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FALL 2021

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To view our online edition go to  
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# MOLLY'S REACH

*On a Sunday evening in the fall of 1969, with the jaunty tootle of a flute, Canada discovered Gibson's Landing.*

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On a Sunday evening in the fall of 1969, with the jaunty tootle of a flute, Canada discovered Gibson's Landing. The opening footage of forested mountains sloping into a glittering blue sea as Bruno Gerussi steered his log-salvage boat Persephone through the waves captured the imagination of generations who appreciated the gentle stories centred on life in and around a small-town diner on BC's west coast.

Gerussi may have been the star among the cast of characters, but the show's real drawing power was the setting. The colour. The rich, natural texture of the scenery. From Victoria to Whitehorse to St. John's, and then through syndication, viewers feasted their eyes and longed for a cup of coffee at Molly's Reach.

And suddenly the tourists were coming to Gibsons, shouting in excitement as the familiar yellow façade with its "Welcome back!" greeting shouted back at them. How disappointing, then, to peer through the dusty windows and see only a shell of a film set. Where's the coffee? Where's the pie? Where's Molly?

And so it continued for the whole 19 years that Beachcombers aired – the longest running drama series in Canadian television history. And then it kept on, as the series was sold in syndication around the world. "You mean Gibson's Landing is a real place? Let's go there. Let's have coffee at Molly's Reach."

When the series ended in 1991, the simple wood frame building that C.P. Smith built as a grocery store in 1926 stood silent and empty. Its subsequent incarnations as a hardware store, second-hand store, real estate and insurance office and finally a government liquor store, were recorded by Helen McCall in photos warehoused at the Sunshine Coast Museum and Archives. Boxes of Beachcomber memorabilia landed at the museum, while long-serving cast and crew members who had settled in the area over the years stowed even more items in drawers and basements.

But the tourists wouldn't let up. "Why is Molly's closed?" they demanded of the poor, hapless students staffing the Visitor Information Centre. Surely this real place, this place they'd visited every Sunday evening for almost two decades, surely it should be open!

Local entrepreneur Gwen Edmonds recognized an opportunity just waiting to be seized, and after some serious upgrades and with a smattering of "Beach" memorabilia, in 1996 she opened the doors of Molly's Reach. The name had double significance for Gwen; her mother's name was also Molly.

Meanwhile, over at the Museum, curators created a Beachcomber exhibit, and a group of area fans and enthusiasts began agitating to get the iconic Persephone out of mothballs at the civic works yard and on display in the Landing.

Long after the series ended, Gibsons finally started to capitalize on its Beachcombers fame.

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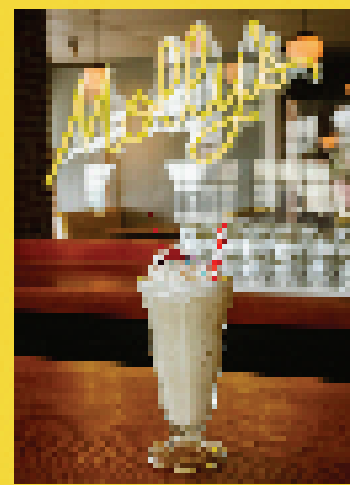
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*Local's Night!*



naming itself after the boat. Persephone's business model as a social enterprise smacks of the small-town, caring-for-one-another philosophy that warmed the scripts from within.

A local coffee roaster and wholesaler named his business "Beachcomber" and eventually opened a small, very modern café just a stone's throw from Molly's, across the street from the beached and restored Persephone.

On the waterfront just below Molly's, the old chandlery that also featured in the series got a facelift from entrepreneurs fleeing Vancouver and bringing their experience with top-flight seafood restaurants with them. The chandlery was gutted to the walls and reborn as the immensely popular Smitty's Oyster House.

The only thing that hasn't really changed is Smitty's Marina. It's still there, still owned by one of C.P. Smith's descendants. John Smith, who grew up surrounded by television crews, is now a sought-after special effects wizard in the industry. For several years, he orchestrated the opening salvo for the community's annual Sea Cavalcade festival: blowing up a "boat" in Gibsons harbor. It was always spectacular to start of SeaCav with a bang!

In 2006, Gwen Edmonds sold Molly's and it continued

much as before, serving up Relic Burgers, clam chowder and shrimp salad while serving as the backdrop for innumerable tourist photos. In 2019, Molly's changed hands again, the new owners recognized an opportunity to refresh both the menu and the interior. Fans groaned at the loss of familiar Beachcomber talismans at first, but then the new (and renewed) items began to take their place and the new menu gained its own following. Especially the milkshakes.

Molly's Reach is still offering comfort food and that familiar, small-town feeling of comfort and belonging on the side. Welcome back. Δ



(TOP) Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives Photograph #3552

(BOTTOM) Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives Photograph #950.



## A Great Mystery

# Sundowner Inn



Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives Photograph # 136

Lovers of the paranormal may enjoy the deliciously creepy tale, “The Window in Room 21,” in Elizabeth Elwood’s *The Agatha Principle and Other Mystery Stories*. Like a few other mystery writers, Elwood found her inspiration here on the Sunshine Coast – in this case, at Garden Bay’s Sundowner Inn. Originally opened in 1930 as the 12-bed St. Mary’s Hospital, the building is widely reputed to be haunted, and Room 21 in particular has its own back story.

But first, a little bit of history about the building itself. Until the hospital was built, residents of the logging and fishing communities that dotted the coastline relied on local midwives and healers (and a doctor who had been struck off for malpractice) or transport by steamers to hospital in Vancouver or the Island. These times are recalled in Betty Keller and Rosella Leslie’s engaging history, *Bright Seas, Pioneer Spirits* – well worth a read for its insights into Coastal culture.

The first hospital building sank. Secured for the community’s use by Rev. John Antle of the Columbia Coast Mission, the unused floating hospital was being towed from Port Hardy area to Pender Harbour when its towboat ran into a storm in Johnstone Strait and the barge went

down. Now the community stepped in to raise funds and volunteer skills, materials and services to build a hospital on acreage donated by Barney Bryneldsen. Because the building’s boiler was donated by an Anglican parish in Vancouver, the building was named St. Mary’s Hospital as acknowledgement for the gift. The 12-bed hospital opened in 1930, with a chapel for local services added in 1940.

By the 1960s, with the Baby Boom in full swing and the resource industries enjoying a boom of their own, it was clear the Sunshine Coast had outgrown its hospital. As Keller and Leslie document in their engaging history *Bright Seas, Pioneer Spirits*, the building had serious drawbacks. They quote Dr. Alan Swan’s pithy summary: *There was no elevator and if you had to move patients from downstairs to upstairs, you had to carry them [around the building] and in the back door and up the stairs. It certainly helped to have a couple of young doctors because there was no orderly. The lab was a little hole in the basement and the X-ray room was grossly inadequate... There was a plebiscite and the community voted over 90 percent – including Pender Harbour – to construct a new hospital. The old one was not only antiquated, it was in the wrong place.” In December, 1964 the new St. Mary’s Hospital opened.*

*As Dr. Swan noted, it was constructed on land generously donated by the Sechelt Indian Band “which must never be forgotten.” As Chief Gary Feschuk would note some 50 years later when pressing for the building’s renaming, the land was the site of the former residential school’s farm, and its placement symbolized a healing of the community. Now a 62-bed acute care facility, the hospital dropped its final link to the past and was renamed Sechelt Hospital (in both English and Salish spellings) in 2015.*

Meanwhile, back in Garden Bay, the vacated building was sold to the first of a series of owners, and became the Sundowner Inn – a venue for community events, weddings and celebrations with a restaurant and small museum in addition to its guest rooms. Now about that window... Room 21 had been used as a site for at least one autopsy over the years, and its window, reportedly, would never stay closed. Staff would enter the room to find the breeze blowing through the icy room, close the window and return later to find it wide open again. Paranormal investigators have visited and reported a “presence” and hotel guests have included tales of spooky sounds and sightings that go beyond the normal creaks and groans of an old building “settling” at night. And so as word spread, the Sundowner Inn became a favourite haunt of Halloween revelers.

After a period of dormancy, a couple of Californian, Kusum Irene Jain and Tom Cunningham purchased the Inn in 2006 and began several years of extensive restoration and renovation. Jain and Cunningham loved the area, tagging it the “Venice of North America” because of all the local waterways. When they reopened in 2013, the Inn’s rooms had been significantly upgraded, and the former restaurant had been transformed into a vibrant gallery featuring works by local artists and writers. Sadly, the Inn closed again in 2016 following the death of Tom Cunningham. Although there have been attempts by local residents to spur interest in reviving the site, The Sundowner Inn continues to sit dormant. And the window in Room 21 is still open. Δ

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# REMEMBERING LEGIONS PAST & PRESENT

The Royal Canadian Legions have been a long standing part of Canadian communities since 1926, after the first World War ended. They were originally called The British Empire Service League, until 1960 when Queen Elizabeth II gave her consent to use the prefix “Royal”. The Legion has always been a place for Veterans, including serving Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP, and their families, offering dedicated support to those who have served. While the Legion still remains a place for Veterans and their families, they have since opened up memberships for anyone in the community.

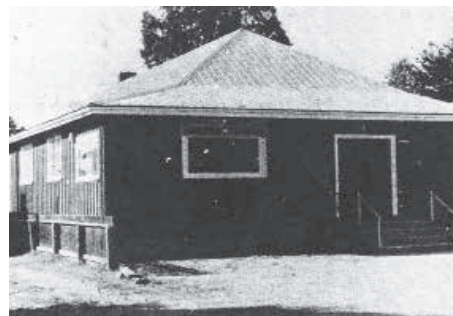
The Sunshine Coast is home to four Royal Canadian Legions; #109 Gibsons, #112 Pender Harbour, #140 Sechelt, and #219 Roberts Creek. While these Legions have a rich history of serving and supporting the Veterans in the community, and will continue to do so, they have started shifting their focus to serving their communities as a whole. Offering full menus, table service, and live entertainment that has made them the place to be in the community. With over 1,400 locations across Canada, they provide one of the largest volunteer bases in the country. Legion members provide local services & support to build a stronger Canada; whether helping local Veterans, supporting seniors, providing youth sports programs, raising funds, volunteering to help those in need, or simply offering a place to gather for fun and celebra-



(TOP) Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives Photograph #1737 Gibsons



(LEFT #1) Photo Courtesy of Pender Harbour Royal Canadian Legion Branch 112. Taken 1950.



(LEFT #2) Photo Courtesy of Sechelt Community Archives, Taken 1934.



(BOTTOM) Photo Courtesy of Roberts Creek Royal Canadian Legion. Taken 1958.

tion, Legions provide essential services in their communities.

The Royal Canadian Legion #109 Gibsons was established in 1953, utilizing the building beside the current establishment before it became too small. Volunteers banded together to create a larger space, and have since added two additional patios. In 1997 a mortgage was taken out under the leadership of Larry Boyd, the Legion President at the time, and has since been paid off; the ashes of the original mortgage can still be viewed at the Legion, after a symbolic “burning of the mortgage”.

The Legion has always been the place to be, supporting veterans by offering them a place to spend their Saturday nights. As memberships have changed due to veterans passing away or moving closer to families, the Gibsons Legion is still an integral part of the community. Through community dinners, supporting local food banks, and donating to the community, especially to the Air and Sea Cadets. Legion 109 also offers bursaries for students at Elphinstone School; they take pride in the students from Langdale who enter Remembrance Day competitions, through art work, essays, and poems. The Legion is open to everyone 19 years and older within the community, hosting snooker and dart leagues, meat draws, crib, lunches, and music. When food is being served, kids are also welcome to join in on the fun.

The Royal Canadian Legion #219 Roberts Creek, “The Little Legion” first began having meetings in members’ basements in 1946, before becoming an official Legion charter in 1947. It wasn’t until 1958 after veterans Jack Hamon and Jack Eldred fundraised, that they moved into a free standing log cabin. The original building still stands, and was added onto in the 1970’s and 80’s; the origi-



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nal cabin structure is still visible from the front of the building. In 2013 the Little Legion almost had to close its doors due to lack of members and financial debt, but team 219 and the community banded together to raise \$10,000 and save the legion. Through numerous fundraising events, such as the "Close Shave" where three members shaved their heads at the Mandala at Creek Daze at 2:19pm which raised \$3000. Now, as with all the Legions, membership is open to anyone 19 years and older, they welcome you to come join them.

This past year the Legion has utilized the front lawn space for summer music and events, and took the closures in stride, using that time to renovate and update the space. Legion 219 is excited to welcome members and their families back with live music, entertainment, and trivia nights. Reserve your seat online and enjoy full service food and drinks with family and friends!

The Royal Canadian Legion #140 Sechelt was founded in 1934 by members who fought in World War II, and has since supported those in Sechelt, Wilson Creek, and Halfmoon Bay communities. The present day location of the Sechelt Legion was founded in 1970 by Jack Mayne and Ted Surtrees. Now, branch 140 is gearing up to move into their third location in 2022, and they want you to know that they're "not your fathers Legion". The Sechelt branch is now a full service Bar & Grill, complete with a full menu which includes a delicious signature burger and seafood chowder. While things have been challenging, they are excited to bring back live entertainment and Saturday night karaoke as soon as they can! The Sechelt Legion is an integral part of the community, having donated over \$25,000 in 2019 to many community groups. Supporting your local Legion supports your community, so be sure to bring the family in for a delicious meal and a game of pool.



Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives Photograph #691 Gibsons Royal Canadian Legion

The Royal Canadian Legion #112 Pender Harbour branch held its first meeting on December 30, 1930 in one of its members' homes. Meetings continued in various members' homes until 1939 when many vets were called back overseas for World War II. Meetings wouldn't resume until November 15, 1945, when 16 veterans met at the Community Hall after coming home from World War II. Branch 112 was formally recognized by the British Columbia Service League in 1946, and is now known as The Pender Harbour and District Royal Canadian Legion Branch 112. Women weren't permitted to be members of the Legion, so in 1946 Mrs Dan Cameron created the first Women's Auxiliary, with ladies hosting meetings in their homes and fundraising events within the community. The original Pender Harbour Legion Hall was a building that Jim Cameron obtained from

a logging camp at Silver Sands and remodelled; this building still remains in the community as the present day Bargain Barn. The Legion bought it's present day property for \$3600 in 1974 and was built in 1976 using local granite to commemorate those lost overseas. Now, with memberships open to anyone over the age of 19 in the community, the Legion has become a focal point for many community events. They host weddings, anniversaries, dances, celebrations of life, and of course Remembrance Day Ceremonies. The Legion's mandate is to ensure "We Never Forget" those who have given their lives for our country, and the Poppy is our flower of Remembrance; "We Remember" through education and remaining a vital and relevant part of the community. Δ



# ROBERTS CREEK MAGNIFICENT *Mandala*

*What began as a way to cover up offensive graffiti, has transformed into an annual community project that has been running for over 20 years.*



In August 1998, just days before the Creek Daze celebrations, someone spray painted hateful graffiti on the road of the beach turnaround and the site of the Daze. Prior to, and for years this has been a spot of summer gatherings and a natural power spot within the Shishalh and Squamish First Nations community, as well as the ferry landing pier of Harry Roberts, the Creek's modern day namesake.

Robert Marion and Erica Snowlake, community artists, gathered together with a couple friends to paint over the graffiti and beautify the space, with the first mandala featuring the sun, moon, a central flower, a giant slug, and the handprints of children. The pair and their helpers had so much fun painting that it became an annual tradition.

A mandala, which is Sanskrit for "circle" or "discoid object", is a geometric design holding a great deal of symbolism in the Hindu or Buddhist cultures. There are three types of mandalas; teaching mandalas where each line, shape, and colour represent different aspects of religious or philosophical systems, healing mandalas are more intuitive and often used for meditation, and lastly sand mandalas where intricate designs are used to represent the impermanence of human life. In Asian



cultures mandalas are used to connect with oneself and the universe, transforming from suffering to joy and happiness.

The Roberts Creek mandala is likened to the sand mandala in Tibetan culture, which when completed, is gifted to Nature, the RC Community Mandala releases its sacred energies as an offering to the Universe when danced upon. The mandala is created over five days by its lucky participants. On the sixth day, volunteers outline the individual designs making them pop while tying them into the overall design, and Rob goes over the entire piece with a latex coating to protect it from rainy weather. Finally, the seventh day has blossomed into July 25th's Mannafestival, a Day Out of Time Celebration, hosted by the organizers, and Jefe Willital, featuring a First Nations-led Opening Ceremony, and local musicians and DJs, as well as drumming, dance, hula hoop, and fire spinning performances.

Over the years this project has grown from 6 people to close to 600 people participating in the painting. Now, 23 years later the space has transformed into a sixty foot wide space where 600 individual canvases fit into the overall design. Rob, alongside his family, Johanna Marion and Abey, and the families of Pamela Messner and Hawkfeather Peterson volunteer to help organize, set up, and prepare the space for painting each year.

The RC Community Mandala has grown into its name, bringing the community together once a year in the heat of summer to paint a beautiful piece of artwork. The mandala has become a spot of celebration, creativity, and a coming together of people. Unfortunately, the community mandala has not run the past two years as organizers opted to hold off on painting until 2022. This project has become such a phenomenal part of the community and everyone is excited to get back to painting, creating, and connecting next year! Δ





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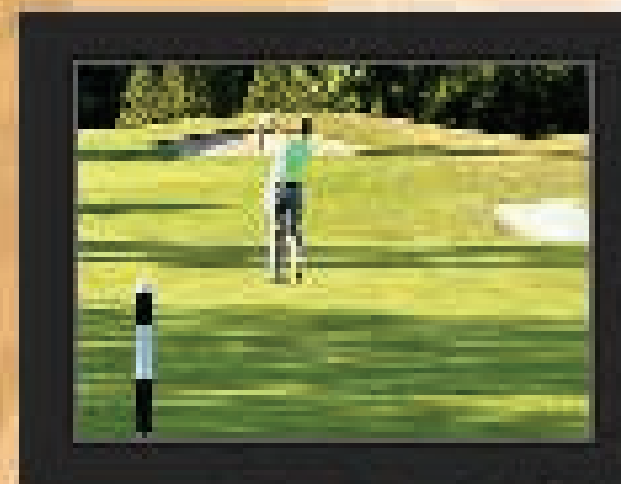
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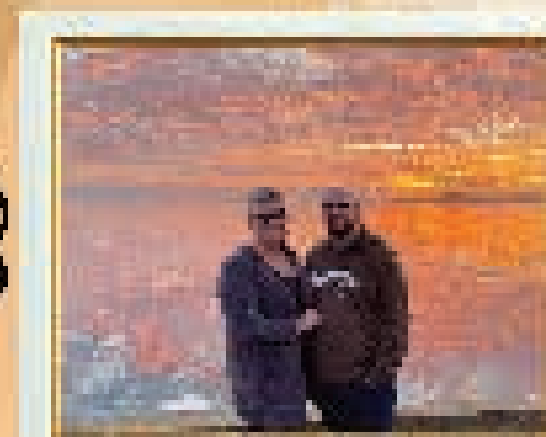
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## THE STORY OF ST. BARTS CHURCH



Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives Photograph #606

Probably the oldest building on the Sunshine Coast, the section of St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church known as Bethlehem Chapel – built in 1892 - has been incorporated into the newer, more modern sanctuary building with a seamless grace.

St Bart's was not the first church built in Gibsons. That honour went to the original Methodist Church that was constructed in the Landing, on acreage donated by George Gibson. However, that building has vanished into the mists of time, as the Methodists blended into the United Church and built a new structure on Glassford to house their congregation. The old Methodist building was sold and moved to what is now Park Road, to serve the Baptist congregation. Eventually that building was outgrown, a new church was built and the old one torn down.

St. Bart's was constructed on an acre of land purchased and donated to the Diocese for that purpose by a Mr. Hyde in memory of his son, Arthur, who died in a smallpox epidemic. Father Henry Glynne Fiennes Clinton – a man of considerable energy and foresight - directed

volunteers in clearing the site and erecting the small wooden church. Before undertaking this project, Father Clinton was known as the man who sounded the alarm during Vancouver's Great Fire of 1886, and spearheaded the opening of Vancouver's first public library in 1887.

Over the years, St. Bart's changed as the congregation, like the tides, ebbed and flowed – but it has always been a community hub in some form. From its inception, the building served as a meeting place as well as a place of worship. For example, C.F. Woodsworth, founder of the CCF (forerunner of the NDP) held early public discussions of utopian socialist theory at St. Bart's. During the 1920s, the church fell into disuse for almost a decade following a dispute between an itinerant minister who had the temerity to take exception to the classroom methods of formidable Sunday School teacher Emma Fletcher. Fuming at his criticism, Mrs. Fletcher sat through the regular Sunday service which followed the school, and when Mass was concluded, stood, faced the congregation and announced, "Friends and neighbours, next week Sunday School will be held in the schoolhouse across

the road." Subsequently the church stood vacant and worship in the building was not resumed until the 1928 appointment of C.O. Darby as vicar to the Sunshine Coast. He was succeeded in the post by the Coast's first full-time Anglican Vicar, Edwin A. Thain. Rev. Thain built a rectory adjacent to the church and also directed construction of St. Aidan's church in Roberts Creek (now deconsecrated but still standing).

Mid-century, the original structure served as the nave of an enlarged building, with a separate hall built in 1989 for Sunday School, Scouting and other activities. In 1984, when St. Aidan's congregation merged with St. Bart's (and became the Parish of St. Aidan and St. Bartholomew, or Saints A and B) even the enlarged building became a bit cramped. Architect Richard Williams designed a new, modern sanctuary that linked the historic old building and the newer hall. When the doors opened in 1995 for consecration of the sanctuary, visitors delighted in the open space, vaulted ceilings, outstanding acoustics and natural light pouring in through the skylights and generously-proportioned windows. During the

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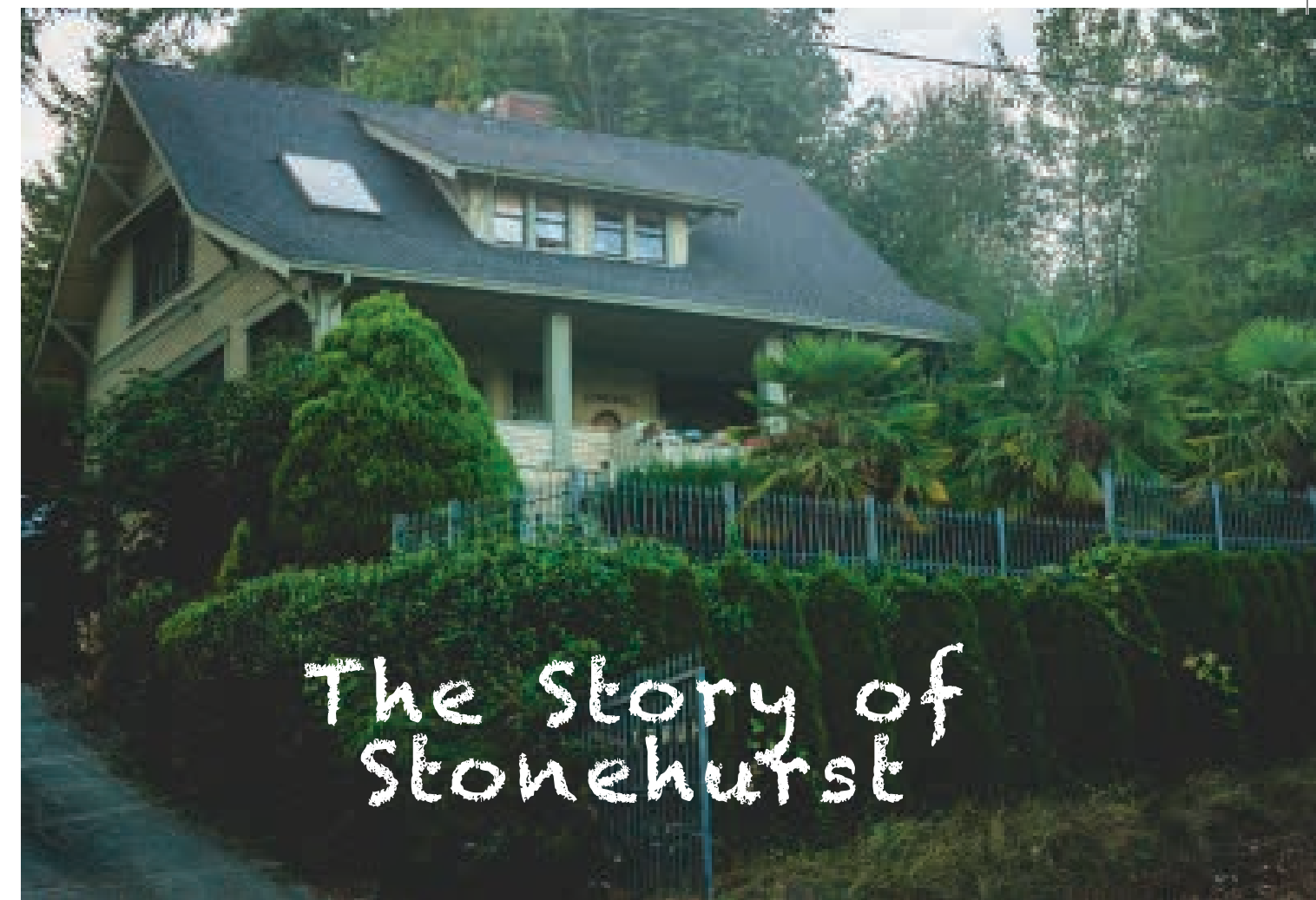
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construction, the newly-named Bethlehem Chapel was carefully restored, using photographs and records from the Sunshine Coast Museum and Archives. The chapel retains a modest bell tower over the original entrance, with a 1901 vintage bell acquired when St Aidan's Church in Roberts Creek was folded into the St. Bart's parish. This bell is a relic of the S.S. Deerhound which plied the St Lawrence before being brought to the West Coast to serve as the Union Steamships' Lady Evelyn. A 70-pound, 16" brass bell made to order in 1963 is a companion to this historic bell. The new sanctuary reflects the Coast's strong arts culture, with wall hangings and paintings by local artists and quilters of international renown. Above the altar, a magnificent modern stained glass window floods the room with rainbow colours, and serves as a counterpoint to the smaller, traditional stained glass window that leads into the Bethlehem Chapel narthex.

Located across from Gibsons Elementary School and Heritage Playhouse, the church has long, strong ties to children's education and to the performing arts. The church's former daycare space is now tenanted by Community Services Child Care Resource and Referral Centre; a music studio; the office for Driftwood Theatre School (which also conducts classes using the church hall); and St. Bart's Food Bank. The Food Bank is probably the church's most visible ministry. Created to provide a no-barrier access to necessities for those in need, this completely volunteer-operated outreach works in cooperation with the Coast's three other food banks to ensure resources are directed equitably. On the third Wednesday of each month, between 11am and 3pm, the downstairs plaza is filled with tables under tents and awnings, and clients are provided with hampers of non-perishable goods as well as fresh produce and an array of other items, treats and clothing donated by businesses and individuals. Δ



Centrally located in Gibsons Landing with a spectacular view of the harbor and the bustling "five corners" area, Stonehurst occupies a unique place in the history of the Sunshine Coast, and of Canada.

When he arrived on the Sunshine Coast in 1911 to open his practice as the area's first resident physician, Dr. Frederick K. Inglis immediately began construction of a centrally located home that could serve as a residence for his wife and six children and also house his clinic and pharmacy. Inglis held graduate degrees in both medicine and divinity, but his real passion was carpentry. Stonehurst was designed and built according to his personal needs and specifications, with 22 rooms, 9-foot ceilings, and incorporating 12" studs. The result was a gracious home with a stately veranda that continues to withstand the ravages of sea air and the Coast's damp climate.

Inglis' clinic and pharmacy occupied the basement level (and is now a private suite). Inglis owned one of the first

automobiles on the Coast, and installed one of the first telephones.

Just after the turn of the century, not long before the Inglis family arrived, a colony of Finns drifted down from the settlement at Sointula ("Place of Harmony" in the Finnish language), settled and began farming the upper bench, known then as Gibsons Heights. They brought with them a utopian, cooperative socialist philosophy that had first inspired Sointula's settlement. Their new doctor was fascinated by this worldview, and found the idea that cooperative socialism in small communities can demonstrate the plan for a larger society quite intriguing. It dovetailed neatly with his past religious studies and his own humanist beliefs.

The First World War, with its reports of the carnage in Europe and the drum beating of patriotic fervor in the community, particularly in the churches, truly challenged Inglis' personal faith. He found himself gravitat-



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ing more and more to his friends in the Finnish community, and he debated their points of view with the local Methodist minister, James Shaver Woodsworth, who shared his pacifist philosophy.


Eventually, J.S. Woodsworth's pacifist views conflicted with the pro-war activists of his Methodist church, led by William Winn. Refusing to bend to public opinion and support recruitment and other wartime activities his congregation wished to promote, in 1917 Woodworth either resigned or his resignation was forced by the church council. Either way, he was required to move his wife and six children out of the church's Manse forthwith. The Inglis family offered them shelter at Stonehurst.

In those close quarters, the ongoing Inglis-Woodworth debate of socialist and pacifist theory intensified. Whenever Woodsworth wasn't job-hunting on the mainland, he and Inglis would argue various aspects

*Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives  
Photograph #2086*



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*Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives  
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of socialist theory and consider its application to the larger Canadian political scene. Those discussions and positions hammered out over the Inglis kitchen table in Gibsons BC may have changed the course of Canadian history. These tenets and theories interwoven with the humanist principles and social democratic values, formed the base of the Canadian Social Gospel party, which Woodsworth represented as MP through its evolution into the Canadian Cooperative Federation (CCF) in 1932, until his death in 1942. Under Woodsworth's leadership, the CCF gained traction and in 1961 evolved into the New Democratic Party of Canada, with former Saskatchewan CCF premier Tommy Douglas as its head.

Dr. Fred Inglis retired in 1945 when son Hugh assumed the medical practice, and passed away in 1950 at the age of 80.

Since then, Stonehurst has changed ownership many times, and in 2014 underwent a major restoration and renovation. It has been divided into self-contained suites and served as a B&B as well as an occasional event venue. Δ

 *Laura Sinclair*

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# Steamships

## OF TIME GONE BY



In 1889, BC's sparse population was mostly scattered along the BC Coast and among the islands, settling on provincial land grants (or pre-emptions) to clear and farm, or to log and mill the plentiful timber, or to fish the oceans teeming with salmon, cod, and halibut.

The city of Vancouver had just been burnt, rebuilt and incorporated when Union Steamships' Director John Darling arrived for a visit – and immediately saw the potential for a fleet of ships to serve that network of coastal communities.

With capital from the British, he purchased 10 vessels and ordered construction of three more, specifically designed to sail the more protected waters of Georgia Strait (Salish Sea). At about this time, George Gibson

and his sons used a home-made pile drive to construct the first wharf at Gibsons Landing, where they had settled in 1887. It is likely the device then travelled by boat to help construct the wharves at George Grantham's and George Hopkins' Landings.

For most of the new settlements, the first order of business after constructing shelter was building a wharf to welcome visitors and shelter their watercraft. So when the Union Steamships began to experiment with transporting freight and mail to the small coastal and island communities of Gibsons, Sechelt, Van Anda, Comox, Lund, and scores of canneries, mill towns, and the tiny mining, forestry, and fishing communities that dotted the coastline, the settlers stood ready to greet them on

their newly-constructed wharves.

At each wharf, a tiny post office sprang up – usually in a nearby home – to receive mail and supplies dispatched by mail order from the city. Along with supplies, Union Steamships soon began delivering a new kind of cargo: tourists. Hopkins and Grantham quickly began to capitalize on this new market, and a pre-war boom in building summer cabins ensued. Even Gibsons new doctor got involved in constructing waterfront suites in his Orkestra House (now Marina House) for the city's escapees.

In the time between the wars, Union Steamships promoted its excursions, particularly to its resort property at Selma Park (acquired among the assets of the All Red

Line and the Terminal Steam Navigation Company) as well as to Pender Harbour, with gushing descriptions of the scenery and activities ripe for enjoyment along “the Gulf Coast Riviera.” Within a very few years, passenger service displaced cargo as the company's main revenue stream. The Selma Park enterprise was a bargain: \$1.50 return, plus 50 cents for lunch at Bert Whitaker's nearby Sechelt Hotel. (Round trip to Powell River was \$3.00 for a first-class ticket). In response to demand and a brilliant marketing push to encourage large company functions at the Selma Park resort, the company spun off the Selma Park resort into Union Estates Limited, acquiring Whitaker's and a second hotel and adding other land holdings to its inventory of cottages, bunkhouses, a tent campsite, covered picnic area, tennis





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Many families would rent accommodations for the whole summer, hoping to escape not only the summer heat, but also the regular summertime outbreaks of polio that spread in close quarters and city swimming pools. And every Friday the wharves were crowded with children eagerly awaiting the "Daddy Boats" bringing working fathers for a quick weekend visit with their families.

In those prosperous pre-World War II days, Union Steamships' business boomed, and excursions expanded to include a trip through the challenging Skookumchuck Rapids, as well as sailings up Howe Sound to Squamish and Britannia. They capped a banner year in 1939 by providing a six-vessel escort convoy to King George the VI and Queen Elizabeth as they left Vancouver harbor at the end of their Canadian royal tour.

Travel patterns changed abruptly after World War II, as the family car became the preferred transport, and as the province's and United States' highway systems improved dramatically – with the new "motels" springing up every few miles to provide a comfortable, convenient night's accommodation.

In 1951, Black Ball Ferries sounded the death knell for Union Steamships' excursions. Its first car ferry sailing between Horseshoe Bay and Gibsons drew crowds to the Government Wharf. With more cars arriving on this easy-access boat, the road between Gibsons and Sechelt was improved with its first asphalt surface – so convenient! So much faster than the old steamship route. Union Steamships struggled on for a few more years, but its traditional mail and cargo business was eaten away by the ferry service and its old wharf-to-wharf service became less and less viable. In 1959, it ceased operations altogether. Δ

# The Port Mellon Mill

*Over 100 years in operation and still going strong.*



*Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives Photograph #2368*

When Vancouver's Cates family secured the water rights to Rainy River on Howe Sound's western shore in the 1890s, they were taking the long view of the site's industrial and economic potential.

The two 160-acre parcels with lush, accessible timber growth on the slopes, deep-water access for log booming, and potential mineral wealth from the river gravel (the Klondike and Fraser gold rushes had recently faded) could fit with the family's existing businesses, or feed the hunger for wood as Vancouver's first turn-of-the-century building boom continued.

In 1907, the British Canadian Wood Pulp and Paper

company headed by Capt. H.A. Mellon purchased 85 acres for construction of its steam-powered mill, tapping into the Rainy River for an abundant water supply. The mill produced high-quality wrapping paper – a product that was not exactly in high demand in Vancouver, and too expensive to ship to more lucrative markets. The mill that opened in 1909 closed in 1910.

This began a decades-long boom-and-bust cycle of operations for the mill's various operators. Focusing on pulp production rather than paper milling, the Port Mellon facility would go into production in periods of high world demand, and shut down during downturns.

With the outbreak of the Second World War and the





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mill's purchase by Sorg Paper, the demand for kraft paper soared – then waned in 1945 – then soared again during the Korean War in the early 1950s and continued through the post-war boom period, and Port Mellon boomed with it – expanding to almost 1,000 residents in a close-knit, thriving community that embraced near-by settlements at Hillside, Seaside, and McNab Creek. Instead of a school bus, there was a school boat that delivered students to the three-room schoolhouse at Port Mellon “when the weather was good enough and it wasn’t too foggy and there wasn’t a squamish wind blowing you went to school, otherwise you had a day off,” as former Hillside resident Vera Askew remembered.

Mail for Hillside’s community of eight families was delivered to Port Mellon’s post office thrice weekly by steamship, and “on the way down to the school boat, one of the

students would pick up the Hillside’s mailbag and that was how our mail was delivered!” Vera added.

A swaying suspension bridge connected Port Mellon to neighbouring Seaside, where the mill maintained a small hotel, community sports field, and housing for employees. “Everything was heated and powered by steam,” Vera noted. “It was free, from the mill.”

Aside from picnics and regattas, Vera remembered the mill offered other amenities to the community. “One year, in the late 1940s, we had quite the winter. The powers that be at Port Mellon [mill] flooded the whole schoolyard so we could have an ice skating rink! The kids could skate during the days, then they lit it up – I don’t remember how – so the adults could skate at night. Only in a small company town could you do that sort of thing.”

Seaside’s community field provided the venue for the annual July 1 school sports day, its annual regatta launched from the hotel’s beachfront location and celebrants gathered later in its beer parlour.

And then in 1953, the Port Mellon Highway changed everything. Suddenly, working at the mill and living in Gibsons, near shops and the high school, became a viable option. Within a very few years, the town that once boasted more clubs and organizations per capita than any community of similar size in BC had dwindled, its hotel closed and its activities – like the annual regatta and picnics – moved down the road. Port Mellon’s loss was Gibsons’ gain.

The production of Kraft pulp paper (the stuff used in paper bags, cardboard boxes and the like) is a fragrant



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business, and the sulfurous rotten-eggs smell drifting down towards Gibsons on the Squamish winds resulted in regular complaints and, mainly, a community shrug. “It’s the smell of money,” folks would say.

“When we first went up there,” Vera Askew remarked, “it stunk to high heaven from the sulfite, and anywhere you walked, even if it was a pathway, you walked on cinders, because you had a lot of soot coming out and so you had this absolutely everywhere. I wanted to comb it out of my hair when I got home from school. And one of the teachers used to like us to bring flowers from Hillside for the school, because the flowers in Port Mellon looked nice but they had lost all their scent. They had no perfume.”

The winds began to shift in the late 1980s, when the newly-formed Howe Sound Pulp and Paper Company (co-owned by Canfor and Japan’s Oji Paper) launched an extensive modernization and billion-dollar expansion program. Adding newsprint to its production line and installing \$100 million worth of the latest environmental protection technology, Howe Sound Pulp and Paper now operated Canada’s most modern mill, with the country’s lowest emissions.

In the years since, environmental protection became part of the company’s corporate culture. Regular annual equipment maintenance and upgrades have improved water and air quality, and the famous “smell of money” is rarely emitted to waft into the larger community these days. The money that supports hundreds of families does continue to flow, and Howe Sound Pulp and Paper supports a number of community causes through charitable donations and sponsorships. Its reputation as a good corporate citizen of the Sunshine Coast as well as a good employer continues more than a century after that first paper product rolled off the mill floor. Δ

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# Welcome to the Sunshine Coast

I am so grateful to all those wonderful partners in our package and magazine this last year.

To the New Residents I have met, and had the opportunity to share info about our beautiful community. Thank you!

*Stephanie*

**Stephanie & Andrew Taylor - Bakers Creek**  
 When welcomed with open arms when we moved to the Sunshine Coast, it was such a journey and such an amazing when we arrived and were greeted by Stephanie. We couldn't believe how nice and generous the Coast was. She provided us a gift package full of amazing coupons and goodies and information all about the Sunshine Coast. How it was so easy to find. We would personally like to thank each and every sponsor and donor that helped us get here. We guess that's what it like to let you know that we do see your services every day.  
 Thank you everyone for being so generous.

To all the Amazing & Incredible Businesses & Services that are a part of our Neighbourhood Welcome program Our New Residents also want to say Thank you too!

*Celebrating One Year!!*

**Joe O'Rourke - Wilsons Creek**

Many thanks to the contributors to the Neighbourhood Welcome Program. It has been a wonderful introduction to the Sunshine Coast community to have the gifts and coupons, and to meet the business owners who supplied them. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

**Emily K & Megan T - Olsson**  
 To All The Shop Owners, thank you so much for the lovely gift bag. Excited to explore the Sunshine Coast and support our local communities. From the new leads to Olsson's Megan & Kirby, and Kasia Day.

**Mike Brown - West Bealiba**

I moved over from Vancouver in April and this was the warmest and most friendly welcome I have ever received. The warm hands in contact are so kind and generous. They have all made this feel like home.

**Caroline Lee - Wilsons**  
 It was wonderful to meet Stephanie. She welcomed me into the community of Wilsons and shared the generosity of the local businesses and the information pamphlets. Sharing information of things to do and see on the Sunshine Coast. Very much appreciated. Thank you.

**Joan W Peter - Dorrigo - Dorrigo Bay**

We would like to thank all the partners of the Sunshine Coast Neighbourhood Welcome. We were thrilled with the welcome package including useful information and contacts. We have been taking a lot of time exploring the beautiful coast and doing all the various projects of the program. Big shout out to Stephanie and everyone involved in this wonderful program. Thank you for all your kindness and generosity!  
 Joan W Peter Dorrigo and Katherine

**Christine Gill - Maroochydore - Goolwa**

My husband and I would like to thank all the businesses and our service provider who contributed to the Sunshine Coast Neighbourhood Welcome Initiative. The warm hug given by the large quantity of samples/gifts you provided is such a lovely touch. It means you really care how we feel the coast is and we will be grateful to you. The best of course, was to get the information and gifts all ready to go when we had a limited guide and our business partner such as yourself.  
 Thank you to you all!

**Roger and Sharon - Sunshine**  
 Thank you to all the local businesses who welcomed us here and community this past month by supporting the Sunshine Coast Neighbourhood Welcome program. Being run by Stephanie Taylor. It is a very valuable program, resource for all businesses. Really made us feel welcome in our new home.

**Stephanie & Kevin - Bakers Creek**

Being new to the Coast and welcomed by Stephanie was an absolute pleasure. The information she provided about local sights and businesses was excellent. Thank you to Stephanie for being such a fantastic ambassador for the Sunshine Coast and to all the participating businesses, we look forward to meeting you in the near future.  
 Thank you all for the warm welcome.

**Mark & David (and the family) John Tarrant - Olsson**

It was such a beautiful surprise to get a welcome to the Sunshine Coast visit from Stephanie. Not only her visit was a joy for us, she also provided us with an impressive selection of business contacts, discount coupons, and amazing morning presents. We'd just like to thank all the businesses for their generosity and kindness by being a part of this package.

*Are you New to the Sunshine Coast?*

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