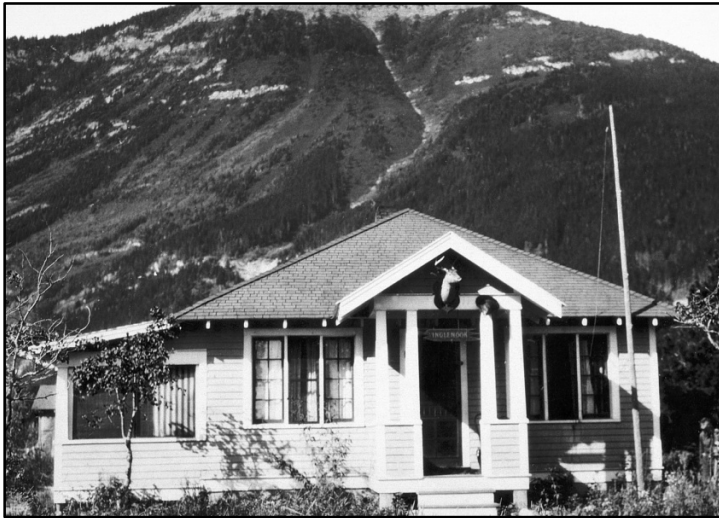




## Summer Camps

### Mothers' Camp

The Kiwanis Club of Lethbridge, a service club formed in 1929 by prominent businessmen wanting to do good works,<sup>1</sup> jumped in to help at a propitious time at the beginning of the Great Depression (1929-1939) when help for the less fortunate was desperately needed.



*"Inglenook", owned by Mary Agnes and John Mason, was located on Mount View Road. In the 1950s it was one of the cabins demolished to make way for today's Bear Mountain Motel. (Photo: WLNA Archives)*

At the club's first anniversary, it was announced its first objective would be establishment a summer camp at Waterton for deserving mothers where they could have an outing in the mountains with their children.<sup>2</sup> The idea was favorably received by the club because among the members were a number of men who were or would become involved in Waterton through cabin ownership or frequent summer visits.<sup>3</sup> Member Dr. Les Allen<sup>4</sup> scouted the Waterton townsite for a cabin to hold the camp until such time as they could build their own<sup>5</sup> and advised the membership that a two-year-old cabin named Inglenook,<sup>6</sup> owned by Mary Agnes

Mason, could be rented for one month for \$150.<sup>7</sup> The members approved the deal and Mrs. Mason was hired as Camp Matron as well.<sup>8</sup>

Each week the camp accommodated 10 deserving mothers, who could bring one pre-school child. All expenses were paid by the Kiwanis Club which raised money in the city to support this venture. A popular method of the day was the "tag sale" in which contributions to a charity were solicited in the street with donors being given a small identifying tag.<sup>9</sup>

The camp attendees were selected by a committee of Lady Kiwanians at first who were later augmented by members of the Lethbridge Nursing Mission who were made aware of needy or convalescing women through the health services the mission provided. From the very first season, the camp was a success and the second year it operated for six weeks.<sup>10</sup> The weekly cost was \$8.70 per person.<sup>11</sup> Dr. Allen, now committee chair, told his fellow Kiwanians he "considered the Camp was our excuse for existence as a Club

and we should go wholeheartedly into the matter of the successful conducting of the activity.”<sup>12</sup> And wholehearted they became, with the annual operation of this rest camp in the park.

The location of the camp was ideal for its purpose “with plenty of indoor and open-air accommodation on the shores of beautiful Waterton Lake surrounded with towering mountains,” the club’s directors were told.<sup>13</sup> Its purpose mirrored the Department of Interior’s observations which were published in a 1914 booklet touting the benefits Dominion Parks. Pointing out the “rightful heritage” of nature, the booklet called attention to the “guarantee to Canadians of recreation which serve best to make better men and women, physically, morally and mentally.”<sup>14</sup>



*The children who attended the Mothers' Camp were able to take advantage of the playground located in the same area as today's playground. (Photo: WLNA Archives)*

At the camp, the mothers had no work to do. They “just rest—probably for the first time in their lives—[having] a wonderful holiday in one of the most beautiful locations on the continent. Each guest is taken for a...boat trip to the head of the lake over the International border. The camp is equipped with gramophone and also a library and everything is done to make their stay a beneficial and enjoyable one. This year a total of 36 mothers and 35 children were accommodated.”<sup>15</sup>

Over the course of successive summers as the Great Depression deepened, changes were made to the operation: the number of weeks the camp was held was reduced, and the focus turned to accommodating convalescing women recovering from illness. In addition club members who drove the women and children to Waterton were partially reimbursed for their oil and gas.<sup>16</sup> After four years of operation, the Kiwanis members were still unanimously in favor of continuing the camp.<sup>17</sup>

Finally in the spring of 1939, the question of camp operation was discussed by the Board of Directors who determined it was advisable to discontinue the camp “on account of the difficulty of securing deserving cases and that the same women were looking with expectations of turning this into an annual holiday.”<sup>18</sup>

Having done yeoman service for needy mothers, the Kiwanis Club did not abandon their interest in good works in Waterton. They turned their attention to providing financial and material assistance to the YMCA Camp Inuspi on Lower Waterton Lake and sponsored attendance for deserving boys.<sup>19</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> “Kiwanians Celebrate at Charter Night Banquet; Club Formally Launched,” *Lethbridge Herald*, Sept. 6, 1929, 9. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>2</sup> “Kiwanis Summer Camp,” *Lethbridge Herald*, May 8, 1930, 5. WLNP Archives Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>3</sup> Included in the membership were Bob Lynn, Dr. Les Allen, Dr. Jesse Bigelow, Dave Elton, and Claude Boulton, all of whom were regulars in Waterton. Chris Morrison, *Waterton Chronicles: People and Their National Park*, (Lethbridge: Goathaunt Publishing, 2008), 135-216.

<sup>4</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, Lethbridge, Alberta, file P19981012028, Minutes of the Lethbridge Kiwanis Club luncheon discussion, June 10, 1930. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>5</sup> The club never did build a cabin in Waterton and continued to rent Inglenook for the life of the camp.

<sup>6</sup> Inglenook was demolished in 1958 to make way for an addition to the west end of the El Cortez Motel (now Bear Mountain Motel). Chris Morrison, *Waterton Chronicles*, 232.

<sup>7</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012028, Minutes of the Lethbridge Kiwanis Club luncheon discussion, June 17, 1930. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>8</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012028, Minutes of the Lethbridge Kiwanis Club luncheon discussion, June 24, 1930. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>9</sup> City of Lethbridge Bylaw No. 638, 1936.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Board of Directors meeting, Feb. 10, 1931, Galt Museum and Archives, File P19981012029; WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>11</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012029, Kiwanis Club Minutes, Nov. 10, 1931. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>12</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012029, Kiwanis Club Minutes, Nov. 10, 1931. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>13</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012030, Minutes of Board of Directors meeting, March 3, 1932; WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15. (The camp was one block away from the lakeshore, not “on the shores of Waterton Lake.”)

<sup>14</sup> *A Sprig of Mountain Heather Being a Story of the Heather and Some Facts About the Mountain Playgrounds of the Dominion*, (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1914) no page numbers. Available online at:

<https://archive.org/search.php?query=%22A%20Sprig%20of%20Mountain%20Heather%22>.

<sup>15</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012030, Minutes of Board of Directors meeting, March 3, 1932.

<sup>16</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012030, Minutes of Board of Directors meeting, March 3, 1932.

<sup>17</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012031, Lethbridge Kiwanis Club Annual Report, 1933. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>18</sup> Galt Museum and Archives, file P19981012037, Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 29, 1939. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 15.

<sup>19</sup> Chris Morrison, *Waterton Chronicles: People and Their National Park*, (Lethbridge: Goathaunt Publishing, 2008), 117-123.