

Saanich Archives Newsletter

| Fall 2025 |



Welcome to Fall!

Welcome to the Fall edition of our newsletter! There's a special quality to the autumn light across Saanich, whether it's filtering through the trees along the trails or casting long shadows over the fields of the peninsula. This season of harvest and reflection is the perfect time to delve into the stories that connect us to our shared home. We hope you enjoy the local histories we have gathered for you in this issue!

New Collection Added!



Saanich Archives is thrilled to announce the addition of new photos to our collection. These images provide a fascinating glimpse into the lives of two families who helped build a community in the post-war era. Both families share a unique bond: WWII veterans Norman Abbott and Joseph Ehmke each built their family homes on Falaise Drive (formerly Falaise Crescent) in 1959.



Poignantly, Joseph was wounded in the Battle of Falaise Gap in 1944 before settling in Saanich with his wife, Lenore. Norman built his home for his wife, Marjorie, and their daughters. We are delighted to share 14 new photos capturing their family stories and the development of this historic Saanich neighbourhood. You can explore these wonderful additions to our collection on our website here!

[View the Collection Here!](#)

Saanich Fair - The First of Many!

Saanich Archives had a wonderful time at the Saanich Fair this year! It was our first time attending, and we loved meeting so many people and sharing our community's history. A big thank you to everyone who stopped by our booth. We're already looking forward to seeing you next year!



Current Exhibits!



Don't miss our current Remembrance Day exhibit, *'Remember me to all': Correspondence and communication during the Great Wars*. This display features letters from WWI and WWII that highlight the powerful words shared between those overseas and their loved ones on the homefront, exploring themes of love, friendship, and connection.

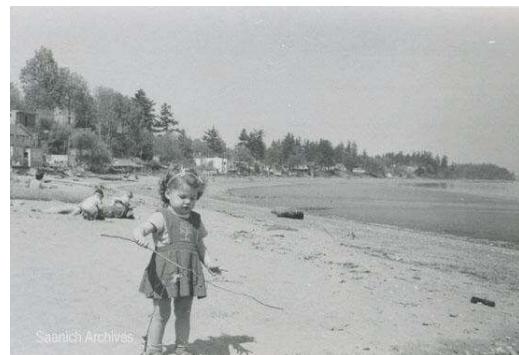
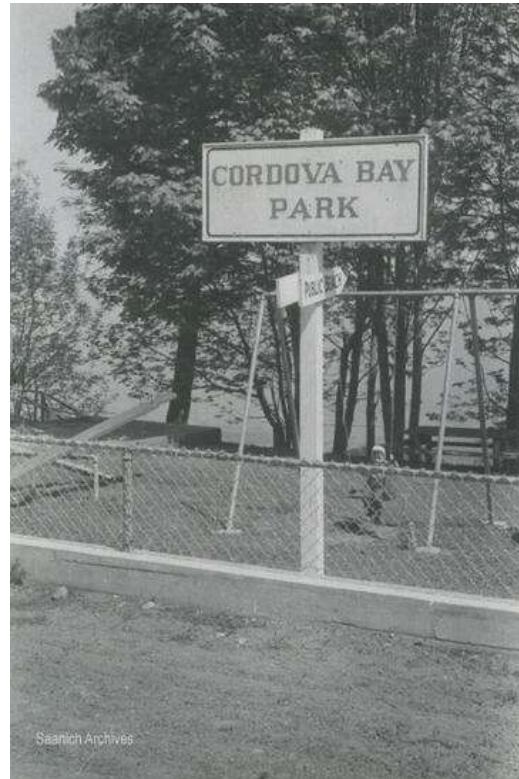
Following this, we invite you to celebrate Archives Awareness Week (November 16–22) with our next display, *Memories and Milestones in the Archives*, running from November 12–18. This exhibit will feature items from our holdings that commemorate important anniversaries and milestones from both the Archives' history and the larger Saanich community.

The Enduring Heart of the Bay: A History of Cordova Bay Park

For generations, Cordova Bay Park has been more than just a path to the sea; it has been the enduring heart of a community. Its story, stretching back long before the first settlers arrived, is one of gathering, recreation, and community spirit.

The area was originally the site of a thriving First Nations village, a place of shelter and abundance for the Lekwungen-speaking peoples for over 1,000 years. Recent archaeological work near the park has uncovered evidence of this long history, reminding us that the bay has always been a vital centre for people.

The park we know today was formally assembled by the municipality in several stages. Records show the land was acquired through a series of by-laws between November 1917 and June 1922. Early documents also reference "Tank Road," where the Victoria & Sidney Railway once passed nearby, bringing the first wave of summer visitors who transformed the bay into a beloved resort destination.



Over the years, the park has been a focus of community life and improvement. A 1923 tender called for the construction of a new bathing pavilion, cementing its role as a recreational hub. Correspondence from 1949 shows the Victoria-Saanich Beaches and Parks Committee actively working to acquire adjacent lots for public use as picnic areas and parking. And as recently as 1978, the park was updated with new toilet facilities, a practical addition for the countless families enjoying the beach.

Today, Cordova Bay Park continues to serve its timeless purpose: providing public access to the beautiful shoreline that has defined this community from its very beginning.



A Landmark Saved: The Story of 4794 West Saanich Road

Standing as a proud survivor of Saanich's rural past, the historic farmhouse at 4794 West Saanich Road has a story as rich as the land it was built on. Long before the current house, the site served travellers as the "Half Way House" hotel, a popular stop 'halfway' to Tod Inlet, which was rebuilt as the Stevens' Hotel after a fire.

The grand farmhouse we see today was constructed around 1900, first known as "Westwood Farm." Its history took a significant turn in 1912 when it became the retirement home of Dr. Walter T. Currie, a celebrated missionary. After 25 years in Angola, Dr. Currie purchased the farm and renamed it "Chissamba," after the African mission where he had spent much of his life.

Following his death, the United Church of Canada erected a stone marker on the property in 1937 to honour his legacy, and the home became affectionately known as the "Currie Mission House."

Despite its history, the house has faced the threat of demolition multiple times. In a dramatic move in 1997, Saanich council voted five-to-four to spare the farmhouse from the wrecking ball, choosing instead to give the Currie Mission House heritage designation to preserve it forever. This act ensured that this irreplaceable link to Saanich's pioneer and missionary history would continue to stand for future generations.

Mark Your Calendar: We'll Be at the Bay Street Armoury

The Saanich Archives is honoured to be participating in a special Open House at the Bay Street Armoury (715 Bay Street) on Friday, December 5, 2025, from 10:00 am to 3:30 pm.

Hosted by the 5th BC Field Regiment and the Canadian Scottish Regiment, this event will commemorate the sacrifices and accomplishments of General Sir Arthur Currie and the Canadian Expeditionary Force during World War One, with a special focus on the contributions from the Greater Victoria area.

We will be there with a display, joining other community groups to help share the stories of this pivotal time in our history. The event is open to the public, and we would be delighted to see you there.



A Note on Our Hours: Final Evenings in the Archives

As we begin to plan for 2026, we are making an adjustment to our public hours. Our "Evenings in the Archives" program, which offered later visiting times, will be coming to a close at the end of this year.

We have genuinely enjoyed seeing different faces in the reading room during these times! We have two final dates remaining for those who wish to take advantage of these later hours: November 20 and our final session on December 18. On these two dates, our hours will be adjusted to 1:30 pm – 6:30 pm.

Starting in the new year, we will be shifting our focus back to a schedule that we feel best serves the community's core needs.

As we plan our services, your feedback is invaluable. We would love to hear from you: what times or days of the week would make the archives most accessible for your research? Please

send us an email with your thoughts!



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