



Alec Nicholson walked to the Vanderhoof area in 1909 when he was 11 years old.



Ena Campbell left Vanderhoof in 1927 but she comes "home" every year.

**TOWN 50 YEARS OLD**

**City slicker's dream created Vanderhoof**



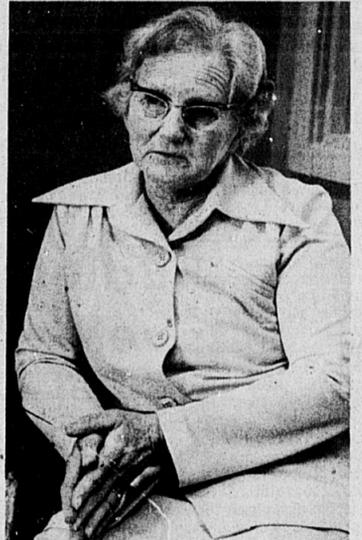
VANDERHOOF — The old timers don't speak too kindly of him.

Herbert Vanderhoof, the man this village was named after, was a city slicker with a pipe dream, they say.

He was just one of many conniving entrepreneurs with great plans for the newly-discovered land in central B.C. He made his first mistake when he established the town of Vanderhoof on the wrong side of the tracks. The people living in the area around 1915 wanted it three miles from the current site. But Vanderhoof had the money so Vanderhoof had the choice.

His second mistake was the hotel he established for retired editors and writers. It was to be a haven of peace and solitude. It was built but the Vanderhoof money ran out before the first guests arrived.

Vanderhoof was a promotional man from Chicago who came in after the Grand Trunk Railroad was completed in 1914.



Teacher Evelyn Dickson opened her name-sake school three times.

**Founder came "by cushion"**

The old timers would say he came in on a "cushion" (by train). Anyone who came to the Vanderhoof area before 1914 got there the hard way. The Alec Nicholson way.

Nicholson was 11 years old when he arrived at Milne Landing, where Vanderhoof now stands, in 1909. With his uncle, a cow, a calf and his aunt and cousin in a covered wagon, Nicholson walked from 150 Mile House to Milne Landing — a seven-week trek over hills and trails so narrow he had to widen them to get the wagon through.

There were only six white people at Milne Landing when Nicholson got there. He spent his childhood in a floorless log cabin abandoned by a trapper.

Nicholson was still a boy when the natives of Bear Lake, about 300 miles north of Vanderhoof, decided to wipe out the gradually settling white population.

"They got as far as Fort St. James and the Indian Chief there saved our lives," he recalls. "The chief told the Bear Lake Indians that white men has big guns that can shoot you down just the way the Indians cut hay."

The natives retreated. "But you know," says Nicholson. "Those Bear Lakers are still pretty bad."

Ena Campbell moved to Vanderhoof in 1918 and left in 1927 to become a nurse. But she returns every year.

"When I talk about home I mean Vanderhoof," she says.

She remembers the days when the village was getting on its feet.

"There were a lot of people trying to promote this area after the Grand Trunk went through in 1914," she says. "More crooks than you could shake a stick at."

Times were good in the old days when the population was less than 200.

"We had better times then than young people do now," she recalls. "There were sleigh rides, hockey games and dances that everyone — men women and children — attended. You learned to make your own entertainment. We were never bored."

Betty Loper was born in 1918 in Hazelton — only because Vanderhoof didn't have a hospital. She's lived in Vanderhoof since. People don't seem to leave the village, she says. And if they do they always come back.

Ernie Philpott, 81, is back for the 50th anniversary celebrations. And he's disillusioned. He moved to Vanderhoof in 1929 in a Model T Ford. He built a garage, helped build the Co-operative Association's grain and feed elevator and spear-headed the Memorial Arena.

His garage was torn down, the elevator burned down last September and the arena he was so proud of was destroyed by fire just two weeks ago. Philpott arrived in Vanderhoof the morning of the arena fire.

"I stepped out of my car and it was smok-

ing," he said. "Ohhh, what a shock. If they keep burning down the things I built I'm not coming back. My garage was torn down, my house was torn down, I was one of the nuts to start the arena and now that and the elevator are gone."

There are just two buildings in Vanderhoof named after residents — a brother and sister team. The Evelyn Dickson Elementary School is named after a long-time teacher of the Vanderhoof Elementary School and the A. Mooney Auditorium is named after her brother, a Vanderhoof doctor since 1947.

Though Mrs. Dickson has never taught at her name-sake school she has opened it three times.

It started as a four-room school and Mrs. Dickson officiated at its first opening. When additional rooms were built on it she opened it again in February 1974. Four months later it burned down, was rebuilt and opened again in December. Mrs. Dickson officiated at the opening ceremonies again.

Dr. Al Mooney was the lone medical doctor of Vanderhoof from 1947 to 1952 — back in the days of house calls. A house call for him didn't always mean packing his black bag in his car and driving off to a nearby farm. It could mean packing it in a boat, a sled or on a cart packed with manure and riding several miles through the bush in sub-zero weather to deliver a baby or tend to a fever.

When Dr. Mooney moved to Vanderhoof there was a sign at the side of the road saying the village's population was 551.

Now there are about 2,000 people in the village limits and some people say there are twice as many in the area surrounding Vanderhoof.

The stability of the village appealed to Dr. Mooney when he first arrived. The town didn't seem to be severely affected by wars or the depression of the 1930s.

And the people of Vanderhoof are there by choice. Nobody has to live there, says the doctor.

"I like the country and that's still the reason for people coming here," he says. "People seldom come here because they have to. There are no businesses here that are part of a chain so people aren't transferred here."

The lifeline of Vanderhoof is the forest industry but many people run small farms on the side.

The old timers remember the Vanderhoof of long ago. Some, like Alec Nicholson, remember the pre-Vanderhoof days, others remember the abandoned writer's hotel established by Herbert Vanderhoof. Some came by cushion, others got to Vanderhoof the hard way.

Now, on its 50th birthday there's just one fact missing. Nobody, not even Mayor Bill McLeod, can recall the date the town was incorporated.

But they'll celebrate its birthday in grand style anyway.



Dr. Al Mooney has been in Vanderhoof since the days of house calls.

Story by Gery Ardley

Photos by Len Tenisci

**Birthday events**

The village of Vanderhoof is celebrating its 50th birthday this week and four days of festivities are planned.

The birthday party will begin at 10 a.m. Thursday with a community sports day. Games, canoe races and softball will be held at various locations throughout the town.

Friday is Pioneer Day. Old timers and visiting pioneers of Vanderhoof will be honored with a morning of music at Ferland Park and a tea will be

held at 2 p.m. in Vanderhoof Elementary School in conjunction with a history fair.

A nationally known singing group, the Allen Sisters, will perform in A.W. Mooney Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.

A parade will move through the streets of the town at 11 a.m. Saturday followed by an afternoon rodeo at the stamper grounds.

On Sunday the annual air show will be held at the Vanderhoof Airport.