

# Venables, Peter

(1881 - 1966)

Founder

Peter ("E.P.") Venables was one of the founders of the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club. His humor, gentle unassuming nature and his broad knowledge of natural history – especially entomology – never failed to enliven a meeting or a field trip. He was an inspiration to some of our brightest lights, including Joan Heriot, who said, "When I was six [Peter] showed me his pinned collection of insects and I was immediately determined to become an entomologist,"

Thirteen-year-old Peter emigrated with his parents and siblings from England to the Coldstream in 1894. Purchasing a 20 acre farm, the family raised a few animals and planted an orchard. A few years later they purchased 200 acres on the Commonage, where Peter and his brothers built a primitive one-roomed cabin and endeavored to raise sheep and turkeys in the face of stiff competition from marauding coyotes.

Young Peter had received a good formal education in England and by 1910 found employment on a survey in the Cariboo for which he was required to walk from Ashcroft to Bella Coola. A year later he found himself journeying to Colombia, South America, as a naturalist on a scientific expedition.

At the outbreak of WW1 Peter joined the London Yeomanry serving at Gallipoli, where he was wounded and then returned home, invalided out of the war by malaria and jaundice. He married Olive Auterac in 1919. Already a keen, self-taught naturalist, he was hired in 1920, without any university education, as an entomologist by the Dominion Department of Agriculture. He worked in a laboratory in the Vernon Court House – in his words – "for 27 years much to the annoyance of insects in general." Peter and Olive retired to their home on 39th Avenue in 1946.

In 1960, "in recognition of distinguished service to the science of entomology", Peter was made an honorary life member of the Entomological Society of British Columbia, which he had helped to found.

Peter's interests, many and varied after retirement, included horseback riding, skating, fishing, walking, the operatic society and theatrical affairs. Some of his entomological publications can be found in the Museum's collection, and his witty poems appeared from time to time in The Vernon News – this one, for example, paraphrasing De Morgan paraphrasing Swift:

*Great parasites have little parasites upon their backs to bite 'em,  
And little parasites have lesser parasites, and so on ad infinitum.*

But always Peter maintained an abiding interest in conservation, natural history, and in the naturalists' club he helped to establish in Vernon in 1951, supporting it faithfully in its earliest years. He died in 1966, at the age of 85.

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