

ROYAL OAK HERITAGE TOUR – Main Street

General Information:

Royal Oak Pioneers

1858 – **Richard & Jane Cheeseman** family were the first to settle in the Royal Oak area.

James Murray Yale

Henry & Eliza Peers owned land in the area 1852, but didn't move to the area until 1858.

1859 - **Alexander Grant Dallas**

1873 – **Louis Duval**

1891 – **Robert Patterson Rithet**

1900 – **Frederick and William & Esther Quick**

Transportation & Access

In 1863 a daily coach service from Victoria was implemented, leaving from the city in the morning by way of the west road to North Saanich and returning in the evening by the east road. Access from Victoria was up Quadra to West Saanich Road and East Saanich Road (Viewmont now)

Victoria & Sidney Railway

Inaugural run was in 1894.

There was a station called Glanford and a station here at Royal Oak.

At the stretch along the Royal Oak Shopping Centre the V&S rail ran along the west side of West Saanich road.

Royal Oak Station was at the corner of West Saanich Road and East Saanich Road (now Viewmont Avenue). The V&S would drop off mail and supplies. The engines ran on burning cordwood. Locals called it the *Cordwood Ltd.* as it also transported cordwood to Victoria from the settlers on the peninsula. A large number of pioneers supplemented their farming with the sale of cordwood.

The rail line entered Royal Oak from the south approximately at a location where the intersection of Glanford Ave and W. Saanich Road is today. The rail line then climbed the long slope to a ridge that lead to Beaver and Elk Lakes. This was reportedly the steepest grade along the line.¹ This slope may have been called "**Company Hill**".²

The roadway was very narrow and poor with a slope that occasionally caused a problem in the era when horse and stage coach were a main mode of transportation. If there was a bit of traffic on the narrow road and a particular horse did not want to go up the hill "**it took the whole company present**" to urge the horse and buggy up the hill.²

V&S Rail commuters could expect that the train may need to make 2 attempts to travel up the slope heading north in Royal Oak.

"experienced passengers would drop off the *Cordwood Ltd* (locals called it because most of its freight and all its energy for running the engine was wood cut in 'cords') realizing full well that they had ample time to refresh themselves at the bar in Mr. Duval's Royal Oak Hotel before swinging aboard as the train made its final attempt to climb the grade."

1906 – Saanich is incorporated as a Municipality. West Saanich Road was paved.

The Royal Oak Station was located just behind the Old Municipal Hall west of W. Saanich Road until 1909 when it was hitched behind an Engine and hauled up to serve as the station at Keating.

SITES:

1)

1852-53 - Richard **Cheeseman** made two trips on the Norman Morrison from England to Victoria. The second time bringing his wife Jane (nee Dyke). The trip took 7 months. Other passengers on the ship included Kenneth McKenzie and family, who settled the HBC Craigflower farm located on the Gorge waterway.

As a Hudson's Bay employee, Richard was deeded property on Chatham Road in Victoria. In 1858, he traded his property on Chatham Road for Section 108 of the Lake District. It took 4 days for them to travel to the densely wooded area. Stories of the First Nations that **Cheeseman** knew from working at Fort Victoria escorted them to the Royal Oak site. They say that Jane Cheeseman named their property Royal Oak after a large old oak tree on the property.

Richard and Jane **Cheeseman** started to build a home for their family of 4 children soon after arriving at the property. The original home later became a hotel. Sources locate the original home and barn on the west side of West Saanich Road at the intersection of West Saanich and East Saanich Road (now Viewmont Ave) near the old Municipal Hall. (*note: this location appears to be on land within Section 9 not Section 108?*)

In 1862 Richard had just purchased new horses. He was driving from the field down the newly cut road (maybe to town with some of their garden produce) when one of the horses spooked and ran off, flipping the wagon and Richard. Richard was killed in the accident. Jane was left with 4 children, an incomplete home, dairy cattle to care for, and crops to tend. At some point her home became the Royal Oak Hotel. (*See site 3 below*)

After her husband's death Jane Cheeseman married **James Bailey** (Rose Hill Farms?) in Feb. 1864.

Jane could not afford school for all her children she and James donated land in 1864 for the construction of a schoolhouse and the community built the school as a "barn raising." (*See Site 2*)

In early 1871 James **Bailey** died of a heart attack.

Jane marries John **Durrance** (Spring Valley Farm – Durrance Road).

Jane **Cheeseman** died at the age of 66. You may find her gravesite at St. Anglican's Church under the name of Mary Durrance. There is a commemoration to Jane Cheeseman Bailey Durrance at the Saanich Commonwealth Pool ... somewhere?

Royal Oak Hotel

By 1864 Jane Cheeseman bailey had leased the hotel to Richard **Porter** who operated it as the Royal Oak Hotel. She reportedly worked in the hotel for Robert.

1866 – The Colonist advertised a Hunting Party contest with a Ball at the end of the day at the R.O. Hotel.

Also advertised cattle sale and an auction at the hotel. Election meetings were also held at the hotel at that time.

The original Royal Oak Hotel was located on the west side of West Saanich Road. Louis **Duval** married Jane and Richard Cheeseman's daughter, Jane, and purchased the hotel in 1873. The hotel burned down in 1887. Louis rebuilt the hotel in 1889 on the east side of West Saanich Road next to the Royal Oak Schoolhouse. The hotel was in operation until 1903 and demolished in 1928.

Louis **Duval** also ran a saw mill at the end of Elk Lake Road between West Saanich Road and what became Interurban Rail. Jane and Louis had three sons Louis, William and Frederick two of them eventually ran a saw mill in the Prospect Lake area.

Other names connected to the hotel included Charles Smallbone, James Camp, and Arthur Slater. Of note circa 1960 to 2008 there had been another hotel called the Royal Oak Inn Resort built up on Elk Lake Road where the Berwick Seniors Residence is now. The Maltwood home (site #10) was also called the Royal Oak Inn at one time.

By **1894** the V&S was stopping near the Royal Oak Hotel to drop off mail and supplies.

2)

Royal Oak Schoolhouse

The first Royal Oak Schoolhouse was opened July 1, 1865. The original schoolhouse may have been located on the west side of West (Saanich) Road. Five boys and 10 girls attended at that time including children from pioneer families – Cheeseman, Von Allman, Wilkinson, Nicholson, Williams and Lindsay. The first school building burned down in 1883 after a supper dance.

1885 a new school for Royal Oak was built on the north east corner of West & East (Viewmont Ave) Saanich Roads. By the 1950s the old schoolhouse was not being used as a school. A larger school complex was constructed on what is now Travino Lane and the Municipality and the School Board were in agreement to tear the old school house down. At that time the Municipal Building and Fire department staff deemed the building “beyond repair” and “hazardous,” thus recommending it be demolished. But ownership of the property was unclear because the property had been donated to the people of the community and Board of School Trustees of the late 1800s. The Board no longer existed and in 1965, Ethel Rankin (nee Duval) who was one of Jane Cheeseman Bailey Durrance granddaughters, requested that demolition be withheld until rightful ownership is resolved. By 1967 the Municipality was able to proceed with registration of the property and there had been enough interest and support within the community and the Heritage Advisory Committee to have the site designated.

3)

1852, Henry Newsham **Peers** (1821-1864), a Hudson’s Bay Co employee, received property in the Lake District on the Colquitz River. He and his wife Eliza (nee Yale, 1830- 1965) did not move to the property until circa 1858. Peers had been a clerk, superintendent, and chief factor at Fort Vancouver in Oregon and had been tasked with finding a route for easy travel from Kamloops to the lower Fraser River. He married Eliza in 1851 and worked at Fort Langley and at the HBC Colwitz Farm in Washington until they moved to and settled **Colquitz** Farm north of Victoria on Section 9 of the LD now the land from W. Saanich & Viewmont Road (was E. Saanich Rd.) west.

After the early deaths of Henry and Eliza in 1864 and 1865, Eliza’s younger sister Aurelia **Manson** (nee Yale 1839-1931) and her husband John D. Manson (1834-1925), a butcher, took over the farm. Eliza and Aurelia were the daughters of James Murray **Yale** (1798-1871) who was the Chief Factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Langley.

The farm house may have been located on or close to the **Colquitz** River and may have been on or near the property that is now 4635 West Saanich Road. In 1859-60 Henry Peers constructed a saw & grist mill on the farm. The mill was powered by the Colquitz River. A few remnants of a mill remain near the Colquitz River at 4635 West Saanich Road. They may be remnants from the old mill.

4)

Pimlott Brothers Royal Oak Grocery (4520 West Saanich Road) may have been built circa **1906-1910**. Is not on the Saanich Heritage Register for some reason?

5)

Royal Oak Community Hall – 4516 West Saanich Road - 1911

The Community Hall served as a central meeting place. William John Quick (1868-1952), a dairy farmer who was born in New Zealand, and Saanich native Esther Tandy Quick (née Carmichael, born 1890) spearheaded the initiative to build a community hall for the Royal Oak neighbourhood. Interested families donated funds and labour, and the land was purchased at a reasonable price from John Durrance and others.

The hall was used for dances and whist drives, basketball games and the Royal Oak Women's Institute Flower Shows, held from 1912 to 1956. Since 1930, this Hall has provided the Women's Institute with the ideal location to undertake charitable events such as dances, work bees, and sporting events.

The Women's Institute bought the hall for \$1,500 in 1930.

The Hall has survived in substantially original condition.

- symmetrical structure
- a low-pitched hipped roof with two hipped roof extensions on either side of the central front entrance. Decorative brackets are mounted under the eaves
- the front façade has four opaque coloured glass windows,
- the upper ones capped with Tudor arches
- lower - wooden drop siding
- cedar shingles above.

6)

Old Saanich Municipal Hall (4512 West Saanich Road) - 1911

Saanich was incorporated on March 1, 1906, council meetings were initially held in the Hilliger house. After February 9, 1907, the meetings were moved to the converted James Pim farmhouse at the corner of Glanford and Vanalman Avenues.

In the 1911 election debate over the location of the new municipal hall, Frederick and William James **Quick** (Wilkinson Road) were instrumental in choosing Royal Oak.

John Charles Malcolm Keith (1858-1940) designed the hall. He was a prominent architect in British Columbia and was the architect of the Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria.

C.H. Merkly built it for \$4,364, and the hall was wired for electricity (D.L. Hickey & Company). Electricity was just new to Victoria at that time. Some areas e.g. Gordon Head, did not receive electricity until 1921.

The Hall is an example of the Arts and Crafts style which was typically used throughout British Columbia for municipal halls of the Edwardian era.

- features include a prominent bellcast hipped roof with wide eaves,
- multiple-assembly wood-sash windows
- use of indigenous materials including a fieldstone foundation and cedar shingle cladding.

7)

1950s Petrol Station and next door a Blacksmith

8)

Patricia Bay Hwy

1950s – newly completed two lane road runs from Quadra and Glanford up W. Saanich Road. The road then splits and goes around both sides of Elk Lake, west & east. East Saanich Road carries along the east shore of Elk Lake (now Pat Bay Hwy).

1964 - Colonist, March 25 - Highway being planned for 1967 Centennial was discussed by Council in 1964.

1969 - Pat Bay Hwy was still being discussed (Nov. 13) letter from Planning to Mayor and Council Pat Bay Hwy rerouted from Quadra to Royal Oak Burial Grounds (The New Islander Nov 30 1977 & Danda Humphries). The Hwy relocation goes through the land that had been part of the Rithet's Farm.

9)

1859 - Alexander Grant **Dallas** was deeded the land Section 8a & b and Section 26 Lake District (899 acres) which includes Rithet's Bog. Alexander married Jane Douglas, the daughter of James Douglas, Chief Factor for HBC and later Governor of Vancouver Island.

Circa 1891 - Robert Patterson **Rithet** bought A.G. Dallas' farm including the land next to the Cheeseman/Duval property from Viewmont Avenue and West Saanich and east including what is now the Broadmead neighbourhood. Amongst other crops cranberries may have been grown on the bog site. Rithet raised racehorses the most famous named Broadmead. Rithet had a horse track on the property that was located just behind where the Fireside Grill is now (old Maltwood property).

Rithet was vice-president of Albion Iron Works, owned flour mills and large farms he mainland and invested in real estate. Rithet served as a justice of the peace, Mayor of Victoria, in the BC Legislature. He was involved in salmon canning and steamship lines and became president of the California and Hawaiian Sugar Refining Company. He built a mansion on Humbolt in Victoria. Rithet was a big promoter of Victoria. He died in 1919 at home in Victoria at the age of 74.

Gordon Rolston developed a Master Plan for the Broadmead community. The Guinness family (Brewmasters from Ireland – Dry Stout and Guinness beer) purchased the property between 1972 and 1980.

Rithet's Bog Nature Sanctuary (42 acres) was dedicated in 1994. The Guinness family donated the land. It is a feeding and resting area for many species of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and 25 species of butterflies.

11)

The Royal Oak Inn, the Thatch, Thatchwood, the Maltwood -4509 West Saanich Road

Colin & Florence **Forrest**

& co-owners David W Bunett, contractor & Vera Hannah Levy

Hubert Savage, architect

Savage worked with many high profile local architects including Maclur, Leonard James, and K.B. Spurgin. He also worked in quite a few different jobs like with munitions at the Victoria Machinery

Depot and inspecting rail lines with CNR. He designed many schools in Victoria and homes in the Uplands.

Colin Murray Forrest (1886-1941) and Florence M. Forrest arrived in Victoria from Shanghai in 1936 and had the idea to open an English-style tearoom. C.M. Forrest had previously built several buildings in Victoria. This site was at a strategic location at the intersection of the roads to the new airport and the Butchart Gardens, amongst a forest of native Garry Oak trees.

The business survived only 1939 and 1940. It ran into difficulty after the onset of wartime rationing, gasoline restrictions and austerity programs.

In 1940, the building was sold to Katharine Emma Maltwood (née Sapsworth 1878-1961) and her husband John Maltwood. They renamed it The Thatch, and filled it with antiques and art works. John Maltwood's fortune came from Oxo, his family's company. Katharine, a noted sculptor, was a student of the British Arts and Crafts movement began by John Ruskin and William Morris. K Maltwood kept a studio in Kensington, London. Kathrine was an art collector and artist.

The couple added a two story studio on the north side connected by a passageway from the minstrel 's gallery. After her death, John donated the house and collections in her memory to the University of Victoria for use as the Maltwood Museum.

A plaque in the main hall states "This museum, the treasures it contains and a generous sum in the form of an endowment were the gift of Mr. John Maltwood and the late Mrs. Katherine Maltwood to the University of Victoria in 1964."

The museum opened in 1964 and closed in 1975.

Saanich purchased the home in 1979 and designated it a heritage building.

In 1980, the University sold the property to Saanich municipality and moved the collection to the University grounds.

It was run as a restaurant by Dominique Chapeau and Harry de Zwager for a period between 1980 and the 1990s.

2003 became the Fireside Grill

Important elements:

- Modelled after a 14th century Elizabethan hall house.
- Tudor style mansion
- designed to resemble a rambling old structure constructed over a number of years.
- meadow setting
- sculptures and features such as the Glastonbury Tree,
- English dry stone terraced rock garden and
- Garry oaks
- picturesque roofline, with jerkin-headed gables, was designed to resemble a traditional thatched roof,
- clad in cedar shingles, with the rolled roof edges covered by steam-bent shingles.
- roughcast stucco walls have random medieval half-timbering in a contrasting darker colour,
- cruck" timber frame building technology from medieval barns and churches
- windows - multi-paned leaded-light wooden-sash casements.
- irregular eyebrow dormers and enormous brick chimneys

- much of the interior is original,
 - hand-adzed post-and-beam timbers,
 - dramatic double-height great hall with a vaulted ceiling
 - mezzanine minstrels' gallery,
 - stone and brick fireplaces, and oak floors.
 - first structure in Saanich to receive municipal heritage designation for its interior features.
 - Mezzanine held a musician's gallery
 - garden & sculpture \ **Glastonbury tree** \ English dry stone terraced rock garden \ Garry oak meadow

END ☺

Just to the South close to the intersection of Quadra and Glandford and West Saanich Road is:

SAANICH WAR MEMORIAL HEALTH CENTRE - 4353 West Saanich Road (designated)
Spurgin & Rice, Architects, 1920

The Saanich War Memorial Health Centre was built by public subscription as a memorial to those who lost their lives in the Great War in the service of their country, a unique contribution to Canada's long list of war memorials. It is also significant as the province's first Health Centre and the most highly developed of its type in Canada at the time.

The building was designed by Saanich Soldiers Settlement Scheme architect Karl Branwhite Spurgin (1877-1936) in partnership with Richard G. Rice,

From 1921 to 1932, the Public Health Nursing Service of British Columbia, one of the earliest in Canada, provided at this location a great variety of nursing care and health education to Saanich residents and training to Public Health Nurse students.

Several additions have occurred to the rear of the building otherwise from the front it looks much like it did in the 1920s. Architects Dillabough & Luney and later Birley & Wagg designed the additions. Today it is used for housing by St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Architectural elements of note:

- British Arts and Crafts influenced design
- cross-gabled roof has prominent gables at the front and back,
- inset central front entrance.
- main walls are constructed of hollow clay tile, finished with roughcast stucco.
- Dark-stained wooden siding was in the gable ends.
- The original porches, at each end of the building, are now enclosed.
- original cedar-shingle roof was double-coursed every seven courses.
- The cornerstone is inscribed 'Saanich War Memorial Health Centre, November 1920.'
- A Memorial Arch once stood at the entrance of the property but was demolished in the 1980s.
- The sign at the front of the property has been designed to mimick the original memorial arch.

Sources:

- 1) (G. Casltes, Saanich – an illustrated history)
- 2) Hearn, George & Wilkie, David. The Cordwood Limited: A History of the V&S Railway. 1971
- 3) Cheeseman vertical file, Saanich Archives
- 4) Saanich Archives oral histories – Ethel Rankin (nee Duval), _____,
- 5) Saanich Heritage Structures

Saanich Archives Photos:



1981-019-006



1978-01-067



1980-012-003



1980-007-002

