

Histories of the North

**Andy Johnson,
Editor in Chief**

Anyone born and raised in Prince George are usually of the mindset that, "Prince George is a shithole." While this may be the case, I have my reservations of this particular mindset. I have witnessed numerous high school friends who have taken the 'risk' of moving away to metropolises such as Victoria, Vancouver, or Edmonton. In most cases, they return six months later to complain about how much more expensive and unforgiving these supposed promised lands are.

One of the reasons I have never moved for more than a month has been due to the strange and connected histories Prince George seems have with the world. For instance, the local history of Kathryn B. Gannon—who I am quite sure is well versed in "prairie style" (whatever it is)—was born in Prince George on 12 April 1969. Gannon's break from Prince George came in 1995 when she starred in "Star Attraction" under the name Marilyn Star (anyone wishing to seek this film out must be 18 or older).



Kathryn B. Gannon

While Star never made it onto the A-list of the adult entertainment world, she did make headlines in 1999 when she was charged with insider trading. The allegations were dropped in 2005, but only after Star served 3 months at the Women's Correction Center in Danbury, Connecticut and paying roughly \$500,000 in legal defense. I would consider this to be risk.

Another local history that I feel I should address concerns John Robert Giscome. Giscome was born in Saint Mary, Jamaica in 1832. In 1854, Giscome and his brother Peter migrated to California to work on the Panama Railway, but by 1855, the railway was completed and Giscome's brother

returned to Jamaica, while Giscome stayed in California to make a profit. Due to the oppressive legislation towards African Americans in California, Giscome migrated in 1856 to Victoria, British Columbia, and then to Quesnel, British Columbia.

It was in Quesnel that Giscome met his Bahamian partner Henry McDame and they decided to join the Cariboo Gold Rush. Giscome and McDame canoed up the Fraser River, hoping that they would reach Fort Saint James, but they were forced to winter in Fort George. The following April, Giscome and McDame were forced to travel by land through what is now Hubble Homestead to Summit Lake, which has become known as Giscome Portage.

Giscome and McDame were among the first to successfully prospect Germansen Creek in 1870. Four years later, McDame found a gold vein around Dease River tributary (now known as McDame Creek). Giscome, McDame and a few other prospectors formed the Discovery Company and successfully prospected this vein for quite a few years.

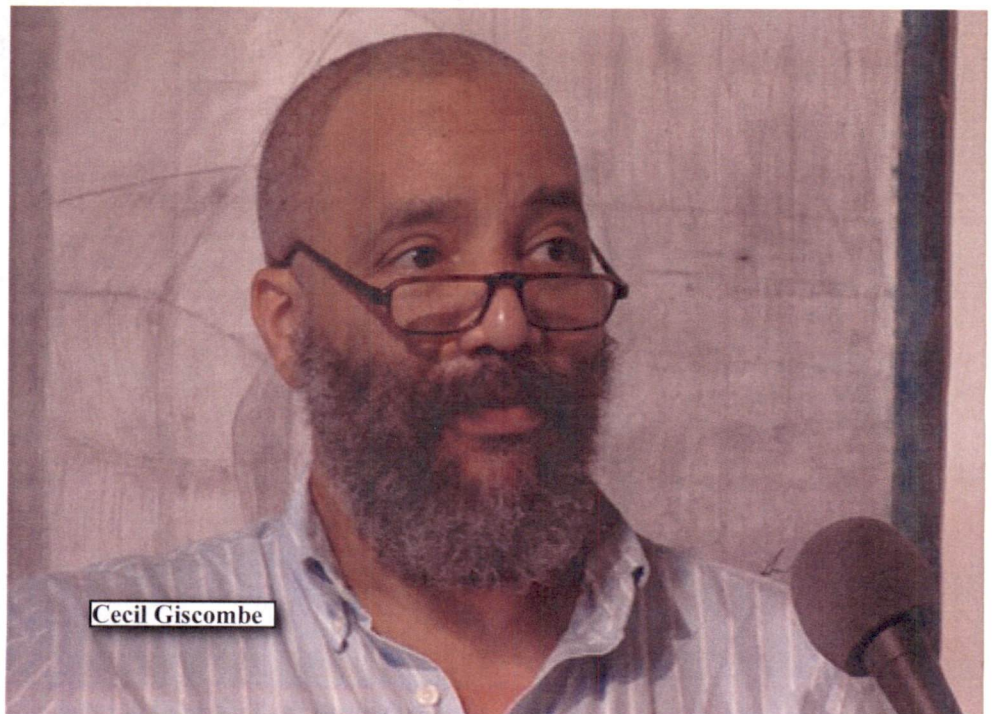
John Robert Giscome returned back to Victoria, British Columbia by 1891. Unlike most of his prospecting contemporaries, Giscome died a wealthy

man at the age of 75, leaving his landlady \$21,000.

While Giscome's legacy survives through his name, his personal history was explored by Cecil Giscombe in his 1998 book "Giscome Road," which Giscombe explores what Publisher's Weekly calls a "powerful, understated meditation on place."

C.S. Giscombe was born in Dayton, Ohio in 1950. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree from SUNY, Albany in 1973 and then obtained his M.A. from Cornell University in 1975. In 2000, Giscombe released "Into and Out of Dislocation," which is part travelogue, part memoir aimed at researching "the 'facts' about John R. Giscome, the Jamaican miner, explorer and possible relation whose name graces several geographical features near Prince George, B.C." (Paula Koneazny, www.amazon.ca).

Eight years later, Giscombe read at the College of New Caledonia (C.N.C.) from his 2008 release "Prairie Style"—which won the American Book Prize—with local and nationally renowned poet Barry McKinnon. "Prairie Style" focuses around "the breakdown of location and voice" (www.amazon.ca). While "Prairie Style" is Giscombe's last release, he will be returning to C.N.C. on 15 October 2012 for a reading in room 1-306 at 7 p.m.



Cecil Giscombe