

Context:

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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.

The Gulf Islands' mild climate was a magnet to this back-to-the-land group advocating self-sufficiency. On Gabriola, a hippie community sprang up on Coho Drive. Tsiporah Grignon, one of the original hippies recalls the early days on Coho as being something special, and husband Paul adds, "we literally needed each other because none of us had the resources to survive by ourselves".

When the Vietnam War ended, the hippie movement seemed to lose momentum. On Gabriola, it went out with a whimper more than a bang. Paul says, "as we became more affluent, we lost the community we had in the beginning". Having learned how to cope for themselves, many turned their acquired entrepreneurial skills to making a living in the business world they had forsaken.

Population growth on Gabriola in the eighties continued, although at a slower rate than in the 1970s. By the middle of the decade, it had reached 2000, half its current value.

With the aid of a Provincial Government Grant and money loaned by residents plus 6000 hours of volunteer labour and 1256 hours of equipment time, Gabriola got its own par-72 golf course. This is on land around Hoggan Lake leased to the Club by Clyde Coats. Designed professionally by Dan Kitsal, it took three years to complete and opened in 1981. The Clubhouse's log building is constructed from trees cleared on the site.

In the late 1980s, BC Tel brought in more telephone lines; a great boon to many residents, making it possible to gradually phase out party lines. It was an end to the frustration of waiting patiently to make a call while a verbose party line member "hogged the line".

The nineties brought great changes, starting with the building of Folklife Village, formerly the Folklife Pavilion at Vancouver's Expo '86. The columns, trusses, fixtures, etc., of the dismantled pavilion lay neglected in a farmer's field in Delta for several years until entrepreneur Steve Wohlleben bought them. Steve had them barged to Descanso Bay, then re-assembled on the site at Lockinvar and North Road. Tenants moved into the reconstructed buildings in 1992.

For the first time, Gabriola had a full-scale supermarket, dental office, and a pharmacy. It was no longer a necessity to go to town for the week's groceries and dental appointments, or to meet the 6.30 pm ferry to pick up prescriptions, phoned over to Nanaimo by the local doctor. Eventually, the dental office moved to the professional building across the street and the Vancouver Island Library took its place.

The last half of the 20th century saw many changes, in a large part made possible by that July day in 1955 when "the lights went on". ◇

Placenames—by Nick Doe

BEACON HILL

In the new, yet-to-be-named, 707-acre park in the northwest centre of Gabriola, there is a hill from which one can see parts of Nanaimo Harbour and the Strait of Georgia. The top of the hill is known by some as the LOOK-OUT, an apt name so long as the new generations of trees, particularly alder, following the clear-cutting are still young. Just for the record though, in talking to Tim Brown, who was born on Gabriola and who helped log the area with Beban Logging in the 1930s, I learned that he knows it as Beacon Hill.