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Christmas Moose



Looking for some Christmas cheer during lockdown? Check out the Christmas Moose and light display at the top of the hill in Field! Recommended by Roxanne Selkirk (newsletter compiler) and Garth Wilson.



Presidents Message

by Helen Barry

Hello Friends,

As with the rest of the world, this is an exceptional time for the Friends of Yoho.

We went into the summer tourist season with high hopes that things would sort themselves out and we would be carrying on with normal activities.

Well, that didn't happen. As Brenda, our manager will tell you, we never got to open the store at the Visitors' Centre. As this is our main source of revenue (besides memberships and donations), this has left us in a vulnerable position heading into the off season.

We also had to cancel summer activities such as Historic Walking Tours and Guest Speakers, and our Spiral Tunnels Model Train Display never made a trip around the track.

With no certainty about next summer, we are taking a serious look at how to proceed. It seems like our best option is to reduce our expenses to bare minimum, and, borrowing the terminology of our wise treasurer, Patricia Narbaitz, enter a period of hibernation.

We also have been unable to plan a Fall Fundraiser and Membership Drive as has been in our tradition, as this, for those who have participated, is a highly social affair. However, we are currently looking at an online auction option to be held in the spring. So, stay tuned for that.

Brenda will be checking into the office minimally, so if you wish to contact us, someone will be there to reply.

On a personal note, I have informed the Board that I will be resigning from the board of the Friends as of our next AGM in June. I am no longer living in Field, and when restrictions are lifted, I plan to be more transient in my retirement. The Friends are always interested in new Board members so if you have ever considered joining us, please let us know.

It seems important to remember that this current health crisis is causing much greater hardships worldwide than the financial woes of the Friends of Yoho. And to keep in mind that the bears, like us, will go into hibernation, the snow will come, we'll all go out skiing and appreciate the wonders of the amazing place we live, and maybe by springtime, things will look a bit brighter.

Til then,

Helen



The Ask Letter

by The Board of Directors

Dear Members and Supporters of The Friends of Yoho -

We have had a very challenging year. Luckily, we have been able to keep Brenda - Our Manager - on for a large part of our operating season this year. Despite keeping the store closed due to COVID safety issues, she has kept us organized.

We have applied for CEWS funding for employees and will be looking at further applications for funding - which is subject to approval.

Going into 2021, however, we need your help to get back up and running. The operations of our retail unit which helps us support projects such as: International Volunteers program in conjunction with Skiing Louise, Memorial benches, Historical Walking tours of Field, water stations in the VRC, operating and maintaining the model train in the VRC and many other projects that benefit Yoho National Park as a whole, will be under review, based on the uncertainty the summer 2021 brings.

We are exploring every possibility to get help or ask for help. And now, we are asking you- our fans, supporters and members.

If you wish, donate money, or offer some extra support to The Friends of Yoho at this time and help us bring in the new year with hope, health and the focus on prosperity - we certainly would appreciate it. Please contact Brenda Selkirk our manager at info@friendsofyoho for donation details.

We thank you in advance.

General Manager Report

by Brenda Selkirk

Hello Friends!

The Friends gift shop remained closed this summer due to COVID-19 restrictions and Parks Canada decisions to

prevent public access to the VRC. Throughout the summer we had our website store providing clothing, magnets, souvenir maps and stuffed animals.

We had some success with this and September proved to be the busiest month by far with sales better than all of our other months combined. This was terrific and a much needed lift to the inactivity in other areas of the organization.

A special thank you to volunteers for keeping the school flower garden in great growing condition, and to all other volunteers who have provided the organization with their support.

Snow is here now and people are venturing out to do activities that are safe and enjoyable. This winter we will continue to adapt to current times, and let you know about upcoming events that we get organized.

Memberships can be renewed through the website for the upcoming year. A form is available with a payment option for donations and or memberships. Thank you to those who have already done this.

What a year this has been. I'm happy to say we survived it and have great plans to move on in the upcoming year. I will be making 2021 my fifth and final year with the Friends of Yoho. What a great experience!

Best Wishes, Brenda Selkirk, General Manager



St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church – Field BC

By Karla Gaffney

Mt. Stephen stands guard over the village of Field and its last remaining church, St. Joseph's. It is the most photographed building within the town site.

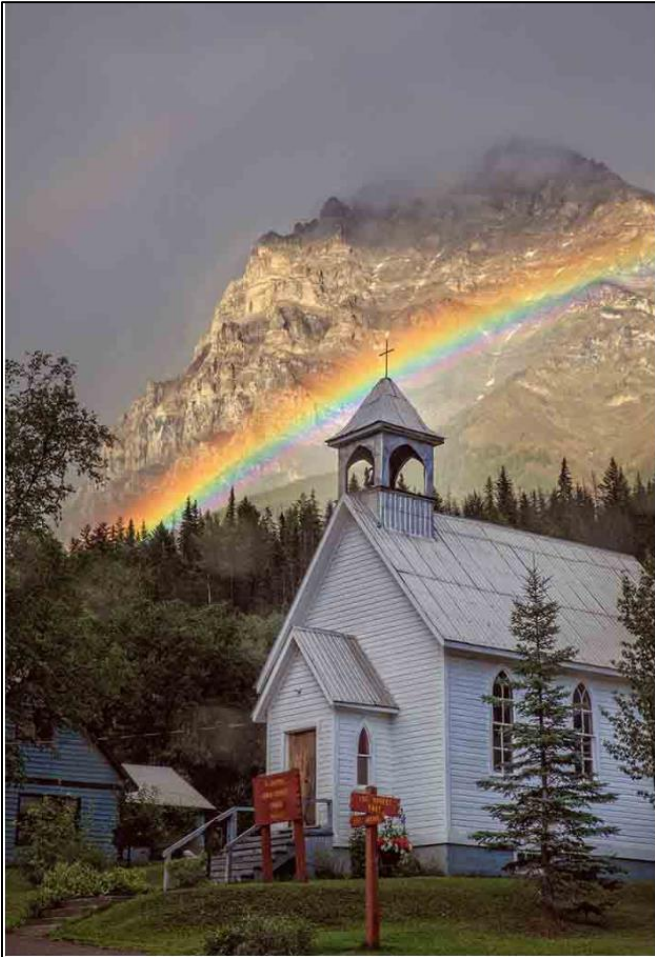


Photo credit: Joel Tansey

In 1908, St. Joseph's Catholic Church was the first of 4 churches (of various denominations) located in the village of Field, BC...and is now the only one remaining. Originally built in 1888 by railway construction crews in Donald (west of Golden), it was subsequently moved to Field in 1908.

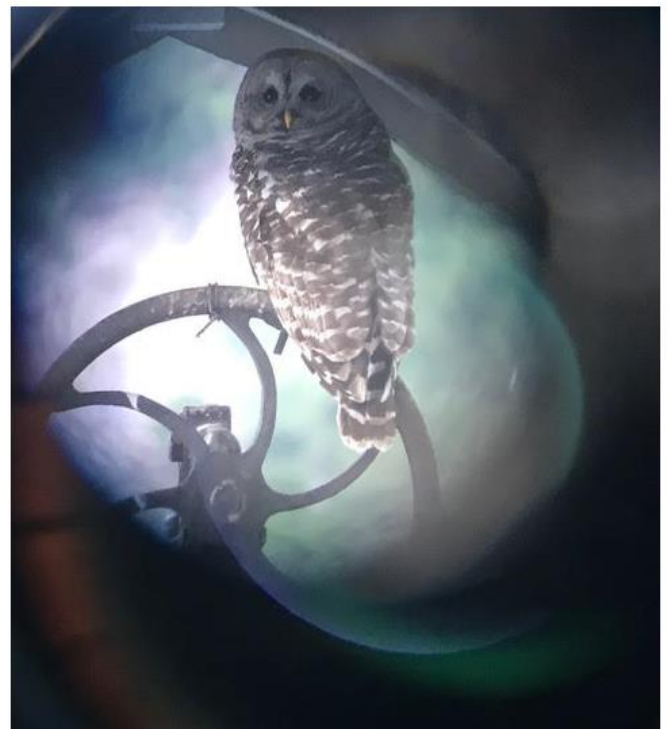
The 2 waves of Italian immigrant families (early 1900's) arriving and settling in Field with the Canadian Pacific Railway, were instrumental in the healthy viability of the church for many generations. A lot of care and attention has been given to the building by a loving community.

With the decline in employment offerings over the past few decades, the community has seen a steady population decline (currently 130) resulting in the closure of many town site amenities...including church services.

For the past few decades (until recent years) Sunday afternoon mass was offered and delivered by the Parish priest traveling in from Golden and an annual Christmas "midnight mass" was attended by most Field residents. The last Catholic wedding was held in the church on June 13th, 2015.....a young, out of town couple who fell in love with this beautiful Yoho venue.

Sadly, a lot of communities across this country have lost their beloved houses of worship due to evolving demographics, leading to a much smaller (or no) congregation, resulting in a lack of revenue to do even the most basic maintenance and/or pay the bills. Field, BC is no different. A small group of caring residents (past and present) have kept the church and its affiliated cemetery maintained voluntarily.

The Roman Catholic Diocese relinquished their Parks Canada lease, then subsequently the church structure itself to the community of Field a few years back.



A Field community member taking advantage of the church structure. Photo credit: Bruce Bembridge / Marilyn Toulouse

The FRAA (Field Recreation Advisory Association) is now leading the effort to preserve the original structure with a major renovation. Upon completion, the “church” will be a non-religious multi use venue. It will be made available for rent to any and all who wish to gather for various events.

This is a huge fund-raising undertaking for a small community. Any and all donations are welcomed through the Friends of Yoho, who have supported this effort by giving all donations from our annual Historic Walking Tours of Field to the project.

On an exciting side note.... a female Barred owl moved into the church belfry a few years back to become a mother. She incubated her eggs to produce 2 owlets for the past 3 years. It is an amazing event to have unfold each season. We hope to have her back next Spring and will ensure any renovations...work around her schedule!



Just noticed a post that shows the layout and brief description of various things in Field.

The one with the CP Telegraphs building was interesting to me in that it said it housed a telephone office with the operators flashing lights etc.

Well, this building at no time ever was a telephone office. The equipment inside was used to act as repeaters for many technical circuits like carrier systems from Vancouver to Calgary and beyond.

We also housed a CBC low power radio transmitter to provide the town and area with broadcasts from the Trans Canada network of the CBC. AM 830 or 840 on the dial as I recall.

When I went to Field the whole town was served with electricity from a generator in the CPR roundhouse in 1957. The paved highway ended at Lake Louise and carried on to Field with gravel and ended there. They were working on the section from Field to Golden also in 1957

As I recall Northern Canada Power came in and rewired the town and set up a generating station on the edge of town somewhere around the late fifties or early sixties. Much more stable power which of course was vital for my office with all that sensitive electronic equipment.

We did have battery backup with about 140 batteries in the back room. Of course, even after the power had been



Photo credit: Bruce Bembridge / Marilyn Toulouse

Telegraph Office – Field, BC

by Cliff Hine

Cliff Hine emailed the office throughout the summer with information about his experience working in the Telegraph Office. Here is what he had to say

– Brenda Selkirk

changed from the CPR roundhouse to NC Power. We couldn't afford to lose our power supply.

It also was a very important switching centre for all the CBC radio networks, the Trans Canada network, Dominion network, Mountain network, Pacific network and others.

All the communications in the area centered in this office and we were responsible for them to operate properly along with all the other circuits that went through this office.

The only thing about telephone circuits was that in the 60's five BCTel circuits were installed in the office to provide telephone service in and out of Field, but this was automatic equipment and never ever had anyone manning these trunks.

During WW2 armed soldiers were deployed around the office to protect the cross Canada communications systems at that time.

Here are a few names of some of the guys who worked in it over the years. Lou Norman, Franklyn Henry, Del Spurr, Glen Cairns, Gordon Moar, Larry Chatham, Larry Watson, Ted Hardin, myself and a few others that I can't put a name to at this time.

I closed it up in the fall of 1969. After that for a short while a technician would drop in and do some routine maintenance but by far most of the circuits had been cut over to a microwave system.

I have the clock at my home which had been used many years in the office. It has two-hour hands because we did all the CBC switching and ran on schedules with Eastern Time.

The office call on Morse code circuits was FO.

At that time there was no long-distance telephone system except for a pay phone in the railway station, the Monarch hotel and in my office.

If you needed to make a call you rang a CPR operator in Banff from one of these pay phones who would take the number you wanted and then would connect you to a AGT operator in Calgary.

Later on BCTel wired houses up for phone service and we installed 5 telephone long distance trunks mounted in my office.

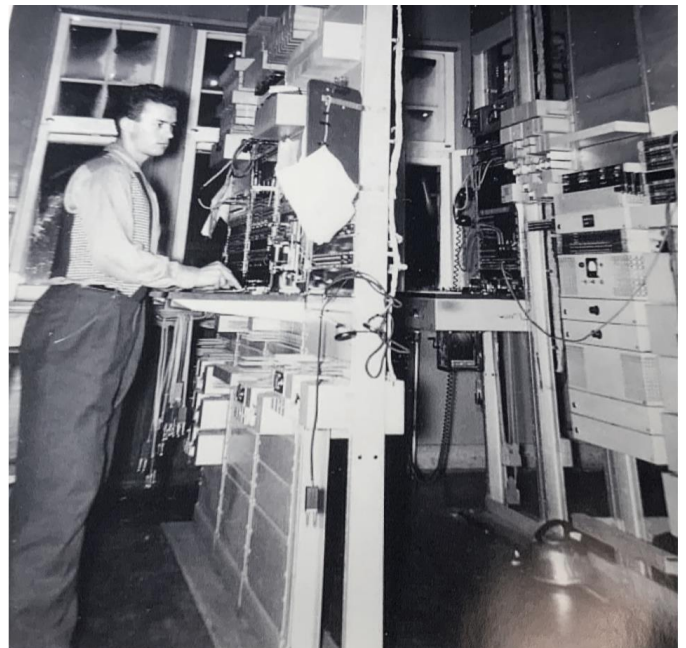
At no time was it ever a telephone office as such. We did have local circuits like a phone line to Emerald Lake, the Park Phone for private use, which included the Yoho Park office, another line in town that included Frank Beuerlein's store and a few houses in town.

But you did not have long distance available on these.

They all went through my office because we were in charge of keeping all these things in good operating condition.

Although I could if I wanted, connect one circuit to another, but this was never done.

I mentioned we had a 40 watt radio station in my office to broadcast the CBC Trans Canada network around the area and we also fed the same network to similar radio transmitters in Golden and Banff. I believe a newer model of that still sits in the office today and feeds the area on 840Khz or perhaps it was 830Khz on your dial.



Larry Chatham is standing at some of the CBC radio broadcast equipment in the Field office, and shows a wee bit of some of the other equipment bays in that area.

The office was full of this and we had about 150 wet cell batteries in a separate room for backup power in case the hydro failed, which it did from time to time.

The power for the town at that time was supplied by a diesel generator in the CPR roundhouse.

Later on the power you have now was installed by Northern Canada Power from an area just west of town.

It was just about ten feet east of those cement stairs in the front of the office that I rescued a baby from a large bear.

My large shepherd dog would lay on the window sill watching the world go by and became quite an attraction for passengers on the six passenger trains that came in every day. The walls in that building are about 1-1/2 feet thick.

Soooo if you can think of any questions drop me a note. I'm 87 now so don't expect too much lol.....

Cheers or as we would say on the Morse code telegraph,
73

I live in Langley BC now but I would prefer Field. Lol

Cliff Hine, Wire Chief

Mary's Memoirs

By Lorraine Zirke



Mary Decicco was born in Field and moved away when she was twenty -- in the mid 50's. In 2012, during one of her regular visits to Field, Mary met a young resident named Naomi Lenstra. Naomi asked if they could become Pen Pals as she was very interested in learning more about the early history of Field and growing up in that era. This was the beginning of a special friendship where they wrote back and forth regularly. In this manner Naomi stepped back in time to life in Field when it was a bustling railroad town filled with Italian immigrants. Thankfully, Naomi saved all of Mary's letters and passed them onto me so that I could share some of Mary's fond memories. A life rich in detail and love of a small community in the mountains. So Mary, let's open up one of your letters and begin reading.

Dear Naomi Angelina,

I was very happy to receive your letter and the lovely card you included. I am so pleased that you have developed a new way of looking at Field and am happy to be leaving all my memories to someone who can enjoy and relate to the stories. I have been looking at your genealogy and have discovered that your grandparents came from the same region in Italy as my own parents. The difference being mine came out decades earlier. My father arrived in Canada in 1903 when he was sixteen years old. He first worked for the CPR in Lake Louise which was then called "Laggan" on the railroad. To get to the Chateau he had to ride a horse. In those days the immigrants would visit Italy to see their families when they had holidays. Immigrants came to Canada thinking they would make money and eventually return home. It was during one of these visits that he married. My mother eventually moved to Canada with my two brothers. Cecil was only 10 years old and Ernest 6 months old. I was their third child when I was born in Field.

You asked what we did for fun in the community.

In those days the passenger trains were plentiful -- up to fourteen per day. Crowds of tourists, many of which were Americans, would unload onto the platform at the CPR Field station to be picked up by Brewster buses and shown all the local points of interest. For the hours between 11 am - 4 pm the station platform resembled the main street of a busy city. It was a great diversion for the town's people to walk down to the station and talk to the tourists. It gave the young residents the chance to see the latest fashions and the opportunity to talk with people from near and far. In those days everyone dressed up and there was no such thing as wearing blue jeans. Francesco Perri was the gardener for the railroad and it was his sole duty to care for the grounds around the station. He landscaped with many gardens and trails which he did so with much care and pride. It was a welcome sight to the many tourists arriving at the station as well as us town folks. It was Field's version of the Butchart Gardens in Victoria.

The Y.M.C.A. building was the focal point of the town and had a huge dining room where train passengers would

dine before heading up the Big Hill eastwards. It was a wonderful old rambling wooden structure that faced the railroad platform and looked out onto the Kicking Horse River. It operated as a hotel, provided permanent accommodations for bachelors working for the railroad, and had a magnificent dining room. This converted to a ballroom or concert hall when necessary. Inside the dining room was a fountain bar where the young teenagers would sit and the railroad men could eat a rushed meal if suddenly, they were on call.

The dining room itself was very formal with white tablecloths, flowers on the tables and gorgeous drapes. The main lobby held a souvenir shop, offices of the manager and staff, and had lots of chesterfields. There was a large reading room and smoking room for men only. You could have your hair cut at the barber shop, play pool, or visit the library. There was even a medical clinic where Dr. Cheeseman had his office. The doctor would even make house calls if you were too ill to make it to his office. It held a movie room that locals could go to on Friday and Saturday evenings.

You can see why life revolved around this Railroad YMCA as it was the hub of the town. I have very clear memories of having my hair cut, and hearing the sound of men playing pool. I went down once or twice per week to borrow books from the library or watch a movie on Friday nights. All the young people would meet at the soda fountain to consume milkshakes. Locals had a chance to perform for the tourists to show off any musical or dramatic talent they might have had. Mrs. Palmer taught music lessons and had many students play their adagios for the concert crowd during Amateur Hour. After the movie on Friday nights the front rows would be pushed back to dance to music that came from the projector screen. Dances were held in the dining room on a regular basis. The largest being New Years Eve having locals make up the orchestra. It consisted of the violin, piano, saxophone, drums and clarinet. Most of this talent were our Italian immigrants. At the stroke of midnight, the train engines heralded in the New Year with the blast of whistles.

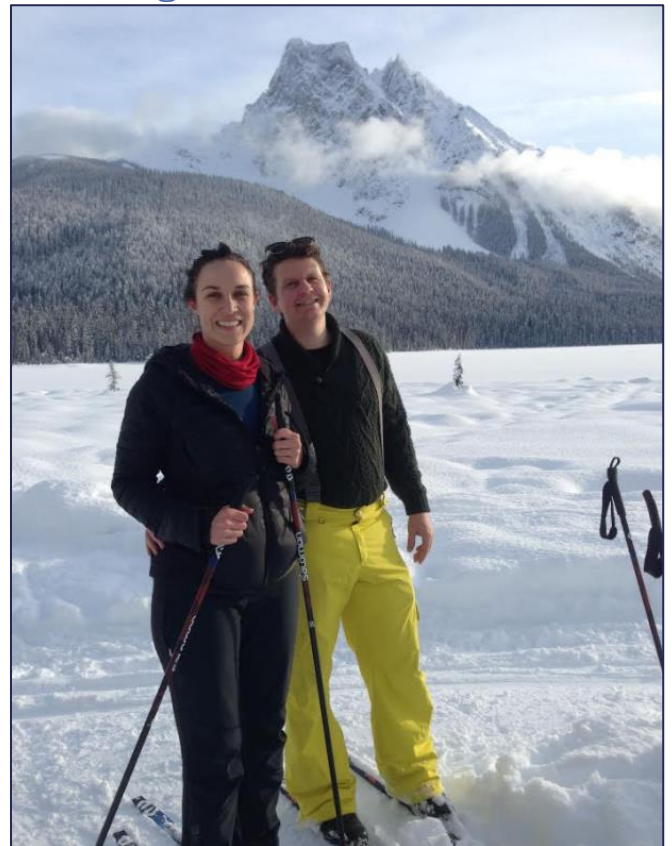
In the winter, there was always a large skating rink across the tracks set up on the river bed. Next to the rink was a

shed where you could go inside and put on your skates and warm up. A stove sat in the middle with benches all around. It became a place where you could catch up on town news and have a locals visit. A family ticket cost \$5.00 per season and that paid for a caretaker who would shovel off the snow that covered the ice rink, keep the fire going, and help youngsters put on their skates. The one caretaker I remember was John Calonna. He was very patient with the kids and did much to make it enjoyable for us. We had a very good men's hockey team that regularly played against Calgary, Canmore, Golden and Revelstoke. I will always remember Mike Port, who ran the Monarch Hotel, wearing his racoon fur coat while skating. Racing around the ice rink in his fur coat he could almost be mistaken for a bear.

Well Naomi, I think I have answered some of your questions about what Field was like when I was your age. I am looking forward to your next letter.

Ciao! and Baci,
Mary

Skiing into the 2021 New Year



Our board member Patricia and her partner Markus making the most of the trails on Emerald Lake.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE FRIENDS OF YOHO GIFT STORE
IS THE MAIN WAY ALL FRIENDS
PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND
EVENTS ARE FUNDED! WE'LL BE
NOTIFYING MEMBERS BY EMAIL
WHEN WE'RE BACK UP AND
RUNNING!

Our Membership

With the closure of our gift store due to Covid-19, memberships are an especially important way of contributing to the Friends of Yoho Society. As always, anyone is eligible to become a member! Becoming a member has several benefits including:

- Developing friendships and connecting with a community that is passionate about understanding and appreciating the natural and cultural heritage of Yoho National Park
- Receiving a sense of accomplishment and pride, knowing your membership fee helps in the development of programs and projects that benefit Yoho National Park
- Unlocking a special 10% discount on merchandise in the Friends of Yoho retail store, as well as at additional Friends stores across
- Subscription to newsletter just like this one that will help keep you informed on programs, projects, and events that the Friends are currently working on!

Membership Pricing

Individual: \$20, annually

Family: \$40, annually

Lifetime: \$200, one time fee

Volunteering

If you have ideas for new programs or projects that may fit with the Friends organization, please let us know! Additionally, if you know of existing initiatives that the Friends are involved with and you'd like to get more involved, please reach out and we will do our best to use your skillset to its full potential. If you'd like to become deeply involved with the Friends of Yoho organization, consider becoming a Board Member! More information about the upcoming elections will be coming out in the spring, but in the meantime please connect with us for more information in the near term.

Stay Tuned: Gift Shop Opening

The Friends of Yoho National Park operate a gift shop in the Field Visitor Centre. The primary source of funding for all the Friends operation, projects, programs, and publications come directly from the profits generated at this store. The store offers materials to enhance a visitor stay in Yoho National Park, specializing in natural and cultural books, as well as trail guides, maps, clothing and giftware unique to Yoho National Park.

While our store is currently closed, we will be announcing the opening of the store on our website, Facebook page, and sending out an email to our members once we are back up and running. Stay tuned for future updates!