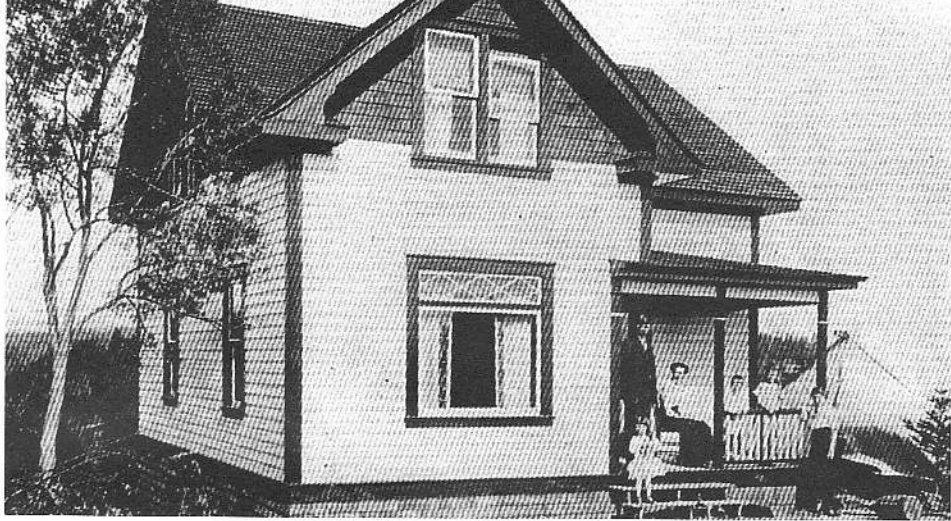


Of Days Gone By



During the building boom that preceded the First War, numerous houses were erected locally by professional builders, either for profit or their own family use. Two adjacent houses built in 1913 by Arthur Bird across from Tillicum School fit these two categories.

Born in 1865, this Englishman was lured west by the Klondike gold rush of 1898. Briefly escaping the waning gold fever, Bird spent some time in Victoria building a house (seen here soon after construction) for wife Louisa and their young family at 3108 Albina Street. Soon afterwards, a second house (also still extant) was built next door to provide the family with rental income. This was a good thing because Bird then spent much of the next twenty years in the North West Territories trapping for furs and seeking an elusive wealth underground. Only a seam of coal came his way. At age sixty-nine, Arthur Bird was last seen in the summer of 1934 when he set out to explore the terrain around Great Bear Lake. Though his remains were never found, a diary retrieved from an abandoned cabin spoke of his last days: "1, January, 1935. Everything looks black. No fur, no money, near 70 and 120 miles back. Don't think I can make it."

Though Bird only spent winters at his Albina Street home, other members of the family resided there for over eighty years.

In 1916, daughter Gracie attended the one-room Tillicum schoolhouse then located on Burnside Road. A class-photo displayed in the foyer of the present-day school shows the young girl standing front-and-centre, her head tilted to one side. One of her many recollections in later years dated back to the First War: "I remember an army troop marching along Burnside Road and a whole bunch of us kids from Tillicum School followed them to town. A lot of us had never been that far and when we got there we were flabbergasted by the stores."

— Dennis Minaker, author of "The Gorge of Summers Gone"

- Arthur's birth records and family history indicate he was born in 1863 in Oxton, Nottingham, England, not 1865 as in the article.
- The second house was built for his daughter and son-in-law, not for rental income
- According to family sources he never was a fur trapper – only a carpenter and prospector.
- He was 72 when he went missing, not 69
- He had a cabin 100 miles south of Cameron Bay at McVicker Arm on Great Bear Lake for many years, and wasn't exploring when he went missing – he had been prospecting and because of illness didn't leave until the winter storms had hit.