

Saanich Archives

Newsletter | Summer 2024



New to the Archives: Lewis Family Collection

Saanich Archives is thrilled to announce a new addition to our holdings thanks to a generous donation from the Lewis family. This collection includes over three photo albums worth of photos, a large selection of letters between the family members (these letters are currently being indexed by a volunteer for Saanich Archives), as well as several pieces of ephemera.

The scope of this collection primarily covers material covering Arthur Eben Lewis, his wife Silena Hull Lewis, and their four children, Mary, Frederick, Art Jr., and Ella. All four children were highly active in sports, and each attended some level of higher education. The pictures and letters follow their lives through school, business, work, marriage and eventually settling down in their Rock Street house in Saanich. Many of this collection's pictures can now be found on our photo search site by either clicking [here](#), or by looking up the Lewis Family Collection at saanich.accesstomemory.org.

Pictured: Family Photo, 1914 (2024-003-098); Fred and friends, Victoria Normal School, ca. 1916 (2024-003-120); Mary Elliot, and Ella and Mary Lewis, ca. 1920 (2024-003-142)



Volunteer Opportunities at Saanich Archives

Do you have a passion for the nitty-gritty of history? Are you detail-oriented? We want to hear from you! We have a new volunteer project starting soon and often have smaller projects or tasks available for volunteers to work on. If you are interested in volunteering at the Saanich Archives, please email us at archives@saanich.ca. We ask that you include your availability and if you are comfortable using Microsoft Excel as our primary upcoming volunteer project will require work in the Archives reading room with Excel. We are looking for 3 volunteers to come in once a week, and will be taking additional names and contact information of interested individuals for the future.



For more details, or if you have any questions, please contact Saanich Archives at 250-475-5494 ext 3478 or archives@saanich.ca.

Black History in Saanich



One early settler to Saanich was Charles Alexander, who was one of hundreds of Black Americans who came to Vancouver Island from San Francisco in 1858 to escape increasing persecution in California. Early Black immigrants were invited to Vancouver Island by Governor James Douglas, who had Black heritage on his mother's side. Shady Creek Church was founded by Charles Alexander in 1862 and many early Black pioneers are buried there. Additionally, Charles Alexander helped build a schoolhouse in Saanich and was instrumental in the formation of the Agricultural Society.

Pictured: Charles Alexander, late-1800s (1981-018-114)

Did You Know?

In 1859, Henry Newsham Peers retired from his position in the Hudson's Bay Company to return to the 205 acre Colquitz Farm he had purchased seven years earlier. In his time with the HBC, he had worked as an apprentice clerk, a port agent, an elected representative in Vancouver County and finally, a chief trader. Peers remained active in retirement.

During the winter of 1859-60, he had a saw and grist mill constructed from funds at least partially provided by his father-in-law, James Murray Yale, who had purchased the adjacent property. Peers spent the remaining four years of his life managing his various rural and city properties, and farming at his Colquitz Farm, where he introduced California quail with the intention of stocking the island with game birds. Peers Creek, which flows into the Coquihalla River east of Hope BC, is named for Henry Peers.

A rectangular text box with a black border, containing a newspaper clipping. The text is in a serif font and reads: "SAW AND GRIST MILLS.—We are pleased to learn that H. N. Peers, Esq., of Colquitz Farm, has commenced to erect a Saw and Grist Mill on Colquitz Stream. This is the right kind of enterprise to benefit the country. At present every foot of the lumber used here is cut on foreign soil, although we have an abundance of good timber convenient. We trust that this example will inspire others to invest in similar enterprises. Until such time as we render our own resources available,—our gold will be sent away, and the colony impoverished."

SAW AND GRIST MILLS.—We are pleased to learn that H. N. Peers, Esq., of Colquitz Farm, has commenced to erect a Saw and Grist Mill on Colquitz Stream. This is the right kind of enterprise to benefit the country. At present every foot of the lumber used here is cut on foreign soil, although we have an abundance of good timber convenient. We trust that this example will inspire others to invest in similar enterprises. Until such time as we render our own resources available,—our gold will be sent away, and the colony impoverished.

Pictured: British Colonist, December 3, 1859



Evenings in Archives!

Have you wanted to visit the Saanich Archives, but the timing wasn't right? We have received feedback indicating that there are members of the community who wish to visit us but cannot make it during our current opening hours. We heard you! Once per month, starting in September 2024, the Saanich Archives will shift our opening hours to be here for you later in the day. More information will be available as we move closer to then, so watch for updates on our website, the District of Saanich Facebook page, and a special email blast. We look forward to seeing you!

Contact Us

Saanich Archives
3100 Tillicum Road
Victoria, BC
V9A 6T2

t. 250-475-5494 ext. 3478
e. archives@saanich.ca
saanich.ca/archives

