisation processes in the area for the next decade.

### III. Promotion of the Windermere District

Regardless of the natural beauty and obvious desiderata of the valley, there was no question that its rapid and profitable advance was going to require active promotion. A letter dated March 21, 1904, from J. S. Dennis, then B.C. Land Commissioner, to the CPR local land agents defines the challenges of developing the mountainous inland of British Columbia:

... there are many difficulties in the way. It would be pleasanter if these were removed but as they are there, the best plan is to surmount them, in fact my earlier conclusion was that all obstacles must be forcefully overcome if we are to make a success of things.<sup>21</sup>

It also defines the prescription:

... give close and energetic attention to your agency and ... be constantly on the lookout not only for the protection of our interests, but also for their advancement, so that we may leave no stone unturned in our endeavors to healthily increase our sales. ...

Bruce took up the challenge with both passion and finesse. He solicited testimonials from valley residents for 1910 in a CPR promotional booklet. Letter titles included "Profitable Fruit Growing," "A Profitable and Congenial Occupation for a Gentleman," "An Instance of Substantial Success," and "A Record of Good Work and Difficulties Overcome." Samuel Brewer, one of the first homesteaders in the area and a resident since 1883 wrote "I ... have grown apples for 17 of 18 years and never had a failure yet." Richard S. Grant Thorhold wrote:

I consider the country an ideal place for any Englishman with a small income who is fond of sport. There is capital bear hunting in the spring, and the season opens again on September 1st for deer, sheep and goats, etc. The only slack time is in the summer months, and if we only had a few more men we could play polo.<sup>22</sup>

The shortage of water is mentioned only by L.G. McKay:

I have never had a failure in a crop. This year was anything but a good hay season as we had practically no rain. I had 120 acres of timothy and clover, and cut 260 tons of hay first crop.<sup>23</sup>

This seems a marked contrast to the entries in the private diary of General Poet, one of the purchasers of CPR land:

Owing to gross carelessness the irrigation ditch did not run and the crop partially failed. The Company agreed to compensate me by accepting the probable yield as the estimate given in their own pamphlet. ...<sup>24</sup>

Further regarding the hay market and the railroad, Poet writes:

"I do not anticipate that ... hay will ever again touch [\$30.00/ton] as the railway will in all probability land the prairie produce in the Valley at far lower rates. At the present moment hay cannot be bought in the valley at less than \$35.00 per ton, but at the railhead (Spillmachine (sic) ) the best prairie hay is selling at \$16.00.

### IV. The Media Perspective

Simultaneous with commercial promotion was wide publicity derived from feature articles in leisure and travel

magazines. Although much of this publicity was contrived — written by people with vested interests in the promotion of the region — it is an important reflection of the kind of enticement that was being offered to the public.

The *Technical World Magazine*<sup>25</sup> featured graphic descriptions and panoramic photos: one, for example, captioned “The Valley Lay Like the Vast Park of Some Feudal Lord.” The *Canadian Mail* reported an interview with E. Mallandaine (a manager with the CVIF) in which he described one million acres “needing only tilling and water.”<sup>26</sup> The article reports how a 40 acre farm bought at 15 pounds per acre could be making a profit within three years. The *Colonist* in 1911 raises the subject of Windermere Valley with the words: “I would that my pen could utter the thoughts that arise in me.”<sup>27</sup> *Canada* in 1912, featured a similarly glowing account.<sup>28</sup> The *Canadian Gazette* called it “Canada’s New Playground”<sup>29</sup> and described attractions for sportsmen, tourists and British settlers. The article notes that the region had been referred to as the “Sleeping Beauty” but that the “Prince, in the shape of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, has appeared on the scene.” The article, perhaps suspect for objectivity, was written by Bruce.

In addition to the feature articles and promotional literature, there were “news” reports in papers which not only chronicled the activities in the area, but which were no doubt anticipated to increase economic interest in the area. The press releases describing the planned development in the area show something of the boosting strategy.<sup>30</sup>

## V. The Development Company

On March 23, 1911, the *Daily Province* of Vancouver displayed the headline “To Buy Vast Tract of Rich Valley Lands.” The purchaser was a newly created holding company called the Western Agencies and Development Company (WADC) which was to buy 200,000 acres from the CPR and create a subsidiary called the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitlands Company (CVIF).

The Cranbrook newspaper, *The Herald*, listed the executives and directors of WADC on April 13, 1911. The president of WADC was J.S. Dennis, who was also the president of the Canadian Pacific Irrigation and Colonization Department. Directors included presidents of private companies in Calgary, senior employees of the CPR, a member of parliament and several “bankers and capitalists” from as far afield as New York, Chicago and Minneapolis. Also included was R.R. Bruce, vice-president, Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitland Company.

The publicity generated in the media was very much a consequence of the promotional activities of the CVIF. The notes from the Wilmer correspondent of the *Cranbrook Herald* on March 23, 1911 state:

There is going to be a large tourist and land seeker traffic throughout the whole Valley this year. . . . The Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitlands, Limited are taking an active part in this missionary work . . . by means of a good line of agencies throughout the English-speaking world they are certainly going to make things whirl.

On April 1, 1911 the *Vancouver Province* featured a story under the title “Great Irrigation Scheme Outlined.” This gave details of a \$7,000,000 CPR scheme for irrigation near Bassano, Alberta, and noted “the handling of such a large project . . . demonstrates what an enormous power the CPR Company is and has been in the development of Western Canada.” The article also noted the creation of the CVIF, and apparently not adverse to boosting, goes on to describe what became the essence of the company’s marketing strategy:

[The railway] line will provide transportation facilities which will give this rich district a quicker outlet for its fruit and products to the prairie cities. It is well also to note that this rich valley is some hundreds of miles nearer these consuming markets than any other district capable of duplicating its products. Fruit, vegetables, poultry, etc. can, with the completion of the above railway, be placed on the train at night and reach the city of Calgary next morning. Fruit growers know what this means.

To further encourage settlement, attention was being given to local services and amenities. The year 1911 was busy: banks were opened in the area (Bank of Montreal and Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce both opened branches in 1911<sup>31</sup>) and the long-awaited provincial government demonstration farm was created.<sup>32</sup> In March, 1911, the *Vancouver Province* noted that: “negotiations are now on foot to induce the Canadian Pacific Railway to erect a large tourist hotel . . . on the west side of Lower Columbia Lake near Milmer (sic).”<sup>33</sup> By April, it was reporting that the hotel would be built “overlooking the beautiful Lake Windermere, which will add materially to the enjoyment of the attractions of this fertile valley.”<sup>34</sup> A golf course was laid out and, in addition, the CVIF created a new race track:

This race track encloses first-class polo ground and next year it is the intention to have exhibition buildings in connection with it . . . there is no doubt by next year it will prove to be one of the fastest half mile tracks in British Columbia.<sup>35</sup>

However, of all the innovations and development, there was none that would have the lasting impact on the creation of the new townsite.

## VI: The Nucleus: The Village of Invermere

Although Bruce corresponded with lawyers in Golden as early as 1905 about the prospects of creating a private townsite to be named Canterbury on the site of what did become





**FIGURE 3.** The promises made in this pamphlet (1911) left a legacy of disappointment that is visible in the landscape today. Fruit and flowers were never to be.

SOURCE: *Windermere Valley Echo*.

Invermere, in the initial announcement of the creation of the WADC in the *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 23, 1911, there was mention of a proposed new town to be called Invermere. The *Cranbrook Herald* of May 4, 1911 only six weeks later reported that “new lots in the up-to-date town-site of Invermere are now open and fast being taken up.” Then, only two weeks later on May 18, the same paper reported on a front page story:

A story of wonderful development of a town that is springing up over night, of delightful climatic conditions, of an opalescent, crystalline lake sparkling in glorious summer sunshine, of singing birds and fragrant flowers, of boating, bathing, and outdoor life. . . . People are flocking in, so that where three weeks ago there was nothing to speak of, today stands a fairly well-developed embryonic city.

The urban quality of the area at the end of the summer of 1911 was characterised in *The Colonist* as follows:

Windermere, Wilmer, Athlmer and Invermere are all points around the lower, or northern, end of Lake Windermere. . . . In point of business and population I should say Athlmer is the most important just now.<sup>36</sup>

This apparent primacy was a probable result of that fact that the area station was in Althamere.<sup>37</sup> However, Bruce’s success in boosting Invermere is evinced by the report in the *Canadian Gazette* of November 23, 1911:

Windermere Valley . . . is undergoing something in the nature of a mild boom. . . . Many lots have been purchased by new-comers in Invermere, the commercial centre of the valley.

That Invermere was a privately owned townsite which was to be the heart of a privately sponsored irrigation and settlement program distinguishes the boosting of Invermere from situations in which either the crown or the CPR owned the developable land. Despite this, there can be no question that the promotion of the area was “boosting” rather than strictly commercial advertising, that is to say, it did have wide-spread support and did involve the initiative of local residents. Even though most people did not benefit directly from increased land sales, everyone realized that prosperity for one meant at least an improved prospect of prosperity for all. The community actively participated in writing letters of testimonial, showing produce in agricultural fairs, and in writing letters to members of parliament to represent the interests of the Invermere area. That the spirit of boosterism spread into the East Kootenay district of British Columbia is perhaps best demonstrated by the notes from Elko, published in the *Cranbrook Herald*, 1911:

Why, we’ve been boycotted by some people for boosting the town. They are scared that someone will come in and open up business or spend money outside their place. Why, right now there’s room for twenty-five more businesses in Elko. The business people in Elko today are working so hard they will soon all be total wrecks, and they are actually going color blind looking at the green all the time. The Merchants Bank is so full of the root of all evil it is really pushing the sand and tar off the roof . . . and just so long as we are in Elko we shall boost, because we have the goods.<sup>38</sup>

That Invermere was not innocent of the mercenary boosting mentality is well demonstrated by this extract of a letter from Bruce to the Parks Commissioner in which Bruce recounts his motivation for orchestrating the creation of Kootenay National Park.

. . . we want to pander to [Americans] all we can. We want their cars and their money and their business. . . . It will be up to us to prove that our judgment is right by going out and getting the tourist business, so that the C.P.R. and the Provincial Government, as well as the Dominion, get some return for their money.<sup>39</sup>



## VII. The Settlers

Boosting in the prairies was primarily concerned with building on the agricultural potential of the area. In boosting the Invermere area, the agricultural potential was certainly important, but the net was cast more widely to include "retired army officers and others with comparatively modest means. . . ."<sup>40</sup> The *Cranbrook Herald* featured a story entitled "Something Doing Up the Kootenay Valley" reflecting the spirit of the valley immediately prior to the formal announcement of the creation of the CVIF:

Lord Hindlip . . . has purchased . . . 500 acres on Upper Columbia Lake, for a very long figure. He is one of the wealthiest noblemen in England and quite a famous big game sportsman. A trifling matter of some twenty lions, half a score of elephants, rhinos, hippos, giraffes, buffalos, (the most dangerous game in the world, grizzly, not excepted) have been shot by him in Abyssinia and British East Africa. His is exactly the man to bring many others of his class. . . .<sup>41</sup>

The *Vancouver Province* noted that the Canadian Club of New York had visited the region and

were so charmed with its beauty and the shooting and fishing obtainable, [that they] formed a sportsmen club named the British Columbia Canadian Club of New York, which has already attained a membership of sixty and is about to erect a large clubhouse overlooking Windermere Lake.<sup>42</sup>

Publicity did not stress the agricultural productivity of the land as much as the overall opportunity for a well-rounded leisurely existence, albeit based primarily on fruit production. The *Canadian Gazette* reported:

It is fully anticipated that within a few years the Windermere district will be closely settled by a very desirable class of British residents. The sporting proclivities of the British settlers are also being gratified in the shape of a polo ground, where that truly English game can be carried on. Ponies adapted to local conditions are being bred successfully by an ex-English army officer.<sup>43</sup>

The conditions in 1911 and 1912 which provided "push" complementary to the "pull" of the publicity for the area is described in the *Calgary Herald*, and also reveals something of the class of immigrant expected.

The unrest in England and the inroads on settled incomes by new forms of taxation are ascribed by a passenger on the latest arrived Empress boat for the remarkable proportion of well-to-do English people among her 1,500 passengers who are making their permanent home in Western Canada.<sup>44</sup>

## VIII. An Outside View

Was the growth of the area around Invermere spontaneous and a natural result of comparative advantage and prevailing socio-economic trends, or was it the result of boosting? The question cannot be answered definitively, but the evidence can be examined. Was the potential of the Valley as overwhelmingly evident as publicity suggested? At least one observer thought not:

The Canadian Pacific Railway has land for sale here which on investigating we found to be all rugged mountains bare of vegetation. This they advertise as grazing land. . . . What little grain was to be seen was about three inches high and of a yellowish color probably from the hot sun and ice-cold irrigation water. . . . Mr. R.R. Bruce [was] most likely afraid to show his good land, the fine meadow lands described in their books [were] under water from in June throughout July. . . . We passed the famous fruit farm of Dr. Young, where they raised strawberries weighing six to the pound. But when we were told that these were shipped up the river by boat and then transferred into Mr. Young's cases and shipped back again and sold as his product, we realized the fake. . . . If people could make a living on scenery, climate and old rye whiskey, it would be an ideal place to live.<sup>45</sup>

This outside view (by a journalist from a potentially competing area) may be as biased as the promotional literature, but it affords some balance. It certainly portends the decade 1910-1920 more accurately than the promotional literature.

The ultimate test of the success of boosting activity is, perhaps, the community's ability to sustain growth, and although the CVIF scheme never bore fruit, the village of Invermere has become a bustling tourist centre. Several factors acted against fruit production: the climate was too cold, with frost spoiling the crop in many years; the construction of the irrigation system was never completed (for reasons that were never made clear publicly); and the community of British settlers which was to have flourished on the dry terrace surrounding Invermere never developed beyond a few farms, many of which were abandoned during the First World War, when army officers returned to Europe to fight.

The natural beauty of the area, which has come to be the basis of the sustaining industry of tourism, was undoubtedly the feature which gave the area a comparative advantage. Unfortunately for those who hoped to be able to make an easy livelihood from fruit production, the reality could never match the image created by the promoters and boosters, and many of the early settlers tell tales of hardship, bitterness and disappointment.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the fact that the CVIF schemes failed and Bruce left the area without ever seeing assured material results of his boosting efforts, Invermere, which is an artifact of his effort, has maintained its importance as the local commer-

cial centre. This truth demonstrates that an understanding of the urban structure of the area may require knowledge of the personal initiatives of its residents. While the physical landscape of Eastern British Columbia allowed less latitude than the Prairies for the designation of transportation routes and settlement locations, it is evident that boosters were active and significant in determining urban development. The anomalous isolation of the town of Invermere is evidence of that. To many, the fact that it is off the main highway is one of its assets. However, to those whose business depends on the constant flow of tourist dollars, it is worth maintaining the large promotional signs at the crossroads to compensate for the "accidents of history" that led to its isolation.

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#### NOTES

1. Alan F.J. Artibise has been the chief exponent. See Alan F.J. Artibise, *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development*, Canadian Plains Studies, Volume X (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1981); or Alan F.J. Artibise, "In Pursuit of Growth," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process*, ed. Alan F.J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982).
2. See David Knight, "'Boosterism' and Locational Analysis, or One Man's Swan is Another Man's Goose," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* III (February 1974): 10-16.
3. Leo Johnson, "Ideology and Political Economy in Urban Growth: Guelph, 1840-1927," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape*, 30-63.
4. Elizabeth Bloomfield, "Reshaping the Urban Landscape? Town Planning Efforts in Kitchener-Waterloo, 1912-1926," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape*, 256-303.
5. Leo Johnson, "Ideology and Political Economy in Urban Growth," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape*, 30.
6. Elizabeth Bloomfield, "Reshaping the Urban Landscape?" in *Shaping the Urban Landscape*, 260.
7. Ronald Rudin, "Boosting the French Canadian Town: Municipal Government and Urban Growth in Quebec, 1850-1900," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* XI (June 1982): 1-10.
8. See, for example, the quotes from Maisonneuve mayor cited in Paul-André Linteau, "The Development and Beautification of an Industrial City: Maisonneuve, 1883-1918," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape*, 304-320.
9. See Norbert MacDonald, "Victoria, Vancouver and the Evolution of British Columbia's Economic System," in *Town and City*, 31-58; and "C.P.R. Town: The City Building Process in Vancouver, 1860-1914," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape*, 382-412.
10. Thomas Meredith, "The Upper Columbia Valley 1900-20: An Assessment of Boosterism and the Biography of Landscape," *Canadian Geographer* XXIX (1985): 44-55.
11. Because of changing tastes and an attempt by the community to project a more subdued and bucolic impression, the sign at the corner has become less garish in recent years; perhaps as a consequence, however, a battery of ten huge and truly egregious private billboards now mar the half mile running up to the junction.
12. See Norman Hacking, "Steamboat Days on the Upper Columbia and Upper Kootenay, British Columbia," *Historical Quarterly* XVI: 1-51. See also, Thomas Meredith, "The Upper Columbia Valley," 44-55.
13. Unless otherwise indicated, the data in this section are from the personal files and letters of Bruce or from taped interviews with his contemporaries. See Thomas Meredith, *The Upper Columbia and Kootenay Valleys, 1807 to 1923*, (Parks Canada, Kootenay National Park, 1984).
14. See MacDonald, "Victoria, Vancouver and the Evolution," 31-58.
15. Letter from R.R. Bruce to Wm. Pearce dated 30 September 1904.
16. *The Colonist*, 17 September 1911.
17. Letter from R.R. Bruce to J.S. Dennis dated 12 September 1904.
18. Letter from Wm. Pearce to J.S. Dennis dated 15 September 1904.
19. Letter from R.R. Bruce to J.R. Anderson dated 27 August 1904.
20. Letter from R.R. Bruce to Thos. A. Sharpe dated 3 June 1906.
21. Letter from J.S. Dennis to R.R. Bruce dated 21 March 1904.
22. CPR 1911 Promotional Booklet.
23. *Ibid.*
24. From the private diary of Gen. Poet, date uncertain, but probably 1911 or 1912.
25. *The Technical World Magazine* (April 1910).
26. *The Canadian Mail*, 23 December 1911.
27. *The Colonist*, 13 October 1911.
28. *Canada*, 9 November 1912.
29. *The Canadian Gazette*, 26 January 1911.
30. See particularly the *Cranbrook Herald* and *Prospector*.
31. *Cranbrook Herald*, 31 March, 18 May 1911.
32. *Cranbrook Herald*, 18 May 1911.
33. *The Vancouver Province*, 23 March 1911.
34. *The Vancouver Province*, 1 April 1911.
35. *Cranbrook Herald*, 18 September 1911.
36. *The Colonist*, 17 September 1911.
37. *Cranbrook Herald*, 6 August 1914.
38. *Cranbrook Herald*, 17 August 1911.
39. Letter from R.R. Bruce to J.B. Harkin dated 1923.
40. *Vancouver Province*, 30 March 1911.
41. *Cranbrook Herald*, 9 March 1911.
42. *Vancouver Province*, 30 March 1911.
43. *The Canadian Gazette*, November 23, 1911.
44. *Calgary Herald*, 11 April 1912.
45. *Nezperce Herald*, 27 June 1910.
46. Thomas C. Meredith, *The Upper Columbia and Kootenay Valleys*.