

# Saanich Archives

News & Events | Fall 2020

## Gordon Head History



The first two installments of our [Local Area Virtual Exhibits](#) series are now available. Each exhibit in this series provides an overview of the history of one local area highlighting some of the people, organizations, and events that helped shape the municipality. Visit our website to read all about the development of Quadra and North Quadra. Up next is Gordon Head which will be released in December. Until then, here's a sneak peek at some Gordon Head History.

Did you know that **James Todd**, the first European land owner in Gordon Head, was the sole European land owner in Gordon Head for 5 years? James Todd was the son of Hudson's Bay Company trader and early Oak Bay settler, John Tod. In 1852, James decided to leave the relative security of Fort Victoria and purchased two sections of land in Gordon Head. He established his home at the base of Mount Douglas and called it **Spring Farm** after the abundant fresh water springs on the property. In 1857, he married Flora Macaulay and they had 17 children. By 1860, 13 men owned all of the land now identified as Gordon Head, although this was short lived as more and more farmers moved to the area over the following decades. After James died in 1904, Spring Farm was divided between three of his sons; James Jr., Albert Henry, and Thomas.

## Did you know?



"Ok, Here goes!" is the caption written on the back of the photo of Reeve Hugh Curtis switching on the first **traffic signal lights** at the intersection of **Tillicum and Gorge Roads** sometime around 1966 or 1967. Don't worry though, he knew what he was doing. The caption on the second photo reads "Here's the switch, Reeve!" and shows a Public Works employee giving Reeve Curtis instructions.

The signal lights appear to have been part of the larger Gorge Road improvement plan. During this time, Gorge Road was repaved, street lights were improved, and sidewalks were installed. Construction of the 7th Gorge Bridge was also completed in 1967. By April 1966, the design of the Gorge-Tillicum intersection had been completed and work was soon underway. The third photo shows the intersection of Tillicum and Gorge in 1967 with the signal lights fully operational.

William Crouch, who had been Reeve of Saanich from 1927-1938, believed that sidewalks and too many streetlights "made people soft". He and his wife lived at 224 Gorge Road West from 1921-1943, only a block away from where the signal light would be installed a few decades later. We can only guess how he would have felt about these improvements.

By 1967, as the number of cars on Saanich Roads continued to increase, plans were underway to install a traffic light on Finlayson Street and Cloverdale Avenue and at the intersection of McKenzie Avenue and Patricia Bay Highway. Today, traffic lights are such a normal feature of the commuter's landscape, it's interesting to think of a time before they were so commonplace.

## New Virtual Exhibit



October is Women's History Month in Canada. This year we decided to celebrate by looking at the history of the **BC Women's Institute** beginning when the first chapter was formed in Gordon Head in 1909. The [virtual exhibit](#) is available now.

The Women's Institute was established as an educational organization to support settler women living in rural areas. Women's Institutes gave women a reason to get together and an opportunity to learn about rural homemaking. During the following century, each chapter would take on projects specific to the needs and circumstances of their communities. In addition to promoting education for women and children, Women's Institutes have played an essential role in advocating for improved public services, social assistance and welfare programmes, and environmental causes. They have raised money to support hospitals, women's and children's health, and for the Red Cross during both world wars.

## New Acquisition

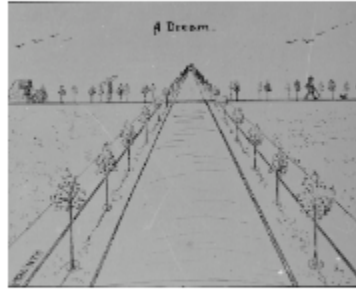


In July 2019, a local resident was [interviewed by CTV News](#) in the hopes of identifying the history of a 19<sup>th</sup> century writing box filled with around a dozen photographs that she had acquired from a family member. Archives staff watched the segment and immediately recognized one of the portraits as **Ethel Bradshaw Lytton** whose [collection of photo albums](#) had been donated to us by her descendants only a few months earlier. We quickly got in touch with CTV news, only to discover that we were not the only ones to have made the family connection. What followed were several months of conversation with relatives in Saanich, Ontario, and Newfoundland. Through this collaboration it was determined that the writing box had belonged to **Clara Windsor McCoubrey Morry** who was born in St. John's, Newfoundland in 1851. We were also able to identify names of most of the people in the photographs.

Clara's sister **Sarah Windsor Bradshaw** moved to Saanich with her 8 children, one of whom was Ethel Bradshaw Lytton, in 1907. Sarah had come to Victoria in 1906 to visit one of their brothers, Augustus Windsor, and fell in love with the area. She asked Augustus to build a new home for her and her family in the Mount Tolmie area, where she lived until her death in 1939. Their home, which still stands in its original location at 3701 Palo Alto Street, was occupied by the Bradshaws until 1950. Eventually, Clara also decided to leave Newfoundland for the West Coast, which is how her writing box full of 19<sup>th</sup> century photos ended up here. Clara died in 1934. The Windsor, Bradshaw, and Morry family connection to the Mount Tolmie neighbourhood continues at [St. Luke's](#) cemetery where many members of the family were laid to rest.

The writing box and its contents have been generously donated to Saanich Archives. We are excited that this beautiful artifact has finally found a permanent home alongside our extensive collection of Windsor, Bradshaw, and Lytton family material.

## From the News



### ***"Marigold man kills the bird that laid the gold"***

On 20 February 1929 the Victoria Daily Times reported that Mr. E. Hardy of Gladiola Avenue found his chicken to be "laying" pieces of gold. In fact, the three small gold nuggets were not laid but were found inside the chicken. Unfortunately for the chicken, she *"was worth more dead than alive, but only to Mr. Hardy, not the chicken"*. On the same day, the [Daily Colonist](#) reported that *"there is no conjecture from whence the bird secured the nuggets."*

There are no photos of Mr. Hardy or his chickens in the Saanich Archives collection. In fact, very little is known about the life of Mr. Hardy. What we do know is that farmers in the Marigold neighbourhood had to contend with regular flooding of Colquitz Creek (perhaps this is how Mr. Hardy's chicken came into possession of the gold nugget?), as we can see in this [series of cartoons](#) poking fun at the plight of property owners on Hyacinth Avenue.

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