

Context:

Gabriola, history

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as his cousin's place was at the south end of the island and cars were not nearly as numerous as they are today.

Driving along the gravel road, with Robin pointing out the various notable landmarks and sights: the lake, Brickyard Hill, Mudge Island, the Community Hall, we fell under the spell of Gabriola's beauty and charm. Of course, in those days, there were still great stands of noble forests, intact and unmolested by mankind's puzzling never-ending need.

We turned right onto Price Road and then right again at Blueback and there on the corner was the tiny cabin. We were welcomed and cordially invited to supper. But we had some business to attend to first!

Our explorations brought us to Lot 90 on Coho Drive. Clayton pointed out a cleared path that led from the road into the one-acre property. "See, there's even a driveway!"

We wasted no time but contacted the real estate agent, Mrs. McCollum, who accepted

our promise of prompt payment of the down payment as soon as my income tax return arrived. As a sign of our honourable intent and to seal the deal, we gave her five dollars, which she received in good faith.

My income tax return came a few days later so we were able to make good on our word before the one-week grace period that Marg McCollum had given us.

After completing these negotiations, Clayton and I drove back to Ken's cabin where a delicious feast awaited us. As the lengthening spring day was drawing in towards evening, we expressed our thanks and our intention to spend the night on our lot. We drove down Blueback and along Islands View to Coho. As we turned onto Coho, we saw three deer quietly grazing. We stopped to watch the gentle creatures, delighted to make their acquaintance and taking their presence as kind of welcome to our new home! ♦

Notes

This section of *SHALE* provides an opportunity for contributors to present the partial results of ongoing research, publish less-than-normal-length articles, and provide "interesting facts".

Gabriola's coal-mining connections—by Lynda Poulton

The mid-19th century found the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) on the west coast of Canada involved in several commercial ventures other than fur trading. At this time, the expanding British Pacific fleet and the increasing use of steamships had created a lively market for coal.

The HBC enlisted many young men from mining areas in Britain. Some chose not to renew their contracts when their time was up and moved on, but a few found their way to Gabriola.

In 1850, the HBC Barque, *Norman Morison*, arrived in Victoria on route to the coal-mining area at Fort Rupert, which was located at the northeast end of Vancouver Island at Beaver Harbour. Jonathan Martin,

from Orpington, England, was aboard and he was subsequently employed there. He later became one of Gabriola's first pre-empting settlers.

The mining operations in the Fort Rupert area were not a success, with conflict with the Indians over ownership of the coal; less production than anticipated; and inexperienced and inept management by the HBC who knew little to nothing about the coal-mining business.

After coal mining began in Nanaimo in 1852, the newly-established-town's population rapidly increased and with it the need for meats, fish, fruits, and vegetables. Gabriola, with eager pre-empting farmers, excellent soil, and a moderate climate, became an important farming community.

One of these successful farming families was the Hoggan family. In 1874, Alexander Hoggan, who was later to pre-empt his own property on Gabriola, was working in Robert Dunsmuir's Wellington mines. Alexander and other men were troubled by the working conditions, and discussed strike action. Declaring Hoggan a ringleader, Dunsmuir had the Sheriff remove his wife and children from their company-owned home, and Alexander was jailed in Victoria for four months, but on the jury's recommendation, without hard labour.

In 1887, Alexander, and his sons, John and James, were working at the Number One (Esplanade) mine and on May 3 of that year, there was a disastrous explosion at this mine in which 148 miners died. Among them were three sons of Gabriola farmers—James Hoggan, 21; Thomas Martin, 22; and John McGuffie, 22.

From 1887 to 1889, the Vancouver Coal Company spent time prospecting for coal on Gabriola, but their drilling was not a success. It is actually not likely that there

are coal seams beneath Gabriola of any commercial value, and, in any case, they would have been too deep to be mined safely at that time.

Shortly after, in 1889, Baldwin H. Wake, of Valdes Island, discovered an outcrop of coal on his land, but further inspection showed this to be nothing more than a small streak of coalified vegetation, which is common in the sandstone and shale of the Gulf Islands.

Several books have been written about coal mining in Nanaimo including Lynne Bowen's *Boss Whistle* and *Three Dollar Dreams*. There is also Jan Peterson's trilogy on Nanaimo history; *Black Diamond City*, *Hub City*, and *Harbour City*. The Nanaimo Community Archives and the Nanaimo Museum also have lots of information, and several members of the Nanaimo Historical Society have on-going coal-mining-related research projects. ♦

Gabriola after the lights went on—by E. Joyce White

On July 20, 1955, electricity came to the Island. It was goodbye to cooking on woodstoves and lighting homes with oil lamps; and hello to refrigeration and running water. It also paved the way for the coming television and computer age. The population then was a little under 400.

Population growth on Gabriola remained low in the 1950s and 60s; averaging only 1% a year, but in the 1970s there was a sudden and rapid increase in growth and the population tripled in just over ten years. It was a time of great change in North America, a change that in large part was fuelled by the Vietnam War. People were rejecting traditional values and dropping out from society. The slogan was "make love not war" and the "hippie" movement was born.