

[Called by File 515](#)

THESE ARE ARCHIVED FILES written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolore” and originally posted on his website: <http://www.gabriolore.ca/>. These are now mirrored at <http://gabriolan.ca/author/gabriolore/>. They are re-posted here without readers’ comments to ensure that at least the files are always available. Some of the photographs in these files have been recovered from archives and restored.

Opinions expressed in these notes are those of the original poster and author.

[Brickyard Hill](#)

South Road

[Ferry Hill](#)[Gabriola Sands](#)[George Street and Whalley](#)

Mander Estates

Hyham Road

[Gossip Corner](#)[The Grande on Peterson Bay](#)

Dragons Lane

Eva Road

Kevan Drive

Tamala Drive

Thomas Place

[Hippy Hollow](#)

Blueback Circle

Blueback Drive

Coho Drive

Grisle Road

Howes Heritage

Tyee Drive

[McClay \(McLay\) Hill](#)

Centre Road

North Road

[Morleyville](#)

Brydie Avenue

Colleen Road

North Road

[Pat Burns Avenue](#)

Harrison Estates

[Petroglyph Way](#)[Phase IV & the Firehall Trail](#)[Preachers Hill](#)[Rosislos Boulevard](#)[Sir William and St. Catherine](#)[Tansy Drive](#)[Tin Can Alley](#)[The “Tunnel”](#)

North Road

[Turkey Shoot Road](#)

Tait Road

[Whalebone Beach Estates](#)

Barrett Road

## THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on June 1, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

### **Brickyard Hill**

This long hill on South Road takes you over Gabriola’s ridge, past Wharf Road and down to Brickyard Beach, where South meets Ferne Road. The name came from the old brickyard that operated at the bottom of the hill and was a busy place in the first half of the 1900s. It eventually ran out of material and a market for the bricks. The history of the brickyard has been recorded by more than one student of Gabriola history, and old photos show some of our early residents at work there. When a huge cement company bought out the company that owned the old brick factory, they got all the land with it. It had no real value to them and eventually it fell into the hands of a former company executive, who was given the land as a retirement bonus of sorts. He held it for a while but has since sold most of it in bits and pieces.

One interesting tale about the thousands of discarded bricks that were left in the area after the brickyard closed, involves an enterprising young Gabriola roofer—Steve—who saw an opportunity. He paid locals cash for any and all the bricks they could bring him, and many ‘under-employed’ islanders took him up on it. They gleaned thousands of discarded bricks from the area around brickyard beach, and Steve stockpiled them and sold them to the local builders and bricklayers for a profit. Many homes on the island (including Steve’s) feature reclaimed bricks from the old brickyard in their fireplaces and hearths.



Cyclists may second guess their choice of direction when they look up this hill.

Cyclists know the hill as a challenge to ride, and it is always discussed when debating the best direction to go when riding around the island. Many feel it is easier to go up 'brickyard' and get the climb over with (relatively) quickly, rather than the long hill from the Maples up to the South End Fire Hall. Try it both ways and see for yourself. ◇

[RETURN](#)

## THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on July 20, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

### Ferry Hill



If the large and tacky 'liquor store next left' sign doesn't turn you off, the daunting hill just might.

One of the most effective barriers to being over-run by pedestrians from 'the outside world' is the ferry hill. The rise from the ferry dock to the post office can be a challenge to anyone who is not used to it, or carrying a few extra pounds. Since ferries operate pretty much at sea level, and the gulf islands are fairly elevated, ferry hills of varying degrees are quite common on this coast. During those rare spells of real nasty winter weather, maintaining the ferry hill for traffic is a challenge, and our local highways crew is usually right on top of it. Between the inexperienced winter drivers, the rush for the ferry, and the balding summer tires on many local vehicles, loss of traction on that hill would spell disaster.

Gabriola's ferry hill was established very early on in the settlement of the north end of island. Half-way up the hill, to the right, a millstone quarry used to operate, and the road went at least that far. Initially, much of Gabriola's original development was at the south end of the island, where agriculture was the prime activity. People came and went from Degnen Bay, Silva Bay and The Maples (a lost dock at the south-east tip of the island). The north end development was primarily driven by the quarry work along the ferry hill and up Easthom Road, and by the first recreational developments that evolved along the shoreline at Gabriola Sands and out Berry Point Road, via the Taylor Bay Road. The ferry hill soon forged its way up to South Road and things developed from there, with the arrival of the north end post office and later the T&T – which is a whole story in itself.



Twenty-odd years ago, when the ferry ramp was a little simpler and more accessible, it was not uncommon to have some wild stunts off the end of the ramp – maybe on New Years or Halloween. Some alcohol/testosterone-charged lad would go blasting down the ferry hill on an old bike, through the opened gate, and off the ferry ramp, to the delight of anyone waiting for the ferry. One eccentric gent – Yuri – was also a sight to see – his long hair flying and a violin under his arm - on a unicycle – coasting down the hill. He didn't jump off the ramp, but he may play his fiddle if you were lucky. ◇

## THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on May 22, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

## Gabriola Sands



Gabriola's most accessible beaches are right here, and they attracted some of the earliest recreational development on the island.

This little peninsula—complete with an isthmus—has some of the island’s nicest waterfront and it is no surprise that it was developed very early on in the history of the island. City folks from Victoria and Vancouver who were looking for a nice summer getaway back in the fifties and sixties discovered Gabriola and its relatively inexpensive waterfront. This area was ideal, with nice beaches and moorage and not all that far away from civilization. The Gabriola Sands development divided up the little peninsula into many half-acre ‘recreational’ lots. The fact that water was scarce in that area did not seem to matter, and many summer cottages were built here. Over the years most of them have become full-fledged homes with many swanky waterfront places barely visible from the road. There are still many little summer cabins to be found as well, tucked away behind the greenery.

It is a unique part of the island and a great peninsula to circumnavigate as a beachcomber. At low tide, one can park at Gabriola Sands Provincial Park—known colloquially as ‘Twin Beaches’—and follow the shoreline around from one side to the other. There are the two bays—Pilot Bay (the ‘pilot’ boats used to moor there waiting for freighters heading to Nanaimo Harbour) facing the Georgia Strait, and Taylor Bay facing Nanaimo.

You may get your feet wet if you miss the beach access and the tide sneaks up on you, but that’s not the end of the world. Twin Beaches is the island’s busiest beach in the summer, and many

spoiled locals bemoan the ‘crowds’ and head for more secluded spots. Note: over a dozen people could qualify as a ‘crowd’ on Gabriola.

If you want to get temporarily ‘lost’ on Gabriola, try driving around the Sands at night looking for an address. Every street looks the same and one crescent seems to be everywhere in the green maze. ◇



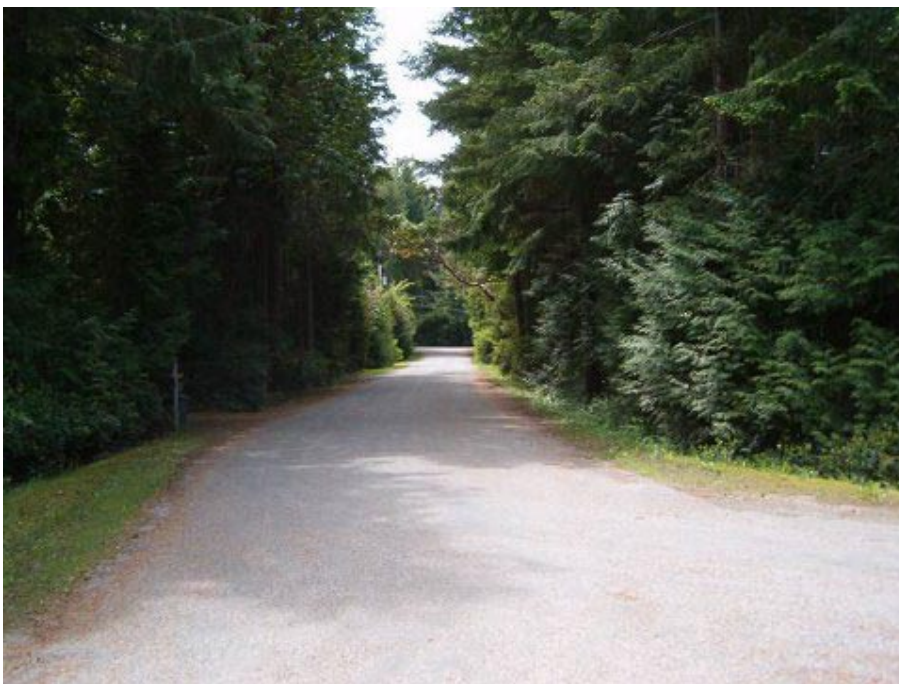
Have we been here before?



Does this look familiar?



Left or right?



We should have turned right...





We should have turned left....

[RETURN](#)

**THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE**

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on July 9, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

**George Street and Whalley**

“I love blondes – no matter what colour their hair is”.

Many of Gabriola’s seasoned veterans will instantly recognize that as a quote from one of the island’s most colourful characters—Walter Krull. He built houses and barns and roads and just about whatever you wanted back in the days when tradesmen were as scarce as building permits.

When the Mander family did a small subdivision—Mander Estates—off Stalker Road, they decided to name one of the roads they created after the charming Walter. ‘Whalley Road’ runs off Stalker Road and was a dead-end until recently when Hyham Road was created to access some new waterfront properties that appeared as a result of the uncharacteristic subdivision of an old farm.



Whalley Rd, named after Walter Krull, runs off Stalker Road and connects it to the newly created Hyham Road.

Walter himself owned some land close to Silva Bay and did a small subdivision of his own off Marvin Road. When it came time to name the new road, Walter was not around to talk to the highways department inspector—but his neighbour George Detweiller was, and now we have George Road. That is a case of being in the right place at the right time. ◇

[RETURN](#)

**THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE**

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on August 17, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

**Gossip Corner**

This corner has a very 'south end' feel to it, winding between a farm and a bay.

The old Garry Oak on South Road, near Martin Road is the centrepiece of Gossip Corner, where folks met to get their mail and shoot the breeze. Before North Road went all the way to Silva Bay, South Road was the route to take and one of the early stops for Gabriola's postal delivery was at this corner in the road, just steps away from the head of Degnen Bay. Someone built a bench under the oak tree and it became a regular meeting place for the south-end folks. It didn't hurt that there were blackberries and fruit trees nearby either, and the old MacDonald farm (perhaps not the one of nursery-rhyme fame) was right there as well.



Maybe someone will repair the old bench at Gossip Corner—so folks can sit and talk about it.

It is a good bet that the earliest settlers on the island liked that area too. One of the few petroglyphs found along the shore is only a few metres away, suggesting that the rock-carver likely spent plenty of time in that area, where good soil, freshwater, great fishing, and a sheltered bay—rich with clams and oysters—are all close by. ◇

[RETURN](#)

**THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE**

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on June 24, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

**The Grande on Peterson Bay**

Fifty-five years old, the Grande perches on the rocks overlooking Peterson Bay - and the entire south coast.

In the 1950s, an ambitious fellow named Len Dobinson decided to build a hotel on a large parcel of land he had bought from old ‘Doc’ Nichols a few years earlier. At the time, there was no electricity on Gabriola, and the hotel was built largely by hand and with chainsaws.

It was perched on a rocky bluff at the edge of the water with great views up and down the Strait of Georgia. The rather unique design featured a wood frame building, but faced with vertical logs. It was done without the kind of permitted and inspected regimen that builders face today. Part of the work on the land included the creation of a tidal pool—a definite no-no in today’s world of shoreline protection.

Dobinson soon sold the building with about 80 acres of waterfront land, to Tom and Eva Shaw, who operated the ‘Grande Hotel’ for many years. Old-timers will remember the beautiful old shuffleboard, and the jukebox that was full of old Elvis hits from the early ’60s. Tom was not an especially good hotelier—gruff and unkempt most of the time, but his wife Eva made up for it.

She was a gregarious and cheerful woman who loved visitors, but she could not make up for Tom’s nasty attitude—and the fact that there was hardly a market for a hotel on Gabriola in the

'60s. He slowly subdivided and sold the land to stay afloat. The resulting roads he named after himself and his family, so we now have Thomas Place, Eva Road, Tamala Road, and Kevan Drive.

During Shaw's ownership of the Grande, he was approached by a Hollywood movie producer who wanted to do a remake of 'The Hounds of the Baskervilles'. Initially old Tom approved—allegedly for a tidy sum—but reneged on the deal after the shooting started. He apparently did not like the behaviour of the show-biz folks. Eventually—many years later, and under new ownership—the Grande was used as a site for a bit in one of the 'Scary Movie' series and a



mock lighthouse was temporarily erected on the property for the 30-second scene.

Peterson Bay - shown here at low tide -is accessible via a trail at the end of Dragon's Lane.

Another infamous incident occurred at the old Grande, when a pair of bank robbers from the east chose to hide out at the old hotel with their suitcase-full of cash. They checked in and then made a trip to Nanaimo—leaving their booty stashed in the room. Eva Shaw 'discovered' the satchel of cash under the bed and reported it to police, who captured the crooks upon their return from town.

Eventually Shaw went bankrupt, and in the late '80s the hotel and remaining land was bought for around \$350k from the bank, by an easterner who promised great things. He did some cosmetic renovation and turned the old 18 room derelict hotel into a private residence and then subdivided and sold off most of the remaining land. He fancied himself as a bit of a financial dragon, and named the new road Dragon's Lane. Although the name has changed on the land, all the local fishermen still refer to the the deep water 'off the Grande'.

The place changed hands again, and today the property is the backdrop for many photographs, as the new owners have found a niche market, offering the hotel as a venue for weddings and other group events. It is booked up for most summer weekends, as the ever-changing signs and balloons at the corner of Dragon's Lane and North Road will attest. ◇

[RETURN](#)

THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on January 4, 2011 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

## Hippy Hollow



The trees have grown, the houses are bigger, and the prices are much higher than they were forty-odd years ago in this quiet Gabriola neighbourhood.

When half-acre lots were offered for ‘fifty dollars down and fifty dollars a month’, it did not take a lot of income to buy one—‘unemployment insurance’ would even suffice. It was no wonder that the lots along Coho Drive were attractive to many of the folks visiting the Gulf Islands in the early 70s. To those from the east, it seemed like a paradise—and a bargain to boot.

One of the first would-be residents was a young lad from Ontario who chanced upon the island in 1971. Visiting an acquaintance on Thompson Road, he spotted the “Lots for Sale” sign. He didn’t quite have the \$50 with him, but a five-dollar deposit held it for a week until he raised the other \$45 for the down payment. Try buying a lot today with a five-dollar deposit.

The price and the financing deal attracted several free-thinking folks, and before long there was an assortment of homes—from tents and small sheds to full sized houses, springing up.

“Celebration house” was one of the first of the bigger homes and became a neighbourhood gathering place for the small group of like-minded folks who made up the small and fairly close-knit community that came to be known as ‘Hippy Hollow’. Some of them are still there today,



and although they may have less hair and nicer cars, they are still part of what makes Gabriola what it is. ◇



One of the few small-lot subdivisions on the south end of the island, this area has very few empty lots left - which is no surprise.

[RETURN](#)

**THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE**

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on March 8, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

**McClay (McLay) Hill**

This hill on North Road has a history worth noting. Although often mistakenly called ‘Horseshoe Hill’, this is where North Road really started. McClay Hill starts just past Bertha—if you are heading towards the South End—just past where old ‘Centre Road’ used to cut along the top of the ridge that the hill runs down. Centre Road was the old logging road that right down the centre of the island, eventually connecting with Degnen Road.



North Road as it heads up McClay Hill



North Road as it heads down McClay Hill

When the time came to develop a real road to the south end, the road builders of the day chose to take the odd route down on to the lower shelf, following the laneway to the McClay Farm on the shelf of land that lay below the ridge. That meant North Road had to come up again (at Tait's Hill beyond Buttercup...another story) which was really not the best route for the main road.

Centre Road was the better route—avoiding the up and down elevation, but politics and road-building are often hand-in-hand, and it is thought that the more expensive road had benefits for road builders and would-be developers, who wanted closer access to the future Whalebone development along the north-east shore of the island.

Regardless of the wisdom of the choice, North Road now runs down McClay Hill and turns sharply left at the bottom. That sharp left turn took the lives of at least two men on a Sunday night several years ago, when a summer party weekend ended in disaster. It is a circus during heavy snowfalls, and many a driver has ended up in the ditch along this stretch of road. To many cell-phone users, halfway down McClay Hill is when you lose your signal—which is a good thing. You should be driving. ◇

[RETURN](#)

**THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE**

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on April 2, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

**Morleyville**

North Road at Brydie is “downtown” Morleyville



Barks missing...from the tree and the dog that died in the crash

“Back in the day” it didn’t take much to get attention on Gabriola. When a fellow named Don Morley built a couple of houses on this stretch of North Road, the area was christened ‘Morleyville’ by the local wags. He went on to build five or six homes along there and the name stuck—although many of those living there now may not be aware of it.

Unofficially, Morleyville is that stretch of North Road between Barrett Road and Colleen where a small half-acre-lot subdivision took place in the 1960s. Nearly all of the lots have been developed now, and most of Morley’s houses remain—renovated and rejuvenated from their original construction. Mr.Morley eventually left the island—under a bit of a cloud according to some, who allege he cryptically changed his name for reasons unknown.

With more pedestrians about, commuters from the south end who regularly pass through Morleyville should know enough to slow down for the kids, pets, and trees. Not many years ago, a speeding south-end commuter made the news when he hit one of the many large and unforgiving trees that grow very close to the road in Morleyville. The scar on the tree will be there for a long time. ◇

[RETURN](#)

**THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE**

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolore”. It was originally posted on March 23, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolore.ca/>.

**Pat Burns Avenue**

At least one deck on Pat Burns Ave has this view of Nanaimo's Mt. Benson

Depending on your age and inclinations, Pat Burns is either a hockey coach or a controversial radio talk-show host from Vancouver. As far as the local avenue in the ‘Harrison Estates’ development—Gabriola’s largest subdivision—the late radio personality is the man for whom it was named.

Not only did the once-popular radio host have a fine avenue named after him, he earned a lot or two into the bargain for his part in the promotion of the 600+ lot development in the 1960s.

Blasting across the airwaves of CJOR, Burns would plug the Gulf Island development regularly, and would-be buyers were offered flights over the island to see the wonderful half-acre lots that were for sale at bargain-basement prices.

Burns became a radio sensation primarily through his entertaining—almost abusive—style. He had many unpopular views—but he never enjoyed the view from his property on Pat Burns Avenue. The lots were sold several years ago without Mr. Burns ever having enjoyed life on the island.

Several years ago, a group of local residents (presumably from Pat Burns Ave) petitioned to have the name changed to 'Madrona' but have not yet succeeded. Perhaps too controversial? ◇

[RETURN](#)

THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on August 1, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

## Petroglyph Way



Petroglyph Way, at the end of Crocker Road, is in the middle of lots of large acreages. The small trail that connects it to South Road is not visible in this image.

This short road was put in in the late 90's to serve three large acreages created after some of the fabled 'Weldwood' lands were sold and developed. Since some known petroglyphs were not far away, it was expected that some would be found on this land. When the logging took place, large areas of smooth sandstone—an ideal canvas for stone carvings—were exposed.

Experts from the University of Victoria came up to search the land for any signs of the ancient graffiti. They found nothing and approved the subdivision.

The real *trail* is a narrow dedicated right-of-way that runs from the new road, between the acreages, to the site of some of the island's most accessible petroglyphs, on the land adjacent to the United Church on South Road. Although the strip of land was dedicated by the developer, hands-on members of the local trails organization (GaLTT) maintain the trail through it. By connecting to South Road, the trail is an important link in a series of trails that allow hikers and cyclists to get up and down the island and stay off the beaten track.





This trail leads towards South Road from Petroglyph Way

If you want to get a sense of how long it takes Gabriola to regenerate, take a walk down this trail. The land it passes through was cleared of all marketable timber in late 1996. All that remained standing were a scant few fir trees, some arbutus, and a smattering of alder and maple. Fourteen years later, much of it is looking pretty lush.

One of the acreages is being turned into a '*Small Species Sanctuary*' by its owner, who rescued it from being totally overgrown by the invasive broom—which he spent months pulling out by hand. With some simple techniques—primarily seeding the open land with some grains/grasses, the land is attracting lots of wildlife up and down the food chain, and becoming a gorgeous patch of gulf island ecosystem. It is different than the old forest, but no less beautiful. ◇

[RETURN](#)

THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on June 12, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

## Phase IV & the Firehall Trail



If you know where to find them, lots of nice trails lead to Phase Four



If you get your mail here – you probably live in Phase Four



The forest is changing around this portion of the old firehall trail, as arbutus and alder start to take over....for now.

When Wildwood Developments (and others) were busy cutting Gabriola into half-acre lots (before the establishment of the Island's Trust) they were doing so in 'phases'. The last phase took place off Berry Point Road and up Norwich hill to Chelwood. The "Phase Four" developers went for the tree-named streets (Tamarack, Balsam, Spruce, Hemlock, Larch, and Jackpine). It was considered a bit 'out of the way' and took a little longer than some phases to develop.

The name may not be the most romantic, but it stuck—perhaps because it was the last phase and because it was so easily identifiable.

During a particularly robust boom in the early 1990s, while land in that area was still pretty cheap, one prolific home builder—Gordon Stevens—bought several lots in Phase Four and built 'spec homes' for the burgeoning real estate market. Had he done so a few years earlier, that area may well have become 'Stevensville'. A half dozen of his houses helped make up that little community that marks the last of the half-acre-lot subdivisions on Gabriola Island.

Things may change for Phase Four if the Church Road–Spruce Road connection takes place. In the mid 90s the entire subdivision was completely cut off from the rest of the island as a result of a particularly nasty windstorm that took down several huge trees along Berry Point Road. Effectively cut off from emergency services for over 24 hours, residents were justifiably concerned. If the proposed extension of Church Road takes place, Phase Four will be much more accessible from the village of Gabriola.

For many years—until the late eighties, and before Church Road existed, the 'firehall trail' cut through from behind the firehall to the end of Spruce, across an eighty acre parcel of heavily

forested private land—owned by Weldwood at one point. When in good enough shape, the trail was used by the fire department, and anyone else who had decent tires, lots of clearance, and a bit of nerve. It was the local shortcut to and (especially) from ‘the Surf’ late at night, when one wished to avoid the main roads. The trail went up and down hills and valleys and wound through the old forest—and through a few puddles that were big enough for fish.

One certainly did not want to meet a vehicle coming the other way. Most trips on the ‘firehall trail’ were an adventure. Portions are still used for a walking and cycling shortcut today, but it is still on private property—for now. ◇

[RETURN](#)

**THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE**

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on March 11, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

**Preachers Hill**

Looking down Preacher's Hill to Degnan Bay

This hill at the south end of Peterson Road rises up from South Road. Before the last section of North Road was finished in the '70s, folks heading to Silva Bay from the ferry would take Peterson to South and then on to Silva Bay. One wet spring, the Preacher who came to give the service at the Log Church, got stuck in the mud on his way back home. Of course, some locals came and pulled him out—with horses I was told—and the hill became known as Preacher's Hill after that.

Verona (Lucille) Martin, who's family were early settlers here, told me that story. She lived on a nice acreage on South Road near the south end Fire Hall, and she used to sell apples up until the late '80s. She had a few tales about the South End and that was one of them, which was corroborated by a couple of other old-timers.

Today 'Preacher's Hill is paved and nobody is likely to get stuck—unless we get another big snowstorm. Coming down the hill you get a very nice view of part of Degnen Bay and across Gabriola Passage to Valdes Island. ◇ [RETURN](#)

## THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolore”. It was originally posted on March 23, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolore.ca/>.

### **Rosislos Boulevard**

No conversation about place names on Gabriola Island would be complete without recounting the story of Rosislos Boulevard.

Of course, Realtors have played a part in the development of Gabriola Island and in the ‘60s a city Realtor named Violet Chernoff approached local land-owner Don Ross about selling his land just off Berry Point Road. Ms. Chernoff was part of the 600+ lot ‘Harrison Estates’ development at that time and Mr. Ross was reluctant. The persistent developer convinced him to sell however—for a low price, since ‘only two lots’ would be created out of the acreage.



The view from the top of Rosislos on a hazy day

When the dust settled, over 20 lots were created—and sold for quite a profit for the wily Ms. Chernoff. To add insult to injury, she named one of the roads she built “Rosislos” to remind Mr. Ross of his “loss”.

Fortunately Mr. Ross was recognized at a later date by another Realtor—Bert Hill—who named Ross Way after him in what was considered ‘uptown’ Gabriola. ◇ [RETURN](#)

THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on August 8, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

## Sir William and St. Catherine



If you manage to find this sign, you could probably find the trail to the sea.

One notable (or notorious) Gabriola pioneer was Bill Coats, who has been described as a handyman, farmer, and entrepreneur. According to two books on the subject, he worked for the infamous Brother Twelve – a cult leader from the early 1900's who bamboozled many gullible folks out of their money and operated a commune of sorts on DeCourcy Island. One of Coates ventures on Gabriola was an attempt to generate electricity on the island. He was close to completing his hydro plant, using the water from Hoggan Lake that he diverted over the bluff on his land, to generate the power. Of course, BC Hydro had shown no interest in supplying the island previously, but immediately began putting up poles and wires when Coats got close to finishing his project, and beat him to the punch.

Bill Coats came to own a considerable amount of land on the island, including the sandstone quarry above Descanso Bay. When his son Clyde subdivided one parcel the family owned between Degnan Bay and Gabriola Passage – at the end of Martin Road – he named the resulting

roads Sir William and St.Catherine, after his father Bill and mother Catherine. Obviously Coats Road bears the family name, but as yet there is no Clyde Road on Gabriola...just Clyde.



It may LOOK like a private drive, but that small lane is on a public road allowance that goes right to the beach, just steps away from Drumbeg Park.

One notable (or notorious) Gabriola pioneer was Bill Coats, who has been described as a handyman, farmer, and entrepreneur. According to two books on the subject, he worked for the infamous Brother Twelve – a cult leader from the early 1900's who bamboozled many gullible folks out of their money and operated a commune of sorts on DeCourcy Island. One of Coates ventures on Gabriola was an attempt to generate electricity on the island. He was close to completing his hydro plant, using the water from Hoggan Lake that he diverted over the bluff on his land, to generate the power. Of course BC Hydro had shown no interest in supplying the island previously, but immediately began putting up poles and wires when Coats got close to finishing his project, and beat him to the punch.

Bill Coats came to own a considerable amount of land on the island, including the sandstone quarry above Descanso Bay. When his son Clyde subdivided one parcel the family owned between Degnan Bay and Gabriola Passage – at the end of Martin Road – he named the resulting roads Sir William and St.Catherine, after his father Bill and mother Catherine. Obviously Coats Road bears the family name, but as yet there is no Clyde Road on Gabriola...just Clyde. ◇

[RETURN](#)



## THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on April 27, 2010 on his website: <http://www.Gabriolare.ca/>.

## Tansy Drive



These get pulled out of my neighbourhood every year

Every August the Tansy Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaeae*) blooms on the island, and although the small clustered bright yellow blossoms are attractive enough—the plant is considered a noxious weed that can poison livestock. Traces are also found in honey produced in areas with a high concentration of this invasive weed.

My first clue that this was not a welcome plant came over 20 years ago, when I would notice Eric Boulton, from Somerset Farm, pulling tansy ragwort from the roadsides near his farm every August, and tossing them on the pavement. I have followed his example ever since, and encourage everyone to do the same. Ragwort is very easy to pull out (unlike broom) and since each plant can produce upwards of 150,000 seeds—pulling out the blooming plants can make a big difference.

The plant is known by many other names around the planet. The unpleasant smell of the blossoms inspired the names ‘Stinking Willie’ and ‘Mare’s Fart’. Not exactly the ideal bloom for a romantic bouquet.

Tansy Drive is another story. It was built in the ‘80’s—through the site of the old ‘Carr’ farm, which was then owned by Fred Carter. Carter developed the land into several parcels from five to ten acres in size. The subdivision was popular, being fairly close to the village, but not too close, and the acreages sold quickly at prices that would make current buyers drool.

Tansy is the name of Fred Carter's daughter, after whom he named the road. Tansy is also the name of another plant in the same family (*Tanacetum vulgare*)—one with a nice fragrance, cute yellow button-like blossoms, and some alleged healing powers. I like to think THAT is the Tansy he named his daughter after. ◇

[RETURN](#)

## THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on May 1, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

## Tin Can Alley



This rather inconspicuous path – directly across from Tin Can Alley – leads to 707 acres of parkland and a network of fantastic trails

When Merv and Annette Sweeny did a subdivision of five-acre view lots along North Road in the late 80s , they offered the community land on which to build a recycling depot. There was a contest to name the road that was built to access the depot, and many entries were filed in the box at ‘D’Pizza’ ( the predecessor to Windeckers/ Suzy’s/ and now Robert’s)

The winning name is a slight variation of an infamous neighbourhood in Manhattan—Tin Pan Alley—that was the centre of the American music industry in the mid to late 1800s. Here, Tin Can Alley is the centre of the Gabriola recycling industry, and the social experience that comes with it.

Many dedicated volunteers man the Gabriola Island Recycling Organization (GIRO) depot every Wednesday and Saturday. They are joined by a procession of recycling islanders, many of whom make it a social event, and linger to chat with friends and neighbours over a bin of

cardboard or plastic. It speaks well of Gabriola's roots as a down-to-earth community—and there are some fine bargains to be had.

Directly across North Road from Tin Can Alley, is an inobtrusive access to Gabriola's 707 acres of community forest. The single track trail leads between some private acreages and ends up connecting to a myriad of trails that wind through this large chunk of Gabriola's hinterland. ◇

[RETURN](#)

## THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on March 9, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

### The “Tunnel”



The “tunnel” is one of Gabriola Island’s nicest features.

This stretch of North Road is probably one of the nicest drives on the planet. Although I have driven it 10,000 times over the last 25 years I am still in love with it, and discover something new about it nearly every trip.

As the name suggest, the road runs through a virtual ‘tunnel’ of trees—thanks to the absence a sixty-six foot right-of-way that accompanies most roads in BC. Like many roads in this province, North Road began as a logging road and it was pushed through private land along the easiest route. With no subdivision of the land, no highway dedication was required and that meant no wide swath of land was given to the province—just the actual roadway. That meant no room for utility poles—which leads to more clearing. The result is a relatively narrow and very scenic stretch of road that really gets you close to the forest—and the deer—who live in the area in great numbers.

‘The Tunnel’ begins just south of Buttercup Road at the top of the ridge, and runs gently downhill all the way to Degnan Road—just over three kilometres. It is a great ride for cyclists, being a gentle rise in one direction, and a fun bit of coasting in the other. On the hottest summer day it is a cool place to be. Take four or five paces off the pavement, and you are in the forest.

One portion runs beside a nature preserve (Elder Cedar) and part of it runs by a large chunk of Federal land that is being held pending the outcome of negotiations with local First Nations.

Although 'the tunnel' has some mention in the last Official Community Plan and some efforts have been made to recognize it as a special part of the island heritage, they fall short of protecting it to the extent required to preserve it. Without careful stewardship and appropriate development restrictions, it will end up as just another ugly swath of pavement and power lines. Islanders should be sure to tell their local representatives that it is an important part of our island culture and a popular stretch of road for locals and visitors alike.

Early one particularly nice Sunday morning a couple of summers ago, a young woman from Tokyo who had been taking a course at a familiar island retreat, was heading to Silva Bay to catch a float plane back to Vancouver. She had heard there were many deer on the island, but she had not yet seen one. I found out that she had actually *never seen a live animal larger than a small dog in her life!* As we went through the tunnel, I drove slower and slower, in hopes of seeing at least one of the dozens that usually appear during the early mornings. Sure enough, a doe and two of her young appeared close to the road and I pointed them out to her. The look on her face was priceless, and tears welled in her eyes as she stared speechless at the trio of deer. I slowed to a stop and we both watched as the little family crossed the road, bounced into the forest, and disappeared. Things got a little misty for me as I realized just how moved this young woman was by those deer. I will never forget the wonder on that woman's face and I will never take my trips through the tunnel and my enumerable deer sightings for granted. ◇

[RETURN](#)

THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolore”. It was originally posted on March 9, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolore.ca/>.

## **Turkey Shoot Road**



The revamped and misnamed Turkey Shoot Road enters the woods off North Road – under the name Tait Road



If you see this flag at the range, you may also hear gunfire, so behave accordingly





This is where Tait Road starts, at the end of Ferne Road. It heads to the range, where the Turkey Shoot begins.

Most locals with any seniority here will know where Turkey Shoot Road is, but the forces of the bureaucracy have chosen to ignore the local wisdom and shun this descriptive and historic name.

The Gabriola Rod and Gun Club established a rifle range on some crown land in the middle of nowhere back in the '70s. It was accessible by logging roads only—one of which came off of North Road in the middle of 'the tunnel'. The road had no official name, but it connected up with a couple of old logging roads and eventually with Tait Road (at the end of Ferne).

Every fall, when the Rod and Gun Club would have their annual turkey shoot, they would post a sign at North Road, pointing down this narrow old logging road towards the rifle range. Of course the rest is history, and it became known as 'Turkey Shoot' Road.

If you were to approach Turkey Shoot Road and the range from South Road, you would take Ferne Road to its end at Tait Road, where you would turn right and drive straight to the range.

Of course, the Tait name has history here too. Most of us know that Betty Tait along with many of her family operated the taxi on the island during the seventies and eighties. It was a more relaxed time, and many fine tales have been told about Tait's taxi days. Betty is still loved by many islanders who experienced her kindness and good nature. The mysterious disappearance of her husband in the early eighties was the subject of much speculation. He has not been found to this day. That is a whole other story.

When some of the large parcels around Turkey Shoot Road changed hands in the '90s, it became an issue that the road was partly on private land, and the province decided to clean things up. They moved one end of the road slightly and promptly named it incorrectly—assuming it was part of Tait Road just because it connected to it. I hope that eventually the mistake will be corrected and the original name will once again be used. ◇

[RETURN](#)

THIS IS AN ARCHIVED FILE

Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolare”. It was originally posted on May 8, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolare.ca/>.

## Whalebone Beach Estates



Whalebone's beach is stony in places, but fun for beachcombers and dog-walkers



Follow Barrett straight to Whalebone Beach via this trail

During the days of the wild west, before the Island's Trust was created to 'preserve and protect' us, the Gulf Islands were considered 'unorganized' and their land use was regulated (or not) by the province of BC. That meant subdivisions had to have a minimum average lot size of only half an acre—roughly forty paces by seventy-five paces. To folks from the city, that was plenty of space, and the lots were bought for 'recreational' use and for investment. One of the nicest of these subdivisions was done by the Great National Land Company—the parent company of Nanaimo Realty. They did the 'Whalebone Beach Estates' on about 120 acres of land along Gabriola's north-east coast. Much of the credit for that development goes to one of Nanaimo's most colourful personalities—the late Mayor Frank Ney.

Frank Ney was a decorated war vet and had a story to tell for everyone he met. He was the founder of Great National Land and Nanaimo Realty, and when they undertook the development along Gabriola's north-east shore he was at the helm. He created a plan that saw nearly every inside lot get frontage on some greenspace or 'park', with plenty of access points. He even sacrificed some waterfront and water-view land in order to give more lots access to the beach.

Over time, these small greenspace/parks have been maintained in varying degrees, from mown to overgrown, providing space to enjoy or privacy. The market was much different then, and one could get a lot with a view—and a cabin—for less than \$4000. Thirty dollars a month would carry the payments on an inside lot with a cabin.

Aside from the physical character and layout of the 'Whalebone Beach Estates', Frank Ney gave it some literary roots by naming most of the streets after characters in Melville's book, 'Moby Dick'. Being accessible only by Barrett Road and its long run down the side of the ridge, 'Whalebone' has evolved into a quiet little island enclave that sees little in the way of traffic and tourists, although savvy islanders know there are beach accesses and nice walks in the area, and some make the trip down Barrett Hill to enjoy them. ◇

[RETURN](#)