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# Early Cattle Ranches in Lake Country

Presentation by Dr. Duane Thomson  
Lake Country Museum & Archives  
October 23, 2021

# Truth and Reconciliation

- Lake Country Museum & Archives operates on the unceded traditional territory of the Syilx/Okanagan people.
- We encourage frank and honest discussion about our colonial past and the continuing impacts of colonization on our indigenous neighbours and on our national life.

# Okanagan-Syilx ranchers and cowboys

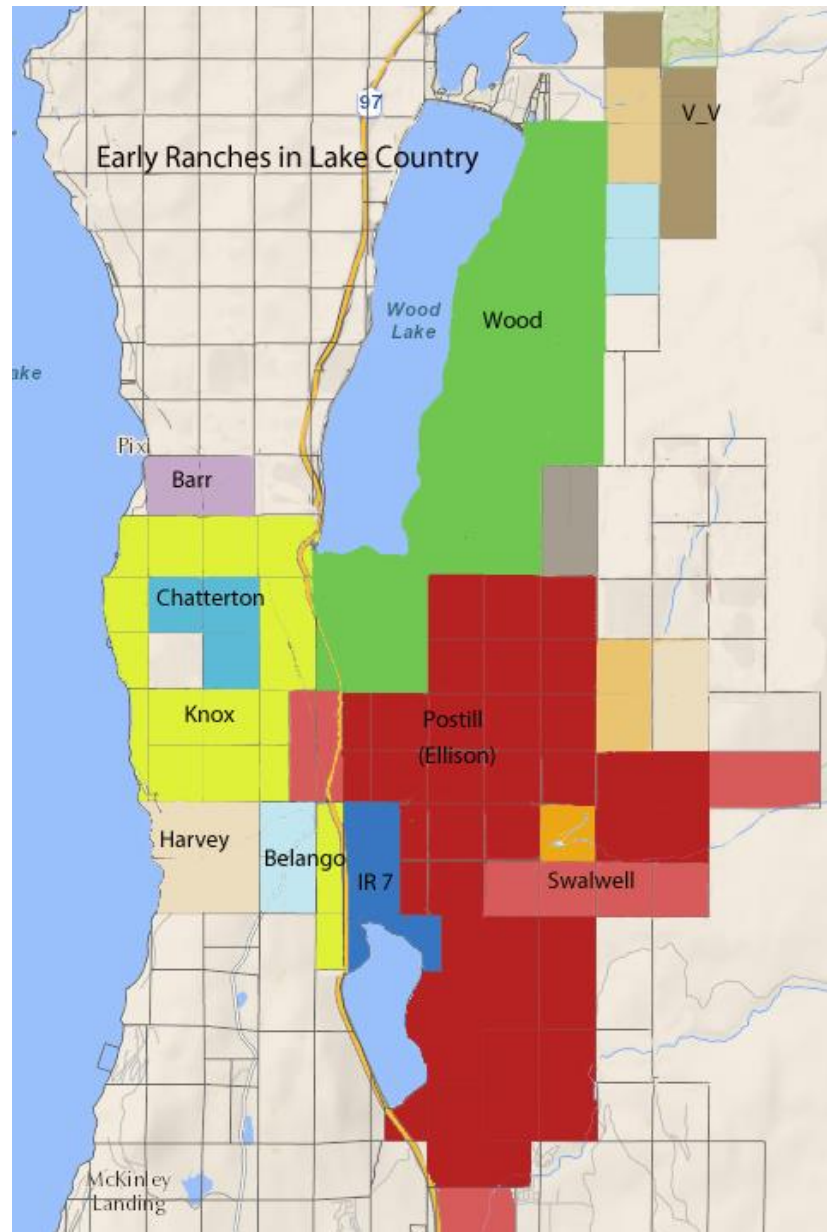
- Indigenous people in the interior of BC were ranchers long before Europeans arrived. They were already an equestrian society.
- The Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company employed horses and technology acquired from indigenous ranchers to transport goods to and from the Columbia Valley.
- Okanagan people remain integral to the ranching industry to the present day.

# Lake Country Cattlemen

- This presentation focuses on the handful of immigrant Europeans who, in the three decades after settlement, acquired vast acreages to support commercial cattle-raising operations.
- In what became Lake Country, three operations dominated the landscape, those of Thomas Wood, the Postill family, and A. B. Knox.
- Smaller, marginal operations co-existed.

## Map of Crown Grants

- Three families, beginning with Thomas Wood, were able to acquire the vast majority of good bottom and grazing land in the region.
- All of this land was pre-empted or purchased for \$1.00 per acre.
- Thousands of acres of land was used freely for over a decade, until cattlemen had established sizable herds.
- When they had cash from cattle sales and when the transcontinental railway (CPR) brought competition for land by new immigrants, they moved to privatize the land.
- These cattlemen made retirement fortunes. As an example, land that Wood purchased in 1885 for \$1.00 per acre, he sold in 1903 for \$38.00 per acre.



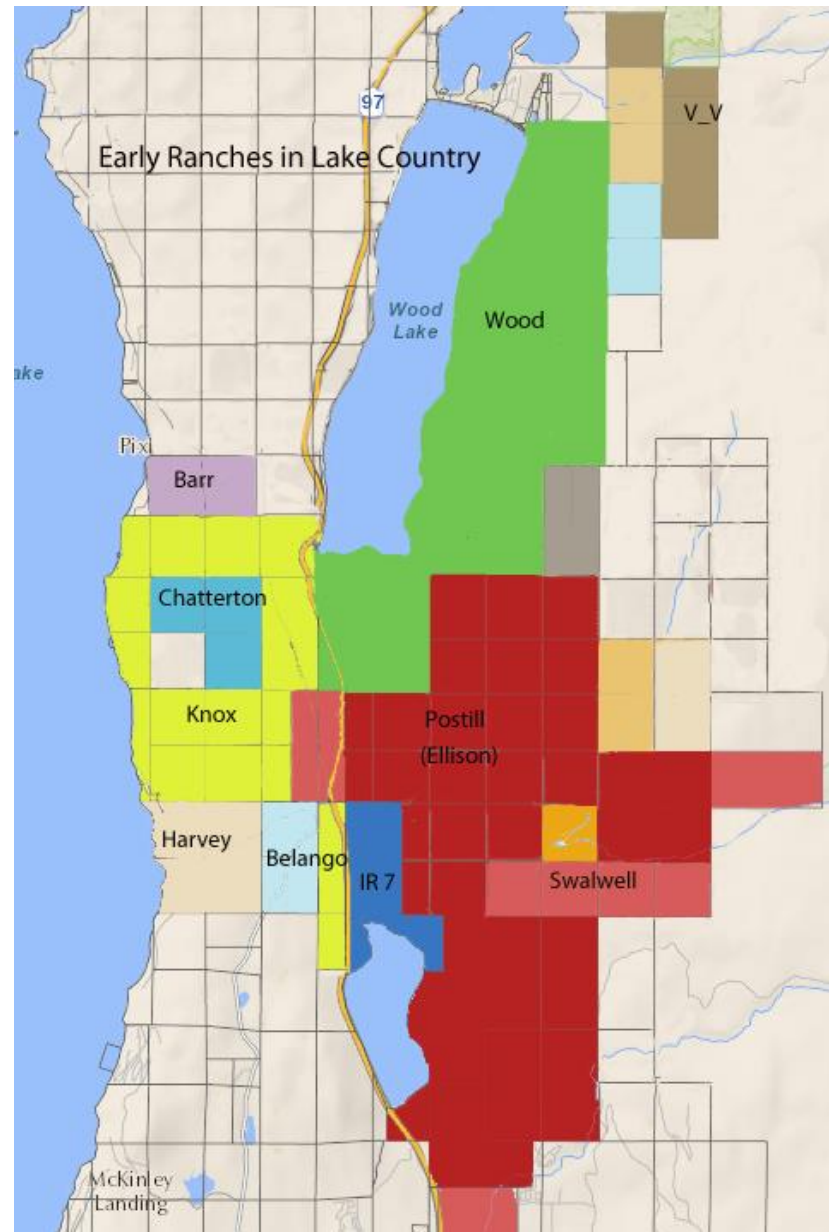
## Thomas Wood, pioneer rancher

- Wood arrived from Newfoundland and, after selling his land at the Head of the Lake, he pre-empted his first lot in 1871.
- As the photo indicates, it was a simple operation – besides cattle, it featured a few horses, pigs, and chickens.
- Buildings were hand-hewed log cabins, fences were of split rails.
- No hay was put up because the meadowland was saved for winter pasturage.
- Notice the water lying in the meadow toward Wood Lake – this photo was taken before the building of the canal at Oyama, when the lake dropped by four feet.



## Thomas Wood's cattle operation

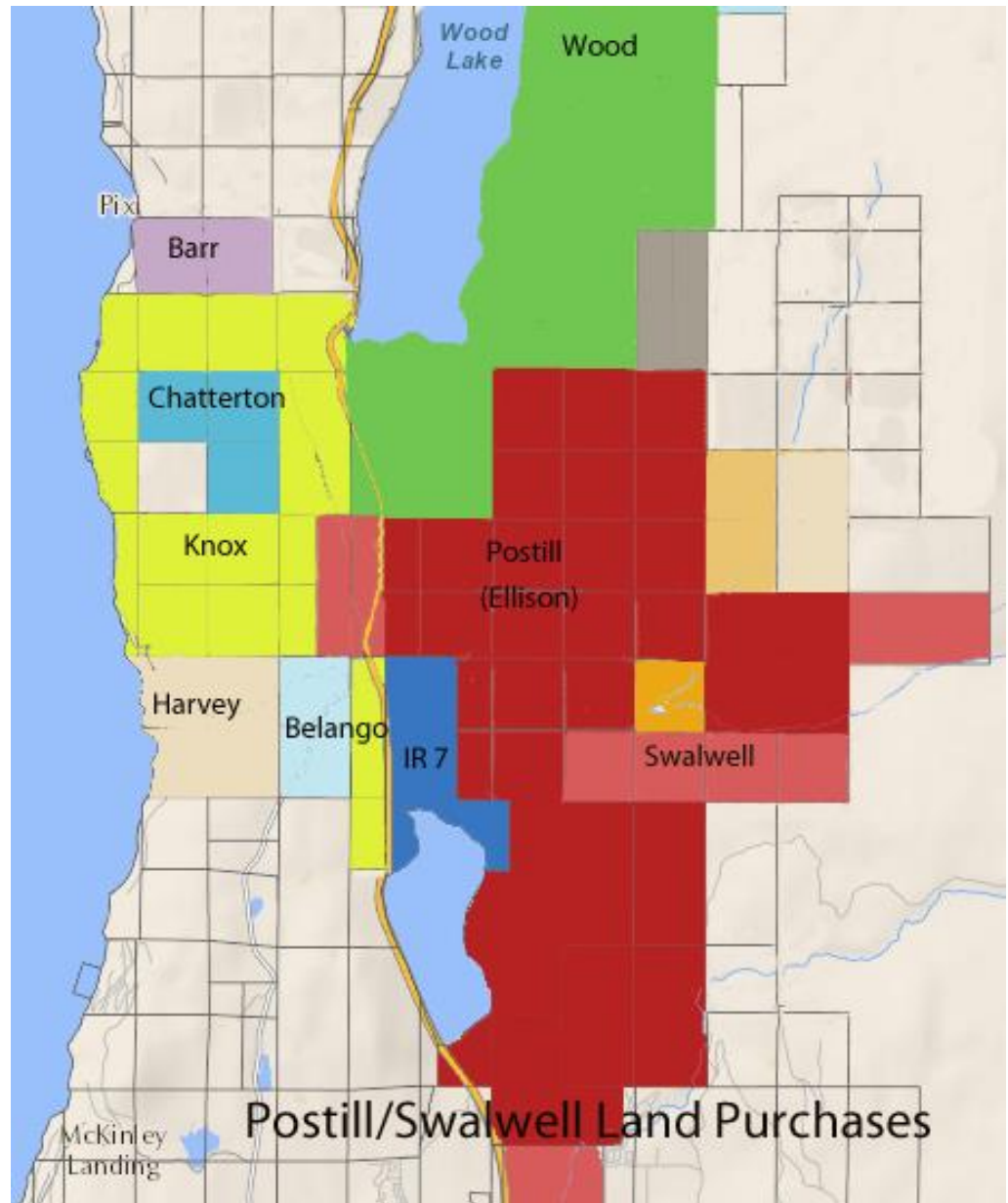
- Wood operated for years from his 360 acre pre-emption, Lot 117. By 1879 his herd had grown to 300 head with 10 horses. His cattle roamed over "Wood's Range" on the east side of Pelmeash (Wood) Lake.
- In the early 1880s, with the high demand for beef due to construction of the CPR, cattle prices improved dramatically.
- In 1884 Wood finally purchased Lot 117 and the extensive Wood's Range. In 1885 he purchased Lots 169 and 173, now owning all of the bottomland between Pelmeash Lake and Lodge Road.
- His ranch comprised 3695 acres.
- Wood subdivided and sold his ranch beginning in 1902, retiring to Victoria.





## The Postill family

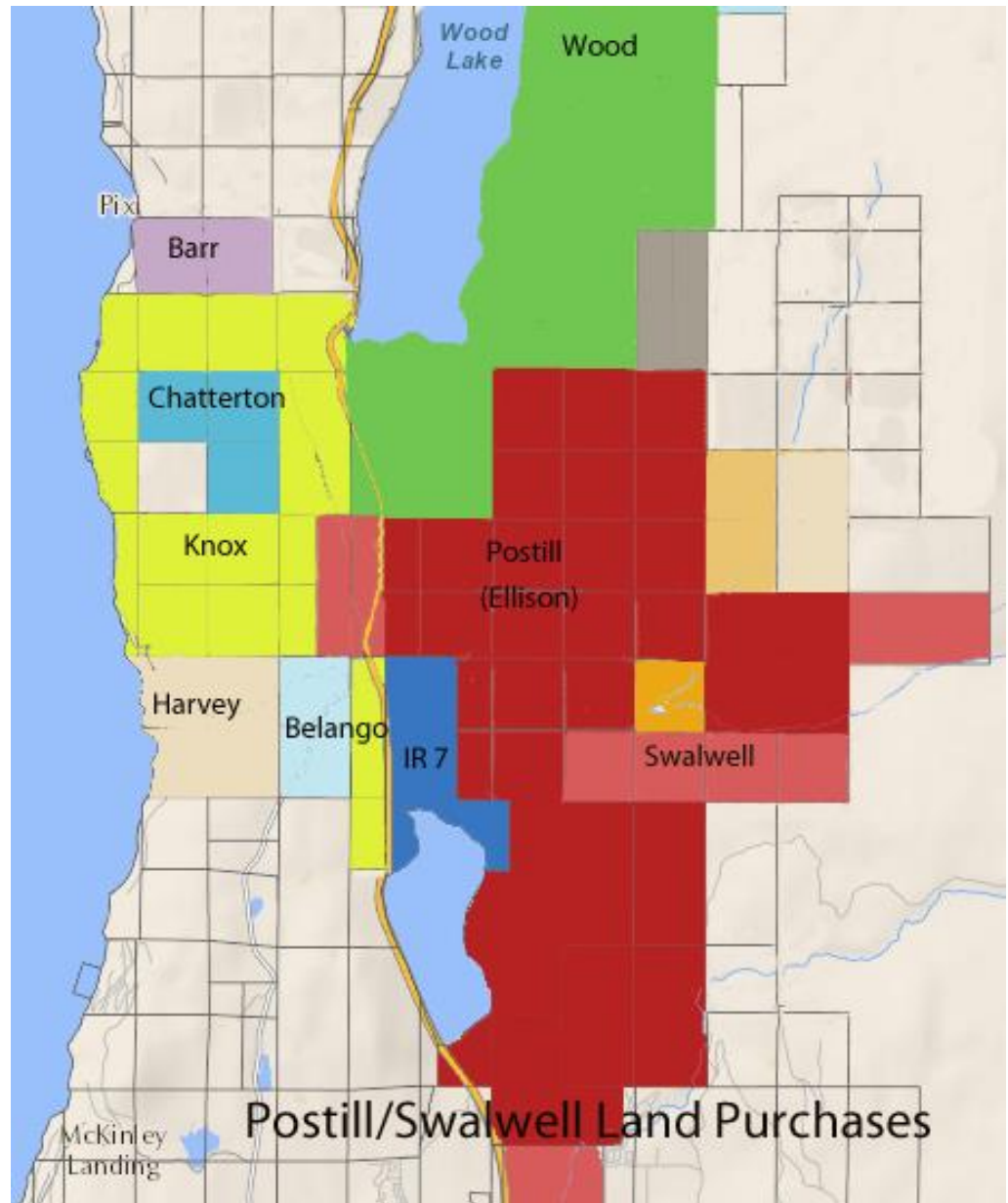
- The family of Edward Postill (d. 1872 en route to the Okanagan), wife Mary and their children Lucy, Alfred, William and Edward Jr. arrived in the district in 1872.
- Alfred purchased the ranch of George Simpson at the head of Duck Lake in 1872. He purchased a further 640 acres in 1888 and 320 more in 1893. Alfred died 1897, aged 45 years.
- Edward purchased 640 acres in 1888. He died in 1889, age 32 years.
- William pre-empted Lot 118 (Swalwell Park area, 320 acres), then 960 acres in 1888. William sold his property to Alfred and moved to AB.
- William returned from the prairies to manage the farm but left after two years.
- Mrs. Mary Postill sold the 5000 acre ranch to Price Ellison in 1903.





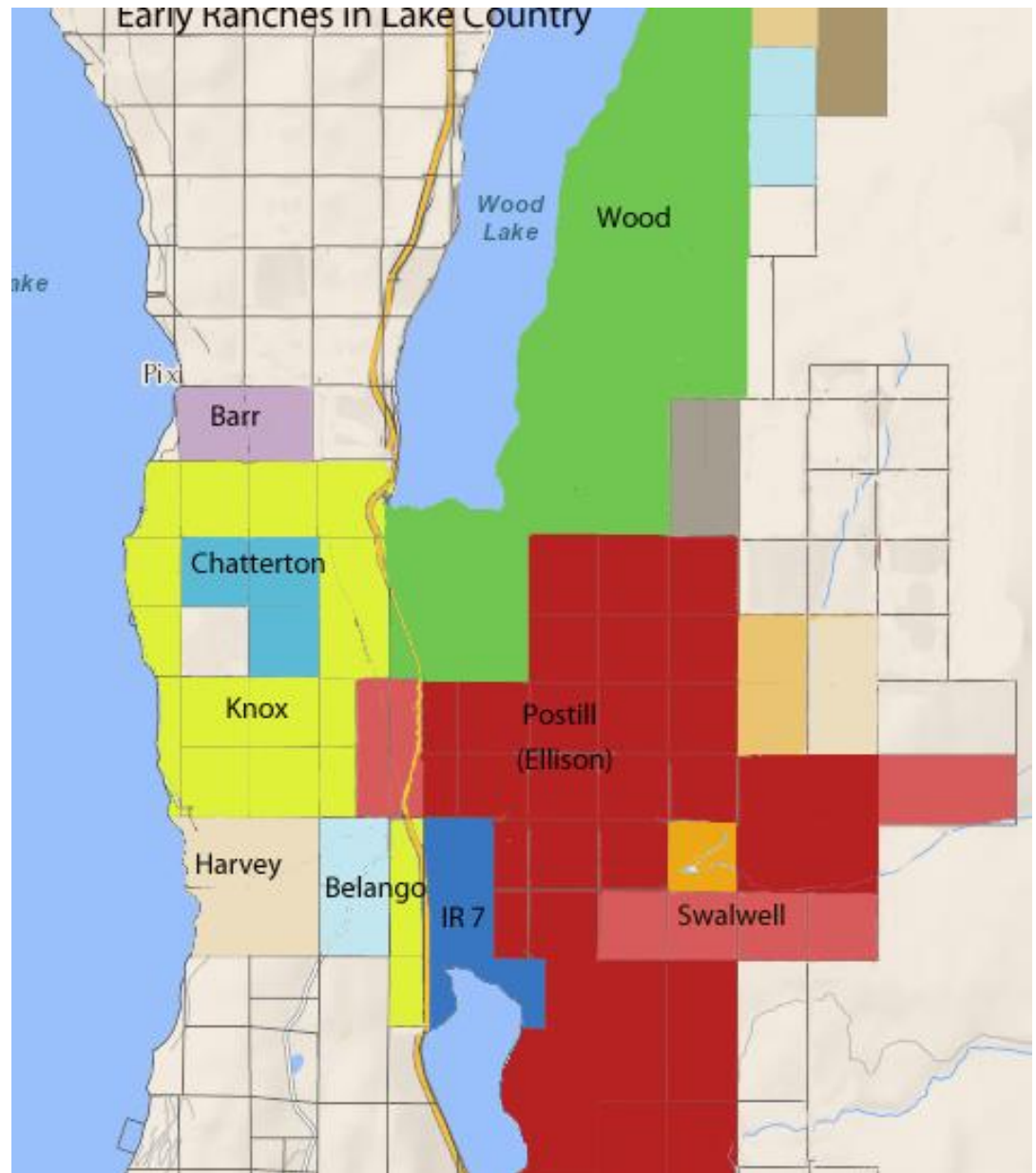
## Postill ranching operation

- 1891 the Postills ran 1500 head of cattle, 60 horses, sheep, and pigs. During the summer, their cattle grazed the forested land to the east and on the Commonage.
- This was a mixed farming operation. In 1891 they took in 850 loads of clover and Timothy hay, had 150 acres in wheat and a small apple orchard and vineyard.
- It is not clear what was the business relationship between the Postills and William Swalwell. He was a cousin and he may have melded his cattle operations with those of the Postill family. His land holdings are peripheral to those of the Postills and included land around Upper Vernon Creek and at Swalwell (Beaver) Lake.



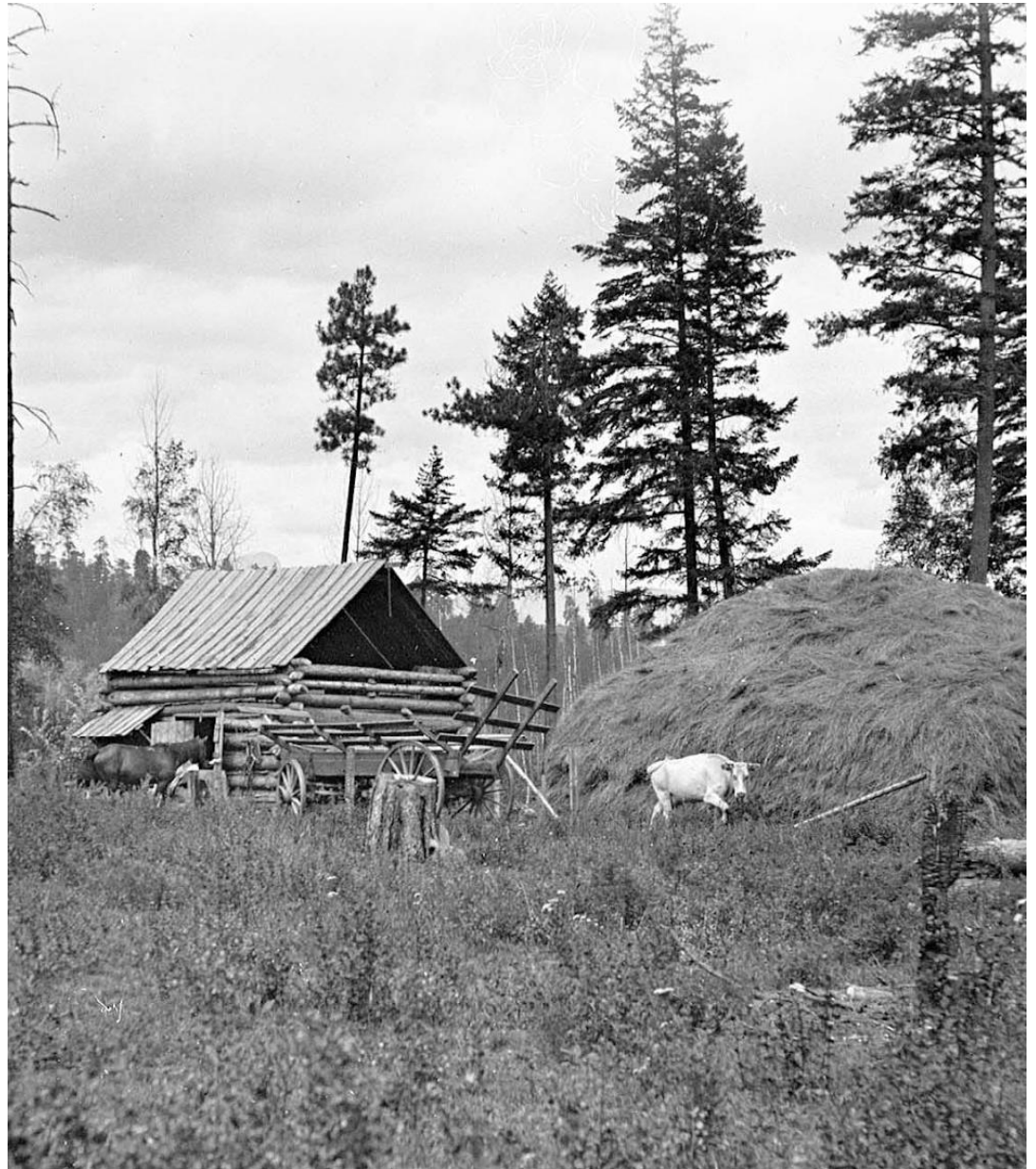
## Arthur B. Knox, Rancher

- Knox initially purchased the Arthur Best (formerly owned by Jules Blondeau) property in the north end of the current City of Kelowna.
- By 1888 he owned an 4000 acre farm with a wharf on Okanagan Lake, a warehouse stocked with 120 tons of wheat, haystacks and a cattle herd.
- Between 1885 to 1894 he purchased land to form a second ranch in what is now Okanagan Centre and Winfield.
- Knox was convicted of burning down Tom Ellis' haystacks in 1892 and was sentenced to three years of hard labour, but he returned home in 1894 and resumed operations.
- He sold his Kelowna property to Okanagan Fruit Land Company in 1903 and the "Upper Ranch" to the Maddock Bros. in 1906.
- Knox died 1925, leaving a large estate (\$175,000) to Scottish relatives.



## Chatterton Ranch

- Brothers Richard and Arthur Chatterton were from Alvaston, Debyshire, Herts, England.
- Richard arrived at Okanagan Landing in 1905, likely employed as an engineer/draftsman building the *SS Okanagan*.
- Richard purchased 30.7 acres of meadow land from Tom Wood in 1904 and 480 acres of hilly land in Lake Country in 1905. On his father's death he returned to live in the UK.
- Arthur operated the Alvaston Ranch and married Alice Waters, a recently arrived English girl.
- He became the Postmaster of the Alvaston P. O. in 1909.
- Arthur was killed by an explosion resulting from his attempt to warm up gunpowder in his oven.



## Chatterton Farming

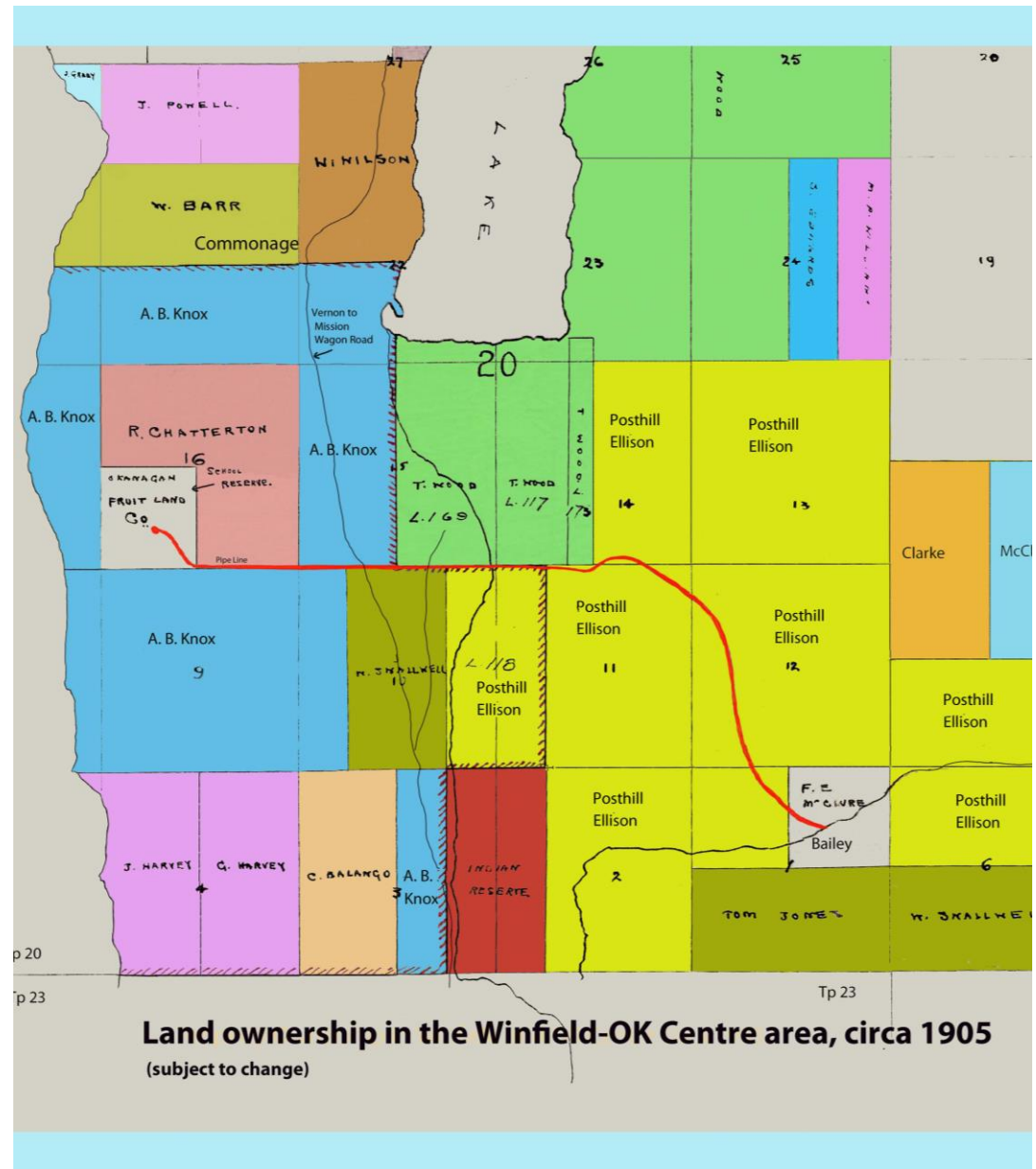
- The accompanying photo shows the Chattertons riding atop a rack of hay, most likely hay taken from the meadowland at the south end of Wood Lake.
- The upland farm was likely used for residential and general farming purposes.
- Arthur's widow, Alice, remarried to an Englishman, Guy Ford. They had three children and in 1921 were living at Whiskey Cove. They may have operated the Alvaston Ranch but Guy Ford also managed the properties of Fleetwood Wilson at Whiskey Cove and the V Bar V ranch in Oyama.
- Guy Ford died in 1924 and the family moved to Vancouver.





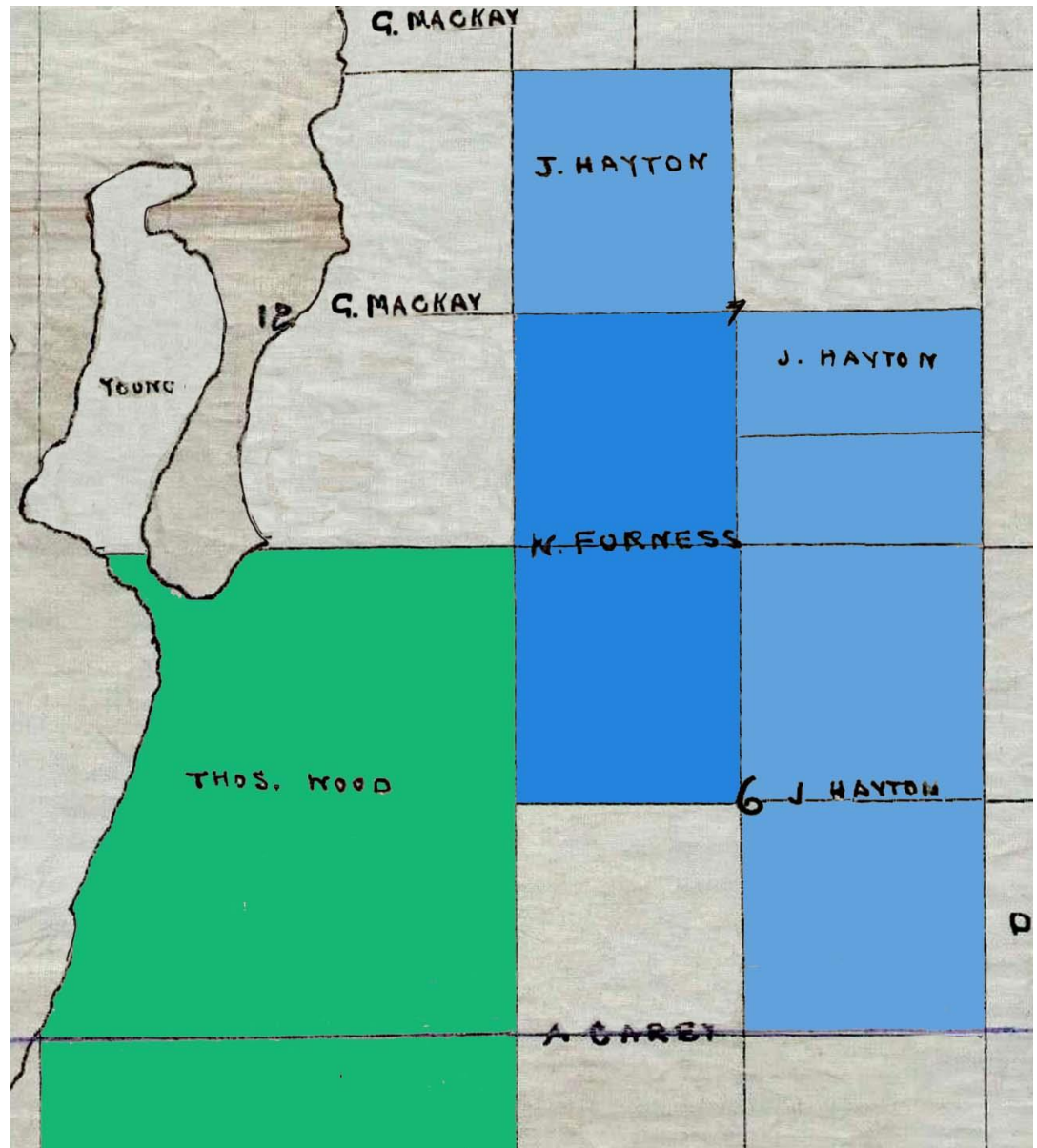
# Map showing Chatterton property, Maddock purchases, local roads and the pipeline from Upper Vernon Creek

- The Vernon to Mission Wagon Road passes just east of the Alvaston Ranch, hence the need for the “Jam Box” P.O. This road became Okanagan Centre Road East.
- The pipeline carrying water from Beaver Lake to the Reservoir on Camp Road is shown in red.
- The Postill property was sold to Price Ellison in 1903.
- The extent of the Maddock Bros. purchases are shown by thatching. They included the property of Knox, the Harveys, Swalwell, Balagno, and a portion of Lot 118, Ellison’s property.
- William and Jane Swalwell moved to the former property of William Postill, land that became Swalwell Park.



## V Bar V Ranch in Oyama

- Land pre-empted by the Bovee brothers, but sold to William Furniss of Vernon.
- Furniss sold to Jack Hayton, a Boer War veteran who increased the size of the ranch in 1905-6, as shown. Hayton sold his property to Fleetwood Wilson and moved to Australia.
- Wilson, a wealthy Englishman, likely named the ranch the V Bar V as he had previously worked at a ranch in AB with that name. Wilson left to serve in WWI and never returned to Canada. Guy Ford managed his property while his own health permitted. Wilson sold the ranch to Norman Davies, a wealthy Welshman in 1932.
- Davis, a WWI veteran, ran sheep and cattle, and moved back and forth between Oyama and Wales Wales. He left to serve in the British Army WW II. In 1943 he sold the farm to a local man, Vernon Ellison.





## Kalwood Farms

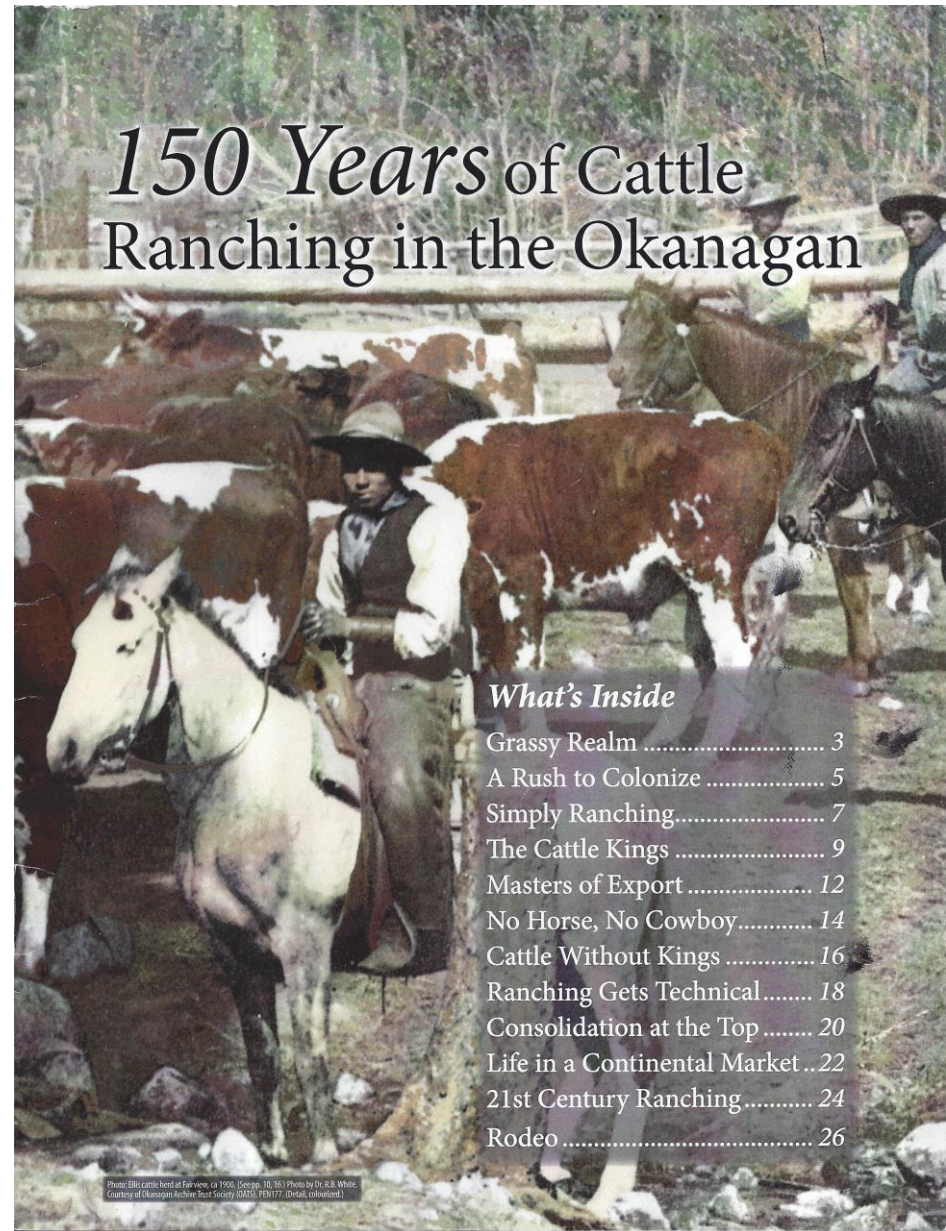
- Vernon Ellison operated an extensive cattle and fruit farming business. Kalwood Farms was a Hereford operation, with Harold Somerset as his cattleman. Ellison was heavily involved in local, provincial and national organizations.
- Ellison sold the V Bar V in 1994. The ranch was subdivided into small residential lots.
- Vernon's son, Kenneth Ellison (on right) along with David Allingham operated a cattle business on land formerly grazed by V Bar V cattle.
- David Allingham is Oyama's last surviving cattleman.





## Cattle Kings and Cowboys

- *Cattle Kings and Cowboys: Ranching in the Okanagan* is researched, written and designed by Don McNair.
- Publication is made possible by the generous support of the Kiwanis Club of Kelowna and Terry and Nancy Hamilton of Oyama.
- This is the third in a series of booklets on Okanagan history published by the Lake Country Museum and Archives.
- Other booklets in the series are: *All Aboard: Rail Trails in the Okanagan* and *Apple Valley: A Century of Fruit Farming in the Okanagan*.



# 150 Years of Cattle Ranching in the Okanagan

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Photo: Ellis cattle herd at Fairview, ca 1900. (Scenes 10, 16) Photo by Dr. R.B. White. Courtesy of Okanagan Archive Trust Society (2020). P&T © (Detail, Coloured)