

History of Cadboro-Gyro Park

European Settlement

Cadboro Bay is bounded on three sides by water, and contains three neighbourhoods: the Village, Queenswood, and Ten Mile Point. Historically, the Cadboro Bay shoreline was home to the Coast Salish Peoples, and a number of archaeological sites exist along the shoreline.

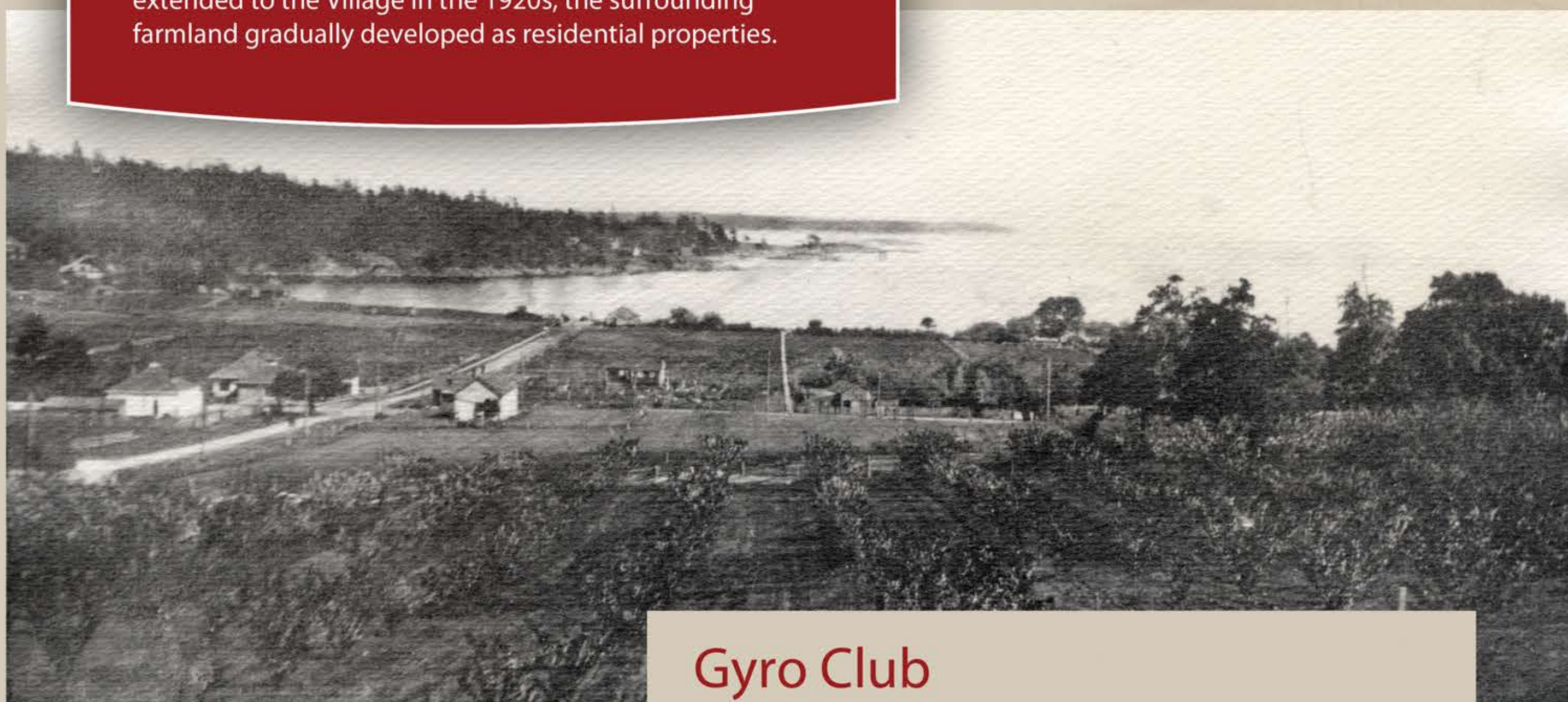
The bay, named after the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) brigantine Cadborough, which first sailed into the bay in 1837. By 1850, seventeen employees of HBC lived in the area on Uplands Farm that was located on the plateau area now occupied by the University of Victoria.

The flat, inland portions of Cadboro Bay continued to develop as farms, and the area around Cadboro Bay beach became a seaside resort as early as 1900. The Cadboro Bay Beach Hotel, originally built in 1909, re-opened in 1920 under new owners and was a popular attraction until destroyed by fire in August 1931. With city water mains extended to the Village in the 1920s, the surrounding farmland gradually developed as residential properties.



Above:
Ted Whitehead at Cadboro Bay –
Hotel in Background circa 1920s.
Saanich Archives 1981-013-010.

Below:
View of Cadboro Bay.
Saanich Archives 2008-035-001



View down Sinclair's Hill to Cadboro Bay, Early 1900s.
Saanich Archives 1980-018-001.



View of Cadboro Bay beach and Cadboro Beach Hotel.
Saanich Archives 2007-171-004.



Gyro Club

Cadboro-Gyro Park shares its name jointly with Cadboro Bay and the Gyro Club for good reason. In 1953, the Gyro Club, at Reverend William Hills' suggestion, purchased 1.77 hectares (4.37 acres) of land from Owen Goward for \$4,500. The Gyro Club raised funds for the purchase through their annual Hole-One-One contest and Carnival.

In April 1954, the Gyro Club and the Municipality of Saanich signed an agreement to convert the marshy area into a park. For months following, thousands of cubic yards of hog-fuel (wood chips) were trucked into the site to fill the low-lying areas. A parking lot, playground, grassy fields and a picnic area rounded out the work. The Gyro Club eventually donated the land to Saanich when taxes on the property became a burden on their organization.

In 1958, Parks Manager, Bert Richman enlisted the help of Saanich Engineering to build the octopus, salmon, boat and the Cadborosaurus. Saanich continued to acquire property surrounding the park and today it has more than tripled in size to over six hectares (15 acres). Many decades later, the park continues to be a remarkable accomplishment to the vision of Billy Hills and the Gyro Club of Victoria.



Gyro George Barr, circa 1957.
Gyro Club of Victoria



University of Victoria Archives,
Archie H. Wills fonds [AR394. 4.3]

A Sea Monster in Our Midst?

The mystery began in the 1930s when there were a number of sightings of an 80 foot (25m) long sea serpent in Cadboro Bay. Reports of more sightings inspired Archie Wills, editor of the Victoria Daily Times newspaper, to publish the headline "Yachtsmen Tell of a Huge Sea-Serpent Seen off Victoria" on October 5, 1933. He later affectionately named it 'Caddy' – short for Cadborosaurus. In 1940, Frederick Holm added the snake-like creature had a head resembling that of a sheep or a horse.

Since that time, there has been the odd sighting, books written and a Canadian children's television show called Mystery Hunters investigated the fabled creature. To date it has eluded capture aside from the remains of a reptilian-like creature found in the stomach of a sperm whale in 1937.

While the existence of an actual sea creature could be debated for decades, one fact remains, the concrete, climbable likeness of 'Caddy' will be seen and enjoyed for a long time to come!

