Lake Environment:
Protection of the natural plant habitat along the water shoreline is key to protecting the water environment from erosion, sedimentation, and pollutant runoff from lawns, roadways, gardens, farms, and faulty septic tanks. Tiny green or brown Pacific Tree frog (Hyla regilla) and the Red-legged frog (Rana aurora) are native frogs to the Todd Creek watershed and are endangered. Land owners can reduce the risk to the native frog species by reinstating natural habitat on the shoreline.

Approximate Distances:
Route A: 2km
Route B: 6km

General
Ancestors of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations were the first known residents of southern Vancouver Island. Please visit the Esquimalt (www.esquimaltnation.ca) and Songhees (www.songheesnation.ca) First Nations to learn more about their history.

European Settlement of the Prospect Lake area began with pioneer farmers in the mid-1800s. Jack Dunmore arrived in 1852 and paddled up Todd Inlet and Todd Creek to find good farmland. Other early European settlers included Frank Campbell, Horace Oldfield, Sam McCullough, Fred Duval and Tony Williams.

Prospect Lake soon became a popular area for fishing and hunting. An 1886 article from the Colonist newspaper describes the lake as being “thronged with anglers.” An 1888 Victoria Water Supply map shows that a dirt track named West Road (now Old West Saanich Road) provided access in the vicinity of the northern end of the lake. By 1895 people could access the lake by taking “the Victoria & Sidney Railroad to Beaver Lake station, and then an interesting tramp of two and a half miles to Prospect Lake.” Daily Colonist November 3, 1957.

A second railroad, the Interurban Railroad, was established in the area by BC Electric Railway in 1913. The Interurban Railroad brought people even closer to the lake and provided several stations along the route. By 1914, wealthy families who were able to buy motor vehicles found it much easier to get out to the lake and more summer cottages were built.

Stories
Jack Whitehead remembers trout as big as 23 inches being caught out of Prospect Lake in the 1930s. Jack’s father Albert Whitehead built a fleet of 16 small flat-bottomed boats and rented them for $1 a day.

Westwood Vale was the name of the valley east of Prospect Lake and west of Beaver Lake, where Gordon Springs drain from the hills into Victoria Flats. The road that runs parallel to the old BC Electric Interurban rail line was called Westwood Vale until 1923 when it was changed to Spring Road.

Students of Prospect Lake School in the 1920s and 30s remember a two room schoolhouse that was built over a water well. John Oldfield recorded that “in the hallways outside the rooms there was a big cast-iron pump with a crank handle that was pushed up and down a few times until the water gushed out. The water was clear and cold. There were two separate cups, one for girls and one for boys.” The rooms were heated with round cast-iron wood stoves. “During the winter students sitting next to the stoves roasting while the rest froze.” John also remembers that each desk had an inkwell and in the cold winter of 1929 the ink froze solid. (Prospect Lake Heritage Society).

Welcome to Saanich Walking Tours
Saanich Heritage Walking Tours are provided to increase public awareness of Saanich Heritage.

Sources for the historical and architectural information and photos include: The Prospect Lake Heritage Society, Saanich Archives www.saanicharchives.ca; Saanich Heritage Register, Donald Luxton & Associates and Jennifer Nell Barr www.saanichheritage.ca.

We liked to hear from you if you have any historical information about a site within this neighbourhood. Please contact Saanich Planning 250-475-1775 or planning@saanich.ca.

Please Note: No sidewalks on this route
All residences on the tour are privately owned. Please remain on public property during your tour and respect the privacy of residents.

Photo credits:
www.spintothesnow.com - oldfield garage workshop
www.swblowers.wordpress.com - California tea plant
Front cover photo credit: Saanich Archives 1993-001-021 Car on Old Saanich Road near the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (after 1918)
1. Whitehead Park

Whitehead Parkland now provides lake access, recreation space, and natural shoreline enjoyment. The land was originally owned by Albert and Nellie Whitehead who operated a farm on the property circa 1923 until 1960 when they sold the land to Saanich on the condition that it be established as a public park. The farm included a greenhouse and small orchard. They also raised goats and geese. Whitehead would lead up a goat cart to travel with the goats from the north end of the lake to the south for picnics. Albert built many of the summer cottages around the lake.

2. Ether’s Villa (1927 - 147 Goward Road

Erie and Ethel Todd bought property on Goward Road in 1927 and named the cottage they built, Ethel’s Villa. Erie Todd was the grandson of J.H. (Jacob) Hurtin, Todd, who made his fortune selling provisions to miners in Barkerville and after moving back to Victoria established a successful fishing supplies business. J.H. Todd & Sons Fishery & Canemery business operated from the early 1880s. The operation of the business continued under Jacob’s sons and grandchildren until 1909.

Marjorie Bell, famous Canadian long distance swimmer, was the first to swim across Lake Ontario and the youngest to swim the English Channel, stayed with the Todds while she practiced for her successful swim across the Strait of Juan de Fuca in 1956. A couple years earlier a famous US long distance swimmer, Florence Chadwick, also practiced swimming from the Todd’s property in preparation for her attempt to swim the Juan de Fuca Strait. Painting by the designer of the present house, John William “Bert” Turlington, 1981.

3. Echo Road

The land surrounding what is now Echo Road was known as On Hing Farm in the late 1880s. On Hing Farm was operated by a Chinese family. Local memories tell of the On Hing prodigious wage “travelling around the country with produce and oysters of Chinamen underneath.” In 1913, after the death of three of their sons, the subdivided the property and thirty acres of the farmland were sold. This subdivision marked the beginning of Prospect Lake’s popularity as a summer getaway.

4. Fraser Residence – 321 Goward Road

The first house built between Interurban Road and the lake cottages. Goward Road was little more a logging track and the Fraser’s carried water from a nearby spring until electricity came in 1947.

5. Stevens Residence – 4816 Spring Road. Built 1895

John Stevens (1835-1914) ran a hotel called “The Half-Way House” (now addressed 4794 West Saanich Road). He lived above the hotel/saloon with his wife. Georgiana (nee Holton, 1840-1929), and their children. Georgiana decided that living above a saloon was not a good place to raise their children, and moved to this house in 1895. In 1906, John sold the farm to the South Saanich Realty Company, Ltd.

Architectural notes:
- Queen anne revival cottage
- Hipped roof
- Projecting gable extensions at the front and side
- Semi-octagonal front window
- Distinctive gable screens.

6. Dominion Astrophysical Observatory - 5071 West Saanich Road, 1915-18

Owners, His Majesty the King in right of the Dominion of Canada, William Henderson, architect.

At the intersection of West Saanich Road and Interurban Roads you can view the white- domed Dominion Astrophysical Observatory that is located at the top of a winding road on Little Saanich Mountain. It is part of a scientific campus of buildings on 50 acres. The observatory was constructed around the year 1915. It was a large structure, the largest of its kind in the world.

The construction of this observatory by the Federal Government represented a step towards independent scientific research. The Observatory was a magnet for scientists from all over the world. When the Observatory opened on May 16, 1918, the telescope was the largest of its kind in the world.

7. Stevens Halfway House Hotel / Westmount – 4794 West Saanich Road

After apprenticing as a seaman, John Stevens emigrated from Kent, England. He worked on steam vessels in the West Coast waters for a number of years. John went on to buy land from the Government, and after moving back to Victoria established a small confectionery store that served the summer residents. This structure was once a small confectionery store that served the summer cottage population. Locals remember buying candy, popsicles, and 5 cent machines.

10. Oldfield Service Station & Shop - 5295 West Saanich Road Brian & Baili Oldfield, Owners

The service station was built in 1934 and it was operated by Brian Oldfield. In the 1940s Brian’s brother Basil constructed the building next to the service station as a shop where he could create his many mechanical innovations. One of his innovations was a four wheel drive logging truck that could steer both the front and rear wheels. Basil also designed and built a futuristic looking car and called it “Spirit of Tomorrow.” The Royal BC Museum displayed the car during a program showcasing “inventor’s ingenuity.” Basil also constructed a home at 3232 West Saanich that spirs on its axis with the help of a washing machine motor.

11. Prospect Lake General Store - 5303 West Saanich Road

Samuel McCullough, owner; circa 1913

Ranchers, Samuel (1860-1929) and Susannah (1863-1949) McCullough were Irish immigrants who came to Canada in the early 1890s. The couple moved to the house next door (5323 West Saanich Rd) in 1912. Samuel built the store in 1913 for his daughter Sarah and her husband John Friday. John and Sarah ran the store and local post office. Between 1946 and 1963, Jack and Evelyn Dunsmore owned and operated the store.

Architectural notes:
- Two-storey commercial building with living quarters above
- Original sales counter
- Features are hidden by stucco cladding

12. Erskine Residence - 5322 West Saanich Road

James Erskine, Owner, circa 1895

This house was built for Captain James Erskine (1851-1943), who immigrated to Canada from Ireland with his wife Mary (nee Hall, 1851-1948) in 1884. He farmed here from about 1895 until 1901. In 1912, Samuel and Susanna McCullough bought the property, which the family owned until 1930.

Architectural notes:
- Front-gabled Farmhouse is an example of frontier functional building design common to the area
- Hipped-roof wraparound verandah on two sides
- Square columns
- Simple balustrades
- Windows surrounds have scalloped apron sills
- Corinice mouldings above the windows and doors

Prospect Lake School, 1894

The recent Prospect Lake School is the third school building to be constructed in the area. The first schoolhouse, built in 1894, has been converted into a residence. It remains at its original location, i.e. north of the current school at the intersection of West Saanich Road and Wallace Drive (5605 West Saanich Road).

13. Prospect Lake School

In 1923, Samuel Cameron donated 1.75 acres of land at the northwest corner of West Saanich Road and Prospect Lake Creek, to the Saanich School Board, and that year the second Prospect Lake Schoolhouse was built. It was a two room schoolhouse. It was closed down in 1966.

14. Sharps Residence - 293 Prospect Lake Road

Henry Sharps (1873-1930) and Hilda Sharps (nee Sales, 1879-1964) came to Saanich from England circu 1910, and practiced mixed farming. Henry was also an electrical engineer. The Sharps family owned the property until 1931.

Architectural notes:
- Craftman bungalow
- Hipped roof with a shed-roof dormer
- Deep inset verandah
- Panelled columns with crown brackets
- Verandah balustrades are cantilevered out from the front wall plane

15. Oldfield Residence - 260 Prospect Lake Road, Household & Edith Oldfield, Owners, circa 1910-14

House (Oldfield Residence) (1868-1950) arrived from Norfolk, England in 1895 and by October 1896 he had acquired title to three large blocks of land in Sections 86 and 87, Howse Road. By 1903 he had made regular weekly trips into Victoria to deliver produce and pick up supplies. In about 1910 he married Edith (nee Henry, 1881-1977) and built this house shortly afterwards.

Architectural notes:
- Craftman bungalow
- L-shaped gabled roof
- The watertable, stringcourse and frieze encircling the house emphasize its horizontal proportions.
- Open front verandah with square columns on shingled clad battened piers
- Balustrades with simple, square balusters
- Square corner posts and a semi-octagonal bay
- Large gabled dormer fronted by a balcony on the roof was added in 1990

16. Lohr Residence – 187 Lohr Road - Reginald & Alice Lohr - 1903

Reginald and Alice Lohr and family immigrated from Tierra del Fuego, Chile. They moved to this little country house in 1913. The house was originally built in 1903. The Lohrs expanded the home adding two bedrooms. The road was named after the Lohr family in honour of all three sons serving during World War 1. The all served overseas. Alfred died in action and was buried in France. Harold returned, suffering from the effects of mustard gas.

The windmill that stands on the property was brought from an abandoned farm in Terreamba. The windmill was transported by truck in three pieces and reconstructed on this site. It is used to water the gardens of the Lohr family who purchased the home in 1964.

17. Lake Side Store - 100 Goward Road

This structure was once a small confectionery store that served the summer cottage population. Locals remember buying candy, popsicles, and 5 cent machine.