

Saanich Archives Newsletter

| Spring 2026 |



Welcome to Spring!

Spring has arrived in Saanich, and with it comes a fresh season of stories, discoveries, and community connection here at the Archives. Whether you're a longtime friend of the collection or finding us for the first time, we're delighted to have you with us! In the months ahead, we look forward to sharing new exhibits, programming, and glimpses into the rich history that makes this municipality such a special place to call home. As always, thank you for your continued curiosity and support - it's what makes this work meaningful!

Current Exhibits

Art in the Archives

Cedar Hill Recreation Centre - on display until May 25th



Saanich Archives is pleased to present an exhibit celebrating the municipality's rich creative history through the eyes of artists past. From watercolours and pencil sketches to colourized and painted photographs, this collection explores the many ways Saanich residents expressed their creativity across the decades, featuring works from notable local artists, including Annie Girling and members of the Goward family.

The exhibit is currently on display at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, so if you're in the neighbourhood, be sure to stop in and take a look before it closes on May 25th!

Pastimes of the Past Times

Saanich Centennial Library Foyer - ongoing



Also currently on display is a continuation of our *Pastimes of the Past Times* exhibit, located in the foyer of the Saanich Centennial Library. This exhibit takes a fond look at the recreational activities enjoyed by Saanich residents throughout the years - a lighthearted reminder that the joy of leisure is a timeless part of community life.

Drop by the library and take a peek at history in a whole new way!

Where We'll Be This Year

We're excited to share that Saanich Archives will be out in the community at two local events this year. You can find us at the **Strawberry Festival** on July 5th and at the **Saanich Fair** from September 5th to 7th. Stop by our table to say hello, learn more about the Archives, and discover the many ways you can explore Saanich's rich history. We love connecting with the community and can't wait to see you there.



The Thomas Russell Diaries

In 1870, Thomas Russell set out from Victoria aboard a sloop bound for Skidegate Inlet in Haida Gwaii (formerly Queen Charlotte Islands) to superintend a coal mine. Over the course of seven and a half months, he recorded his experiences in a series of notebooks that have since been passed down through generations of his family. Thanks to a generous donation and the dedicated transcription work of Quentin Goodbody of the Ladysmith and District Historical Society, that diary is now available to read.

Spanning four notebook volumes, the diary offers a remarkable firsthand glimpse into life and work in a remote corner of 19th-century British Columbia. Whether you're a history enthusiast, a genealogy researcher, or simply love a good story, this is well worth a read. The diary volumes have been deposited with Saanich Archives, but thanks to Quentin's efforts they can be read in full from the link down below.



Historical Highlight: Hannah Hatherly Maynard



Mrs. R. Maynard, or Hannah Maynard, was born in Cornwall in 1834. In 1852 she married Richard Maynard and they decided to move to Bowmanville, Ontario. In 1858, Richard joined gold-seekers on the Fraser River in BC, where he seems to have been quite successful. In a letter to Hannah, Richard notes the 'great need' for a photographer, which set Hannah on the path to becoming a professional photographer. During the time in which Richard was out west, Hannah taught herself the basics of photography, likely through observation of local photographers and through trial and error after simply purchasing equipment and getting started.

When Richard and Hannah moved to Victoria in 1862, Richard left for the Stikine River area to continue mining. Hannah opened her first photography studio - Mrs. R. Maynard's Photographic Gallery. Over the next many years, Hannah ran her studio, where she focused on portrait work and experimental photographic techniques. She also taught Richard all she knew of photography, which he then used on assignments in the field and for the government. Many of Richard's photographs of Barkerville were taken just a few days before the entire town was destroyed by fire in 1868 and they remain an important record of the original Barkerville. While Richard was away, Hannah continued in her photographic career. Newspapers ran her photographs and in 1887, and she became the official photographer for the Victoria Police Department.

In her studio, Hannah also experimented with new forms of photography and was a master of lighting technique. She was one of the early adopters of line-lit photography, which highlighted facial features. She experimented with photomontage, producing the Gems of British Columbia series – a greeting card sent out on New Years to all the mothers of children she had photographed in the preceding year. One year, this included up to 22,000 individual photographs. The Gems of 1885 was published and praised by the St. Louis and Canadian Photographer in 1886, bringing her a measure of recognition throughout North America. When personal tragedy struck, in the form of the death of three family members, Hannah took an interest in seances and Spiritualism, which led her to create a type of photography called "Living Statuary" or "Statuary from Life" where the subject often appeared as a bust on a pedestal. She continued to run the

photographic studio and shoe store businesses until 1912, when she retired and her sons took over. She died at the age of 84, in May 1918, and is buried in Ross Bay Cemetery.

While the BC Archives holds the vast majority of the Maynard family's collection, and the family technically settled in Victoria proper, Saanich Archives has a number of photographs taken by Hannah, which can be found by searching her last name on our photo search site. She is celebrated today for the range and quality of her professional and creative work.





Saanich Community Cookbook

Did you miss our BC Heritage Week community cookbook? It's not too late to take a look! Brought together in celebration of BC Heritage Week 2026, this collection gathers recipes from local and archival kitchens alike - a reflection of the stories, traditions, and communities that have shaped Saanich over the years. If you're looking for inspiration in the kitchen or simply want to explore a little local history one recipe at a time, we hope you'll pull up a chair and dig in.

[View the Recipes Here!](#)



Did you know..?

The tradition of summer parks programs in Saanich began 10 years before the Saanich Parks Department was established!

In the summer of 1948, a group of mothers organized the first children's summer program at Playfair Park to keep neighbourhood children occupied with fun supervised activities over the summer months. This group of volunteers became known as the Playfair Park Mothers' Group.

The program ran for 6 weeks in July and August, and was open to children aged 4 to 16. Activities included sports, pantomimes, costume competitions, crafts, dance, barbeques, and field trips. There were also "Book Character Days" when children dressed up as their favourite fictional character, pet days, scavenger hunts, fashion shows, puppet shows, bingo, pony rides, and home cooking classes. Treats like hot dogs and ice cream were often available.

The Playfair Park Mothers' Group led the way for Saanich's tradition of summer parks programs. Reynolds Road Park was the next to offer a summer program beginning in 1951, followed by 12 more over the next few years. These programs continued to be offered by volunteers even after the Saanich Parks Department was established in 1958, but by the early 1970s, the Parks Department took charge and the volunteer groups were steadily disbanded.