

# CEDAR CREEK ==

## The School in the Backwoods

By LEONARD PACKMAN

Some months ago whilst lying in bed recovering from a spell of influenza, I passed the time away by thinking of the many papers I read as a boy. The old green Boys' Friend was one of them and, on recalling to mind the various stories in that paper, I naturally thought of Cedar Creek - 'The School in the Backwoods' as it was called.

"Frank Richards' Schooldays" by Martin Clifford; so ran the print in my mind's eye, together with the delightful illustrations accompanying it.

I thought of Cedar Creek.... Thompson.... Kamloops.... Fraser City.... I thought of the stories, many humorous, a few rather sad, but all very loveable to me in my boyhood. And of course, I thought of the characters; not only the boys and girls at the school but those outside as well, for they all formed part of the background around which the stories were written, each and every one having a particular part to play.

The more I thought, the more I dwelt upon it, until the realisation came to me that - unless I was very much mistaken - surprisingly little had been written about Cedar Creek in the various magazines devoted to Juvenilia, although it was considered by many Hamiltonians to be one of the author's best creations.

To my mind this is rather strange. That the stories were a success cannot be denied, for they enjoyed a long run in the Boys' Friend. As for their popularity, the proof lies in the indisputable fact that the Amalgamated Press found them, commercially, sufficiently an asset to warrant many of the stories being reprinted in the Boys' Friend (4d) Library (1st series), the Popular, the Gem (at the back of that paper) and the Greyfriars Holiday Annual, the span of years covering well over two decades.

I feel sure that many of you will agree with me, that such delightful work is deserving of a better fate than that of comparative obscurity; and if this is so, surely the place for recognition is the C. D. Annual, throughout the seven of which all the other major works of Charles Hamilton have been recorded.

Having got so far, it remains to be decided as to the way in which it shall be done.

Most fortunately (and happily!), time and age do not exist where Mr. Hamilton's Peter Pannish characters and creations are concerned, so that I invite all those who would like to take the opportunity of renewing acquaintance with our 'Backwoods' friends to join me in a short visit to Vancouver B.C.

Our time will be very limited, but we will endeavour to cover as much ground and see as many faces as possible.

What do you say? Not a bad idea? Right! We are on our way . . . . .

. . . . . Well, here we are in Thompson. As you may remember, Thompson, the nearest point to Cedar Creek, lies in a valley - - and it is just as we had imagined it to be. The roar of the water from the nearby Falls is somewhat awe-



inspiring, but certainly far more pleasing than that of heavy traffic, which is the only kind of roar many of us ever hear!

We do not anticipate any difficulty in finding our way around, for Thompson is almost as familiar to us as is our home town . . . .

Where shall we start? Well, we need a few things, so I suggest we make for Gunten's stores . . . .

Here we are, and here is Old Man Gunten himself - as surly as ever, no doubt. Yes, just as I thought, he hasn't altered a bit; for Mr. Gunten, a Swiss, is quite a 'big bug' in Thompson, being the main Storekeeper and Postmaster too. His son, Kern, is at Cedar Creek School. Maybe we shall see him later on . . . .

Well, you are not a very likeable sort of man, Mr. Gunten, but you do at least conform to the mental picture we had of you, so we are glad to have met you, none the more for that. And now we must be on our way . . . . Wait a moment, who is that man coming towards us? Why, it's the sheriff - Sheriff Henderson, uncle of Tom and Molly Lawrence who are also at Cedar Creek School. A good man is the sheriff, for he keeps his eye on the bad men of the town. He looks as though he is on the warpath, so let's follow him and see where he goes. Ah! I rather guessed as much! He's making for the 'Red Dog' saloon. This should be good! But just a second. Look at that old Apache Indian outside the saloon. Surely there is something familiar about him? Why, yes, it's dear old 'Injun Dick', still hopefully waiting for someone to slip him a 'quarter' for his beloved 'firewater'. Good old Injun Dick, may your shadow never grow less!

Now we are in the saloon and, having given the barman our orders, we see that Sheriff Henderson is laying down the law to a bunch of scruffy-looking individuals. I don't seem to recognise any of them, although there is something about them that strikes a chord. Let's get a bit closer. Ah! of course, I should have known - we should all have known. It's none other than that 'nap hand' of villians, 'Poker Pete', 'four Kings', 'Euchre Dick', 'Black Rube' and 'Dave Dunn'. The sheriff's words don't seem to be making much impression, but these are wily old birds and know just how far to go without overdoing it. However, as there may be a spot of trouble, I think we had better finish our refreshment and be going - quick!

Where shall we go from here? Well, how about looking up old Mr. Penrose - if he is still around? Come on, we'll see. This is the way . . . Hop Chung's Chinese Laundry - - McNab's Dance Hall and yes, this is it, 'The Thompson Press', owned and published by Mr. Penrose. He used to do quite a bit of business with Frank Richards the Schoolboy Author, at one time or another, didn't he? And yes, through the window we can see old Penrose himself, still as busy as ever, bless him!

Well, we have a lot to see yet, and quite a bit of ground to cover - and time is passing all too quickly. So we must be moving along again.

I know we would all very much like to take a ride to Kamloops, and also cross the Fraser river for a look around Fraser City.

Fraser City! How the name conjures up the details of that memorable sleigh ride across the frozen river one Christmas Eve . . . Frank Richards, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc being chased by a pack of hungry, howling wolves and holding them back by throwing out their fur rug to keep them off . . . the cracking of the ice as they sped over it on the return journey . . . all this to buy a doll for a very sick child - and what a worthy cause!

Alas, I'm afraid it would take too long, so we must - very reluctantly - make our way to Cedar Creek . . .



And Cedar Creek it is! Now, I know we are all anxious to see the School, but I think we have time to visit just two other places first. One of them is quite near at hand, so just follow me . . . There you are! That's the Lawless Ranch, or rather, the Ranch-house. The ranch itself is quite a size, you know. Look! Do you see those two big men talking together on the step? Recognise them? Yes, you are quite correct, they are Rancher Lawless himself and his foreman, Billy Cook. My! my! - we certainly have been lucky so far! And now for a peep at the other place I have in mind. It's right at the other end of the trail, so we shall have to get going.

Here we are. What did you say, "It's only a shack"? Of course it's a shack. Surely you haven't forgotten? Quite correct, it's Vere Beauclerc's home. It's not much of a place, but it means everything to Vere, you know. Let's take a peep through the window and see if anyone is there. Yes, there he is; it's Vere's father, Lascelles Beauclerc, the 'Remittance Man'. He doesn't look very happy; but then, he never was . . . Poor weak-willed man, so easily led astray. The number of times Vere has saved him from himself! Come. Let us leave him to his thoughts . . .

And now for the school . . . No! No! - that's not the school. Yes, of course it's a school - Hillcrest School! I suppose you have forgotten Cedar Creek's rivals, Dicky Bird & Co.? Maybe we shall have time to look around it before we go back. Come on, we are nearly there now.

Ah, here we are at last! There's the stockade - and surely that's 'Black Sally', the schoolkeeper and cook, waddling towards the schoolroom entrance. Now, we mus'n't disturb them while they are having lessons, so we shall have to be content to peep through the windows and see who we can spot. Yes, I do really believe they are all there, every one of them - if my memory doesn't fail me. Let's run over the names as they sit there . . . Frank Richards, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc (the 'three inseparables') are side by side, as one would expect. Then comes Tom and Molly Lawrence; and next to Molly sits Milly Brown (a nice, quiet, unobstrusive type of girl), followed by Kate Dawson and her brother Dick. And now, as was also expected, we find Kern Gunten and Keller (both Swiss - and 'bad eggs') and Eban Hacke (another of Gunten's cronies, but not all bad). Harold Hopkins, the Cockney schoolboy, is the next in our line of vision, followed by Yen Chin (a very untruthful and not particularly likeable sort of boy, possessing none of the loveable characteristics of his counterpart, Wun Lung, at Greyfriars School; although, to be quite fair and give him his due, he has on occasion shown great pluck).

Last but not least, and trying to make his fat little figure as inconspicuous as possible, is Chunky Todgers. At this very moment Chunky is surreptitiously pushing maple sugar into his small but capacious mouth . . . But wait a moment, who are those three people sitting at the table and in conference? Of course, it's Mr. Slimmy, Mr. Shepherd (the 'Gentle Shepherd') and - Miss Ethel Meadows, the Headmistress. A very fine woman is Miss Meadows, as I am sure you will all agree, for she possesses all those characteristics that only Charles Hamilton can portray . . . kindly disposition, strict and severe when the occasion demands, but always scrupulously fair, and what is more, utterly fearless. All these characteristics have, from time to time, shown themselves in many of the stories; but the nicest thing about her is that she looks so sweet and young. I guess she must have wheedled some of that Elixir of Youth from her creator! Furthermore, I rather feel that Martin Clifford has a particular liking for her, otherwise he would not have given her one of his favourite Christian names.



How the sight of each and every one of these faces brings back memories of the delightful stories which featured them . . . It would take a complete C.D. Annual to enumerate all the thrilling adventures, humorous escapades and suchlike, in which the majority of these loveable characters have been featured throughout the original long run of the stories . . . And so, although I hate to say it, I am afraid we shall have to leave them and make our way back - it's quite a journey you know.

Alas, time passes all too quickly, and all we have been able to do is to catch just a brief glimpse of all these dear friends of our youth. However, even a glimpse is better than nothing at all. We have at least succeeded in paying them a visit, to show that they are not forgotten.

But stay a minute. We really must see who that tall, fine-looking man is, entering the school. I rather imagine he has come to see Miss Meadows and have a little chat. Yes, my hunch was right, for it is none other than Sergeant Laselle of the North-West Mounted Police. I have another hunch that he is rather fond of Miss Meadows . . .

And now I am afraid it is goodbye to happy Cedar Creek and dear old Thompson Valley. Maybe, one day, another of the 'Brotherhood of Happy Hours' will have more to say about you. Meanwhile, if by any chance any old friend has been overlooked, please forgive me, for I, and no one else, will be the one to blame.

#### THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL

Note: In last year's C.D. Annual we gave a list of the long and short complete stories by Charles Hamilton and E.S. Brooks, which had appeared in the Greyfriars Holiday Annual, but unfortunately, through lack of space, we were unable to give them all. During the year we have had several requests for completion so here are those which were omitted, years 1934 - 1941.

For compiling this year's, thanks are due to John R. Shaw.

1934:	Greyfriars.	A Schoolboy's Honour (Reprint of Magnet No. 303 - The Scapegoat)
	Greyfriars.	Bunter the Truthful
	Greyfriars.	Just Like Coker
	Greyfriars.	Pon's Little Mistake
	Greyfriars.	Skinner's Shady Scheme
	Rookwood.	Presence of Mind
	Rookwood	What Happened at the Boat House
	St. Jim's.	Spoofed (Reprint of Gem No. 799 - Trimble's Auction)
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1935:	Greyfriars.	Billy Bunter's Booby-Trap
	Greyfriars.	Frank Richards versus Greyfriars
	Greyfriars.	The Footprint in the Sand (Reprint of Magnet No. 992 - The Footprint in the Sand)
	Rookwood.	The Boy Who Wouldn't Budge
	St. Jim's.	Baggy Trimble's Brainwave
	St. Jim's.	Getting Over Gussy
	St. Jim's.	The Stony Seven (Reprint of Gem No. 751 - Raising the Wind)