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WINTER 2024

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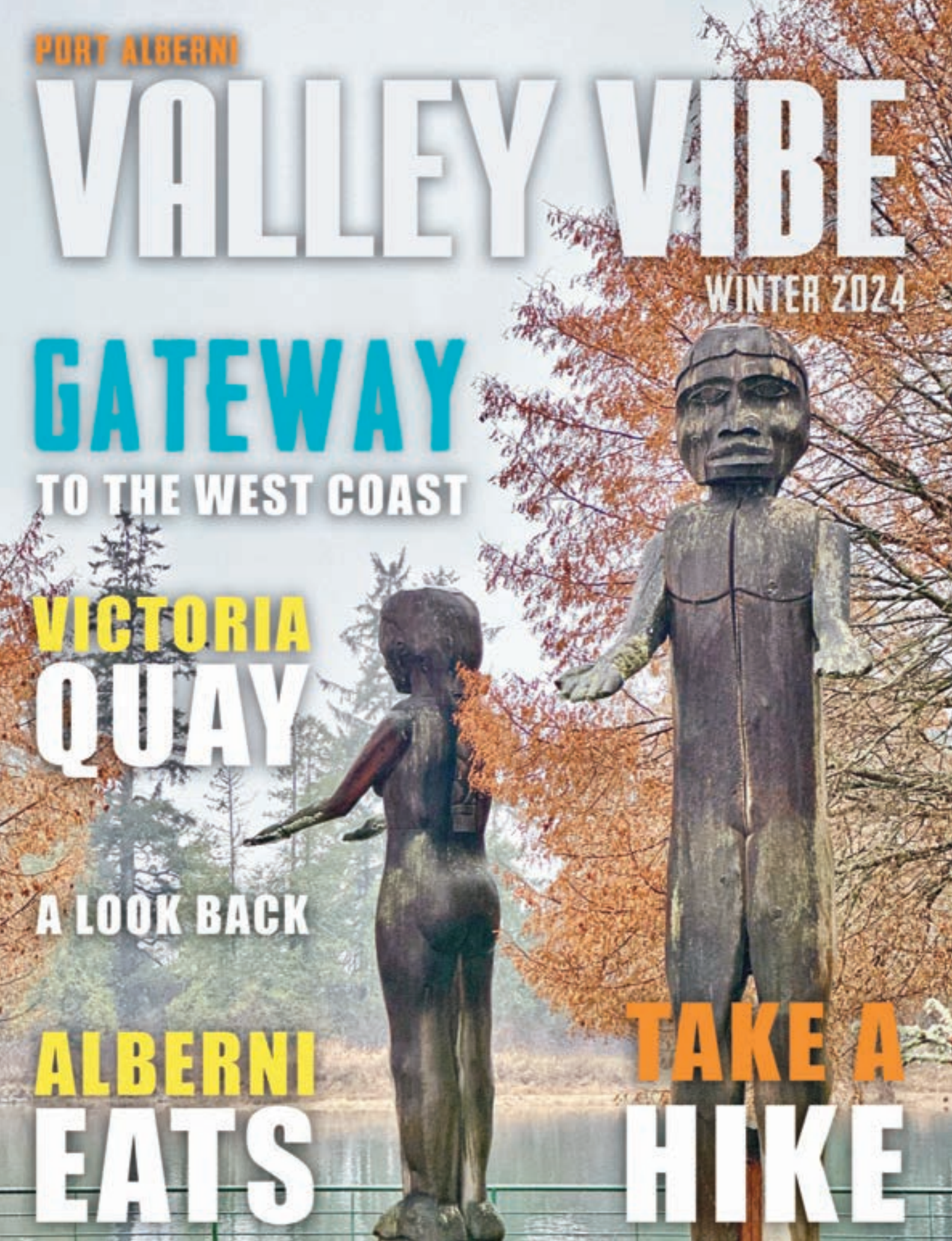
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VICTORIA QUAY

A LOOK BACK

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MILE ZERO VICTORIA QUAY

Written By: Heather Thomson

Today Victoria Quay is rich with both history and beauty. It is a peaceful place to sit and enjoy the view or have a quick stroll along the water. Running parallel with the Somass River at the bottom of Johnston Road, Victoria Quay is a beautiful spot that has an important history to the Alberni Valley.

Its importance predated the arrival of settlers to this Valley. The Somass River has been an essential passageway for the Nuu-chah-nulth people since time immemorial. It was the gateway to the Pacific Ocean, where many Nuu-chah-nulth spent summers. To this day, its waters offer a wealth of resources that sustain them throughout the year. This strong connection to Victoria Quay is still evident today through the Welcoming Figures, that greet visitors both on land and from the ocean, and the Whaling Monument. The figures are both carved by local Hupacasath First Nations artists and stand proudly at the base of Johnston.

Following the arrival of Europeans, Victoria Quay became important in Alberni as a shipping port. It was the main waterfront for the mainly farming community of the Alberni Valley in the late 1800s. Ships would pull into the sheltered area to unload supplies to the quickly growing community. Supplies would come in there, and goods would be shipped out from the same spot. Most notably were the Willapa, Queen City, and the Tees, all navigating the Somass River at high tide to bring freight to Alberni. The Tees is remembered for its part in bringing electricity to Alberni in 1893.



Photo by Alex Taelman - Zenseekers

By the turn of the century, a long trestle bridge ran the length of the waterfront from Rogers Creek to what is today known as Victoria Quay. It offered the only connection between Port Alberni and Alberni as it ran from what is now Johnston Road to the first road in Port Alberni. The two communities amalgamated in 1967, and to this day, Victoria Quay is an important connection between what is now North and South Port Alberni.

After settlers established a community in Alberni, the boardwalk area of Victoria Quay was home to many residences and businesses. Some of the notable people who lived along the Quay were Harry and James Hill, Jim and John Redford, and Dr. Alfred John Pybus. The Pybus home sat at approximately the location where people can go to the Arrowsmith Rotary viewing deck to check out the action along the Somass River and the Somass Estuary.

In the area close to where the Legion stands today, you could find Angus Erickson's Post Office, the Alberni Trading Company Store, Sareault's Alberni Hotel, and Drinkwater's Barber Shop. On the corner of Margaret and Johnson stood the Government Court House, the Royal Bank of Canada, the Arlington Hotel, and Jack Burke's Livery Stable. At the junction of Kitsuksis Creek and the Somass River stood Sayward's Landing Fish House. Along the Victoria Quay boardwalk was a wharf, C. Fredrick Bishop's General Store and Huff's Hall.

Although best known as Johnston Road, the main road up from Victoria Quay is actually part of the Trans-Canada Highway. In 1912, Victoria Quay was chosen as the location for the Mile Zero marker of the Trans-Canada Highway. This post marked the terminus of the Trans-Canada Highway. It remained in this spot until 1950 when Mile Zero was moved to Victoria. Although it stayed in Alberni for close to 40 years, the post did spend a night in Port Alberni. Shortly after being installed at Victoria Quay, pranksters stole the sign in the middle of the night and positioned it at the intersection of Argyle and Kingsway. Although the two towns were constant rivals at the time, the Mayor of Port Alberni made sure the sign was returned.

The Victoria Quay area was home to the Dominion Day celebrations on July 1. This featured many

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Photo by Denay Piatka

sporting events, with the waterfront as a focal point. Often First Nations from the area took part, including the popular canoe races. Crowds gathered along Victoria Quay to cheer on the boats. This scene was repeated about 100 years later in July 2011 when the annual Pulling Together Canoe Journey concluded in Port Alberni. Hundreds of people lined Victoria Quay as more than 200 paddlers (including me!) ended their journey that began 10 days prior in Tofino.

Victoria Quay welcomed a new carving in 2012 as part of the Centennial Celebration in the Alberni Valley. The carved wooden bear offers visitors to the Quay a high five as they stroll the boardwalk.

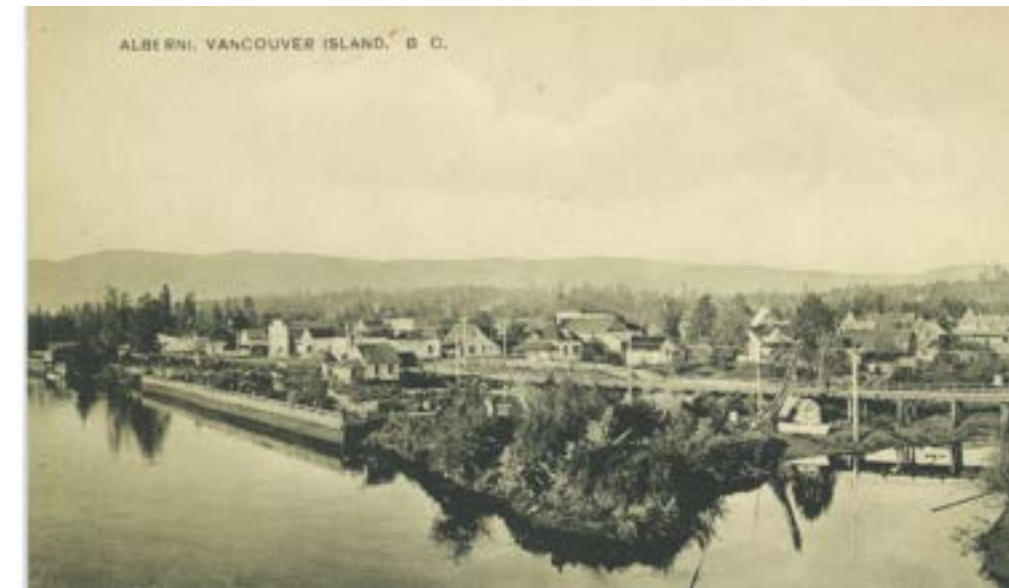
It is fitting that a carved bear lives at Victoria Quay, since it is a popular spot for visitors and residents alike to stop for some bear watching. Although bears can be seen any time of year along the Quay, it is most common to see them at low tide looking for fish when the salmon are running. They are not alone. If you are lucky you may spot bald eagles in the trees along the river keeping a keen eye on the river for their dinner. Seals and sealions are often found cruising up the river chasing their next meal or just checking out the brackish water of the Somass.

The Somass is known for its amazing salmon runs as it

meets the Alberni Inlet just south of Victoria Quay. As it winds its way to Paper Mill Dam, it goes from salt water, to brackish, and finally fresh water.

In 2017, a new attraction was added to Victoria Quay – Mill Stone Park. At the south end of the boardwalk stands the mill stones from the first paper mill in B.C., BC Paper Manufacturing Company, which operated on the Somass from 1894-1896. In 1948, the stones were made into a monument to commemorate the early history of paper production, but they stood for many years at the paper mill before they were moved to Victoria Quay in 2016. In 2021, the n'aasn'aas'aqsa pole was unveiled in MillStone Park. The pole was carved by Nuu-chah-nulth carver Tim Paul.

It was initiated by the First Nations Education Foundation in 2018 as part of the United Nations 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages. When the remains of hundreds of children were discovered at various residential schools across Canada, the meaning of the pole changed. Its name means mother in Nuu-chah-nulth and Tim Paul said it represents the mothers whose children didn't return to them. The pole is carved out of an 800-year-old fallen tree donated by Huu-ay-aht First Nations.



This scenic view shows the town of Alberni as seen from the river, bridge over Rodgers Creek and Victoria Quay area. Taken in 1930. Photo Credit Alberni Valley Museum Archives PN00403

Victoria Quay offers many shops, restaurants, businesses, and even British Columbia's number one brewery for 2023, Twin City Brewing. The Quay also offers two of four free electric car chargers in the Alberni Valley, bringing it into the modern age.

What began as a way for people to get from Port Alberni to Alberni continues to be a centrepiece of the community. People walk along the boardwalk for leisure, exercise, or to get from one place to another. Every year, Victoria Quay is lined in orange as walkers mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in the Valley on Orange Shirt Day, September 30.

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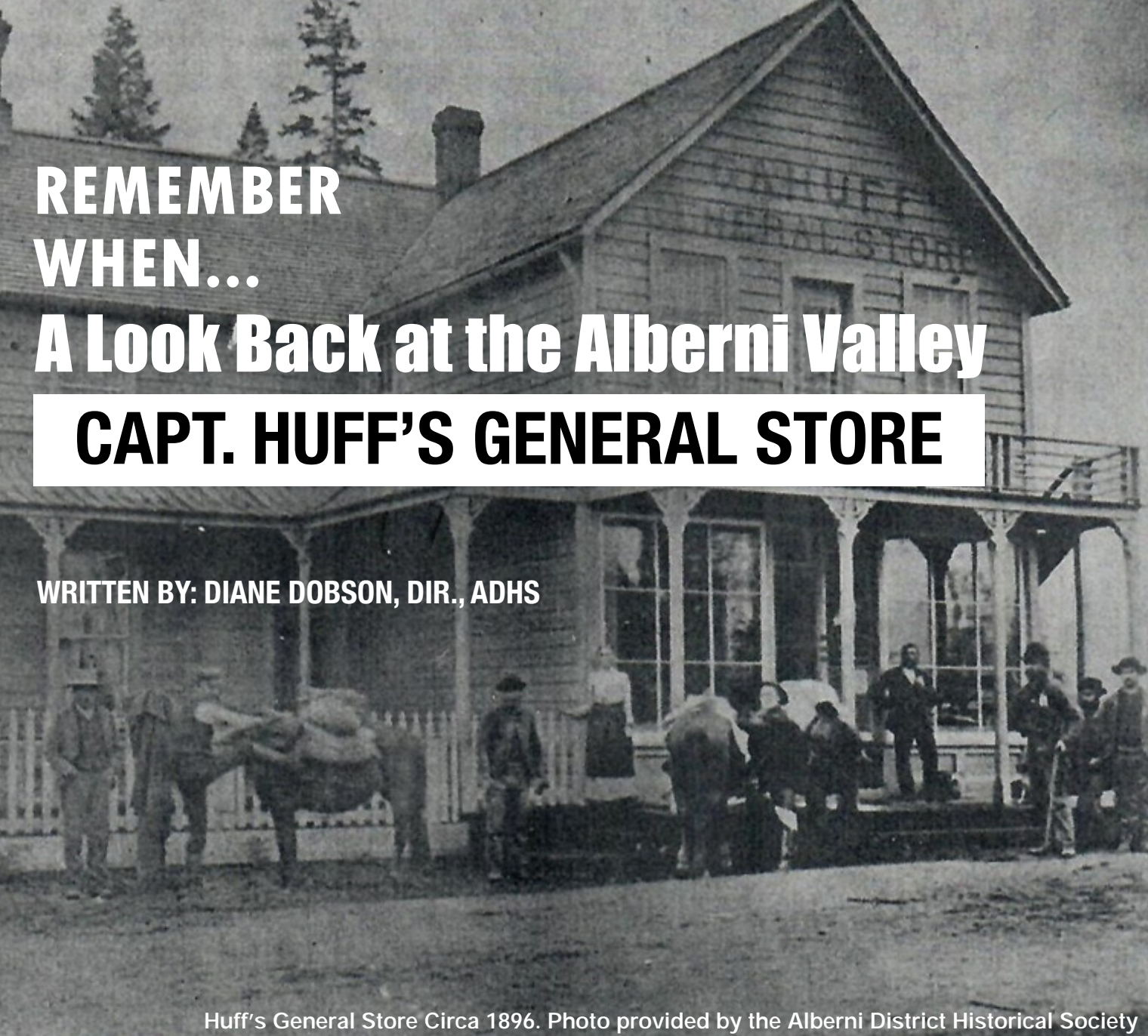


REMEMBER WHEN...

A Look Back at the Alberni Valley

CAPT. HUFF'S GENERAL STORE

WRITTEN BY: DIANE DOBSON, DIR., ADHS



Huff's General Store Circa 1896. Photo provided by the Alberni District Historical Society

In the 1890's, Capt. George Huff was one of Alberni's movers and shakers. I have previously spoken about his marine career but George Huff was much more than that. He had arrived from Ontario in 1885 with his wife, Eliza, and daughter, Minnie. In short order, he was serving a triple role in Alberni as Justice of the Peace, Secretary of the school board and as a storekeeper.

Today we will focus on Huff's General Store, located at the intersection of Johnston Road and Victoria Quay. The building contained not only the store but rooms to accommodate a few travellers. He soon added Huff's Hall nearby, the first one in Alberni. The Anglican Church

services were held here once a month as were dances and social events.

Huff also built a good-sized wharf on the riverbank 50 yards from the store entrance. It proved to be of great convenience as the wooden stern-wheeler, the Willie, owned by Capt. Huff, transferred the cargoes from the Port Alberni wharf and unloaded them here. Supplies were ordered and shipped every two weeks from Victoria.

Huff was a precise and astute businessman. Evidence of this is the leather-bound store ledger that was used daily in these early years. We, at the ADHS Archives, are

fortunate to be the keepers of this invaluable tome. It is full of interest and insight that I would like to share with you.

The 300-page ledger contains the name of every patron and their transactions, all written in George Huff's meticulous hand. Most people didn't have cash in their pockets so credit was the norm.

It is a joy to read. I suggest we take a look back at a day in the life of Huff's General Store. All transactions are real and we can learn a bit of the locals and their lifestyle through the ledger. Okay, let's pretend it is a Saturday, a busy shopping day, in the Spring of 1895. Many farmers and those living on the outskirts make their weekly pilgrimage into town on Saturdays. George and his daughter, Minnie, who worked at the store for some time, stand behind the counter. It isn't long before the bell above the door rings as the door opens.

"Good morning, Joseph," greets George as he nods his head to Mrs. Halpenny. "How are you this fine morning?" Joseph smiles and sets down a wooden box of butter on the counter while his wife holds a basket of eggs. It was common practice then to barter fresh produce to offset the cost of one's purchases. George credits their account 25 cents/dozen for the eggs and \$2.00 for the five pounds of butter. Amongst their usual purchases is four yards of gingham for 60 cents. Obviously, Mrs. Halpenny's eggs and butter covered it and then some.

Rinnng...another customer. Oh, it's Dr. Morgan's wife, Mamie. George acknowledges her while packing up the Halpenny's order. Mrs. Morgan had just a short walk from her lovely Margaret Street home (the present-day EM Salon). She has the purchase of pansy and other flower seeds in mind and heads over to the garden section. Minnie meets her there. Mrs. Morgan is pleased with the selection and adds them to her order. George totals it and itemizes it to their page in the ledger. Here it is as written in the original ledger...

- one sack of flour \$1.60
- one box yeast cake 15 cents
- one glass lamp 20 cents
- six packs seeds 30 cents

The order is totalled and will be paid monthly. I really hope the Morgan Garden flourished.

Customers came all day long, shopped, chatted and



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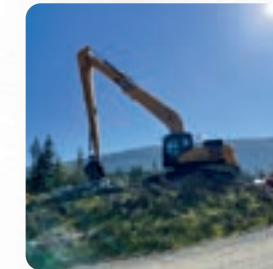
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Studio portrait of Captain George Huff, who owned and operated the steamwheeler "Willie," which traveled the Alberni Inlet in the early 1900s. He was at one time a member of the provincial legislature. He was the father of Minnie Paterson, who was the wife of Thomas Paterson, the Cape Beale lighthouse keeper at the time of the wrecks of the Valencia on January 22, 1906, and the Coloma on December 7, 1906. Minnie became known as the "Heroine of Cape Beale" for her efforts to save the crew of the Coloma, trekking through rough terrain and weather to Bamfield to notify the C.G.S. Quadra, which was sheltered there. She never fully recovered her health after her ordeal and died five years later. Circa 1900. Photo courtesy of the Alberni Valley Museum PN11871.

socialized. Typical of grocery items most bought, according to the ledger were yeast cakes, sacks of flour and washing soda. Butter and eggs were bought too, unless you raised your own animals, of course. Chewing tobacco is another popular commodity.

Mining was at its peak in the valley around the turn of the 20th century. The prospector, in turn, was a regular customer. A two-week supply of food, bought and packed on their backs was usual and bacon and beans were essential. The Mineral Creek Mining Company had an account at Huff's. Along with the food and tobacco, they also purchased five pounds of nails at a time, pick and hammer handles and candles. In July 1895, the ledger shows a charge of \$4.50 for freight on dynamite. The company's three-month tab totalled \$135 which was paid by cheque.

One entry brought a smile to my face. That was for Miss Patty Cox, daughter of lighthouse keeper, Emmanuel Cox. She was a customer that spring. A month before, she was in, purchasing four yards of shirting for 60 cents.

This day she knew exactly what she wanted as she headed to the sewing and notions section. After much deliberation, Patty purchased 1 1/2 yards of ribbon for 15 cents and a card of buttons. Obviously, Miss Cox was completing the garment she started previously.

What I found appealing and yet was curious about was her last transaction. She booked the rental of a horse and rig to the paper mill a few miles from town. She needed it in two days time. The cost, \$1.00, was added to her tab. The romantic in me wants to think that Patty Cox, dressed in her new finery, was going to the country to meet her beau. Ah, one can only speculate.

What do you think?

I have enjoyed this journey in time with the help of Mr.Huff's ledger and hope you have too.

All research courtesy of the Alberni District Historical Society (ADHS). Photos courtesy of the AV Museum.

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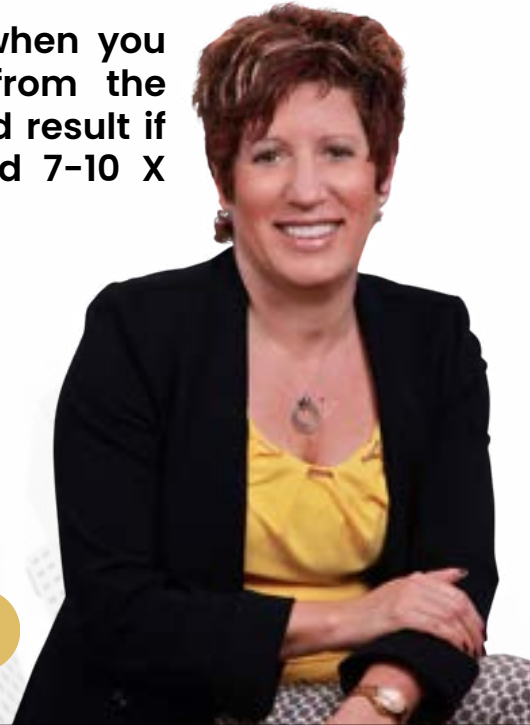
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THE ROTARY PROJECT

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY ARROWSMITH ROTARY

When Clutesi Haven Marina was redeveloped and the eastern river banks of the Somass River in the Victoria Quay area were stabilized using riprap, there were discussions amongst the Community on how to make this area more accessible for the valley residents and for tourists to our area, to stop and enjoy this natural beauty and the various viewpoints.

In the early 2000's, the concept of a viewing deck with a bench, projecting out over top of the riprap and overhanging the river was brought forward by a member of Arrowsmith Rotary. The Director of Parks and Recreation was invited to attend a meeting, as a guest speaker, and the concept of constructing a viewing deck was proposed to him at that time.

In 2002, Arrowsmith Rotary donated the funds needed to build the first viewing deck in the Victoria Quay walkway

area, and a bench was placed in the uncovered structure, where one could stop and rest and take in the sights and eventually a picnic table right adjacent to the deck.

Over the years, this deck has hosted a lot of foot traffic atop the wooden structure, however use was always contingent on the weather. But also over the many years, the wooden structure was subjected to all kinds of weather, from the hot sun to the heavy rains, snow and winds showed signs of wear and tear and was in desperate need of repairs.

In early 2018, what started as a simple request to Arrowsmith Rotary by Parks and Recreation to upgrade the old style recognition plaque on the safety railings, quickly morphed to a discussion to upgrade the entire deck (already in need of repairs), reconfigure the size and design slightly adding more space to congregate, and most importantly, to construct a roof over the deck, making it more of an



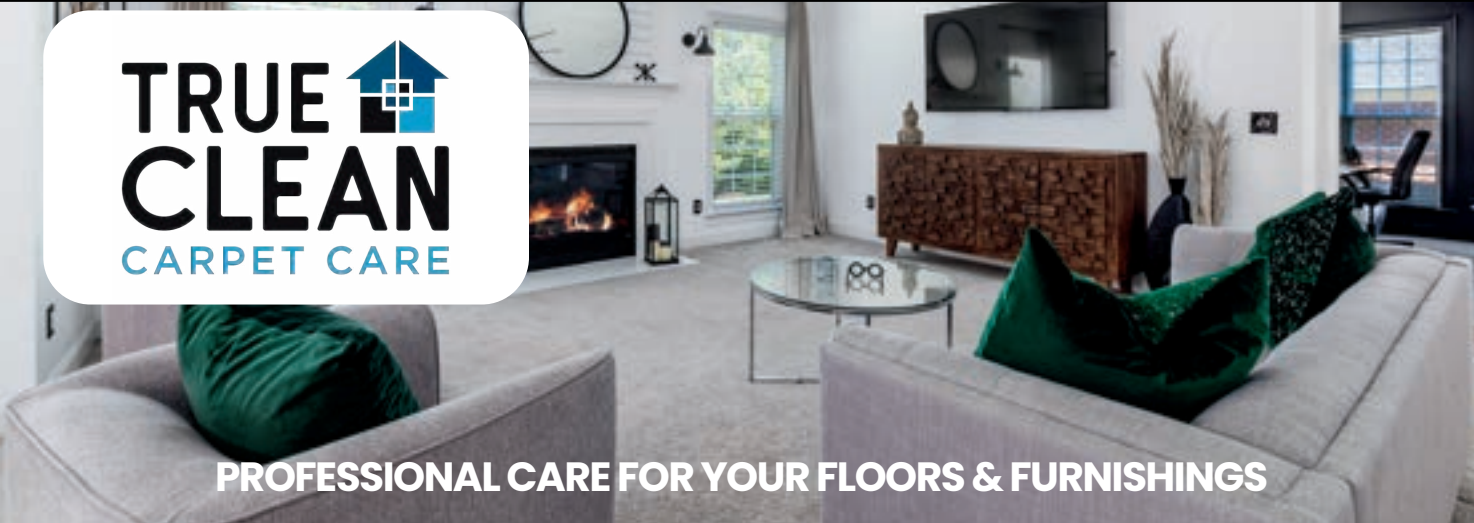
all-weather destination for everyone to use. The entire structure, including the roof, was to fit the sightlines already in existence in that area and could not block views.

Citing a reason for funding the original deck... "This community service project will provide good use for our residents and tourists, and will be a benefit to the overall good to the community as a whole", said long time Rotarian Larry McGifford and Club President at the time. "The proposed upgrades would make it even a better year round place to congregate and socialize, and not restricted by our often inclement weather conditions.....it's just a

continuation of what Arrowsmith Rotary started in 2002".

After investigating the costs for such a project to proceed, and a proposed design, Arrowsmith Rotary concluded their willingness to fund the reconfiguration of the deck with the addition of the proposed roof design. In 2018, a further \$15,000 was donated to the City for this work to commence and the construction was completed in 2020. A drive by Victoria Quay on rainy days, and often you will see visitors sitting at the table, on the bench, or on their own chairs, socializing while staying dry. This project has shown proven benefits for the community.

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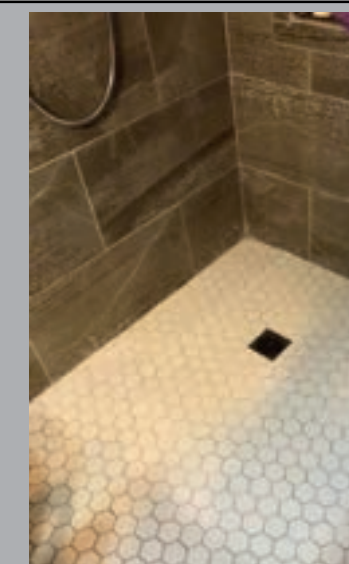
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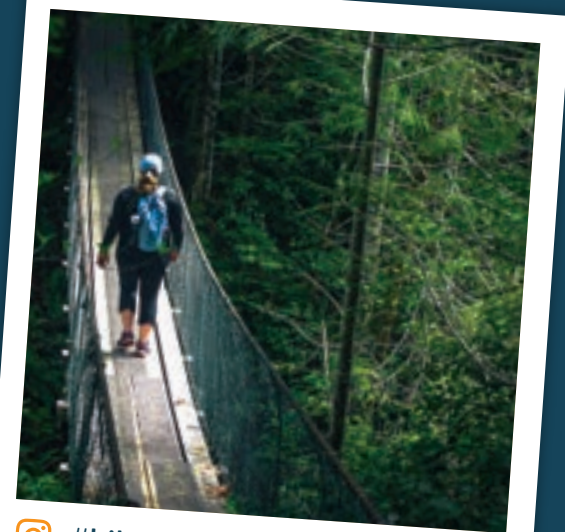


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In October 2004, hundreds of people gathered for the unveiling of the Alberni Valley's first Welcoming figure. Nuuchii, which means mountain, is the male welcoming figure. He faces east up Johnston, welcoming people who come by land. The figure was carved by Rod Sayers, Cecil Dawson, and Doug David over a four-month period. Although the Hupacasath First Nations raised the figure, the base of Nuuchii is made up of 14 stones, each one representing one of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations.

Nuuchii was the first Hupacasath pole carved in more than 75 years and, in May 2005 was joined by a female welcoming figure facing the mouth of the Somass River, welcoming people who arrive to the Valley by boat. The female figure, called River Princess, was carved by Rod Sayers and Cecil Dawson out of a red cedar log selected shortly after the male figure was raised in the fall.

Judith Sayers, chief councillor for Hupacasath at the time, told the Ha-shilth-sa paper the two figures serve as a reminder to the millions of visitors that pass by every year, that this is Nuu-chah-nulth territory and that their people remain involved in the things that happen in their territory.

To the left of the Welcoming Figures lies the Whaler's Canoe Exhibit. The large carving depicts a proud history of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The Nuu-chah-nulth Whaling Canoe sculpture was carved out of yellow cedar and was originally housed in the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria. It is a tribute to the strong connection between the Nuu-chah-nulth people and the sea. They were known to be great whalers, and this life-sized carving depicts the strength and ferocity of the whalers. They headed out to the open ocean in search of whales in a canoe with only spears and wooden tools. They worked together to hunt some of the largest mammals in the world. The monument is permanently housed in a small shelter at the bottom of Johnston Road and serves as a reminder that, although whaling is no longer a practice among Nuu-chah-nulth, it was once a strong tradition.



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ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

OVER THE YEARS

Photo courtesy of the Alberni Valley Museum Archives PN02760



Photo by Melissa Renwick - ZenSeekers

Sitting on the corner of Elizabeth and Johnson, the original St. Andrew's Church was built in 1892 by volunteers as a community project for the Presbyterian Church. In 1912, a new church was built and was entrusted to the status of church hall. Unfortunately, the new building burned down only two years later, and church goers were forced back to the original building. In 1915, the cost to rebuild was \$6,000 after a \$2,000 insurance claim.

The present structure was built in 1939 after it became St. Andrew's United Church in 1925. After the amalgamation in 2002 with the United Church, the building was left empty. It has since been converted into a fish and chips restaurant, Bare Bones Fish House and Smokery, which has maintained the original building design inside and out. Over the years the new tenants have done a great job preserving the original design; the pews fill the restaurant, and the beautiful stained glass still shines bright. Many add-ons and renovations have been done since 1939, including the addition of Walk the Coast, a stunning footwear and apparel store located next to the former church sanctuary.

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GATEWAY TO THE WESTCOAST

JOHNSTON ROAD CORRIDOR



Johnston Road at Victoria Quay looking east between 1915 and 1925; Johnston Road Hole; On right: C.M. Pineo store, Hardware and Plumbing store, St. Andrews Church. On left: Saunders Store. Man riding bicycle is to the right of the hole. Photo courtesy of the Alberni Valley Museum Archives PN00002.

Written by Heather Thomson

The lower Johnson Road corridor is probably the most travelled part of the Alberni Valley. Yet when people drive down it to get to their next destination, they probably don't realize how important the history of the area is to the creation of Port Alberni.

The town of Alberni was built on the banks of the Somass River, which flows into the Alberni Inlet. Unlike the port town of Port Alberni, Alberni was mostly a farming community in the late 1800s. The farmers and business people of Alberni relied heavily on the connection between the Johnston Road corridor and the Somass River to move goods. Johnston Road was also extremely important to settlers of the time as it was the main road to Nanaimo. Although the Nuu-chah-nulth called the Alberni Valley home since time immemorial, the town of Alberni started to take shape after 1879 when Anderson & Co. acquired title to approximately 2,500 acres of land for a sawmill venture. In the early 1880s, the townsite began to take shape mostly by agricultural settlers.

When the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway set up its new terminus in New Alberni (later renamed Port Alberni) the two communities began to grow. In Alberni, the streets were named after Anderson Company officials, including Johnston Road. At the turn of the century, Johnston was at the centre of the new town that was bordered by the Somass River, Kitsuksis Creek, Helen Street, Roger Creek, and Nanaimo Road (now Burke Road).

The avenues went up to 12 at that time, with the last one being called Anderson instead of 13th. Although the city has expanded well beyond these borders, many of the street names have not changed from the original surveys of Alberni.

Johnston Road quickly grew and became an important corridor in the town. Businesses started to locate the length of the road, including the end closest to the Somass River, despite it having a rather unique feature – a giant hole! At high tide the hole would fill with water, and therefore Victoria Quay initially had a bridge crossing the hole. Even though this made it a bit of a challenge, businesses like C.M. Pineo's druggist, a plumbing and hardware store, and Saunders Store did well on the edge of the hole. Eventually the town decided the hole posed a bit of a safety risk, and in 1919 a work bee was



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organized and the hole was filled in.

A little bit north of the hole stood the Arlington Hotel. It was built in 1893 by Matt Ward on the corner of Johnston Road and Margaret Street, where it stands today as The Blue Marlin. The three-storey building soon became a gathering place in Alberni that included a dining room that seated 90 people and a modern saloon. Although it has undergone many changes through the years, it remains a place of gathering in the community.

Across Margaret Street from the Arlington, Jack Burke and Harry Fitzgerald opened Alberni Livery Stables. Burke was a regular at the Arlington, often calling square dances while his wife played the piano. Today, this is home to Cloverdale Paints.

In the early 1900, the postal service was operated out of the Alberni Livery Stables. Burke lost the contract after nine years. With the booming of the automotive industry, Chatwin Motors arrived on the corner in the 1940s. Although there was a fire there, it continued to be a car dealership through the years with ownership changing a number of times. Finally, Jim Pelk purchased it and opened Jim Pelk Pontiac Buick GMC until 1997. For a while Van Isle Ford operated out of the location across Johnston Road, which is now home to Gone Fishin'.

Just a block up Johnston, the Alberni Post Office was built in 1939 by Thor Peterson. It was considered very modern and cost \$18,000 to build. It had 480 letter boxes and a few parcel boxes. Home delivery didn't come to Alberni until 1961. Today the post office is still recognizable as such, but it is now home to Pete's Mountain Meats.

Next door stood St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and manse. Originally built in 1892, the small church was replaced with a larger one in 1912. In 1915, a fire destroyed the church, and the manse, which had been added to the property in 1907, was badly damaged. The church was rebuilt, and in 1925 it became St. Andrew's United Church. The building that remains at that site opened in 1939. In 2001, the building was left empty when St. Andrews and First United formed the Alberni Valley United Church. Barebones Fish and Chips opened in the old church in 2009, although it is still recognizable as a church. The building also houses Walk the Coast and Island Tropics.



A large crowd is gathered for the installation of the Canadian Highway sign, at Johnston Road and Victoria Quay. Many people, on foot and in automobiles are gathered at the spot, the sign reads, "To Great Central Lake, Sproat Lake, Beaver Creek Road" The City Hall and another building can be seen at the bottom right. Circa 1912. Photo courtesy of the Alberni Valley Museum Archives PN00436.

Although you wouldn't know it today, Johnston Road was also rich farmland. The area around the railroad tracks where Buylow Foods and Alberni Elementary are now and on the hillside behind Wynans Furniture was known as the Paterson Townsite in the late 1800s. It was agricultural land until 1907 when the Patersons subdivided the property into residential lots. He also built an impressive two-storey farmhouse known as Glencoe Heights. This home still stands proudly on the hillside. The land Paterson developed is now one of the busiest parts of lower Johnston Road.

Alberni Elementary was first built on the corner of Johnston and Leslie in 1900. Today this is a residential area and the school is just below the tracks from its original location. John Howitt became principal and head teacher. In 1910, it was expanded to two classrooms as Alberni continued to grow.

In 1934, a new Alberni Elementary School was built on the corner of Johnston and Helen where it remains to this day. That same year, after teaching three generations of Alberni children, John Howitt retired.

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A long line of cars decorated with flags. They are coming down Johnston Road in front of the Courthouse. A Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman on horseback is beside the lead car in the parade. Circa 1919. Photo courtesy of the Alberni Valley Museum Archives PN00017.

Lower Johnston Road has developed extensively through the years and is home to many stores including jewellers, barber shops, a couple of thrift shops, insurance and financial companies, a gas station, restaurants, clothing stores, health food stores, and a surf shop, to name a few.

Every year thousands of travellers make their way down Johnston on the way to destinations beyond such as Sproat Lake and the West Coast, but the historic area still offers many reasons to stop and have a look. Due to this, the Johnston Road corridor will forever be known as the gateway to the West Coast.

King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in B.C. Written in front of a photograph: To my friend J.Forsyth. Original imprint of Leonard Frank Photos in bottom right hand corner. The back of the photograph reads: COMMUNITIES - ROYAL VISITS, CELEBRATIONS, OCCASIONS P436 GEORGE VI, QUEEN ELIZABETH IN VANCOUVER 1939, LEONARD FRANK PHOTO. The photograph shows numerous businesses along the street: ...olt Fur Co. Ltd., Hat Shop, Tod and Manning Jewelers opticians. The Queen and King are traveling in a black convertible automobile with a procession of horses with military escort. Along the road men are lined up in scottish/irish uniforms and the public is lined up behind them. Photo courtesy of the Alberni Valley Museum PN00588 (below).



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TAKE A HIKE

Photo by Nancy Shields - ZenSeekers

The Alberni Valley truly is the heart of Vancouver Island. Surrounded by mountains, rivers, creeks, and lush rainforest, there is always a new place to explore.

The main road into Port Alberni is via the Alberni Highway, travelling around Cameron Lake, through Cathedral Grove, and over the Port Alberni summit. The drive is magical to say the least; upon first entering the Alberni Valley, visitors and residents alike are greeted by 360 mountain views, encompassing our beautiful town; but entering the Alberni Valley wasn't always this way.

Traveling through the Barkley Sound and up the Alberni Inlet used to be the main route for anyone traveling in or out of Port Alberni. Imagine, if you will, how our beautiful town might look from that perspective; traveling on a ship, boat, or canoe, rocky mountains rising almost perpendicularly from the water on either side of you, trees covering the mountain sides. Certain parts feel as though you're in the middle of a mountain lake, rather than an inlet. We

truly are blessed to live in such a beautiful place.

Alongside the natural beauty the Alberni Valley has to offer is our amazing community. Friendly faces are seen throughout the town, whether you're running errands or going for a walk along the Dike. Accompanying those smiling faces are friendly hellos, quick conversations, and an amazing sense of community. You can feel how close this town is when you check out a Bulldogs game or go into a local coffee shop, everyone comes together to support one another.

We are fortunate to share this land with First Nations. Many of their traditions and lifestyle are still present in our community today; as seen during many of our local festivals and events.

The Alberni Valley is like a breath of fresh air, to fill you with rich history, a strong community, and beautiful scenery. Around the lake, through the grove, over the hump, and you're home there are so many amazing places to go and take a hike.

TAKE A HIKE

STAMP FALLS PROVINCIAL PARK

Stamp River Provincial Park is a quick 15 minute drive down Beaver Creek Road; perfect for camping, day hikes through breathtaking forest and waterfall views, or relaxation by the river, Stamp River has it all.

One of the main attractions of the park is it's annual run of thousands of Pacific salmon swimming in the pool below the falls, before ascending up the ladder to the spawning grounds; this natural migration happens during late summer and early fall months. The trail along the river and falls offer fantastic view points of the salmon, alongside well placed information stands that the whole family will enjoy reading.

With salmon comes black bears looking for an easy meal, so always be aware and keep dogs leashed. Stamp River Provincial Park is the perfect place to spend a couple hours immersed in nature or a couple days camping along the river. During summer months the water is calm enough in certain areas for a quick dip in the river to cool off while having a picnic lunch, while the trails offer spectacular views of the raging river and falls alongside the beautiful forest. The fall and winter months offer a phenomenal display of the river rushing past and down the falls, as you crunch on fallen leaves along the trail. This park is the perfect escape into nature, regardless of the season!



Photo by Dawn Auffray

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CATHEDRAL GROVE



Photo by Chris Pouget

MacMillan Provincial Park, or more commonly known as Cathedral Grove has served as a gateway to the West Coast since time immemorial. Located on the traditional territories of the K'ómoks, Tseshah, and the Te'mexw peoples, the 136 hectares of protected forest serve as an intricate ecosystem for animals and plants alike. The forest is filled with Douglas-fir, Western Hemlock, Grand fir and Western Red Cedar trees, and offers the most accessible access to old growth forests. The 136 hectares of Cathedral Grove was donated by H.R MacMillan in 1944 to the BC government after numerous protests to protect the forest. Unfortunately the area surrounding the protected space was logged and threatened to harm the ecosystem within.

Once you step into the forests of MacMillan Provincial Park, it's no surprise where the name Cathedral Grove came from; with trees reaching as high as 80 meters high

in some places, the forest resembles a great cathedral, even more beautiful than traditional gothic cathedrals. While gothic cathedrals date back hundreds of years, the forests of Cathedral Grove are over 1000 years old, with trees as old as 800 years.

The presence of the local Indigenous culture can be found throughout the forest with culturally modified trees (CMT), where the bark from cedars have been stripped off, or "strip cat faces", and evidence of burn felling with blackened hollowed out trees. Cedars are considered sacred in Indigenous culture for their life-giving properties; providing shelter, tools, transportation (canoes), and Totem Poles.

Cathedral Grove served as an ancient trading trail linking the East and West Coast of Vancouver Island. Connecting Mount Arrowsmith, the Beaufort Range,

and Cathedral Grove was known as "Yuts-whol-aht" or "Walking through the face of Mountains.

The original road that travelled around Cameron Lake and through Cathedral Grove was unpaved, rocky, and with a lot of bends. The road travelling through the Grove was only wide enough for one car to squeeze between the massive trees. Cathedral Grove has been a tourist destination since at least the 1920's, when the Cameron Chalet was a thriving destination spot. What now takes us about 25 minutes to venture around the lake and through the Grove, would have taken considerably longer in the 1920's, especially if travelling by horse and carriage. Once the road was paved in the 1950's, and cars became more accessible, travelling through Cathedral Grove became more accessible, and continued to be a tourist hub for many travellers making their way to the West Coast of Vancouver Island.

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Photo courtesy of the Port Alberni Port Authority

ALBERNI INLET

Where the fresh water meets the sea; from the Pacific Ocean, through the Barkley Sound, up the Alberni Inlet to meet the Somass River. Travelled for thousands of years by the Hupacasath First Nations, whose territory was governed by the seasons, they followed the animals, fish and mammals alike, up and down the inlet between Sproat Lake and Nettle Island.

The Alberni Inlet is named after the Spanish captain, Don Pedro de Alberni, who commanded a military outpost in the Nootka Sound between 1790-1792. In 1860, a tall-masted schooner, the "Meg Merrilies" moored in the Alberni Inlet.

In present day the Inlet is still used for maritime trade and marine commerce between Port Alberni and the world. We continue to follow the Salmon up and down the inlet, during the Salmon Festival and Derby, as well as spending our summers in and around the water.

You don't even need a boat to see the Alberni Inlet; along the 20km Inlet Trail, hikers can explore from Port Alberni to just past China Creek Marina. The hike offers some challenging sections, spectacular views, and the perfect balance between forest, mountains, and the Ocean.

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