



## Place Names<sup>1</sup>

### Aldridge Bay

The naming of Aldridge Bay, located on the northwestern shore of Middle Waterton Lake, came about as the result of a common practice of associating places with the first settler of a site. That settler was William “Bill” Aldridge and family. He and his second wife, Anna Rolph Aldridge and their many children, were Mormon immigrants from Logan, Utah who came to Canada in 1888 residing briefly in Cardston, Northwest Territories.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of the next nine years, they moved a number of times within the region finally choosing to stay in Kootenay



*William Aldridge family, 1906. Left to right, back row: Albert, Charles, Oliver, Amy, David, Herman. Middle row: Mary (Cox), William with Alta on his knee, Mrs. Aldridge (Anna) with Lettie on her knee. Front row: Stirling, John, Annie.  
(Photo: Glenbow Archives NC-7-451)*

Lakes Forest Reserve (later named Waterton) which was established two years before their arrival in 1897. They chose to build their rustic house on a strip of land between present day Linnet Lake and Middle Waterton Lake, an area sometimes referred to as Moccasin Flats, where the terrain provided protection from the wind. Along the curving shore of the Middle Lake, toward the northwest, they established an area to raise cattle.<sup>3</sup>

During his first summer at the lake, Aldridge had an important visitor: Charles Ora Card, a church leader responsible for the establishment of the town of Cardston in 1887. In his diaries, Card notes his visit with Aldridge on August 13, 1897 “at the upper end of the middle Lake of the Kootenai [sic]...” He and his party camped overnight “on the shore by the shade of a Quaking Asp[en] Grove.”<sup>4</sup> It was a precise description of the strip of land between Linnet Lake and Middle Waterton Lake that still applies today. The next day while others went fishing, Card accompanied Aldridge to a gorge a short distance from the lake to see an outcropping with potential for metal content.<sup>5</sup> Card took rock samples with him when he left August 15, but not before he led the first Latter-day Saints testimony meeting ever recorded at Waterton.<sup>6</sup>

Aldridge decided to stay at the reserve but was officially a squatter who had no legal right to set up a home and ranch. No leases would be issued in the park until 1911.<sup>7</sup> According to the Aldridge family history, the cattle ranch failed when the entire herd succumbed to disease and the effects of a horrific winter. But the ever-resilient Aldridge managed to take care of his growing family partially through his avid interest in natural resources. Initially Aldridge and his sons harvested fish which they ate and also sold to visitors in the summer. They kept the fish alive in a near-shore pool of their own making. Aldridge also hunted and trapped,



*Aldridge Bay, part of Middle Waterton Lake, has more recently been referred to as Driftwood Bay.*

*(Photo: Chris Morrison)*

presumably in the non-reserve portion of the area, and built a wood-fired lime kiln near his cabin, utilizing the abundant limestone rock from the mountains. Lime was a much sought after building component used in both mortar and concrete which had many uses. Its sale became a side line for the Aldridge family over the next few years.<sup>8</sup>



*On a calm day, this bay is one of the park's most beautiful settings. (Photo: Chris Morrison)*

Aldridge was befriended by John George "Kootenai" Brown, the first white settler on the reserve and the man who would become first forest ranger-in-charge.<sup>9</sup> Aldridge did odd jobs for Brown and it was Brown who told him about a source of oil in the Akamina Valley discovered long before by First Nations people. Aldridge and his third oldest child, Oliver, followed Brown's directions and found oil in the valley in 1898. The family set up a summer

camp nearby the oil find and began making a living by collecting and selling it to farmers.<sup>10</sup>

William Aldridge and his family moved to Cardston in 1904 and he pursued other enterprises but left his log residence standing on the shore of the Middle Lake.<sup>11</sup> Because of his activity over the course of six years, the name Aldridge Bay, his original Waterton home, lingered for many years. He died at the age of 73 on June 19, 1916, just a month before his old friend John George “Kootenai” Brown.

The name Aldridge Bay is no longer in common use.





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<sup>1</sup> Place names in Waterton have been of two types since the inception of the park in 1895: official names and local names. The official names have endured through government designation, use, and wide-spread publication of maps while many local names have often fallen into disuse and in the process are unfamiliar to today's visitors.

<sup>2</sup> Alberta did not become a province until 1905.

<sup>3</sup> The site on the bay is shown as "ranch": Map of Crowsnest Forest and Waterton Lakes Park from photographic surveys by M.P Bridgland, DLS, assisted by A. E. Hyatt, 1913-14, sheet 5. WLNP Archives, map drawer 02, folder 06.

<sup>4</sup> *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card, The Canadian Years, 1886-1903*, ed. Donald G. Godfrey and Brigham Y. Card, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 414.

<sup>5</sup> The location of the gorge was not given in the Card diaries.

<sup>6</sup> *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card, The Canadian Years, 1886-1903*, ed. Donald G. Godfrey and Brigham Y. Card, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 415.

<sup>7</sup> Lots were surveyed in Waterton in November, 1910 but were not available for application until the following year. William Aldridge, who was gone from the park by then, never applied for a lease.

<sup>8</sup> Karen Carpenter, *The Aldridges*, (unpublished papers), 2005. WLNP, Box 130, Item 7.

<sup>9</sup> "An Affidavit Tells of Oil Field," *Lethbridge Herald*, Nov. 1, 1913, front page. WLNP, Box 130, Item 7.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Johan F. Dormaar & Robert A. Watt, *Oil City Black Gold in Waterton Park*, (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 2007), 11; Frank Goble, *Trails Grewed Over, Book 1 The Pioneers*, (Cardston: Goble Publishing Ltd., 2000), 111-112.

<sup>11</sup> "Wonderful Waterton," interview with Doug Oland, *Lethbridge Herald*, Aug. 2, 1948. WLNP, Box 130, Item 7.