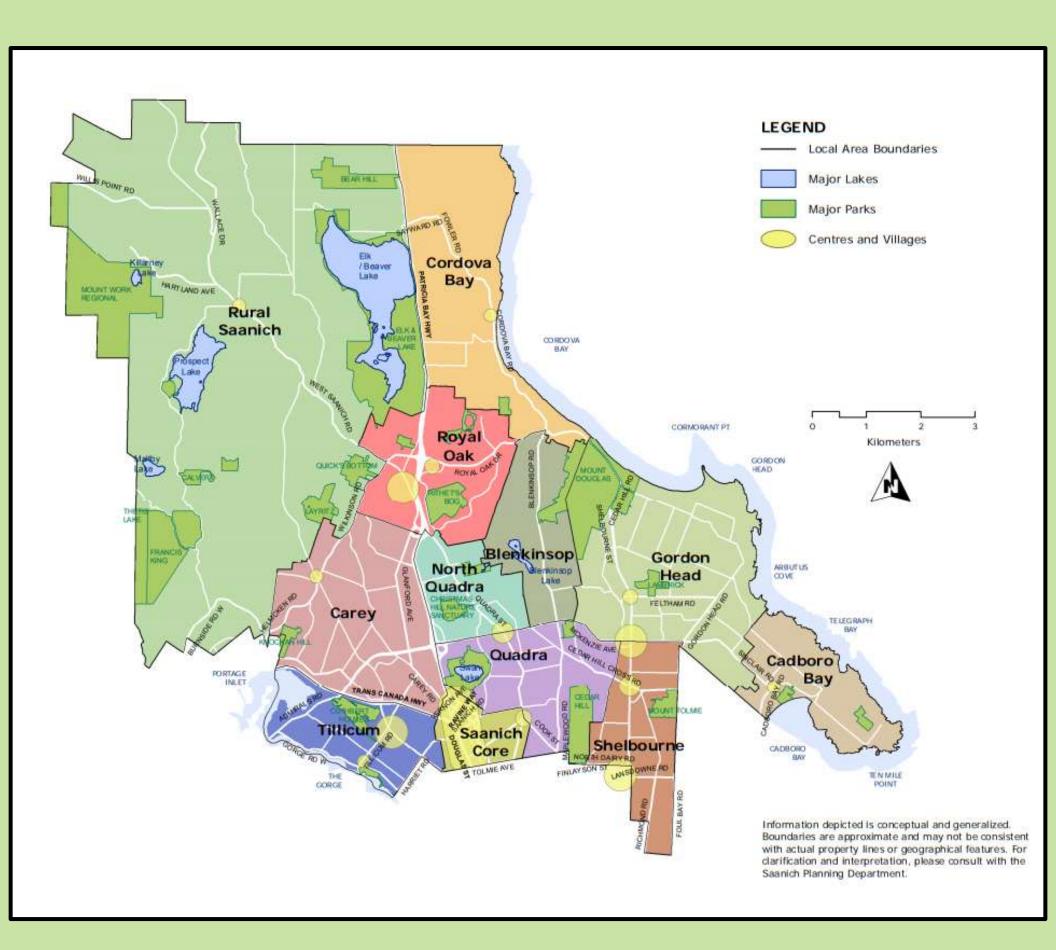


Sheep on Rithet farm , ca. 1930 (1981-003-007b)

The Royal Oak community is centrally located in the Municipality of Saanich. Local lore says that its name originated with early landowner Jane Cheeseman, who described a magnificent oak tree on her property as a "Royal Oak". Along with the Cheeseman family, settler families like the Goyettes, Quicks and Heals began farming this area in the second half of the 19th century. Royal Oak was once the administrative centre of the Municipality. In 1911, the second Municipal Hall was built on West Saanich Road, and it remained in use until 1965 when the municipal offices moved to their current location on Vernon Avenue. The large Broadmead Farm, owned from the 1890s by businessman R.P. Rithet, once spread over 825 acres. Today, Broadmead Farm has become the Broadmead Estates subdivision. Other well-known locations in the Royal Oak district include the Royal Oak Burial Park and heritage buildings such as St. Michael's Church, the Royal Oak Schoolhouse and the Royal Oak Inn (now the Fireside Grill).



The District of Saanich lies within the traditional territories of the Ləkwəŋən and SENĆOŦEN speaking peoples. Evidence of First Nations settlement in the area now called Saanich dates back over 4,000 years. The Ləkwəŋən peoples are comprised of two nations, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the WSÁNEĆ peoples include five nations, WJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), BOKEĆEN (Pauquachin), STÁUTW (Tsawout), WSIKEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nations. Each nation had their own territory and travelled freely over their land; hunting, fishing and gathering resources. The Ləkwəŋən and WSÁNEĆ peoples have historical connections with the land which continue to this day.





Rithet's Bog, 1966 (2017-011-004)

1850-1854

From 1850-1854, James Douglas, Chief Factor and later Governor of the Hudson Bay Company colony on Vancouver Island, signed treaties with 14 Indigenous groups. These documents are often referred to as the "Fort Victoria Treaties" or the "Douglas Treaties." James Douglas did not explicitly use the word treaty in these agreements, but a Supreme Court decision ruled that these agreements were and remain valid treaties since Douglas, who was acting as an agent of the Crown at the time, arranged them with the Indigenous peoples. First Nations argue that their ancestors understood these as peace treaties or agreements of cohabitation of the land. The British, however, interpreted these treaties as purchase agreements that surrendered lands near Hudson Bay Company posts in exchange for reserve lands, the continued right to hunt and fish, and a one-time payment. The text in the treaties is quite short, and the agreements reached in the fourteen treaties are almost the same, except for the territories referred to, the persons signing, and the payment amounts for the land.

The treaty that covers the area today known as **Royal Oak** was signed by two different parties, the South Saanich and the Kosampson. The treaty signed by the South Saanich tribe referred to the "the whole of the lands situated and lying between Mount Douglas and Cowichan Head, on the canal de Haro, and extending Thence to the line running through the centre of Vancouver Island, north and south." The twenty members of the Kosampson, whose primary settlement was centered around Craigflower Park on Admirals Road, signed the treaty which referred to the land "on the east side of the arm, enclosing Christmas Hill and Lake and the lands west of those objects."

The conditions of the treaties state "that our village sites and enclosed fields are to be kept for our own use, for the use of our children, and for those who may follow after us and the land shall be properly surveyed hereafter. It is understood, however, that the land itself, with these small exceptions, becomes the entire property of the white people for ever; it is also understood that we are at liberty to hunt over the unoccupied lands, and to carry on our fisheries as formerly. We have received, as payment, Fifty-two pounds ten shillings sterling." (Full text available online through Indigenous Services Canada).

Jane Durrance

In 1852 and 1853, Richard Cheeseman made two trips to Victoria, the second time bringing his wife, Jane (nee Dyke) with him. As an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, Richard was given property in Victoria where he and his family stayed until 1858, when he acquired land in the Lake District. The journey from Victoria took nearly four days through dense woods, and the often-told tale is that on arrival, the sight of a majestic oak tree prompted Jane to call the area Royal Oak.

Richard and Jane began building a house for themselves and their four children. Unfortunately, their time together in their new home was short. In 1862, Richard was driving a wagon down a newly cut road when one of his horses spooked and bolted. The wagon flipped, and Richard succumbed to his injuries, leaving Jane with four daughters and a farm to run.

By 1864, Jane had leased some of her property to Robert Porter for the use of a hotel and married **James Bailey**, with whom she would have a fifth daughter. The Baileys donated land for the **Royal Oak School**, and members of the community came together to build the school in barnraising fashion. In 1871, James Bailey died of a heart attack at the age of 41, just seven years into their marriage.

That same year, Jane was married for a third time to **John Durrance**, and a year later she gave birth to her only son. In 1897, she died at the age of 66.





Durrance family's Spring Valley farm, 1904 (1981-011-002)

View of Rithet's Bog at Quadra Street, ca. 1960 (1984-003-054)



Rithet's Bog, 1966 (1984-003-054)



Rithet's Bog looking west, 1966 (2017-011-008)

1860s

In the 1860s, European settlers dug ditches and drained a substantial swamp north of Elk Lake. As a result, several small streams which passed through WJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip) territory dried up, which heavily affected their ability to gather key resources for their way of life. These resources included medicines and herbs, food sources like ducks and fish, and materials such as reeds used for mats.

Rithet's Bog, named for businessman and landowner R.P. Rithet, became a key location for gathering resources after these streams were drained. First Nations and settlers alike travelled to the bog to gather bog cranberries and Labrador tea (also called MAKEM or swamp tea). Additionally, mosses were collected from around Rithet's Bog and used for a variety of purposes including food covering, bedding and mats.

These practices, too, came under jeopardy when R.P. Rithet drained the bog, an act which was repeated as agricultural activity expanded in the surrounding areas. In the years that followed, new ditches were dug for crop planting, and invasive species were introduced, all of which put the health of the bog at great risk.

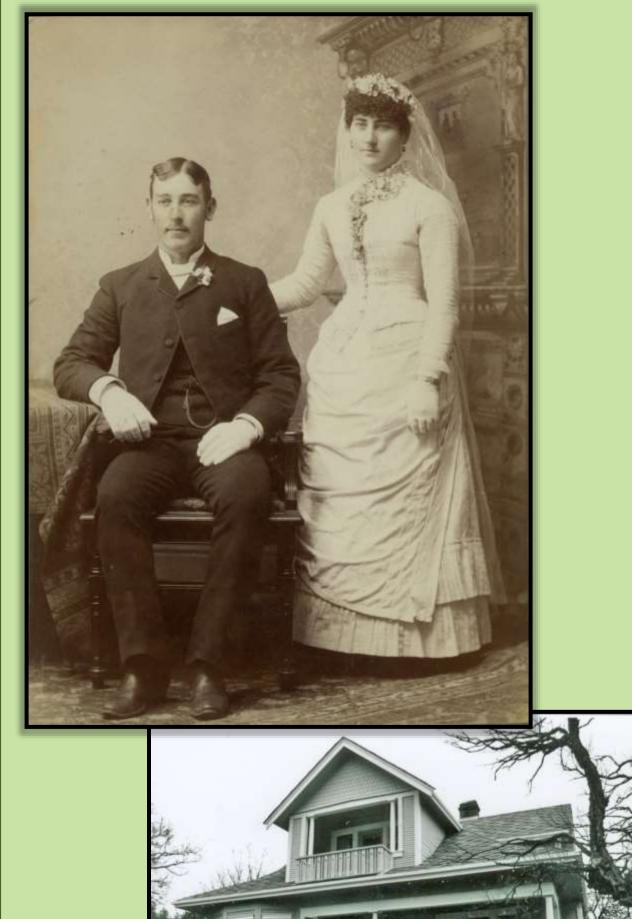
Today, the edges of the wetlands have reverted from agriculture to willow thickets and marsh to keep the flora and fauna of the bog healthy.

1860s Isabel King and Walter Heal on their wedding day, 1888 (2008-008-027)

John Heal was born in England in 1814. By 1860, he and his wife Julia Ann and their four children were among the first settlers in Royal Oak on a property they called Mount Pleasant Farm. Julia died in a carriage accident in 1884. Ten years later, John was in a similar accident which left him with grave injuries that contributed to his death in 1896.

The Heals' sons Fred and Charlie later bought property further out on West Saanich Road. Their son Harry bought property beside the family farm which would later become part of Royal Oak Burial Park. Another son, Walter Heal, stayed with the family after Julia's death to help take care of his father and sisters.

Walter, a farmer, married Keturah **Isabel King,** the daughter of another pioneer family from the Cedar Hill district. In the 1890s and into the early 1900s, Isabel operated Royal Oak's first post office from their home. In 1914, the Heals' original house was demolished, and they built a new home on what is now Royal Wood Place. That house, now heritage building, designated remained in the family until 1955.



Heal family home, built 1914, photo taken ca. 1987 (2006-015-181c)

ROBBERY IN VICTORIA DISTRICT. - The house of Joseph Goyette, who resides about half a mile from the Royal Oak, Saanich road, was robbed on Friday afternoon cf \$300 in gold coin and \$300 in jewelry by thieves who gained an entrance during the temporary absence of the fam-This is a heavy robbery and it is hoped the thieves will be caught.

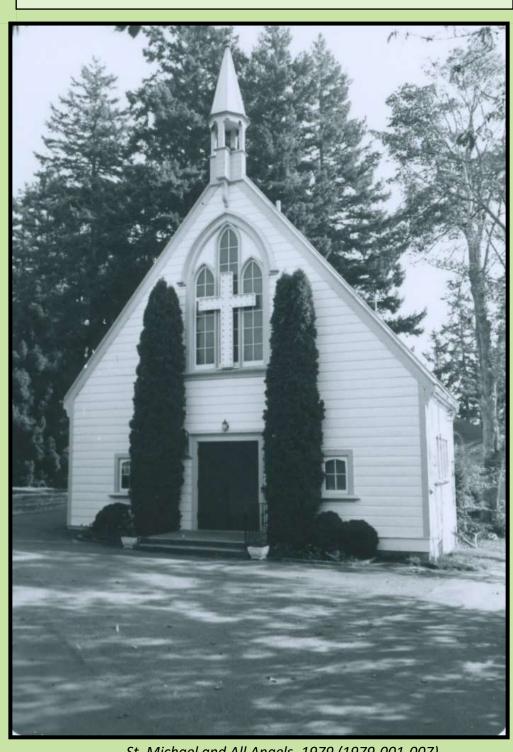
The Daily Colonist, July 29, 1884

1883

On September 24, 1883, St. Michael and All Angels Anglican Church was dedicated in the neighbourhood of Royal Oak. With much of the labour provided by the parishioners, the church was a true community build. Louis Duval, proprietor of the Royal Oak Hotel, cleared the land and hauled the timber to the church, and later his son became the first child baptized there. Originally built to seat 100 people, additions were made over time to accommodate more parishioners. In 1902, the land behind the church was cleared for a yard, and in 1912 plans for a bell were arranged. Walter Carmichael built the bell tower, while William Quick supervised the bell's journey to St. Michael's. The bell had been cast in England and used in China before being donated. The church hall was built in 1922, and 1954 saw the addition of a choir room and gallery.

1876

Pontien Joseph Goyette was born in Quebec in 1848. He travelled west to prospect for gold in BC, and with some of his earnings, purchased land in Saanich. In 1876, he married Cedra Cheeseman, daughter of Richard and Jane Cheeseman, and the couple went to live on their Royal Oak farm. Joseph and Cedra had several children, including two who died in infancy. An 1884 newspaper article tells of a robbery at their home. In 1924, Cedra died at the age of 66. Joseph was 85 when he died almost ten years later in 1933.



St. Michael and All Angels, 1979 (1979-001-007)

In **1865**, on land donated by the Bailey family, the first **Royal Oak School** (then called the **Lake District School**) was built. The first teacher at the one-room schoolhouse, Elizabeth Beattie, taught a group of five boys and ten girls. After a Saturday supper dance in 1883, a fire destroyed the building, its organ, and all the schoolbooks. In **1885**, a new school was built. The total building cost was \$500, and it could accommodate 42 pupils sharing 14 desks.

By **1922**, more classroom space was needed for the growing population. The old schoolhouse was moved to a different location on site, raised and renovated, then used for the primary grades. An additional two-room school was constructed to house the upper six grades. The 1922 school building was demolished around 1965.

The 1885 building served as a school until 1951, when a new school building was opened nearby. Today, the 1885 Royal Oak Schoolhouse, which is on the Saanich heritage register, continues to be used as a neighbourhood meeting space.



Royal Oak School, built 1885, photo taken 1965 (1978-001-016)



Royal Oak School with 2 classrooms, built 1922 (1998-006-004)



Royal Oak School class photograph, ca. 1900 (2008-003-002)

1890s Broadmead Farm

In the late 1880s, George and Isabella (Stark) McMorran journeyed from Paisley, Ontario, to Saanich, where George took up the position of foreman on Broadmead Farm which was owned by R.P. Rithet. By 1890, the family had moved into the just-completed farmhouse, where they lived for the next nine years.

Under McMorran, mass clear-cutting took place using oxen, horses and explosives. This increased the workable area of the farm to nearly three hundred acres, and it became one of the largest grain suppliers on Vancouver Island.

Hunting and poaching were commonplace, and George McMorran periodically patrolled the land to scare off would-be poachers.



Stewart Elgar and Jack Bothwell, Broadmead Farm, 1893 (1989-008-198)



Broadmead Farm, 1893 (1989-008-203)



Jack Bothwell, trainer, on racehorse, Broadmead Farm, 1893 (1989-008-204)



G. McMorran Sr. & R. Maynard's grandson blasting stumps, 1895 (1989-008-196)



Chinese cook and foreman of Rithet's Broadmead Farm, Chinese New Year, 1893 (1980-020-002)

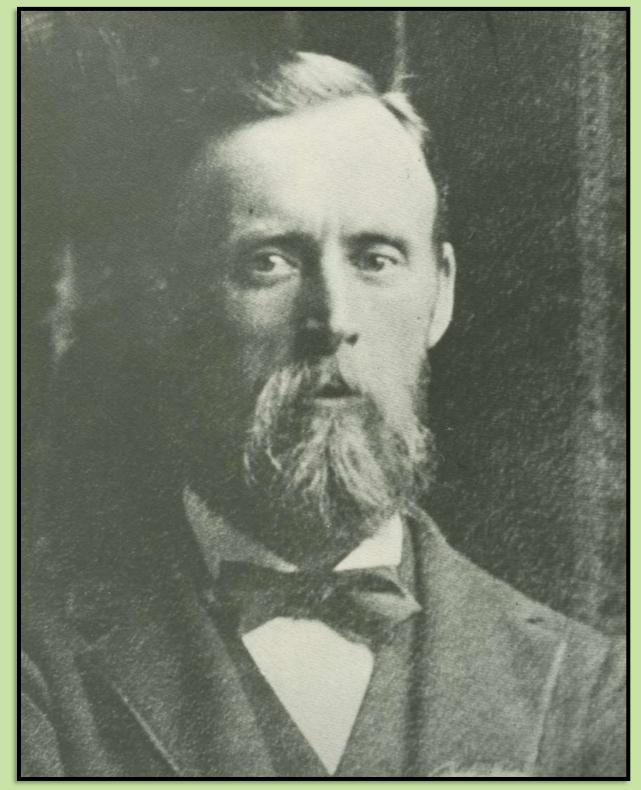
1890s

Broadmead Farm

Horses, especially racehorses, were the lifeblood of **Broadmead Farm**. The farm was named after R.P. Rithet's favourite racehorse, the stallion **Broadmead.** Every year, the most promising horses at the Broadmead track were sent down to San Francisco to compete. Horses, trainers, and jockeys travelled by boat.

Broadmead also kept workhorses for farm work, pulling stumps and draining the nearby bog. Draining required the horses to wear 18-inch wooden shoes to help prevent them from sinking into the bog.

The farm employed Chinese labourers to help run various aspects of the farm. They lived in a separate dwelling near the main house and had their own foreman. Chinese New Year became a major celebration for the farm, and fireworks lit up the night sky during the festivities.

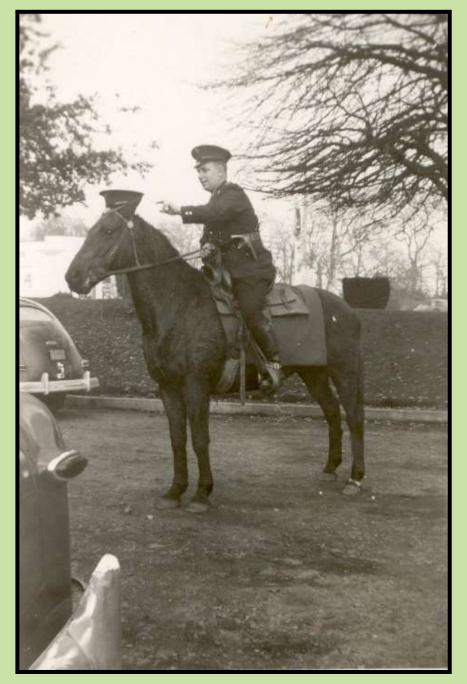


Reeve T.A. Brydon, 1906 (2012-015-002)

Thomas Brydon was born in Selkirk, Scotland, in 1857. A carpenter by trade, he and his wife **Mary Ann Malcolm** immigrated to Victoria in 1888. In 1906, the Brydon family moved to Saanich to live on property that Thomas had purchased in 1900. Thomas Brydon served as the first Reeve of the newly established District of Saanich from 1906 to 1907. The Brydons grew fruit on their sizeable farm located near Glanford and Mann Avenues, and Thomas continued to live on the farm until his death in 1920 at the age of 64.

Brydon Park, located off Vanguard Place in Royal Oak, is named for the first Reeve of Saanich.

1906 marked the incorporation of the District of Saanich and the formation of the Saanich Police. On May 12 of that year, the police officer dealt with his first complaint: a nuisance dog. J.J. Russell was the first constable, and due to the rural nature of the municipality, Constable Russell patrolled the horseback responding district on complaints received predominantly by letter. By 1915, the police force consisted of a fulltime police chief and two constables, and was working out of two rooms in the Municipal Hall on West Saanich Road. The following year, in 1916, the force purchased its first police car. The post-WWII population boom saw the population of Saanich increase to 65,000 in the 1960s, and in 1962, the Saanich Police moved from their two-room facility into new headquarters on Vernon Avenue.



Ed Anderson on police horse, 1936 (1981-025-005)



Saanich Police Department, 1967 (2010-055-001)



Saanich Municipal Hall in Royal Oak, 1911 (1981-025-005)

When Saanich was first incorporated on March 1, 1906, council meetings were held in residents' homes. After February 1907, the meetings were moved to the first Municipal Hall, a converted farmhouse at the corner of Glanford and Vanalman Avenues. In 1911, after a debate over the location of a new municipal hall, Frederick and William James Quick were instrumental in choosing the Royal Oak location of 4512 West Saanich Road. John Charles Malcolm Keith, known for his work on many important civic buildings in British Columbia, designed the hall, and C.H. Merkly built it for \$4,364. In 1915, the building was expanded, and in 1948, it underwent further repairs and another addition. Rapid growth in Saanich after WWII drove the move to the current municipal hall at 770 Vernon Avenue in 1965. The Royal Oak hall, a designated heritage building, is now used as a restaurant.

Royal Oak Community Hall and the Royal Oak Women's Institute

In the spring of 1910, public-spirited women of Royal Oak began meeting to talk about ways to improve their community. By September of that year, they had officially organized as the **Royal Oak Women's Institute** with Saanich native **Esther Tandy Quick (née Carmichael)**, as director. The Women's Institute was established as an educational organization to support women living in rural areas, and to promote education for women and children. Women's Institutes have advocated for improved public services, social welfare programmes, and environmental causes. They have also raised money for purposes such as hospitals, women's and children's health, and the Red Cross in wartime.

Both Esther and her husband, William John Quick, were eager to see their community develop. They led the drive to build the Royal Oak Community Hall in 1911. High levels of local interest generated significant donations of labour and funds. The hall has remained a key venue for the whole community of Royal Oak, as well as for the Royal Oak Women's Institute, which heavily promoted its creation, and which purchased the building for \$1500 in 1930.

In 1979, the Royal Oak Community Hall was given heritage designation, ensuring that its unique external appearance would be preserved.



Royal Oak Community Hall, 1972 (1981-025-005)



Pimlott family in front of Pimlott Bros. Royal Oak Grocery, 1913 (1980-012-001)

James Pimlott left England with his father, stepmother and two brothers in 1889, and the family settled in Manitoba. It was there that he met Louise Rushby, and the two were married in 1899. On August 4, 1900, they had their son, George, the first of seven children. By 1908 James and Louise had acquired some land on Burnside Road in Saanich, and he became the first postmaster for the Strawberry Vale Post Office. In 1912, the Pimlotts started a grocery business on West Saanich Road in the Royal Oak district and James took over the Royal Oak Post Office. James carried on the grocery business until 1923, when they were forced to let it go for financial reasons. The grocery store building still stands at 4520 West Saanich Road.

Saanich War Memorial Health Centre, 1920 (2009-020-019)



Arch of Saanich War Memorial Health Centre, 1941 (2002-001-001)



Health nurses and buses outside Saanich War Memorial Health Centre, 1930 (1981-016-001)

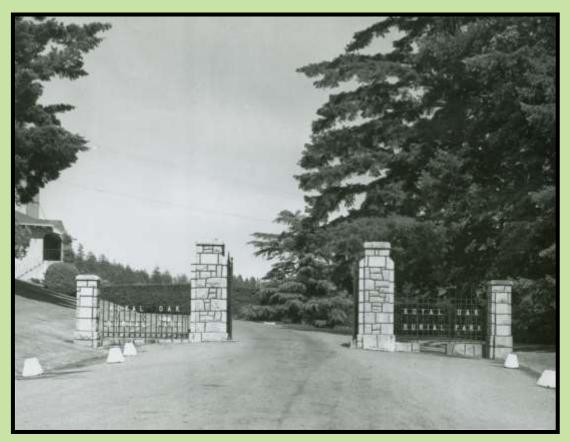
The **Saanich** War Memorial **Health Centre** was built by public subscription as a memorial to those who lost their lives in WW1. It is a unique addition to Canada's extensive catalogue of war memorials and is also significant as BC's first health centre. The building was by architect designed Karl **Branwhite Spurgin** (1877-1936) in partnership with Richard G. **Rice** and constructed with a budget of \$25,000.

From 1921 to 1932, the Public **Health Nursing Service of British** Columbia operated out of the Health Centre, providing field training to public health nursing students, and nursing care and health education to Saanich residents. In 1987 the distinctive entrance archway was removed due to safety concerns. Today, the building is known as the St. Andrew Memorial Manor, helping to provide independent subsidized housing for seniors.

Royal Oak Burial Park opened in 1923 as a public cemetery funded jointly by the Municipalities of Saanich and Victoria. The initial development was 6.5 acres. Burial plots were sold for \$30 each, and the funds raised from the sale of plots helped to cover the cost of access roads, administration buildings, a drainage and irrigation system, and entrance gates.

Florence M. Johns was the first person to be buried in the park on November 30, 1923. Notable people buried in Royal Oak Burial Park include Nellie McClung, the writer who fought for women's rights and the temperance movement; Nancy Hodges, the first woman in the Commonwealth to be named Speaker, and the first BC woman named to the Senate of Canada; Victoria Cross recipient Rowland Bourke; Titanic survivor Mabel Fortune Driscoll; and several BC premiers.

In 1991, the crematorium, built in 1937 for \$16,000 and now called the Garden Chapel, was added to the Saanich heritage inventory as a fine example of the Art Deco style. By 1996, Royal Oak Burial Park had expanded to 133 acres and included a mausoleum and a columbarium. The columbarium was championed by Saanich Mayor Arthur Ash, who became the first person interred there during a dedication service on June 23, 1988.



Entrance to Royal Oak Burial Park, 1960 (2010-031-013)



Garden Chapel, Royal Oak Burial Park, ca. 1987 (2006-015-053b)



Royal Oak Burial Park, 1945 (1984-017-003)

Movie crew on Rithet estate, 1930s (1981-003-002)



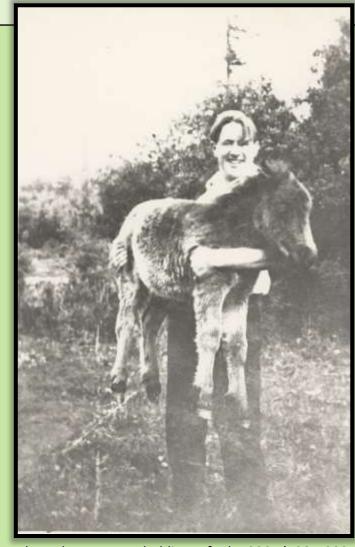
Putting sheep through the chute at shearing time, Rithet farm, 1930s (1981-003-006b)



Sheep on Rithet farm, 1930s (1981-003-007a)

1930s Broadmead Farm: The Locke Family

The Locke family immigrated from England around 1907 and operated a butcher shop in Esquimalt before leasing Broadmead Farm in the 1930s. The family grew crops there, and raised sheep and cattle, often employing a couple of workers to help take care of the farm. Many of the family photos refer to the property as the Rithet Estate. The large farm also served as the location for some cowboy and Rin Tin Tin movies, and Locke family horses were used in some of the productions.



Broadmead Farm, man holding a foal, 1930s (1981-003-004b)



Maltwood Museum (The Thatch), 1979 (1979-001-006a)

On May 30th, 1939, Colin and Florence Forrest opened their English-style tearoom, **The Royal Oak Inn**. Designed by local architect Hubert Savage in the picturesque Cotswold Cottage style, the building is reminiscent of a 14th century English hall house. When the Forrests' business failed due to the onset of wartime rationing and austerity programmes, the building was sold to **John and Katharine Maltwood**, who furnished it with antiques and art works. Katharine was a noted sculptor and student of the British Arts and Crafts movement. The building's roof was designed to resemble a traditional thatched roof, inspiring the couple to name their new home **The Thatch**. They remained there until Katharine's death in 1961. In her memory, John donated the building and much of her art collection to the University of Victoria in 1964. The University of Victoria operated the house as the **Maltwood Museum** until 1981. At that time, the building was sold and converted to restaurant use once more, first as The Chantecler, then as the Fireside Grill.

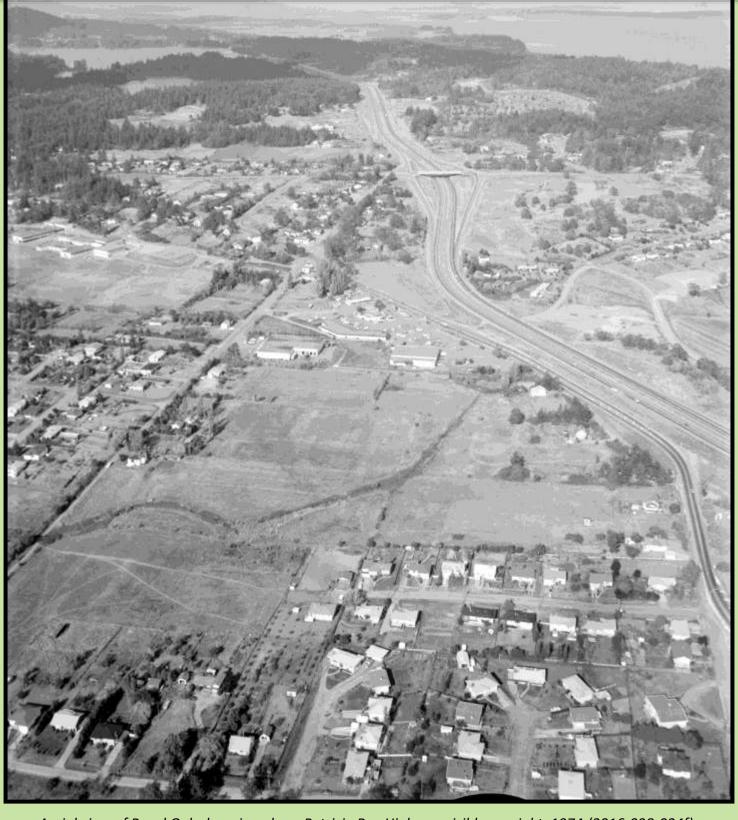
Ernest Ammann was born in Switzerland and devoted many years of his life to the hotel industry, working in places such as Egypt, Germany, San Francisco and Tunisia before making his way to Canada. During the Second World War, he served with the Canadian Army as a mess officer. It was during the war that he met and married Enid, a McGill alumna and dietician for a Montreal hospital. In 1946, the Ammanns moved to Victoria and launched the Chez Ernest Restaurant in Royal Oak. Enid was the chef, producing the customer's choice of two menu items, either a steak or chicken dinner. The dinner included one of Enid's specialties, soupe aux pois à la maison Ernest, and dessert was Swiss apple pie. Ernest, on the other hand, worked the front of the restaurant as host and waiter. The restaurant's popularity soared, and reservations for one of the 40 tables had to be made well in advance. Such high demand allowed for some exclusivity; children under the age of ten were not allowed. The Ammanns retired in 1972 and the restaurant was sold. Ernest Ammann died in February of 1989, and Enid died later the same year.



Chez Ernest Restaurant on West Saanich Road, 1970s (1984-004-001)

1950s

In the 1940s, the Saanich Peninsula was sparsely populated and largely rural with narrow country roads connecting small agricultural centres. The construction of the **Pat Bay (Patricia Bay) Highway** in the early 1950s linked the farmlands of the Peninsula to the rest of Saanich and the City of Victoria. In the 1960s a new stretch of the highway gave access to the airport and the BC Ferry Terminal at Swartz Bay. Despite the highway's name, the road does not actually lead to Patricia Bay in North Saanich. Instead, the name reflects the road's connection to the old Pat Bay Airport. By the mid-1970s the highway had expanded to a become a four-lane, divided thoroughfare.



Aerial view of Royal Oak shopping plaza, Patricia Bay Highway visible on right, 1974 (2016-038-024f)

Broadmead Farm George McMorran Jr. Recollections, 1960



George McMorran Jr. looking over low land at Broadmead farm, 1960 (1989-008-168)

"Looking over the low land at Broadmede farm. It was in this swamp we got our cranberries for the turkey on Xmas day. Up to the left is Royal Oak Avenue and beyond the clear land is what we called Bald Mountain and it was over this hill we ran down to the beach at Cordova Bay. The trail was well used ..." – George McMorran Jr., 1960. (description on back of photo)

1960s Broadmead Farm to Broadmead Estates

After R.P. Rithet's death in 1919, his lands were placed into a called Rithet company Consolidated. The company oversaw the subdivision of some of the land around the perimeter of the property in the 1950s but decided that the piecemeal method was not ideal. In 1960, the first draft of a comprehensive plan was created and rejected. Local developer and planner Gordon Rolston was then hired to develop a new plan which considered the environment and topography of the property. His plan was accepted, and the first houses were built between 1965 and 1967. The neighbourhood adopted design controls and covenants including the retention of trees and other natural features which give it a cohesive appearance.



View of Broadmead Estates, 1973 (1981-021-029a)



Girl riding her bicycle, Emily Carr Drive, Broadmead Estates, 1973 (1981-021-029b)

As early as 1968, the community of Royal Oak had talked about the need for a community centre. In 1988, the proposal for what would become **Saanich Commonwealth Place** was formally made and the project was underway. The community centre was completed in November 1993, after a total cost of \$22 million. In addition to indoor sports and fitness facilities, the centre boasts competition, warm-up, wave, toddler, and teaching pools, as well as a waterslide. The following year, a library branch was added. In 1994, the pool hosted the aquatic events for the **Commonwealth Games**.

Community Centre

Residents Must Prove Need And Establish Support

If residents of the Royal Oak area can prove the need for a community centre and show unquestionable support from residents by the end of the year, Saanich Council will make them a present of 1.20 acres of land upon which to build.

Speaking to council in support of a letter urging the need for a community centre. Mrs. Goosney referred to a statement that school district 63 was considering the added construction of a new gymnasium at Royal Oak secondary school. She said, "We have organizations clamouring for a centre.

Reeve Hugh Curtis observed that the community made use of the existing gymnasium on a regular basis but Mrs. Gresney said a group of teenagers wanted to hold a dance and were refused by the school board.

She added, "I think it should be open to all the public-that is why we want to build our own".

A meeting is to be held tonight (Thursday) to discuss ways and means of raising money.

Dogwood-Star, April 4, 1968



Swim race at Saanich Commonwealth Place, 1994 (2011-055-002)



Construction of Rithet Reservoir, 1949 (1983-008-001b)

Working on your own research project?

Visit www.saanich.ca/archives to access our online finding aids and photo search site.

Saanich Archives is located inside the Saanich Centennial Library next to Pearkes Recreation Centre at 3100 Tillicum Road.

Our hours are: Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

For more information contact us at: archives@saanich.ca
250 475 5494 ext. 3478

