

Saanich Archives

Newsletter | Spring 2022



We're Back!

After a short hiatus, we're happy to announce that we'll be posting our newsletter twice a year from now on! We look forward to sharing Saanich's stories and images with you – starting with this Spring 2022 edition. Read on!



New Exhibit: Carey

What are some of the meanings behind the name Colquitz? What happened to Panama Park? Who were the Halls, and what was notable about Stranton Lodge? All of the answers to these questions and many more can be found in the Carey instalment of our "Local Areas" series of online exhibits. This exhibit is an excellent jumping-off point for residents and researchers alike as we walk you through a timeline of the Carey area, highlighting people, places, and stories along the way.

The Carey timeline, and other virtual exhibits created by Saanich Archives, can be found [here](#).



Looking Back: Gardening in Saanich

With spring sprouting all around, Saanich gardeners are dusting off their gardening tools and checking to see if their bulbs are blooming – which isn't so different from Saanich residents of the past! With nurseries aplenty to supply all that was needed to start gardens of their own, gardening was a beloved pastime and a necessity for many Saanich residents. Schools often had a garden that students tended, and the Victoria Rotary Club sponsored a contest that gave a gold medal to the student with the best garden. Jack Whitehead was one of those winners.

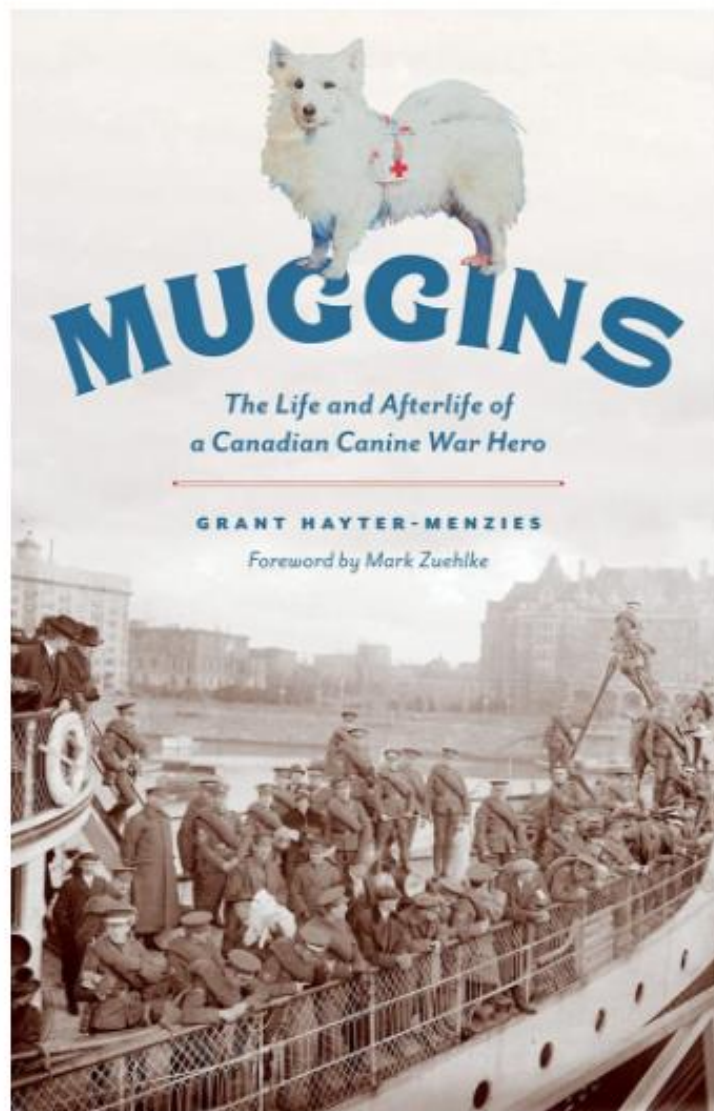
Many of Saanich's early gardeners tried to emulate the gardens of their homelands. Others worked to cultivate native plant species in their garden plots. Still others focused on practicality, preferring to grow fruits and vegetables for food rather than flowers and shrubs. Regardless of their focus, it is clear that the pride they took in their green spaces is a pride that many of us today still share.



From Our Collection: Where Bulbs and Bungalows Meet, a Neighbourhood History by Dennis Minaker

Investigate the history of the Shelbourne Valley, proudly presented by resident Dennis Minaker in a thoughtfully researched love-letter to the area. Read about the creation of the Mount Tolmie Nursery, St. Michael's University School, and the bungalows which soon began to dot the landscape. Learn about the people who helped cultivate the neighbourhood and called it home. And as Minaker himself says: "Most of it is true".

Where Bulbs and Bungalows Meet can be read [here!](#)



New Arrival: Muggins: The Life and Afterlife of a Canadian Canine War Hero by Grant Hayter-Menzies

Victoria's beloved canine celebrity is back in a book dedicated to telling his life story. Hayter-Menzies takes you from Muggins' early life through to his work raising substantial funds for the Red Cross and veterans' causes both during and after the First World War. Learn about his contributions beyond fundraising, and about the accolades and medals he earned along the way. This book about the adorable little white Spitz dog (a Saanich resident) is a must read for both dog and history lovers!

Muggins: The Life and Afterlife of a Canadian Canine War Hero is available to read here at the Archives, to borrow from the GVPL, or to purchase locally and online. To do your own research on Muggins, Saanich Archives invites you to visit and view our Muggins collection.



Faces from History: Hector Spencer Cowper

Hector Spencer Cowper was born in the North of England in 1877, where his parents lived in comfortable circumstances and where he had everything he could 'reasonably ask for'. In England, he worked as a broker, he had a 'good life' and his affairs were all in order. Cowper arrived in Victoria in 1912, and by 1914, he was serving as Municipal Clerk for Saanich. In that position, he eventually became comptroller and treasurer for the Municipality, and the secretary to the Saanich School Board. He was well liked, and is described as having a "pleasing personality".

All was well – until 1923, when it was discovered that Cowper had been embezzling funds from the Municipality for the past seven years. In all, he had siphoned off nearly \$11,000 dollars, no small amount in the year 1923 (equivalent to over \$175,000 today). What followed was a quick arrest, trial and sentencing, all done within eight days. His trial featured effusive praise for his talents and personality, and sympathy was expressed towards him by Saanich municipal officials and colleagues. Reeve Watson described Cowper and the situation as follows: "one of the municipal officers, in whom all Saanich has had the utmost implicit confidence, and a man of outstanding ability, has fallen the victim of weakness". It was a weakness that earned him a two year sentence, and the loss of his Saanich property as recompense.

Lest we grow too concerned about the state of Cowper's life, however, the historical record finds him again after his sentencing is complete, living in Vancouver and, as he served Saanich for all those years, finding a role in his new city as City Accountant.

To hear more about Cowper, his reasons for the theft and why there may have been some leniency in his sentence, please listen to the [Amazing Places podcast](#) as host Michele Sealey is joined by Saanich Archives Specialist Kimberly Head to talk about this bit of Saanich history.

Contact Us

t. 250-475-5494 ext. 3478

e. archives@saanich.ca

saanich.ca/archives