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Gabriola, summer

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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”.

The drought of the 1930s—by Nick Doe

In Jenni Gehlbach’s article on diatomaceous earth in the last issue of *SHALE*,¹ she noted that when the mining took place in Dutchmans Swamp² in 1939, it was dry. Not only that, the diatomaceous earth was only discovered after there had been a fire. Now, this is strange because nowadays, the swamp—some call it a “pond”—retains some surface water throughout the year.

This reminded me that the 1930s were of course a time of drought; there were widespread crop failures and mass migrations out of the Great Plains, and it was in 1938 that there was a big wildfire here on the island.³

In a paper on multi-year droughts published in 2004,⁴ the authors describe how they looked at tree-ring data from thirty-two sites in the watershed of the Columbia River and by figuring out the relationship between tree-ring data and flows in the river, they could use the tree-ring data to deduce what the flows in the river must have been in years before anyone was recording them.

¹ *SHALE* 24, p.22, June 2010.

² Between Berg Road and Dunshire Drive. Also known as Eppers Swamp or Epps Pond.

³ June Lewis-Harrison, *The People of Gabriola*, pp.255–6, 1982.

⁴ Z. Gedalof, D.L. Peterson, & N.J. Mantua, *Columbia river flow and drought since 1750*, Journal of the American Water Resources Association, pp.1579–1592, December 2004.

The authors surmise that there have been six multi-year droughts between 1750 and 1950. These were in 1772–1778, 1800–1808, 1840–1852, 1888–1892, 1920–1928, and 1931–1940. Since 1950, we have not had a significant multi-year drought. The drought of the 1930s was second in severity and persistence only to the twelve-year long drought in the 1840s.

While perhaps of no significance, it was probably in the 1840s that the Snunéymux^w abandoned their village on False Narrows as a year-round settlement.⁵ While it is impossible to predict when a drought of such duration will occur again, the authors of the paper say that it can only be a matter of time before there is one. ◇

Augusts on Gabriola Island

Daily Colonist, August 15, 1878.

Nanaimo: Extensive bush fires are raging throughout the entire district. A very large one is devastating the country between Wellington and South Wellington Railway, and the works on the latter railway are said to be in imminent danger. ...If the high winds of the past few days continue, the citizens will have to take some steps to prevent the fires spreading to the city. Up the Nanaimo River and on Gabriola Island large fires are burning.

Victoria Daily Colonist, August 16, 1904.

Nanaimo: Last Saturday night the lofty bluffs of Gabriola Island presented a curious and splendid spectacle across the four miles of water which intervenes between them and this city. Along their whole length a bush

⁵ *SHALE* 4, p.5–8, June 2002.

fire was raging, and as pine trees loaded with gum were reached these flamed up to their topmost branches like gigantic torches. A number of them were blazing at once and the sight was most remarkable. There is absolutely no sign of rain at present, and the danger not only to outlying settlements of destruction by fire but also in the city itself is continually present.

Nanaimo Free Press, August 9, 1929.

Whist Drive Held in Log House to Swell Community Hall Funds. On Wednesday evening Mr. and Mrs. Castrie opened the doors of their Log House at Taylor Bay to a whist drive in aid of the Gabriola Community Hall fund.

The drive proved a big success, and the funds reimbursed to a great extent. Mrs. Trill won the ladies' prize, and Mr. D. McConvey the gents' prize, and the booby being won by Miss Eastham and Mr. C. Williams.

Mr. J. Rivers supervised the evening's entertainment, which he handled in a very efficient manner, while the refreshments, which were done full justice to, were given out by Mrs. Westholme, Mrs. Trill and Miss Lena McConvey.

{The next article below this is headlined
Graf Zeppelin Nearing The English Coast}

Nanaimo Free Press, August 16, 1929, {a front-page article}.

Entertained at Gabriola Home. Mrs. Florence Darling, of Vancouver, who is at present spending the vacation season at her summer home, North Gabriola, yesterday entertained to an afternoon tea in honor of her mother, a recent arrival from Montreal.

The tea tables were tastefully decorated with a profusion of flowers, and were presided over by Mrs. Harold Darling.

Among those present were Mrs. Lawrence, Mrs. Howie, Mrs. Bennett, [Mrs. ?] Castree, Mrs. Coates Sr., and Mrs. Coates Jr.

Nanaimo Free Press, August 29, 1930.

Gabriola Island Residents Will Hold Big Picnic. On Monday the residents of Gabriola Island will hold a community picnic at Taylor Bay. This is the first gathering of the Island residents for many years, and it is the intention of the sponsors to make it an annual affair.

An elaborate program of sporting events has been arranged by the committee in charge which will occupy most of the afternoon. Included on the program will be a tug of war contest between North and South Gabriola Island teams, and the greasy pole.

A dance platform has also been constructed, and will be the scene of the evening's entertainment.

Nanaimo Free Press, September 3, 1930.

Big Day at Gabriola Island on Monday. In common with other sections of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, the residents of Gabriola Island on Monday celebrated Labor Day with a big program of events held at Community Park, Taylor Bay, North Gabriola.

There was a large attendance of Island residents and in addition many Nanaimo citizens were present and enjoyed the program of events which was one of the best ever held on the Island. The various events, including racing for adults and children, were keenly contested, the feature of the program being the obstacle racing. Success was due to a great extent to the efforts of Mr. Ware and his band of willing helpers, also to Mr. R. Easthom who was judge and whose decisions were favorably received.

Mr. George Castry⁶ had the dance floor in splendid shape for the evening, a two-piece orchestra adding to the entertainment. The committee feels grateful to Nanaimo business men, who by reason of giving prizes for the

⁶ Castrie, Castree, or Castry? Wrigley's 1930s BC Directories don't help, but Jack Cox mentions "Castree" in *Gabriola Three Schools' Reunion*.

various events made the success of the celebration possible. ◇

Island old timers—by Martha Hoggan (married to John Holm)

A hand-written note in the Gabriola Archives (1996.008.04). I've edited or inserted other words as indicated by square brackets. Braces indicate notes in the margin in Martha's handwriting. ED.

[Here's] what I remember first about the folks on the Island. There were very few white women Mrs. Jackie Foster, W. Stephenson's grandma (also a Joe Foster, Taylor Bay, wife Indian); a Miss Jemmison who lived with her two brothers; Mrs. J. Eastham [Easthom], Dick's mother, later married. [text confusing here] Hyme my mother (7 children at the lake) & my father [Alexander's] first wife's sister from Glasgow. There were a few bachelors and widows. Mr. Sabbason, the [pilot] at Taylor Bay, who brought the ships in. Mike Mannly [Manly], where Dick Eastham lived, an Irish bachelor. Mr. Rollo & his two sons, John & George. Jimmies grandfather. Mr. LeBuff [LeBœuf], [widower], one son, two daughters, [Indian mother]. William McDougal, [bachelor] Scotch. Mr. & Mrs. McLay and family all white. Mr. J. White Pemberton [Penberthy], Alaskan Indian wife, one son, two daughters. Mr. John Gemmel [Gimmelle], bachelor Scotch. Mr. McGuffy [McGuffie], Indian wife, two boys, two girls. Mr. Chappel [Chapple], Indian wife, two boys, one girl. Mr. Edgar, Indian wife, two boys, four girls. John Martin, Indian wife, large family. (Son & daughter of [pilot] and Indian...?). Jim Gray (½ Indian) married white woman, two sons, twin daughters. Harry Peterson, wife ½ Indian, was a [Boer] from [South Africa], large family. (Sister to Jim Gray). John Silva, [Portuguese], Indian wife. Harry Ogarr [?], [Degnen]'s Bay, bachelor. Mr. Crass [?Cross, also Degnen Bay] bachelor.

This was all that lived there at that time. I think that is all I can recall, till new folks started to move in, and the children got married.

p.s. These were on Gabriola when Uncle Dave & William came to the lake or soon after. [ca 1872, but some names are later than that]

p.s. There used to be a man by the name of Barney who lived on [Coats?] place and had two cabins, one by May's house and one in the woods over by the back bays. He just lived with the woods all around his log cabins, and when the Indians came, he [ran] through the woods to the other cabin till the Indians had left. That is the story told to my parents, but we used the cabin by May's for years, and I have played in the other one. ◇

Beautiful Gabriola—anonymous

The following article appeared in the *Beautiful British Columbia* magazine in 1961.⁷ As will become obvious as you read it, this is not a recommended account of the Spanish naval visits in the 18th century—the author has garbled that and other parts of Gabriola's history, and the geology needs revising too—but it is an interesting read nevertheless. It also gives me an excuse to print the picture that accompanied the original article. For those that don't know, “panther” is the old name for a cougar. They were once fairly common on the island.

Gabriola Island

Gabriola Island, four miles offshore from Nanaimo, is steeped in history and has a variety of enchanting sights to appeal to the most discriminating visitor.

⁷ *Beautiful British Columbia—Land of New Horizons*, Winter 1961, pp.35–36.