

Konstantine & Emilie Popoff

Konstantine (or Konstantane) Popoff was born 6 Mar 1882 in Oblaste, Woysko, Donskogo, Russia¹ to Jacob and Matrona Popoff.² Nothing is known of his life in Russia, other than the fact he spent 14 months in the navy,³ where he attained the rank of lieutenant.⁴

Emilie Dorothea (or Emily Dorothy) Rangno was born 16 Jan 1887 in Odessa, Russia.⁵ Her mother's name was also Emilie Rangno⁶, although her father's name is unknown.⁷

It's uncertain when Konstantine and Emilie met and emigrated to Canada, but by 1907 they were married and ranching in the Slocan Valley. They owned lot 10419, surveyed on 10 Oct 1911.⁸

In 1913, Konstantine entered the real estate business, forming a partnership with Henry H. Crofts.⁹ According to a newspaper ad, they had an office at 315 Baker St. in Nelson, and specialized in Slocan Valley and Boundary properties. It further noted that an "asset of this [company] is the fact Mr. Popoff can speak Russian."

Konstantine's mother came to Canada as well — a 1917 newspaper report said she lived in Shoreacres. Apparently by then she had re-married a Mr. Pirosho.¹⁰ She died in Slocan City on Boxing Day 1926, at age 75.¹¹

Konstantine's brother also came to visit from Moscow, along with his wife and two small sons. They planned on settling in the area.¹²

Emilie's mother, brother, and sister-in-law came from Petrograd to visit in the summer of 1923.¹³ It was the last time she would see her brother Adolphus, who was killed in Montreal six months later.¹⁴ Her mother, meanwhile, continued to live with them in Slocan until her death on 26 Jun 1927 at age 72.¹⁵

Her funeral was held at Slocan's Presbyterian church and she was buried in the Slocan cemetery. Her obituary¹⁶ says that her husband and another son were killed in World War I. Mrs. Rangno was also survived by two brothers in Russia, and several nieces and nephews.

Konstantine enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces at Victoria on 8 Oct 1918. His attestation papers list his profession as 'farmer,' — but to that he added 'linguist.' He joined the 260th army battallion as a private and sailed from Vancouver aboard the *S.S. Protesilaus* on 26 Dec 1918, arriving in Siberia three weeks later.¹⁷

On 15 April 1919, he was admitted to hospital in Vladivostok for an ailment alternately diagnosed as the mumps, tonsillitis, or bronchitis. Within a few days he was on his way back to Canada aboard the *S.S. Monteagle*, and was admitted to Shaughnessy Hospital. There he was treated, pronounced cured, and released. A medical examiner's report found his "heart, lungs, and all other organs normal. Finely developed muscular man in first class condition. Can resume his former employment immediately."¹⁸



EMILIE POPOFF, c. 1946

While it appeared the military wished to have him return to duty, instead Konstantine received an honorable discharge 9 Jun 1919 on account of "demobilization."¹⁹ Upon his return home, he was welcomed at the Slocan dock by a juvenile brass band.²⁰

The Popoffs raised cattle and hay in the Little Slocan, and ran a large dairy and store on an acreage two miles south of Slocan City.^{21, 22} They also built a house in Slocan,²³ and operated a butcher shop there.²⁴

During the interment of Japanese-Canadians in the 1940s, their farm was one of the areas where hundreds of makeshift shacks were assembled.

The Popoffs had two daughters, Jean and Vera. Jean married J.A. (Ash) Baillie of Trail on 13 May 1931 and had a daughter Arlene.²⁵ Vera married Gordon Kitchner on 8 July 1933. He was killed in eastern Canada during World War II.²⁶

Emilie was a trailblazer among women in the area. She was first elected to office in 1922 as a school trustee, and continued to serve in that role off-and-on for the next 30 years.²⁷

She was president of the West Kootenay District of Women's Institutes,²⁸ and a provincial director of the B.C. Women's Institute from 1940-46.²⁹ Several sources also credit her with organizing the Slocan Women's Institute in the 1920s and serving as its founding president.^{30, 31} However, her name is not included in the minutes of that organization, which survive from 1929 onward.³²

She and her husband also formed the first valley farmer's institute, although this organization only lasted three years.³³

In December 1946, Emilie was acclaimed as the first woman mayor of Slocan and the Kootenays, succeeding long-time mayor Peter Swan. In fact, along with Nora Arnold of Prince Rupert, she was the second woman mayor in B.C. (The first was Stella Gummow in Peachland, four years earlier.)³⁴

She was returned for a second term in 1947 by acclamation, but did not quite finish it. In December 1948, she and her husband moved to Vancouver,³⁵ where their last address was 102-2250 West 43rd.³⁶

Konstantine died at South Okanagan General Hospital in Oliver on 14 July 1973 at age 91. He had been there for a month. The cause was listed as congestive heart failure as a result of atherosclerosis. He had also been suffering from senile dementia for six months.³⁷ At the time of his death, the Popoffs had been married for at least 65 years.

Emilie died at Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver on 28 Mar 1977 at age 90, as a result of some affliction to her right leg; it appears to have been gangrene, but the writing on the death certificate is hardly legible.³⁸ It's not known where either of the two is buried.

Between their deaths, their daughter Vera apparently passed away. While she signed her father's death certificate, she did not appear in her mother's obituary. The latter did mention daughter Jean Baillie, then living in Vancouver, and possibly separated from her husband.

It also noted that granddaughter Arlene — who married Bob Miller, but by this point also appeared to be separated — was living in Reno with great-granddaughter Michelle. Their whereabouts are not known, although their pictures were included in a Baillie family tree that was displayed recently in Trail.

The Slocan village office has long had a studio portrait of Emilie. But by the summer of 2000, no one knew who she was, and it had been put in storage. It has since been returned to a place of prominence. The photograph, pictured here, is from about the time she was acclaimed as mayor. Another shot taken at the same sitting appeared in the *Nelson Daily News*.

Later, when the picture was removed from its frame, another photo fell out of the back, that of two girls on an old bridge, believed to be in Slocan.

No picture of Konstantine Popoff is known to exist, but his military record describes him as 5'6" and 150 lbs., with blue eyes, dark hair, and a dark complexion.³⁹

One lasting legacy to the Popoffs is Popoff Creek, which flows through the area where their farm was.

Footnotes

1. World War I regimental record for Konstantine Popoff, National Archives of Canada. Regimental number: 2771432. Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 7903-50
2. Death certificate for Konstantine Popoff, B.C. Archives.
3. Regimental record.
4. *Nelson Daily News*, 10 Dec 1948.
5. Death certificate for Emilie Popoff.
6. *Nelson Daily News*, 20 Jun 1923.
7. Death certificate for Emilie Popoff.
8. Innes Cooper, Slocan City Historical Group.
9. *Nelson Daily News* advertisement, 1913.
10. *Nelson Daily News*, 29 Mar 1917. Other reports spell it Poroscho, Poroshco, and Piroshio.
11. B.C. Archives vital events index.
12. *Nelson Daily News*, 4 Oct 1924.
13. *Nelson Daily News*, 20 Jun 1923.
14. *Nelson Daily News*, 17 Dec 1923. The cause of death is not given.
15. B.C. Archives vital events index.
16. *Nelson Daily News*, 6 Jul 1927.
17. Regimental record.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. *Nelson Daily News*, 16 May 1919.
21. Innes Cooper.
22. *Slocan City Legacy*, Louise Anderson, 1992, p. 29
23. Ibid.
24. Innes Cooper.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. *Nelson Daily News*, 10 Jan 1922.
28. *Nelson Daily News*, 10 Dec 1948.
29. *Modern Pioneers 1909-1959*, B.C. Women's Institutes, p. 22
30. *Slocan History*, Mary Hird, 27 Feb 1961, p. 12
31. *Slocan City Legacy*, p. 30
32. Slocan Women's Institute minutes 1929-73, B.C. Archives MS-0438.
33. *Slocan City Legacy*, p. 30
34. B.C. Ministry of Women's Equality web site.
35. City of Slocan council minutes.
36. *Vancouver Sun*, 30 Mar 1977.
37. Death certificate, Konstantine Popoff.
38. Death certificate, Emilie Popoff.
39. Regimental record.

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RECEIVED

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VILLAGE OF SLOCAN

from Greg Nesteroff