

## HISTORY COLUMN: Metchosin's Glen Rosa farm home to colourful characters

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Is it possible that some pieces of property attract more interesting characters than others?

The farm known as Glen Rosa on Rocky Point Road, overlooking Pedder Bay inlet, has had its fair share of dynamic personages.

In the beginning, Mary Ann and Edward Vine homesteaded the property in 1858. Mary Ann had arrived in what was then Camosun with her previous husband on the ship Norman Morrison in 1853. Her husband took an immediate dislike to the colony and left his wife and their 10-year-old daughter. Soon after returning to England he died. Later Edward Vine and Mary Ann met, married and left for Metchosin.

Nothing in those days was for the faint of heart. Only rough trails connected the pioneers who were settling away from the fort. Swifter and easier transportation came by hiring native people to paddle to Fort Victoria.

Mary Ann quickly found her calling in midwifery and nursing; she travelled by foot as far away as Sooke to help those in need. She thought nothing of heading out at night with a lantern to follow a 20-mile trail to attend a woman in childbirth.

Besides her caring and kind nature she was known for her volcanic and violent temper. It was said she feared neither man nor beast and that both man and beast feared her. There are many stories of her facing down cougars and braving dangers on her journeys, with just as many stories of her interacting and enforcing her will on men.

She was known by the natives as Mesachie Tyee or Devil Spirit, and by others as Granny Vine. Much has been written of her and her legacy to the settlement of the southern Island.

The house in the old picture is not the original homestead which stood by the creek in the valley below. It burned to the ground on Sept. 13 1881. Edward Vine was in Victoria on business when Mary Ann saw the fire as she was returning from the barn. She managed to rush into the house and snatched a cloak, two dresses and a birdcage. Whether the cage included a bird is not mentioned in the report!

Edward Vine later commenced building a house on the rocky promontory where the present house stands. It is doubtful they ever lived in it as it was unfinished when they sold the farm.

In 1895 the Reids bought the 660 acres for \$7,595 (\$217,000) to be paid in two installments. John Dunlop Reid had arrived in North America aged 18 in 1884. He spent time successfully shepherding throughout the American West before deciding to settle and marry in Victoria.

He immediately started to make a serious business of the farm, calling it Glen Rosa in honour of his Ayreshire heritage. Before long he had planted over a thousand apple trees of many varieties.

Two boys, Fergus and Kenneth were born. They were raised on the farm and helped out. The Reids were active and respected in the community, holding positions on the School Board, Metchosin Farmer's Institute and the Women's Institute.

Kenneth told a local newspaper about finding a strange projectile when clearing land. It was 18 inches long and eight inches in diameter and almost 125 pounds. It is thought to have been fired from a Spanish "warship" to impress the natives in very early times.

When the Maritime Museum opened in Victoria, Ken Reid donated it for the collection. In the same article he recalls pioneers finding cannon balls eroded from the cliffs above what is now Witty's Beach; they "lay as mute reminders of iron intimidation." (Daily Colonist, June 3, 1979)

Glen Rosa was sold in 1952 to an Olive Gill. Not much is known about her except she promoted a scheme to make cabins for oldsters (sic). Presumably this idea was not successful, as there are no cabins. It is an intriguing idea, what with our aging population, but surely would be contrary to Metchosin planning permits!



Photo of Glen Rosa on Rocky Point Road, circa 1905, shows a prominent orchard and home overlooking Pedder Bay inlet. The roadway is dirt and the home features a view of the inlet. Today the road is paved and that view is blocked by the growth of trees. / COURTESY METCHOSIN MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

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The land was divided over the years. One memorable owner, Deborah Hertzberg, renamed it "Kilima" in honour of her Kenyan background. She ran a lovely tea house for some years, the highlight being able to choose your own teapot from a vast array stacked on the shelves.

The story of Glen Rosa is far from over. The present owners use the original name and tend the remaining fruit trees. They have a few sheep reminiscent of the large flocks run by the Reids and the Vines. The whole house has been rebuilt and enlarged, showcasing much of the old growth timber from the house started in 1881. Their enterprise, character and community involvement will figure in the ongoing tale of the house and land.

*Wendy Mitchell is president of the Metchosin Museum Society and can be reached by email at [wendyncmitchell@shaw.ca](mailto:wendyncmitchell@shaw.ca). The School House Museum is open Saturdays 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. and Sundays 11:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Happy Valley Road. The Pioneer Barn and Book Store behind the fire hall is open Sundays 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.*