

A Brief History of the Park

Information from Ian Pooley and RDCO

*First Nations habitation of Black Mountain or Sntsk'il'nten goes back centuries. Sntsk'il'nten means "place where flint is found" and was a prime spot for gathering material for and fashioning stone tools. It is speculated that an isolated crop of rhyolite may be the mineral source used for these tools.

*1860 was the beginning of francophones use of the park. Ranching was the prime occupation of settlers in what is now parkland as it has extensive grasslands and creeks running through it.

*1893 saw the beginnings of ranching in the park area by Daniel Prather. He was the first to use irrigation here. Other endeavours in the park included logging and gold panning. Colin Keith Lee Pyman, along with help from a cousin, had an early horse ranch on the west side of the park. Although somewhat dilapidated, the log farm house can still be seen in its prime location. Four American families settled on or near Black Mountain in 1893: Oliver Bruce Prather, Jeremiah Clark, John McClure, and Prior Brown, and three years later, John McClure's brother James.



*From 1909 to 1920 various irrigation projects were introduced. The Belgo Canadian Fruitlands irrigation ditches marked both success and failure: the big ditch, although inefficient, successfully carried water to the new orchards in the Belgo area, but the projected extension to Rutland was a failure, and although the right of way was prepared, the ditch was never completed, and never carried water.



*1920's – 1950's, Preston Ski Hill which was in Joe Rich was relocated to the bowl of Black Mountain after WW1 as a result of gasoline rationing as it was closer to Kelowna. Locals recall a truck hauling skiers up to the site as it is high up on the mountain.



*1953 saw the construction of the Forest Service Road which goes to the summit and is still in use today. Originally a fire lookout was stationed here in 1954 and the concrete foundations still exist at the top. Several communication towers are maintained at the top and are visible from the highway.

*2007 – 2008 the beginnings of a co-management model between First Nations and Regional Park was conceived. And, in 2014 – 2015 the regional park was established through a combination of fee simple acquisition, ecological gift and a 30 year license of occupation on crown land. The Friends of Black Mountain was formed. They assist where possible with local knowledge of trails and observation of resident birds, animals, vegetation and with monitoring damage to park lands.