

Context:

Gabriola, history

Citations:

1. Gehlbach, Jenni, Gabriola's industrial past—the brickyard, *SHALE* 15, pp.3–35, May 2007.
2. Gehlbach, Jenni, Brickyard notes, *SHALE* 18, pp.31–32, April 2008.

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Reference:

Date posted:

June 23, 2012.

# Gabriola's industrial past—the brickyard

by Jenni Gehlbach

This article would not have been possible without the meticulous and extensive documentary research of Howard Houle who generously lent me his files, thereby providing a strong base for my own research. It is also greatly enriched by personal quotes taken from June Harrison's book, *The People of Gabriola*, and by some interesting photographs and memoirs loaned to me by Earl Easthom's family. The Gabriola Historical and Museum Society (GHMS) provided pioneer family information, census information, additional documents and photographs, and gave me access to archived tapes of old-timers telling their stories. Thanks are also due to Frank Bond for sharing his research notes with me.

When I first arrived on peaceful Gabriola, I was mystified by frequent references to place names that didn't appear on any "official" maps. It seemed foolish to have to ask—everyone around appeared to know—but where on earth were Gossip Corner, Twin Beaches, and Brickyard Hill? This last name was particularly puzzling, but it turned out to be close to where I lived.

The house we had bought has a two-storey fireplace and chimney-facing made of rough bricks that are a beautiful soft variegated pink, and the builder casually remarked that they were discards from the old brickyard, waving his arm toward what looked like a very rural hillside nearby. Brickyard? In this bucolic paradise? What brickyard? How peculiar....

Aside from many Islanders' chimneys and patios, and the scattered, sea-softened fragments of rosy brick still to be found on the beach at the bottom of Brickyard Hill, there is no obvious trace of the brickyard now, but if you know where to look, you can still see a part of the collapsed roof of the old drying kiln, the rusting and rotting remains of an old rail car, and a few other traces of what once was a busy quarry and brick factory.

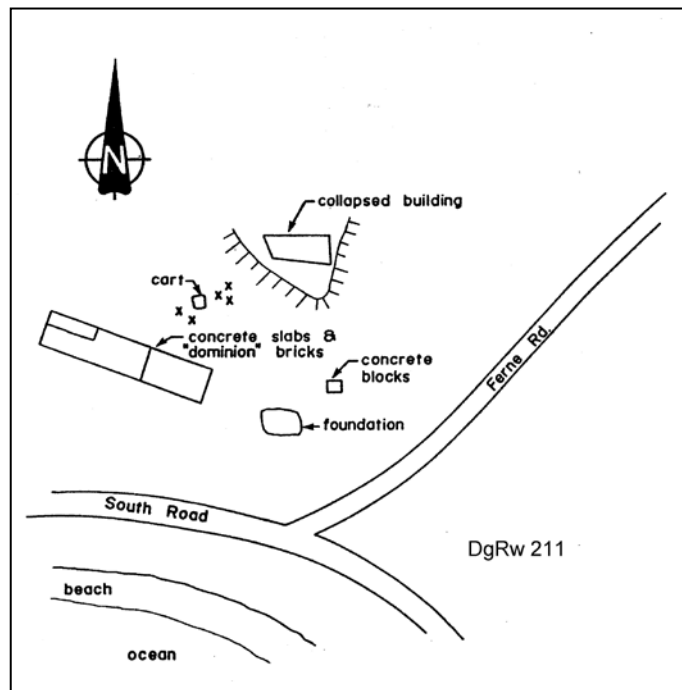


Figure 1: The brickyard site as mapped by archaeologists in a 1987 survey.

The earliest documentary records we have of the brickyard operations are dated 1911, which was when the first company to operate the yard was incorporated, but Joe Davis, who was born in 1920, told Frank Bond that bricks were being made there long before he was born, probably before the turn of the century. After the demise of the factory in the early 1950s, the site was

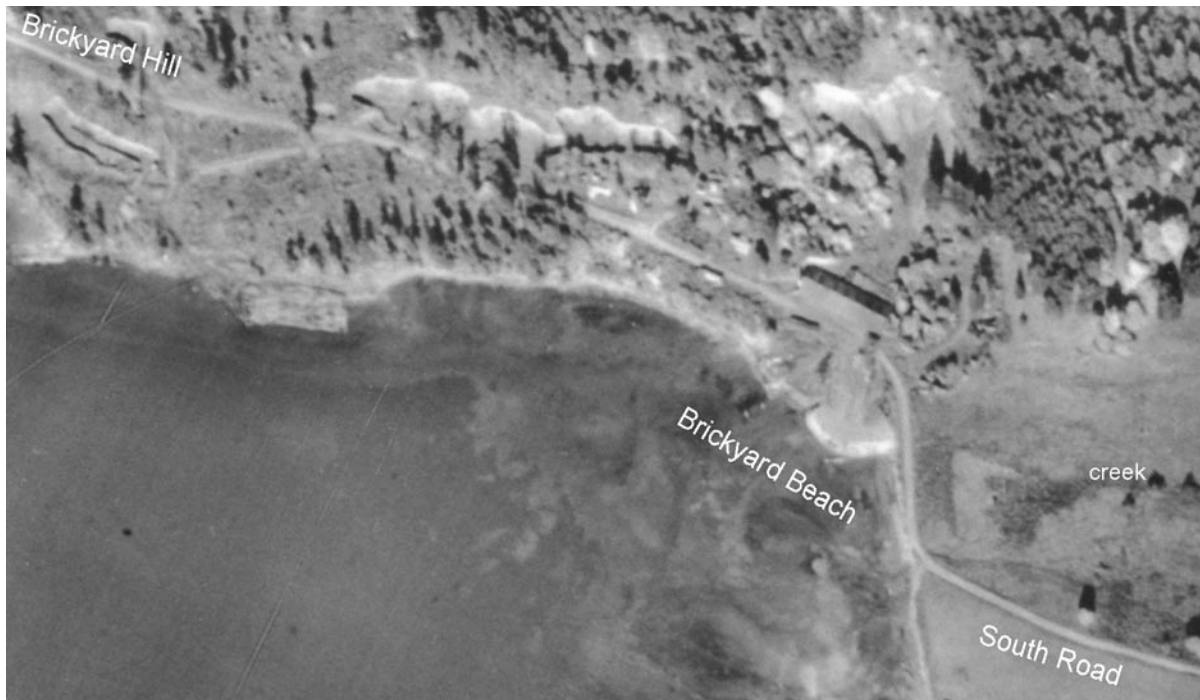


Figure 2: An aerial photograph of the brickyard taken in 1951 showing the quarry face (white) extending to the west. What is probably a log boom can be seen along the shore.

BC Photograph 1437.26

cleared of all buildings, and bush has since reclaimed the site. So where was it exactly?

A Heritage Conservation Branch survey of the archaeological sites at False Narrows Bluffs made in 1987 noted the historical significance of the brickyard site and the need for research into its use.<sup>1</sup> It mapped (*Figure 1*) the then visible traces of concrete slabs and blocks; a collapsed wooden building; two depressions that were probably a building foundation; a wooden cart, thousands of scattered bricks, and some scattered shell deposits. To the north of these structural remains, the archaeologists reported: “a large excavated clay quarry used in the manufacture of bricks”.

A 1932 aerial photograph (*front cover*) shows the large kiln close to the shore where South Road and Ferne Road now converge. In it, you can also see the subsidiary plant

buildings nearby and the curve of the quarry, behind and up the hill a bit.

In a second photograph (*Figure 2*), taken in 1951, you can see how both the quarrying and logging had progressed in the intervening twenty years.

*Figure 3* is a photograph of the brickyard near the waterline at Brickyard Beach;<sup>2</sup> and *Figure 4* is a view across the buildings looking toward the water at False Narrows.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, south-western BC was booming, and the rapidly developing region needed building and paving bricks and sewer pipes.

In 1904, the BC Ministry of Mines reported:

Red bricks are manufactured in small yards all over the Province for local consumption, the distribution of brick clay being so general as not to necessitate any large brick-making



Figure 3: View of the brickyard from the shore at Brickyard Beach.

Courtesy Sheila Bradley

centre, although very extensive yards are in operation near Vancouver and New Westminster. The manufacture of fire brick has been carried on at Comox by the Wellington Colliery Co. from fireclay occurring in connection with the coal seams, and also at Victoria by the BC Pottery Co. from clay derived from the same source. This latter company has also entered extensively into the manufacture of drain and sewer pipe, tiles, etc., for which there appears to be a good local market.

But why here on Gabriola? In short, because pre-emptors and settlers on Gabriola were interested, not only in farming, but also in the possibilities for mining their land. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, people had found shale that could be crushed to make clay for making bricks and tiles; sandstone for building material and millstones; and useful

deposits of diatomaceous earth, sand, and gravel. Only coal was nowhere to be found. Shale suitable for brick-making, abundant coal available in Nanaimo for firing a kiln, a good supply of wood and fresh water, and easy access to the sea, all made brick-making on Gabriola a logical industrial development.

### **The clay and water supply**

A report of the Minister of Mines in 1918 stated that the Gabriola shale deposit being worked by the Gabriola Island Shale Product Company at that time belonged to the “bottom part of the Northumberland Formation of the Nanaimo Series”. The report notes that shales on Gabriola have been described as “grey, sandy” but that “the shales on the property of the Gabriola Island Company are bluish and brownish in colour,

and in actual commercial practice show good plasticity...”<sup>3</sup> Local potter Howard Houle says that these blue and brown shales can be mixed to obtain a pleasing colour brick.<sup>4</sup> When samples of the blue and brown Gabriola shales were examined on December 30, 1918, they were reported to be “suitable for paving-brick, sewer pipe etc.”; the analysis is shown in *Table 1*.<sup>5</sup>

<i>Table 1: Analysis of the shales worked at the Gabriola brickyard</i>		
	Blue shale %	Brown shale %
Silica	55.6	56.4
Ferric Oxide	10.1	9.37
Alumina	20.0	20.1
Lime	Trace	Trace
Magnesia	0.3	0.3
Sulphur	0.1	0.15
Alkalies	4.9	4.28
Ignition	9.0	9.4

The 1918 report went on to note that the quarry “...is partly an open-cut and partly an

incline pit, and was:

...about 125 feet long, extending back into a ridge, with the face about 35 feet high at the north-easterly end of the quarry, which is the widest part and where the floor is practically level. The south-westerly end of the quarry is a pit about 20 feet deeper than the floor at the other part. This end of the quarry is not being worked at present owing to the accumulation of water and necessity for pumping, which is avoided at the north-easterly end.

In 1930, in its Inspection of Quarries section, the BC Report of the Minister of Mines, states that Gabriola Shale Products’ method of operation was the “open-quarry system”, and the product was “a good grade of shale”. That report says the “overburden averages from 15 to 20 feet in thickness and is stripped by hand”.

The quarry’s safety record was good, with no accidents reported that year or in 1934.<sup>6</sup> The 1934 report also notes that blasting at the quarry “is done by electric battery and cable under the supervision of a certified blaster”. Talking in his eighties to June Harrison,<sup>7</sup> Jimmy Rollo recalled:

Juriet [who lived on Mudge] was the powder man down there for some time. The powder looked like a handful of wheat—black stuff. It was bought in kegs of ten to fifty pounds and obtained at the hardware stores.

However, the 1948 report, when the brickyard activity was nearing its end, states that the shale then being used was “soft and requires no blasting”. Jimmy Rowan also remarked that in 1942, “It was hot



Figure 4: Looking over the yard towards False Narrows and the south end of Mudge. The tall chimney belonged to the dryer, which was next to the firing kiln. Behind it are storage sheds.

GHMS Archives 2000.023.001



Figure 5: Working the quarry face during the 1940s. From left to right, Henry Silva, Bill Rowan, and Dick Edgar. Note the rail car used to transport the shale.

GHMS Archives 1996.009.04a (iv)

work...and sporadic because they were running out of good blue shale. The brown shale," he said, "is too soft."

Besides having a suitable clay, it was essential to have a good supply of water. Fortunately, there is a seasonal creek that runs into the sea at Brickyard Beach, and the shale underlying the low-lying surrounding area makes good groundwater aquifers.

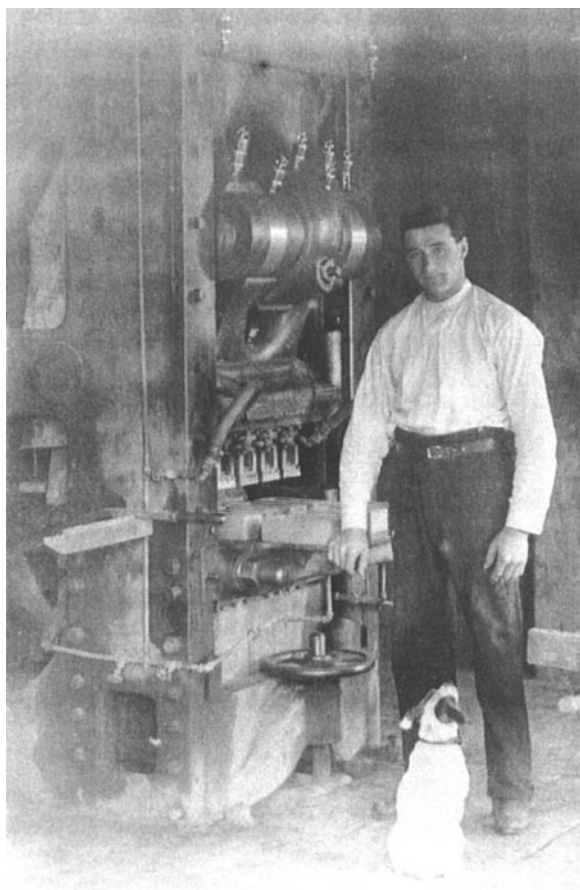
Joe Davis told Frank Bond that water was pumped from an old shaft drilled in an earlier search for coal near the junction of South Road and the present-day Ferne Road. These supplies weren't always adequate however; a 1945 Minister of Mines report records, for example, that "for a brief period in late summer...the quarry was closed for lack of sufficient water".

## The brick-making process

The first step in the process of converting shale to bricks, is to crush, grind, and screen the shale to reduce it to a fine clay powder in a "dry pan crusher", which is rather like a huge rotary kitchen sieve about nine feet in diameter. After the shale was crushed, it was mixed with water and the slurry went upstairs in an elevator and was dumped in a bin for final screening before being led by a chute to the press.

Fireclay bricks (used for high-temperature environments such as kilns) are compressed dry, but common bricks are made by a soft- or stiff-mud process, depending on the amount of water mixed with the clay before they are compressed into rectangular blocks.

On Gabriola, they pressed four bricks at a time in a hand-operated hydraulic press,



shown in *Figure 6*. “Ka-plunk. Four bricks. Ka-plunk. Another four bricks. I’ll never forget that sound,” said Joe Davis.

Jimmy Rowan told Frank Bond that two men worked the press. One would throw bricks, two at a time, to the other man who loaded them onto a flat cart (*Figure 7*). “Once you got used to it, and developed callouses, it was okay,” said Jimmy. “You couldn’t use gloves because they wouldn’t last long, and you couldn’t afford them on \$3.20 a day.”

The freshly pressed “green” bricks had to be dried before firing, and in Gabriola’s brick plant, they were hand-pushed on carts into the drying kiln. When they emerged dry after “a couple of days”, they were taken, again by hand-pushed carts, to the firing kiln.

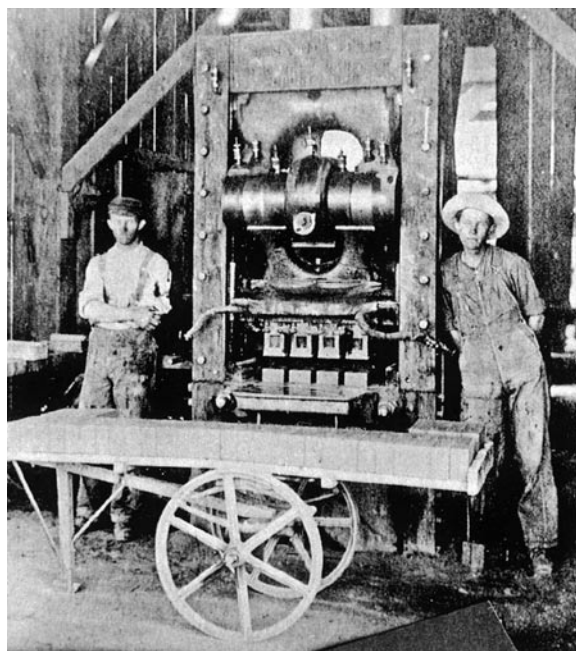


Figure 6 & 7: Bricks were pressed, four at a time, from a slurry made by adding water to finely crushed shale. The bricks were then carted off to be dried before firing.

Fig. 6 GHMS Archives 1996.040.009 (copy)

Fig. 7 H.J. Boam, p.202, (endnote 38), Nanaimo Community Archives

When the firing kiln was full, the entrance hole was bricked up with dry-stacked bricks. At the back of the kiln (*Figure 8*) were low arched holes into which firewood was fed by hand to get the fires going.

During the firing process, wheelbarrow-loads of coal were rolled up a ramp and across the top of the kiln under the high wooden roof. Plugs were removed from holes in the top of the kiln, and coal was shovelled in until the temperature reached about 1100°C.

This is how Jimmy Rollo described the process to June Harrison:

DeLong [the brickyard manager in the 1930s] modernized the operations there, when the continuous Klose kiln was started. There were 13 [chambers] in a row, the first one started up by wood, the rest by coal. The burner poured the coal down and then came

back to the first [chamber] and started all over again, and it would go on, a continuous operation.

The firing kiln was lined with refractory bricks—a special kind of brick that can withstand high temperatures—and these were made by the Clayburn Company in their factory near Matsqui in the Fraser Valley.<sup>8</sup> At Brickyard Beach you can still find a few pieces of these denser, pale-yellow bricks stamped “CLAYBURN” or less often “CLAYBURN—Made in Canada” among the more usual red-toned fragments stamped “DOMINION”.<sup>9</sup>

After the bricks cooled for three or four days, men loaded them onto wheelbarrows and took them to the beach. There they threw away the culls and clinkers—bricks that were broken, deformed, melted, or stuck together—and stacked the good bricks to await the scow.

The 1918 report of the Minister of Mines stated that the plant had a Bird press with a

capacity of 20 thousand bricks a day, and that:

...the plant also had [a] Bird dry-pan crusher and fan of the 50-inch Sheldon type, which revolves at 300 rpm, and is used to provide artificial ventilation in the semi continuous kiln, 148 feet long, 42 feet wide, and 10 feet high. The kiln has horizontal draught and is divided into ten chambers, each chamber having a capacity to hold 22 500 bricks. There is a dryer 100 feet long divided into five chambers, in which the bricks are placed after leaving the press...

The report added:

[The dryer's heat is] transmitted from fire-boxes at the north end through cast-iron pipes 12 inches in diameter. The machinery in the plant is driven by steam generated in a 100-horse-power boiler.

*Figure 9* shows the factory's steam pump.

Output was high. For example, the 1920 BC Report of the Minister of Mines states that Gabriola Shale Products manufactured more than three and a half million red bricks



Figure 8: John Finnermore at the doors used to kindle wood fires. Once alight, the temperature was raised by adding coal through holes in the roof.

GHMS Archives 1996.040.002(a)



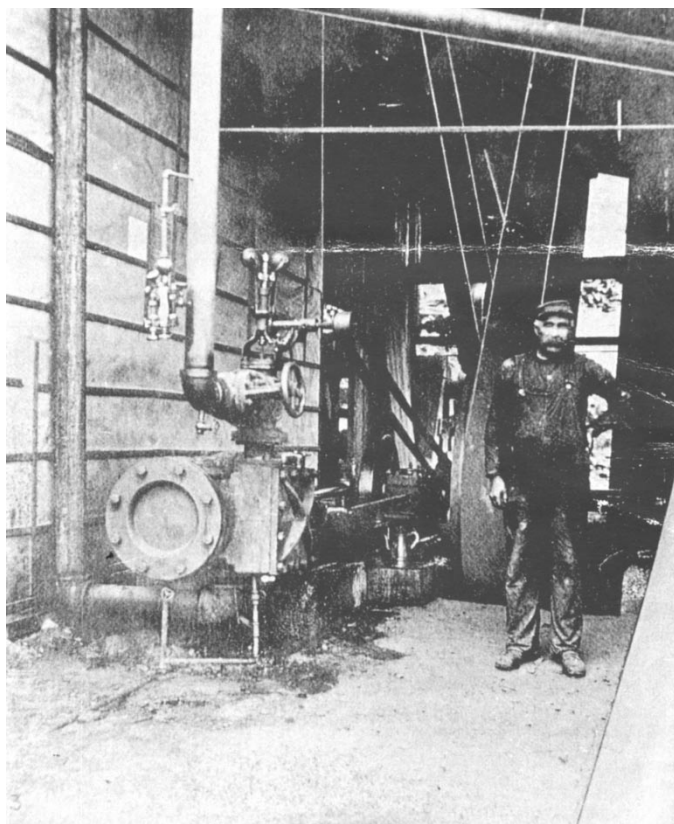


Figure 9: The steam pump used to power the yard's belt-driven machinery (crusher, fans, hoists, etc.)

H. J. Boam, p.202, (endnote 38), Nanaimo Community Archives

“for building purposes” that year.

The 1937 BC Ministry of Mines annual report said the plant had “boiler, crusher, press, kilns, and driers” and in the 1947 report, the firing kiln is described as a “fired semi-continuous chamber kiln of the Hoffman type”. The 1948 report said the shale was “loaded onto trucks with a gas shovel for transportation to the crushing plant” and apparently this gas shovel was among the equipment removed to Bill Coats’ property when he was contracted to clear the site years later.

## Transportation

When Charlie Murray recalled working at the brickyard, he recounted how “bricks were hauled away in the thousands by scow

to Vancouver”. Scows brought coal to Brickyard Beach<sup>10</sup> from Nanaimo and took away the bricks to the customers, mostly in Vancouver, but also in Westminster and Victoria. This beach is wide and flat, with plenty of room to store and manoeuvre materials and the scows themselves.

*Figure 10* shows Jimmy Davis and a Chinese worker that Earl Easthom says they called Slu (Sloo?) standing on one of the scows with a load of coal for fuelling the kiln, with Mudge Island in the background. *Figure 11* shows Jimmy and Slu and an unidentified worker on the scow with horse and wagon. *Figure 12* shows a loaded scow.

Jimmy told Frank Bond of the ingenious method they used to prevent the scow from shifting with the tides during loading, a job that took two or three days. He said that they pulled a plug, letting it sink and rest in shallow water on the bottom.

Men used “tongs to load the bricks seven at a time, 49 lb.”,<sup>11</sup> and after the scow was loaded, they re-installed the plug at low tide so that it floated free on the next high tide. Earl also told his daughter that a loaded scow of bricks once capsized and went to the bottom down near where logs are now boomed below the cliffs of the Coats’ property, but nobody now seems to remember exactly where and when this happened.

The 1918 Ministry of Mines report stated:

...transportation facilities are admirable owing to the fact that the plant is on the shore of a perfectly sheltered harbour, where scows can lie for loading at all seasons, and the further fact that the deposit of shale is close to the plant. Tugs must tow scows from the

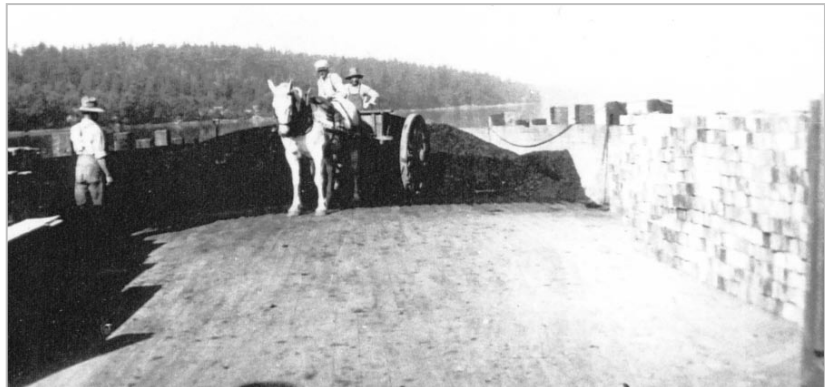


Figure 10: Jimmy Davis and a worker known only as “Slu” unloading coal for the kiln from a scow. Mudge Island in the background.

Courtesy Sheila Bradley

Figure 11: Another photo of Jimmy and “Slu” loading coal onto the wagon drawn by Dolly.

On the left, an unidentified worker, and on the right a partial load of bricks.



Courtesy Sheila Bradley

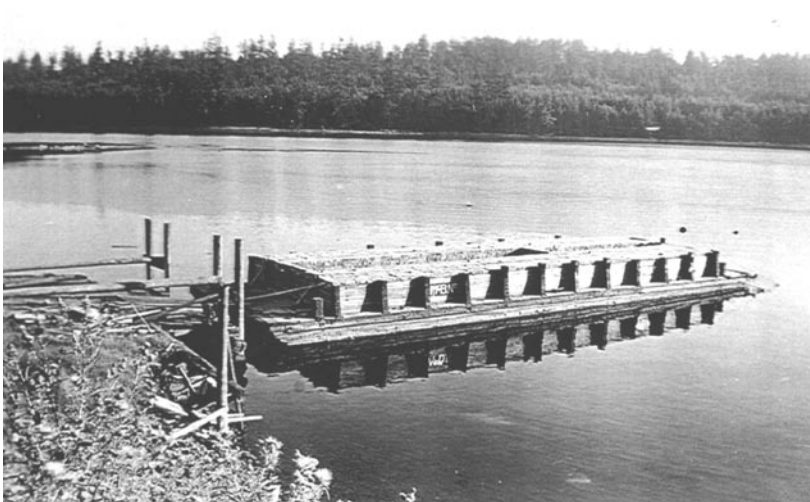


Figure 12: A scow loaded with bricks ready to be exported from Gabriola.

Reputedly, a fully-loaded scow like this once sank in the Northumberland Channel, but the details of this event are lacking.

GHMS Archives  
1996.009.04a (vii)

wharf at high tide, because the shore on this part of Gabriola Island has such a gradual slope that it is a considerable distance to water sufficiently deep to accommodate vessels of deep draught.

The Ministry's 1920 Report also states that "the chief market for this product is the city of Vancouver, to which the bricks are transported by scows". This report notes that the quarry's proximity to shipping facilities "enables the company to operate at a minimum cost". But, in the spring of 1939, the Gabriola School magazine *Anecho* contained the following report written by "H.S." that illustrates the perils of using tugs and scows to transport loads in and out of the shallow bay subject to tidal changes:

Dad has been working at the brickyard on two scows that came in. We were surprised to see them. A number of men have been busy loading the scows with bricks. The tug came in last night but they could not get the scow out. Nine thousand bricks had to be taken off. They will have to come back again to-night.

Once the *Atrevida* ferry service between Gabriola and Nanaimo was established in 1931, some smaller orders were delivered locally on Vancouver Island by road and ferry. Jimmy Rollo, who operated a freight service on Gabriola in those days recalled:

I hauled bricks to Nanaimo and delivered others to Qualicum and Duncan. I would take an order of 1500 or 2000 or more. I had a one-ton truck...I hauled everything...I trucked cordwood and poles to the brickyard, which were used to fire the kiln.

Later, the company also purchased a large truck and made regular mid-week brick deliveries. Peter Bell reminisced<sup>12</sup> that big trucks were loaded sideways on the *Atrevida* with their front and back ends protruding over the sides of the ferry during the hazardous trip.

Of course, not all their supplies came by sea—for example, firewood for the kiln had to be hauled to the site. Jimmy Rowan said he worked for Tim Brown who had a contract to supply wood to the brickyard, and he recalled the hazard of bringing heavy loads of wood by horse and wagon down the "Big Hill", as "Brickyard Hill" was then known, to the yard.

## The workers

We have almost no early company records and know only a few names of those who worked there in the early years.

In 1913, John and Joseph Piper were manager and assistant manager respectively, but in 1914 the manager had become James H. Hayes. In the Wrigley's BC Directory for 1920 and 1922, D.W.E. Campbell is named as the general manager of "Gabriola Brick and Shale Products". Charles DeLong and Mr Fernell are listed as managers in 1923, and again in 1927, but in that year wrongly as being at the by-then defunct Dominion company. Only DeLong is listed as manager in 1928.

The only brickmakers and labourers listed before 1920 are Chas Hobson (1913–4) and the Finnamores: John (1914–5), Harry (1914 & 1919), and William (1914, 1918–9).

Peggy Lewis Imredy's grandfather had acreage at the south end of Gabriola, and her mother married John Finnamore in 1931. The following year, her family moved from near the wharf by the Maples to the brickyard into what her sister Babs Lewis Shortreid describes as a company house, to be closer to their father's work.

Babs found living there and being able to watch the bricks being made interesting and Peggy writes that her parents used to play cards with the DeLongs every Thursday evening.<sup>13</sup> Peggy also said:

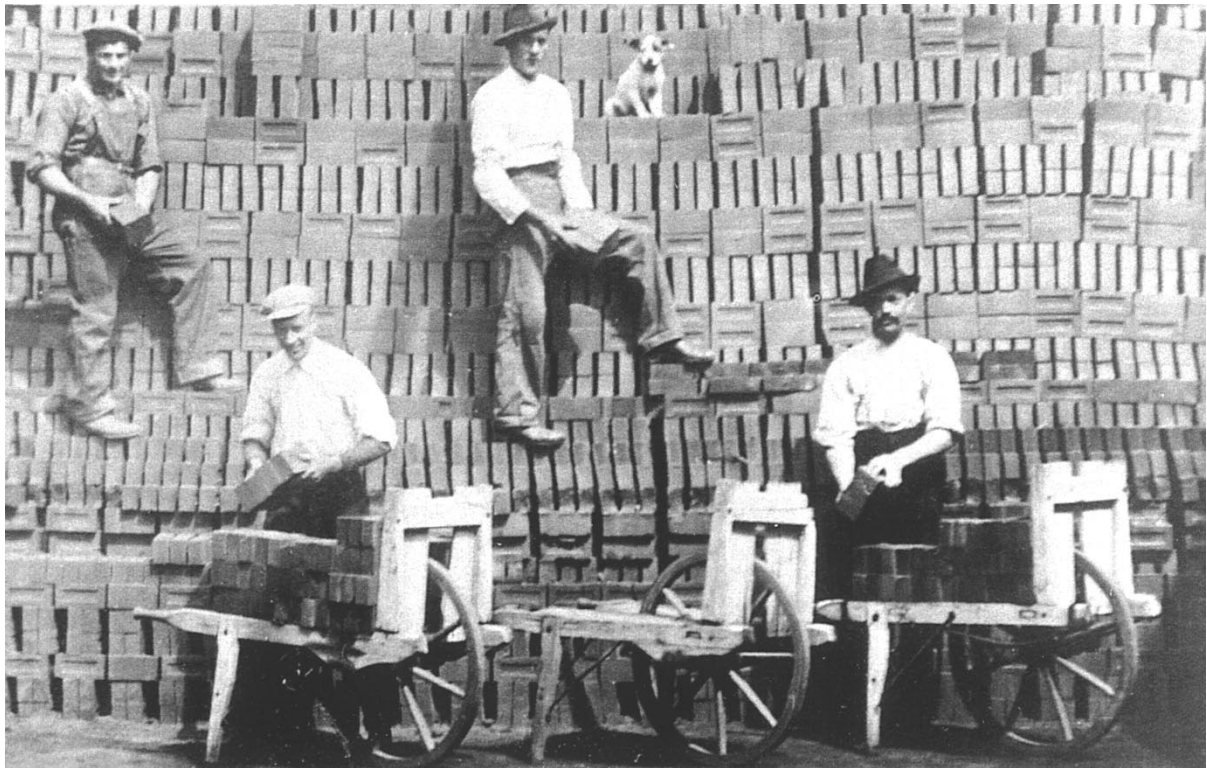


Figure 13: Workers stacking (or unstacking?) bricks. The only person whose identity we are sure of is Harry Finnermore, top centre. That's his dog sitting beside him.

GHMS Archives 1996.040.006 (copy)

We could wander all through the yard when it was working, no one bothered us. Our water supply was down in the pit where a spring had clear pure water, (water cress grew there by the stream) flowing to supply the brickyard.

She reports that Mrs. DeLong's niece Philipina Walters "did the cooking at the brickyard boarding house", though I have found no other mention of this boarding house. She also says that Philipina and her husband Oscar had been brought out from Germany to help in the brickyard business. During the war years, their German heritage appears to have been a problem, and they had to give up their work at the brickyard.

We know that Chinese men did much of the hard labour throughout the brickyard's history. They were housed in shacks near

the brickyard site, had their own cook there, and a manager who could interpret for them. Their drinking water probably came from Lobo Spring<sup>14</sup> on an adjacent property.

Although the Chinese workers were housed on the Island, they do not appear to have integrated into Gabriola life or settled here after the brickyard closed. June Harrison reports:<sup>15</sup>

...they kept pretty much to themselves, ate their own food, had their own cook, and those little bottles of opium.

In June's book, we also read that Tim Brown's Aunt Georgina Dickinson recalled that when she was a child:<sup>16</sup>

...two brothers who lived near LeBoeuf Bay had Chinese wives. In those days, that was quite an oddity.



Figure 14: The guys at the yard ca. 1925, two of whom are demonstrating that the company wheelbarrows made tolerably good deck chairs. Most have not been identified, but the man closest to the camera is John Silva Jr. (born 1893).

Courtesy Joan Coulter

Georgina also spoke of her family raising chickens and rabbits for sale to the Chinese market in Nanaimo, but never dealing directly with the Chinese.

In talking about the brickyard, Jimmy Rollo recalled: “the Chinese workers had their own manager as they couldn’t speak English”. Those were harsh times for non-European immigrants; their employers (including the big Nanaimo mining companies) did not refer to Chinese workers by name, but only by assigned numbers. Refreshingly, despite these prevailing attitudes, Peggy Lewis Imredy speaks fondly of living near the brickyard as a child:

The Chinese workers were friends, we visited them in their homes at the yard, or maybe they were shacks. They used to visit us when we moved away from the yard. They were experts in catching the cod that lurked in False Narrows.

Joe Davis also said that the brickyard employed six or seven Chinese men who had their own cook and lived on the site, but spoke English and were friendly.

During the 1940s, the Chinese workers were employed by logging contractor Dan McConvey when the yard wasn’t busy.

Of course, many locals also worked at the brickyard. Margaret Morrissey Tilley wrote in Imredy’s book that after her family moved from the Entrance Island lighthouse to Gabriola in 1918, her father worked at the brickyard for a while before starting his trucking business in Nanaimo.

Charlie Murray, the BC champion faller and buckler, recalled helping his father cut cord wood for the brickyard in 1917 and 1918 while he was still at South End School, and when he left school in 1924 he worked for Gabriola Shale Products until 1929.

Until the late 1920s, local BC directories usually described workers simply as “lab”

(labourer) without listing their employers. However, in the 1927 and 1928 Directories, Angelo Vannetti is described as a “brick burner”, and in 1928, John Atkinson, Herbert P. Cazaly, and William Stevenson are also listed as labourers at “Dom. B & S. Prod.” on Gabriola.

Then as now, Islanders flexibly took whatever work was available, logging, fishing, farming, trapping, or labouring in the quarries. For example, in 1930, John Atkinson, H.P. Cazaly, John Finnamore (who worked at the kiln and also on the crusher), and William Gray are listed as labourers at the brickyard under Chas. T. DeLong’s management, while A.D. Shaw is listed as a “trapper”. But by 1934,<sup>17</sup> A.D. Shaw was named as foreman at the brickyard and William Gray’s work was listed as “farming”. John’s brother, Harry Finnamore, was simply listed that year as a labourer with no particular workplace, though we know he worked at the brickyard—in *Figure 13* we see him with his dog and some co-workers on a pile of bricks. Bill Coats told June that he remembered working there alongside Harry Finnamore and Jack Atkinson under Charlie DeLong and Mr Higgs, and Billie Leitch recalled that he had “a little work in the brickyard” in 1939.

Peggy Lewis Imredy says in her book:<sup>18</sup>

When the brickyard worked it was interesting to watch the crusher, which Dad ran, and the presser Uncle Harry Finnamore worked at.

Joe Davis began working for Dominion Brick in 1937, when he was 17, earning \$3.50 per day plus 50¢ for the use of his horse, Dolly. He stabled the horse at the brickyard during the summer and rode his bicycle five miles to work and back every day. In the wintertime, when mud closed the operation, Joe used to take the horse back to his home in Silva Bay.<sup>19</sup>

When war broke out, older men left the brickyard to enlist, and younger men took their places after they left school. Joe told Frank Bond that his brother worked at the yard for a couple of summers because he was too young for the army.

Jack Cox worked at the brickyard before he joined the army in 1941, and Gordon Baillie worked there when he first left South End School in 1942. Tommy G. McDonald (Mary Degnen's son) told June Harrison about working in the brickyard in the 1940s, saying: "at that time Bill Gray, Harry Finnamore, Jack Atkinson, and others all worked there. There were also a few Chinese who could not speak English".

Charlie DeLong remained manager until 1941, then left the Island. He was succeeded in 1943 by F.A. Higgs. We have no other reports of who worked at the yard during the war, but the 1946 BC and Yukon Directory lists William Gray (tractor operator) and Jas. Morris, H. Pagett, A.A. Print, A.C. Severson, and T.G. McDonald as labourers. There are no listings after 1950.

## The early landowners

It is interesting to trace the ownership of the piece of land occupied by the brickyard and quarry because in many ways it is typical of the way that Gabriola has developed as a community. This piece of land near Brickyard Beach has been owned in turn by a pre-emptor, an absentee landlord, a pioneer farmer and contractor, a series of manufacturing companies, another farmer, property developers, and finally a private individual who is likely investing for retirement years.

### *The pre-emptor—Thomas McGuffie*

Thomas McGuffie was born in County Galloway in Scotland around 1831 and

immigrated to Canada, working first in the Cariboo as a miner at the time of the gold rush. In 1860, he moved to Nanaimo to mine for coal and he first saw Gabriola (in those days called "The Big Island" by people who lived in Nanaimo) by canoeing over from Nanaimo. On July 4, 1875, Thomas, described as a farmer and Gabriola resident aged 41, formally married Adeliza Jane Sabiston,<sup>20</sup> aged 26, with whom he already had several children.

McGuffie was active in the community,<sup>21</sup> and his family appeared on the 1881 Gabriola, Mudge, and DeCourcy rolls as: Thomas (48); wife Adelaide Jan[e] (30); sons, John (16), George (14), and Thomas Alexander (4); and two daughters, Ann (11) and Margaret (9).

By 1884, the family had pre-empted a total of 577 acres of land near False Narrows, some of it held by Thomas, and some by his oldest son John. This swathe of McGuffie land ran along the water line between what is now Green Wharf and the far end of El Verano Drive and north up the hill to the ridge above Seymour and Chernoff (including the area where Ferne Road now runs).<sup>22</sup>

To get clear title, Thomas and his family cleared and planted ("seeded in grass") ten acres of each parcel of pre-empted land.

We think today of early European pioneers on this Island as searching for land of their own—a retreat from dirty, overcrowded cities and a chance to live off the land in rural peace—and we now resist those who try to introduce "vile industry" into this peaceful place. But this region in the late nineteenth century was coal-mining country, and, six months after McGuffie's 1884 pre-emption, the Vancouver Coal Company began drilling for coal on Gabriola with their "diamond drilling machine".



The report of the Minister of Mines in 1887 says:

...they were drilling on the south side and near to False Narrows. This hole is down over 1000 feet, but they have not struck any coal as yet. This is now the deepest hole in the district.

By the following year, the hole was down to 1970 feet (600 metres) and:

...has not yet reached the coal, but the core now got out shows that they are in the productive measures overlying the coal, and it is to be hoped that it will be struck soon.

It wasn't. The unsuccessful project was terminated in 1889. There but for the grace of God goes a coal-mining town on Gabriola!

Coal mining held the promise of riches in the nineteenth century, but it also offered family tragedies. On May 3, 1887, John McGuffie died at age 23 along with 148 others in an explosion in the No. 1 pit of the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company in Nanaimo,<sup>23</sup> and his land-holdings passed to his father. In 1892, Thomas got grant in fee of the SE ¼ of Section 9, and of the S ½ divisions of the NW¼ and NE¼ divisions of Section 9 (his son's pre-emption). Then, on December 21, 1894, Thomas sold the eastern portions of his own original holdings in Sections 9 and 28, and the two portions of Section 9 that had been his son's to Thomas Morgan of Nanaimo.

In the 1891 census, Thomas and George McGuffie's occupations are given as farmer, and lists George and his sister Maggie as still living at home with Thomas and Adeliza. But on February 14, 1895, Thomas died<sup>24</sup> intestate, aged 62, and the probate certificate of March 12, 1895 names his younger son George McGuffie as administrator of the rest of his property, which was valued then at less than \$1500.

In the 1901 census, Thomas's widow is listed as a farmer living with her son George,<sup>25</sup> described as a woodsman, and daughter Maggie. George continued to farm and administer the McGuffie estate until he died in 1926.

### ***The landlords—Thomas and Annie Morgan***

We do not know much for sure about the Morgan family who bought land from McGuffie. Research is difficult because the names Morgan and Lewis were very common in Nanaimo, which was a coal-mining town with many Welsh immigrants.<sup>26</sup>

After the 1887 mine disaster, at the first regular meeting of the Nanaimo Relief Committee (reported May 21 in the Nanaimo Free Press), reference was made to the explosion and a T. Morgan was appointed to the Nanaimo Miners' Committee. Three Annie Morgans lived in Nanaimo during this period; however, the most likely candidate by age and circumstances was an Annie Holden who married a Thomas Morgan in Victoria on September 1, 1875. This Thomas Morgan was born in Wales around 1848 and died at age 75 in 1923, and is buried in Nanaimo.

Two daughters were born to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Morgan on March 2, 1887 and November 7, 1892; and another was born to Mr. and Mrs. T.C. Morgan on July 26, 1894, the year in which McGuffie sold some of his land to a Thomas Morgan.

In 1897, Thomas Morgan appears to have got into financial difficulties and was in default of his mortgage on the old McGuffie lands. Documents show there was a "Conveyance in fee under power of sale in said mortgage" to a Thomas Miles<sup>27</sup> on January 30, 1897. But almost immediately,



on February 1, 1897, another conveyance in fee transferred the title to Annie Morgan.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from this odd land transfer from Thomas Morgan to Annie via Miles, there remains another mystery about the Morgans' ownership of this land. When the first brickyard company was formed in 1911, it was evident from the documents that the shale deposits had already been earmarked and that some or all of a brick-manufacturing plant had already been built.

It is not clear from the available documents whether the Morgans simply knew of the potential of the shale on the hillside and leased the land to other investors and operators (possibly via William Nairn Shaw), or if they were directly involved themselves in the quarrying and brick-making business.

There is no evidence that the Morgans ever lived on Gabriola, though they held the land there until 1913,<sup>29</sup> when in November, Annie sold it to William Nairn Shaw for \$6000, giving him a mortgage for \$3000 at 6% in the transaction. Application was made May 2, 1914, for a Certificate of Indefeasible Title in Fee Simple to William Nairn Shaw of Gabriola.

### ***The pioneer farmer—William Nairn Shaw***

William Nairn[e]<sup>30</sup> Shaw was born on May 15, 1862, in Scotland. He and his wife Euphemia emigrated, probably in the early 1890s, and went directly to Nanaimo, where they settled and started their family. Other family members remained in Scotland. The Nanaimo Free Press on July 7, 1897, reported that:

Mr. Shaw, of Edinburgh, Scotland, brother of Mr. W.N. Shaw, of this city, with his wife and family, arrived in this city yesterday on a short visit to Mrs. W.N. Shaw. Mr. Shaw is

on the way round the world and has just arrived by steamer from Australia. He is said to represent a considerable amount of Scotch capital and is visiting British Columbia in its interest.

The Nairn Shaws eventually moved to the south end of Gabriola and acquired land there. In the 1901 census, William Nairn Shaw is listed as a 38-year-old farmer living with his 31-year-old wife Euphemia and three daughters: Cecilia (6 years old), Jean L. (4) and Joanna E. (1). In 1909, he is listed in a directory as both a farmer and a contractor, and in the 1911 census, the Shaw household had increased to include a lodger (T. Reynolds), and eight married male Chinese “servants”. The 1920 voters list describes him again only as a farmer.

Certainly, more than farming was on Shaw's mind in 1913. In addition to the mortgage for \$3000 from Shaw to Annie Morgan, the application for title on the lands at False Narrows was also subject to the right of the newly formed Dominion Shale Brick and Sewer Pipe Company (Dominion) to purchase a 20-acre parcel of that land from Shaw. The company had already built the plant and were manufacturing brick from shale quarried in the land Shaw bought, but it is not clear how the directors of Dominion first heard of the business possibilities of the Gabriola shale and brickyard site. It may be that Shaw was already involved as a contractor before he sold the company the land.

On August 6, 1914, the small 20-acre parcel that was “part of section 28, Range Nine”, was transferred from Shaw to Dominion for \$7795—a tidy profit in just a few months on his \$6000 investment in Annie's 414 acres. The parcel (called “Parcel A” in future legal documents) extended down the hill to False Narrows at what we now call Brickyard Beach. On Aug 7, 1914, a mortgage of

\$6000 was issued to Dominion by Dennis Reginald Harris.<sup>31</sup>

The certificate of conveyance was dated August 14 and received at the Land Registry Office on August 17. *Figure 15* shows the official plan of Parcel A signed by William Nairn Shaw, and the Certificate of Indefeasible Title<sup>32</sup> has the following proviso attached to the (faulty) legal description<sup>33</sup> of the parcel:

EXCEPTING thereout and reserving unto the vendor, his heirs and assigns, all coal and fireclay under the surface of the said lands and the right to mine and remove the same.

Ownership of all the buildings and fixtures on this land was also transferred to Dominion. Although Shaw did not invest in or work for the new company, he retained the mining rights, and so became a key figure in the Island's brick-making business, selling it land for the quarry and plant, and supplying it with both shale and water for the manufacturing process.<sup>34</sup>

William Nairn Shaw and his family continued to farm the adjacent land and take an active part in the Gabriola community. He also held other lands on the south side of Gabriola and donated land for the Community Hall in 1924. He died in 1950 in Nanaimo aged 87,<sup>35</sup> but his interests in the coal and fireclay rights on his False Narrows holdings continued to be represented by the Executor of his will, his grandson William Novello Westwood, who took over title to the rest of Shaw's False Narrows holdings ("except Parcel A") on November 10, 1950.

## The companies

Several companies operated the brickyard at different periods. These were:

- Dominion Shale Brick and Sewer Pipe Company
- Gabriola Shale Products
- T.G. McBride and Co.
- Evans Coleman & Evans.

After closure of the quarry and factory, the property continued to pass through various corporate hands for several years.

### *Dominion Shale Brick and Sewer Pipe Company*

On Nov 7, 1911, a few years *before* the land transfer from Shaw, a Memorandum of Association for a new company called the Dominion Shale Brick and Sewer Pipe Company stated that the purposes of the Company were:

- (a) To carry on the business of manufacturers and sellers of brick, tiles, pottery, earthenware, china, and terra cotta, drain-pipes, sewer-pipes, and pipes of every kind and description, and all products made of clay and shale.
- (b) To carry on the business of pavers and manufacturers of and dealers in cut stone and ordinary stone, whether for building, paving, or other purposes.
- (c) To manufacture, use, buy, sell, and deal in Portland and all other kinds of cement, and in all kinds of lime and plaster, and of all products thereof, brick, cement, artificial stone, tile, slate, and all other building material.

To support these main objectives, there was a long list of subsidiary objectives involving: the lease and purchase of land; acquiring transportation infrastructure; acquiring water rights; and engaging in business activities such as raising money, employing people, paying expenses, and distributing property.

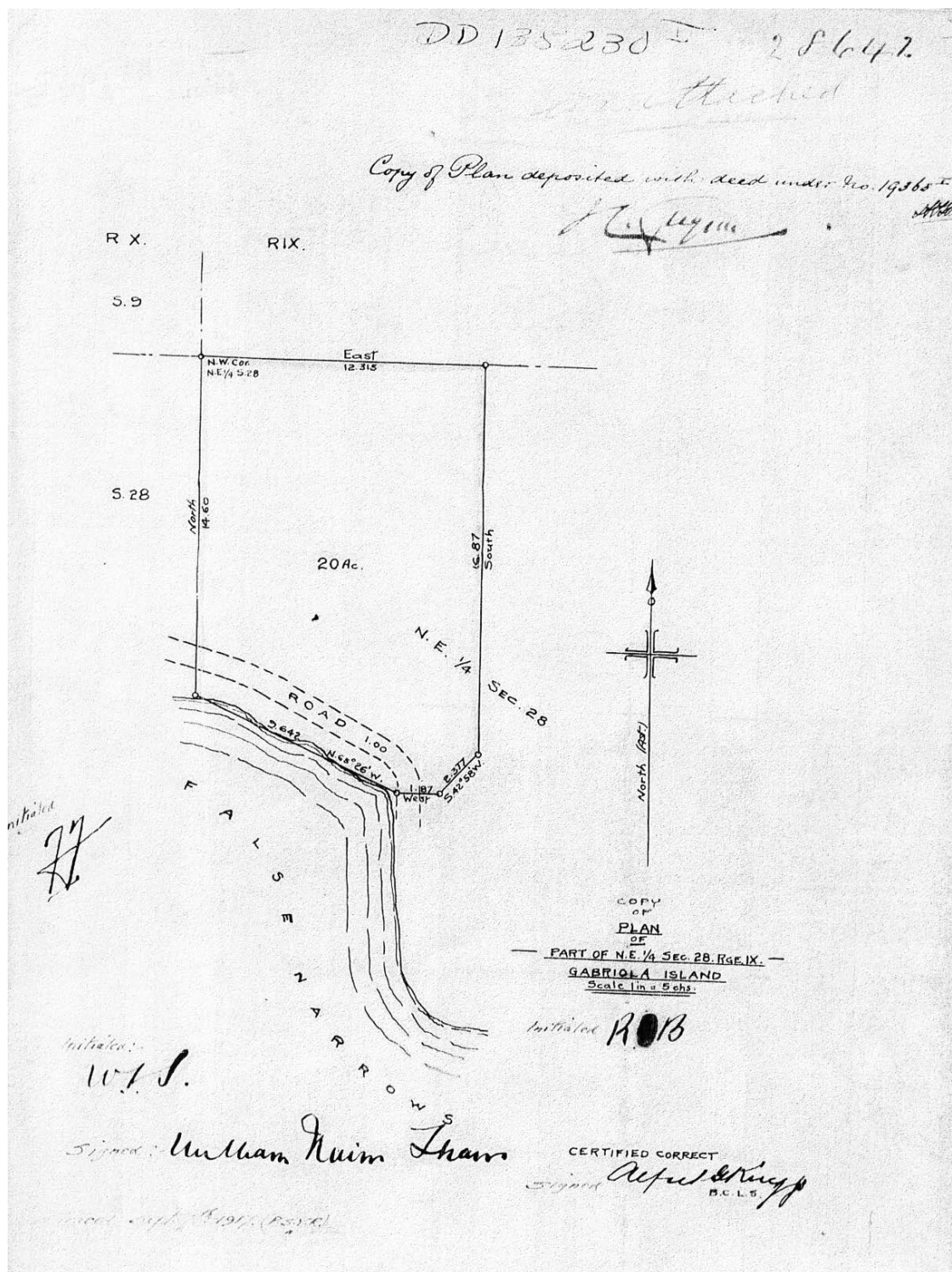


Figure 15: An official copy of the plan of Parcel A sold by William Nairn Shaw in 1914 to the Dominion Shale Brick and Sewer Pipe Company, the first of the companies to own the brickyard. However, in making the sale, Shaw made sure that he retained subsurface rights to the land.

On November 10, the provisional Directors were named in the issued Certificate of Incorporation as:

–Donald J. Dewar, President (a broker from Vancouver);

–Leonidas de Lacey Morris (a brick manufacturer then living in Nanaimo), VP and Manager; and

–Paul Steenstrup (of Vancouver), Secretary and Treasurer.

The five shareholders (one share each) in this new company were reported then as: Dewar, Morris, and William G. Anderson (a barrister and solicitor from Vancouver), plus Josephine Sommerville (a stenographer from Vancouver) and Robert Beverley Parkes (another barrister from Vancouver). These last two, Sommerville and Parkes, appear to have been merely legal “placeholders”, because they were replaced by J.A. Dewar and Edith Dewar (the wife of D.J.) in the allotment of shares listed on November 18, 1911, at a meeting in Vancouver of the provisional Directors.

On January 31, 1912, D.J. Dewar, L.D. Morris, J.A. Dewar, and P. Steenstrup (as vendors) and the company (represented by D.J. Dewar and P. Steenstrup) signed an agreement setting up the company, to enable the company to purchase the brick plant, clay beds, and premises. This agreement states:

...the vendors have been building and constructing a plant for the manufacture of shale brick and sewer pipe near the City of Nanaimo in the Province of British Columbia for some time now...[and]... have acquired certain beds of clay and raw material for the manufacture of brick and sewer pipe.

Presumably, at this point, they were leasing the land from Annie Morgan who still held title.

The Nanaimo journalist and historian John Cass in an article in the Nanaimo Free Press records that Thomas Dobson's Nanaimo Foundry had at that time ordered equipment from the Berg Machinery Manufacturing Company of Toronto, and would be installing it on Gabriola when it arrived. He also reported that Dobson was expecting the brick plant to be operating by March 1912.

### *Description of the business in the 1912 prospectus*

On February 19, 1912, Dominion issued a prospectus with the aim of raising another \$25,000 to be used to increase capacity from 40 to 80 thousand bricks per day by purchasing a “second press and dry-pan”.<sup>36</sup> So clearly they were already producing bricks in 1911.

The prospectus describes the aims of the company. They wanted, it said, “...to cater to the highest class of the brick trade and to supply the high-grade facing and building brick used in the surrounding cities”. The prospectus mentions the “inexhaustible shale deposit” and its pre-testing in “a genuine full-size kiln at two of the largest plants in the United States; the result [of which] was a perfect product similar to that...sold at the highest market price today”.<sup>37</sup>

It describes the convenience of Percy Anchorage [Brickyard Beach] for loading and shipping, and states that the company has “a tender with Monsen and Rowe, Vancouver, to deliver our brick...for \$1.25 per thousand, which can be lowered to \$1.00 per thousand when our output is doubled, and after getting our own transportation facilities this haul may be lowered to 50¢ per M [thousand]”.

The market is described as very large in Vancouver, Victoria, Westminster, and smaller towns, with prices higher than elsewhere in North America.

Fuel was said to be the greatest expense in brick-making, and the prospectus claimed:

...five coalmines within a radius of ten miles gives us a choice of fuel at competitive rates. First class washed coal is offered at \$2 per ton by the Pacific Coast Mines, Vancouver Island; this price can be reduced to a minimum when our force[d] draft system is installed, as the local mines are wasting daily some hundreds of tons of black coal, that can be had almost for the asking, and is suitable for the burning of brick.

The prospectus also contained the following cost-benefit analysis of brick-making at that time.

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**Market Value of Product, 20 M bricks/day**

75% of No. 1 Brick @ \$40 per M	600.00
15% of No. 2 Brick @ \$20 per M	60.00
10% of No. 3 brick @ \$12 per M	<u>24.00</u>

Market value of 20 M Brick	684.00
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Total cost of manufacturing ( <i>see below</i> )	<u>220.65</u>
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<b>Net profit on 20 M Brick</b>	<u><b>\$463.35</b></u>
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**Retail Cost of Manufacturing, 20 M bricks/day**

Mining shale, 75¢ per M [probably including royalties to Shaw]	15.00
One dry-pan man	3.00
One press man	3.50
Two truckers @ \$3.00	6.00
One setter	3.50
Two burners @ \$3.50	7.00
Two labourers @ \$2.75	5.50
Superintendence	10.00
Loading, 75¢ per M	15.00
Shading 50¢ per M	<u>10.00</u>
<b>Operations Subtotal</b>	<b>78.50</b>
Fuel for boiler	6.00
Fuel for bricks, \$3.00 per M	<u>60.00</u>
<b>Fuel Subtotal</b>	<b>66.00</b>
Freight to Vancouver \$1.25 per M	25.00

Depreciation & insurance 10%	16.95
Cost of selling, 5% of market value	<u>34.20</u>
	76.15
<b>Total Cost of Product</b>	<u><b>\$220.65</b></u>

Later that year, 1912, Henry J. Boam wrote in his book about British Columbia<sup>38</sup> that Dominion Shale Brick and Sewer Pipe Company was: "...one of the most recent and up-to-date manufacturers of its particular specialties". He reported that the plant had a nine-foot diameter dry-pan crusher and two presses capable of turning out 2000 bricks per hour, and that the rest of the plant was the "most modern procurable".

Average output was 75–80 thousand bricks per day, all of which were "easily disposed of in the Province". Boam noted that the President and General Manager of the company was Donald J. Dewar who first came to BC in 1887 and that the Secretary and Treasurer, Paul Steenstrup, was an experienced civil engineer and contractor who had worked in the USA.

A couple of years later, in April 1914, according to John Cass, the brickyard had a newly installed electric plant and a Klose kiln. And, of course, we know that on August 6, 1914, Dominion Shale Brick and Sewer Pipe Company bought Nairn Shaw's 20-acre parcel of land with all the buildings and improvements on it.

*Dominion's shareholders and directors*

On January 20, 1913, Dominion's shareholders were:

- D J. Dewar of Vancouver (manager);
- L.D. Morris of Nanaimo (brick-maker);
- P. Steenstrup of Vancouver (contractor);
- J.A. Dewar of Nanaimo (farmer);
- J.H. Elford of Victoria (brick-maker);
- J. Pitcairn Elford<sup>39</sup> of Victoria (also a brick-maker);

- Edith Dewar of Vancouver (married woman);
- W.G. Anderson of Vancouver (barrister);
- Arthur Wolfstan Riley of Victoria (gentleman);
- J. Spark of Vancouver (newsagent);
- Robert Cutesforth Brumpton of Victoria (merchant); and
- James W. Hey of Nanaimo (accountant).

The Directors of Dominion were D.J. Dewar, Riley, Brumpton, J.P. Elford, and Hey.

On April 5, 1914, D.J. Dewar was no longer listed as a Director, Brumpton was President, Hey was Secretary and Treasurer, and they had been joined by James Oscar Cameron of Victoria who represented big money connected with investment and lumber concerns.

In future years, this Cameron was to acquire a major interest in Gabriola's brickyard business. On May 10, 1916, the Directors of Dominion were: J.P. Elford (President); A.W.E. Riley (Secretary); R.C. Brumpton, now of Nanaimo; J.O. Cameron; and F.L. Randall also of Nanaimo.

#### *Dominion's 1916 assets and the effects of changes to the Trust Companies Act*

In 1916, Dominion's balance sheet indicated that the company's assets amounted to about 40 thousand dollars.<sup>40</sup> In July of the same year, Dominion received notice of their failure to comply by May 16, 1916, with the requirements of some changes to the Trust Companies Act of 1910. Under the new 1914 Trust Companies Act, some of the activities of Dominion were to be exclusively reserved to trust companies, and after the grace period of eighteen months (until September 4, 1915) they had been instructed to decide whether to become registered under the Act as a Trust Company or to abandon their power to do trust

business. A decision was made by the Directors to dissolve the existing company and transfer the assets to a new one.

On August 13, 1916, Dominion received a mortgage from Merchants' Bank of Canada for \$16,369.65 registered under the Bills of Sale Act on August 31, 1916, in the Nanaimo Offices of the Registrar of Joint-Stock Companies. It was to "secure the sum of \$16,369.65 and charges, one Berg four mould press and one 10-foot dry pan and eighty thousand bricks to the same more or less, one large safe, six large rubber belts for machines, one drilling machine, twelve wheelbarrows, one dump cart, and one steam pump". It was executed under the company seal by John P. Elford (President) and A.W.E. Riley (Secretary).

At an extraordinary general meeting of shareholders on September 15, 1916, it was agreed: "That the company be wound up voluntarily and that D.W. Campbell... be...appointed liquidator for the purpose of winding up". At a meeting of creditors on September 30, with Mr. Kirby representing Merchants' Bank of Canada and William Nairn Shaw representing "himself and others", a motion was carried "that the liquidator proceed with the work without the assistance of a joint liquidator or committee of inspection". Campbell notified the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies of the company's decision in a letter dated October 4, and of the decisions of the meeting of stock holders in another letter dated November 16, 1916.

#### ***Gabriola Shale Products***

June 27, 1917, a memorandum of Association was made with subscribers Daniel Wesley Campbell (one share) and Donell Cameron (one share), both of whom lived in Victoria. Articles of Association

were issued June 28. On this date also a Certificate of Incorporation was issued for Gabriola Shale Products, (GSP, company # 3437) signed by D.W. Campbell, Secretary. Its declared capital was \$50,000 divided into 500 shares. The Company's registered office was at 320, Central Building, View Street, Victoria, BC, and its first stated objective was to:

...carry on the business of manufacturers and sellers of brick, tiles, pottery, earthenware, china, and terra cotta, drain-pipes, sewer-pipes, and pipes of every kind and description, and all products made of clay and shale.

However, its other stated objectives ranged from

...cutting stone for building and paving; manufacture or purchase of cement, lime, plaster, tile, and artificial stone; purchase, pre-emption or lease of lands yielding petroleum, peat coal, rock, clay, earth, gravel, and sand; working those lands "to turn the same to account"; acquiring timber and timber limits and carrying on the business of lumbermen; construction of the infrastructure needed for their manufacturing and transportation; acquiring water rights and privileges and diverting the water as needed to carry on the business of a power company or any business within the meaning of 'The Water Act'.... and enjoy the full benefit of...the Power Companies' Relief Act...; to construct tramways and ...all kinds of vehicles...to carry passengers and merchandise, and "goods of all kinds".

Quite a wide-ranging set of industrial undertakings in this rural paradise of ours!

They also planned to deal in real estate and personal property as deemed necessary to their business; to be general contractors; to enter into partnerships with any persons and companies that might benefit the Company; to deal in the company's assets, accepting or disposing of shares and debentures for the

Company's benefit; to enter into agreements with authorities for such things as licences and concessions; apply for or acquire patents; to purchase or amalgamate with other people or businesses that might help them pursue their objectives; to raise money for the business; to invest money not immediately required for the business; to distribute their property among their members "*in specie*"; to register their company elsewhere; to help in the establishment of associations to aid their employees; and to pay their expenses from their funds.

On August 29, 1917, title of the parcel of land on which the brickworks operated passed from Dominion to Gabriola Shale Products. The list of encumbrances, liens and interests includes (1) \$6000 to Dennis Reginald Harris and (2) Shaw's subsurface rights. In a Land Registry Act Form D No. 35897G, dated Oct 4, 1917, the property is shown as having been conveyanced on July 19, 1917, (when application for title was made) as follows:

- from Dominion to Robert Marchell Smith
- from Robert Marchell Smith to James Oscar Cameron and Allen Campbell Fraser
- from James Oscar Cameron and Allen Campbell Fraser to Gabriola Shale Products.

In this transaction, Shaw registered his continuing claim to entitlement to "the coal and fireclay under the surface of the hereinafter described lands and the right to enter upon the said lands and mine and remove the same".

The 1918 annual report of the BC Minister of Mines states that "Gabriola Island Shale Product [*sic*] Company, Limited, has succeeded the Dominion Shale Product [*sic*]

Company, Limited, and with D.W. Campbell, of Victoria, as superintendent, is manufacturing high-class pressed red brick which finds a ready market in Vancouver and other points”.

The mortgage from Dennis Reginald Harris was re-assigned to Gabriola Shale Products on July 2, 1919, and the due date for repayment of the principal was delayed to August 7, 1920, with interest at 7% payable quarterly from May 7, 1919.

*Cameron Investment's increasing share of GSP*

James Oscar Cameron of Victoria was named as President of the new company on February 18, 1918, and D.W. Campbell became Secretary and Treasurer. In March 1918, the Company's registered offices were moved to 102 Moody Block in Victoria and the letter to this effect to the Registrar of Companies dated March 7 was on Cameron Investment & Securities Co.'s letterhead.

According to the Companies Act Form B dated December 31, 1918, nominal share capital of Gabriola Shale Products was \$50,000 divided into 500 shares at \$100. At

that date, a total of 363 shares were held (with only \$500 unpaid). Within the next five years, the company came under the total control of Cameron Investments and Securities (see *Table 2*).

*Conflict and operations in the 1920s*

Business relations at the brickyard were not all sweetness and light at this time of expansion. At the time of the changeover to the new company, Shaw increased the price of their water from \$6 to \$20 per month. This caused escalating problems between him and D.W. Campbell, culminating in Campbell suing Shaw for \$20,000 damages for “injury to his reputation”. The case was heard in Nanaimo Courthouse in June 1920, resulting in an award of \$200 and costs for the Plaintiff.

Some of the necessary paperwork after the transfer of corporate ownership appears to have been sloppy: a letter sent October 4, 1922, to Dominion's offices in Victoria's Central Building and also to “D.W. Campbell Esq. (Liquidator)” at the Moody Block, Victoria address, notified them that

<b>Table 2: Shareholdings 1918-1923</b>				
<b>Shareholders:</b>	<b>14/02/18</b>	<b>31/12/18</b>	<b>26/10/20</b>	<b>7/03/23</b>
James O. Cameron, Sawmill Mgr.	1	2	2	2
Allan C. Fraser, Mgr. Merchants' Bank of Canada	1	1	1	-
J.O. Cameron & A.C. Fraser	100	-	-	-
Robert M. Smith, Engineer	1	1	1	-
Donell O. Cameron, Sawmill Mgr.		1	1	1
Daniel W. Campbell, Insurance Agent		1	1	1
Cameron Investment & Securities Co.	150	177	197	496
C.G. Dunning Mgr. Merchants' Bank of Canada		75	75	-
Land Securities Co., Winnipeg, Man.		105	125	-
<b>TOTAL SHARES ISSUED</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>500</b>



all the necessary returns to be made by a liquidator had not been made, giving them 14 days notice of publication of a notice in the Gazette, and subsequent (two months later) striking from the Register of Companies if the necessary returns remain unsubmitted.

According to the BC Ministry of Mines' annual report, the new company manufactured 3 578 600 bricks during 1920 and although there are no other Ministry Reports on Gabriola's brickyard during the 1920s, it appears to have operated smoothly under D.W. Campbell's management.

The quality of their bricks had a good reputation; for example,<sup>41</sup> George Robinson of Vancouver specified that only red brick from Gabriola be used in the building he had been contracted to construct for Mitchell's Farmers Market due to be opened on September 12, 1922.

### *The dirty thirties*

On March 24, 1932 Gabriola Shale Products notified the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies that the mortgage (title # 286421) between D.R. Harris and Gabriola Shale Products had been released on August 20, 1930, and filed in Nanaimo.

The company had been prospering to this point, but economic conditions were poor generally, so demand for bricks began to slow down. Talking to June Harrison, Gabriola old-timer Harry Howie recalled those years:

...the hungry thirties were pretty grim. It was a hard time for all of us. We survived pretty good though, nobody starved, but there was no work anywhere and so no money to be had, you couldn't raise a red cent, not a penny.

Earl Easthom who was born on Gabriola in 1916, recalled<sup>42</sup> working in the brickyard

when he was 15 or 16, before he worked at the stone quarry. He said:

As far as I remember it was always there. It used to go steady all year round years and years ago and then they cut it down to six months a year because they couldn't get rid of enough bricks...It was just hard work. You know I always had the hardest jobs...you're willing, so they give you the hard jobs. You go there and you shovel that shale onto the little bucket box on the tracks and you push it out and they up and dumped it and they brought it back and you did it again. I wasn't the only one. They had two people there.

The 1930 Report of the BC Minister of Mines in its Inspection of Quarries section states that Gabriola Shale Products' operation managed by Charles F. DeLong had closed the quarry and plant for several months toward the end of 1930, although DeLong informed the inspectors that operations were to be resumed early in 1931.<sup>43</sup> A very similar report was made in 1931, with another closure toward the end of that year due to lack of orders. In 1932, the quarry and plant were idle the entire year, and the next year's report says: "Owing to market conditions no work was done at the quarry or plant during 1933".

They were open for only a short period during 1934, and "then closed down for an indefinite period". The *Gabriola Advertiser* made the following reports in the summer of 1934:

The Gabriola Shale Products under the management of Mr. C. DeLong are making preparations to operate the Island brickyard. A scow load of coal arrived, and repairs to boilers and plant are underway.<sup>44</sup>

A breakdown occurred at the local brickyard today (Tues.), the yard workers being forced to take a holiday. Engineers were brought from Nanaimo, however, and after working late hours, managed to get the pan in working

order again. It is hoped work will be resumed as usual.<sup>45</sup>

The rest of the decade was no better: the Ministry of Mines reports stated that “the plant has been closed down for a couple of years and was in operation only three months in 1936”; and from 1937 to 1939 it operated for only five or six months a year with crews of 24 or 28 men, still under the management of DeLong.

In April 1939, Gabriola's school magazine *Anecho* had reported that the brickyard was busy loading scows, but in June 1940 it said:

The old brickyard, which has been idle for months, appears as if it will not open up this year. This is also the opinion of Mr. DeLong, the manager. I know that will be a great disappointment to some people because those out of work are depending upon it to open. I don't think it will because there is yet quite a lot of bricks left over from last year but don't give up hope folks; that's what was said last year too.

*Transfers among Gabriola Shale Products, T.G. McBride, and Evans Coleman & Evans*

Cameron Investment & Securities transferred its holdings in Gabriola Shale Products to the Cameron Lumber Company in 1939, reassigning its 496 shares to Allan W. Millar—one share to him as a personal shareholder, and 495 to him as trustee of the lumber company.

In the 1940 annual report of the BC Minister of Mines, the brickyard company's name appeared as Dominion Brick Co. and the report stated: “This property was formerly operated by the Gabriola Shale Products”. The manager was listed as Thomas G. McBride and work reportedly began in August and employed 23 men steadily until November.

A letter dated September 6, 1941 from the Registrar of Companies to Gabriola Shale Products, c/o T.G. McBride & Co. of Vancouver, advises that the Company's directors are in default of filing their annual report, the last one on file being dated 15 February 1940. However, on October 23, 1941, on behalf of McBride, Harold Campbell (Chartered Accountant) wrote to Gabriola Shale Products, c/o Cameron Lumber Co. at their old Moody Block address in Victoria stating that they are the ones in default since:

...Mr McBride, of course, has nothing to do with the filing of your Company reports as he is not running as the Gabriola Shale Products Ltd. and I presume that you may wish to retain the charter of that Company...He [the Registrar] further requires copies of whatever Resolutions were passed regarding the sale and transfer of assets of your Company to Messrs. T.G. McBride & Co.

In an explanatory letter to the Registrar on the same date, Harold Campbell wrote:

For your guidance, I may say that T.G. McBride & Co. purchased the Brick Yards, Equipment, &c., but are not carrying on the Gabriola Shale Products Ltd. as a Company. They are simply manufacturing bricks for their own business in Vancouver and treating such manufacture and sale of bricks as a department of T.G. McBride & Co.

On March 27, 1942, Gabriola Shale Products agreed to sell Parcel A and the brick-making business to Evans, Coleman & Evans of Victoria “for the sum of \$14,000”.

The Indenture certificate says this was to include “all buildings, fixtures, commons, ways, profits, privileges, rights, easements and appurtenances”, and all supplies except for the stock of manufactured brick and tile. It also states that the sale will be subject to Shaw's subsurface rights and, of course, the

payment of all necessary taxes, including any arrears.<sup>46</sup>

On April 18, 1942, the Registrar of Companies wrote to Gabriola Shale Products in Victoria, advising them that they had failed for two consecutive years to file the required reports, and if they failed to comply or notify the registrar that they were no longer carrying on the business, a notice would be published in the Gazette, and two months later they would be struck off the register of companies and dissolved, although any liabilities of the officers and members would continue. But, in the 1942 report of the Ministry of Mines, the company operating the Gabriola brickyard is again named as “Gabriola Shale” with its company office listed at Columbia Street, Vancouver, BC, and local manager F.A. Higgs. Operations that year began on May 16 and went to November 30 with an average crew of 29 men. Output was 1.9 million bricks. But the 1943 report simply stated “Gabriola Shale Products Quarry [sic] did not operate during 1943”.

On November 25, 1943, Gabriola Shale Products was dissolved and ownership of its assets passed to Evans, Coleman & Evans of Victoria.

### ***Evans, Coleman & Evans***

Evans, Coleman & Evans' Certificate of Indefeasible Title for the land is dated March 16, 1943, still of course subject to the retention of coal and fireclay rights by William Nairn Shaw. The Minister of Mines' 1944 and 1945 annual reports say:

Gabriola Shale Products Quarry—(49° 123° S.W.) Evans, Coleman & Evans, Operators, Vancouver, BC; F.A. Higgs, Manager, Gabriola Island, BC This quarry was idle in 1943 but resumed operations on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1944. With a crew of six men employed at the quarry and five men around the surface

plant, work was carried on for the rest of the year.

...J. Atkinson, Foreman, ...quarry...operated continuously during 1945 except for a brief period in the late summer when it was closed for lack of sufficient water. An average crew of twenty-four men has been steadily engaged in the quarry and brick-making plant, producing a total of 1.8 million bricks

The 1947 and 1948 reports called the company Gabriola Shale Products, but still named F.A. Higgs as resident manager. The factory operated steadily during 1948 with a crew averaging 24 men in the brickyard and two in the quarry. That year they produced 3.75 million bricks marketed in Vancouver, Victoria, and Westminster.

In 1950, the Minister of Mines again lists the company as Evans, Coleman & Evans, but the plant was still under Higgs' management. It operated from March to November that year and used 900 tons of shale with an average crew of 17.

Over these several years Evans, Coleman & Evans had encumbered the title of their various properties, including Parcel A, with several substantial “charges, liens and interests” from the Royal Trust Company.<sup>47</sup>

In 1952, the Minister of Mines again reported that the plant did not operate, but this time Gabriola's brickyard stayed closed. Times were changing: the coalmines were nearly all gone, along with their convenient, cheap fuel. The construction and architectural worlds were changing too, as brick was abandoned in favour of concrete. Once thriving brickyards became a thing of the past.

In 1964, Evans, Colman & Evans changed its name to Ocean Cement and title to Parcel A passed to the new company on April 20, 1965.

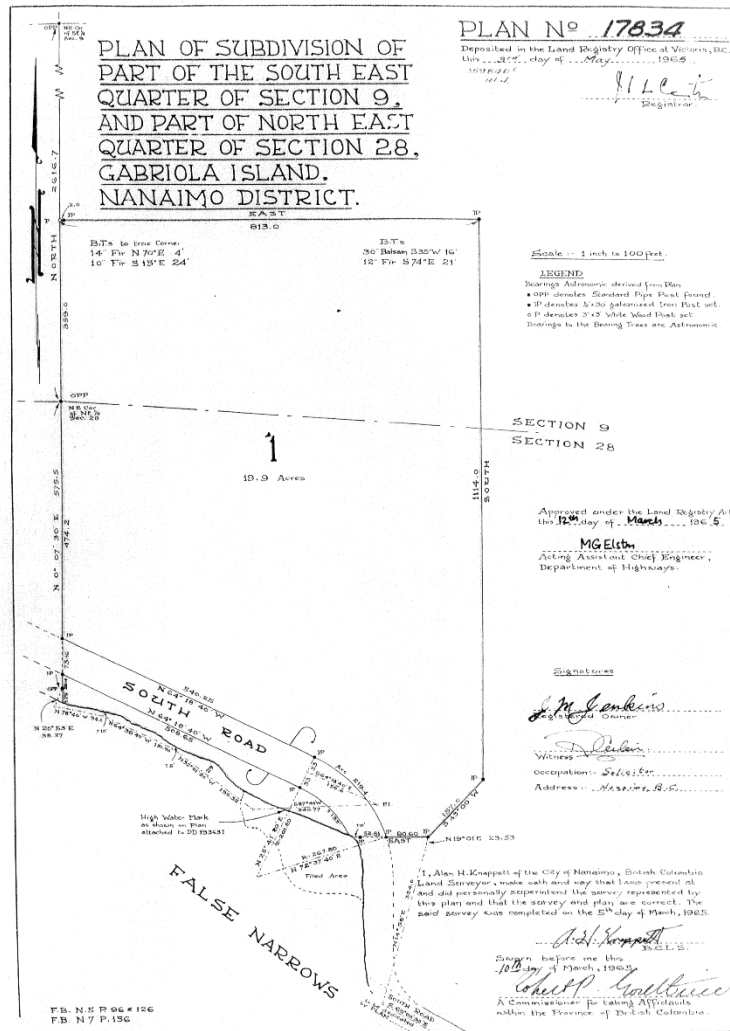


Figure 16: Plan 17834 Lot 1 showing the correct division between Sections 9 and 28.

Physically, Lot 1 is identical to Parcel A shown in Figure 15, but Parcel A is shown as being entirely within Section 28.

To correct the error, Jenkins bought Parcel A for one dollar, subdivided it, and then sold the two subdivisions back as Lot 1 for one dollar. Relatively straightforward when you know what is going on and why, but puzzling to a historian who doesn't.

among other places. When he first brought his family to Gabriola in 1949, aged 45, he operated a sheep farm on land he leased from Jim Brown's father Dan, "up in the Horseshoe Drive area". Apparently Mrs. Jenkins didn't like it up there—"too gloomy"—and he decided to buy south end land under the Veterans' Land Act (VLA).

On October 17, 1953, the  
the Veterans Land Act in a three-  
ent with Jenkins and Westwood,  
e (certificate # 233386I) to:

- Section 28, NE¼ division, (except Parcel A)
- Section 9, SE¼ division.

Jenkins worked to pay off the loan for this land and applied for his Certificate of Indefeasible Title on June 15, 1964 (# 345325I, issued June 22).

In April 1965, he also applied for a title certificate (# 359839I, issued May 5) for Parcel A of Section 28, NE¼ division—the

## Winding it up—a new era

Pre-emption and pioneering had passed away long since, but new entitlements like the Veterans' Land Act presented opportunities for those willing to take a chance.

*Farmer and land developer—John Morgan Jenkins*

His daughter Betty Abrams told me that John Morgan Jenkins “was a worker”. He had been a fisherman, a rancher, a hotelier, and a farmer, in Ottawa, Kitscoty (Alta.), Powell River, Courtenay, and Smithers

old brickyard land. He bought it from Ocean Cement for only one dollar, though its declared value was \$5000.

On the same day, he applied for the title certificate (# 359840I) for the combined tract of land, incorporating his VLA land and Parcel A. But immediately, he legally re-subdivided the land, applying for a third certificate, (# 360530I, also issued May 5) for “Lot 1, Sections 9 and 28” of Plan 17834. This plan (see *Figure 16*) shows Lot 1 to be the exact same location and size as Parcel A, which had previously been erroneously described as being only a part of Section 28. The new official description now accurately included a small part of the SE corner of Section 9. On September 28, 1965 Jenkins sold Lot 1 back to Ocean Cement for one dollar (title certificate # 368239I).

Now Jenkins was poised to subdivide the rest of his land. Betty recalled that at that time, Jenkins held a total of 644 acres of property extending from the ocean front of what is now El Verano Drive up and “over the ridge to the gravel pit” and that he bought most of it from the William Nairn Shaw family via the estate’s executor Westwood. She says that the portion Jenkins bought under the VLA he was obligated to hold for 18 years and he operated a dairy farm<sup>48</sup> on the lands near the stream that flows into Brickyard Beach. His family in those days lived in the farmhouse (possibly the old Shaw farmhouse) just up Ferne Road. He retired to one of the South Road/El Verano lots that he and Dean Finlayson had subdivided, living there until he died on August 8, 1988.

In the period since the brickyard had closed, Gabriola’s pioneers, lumbermen, and early farmers had given way to housing developers as hippies, country cottagers,

artists, young families, and retired people “discovered” their rural paradise.

### *Corporate interests after closure*

William Nairn Shaw’s family interests in the coal and fireclay rights continued to be represented by Westwood, but Ocean Cement was swallowed by Ocean Construction Supplies of Burrard St., Vancouver, and the title for the land passed to them on April 12, 1972.

On December 31, 1977, a certificate was issued under the Companies Act stating that a new large company, also called Ocean Construction Supplies, was being formed with Incorporation Number 169553 by amalgamating more than a dozen smaller companies old and new involved in the sand, gravel, cement, and brick-making businesses.<sup>49</sup>

In June 1978, a title certificate for the brickyard property was issued to this enlarged industrial corporation. It is still very much in business. On the company’s current web site we read:

Ocean Construction Supplies Ltd. is a business unit of Lehigh Cement Company [a Pennsylvania affiliate of Heidelberg Cement Group of Germany]... [and]...is a producer of high quality portland, blended and specialty cements and construction materials. [It] is...affiliated with some of the world’s most technically advanced cement operations and related construction materials activities... subsidiaries supply lightweight aggregates, ready-mix concrete, concrete pipe, concrete block, pre-cast and pre-stressed concrete products, admixtures, flyash, and other pozzolanic materials....

So the company is still making bricks, but they’re now interlocking ones made of cement, and they no longer even hold land on Gabriola. Another large company, the Genstar Development Company, bought the

old brickyard site in 1983, and since then, it has passed into private hands, though it remains undeveloped.

### ***Back to nature***

The companies that held the brickyard lands after the early fifties did nothing with the site, and it fell into neglect.

The structures and millions of bricks were attracting vandals, thieves, and the curious. It became a hazard and something had to be done. Clyde Coats told June Harrison that:<sup>50</sup>

When the Brickyard operations were closed, my Dad [Bill Coats] put in a bid for dismantling the structures and we went down to take the building down. Dad bought things out there. Morgan Jenkins bought the trucks and the rolling stock, and we bought all the buildings and the machinery. There were big cast iron rollers, which we sold to a junk dealer in Vancouver, and the belt-driven pulley can still be seen on our property. The bricks were removed and we were selling them for many years afterwards—must have been twenty years...a Dutchman...was put to work piling bricks across the lake. The bricks would be brought in by truck and he was required to pile them.... We must have taken about five million bricks out, sold some, shipped them and sold them as firebricks. The lumber was all de-nailed, stacks of it still left around here... The railway cars and water reservoir were brought away...

The patch of land between the beach and South Road (the old loading area) was designated Crown Land in 1974, and the BC government briefly allowed bricks to be dug



Figure 16: As it was. Brickyard Beach with the mother lode of culls, now dispersed and buried, on the left.

GHMS Archives 1996.009.004 a(v)

out by enterprising locals—no doubt that's where my lovely chimney facings came from—before ordering it bulldozed flat. It's now a perfect spot for the Gabriola Canada Day Potato Cannon Contest. The rest of the site on the hillside has returned to leafy peace and the only people mining the brickyard area now are usually just picking blackberries or collecting oysters on the beach. ◇

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Ian R. Wilson, *The False Narrows Bluffs Archaeological Investigations on Gabriola Island*, Permit 1987-40, December 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Earl Easthom, who is 90 years old now, worked at the brickyard when he was a young man. This photograph was kindly loaned to me by Earl's daughter, Sheila Bradley.

<sup>3</sup> The Nanaimo Series is now known as the Nanaimo Group. Early geologists recognized only two formations in this group on Gabriola, the Gabriola Formation (mainly sandstones) and the Northumberland Formation (conglomerates, sandstones, and shales). The Northumberland Formation has now been subdivided into the Spray, Geoffrey, and a more tightly defined Northumberland Formation. The shale used for

brick-making remains in the Northumberland Formation, but the “grey, sandy” shale is part of the Spray Formation most easily seen along Easthom Road.

Once crushed and mixed with water, shale, which is a form of mudrock, forms clay, and either shale or clay can be used as the raw materials for brick-making. Use of clay was once common in BC, but nowadays, most bricks in Canada are made from shale. Firing clay produces the mineral *mullite* ( $3\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2$ ), which has long interlocking crystals.

<sup>4</sup> The difference in colour of shales is mainly due to different degrees of oxidation of the iron in it (the most weathered shale is brown). This wouldn't show up in a chemical analysis. The red colour of bricks is due to oxides of iron, particularly *hematite* ( $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ). Lighter- and brighter-red bricks contain more alumina, while darker bricks with a brown or purplish cast contain manganese (common on Gabriola). Overfiring will also darken them. Bricks with low iron and high silica content are yellowish.

<sup>5</sup> A high percentage of magnesia and alkalis (sodium and potassium) makes the bricks prone to efflorescence, but some is required to act as a flux. “Ignition” (weight loss on heating) is a measure of water and organic carbon content. A high carbon content, common in clays associated with coal-bearing strata, is also undesirable because it blackens the bricks.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1934 report, the safety record was also stated to be good at McDonald Cut-stone Operators who were cutting mill-stones in Descanso Bay just west of the present-day ferry terminal, reminding us that, with the sawmill at Silva Bay, there were significant industrial businesses at both ends of the Island. Diatomaceous earth was also being quarried commercially on Gabriola at about this time.

<sup>7</sup> June Lewis-Harrison, *The People of Gabriola*, p.60, Frieson & Sons BC, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> “Clayburn became famous for its trademark Clayburn-brand firebrick, which was a speckled buff colour. After 1906, it was the only firebrick producer in British Columbia... It was used for

sheathing boilers, building smokestacks, and constructing kilns.” Helmi Braches (ed.), *Brick by Brick—The Story of Clayburn*, p.36, Clayburn Village Community Society, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Occasionally, one finds old red bricks on Gabriola made by I-XL Industries, “I excel”, an Alberta company. These bricks can be found throughout western Canada. Probably those on Gabriola were brought here recently and have no particular historical significance.

<sup>10</sup> Brickyard Beach is marked on charts as Percy Anchorage at the entrance to False Narrows.

<sup>11</sup> Each brick actually weighs about 5 lb., not 7. The 49 lb. sounds suspiciously close to some unknown 50 lb. (legal?) lifting limit.

<sup>12</sup> In a taped conversation with Carol Boyce kept in the GHMS Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Peggy Lewis Imredy's book, *Gabriola Island*, was compiled in 1984 for the Gabriola Three Schools' Reunion at Silva Bay Resort. Jack Cox, John and Harry Finnamore, Charlie Murray, Billie Leitch, and Gordon Baillie's work at the brickyard are recorded in it. The book was never published but a copy is held in the GHMS Archives.

<sup>14</sup> Lobo Spring on Brickyard Hill is named after Lorraine and Bob Weir who owned land adjoining the brickyard property later.

<sup>15</sup> *The People of Gabriola* (ibid), p.235.

<sup>16</sup> *The People of Gabriola* (ibid), p.110.

<sup>17</sup> In 1934, L. Roberts is mysteriously named as “prop” at the yard—proprietor? prop cutter? property manager? The Ministry report states the brickyard hardly operated that year.

<sup>18</sup> *Gabriola Island* (ibid), p.69.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph and his brother James Davis were adopted by the Silva family.

<sup>20</sup> Adeliza Jane McGuffie was by birth a South Alaskan Tongas woman. Her name appears as Adelaide Jan (30) in the 1881 census, as Elizabeth (50) in the 1891 census, as Jane (63) in the 1901 census, but as Adeliza Jane in the family history records in the GHMS Archives.

<sup>21</sup> McGuffie was involved in setting up Gabriola's first school in the 1870s near the present day Community Hall. See *SHALE* 11, pp.7–21, May 2005.

<sup>22</sup> The 1884/5 Alberni-Nanaimo Assessment Rolls list the McGuffie family holdings in the El Verano Drive and Brickyard Hill area as:

- Section 9, NW¼ division, S ½ subdivision, 80 acres (John)
- Section 9, NE¼ division, S ½ subdivision, 80 acres (John)
- Section 9, SW¼ division, 152 acres (Thomas)
- Section 9, SE¼ division, 160 acres (Thomas)
- Section 28, NW¼ division, 11 acres (Thomas); and
- Section 28 NE¼ division, 94 acres (Thomas).

<sup>23</sup> Childhood deaths were common in those days: the McGuffies' son, Thomas Alexander, had died in 1885 when only eight years old, and a daughter Elizabeth had died in infancy in 1875.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas McGuffie was reported in the Nanaimo Free Press, February 16, 1895, as being found "sitting in his canoe stone dead". The report was headed "Pioneer's Passing Away".

<sup>25</sup> George married Emily Jane Hudson in July 1895 but we hear no more of Emily in official records. Maggie was unmarried. The McGuffies' other daughter Ann[e] had married John Lewis and continued to live on Gabriola.

<sup>26</sup> John W. Morgan, aged 23, and David Morgan aged 27, also born in Wales, died on May 3, 1887 in the No.1 Pit, Esplanade, mine disaster that had also killed young John McGuffie. Research continues as to whether they were related to "our" Thomas Morgan.

<sup>27</sup> This is most likely the Thomas Miles who was born in Wales and died in Nanaimo aged 62 in 1917. The 1889 BC Directory lists a Thomas Miles who was a miner at Vancouver Coal

Company living on Nicol Street in Nanaimo. On December 25, 1886, the Nanaimo Free Press reported the nomination of Colin Campbell McKenzie the day before as a candidate in a by-election for the provincial legislature. He was proposed by David Hoggan and James Rollo, and assented by R.S.B. O'Brian, Thomas Miles, and William Hoggan. This links Thomas Miles to three other Gabriola landowners. In this by-election on January 3, 1887, 12 of the 511 ballots returned were from Gabriola, where voting took place in the schoolhouse. McKenzie was not elected, receiving only 109 votes.

<sup>28</sup> The Certificate of Title that Annie applied for in 1911 before making her deal with William Nairn Shaw states there were "Statuary declarations of Thomas Morgan as to default under mortgage and notice given [*sic*] and as to possession and payment of taxes, and statutory declaration of Albert Edward Planta [a notary public] as to possession and payment of taxes."

<sup>29</sup> A "Form D" under Section 29, Subsection (b) of the Land Registry Act states this mortgage was registered on November 14, 1913, and the release is dated August 10, 1914.

<sup>30</sup> Shaw's descendent, Jennifer Lewis, has a genealogy website and on this site the name is spelled "Nairne". In the legal documentation regarding land transfers on Gabriola the name is spelled "Nairn". His wife's maiden name was Euphemia Temple Hunter and she was born January 17, 1861, in Scotland. Their oldest child Euphemia Temple Hunter Shaw, born in 1893, died aged 4 and is buried in Nanaimo Cemetery. In 1920, William Nairn Shaw's daughter, Jean H. L. Shaw, married Dr. Charles Novello Westwood and it was their son Dr. William Novello Westwood who later acted as the executor of Shaw's estate.

<sup>31</sup> Dennis Reginald Harris, a civil engineer born in Winchester, Hants., England, married Martha Douglas in Victoria in March 1878. She was the daughter Sir James Douglas, who died later that year in August.

<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, the Indenture Certificate displays some confusion over the Company



name. The name of the purchaser is typed as “DOMINION BRICK COMPANY LIMITED”, but initialled hand-written inserts change this to “DOMINION *shale* BRICK *sewer pipe* COMPANY LIMITED”.

<sup>33</sup> The legal description of land bought by Dominion from Shaw in 1914 was as follows. The description is faulty in that it implies the north boundary was that of Section 28 whereas in fact it extends into Section 9. This required some paperwork juggling to correct in 1965.

Commencing at the North-west corner of the North-east quarter of said Section 28, Range 9, Gabriola Island; thence East along the North boundary of the said quarter section 12.315 chains; thence South and parallel to the West boundary of the said quarter section 16.87 chains; thence S 42°58' W. 2.377 chains; thence West and parallel to the North boundary of the said quarter section 1.87 chains to high water mark; thence following the meanders of the shore at high water mark 9.642 chains to a point on the West boundary of the said quarter section; thence North and along the said West boundary 14.60 chains to the point of commencement. The whole containing by admeasurement (excepting the wagon road) twenty (20) acres more or less, and being more particularly shown on the attached plan.

<sup>34</sup> A note on the 1914 Land Title Certificate says that in 1939 William Nairn Shaw also signed a three-year Timber Agreement on the land with Frank Beban Lumber Co.

<sup>35</sup> Both William Nairn and his wife Euphemia Shaw are buried in the Pioneer Cemetery on South Road, Gabriola.

<sup>36</sup> Dominion's prospectus, issued on February 19, 1912, somewhat inaccurately states that the Company had bought the brick plant, clay beds and premises from D.J. Dewar, L.D. Morris, J.A. Dewar (listed as being from South Gabriola Island) and P. Steenstrup, who had received in payment 500 fully paid-up shares in the capital stock of the company, allotted as follows: D.J. Dewar (187.5); J.A. Dewar (62.5); L.D. Morris

(125); P. Steenstrup (125). These four, together with William G. Anderson, are listed in the prospectus as the directors of the company. It also states that five other shares had been allotted, but only partially paid to \$200. They sought to issue another 500 fully paid-up shares.

<sup>37</sup> L.D. Morris was identified as Superintendent and Manager of the plant, and the prospectus notes that he had “been superintendent for years of large shale brick plants in the United States. He was formerly in charge of the Denver Sewer Pipe & Clay Co., and the Golden Pressed Fire Brick Co., Denver, Colorado.”

<sup>38</sup> Henry J. Boam, *BC—Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources*, p.203, Sells: London, 1912.

<sup>39</sup> Victoria Real Estate's Philip Illingworth says that John Pitcairn Elford was born in Australia in 1850 to emigrant English parents Robert and Hanna, who married in 1844 and had left England in search of gold. He was christened on Pitcairn Island when they were on their way to California, where his brother Theophilus was born in 1854. The family eventually settled in Victoria and Robert Elford is listed as a 62-year-old builder there in the 1881 census. In 1886, John P. Elford and William J. Smith set up the Queen City Brick and Tile Works, which later became the Victoria Brick & Tile Co. Elford and Smith were also listed as builders and contractors of Cadboro Bay Road and Saanich Road in the 1892 William's Directory of BC. In 1895, John Pitcairn built a house at 119 Ormond Street, Victoria, whose first tenants were John Herbert Elford and his wife Sarah Jane (who was born in 1870). In 1901, John Herbert Elford was the foreman of the Victoria Brick and Tile Co. and he became a partner in 1912.

<sup>40</sup> In 1916, Dominion's balance sheet read:

#### **Assets**

Real estate 20 acres	16000.
Plant & equipment	24350.
Bricks on hand & supplies	<u>1350.</u>
	40700.

#### **Liabilities**

Mortgage	6000.
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Merchants' Bank	16140.
Interest due	500.
Floating liabilities	<u>650.</u>
	23290.
<b>Capital</b>	
Issued	60500.
(authorized 100,000.)	
Less costs to date	<u>43090.</u>
	17410.

<sup>41</sup> This information, and that about the Campbell vs. Shaw court case, is from John Cass's articles in the Nanaimo Free Press.

<sup>42</sup> In a taped conversation with Carol Boyce, held in the GHMS Archives.

<sup>43</sup> The large Clayburn Company in the Fraser Valley also suffered at this time: "Timing of the expansion...could not have been worse for the company because by the end of 1930, orders for brick were greatly reduced due to the worldwide economic depression". *Brick by Brick—The Story of Clayburn* (ibid), p.41.

<sup>44</sup> *Gabriola Advertiser*, 1 No.8, June 21, 1934.

<sup>45</sup> *Gabriola Advertiser*, 1 No.11, July 11, 1934.

<sup>46</sup> Another Indenture certificate on that same date states that Thomas George McBride also granted to Evans, Coleman & Evans Ltd., for one dollar, an undivided two-thirds interest in "The fractional North West Quarter of Section 28" (the adjoining land on the Green Wharf side) and its appurtenances etc.

<sup>47</sup> The charges, liens, and interests included:

- #119420, a mortgage for \$900,000 at 3.5% to secure debentures (Certificate of Charge issued in April 1946)
- #124259, debentures aggregating \$1,250,000 at 3.5%, declared value \$320,070 (Certificate of Charge issued in May 1947)
- #154976, for \$1,000,000 at 3.25% (Certificate of Charge issued in March 1951).

<sup>48</sup> The old dairy barn is still down on South Road, though another of Jenkins' daughters,

potter Val Sawyer raised it up and converted it to a house when that 1.5-acre parcel was subdivided off in 1972. Its current owner, who bought it in 1990, says he thinks the barn is old because it is made from hand-sawn boards. Betty says the barn predates her father's ownership, so probably it was built by Shaw. The owner says William Nairn Shaw's family still holds mining rights on this piece of land.

<sup>49</sup> The companies were:

- Ocean Wharves, incorporated 1910 under the name Evans Coleman Wharf Co. changing its name in 1964
- Ocean Cement Trading, incorporated in 1915 under the name Western Salmon Packing Co., which changed its name to Evans Coleman Trading Co. in 1924 and subsequently changed it again in 1964
- Ocean Construction Supplies, incorporated in 1910 under the name Evans, Coleman & Evans, which changed its name to Ocean Cement in 1964, and subsequently changed it again in 1972
- Champion & White (1920); Hillside Sand & Gravel, (1924); McCleery & Weston (1928); Highland Sand & Gravel Co. (1940)
- Western Sand & Gravel, incorporated in 1947 under the name Atlas Construction and changing its name in 1954
- Superior Construction Co. (1948); Cassidy Sand & Gravel (1953); Prince George Concrete Products (1957); Steelhead Holdings (1961); Kitimat Concrete Products (1961); Pacific Brick & Block (1962); Baron Holdings (1969).

The Marpole Brick Co., which incorporated in 1941, changed its name to Ocean Cement in 1972 and subsequently to Tilbury Cement in 1986. Tilbury's office is registered at the same address as Ocean Construction Supplies.

<sup>50</sup> *The People of Gabriola* (ibid), pp.128–9.

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## Research 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”.

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### **Brickyard notes**—by Jenni Gehlbach

#### ***The Chinese workers***

When I wrote about Gabriola’s brickyard in *SHALE* 15, I commented upon the difficulty of discovering who worked there in the early years of its operation, particularly the Chinese men. But now I can put names to at least a few of them, and also identify an American who probably worked there too.

The first registered Company to operate the brickyard started in 1911, and although he was not part of that company, William Nairn Shaw was a key player in the establishment and financing of the brickyard operation. The 1911 census of Gabriola’s residents lists as living in Shaw’s household an American lodger together with eight Chinese “servants” whose work was listed as “labourer”, and whose religion was listed as Confucianism. They were:

- Chow Chu—34 years old;
- Yip Chu or Chi—42 years old;
- Chow Gan—25 years old;
- Chow Kim (1)—31 years old;
- Chow Kim (2)—34 years old;
- Chow Pan—31 years old;
- Sam Slu—33 years old; and
- Yip ?—30 years old.

Sam Slu is shown in early pictures of a scow being loaded and unloaded at the brickyard. Earl Easthom knew him, probably from his father or uncle, as “Slu” or “Sloo” and the “letter writer” of the group.

The American was Thomas Reynolds, a Roman Catholic of Scottish descent, whose work was described as being a “teamster”. He was 36 years old.

#### ***Thomas Morgan and the brickyard***

The most intriguing of the few little mysteries that remained upon completion of the brickyard article was the role played by Thomas Morgan. Another lingering question was who was it exactly that had spotted the local shale deposits that were so suitable for making bricks, and realized the potential for a good business. I now have the answer to both questions.

As I reported in the article in *SHALE* 15, in 1894, a few years after the search for coal on McGuffie’s land was abandoned, Thomas Morgan bought a large swathe of it, including the land on which the brickyard eventually operated. In 1897, Morgan sold this land to a Thomas Miles, who very quickly flipped it back to Thomas Morgan’s wife, Annie, which is a very strange thing to have done.

The Morgans never lived on Gabriola, remaining in Nanaimo, but they held the Gabriola land until 1913–4, when they sold it to William Nairn Shaw, who subdivided it and flipped it at great profit to the first brick-making company: Dominion Shale Brick and Sewer Pipe Company. Dominion had already been in production for several years at that point; thus, it is certain that the brick business started while Annie Morgan held the land.

Recently, I have been researching the history of Gabriola's sandstone quarry and this has entailed searching through dozens of Annual Reports from the Provincial Ministry of Mines from the 1870s to the 1940s. And this is what I ran across in the Report of the Secretary of the Board of Examiners, 1900:

- On May 30, 1896, Thomas Morgan of Nanaimo received his 'certificate of competency' as an assayer under the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1877.

Other similar reports revealed more about his career:

- On November 1, 1898, Thomas Morgan was appointed Inspector of Mines for BC, giving his first Report for the District of Nanaimo that year
- Morgan acted as Inspector of mines and quarries in various parts of the Province throughout his career
- On May 31, 1913, Thomas Morgan retired from his job as Inspector of Mines. He and his successor, John Newton, filed a joint Report for the Nanaimo District that year.

So the mystery of the Morgans is solved. In addition to his previously reported appointment to the Safety Committee for Nanaimo's mines, Thomas was a qualified assayer and no doubt recognized good clay when he saw it. His work may well have brought him here while the Vancouver Coal Company were digging their exploratory shaft. But, if he were to be appointed an Inspector of Mines for the Ministry, it would not do for him to be involved in a shale quarry—that would constitute a conflict of interest. So Thomas arranged for his wife Annie to hold the land for the duration of his career. He retired the same year that Annie sold the land to Nairn Shaw, no doubt providing the family with a nest-egg for their retirement. ♦

## Trace elements—by Nick Doe

While we are all familiar with elements like iron (Fe), copper (Cu), and sodium (Na), a few, much rarer, beasts, scandium (Sc) for example, frequently pop up in analyses of the metal content of groundwater or soil samples (*SHALE* 7, pp.35–42, 43–48). Some of these rarer “trace” elements are essential for living things; some are toxic; and some are both, depending on their concentration—which in itself is enough to make them interesting. Very often though, no one pays them any attention unless they are present in a concentration that exceeds some standard for potable water or contaminated soil. Rare indeed is the enquiring mind that upon receiving a lab. report asks, what the heck is dysprosium (Dy), how did it get into my well, or should I care that there's 0.34 parts per million of it in my soil? Google provides some of the answers,<sup>1</sup> but here are some thoughts from a more Gabriolan perspective.

Let's start by seeing what's in the bedrock. The graph on the next page shows the concentrations of 18 of the most common metals<sup>2</sup> in sandstone and shale. It is not a complete analysis—that may come later. It excludes common non-metals like carbon (C) and sulphur (S), and also a few of the semi-metals that might be present like arsenic (As) and boron (B). Exclusions are not because of lack of interest, but because some elements are more difficult to assay than others and labs. don't do “difficult” ones unless requested to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia says: “Backcountry tent manufacturers sometimes use *scandium* alloys in tent poles”. *Dysprosium* is used in making laser materials including compact disks.

<sup>2</sup> I'm using “metals” to mean both metals and semi-metals (metalloids). Semi-metals have some of the properties of both metals and non-metals.