



Victoria Historical Society Publication

Winter, 2006/2007

Welcome to the Victoria Historical Society. Our speaker this evening is Mr. Geoffrey Castle, the Archivist for the municipality of Saanich and a long-time member of our Society. Mr Castle has been the guiding light for the book *Saanich, 100 Years 100 Stories*, recently published as part of the celebrations to commemorate the centennial of that municipality.

Notice of, and registration forms for, the 2007 Conference have been sent to the BCHF journal editor for inclusion in the forthcoming edition of 'BC History' and arrangements are in hand to get the information posted on their web site. The BCHF, VHS, and OCS web sites will also be cross-linked to maximise the publicity. As mentioned in the last newsletter, arrangements are proceeding well and as we get nearer to the event we will need a good deal of help with the day-to-day running of the event, and will rely on the enthusiasm of our members to help make the event a success.

Included in this issue are contributions from Helen Stewart, a well-known local author and artist who writes about her home and studio at Ten Mile Point, and Shirley Cuthbertson who gives us a look at Victoria's fall fairs and exhibitions. With the entertainment season close by, a recipe from Sylvia van Kirk for drop scones is provided.

The flow of contributions to the newsletter has become a raging trickle and additional essays would be most welcome.



SPEAKERS FOR 2006 ~ 2007 SEASON

23 November, 2006
Geoffrey Castle ~ *A Saanich Scenario*
Mr. Castle, Archivist for Saanich Municipality which has celebrated its Centennial in 2006, will speak about people and places of Saanich's history.

7 December, 2006 (Dinner Evening),
Rev. Sel Caradus ~ *A Temple Not Made With Hands; a History of Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC.*
Rev. Caradus has written a history of the cathedral, its people and the community it has served, and its present life in Victoria from its origins in the 1850's.

25 January, 2007
Daryl Ashby ~ *John Muir, West Coast Pioneer.*
Mr. Ashby, author of the book with the above title, is a keen local historian, and will speak about John Muir who had a major part in the early colony of Vancouver Island.

22 February, 2007
Susan Wood & Ken Roueche ~ *Exploring Fairfield's Past*
Ms. Wood, editor of *Moss Rock Review* and CFAX radio host of the Local History Hour (Sundays 2pm), and Mr. Roueche, author of *A Fairfield History*, will speak about the people and events that shaped the Fairfield area of Victoria.

22 March, 2007
Jean Barman ~ *Stanley Park's Secret*
Ms. Barman, prominent BC historian, will share insights and events described in her recent book, *Stanley Park's Secret, the Forgotten Families of Whoi-Who, Kanaka Ranch, and Brockton Point.* Stanley Park has recently noted its centennial in Vancouver.

26 April, 2007
Helen Edwards and John Edwards ~ *Preserving Victoria's Heritage*
The speakers have been active in the Hallmark Society, which is dedicated to the preservation efforts by citizens and local government of heritage buildings. They will give an illustrated lecture on aspects of this program which has achieved much.

24 May, 2007
Arnold Ranneris ~ *Victoria's YMCA and YWCA*
Arnold is volunteer archivist for the YM/YWCA. He has become fascinated with the social history of the "Y" which has been active in Victoria since 1875 (YMCA) and 1892 (YWCA). He will be assisted by Lori Hewitt, staff member of the YM/YWCA

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Christmas Dinner Meeting



A reminder to those who have not yet signed up for the Christmas Dinner Meeting. We will be meeting at the Gorge Vale Golf Club, and we can expect the usual warm welcome and good service from them. The cost of the dinner will be \$25.00 and you should send or give your cheques to Eric Domke as soon as possible. The speaker at this meeting will be the Rev. Sel Caradus and his topic will be *A History of Christ Church Cathedral*. Why not use this opportunity to introduce your friends to the Society, and invite them to join us for the dinner meeting. As with our regular meetings, guests are always welcome, and the informal atmosphere of the dinner together with the presence of a stimulating speaker will ensure an enjoyable evening.

If you are in need of assistance to get to the Gorge Vale Golf Club, please make yourself known to Arnold Ranneris, and he will try to match those needing a ride with those having space. This should be done as early as possible to allow Arnold to make appropriate arrangements.

Membership

At the last Council meeting, it was decided to change the existing flexible membership year to one beginning in September of each year. This scheme will be implemented immediately, and memberships falling due between now and September next will be pro-rated by month. Existing paid memberships expiring after September next will be credited on the same basis. A membership form will be included in the newsletter to be mailed to all members at the beginning of September

Newsletter

The newsletter can now be produced in electronic form, and henceforth will be available at the Society's web site. If you would prefer to read the newsletter from the web site rather than have a paper copy delivered, please inform the newsletter editor by sending an E-mail with 'VHS Newsletter' in the subject line, and 'E-copy only' as the text. The E-mail address of the editor appears on the back page of this newsletter. For reasons of privacy, the electronic copy will have the telephone numbers of the Society's officers omitted, but contact can be maintained via an E-mail service at the web site - <http://www.victoriahistoricalsociety.bc.ca>

A PLEA FOR HELP

I have volunteered to research the building, The Glenshiel, now a retirement home at 606 Douglas Street. The building opened in 1910, we believe, as the Criterion Inn. Shortly thereafter, its name was changed to The Glenshiel Inn and in the 1930s to the Glenshiel Hotel.

The purpose of this research is the building's centennial, in 2008.

We have done a very small amount of research to date and have an incomplete story. The executive director, Marilyn Carroll, has a few items of interest from the building's days as a hotel, and can document its more recent history.

I will be conducting research in the BC Archives, the City of Victoria Archives and the Greater Victoria Public Library. While I have some background in historical research, I am by no means a professional and therefore would appreciate any help that the Victoria Historical Society or some of its members are able to contribute. Any assistance will receive appropriate recognition.

The Glenshiel is planning a special event to mark the anniversary. The material gleaned will be used in a special display, with credit given to those who have provided it.

Thank you very much in advance for any help you are able to provide.

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BOOKS RELATING TO THE SPEAKERS PROGRAMME OF THE VHS

In September we heard Terri Hunter on the history of Oak Bay... A book of interest is *Oak Bay British Columbia, In Photographs* - Staff of Oak Bay Archives and others have put together this most interesting history. Library call no. 971.128 Oak, or available for purchase at \$25 from Oak Bay Municipal Hall. In October, we heard Jan Ross, Curator of Carr House. A few books of note as well as Emily's own many good writings are:

Emily Carr, A Biography, by Maria Tippett

Emily Carr Country, put together by Courtney Milne, it has paintings and excerpts from Emily's writings in beautiful format.

Library no. 779.36711 CAR

Wild Flowers - Published by the Royal BC Museum, Emily Woods' illustrations with commentary from Emily Carr's works.

In November, we will hear Geoffrey Castle, Archivist for Saanich. A book done for Saanich's Centennial *Saanich Centennial, 1906-2006, 100 Years, 100 Stories*
Library no. 971.128 SAA

In December, at our Christmas dinner, we will hear Rev. Sel Caradus, author of *A Temple Not Made With Hands; A History of Christ Church Cathedral*.
Library no. 283.7128 CAR, or can be purchased from the Cathedral.

In January, our speaker will be Daryl Ashby, author of *John Muir, West Coast Pioneer*.
Library no. 923.7112 MUI (or purchased at most Victoria bookstores and at the Maritime Museum)

Arnold Ranneris,
Chair, VHS Speakers Programme



BOOK REVIEW

The Chilcotin War

At our May meeting, John Lutz provided an overview of what he called The Smallpox War. A very readable book by Mel Rothenburger gives a written overview. Governor Seymour's greatest source of pride in relations with the First Nations (he called them Indians) was his actions in the Chilcotin uprising. These expeditions, he felt, had insured that the native Indians would never again rise up in force against the white population and indeed they never did. However, in his failure to continue creating a base for understanding between the two races (as Gov. Douglas had begun), he entrenched the foundations of hostility for years to come. It was a mixed legacy.

The book can be borrowed from the Public Library (call no. 971.100097 Rot). Ask a librarian.

Arnold Ranneris

EARLY FALL FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS

Victoria has a long tradition of fall fairs and exhibitions. In 1861, a small group of people gathered for the first fall fair situated on the west side of Broad St., on a vacant lot, between Fort and Broughton streets. Later, by the 1880's, this lot was the site of a livery stable operated by a Mr. Lascelles. However, by the time Mr. Lascelles was hiring out horses and buggies Victoria's annual fall fairs had centred around Agricultural Hall in Beacon Hill Park.

In 1884, a proposal to construct an agricultural hall in the park was one of the first issues to raise the ire of the public. A letter to the Colonist, April 10, 1884, called the agricultural hall a "barbarous proposal" that the public will resolutely oppose. This led to a court hearing in regard to the 1883 Trust, written by Judge Matthew B. Begbie, which prohibited certain activities from taking place in the park. However, permission was granted and construction of the agricultural hall on the park's east side, on the Heywood meadows, was completed in three weeks, in time for the September 26 - 27 fall fair of 1884. Erected on stone pillars, the 20 metre by 30 metre frame building had a wide gallery which ran around the interior making two levels. Two small offices were located on the ground floor. Outhouses and livestock pens ran along the N E boundaries of the property. Exhibits were such items as Pendray's fifteen varieties of locally manufactured soap, Brackman-Ker's oatmeal and Goodacres dressed beef.

The fair remained on that site until 1887 when Victoria got its first all-Canadian militia from Eastern Canada. Known as "C" Battery of the Garrison Artillery, the unmarried men were quartered in the agricultural hall and the married men in nearby homes. During the militia's five years in Victoria there were frequent desertions owing to poor living conditions in the hall, and the dominant presence of the Royal Navy seemed to outclass the soldiers socially. By 1903, the agricultural hall was in need of major repairs and by 1905 the building was gone.

Victoria's fall fair then moved to Riding Park (or Driving Park) which became Willows Fairground. The B. C. Agricultural Association bought six acres of choice farmland beneath Lansdowne slope on Eastdowne Rd. between Estevan Ave. and Newton St. By 1907, the Willows exhibition had grown so large that an additional 60 acres were bought at the cost of

\$50,000. Agricultural societies appeared early in settlement years with the objective of assisting farmers and organizing an annual fair. Buildings were erected on this site but fire levelled them that winter.

The Exhibition Building built by the B. C. Agricultural Association in 65 days, in 1891, was replaced, in 1899, by the Exhibition Complex and Race Track costing \$45,000. A city by-law raised \$25,000 of this and the rest was by public subscription. The main roof of Exhibition Hall was 56 ft. high, surmounted by octagonal towers rising to 100 ft. with an open cupola. The balcony was 75 ft. above the ground. Galleries, one above the other, circling the interior were where the prize-winning produce was exhibited. This outstanding building with its 20,000 sq. ft. of floor space, several fountains, and two staircases to the galleries, was the pride of the exhibition. In nearby barns cattle were housed and exhibited in an enclosure in front of the hall. Eight years later, in 1907, this fine building was destroyed by fire. Its location is approximately where today's Haultain St. merges with Eastdowne Rd. Later, the large exhibitions at the Willows continued in a building of lesser design.

Victoria was slowly coming out of the horse and buggy years and people depended on public transportation. In 1899, after the completion of the grandiose exhibition building, the B. C. Electric Railway laid an extension of the streetcar line from Jubilee Hospital to the fairgrounds. In 1901, crews completely re-laid track from Oak Bay Junction to the Willows fair. This branch re-opened, together with Willows park, on September 12, for the visit of the future King George V to the exhibition. A final piece of track was laid, with a large loop off Cadboro Bay Rd., running along Eastdowne Rd., to Fair St. and Epworth St. Streetcar fare was 5 cents to anywhere in the city.

Winning produce, horticultural displays, livestock, and the usual fair midway competed with horse racing. On the ½ mile, oval, dirt track, horse racing was immensely popular at the Willows Park Racetrack. This facility included the ½ mile of stables, today the site of Woodhouse St. opposite Willows School. The racetrack was classed the finest in the Pacific Northwest. There was a grandstand with seating for 2,500 spectators and standing room for hundreds more. Fans of horse racing enjoyed a regular schedule of races, not just during the fair but throughout the year. Races were hugely advertised and not cheap to attend. By 1912, auto racing

appeared at the Willows Fairgrounds. They had to alternate race weeks with the horse racing club. In 1913, a 60 day race meet was held with competitors arriving from far and near.

The racetrack was in operation until 1947, coincident with the demise of Victoria's streetcar system. Sadly, later the same year, the remaining fairground buildings and the race track went up in flames. In 1948, Oak Bay Municipality bought the property for \$120,000. The land was soon subdivided into housing lots except for ten acres reserved for Carnarvon park.

Liesel Jakeman



MOSSY ROCKS

Mossy Rocks is my home. I am most fortunate, for if I had my choice of any house and any place in the world to live, I would choose Mossy Rocks.

In 1912, the first owner did have his choice of nearly any property on Ten Mile Point.

He chose this Tudor Avenue property probably because it was located the road and because the property was warm and sheltered. He built his house not as a place to live but as a party place. There were no bedrooms, only the great room (50' x 15'), an inglenook, dining room, bathroom, and small maid's kitchen.

The Prince of Wales (Prince Edward) was said to have danced at one of the fancy balls of the time. These gala events were short-lived however, for the anti-German wartime feelings caused the German owner to abandon his party house. He was seen walking down to the sea where he was picked up and taken elsewhere by boat. The house and all its furnishings were abandoned. This cast a spell over Mossy Rocks. It now became known as a haunted house.

It was the Taylor family who changed the party house into a home. They added a backroom to accommodate stairs leading to an upper loft, now converted to bedrooms.

Mr. Taylor had worked for Mrs. Butchart but soon began devoting his efforts to the creation of his own garden, "Little Butchart Gardens".



Mossy Rocks has had a series of unusual owners, probably in part because it is a most unusual home. An old friend remembers as a child attending a roller skating party in the living room. The same elegant room has served as an arena for hockey practice and gymnastics.

The house has the unfounded reputation of having been used as both gambling hall and brothel, most likely because of its proximity to Smugglers Cove and because the interior decoration was at one time in colours of red, white, and black, with a splash of purple velvet covering the pool table.

For me the great room serves as a studio and art gallery, a gracious space for concerts, storytelling and teaching. I also have created a beautiful garden on this perfect acre of land. When our family arrived here twenty five years ago, the grounds were deep in ivy, the old shrubs and beautiful oak and fir Trees all strangled by its rampant growth. As in a fairytale, the old garden had slowly disappeared. And over many years, pulling ivy bit by bit, we slowly began to reclaim it.



Eight years ago I began in earnest to create another garden – with the help of my gardener Chris Ball. Endless loads of rock and shredded mulch were hauled in. Pathways were laid out, raised beds planted. For me this was like making a large and living painting. The work was immensely rewarding, the results magical.

The house is again a natural part of its landscape instead of being engulfed by wild growth. Mossy Rocks, always a special place, is today perhaps even more special.

Helen Stewart

Helen Stewart is a local artist and author, and may be contacted at her home studio.



AND FINALLY..

The following is a recipe which may be of interest to our members. It is for 'Mrs Cridge's Dropcakes' and was forwarded to us by Sylvia Van Kirk. It carries with it an interesting story. The drop cakes were famous up and down the coast of Vancouver Island in the late nineteenth century. The recipe, which Mrs Cridge had brought with her from England, was a closely guarded secret. One evening, while Sylvia's grandmother and Mrs Cridge were having a few beers in the tap room of the St. Charles Hotel, the subject of the famous drop cakes came up, and since it was getting late in the evening the discussion was more than a little animated. Sylvia's grandmother wanted the recipe and Mrs. Cridge refused to part with it. Finally the barman was called to the table to mediate, and it was decided that an arm-wrestling contest would settle the matter. After a short and unequal battle, Sylvia's grandmother won, and so the recipe became part of the Van Kirk legacy, and Mrs Cridge was left to nurse her sore arm.

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Dry mix

2 cups flour
½ cup sugar
½ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon baking powder
3 teaspoons mixed spice and cinnamon

Wet mix

2 eggs beaten
¼ cup vegetable oil
1 cup milk
2 teaspoons vanilla

1 cup golden raisins (dried cranberries or chocolate chips or nuts may be substituted)

Mix together the dry ingredients. Mix together the wet ingredients

Stir dry ingredients into the wet ingredients, mix well, and add the raisins (or chosen substitute)

Drop by teaspoons onto a greased cookie sheet and bake in a pre-heated oven for 10 - 15 minutes or until browned.



**Members of the Board for the Year
2006 – 2007**

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The Victoria Historical Society holds its meetings
on the fourth Thursday of each month from September to May,
at the James Bay New Horizons Centre, 234 Menzies Street, Victoria.

Meetings begin at 7:30 and comprise a short business meeting
and a refreshment break followed by a talk or presentation by a guest speaker.

Visitors are always welcome and encouraged to become members of our Society.

This newsletter is published four times a year
and distributed to members electronically or by mail.
It is also available at our regular meetings at the door

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