

STORY BY *Shella Gardezi*
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HORSE SENSE

Owl Mountain Ranch offers stunning trail rides on calm, handsome horses

As soon as Rick and Marie Seymour saw the property tucked right against the stunning Owl Mountain, they knew that's where they wanted their new home and business.

"We looked all over B.C. for a landscape like this," said Rick.

Once you pull off the highway and through the gates of Owl Mountain Ranch you'll know exactly how they must have felt when they made the decision over 10 years ago to move their family here from Langley, B.C., and begin a trail-riding business.



Opening page: Riding is a way of life for the Seymour family — Rick, Marie, Chelsea and Ryan. Even Zac the dog enjoys the trails with them.

Top: Ranch hand Travis Voght is one of the guides on the ride along Smugglers Trail.

Center left: Rick Seymour gives first time rider, writer Shella Gardezi time to get acquainted with Cookie before beginning her trail ride.

Center right: Rick relaxes at the bar, surrounded by antique saddles, tack and cowboy artifacts.

Bottom: Six-year-old Liam Crozier from Newmarket, Ontario spends some quiet time with Cowboy, the miniature horse and Anderson, the miniature donkey at the petting zoo.

Located near the Cascade border station about six kilometres from Christina Lake, there's a lot to explore on horseback. The business offers trail rides that are suitable for any level and range from one hour to a half day. A one-hour beginner tour will take you right up against the rock face of Owl Mountain. In the summer, the family is joined by Bonnie James and Travis Voght of Merritt, who are skilled riders, instructors and trail guides.

I arrive not knowing what to expect. I've never ridden a horse before and the one picked out for me, Cookie, is big... really big.

However, in trail riding, that's a good thing, apparently. Bonnie, who offers to lead me, says Cookie is the preferred horse for kids and beginners. It's the smaller horses that tend to be a little skittish, she said.

"You could set a bomb off under Cookie and she wouldn't bolt," she assures me.

Cookie doesn't disappoint, setting off on a leisurely pace through the foothills of Owl Mountain, which, it turns out, shelters a fascinating history.

The trail we travel is called Smuggler's Trail. In the time of prohibition it was a busy thoroughfare for those smuggling alcohol across the line to thirsty customers in the south. In fact, riders will even come across a carriage sunk into the ground, which ranchers believe was used by settlers.

Trail guides share fascinating stories about this era, 1917-1933, but for those more interested in the flora and fauna, the ride is also very informative. During our ride, Bonnie helps spot a snake and a deer and lets us know that she has recently seen bear tracks nearby. She also helps identify plants, berries and trees.

Then, of course, there's the spectacular scenery with breathtaking views as we traverse the ridges, valleys and forests surrounding the ranch. For a beginner, it doesn't take long to forget one's nervousness and just enjoy the ride.

For the more adventurous there's swimming with horses, which takes you across the Kettle River on horseback, and the Cascade Canyon tour, which takes riders alongside the falls.

When asked how much experience one needs for these more advanced tours, Rick responds, "You have to be older than 10."

Grand Forks resident Sarah Kemper, who

recently took her two boys, Ben, 7, and Aidan, 10, on the beginner tour, says she knew her family was in good hands.

"These horses really know what they're doing," she said.

Owl Mountain works to breed and raise the calmest and friendliest horses it can. Any signs of skittishness would disqualify a horse from working on the ranch. But it's not all about the people; Rick and Marie also want to make sure the horses enjoy themselves. The horses don't spend their days stuck in indoor stalls. Between trail rides they have plenty of time for rest, exercise and play.

"We want our customers to see horses that are happy and healthy and well-cared for," says Marie. "The customers respect that and, also, the horses have respect for the people."

"Our primary goal is to offer visitors a positive hands-on experience with a friendly animal," says Rick.

Rick and Marie have both been long-time "horse people." Rick's family has been in the horse business for five generations. Meanwhile, when her friends were saving for cars at 16, Marie was saving for a horse. They've passed on their love to their two children Chelsey, 16, who helps out with pony rides and who kicked off the 2009 season with a promotional ride all the way to Christina Lake and Ryan, 11, who went on his first pack ride at the age of four.

Rides are booked for small groups of up to 12 people with two guides.

However, Owl Mountain offers more than just trail rides. Among the services offered are private lessons in both Western and English style horseback riding. In fact, Travis even offered the ranch's first "cowboy" riding and roping lesson this summer.

In the off-season, the ranch keeps busy with a reception hall located in its big red barn. The interior has been renovated to resemble a cowboy saloon. It recently attracted film students from Nelson looking to shoot a western. As well, the Christina Lake firefighters recently rented out the venue for a murder mystery dinner.

Rick, an avid antique collector, has begun to fill display cases and hopes to have a small museum of cowboy artifacts in the hall.

Meanwhile, Marie's "pet" project is at the

back of the red barn. She has recently begun a petting zoo with miniature animals, including two goats, a donkey and a horse.

"It's a real treat for city kids to be able to pet the animals," she says.

The team has begun putting in tenting sites and has plans for a campground in the future. However, they're waiting on the economic turnaround before they determine how much to invest in this new venture.

The ebb and flow of the economy is one of the primary challenges for a tourism-based business, says Rick. However, with most of their overhead costs in the care and feeding of


the horses, they are in a better position than most to manage change through the selling and buying of livestock.

Customers come from all over Europe and North America with locals increasingly discovering the ranch through word of mouth. Repeat business is one of the benefits of offering a variety of different rides.

As I awkwardly make my way down from my ever-so-patient horse, Cookie, I'm already wondering about my next visit. I could take the plunge on the river ride or I could overcome my fear of heights on the canyon tour. Whatever I choose, it's sure to be an adventure. **3**

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From Toil to Peaceful Life

The Padmoroff property has transformed from a Doukhobor industrial site to a comfortable family home

The Padmoroff family is modest about their two-storey farmhouse in Grand Forks, but a lot of history and hard work went into what exists today.

"It's just our family home," says Carolyn who's well aware that drivers often slow down to take a second look when passing her property just west of Grand Forks city limits.

Stepping into the quiet, rural, west end of the Sunshine Valley, it's hard to imagine that the area was once the industrial heart of Doukhobor life in Grand Forks.

Alex and Carolyn had their work cut out for them when they decided to turn a former cafeteria and shoemaker's shop into a family home back in 1979.

Alex inherited the 1918 building from his father, also named Alex, who had made his own, less-extensive renovations when he first purchased it in 1946. Following the bankruptcy of the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (CCUB) which operated the communal enterprise in Grand Forks, plots of land were sold back by the government, with original Doukhobor residents, such





Opening page, top: The historic Padmoroff residence is all that remains in what was once know as the industrial heart of Doukhobor life in Grand Forks. The home and outbuildings are indicative of Doukhobor architecture. Below: Carolyn and Alex Padmoroff pose outside the entranceway of their home.

Clockwise from top left: The open floor plan and vaulted ceilings make this home airy and spacious.

Carolyn Padmoroff in the renovated kitchen that was once a shoemaker's shop.

The fireplace was created using bricks from the original chimney.

Opposite page: This old Ford logging truck used by Alex Padmoroff Sr. for his logging business are displayed by the barn as reminders of their family's history.



as Alex Padmoroff Sr. given first priority.

The top floor, now three bedrooms and a den, was the shoemaker shop. The bottom floor was a cafeteria, which serviced the many workers in the area. On Padmoroff's property alone, there was a grainery (1925) and a jam factory, which was demolished by arson in 1935 shortly after construction and the production of the first batch began. The boiler house where water was heated to make the jam remains standing.

Out of the living room window, one can see the remains of the brick factory, including the clay pit. There was also a flour mill, sawmill, and harness and machine shop.

Alex and Carolyn moved onto the property in 1975 to help care for Alex's father. That's when the cleanup began. In addition to the home, there were

several old wooden outbuildings used for chicken coops, outhouses, etc. that had to be removed.

When Alex Jr. inherited the home from his father, it was time for the couple to take a hard look at the building and decide whether it was worth it to remodel, or to tear down and rebuild.

"We thought about it, whether we should demolish it or try to make a good home out of it," he said.

They consulted an architect for some rough plans and talked to other knowledgeable people. In the end they decided it was worth it.

The biggest challenge for Alex, who estimates that he did 70 to 80 per cent of the work himself, was digging out the basement. "It took me 40 days and 40 nights," he joked.

Alex followed his father's footsteps into the logging business, so the majority of his work had to take place on evenings and weekends.

The rest of the building had to be completely gutted and redone with modern utilities and insulation. The building, fortunately, had a lot going for it, including its solid brickwork, high ceilings and the fact that there weren't any load bearing walls inside to limit the design. The Padmoroffs, however, decided they wanted to maintain as much of the building's existing character as possible.

"We didn't change the building itself, but the inside is totally redone," said Carolyn. This is our home. We wanted to make it livable and comfortable."



All the window and door openings are in their original position, with a few exceptions. One downstairs window became patio doors, another upstairs window was blocked off for a closet and the kitchen window was raised to accommodate the counters.

In the living room, the Padmoroffs have taken advantage of the 10-foot-high ceilings by sloping down to the 8-foot level to create a vaulted effect.

Another centerpiece of the first floor is the fireplace, designed by Carolyn and created using bricks from the original chimney. The bricklayer created steps on

one side, which are used as shelves for family photos and momentos. Very little polishing was done — many of the bricks are still blackened with soot — giving the fireplace an “old world” effect.

During the period the couple was living on the senior Alex Padmoroff’s property, the family grew from two to four with the addition of Andrea and Jarred. Carolyn’s primary concern was making sure the home was big enough for the family. Alex’s father had partitioned the lower floor into five rooms, but left the top floor empty.

The Padmoroffs continued their renova-

tions in this level creating a new staircase, three bedrooms, a bathroom and a den.

“The rooms are small, but they’re cozy,” said Carolyn.

It’s in the spring when the Padmoroff’s 9.25 acres really comes alive with historical charm. The couple continues to maintain the fields growing hay and alfalfa. The two other brick buildings are used as a shop and garage (the former boiler house) and a barn (the former grainery).

Little renovation has taken place on these buildings, but Alex has plans for them too. He plans to sandblast the brick to give them the same bright, clean colour the home has. Otherwise minor repairs are needed to keep them serving their current purposes for the next 100 years. Alex proudly displays his father’s ‘40s and ‘50s logging trucks outside the barn, as well as a horse-drawn sleigh for hauling logs.

Carolyn, originally from Fort St. John, has learned the art of gardening and preserving from Alex’s mother. Although she used to maintain three gardens, she’s now down to one.

It’s a fitting lifestyle for the area that’s still surrounded by the remains of the once thriving orchards, fields and factories of the area. **3**

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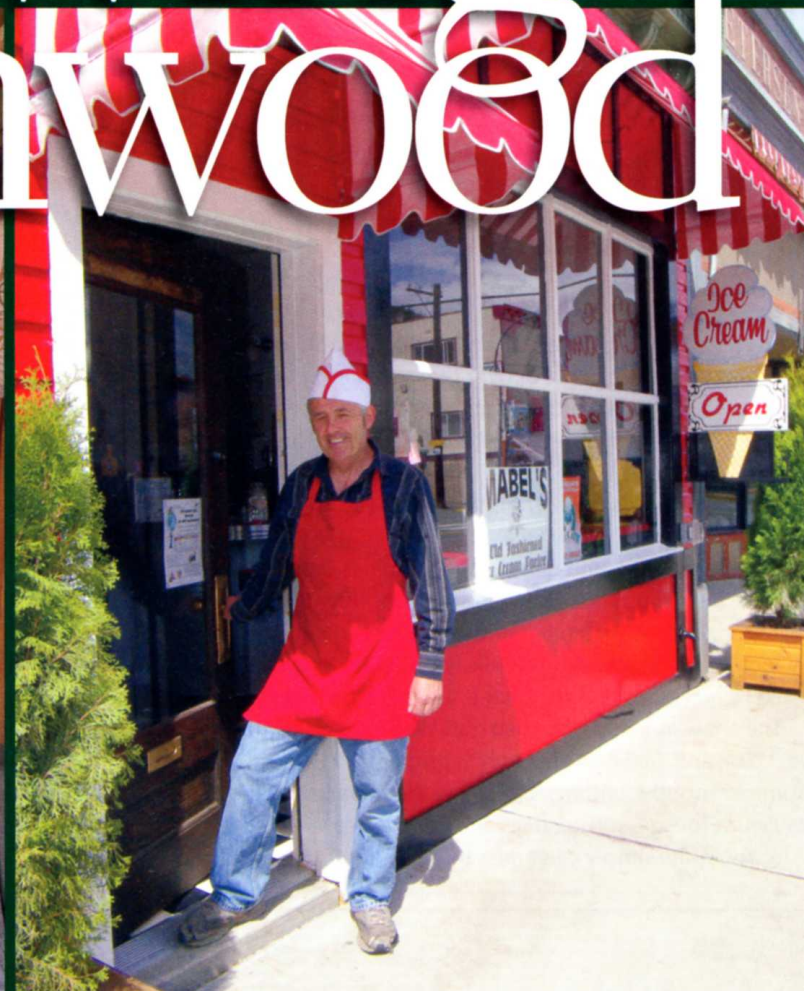
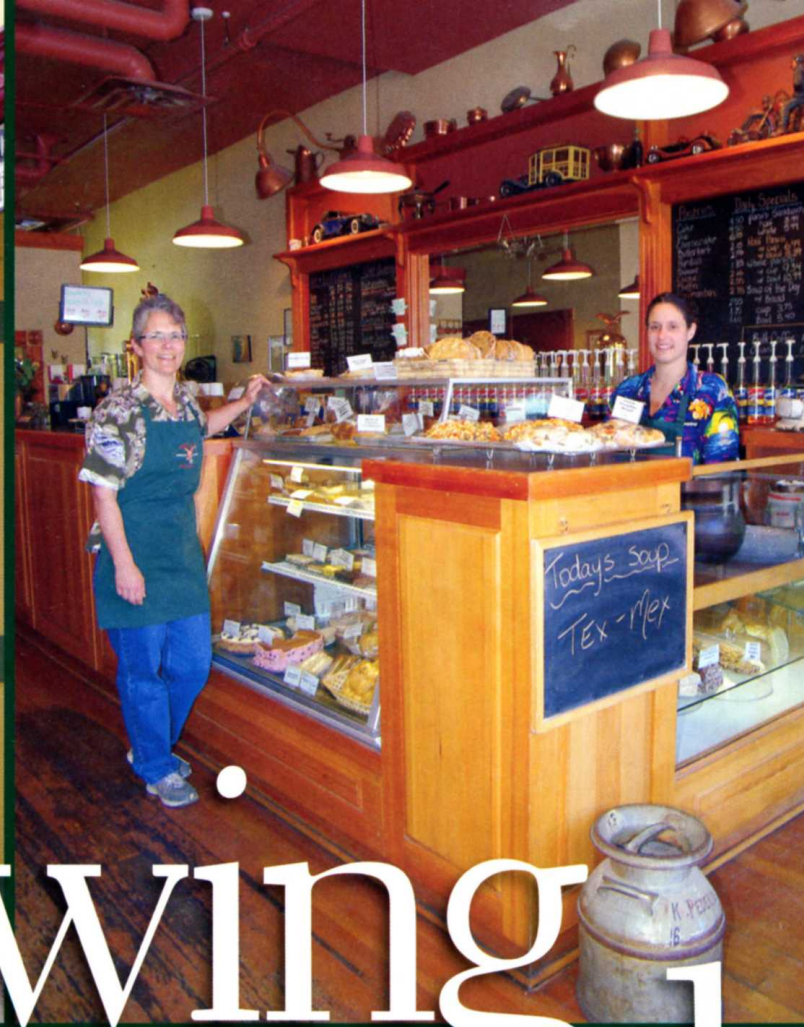
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STORY BY

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Opposite page, top left: Jim Nathorst, president of the Greenwood Board of Trade, gets ready to welcome the lunch crowd outside his restaurant, The Pacific Grill. Once inside, you'll be surprised by the elegant décor and excellent food.

Top right: Mom and daughter team Joanne and Vanessa Marien, owners of the Copper Eagle Cappuccino and Bakery, offer fresh baking daily along with soup and sandwiches.

Bottom left: Carver Jim Harris can be seen at work outside his workshop, Silkenwood Custom Carving, located at Deadwood Junction most days. Jim's unique creations are carved on wood, rock and antlers.

Bottom right: Rick Nathorst boasts claim to the "world's best ice cream" at Funky Mabel's Ice Cream and Gifts, named after his mother.

This page, above: This historic block of buildings on the main street of Greenwood are true landmarks of the tiny city. The Windsor Hotel (Greenwood Inn Hotel) c1899, centre, replaced two previous hotels destroyed by fire.

Canada's smallest city is enjoying a renaissance

GREENWOOD is a city that never forgot its past, and that might just be its greatest asset as it moves into the future.

Located in the Boundary region halfway between Grand Forks and Rock Creek, the old mining and logging town of Greenwood has reinvented itself once again. Actually, that's city, not town, the residents will gently remind you; Greenwood is the smallest city in Canada.

The city is now enjoying a renaissance with new businesses, new people and new ideas moving in all the time.

In fact, things have really taken off in the past two years, local residents report, and one of the major reasons is the city's historical character, which shines through wherever you look, whether it's the storied businesses on the main street, the industrial of a smelter overlooking the city, the pride people take in restoring old homes or the famous town hall (featured in the 1999 movie, *Snow Falling on Cedars*). The town hall features jail cells in the basement and a courthouse upstairs. These areas are no longer in use, but tours can be booked through the museum.

Two of the first people to take a chance on Greenwood's future were Colleen and Jeff Fraser. They opened the Copper Eagle Cappuccino & Bakery in 1997.

"There wasn't much going on in Greenwood at the time," says Joanne Marien, the current owner. "It was a typical small town experiencing a decline in the lumber industry. They did a miracle here. They put Greenwood back on the map."



Top left: Kevin Powers, a recent transplant from Kelowna, says that business is great at his shop, Hillbilly Leather. With its central location on the main street, it has become a regular stop for motorcycle enthusiasts passing through town.

Top right: Owner Paula Sittler, along with her dad Gary (right) and mom Deb (not pictured), operate Deadwood Junction, a funky little Wild West style complex that hosts weekly live music, local art, coffee and baked goods.

Right: This c1915 Federal Post Office building, which used to house a residence and the Canada Customs office on the second floor and still uses the original brass post office boxes, is a symbol of the prosperity in Greenwood prior to 1919.

It wasn't long before the people driving through town on Hwy. 3 started stopping. Some of Marien's regular customers live as far away as Vancouver and Nelson and make it a point to stop in whenever they're passing through. It also wasn't long before people started noticing the tourists stopping.

Many of the new business owners credit the downtown's location on the highway as key to their success.

Kevin Powers, owner of the Hillbilly Leather Hut, owned a store in Kelowna for three years before opening up for his first season in Greenwood last year.

"On a day-to-day average, I did better or as good as I did in Kelowna in my first season here," he said as he prepared his shop for his second season. "The location on the highway definitely helps."

Despite the historical flavour of the downtown, Marge Maclean, president of the Greenwood Historical Society, said the city has not always been "heritage minded" and many important buildings have been lost. However, downtown revitalization in the '70s helped preserve the oldest block in the downtown, dating from 1897, which houses the Copper Eagle, the Pacific Grill and the Greenwood Inn. Other business owners have done their part to help maintain the historic character, at least in their facades.

Greenwood's fortunes have ebbed and flowed over the years. At one point during the mining boom, there were four banks in town. At others times, storefronts sat empty.

Doug Janzen, who just opened Jak's Diner & Deli across the street from the Copper Eagle, said his building used to house a Bank of Montreal branch and still has the safe to prove it. That and the façade of the building haven't

changed, but the rest of the building has been completely renovated as a modern restaurant. Janzen said he's confident that it will be worth his investment.

"The last two summers we've had a noticeable increase in the number of people stopping here," he said. "Greenwood should become more trendy with time as new businesses and new ideas come into town."

It's not just business ideas that are helping Greenwood grow. It's also the people and the commitment to the community, said Grazyna Manturzyk. Manturzyk moved to Greenwood three years ago, and soon grew tired of the commute to her job in Kelowna as a horticultural instructor.

"I went to South America to rethink my life," she said. After six months of touring, writing and thinking, it was clear to her that Greenwood was her home.

She came back re-energized with not only a plan for her own nursery and gift shop, Lavender, which opened in May, but also some ideas she thought could help make the town better. She helped spearhead the city's Farmer Market which features entertainment as well as vendors from throughout the Boundary. She found city council and the community welcomed the new ideas.

"There's lots of people who want to make it a better and more beautiful community," she said.

The Greenwood Board of Trade started beautification efforts including placing hanging flower baskets in the downtown.

Any trendy up-and-coming city needs art and culture to help bring people in, and Greenwood has no shortage of that. Manturzyk plans to feature local artists in her gift shop. Paula Sittler, owner of Deadwood Junction, serves up work from local artisans and weekly live music, along with coffee and baked goods at her business. Right next door you might even glimpse Jim Harris, a local carver at work in his studio. Dave and Jocelyn Evans' store, Tomorrow's Treasures, features unique artwork and gifts in the storefront section. They also cater to locals with quilting and paint supplies in the back section of the store.

In a small town it pays to have more than one area of expertise, as Garth Sired will tell you. He and his spouse Wendy left Red Deer and opened a candy shop downtown in 2008. Garth also owns an aerial photography company, Rise Above.

Janzen, the restaurateur, owns a repair shop, and Manturzyk plans to give horticultural workshops.

Despite the challenges of making a living in a small town, the residents wouldn't have it any other way. As the Okanagan becomes more and more congested, and housing prices soar, there's renewed interest in towns like Greenwood that enjoy a similar climate, but much less stress.

"Greenwood has a really good future ahead," said Sired. "I hope the momentum keeps going, but I don't want to see it grow too rapidly. It's just a beautiful, friendly little place." **3**