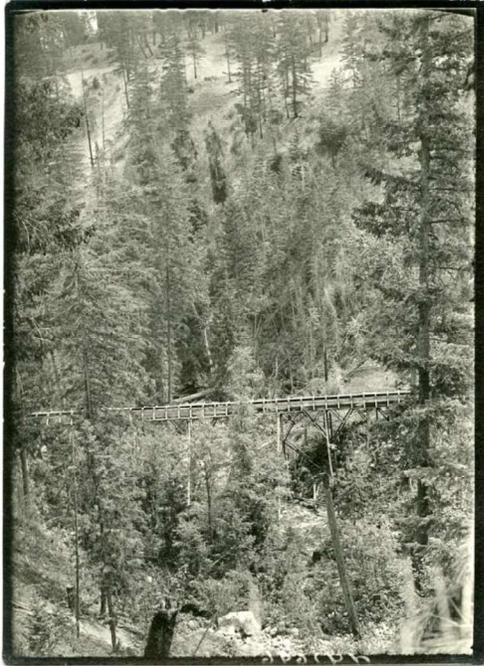


An Early Orchard Development Company's Scenic Route through Black Mountain Park

by Ian Pooley

The south-west corner of Black Mountain/Sntsk'il'ntən Park contains the traces of a large irrigation system that was abandoned before it was actually completed. The remains of the big open ditch can be seen to the left of the road up to the upper ravine. Below this ditch there is a trench designed to conduct a wooden pipe down the hillside to another transverse ditch. At the very bottom, winding along the scree slopes at the foot of the mountain in a north-westerly



direction for about half a mile, there are still the remains of a carefully graded right of way intended for a large irrigation flume that was never built.

Typical early wood irrigation flume. This one, spanning Canyon Creek (KLO Creek) was built by the Canyon Creek Irrigation Company

The abandoned irrigation system was built by the Belgo Canadian Fruitlands Company around 1910, and was intended to serve orchards above Rutland that the company intended to develop before World War One. The system, called the "Moodie Extension," after the engineer who designed it, was abandoned when the company ran into financial difficulties before the war, and development of the orchards on the benchland east of Rutland was delayed until after the war.

Nevertheless, the company did complete a lot of its ambitious system by 1913, including reservoirs at the head of Mission Creek, a domestic water system and irrigation system for its new orchard land in the Belgo area. It never realized other even more ambitious plans, including a golf course, a townsite, and a hydroelectric plant on Mission Creek.

Today, the old right of way is a reminder of the grandiose plans of the early development companies that installed irrigation systems all over the Okanagan. They were often poorly built, leaked, and lacked sufficient water supply to properly irrigate the quickly expanding orchards. Hopefully much of the old route will become a scenic footpath that will eventually give Black Mountain residents an easy access route into the heart of the new park.



Remnants of the old irrigation system still evident today

The Wonder of Bluebirds

By Doreen Wierenga

The first time I heard of bluebirds was when I was very young listening to the radio during wartime. The song, “There’ll be Bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover” was often played. Little did I know that in the distant future, I’d become really involved with bluebirds. Bluebirds have been aptly described as having, “radiant blue feathers, soft round bodies, appealing little faces and gentle manner... Henry David Thoreau said that bluebirds carry the sky on their backs!”¹

Because of loss of habitat, bluebirds are finding it harder all the time to find natural holes for nesting which is why we have bluebird trails or routes where bluebird boxes are installed. Open