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Gehlbach, J., Gabriola's wharves—[The Maples and Degnen Bay](#), *SHALE* 27, pp.18–27, December 2013.

Gehlbach, J., Gabriola's wharves—[Silva Bay](#), *SHALE* 27, pp.28–36, December 2013.

Reeve, P., [More wharves in Silva Bay](#), *SHALE* 28, pp.51–53, June 2014.

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# Gabriola's wharves—the north shore

by Jenni Gehlbach



Patricia Park Wharf in Clark Bay, ca 1913.

Gabriola Museum Archives

The weather and sea can be fierce on the northern shore of Gabriola Island, exposed as it is to the open waters of the Strait of Georgia. Several attempts have been made to build a wharf along this shore, but most haven't lasted more than a few years.

## Wharf at Clark Bay

A photograph in the Gabriola Museum Archives shows an elaborate wooden dock being built on the northern shore of Gabriola—you can see Entrance Island in the background, as well as a two-funnel steamship. A hand-written caption on the photo “Patricia Park Wharf, North Gabriola” seemed mysterious since there’s no such named park. However, Russ Beattie thought that the ship might very well be the early CPR ship *SS Princess Patricia*, which had two funnels. He added that the later

*Princess Patricia* vessel had three, as did the *Princess Victoria*.

Seeing this picture, John Capon, who lives close to that area, wrote: “I once heard that there was a dock at Darling's Point, at the end of Seagirt Road” and George Westarp, who lives on Seagirt, wrote that he too had been told that there had been a wharf at the end of his road, and he had found odd pieces of metal in the rocks there. He also wrote to Nick Doe about this photograph:

“I am almost certain that it is the wharf that was built for the CPR steamers ...at the end of Seagirt Road and succumbed to the winter storms relatively soon after construction. In the background of the photo is Entrance Island when the light was on top of the light keeper's house...

“I would guess that the wharf is post-1912 as that is the date of the subdivision along the shore of Section 22 and properties were bought by people from Vancouver. Some descendants still own summer places in the area. My guess would be that...the wharf was destroyed either before or during the first World War. Afterwards the economics did not justify a rebuild, similar to the abandonment of the CNR line construction to Port Alberni, which stopped at the outbreak of war and was never restarted.”

Confirming one of these inspired “guesses” was a notice found in *The Nanaimo Free Press* dated June 18, 1913:

IN THE MATTER OF THE ‘NAVIGABLE  
WATERS PROTECTION ACT’  
REVISED STATUTES OF CANADA, CHAPTER  
115

“Notice is hereby given that I have deposited in the Land Registry Office at the City of Victoria, British Columbia, and with the Minister of Public Works in Ottawa, Canada, a plan showing a proposed wharf on the foreshore adjoining Lot 5 Block 6, and Lot 12 Block 5 in the subdivision of the North Half of Section 22 and the North Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 23, Gabriola Island, British Columbia, and notice is further given that one month after the date of such deposit I shall apply to the Governor-in-Council for approval of the construction of such proposed wharf.

Dated this 1st day of May, A.D.1913.  
W.G. Morrison,  
Trustee for Gabriola Island Syndicate,  
Vancouver, BC.”

Which leaves us with another intriguing question—who were the Gabriola Island Syndicate? The only other reference I have found to them was in the *Nanaimo Free Press* on May 1, 1911, which printed this:

TOBACCO

“On December 9, 1910, 100 lbs of tobacco leaves was shipped out by a Gabriola Island Syndicate under the name ‘Nanaimo Mixture’.”

Possibly the first Gabriola Island grow op needed a handier shipping point? Anyway, I imagine the newspapers were too busy with the First World War to note the collapse of a Gabriola wharf in a storm.

## Wharf in Peterson Bay?

A 1932 aerial photograph appears to show a substantial wharf in Peterson Bay where the Grande Hotel was built in the 1950s, but the resolution of the picture is very poor and it might just be a natural feature.<sup>1</sup> If there was a wharf there, it would have been built by Henry Peterson, the head of an, in-its-time, well-known, large, and by-all-accounts colourful family. Beyond that, the history of any wharf or wharves in Peterson Bay has now been lost.

## Wharves near Twin Beaches—1920s to 1950s

Pilot Bay and Taylor Bay are sheltered, gently sloped, and sandy-bottomed,<sup>2</sup> so they provide reasonably safe moorage for small craft without the aid of wharves, although in a good blow, boats anchored there are often dragged; however, Pilot Bay was the Spanish Navy’s *Cala del Descanso* and they noted that, despite being less sheltered, it was a better anchorage than the present-day (wrongly-named) Descanso Bay.

<sup>1</sup> It is still known by fishermen and old-timers as the GranDEE despite its demise as a hotel in the late-1980s.

<sup>2</sup> The area is widely known as “Twin Beaches” for obvious reasons, but its official name is the “Gabriola Sands Subdivision”.



Frank Hackwood, who lives on Pilot Bay and whose mother first started coming to Taylor Bay in the 1920s, told me that Pilot Bay in the early days was shallow and a bit too “swampy” for easy landings.<sup>3</sup> Taylor Bay is more accessible to Nanaimo, more protected, and more appropriate for boat landings, moorage, and wharves.

### ***Jankowski's wharves***

The Rev. Taylor, for whom Taylor Bay *might* be named,<sup>4</sup> went to live in Nanaimo in 1908, leaving his land at Twin Beaches. He died in 1912. On July 3, 1912, Richard Frederick Jankowski signed articles of

agreement with three other men to purchase a quarter section of Taylor's land at Twin Beaches for \$9700.<sup>5</sup> Jankowski was 29. He was a resourceful entrepreneur whose family company Jankowski & Bros. had built boats in Nanaimo and his family says he had a silver mine in Stewart—apparently a nearby mountain there was named “Mount Jankowski” after him. He also had a coal company in Victoria called The Western Coal Co. and Frank Hackwood remembers that Jankowski worked for Hamilton Baillie at Chemainus Towing.

<sup>3</sup> There used to be extensive kelp beds at the entrance to the bay, but these have thinned out in recent years.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. George William Taylor, although a well-known Gabriolan, was not the first Taylor to live along the shores of the bay. See June Lewis-Harrison, *The People of Gabriola*, 1982, p.155.

<sup>5</sup> In 1928 Jankowski bought the last of his three partners out for \$2500. His grand-daughter Evelyn told this family history to Lynda Poulton, Kit Szanto, and Joyce White in an interview on April 20, 2007. In another 2007 interview, Frank Hackwood told Kit Szanto that Jankowski named the Twin Beaches area, and later his boat also, *Usella* because that was the Coast Salish word for twins.

He was usually called Fred and he and his wife Gladys had five children including Fred Jr. (Frederick Barret-Lennard Jancowski, born 1917) and Charley (Charles Hardwicke Jancowski, born 1924). It was Charley Jancowski who years later brought the Hackwood brothers over to Taylor Bay to show them his new boat, during which visit, Hackwood said: “Old Mr. Jancowski came down to the wharf and said he wanted to sell a piece of his property...because he needed \$1300 to buy a Vivien diesel engine.” That is how the Hackwoods acquired their Pilot Bay property.

Frank Hackwood told me that Fred

Jancowski Sr. lived in a big log cabin<sup>6</sup> that he built at the head of the bay—nobody lived on Pilot Bay in those days. He said Jancowsky had a shingle mill in the corner of Pilot Bay in the only cleared space, and there must have been a small wharf for loading the shingles for delivery at one time because he remembers seeing the rotting remains of pilings on the beach as a boy. He believes there haven't been any other wharves on Pilot Bay—even the pilot boats didn't use one, despite having a shack on the shore.

June Harrison writes that Jancowski operated a ferry company as early as 1915,



Taylor Bay wharf ca. 1915.

Gabriola Museum #1999.019.001.01 (V. McConvey photo album)

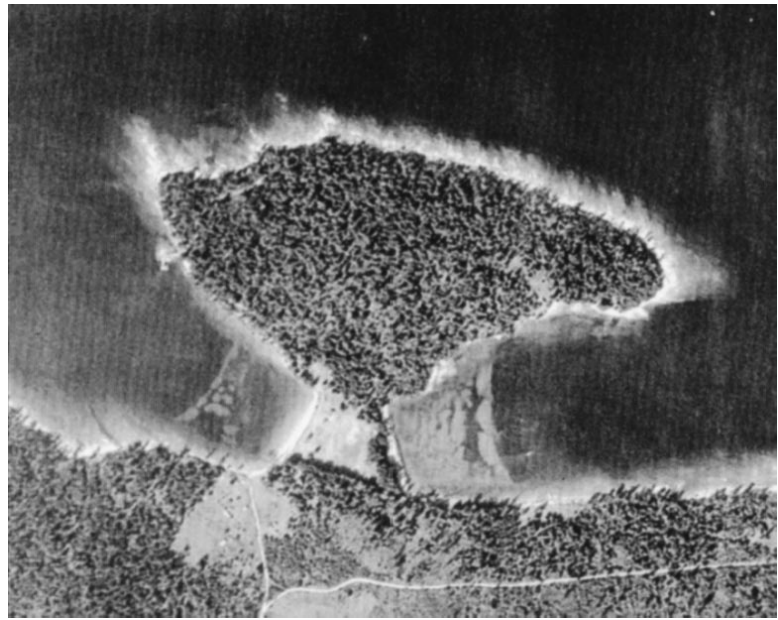
<sup>6</sup> Frank Hackwood said that the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) used to rent Jancowski's beach cabin in 1937–38 for their summer gatherings.

bringing big parties across to Gabriola on excursions. His 78-foot boat *Usella* could carry “some one hundred and fifty passengers”. In a story<sup>7</sup> told a few years ago to Nick Doe, Hackwood said: “In the days before the depression, the 1920s, there were lots of ideas of making this a big holiday resort area with hotels and lodges.”

The museum has a fine picture of a big wharf in Taylor Bay, which is undated but was in an album dated 1916.<sup>8</sup> Frank Hackwood says the picture is way before his time and he is sure that this is the first wharf that Jancowski built off the big rock that locals called “Turtle Rock” on the north shore of Taylor Bay (the one opposite where the Haven is today).

### ***Jancowski's first wharf***

Jancowski built three different wharves in Taylor Bay over the years. Two of them were near Turtle Rock; both were floats without pilings, and the first one was anchored to the rock. The only newspaper reference I found to this wharf was in 1931—a July 27 article in the *Nanaimo Free Press* reported the drowning death of a young Nanaimo girl whose “[sketching] box and kit were found at the end of the wharf, and the immediate supposition was that she had fell off the landing and drowned”.



Twin Beaches (Gabriola Sands) in 1932. Jancowski's first wharf is visible in Taylor Bay (the bay on the left).

Canadian Air Force A4504-46

A 1932 aerial photograph of the Twin Beaches area shows the sizeable wharf structure sloping off the rock.

Frank Hackwood has a photo of his own family's boat *Franalja* (an amalgam of the sons' names, Frank, Alan, Jack) tied to Jancowski's dock in 1933 or 34 when Frank was a little boy—his family used to come over often to Taylor Bay for picnics from Indian Beach in Nanaimo. In the photo (*not shown here*), you can see little Frank standing behind the railing, his brothers Alan and Jack in the stern of a boat, and his Dad standing on the wharf.

Frank says that early wharf blew apart in a storm some years later but you can still see its eroding support rings sunk into the sandstone.

<sup>7</sup> “The sad tale of Jancowski's horse” in *SHALE* 1, November 2000.

<sup>8</sup> The album belonged to Miss V. McConvey and was inscribed on the inside cover: “February 12, 1916”.



The *Fanalja* (left) at Jancowski's second wharf at Turtle Rock ca.1945.

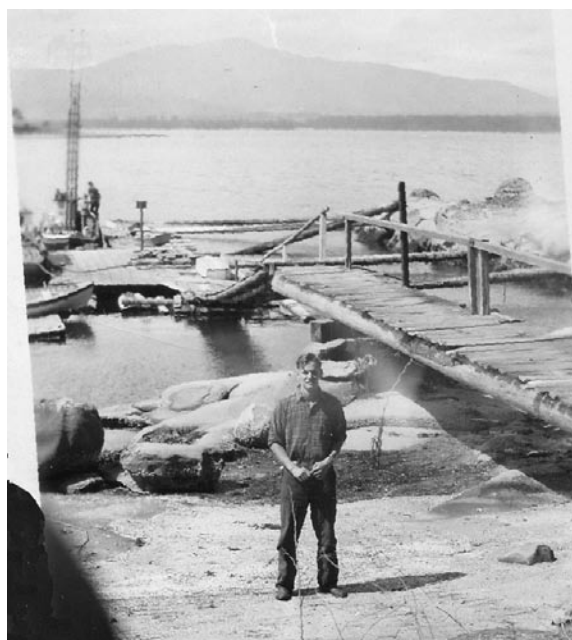
Photograph courtesy of Frank Hackwood

rock'." He showed me some metal bars that had supported the ramp to Jancowski's second wharf near the wooden beach access steps.<sup>10</sup> The wharf structure can be seen in that location in aerial photographs in 1945 and 1957, but the wharf is diminished by 1962, and is not there in 1975.

Jancowski built another, smaller float near Turtle Rock in the mid-1940s with the help of his neighbours Henry McIndoo and Joe Chapple. The ramp to it ran across the adjacent beach rather than off the rock. In those days, Taylor Bay Road<sup>9</sup> ran around the edge of Taylor Bay, ending near Turtle Rock, and Jancowski's new wharf ramp ran directly down from the road. Stringer logs held the float in place in the water.

### ***Jancowski's second wharf***

Russ Beattie, who lives on DeCourcy Drive and has been coming to Gabriola since 1945, remembers two wharves near Twin Beaches, both of which were eventually blown away in storms. He used to come here in his grandfather's boat, and said: "We used to land our boat in mid to late 1940s on the small wharf in Taylor Bay near the 'big



Jancowski's second wharf ca. 1945. The figure is "Bert" a friend of the Hackwoods.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Hackwood told me that in those days, every year on January 1, Jancowski would close a gate across this private road access for 24 hours to prevent it being gazetted as a public road. The supporting gatepost was still visible in the 1950s.

<sup>10</sup> The Regional District of Nanaimo put in these wooden beach access steps in 2001 after the RDN acquired the access path from the Department of Highways for \$1.





The beach at Taylor Bay ca. 1941. A=Jancowski's house; B=Bill Little's cabin; C Jancowski's third wharf.  
BCARS D-01871

himself in front of it in a sailing dinghy, with his Dad and Chapple standing on the jetty. The cleaning grid is to the left in front the small cabin that Bill Little had floated into the bay on a cedar raft and raised on stilts. Jancowski's house is half-visible behind the trees.

### *Jancowski's third wharf*

Sometime in the late 1930s, Jancowski also built a wharf right at the head of Taylor Bay on the sandy beach in front of his big log cabin. The wharf was left high and dry at low tide and BC archives has an attractive picture of the otherwise empty sand beach with this structure at the far end. Frank Hackwood said it had a grid next to it for cleaning boat bottoms. He has a 1941 picture of



Captain (Frank) Hackwood at Taylor Bay ca. 1940. Jancowski's house in the background; Bill Little's cabin, and Jancowski's third wharf at the water's edge on the right.  
Photograph courtesy of Frank Hackwood



***McIndoo's wharf***

The other wharf that Russ Beattie remembered was Henry McIndoo's wharf, which was built in 1934. The first issue of *The Gabriola Advertiser* Vol.1 No. 1, 3/5/1934 contained this news item:

"We note with interest that the strenuous efforts of Messrs. Chapple and Johnston are meeting with success in the construction of the new wharf for Mr. H. McIndoo. We are assured that this sturdy wharf will ably withstand the raging seas which lash our northern shores."

Moses Henry McIndoo<sup>11</sup> was listed as retired on Gabriola in the 1934 *Sun British Columbia Directory*, and Frank Hackwood always referred to



Twin Beaches (Gabriola Sands) in 1945. McIndoo's wharf is clearly visible jutting out from the outer coast (*left side*).

Federal Dept. Energy & Mines A9302-8

him as Captain McIndoo (firmly



McIndoo's wharf in the 1930s.

Gabriola Museum Archives 2001.021.006

pronouncing "mac" at the beginning of the name, as did Beattie), explaining that he had served in the RCMP. At that point, McIndoo must have been renting one of Jancowski's lots because he didn't buy his parcel of land from Jancowski until 1941.

<sup>11</sup> In Nanaimo's 1911 census records, McIndoo had been listed with his then new wife Mary Lenora. He claimed to have been born in 1873 in Ontario, of Scots descent, but his 1951 death is registered in Nanaimo as being at the age of 81.



McIndoo's wharf in the 1950s.

Photograph courtesy of Russ Beattie

Beattie showed me where McIndoo's long straight wharf used to be off the "hammerhead" outer shore of Twin Beaches, and a 1945 aerial map shows it clearly (as well as Jancowski's second floating dock in Taylor Bay). Hackwood told me that in 1944 he helped McIndoo straighten his wharf.

### ***McIndoo's new wharf***

Hackwood says this photograph must have been taken when the wharf was new because the steamer is certainly the *SS Elaine*, recognizable by its low pilot-house, which dates the photograph as being in the 1930s.

The assurances of the sturdiness of McIndoo's new wharf turned out to be reasonably accurate, but it too was eventually blown away. In Beattie's similar photograph of the wharf, the CPR

steamship<sup>12</sup> that can be seen passing is the *SS Princess of Nanaimo*. It was built in Glasgow in 1950, so the wharf must have lasted well into the 1950s, and Hackwood confirms this. There is no trace of it in a 1957 aerial photograph, but you can still find its anchor loops embedded in the sandstone point just north of the public beach access.

Hackwood said that when the CPR steamers passed McIndoo's wharf on their excursions to Newcastle Island, they would toot their whistles in greeting and the McIndoos would wave tablecloth banners. Alas, after Pearl Harbour, the steamers were all painted grey and were forbidden to toot. ◇

[EDITOR: This is the fifth of six articles on Gabriola's wharves by Jenni Gehlbach.]

<sup>12</sup> See page 138 of "Ships of the Canadian Pacific Railway" by Gordon Newell and Joe Williamson, Bonanza Books, 1959