

Newsletter

"Remembering those who volunteered, sacrificed, served, fought, and died for our freedom."



(Photo: Sea Island Heritage Society per Doug Eastman)

President's Message



Every year as November 11th nears, we are reminded of the significance and importance of this date. For Sea Island, it has special meaning.

During WWII the Boeing Plant on Sea Island contributed significantly to the war effort. Homes were built for Boeing workers, forming the early community of Burkeville. The RCAF Base was built close to Burkeville. It provided homes for many of the Air Force families as they moved on and off Sea Island between postings.

At the same time, the thriving Japanese Canadian community, living and working at Sea

Island canneries, was suddenly uprooted and relocated when the government invoked the War Measures Act. Families took only what they could carry.

After the war, Burkeville houses became homes for returning veterans and their families. The subdivision of Cora Brown was one of those specifically built neighbourhoods through the Veterans Land Act that provided homes for those who served in the Armed Forces.

The Army barracks on the base turned into temporary homes for returning soldiers and their families while their houses on Sea Island were being built.

Most of our parents rarely spoke of their war experiences. It is only now that we are learning more about this time in their lives.

In this issue, we share Sea Island veterans' stories, offer some details we've learned about wartime, tell of the first amphibian PBV built at Boeing Plant No. 3 and No. 4 on Sea Island, and share a glimpse into life in Burkeville in 1942.

We invite you to contribute more stories of Sea Island life to share and remember.

We also remind you that our 2024 membership drive starts mid-November. Your support for the work of the Society is greatly appreciated. We still have much to do. Please see details below in Upcoming Events.

We encourage members to volunteer. Join a project or help us plan and take part in the reunion, Doors Open and/or Burkeville Days.

Let us know what you are interested in contributing to.

Another upcoming event is our Zoom Coffee Chat on November 16. We are excited to welcome Major (Ret'd RCAF) Jerry Vernon as our guest speaker. See page 3 of the newsletter for details.

At this time of remembrance,

Eunice Robinson



President

Sea Island Heritage Society

Upcoming Events

MEMBERSHIP FEES DUE IN DECEMBER

Become a SIHS member for 2024!

Membership helps us expand the Society's archival Collection through the work we do to research, collect, document, and preserve Sea Island images, text, artifacts, and memorabilia; and meet our goals of being a network hub, a gathering 'space' and a collective voice for Sea Island's heritage.

The Society welcomes new and returning members.

- 2024 annual individual membership fee is \$15.
- Pay \$100 once at any time for a lifetime membership.

Fees can be paid in one of two ways:

1. Mail a cheque for your membership or donation to:

Sea Island Heritage Society

Box 88051, Lansdowne Mall

Richmond, BC V6X 3T6

2. Join to become an annual or lifetime member or donate to the Society via e-Transfer to treasurersihs@seaislandhome.org.

COFFEE CHAT - NOVEMBER 16, 2023

Guest speaker: Major (Ret'd RCAF) Jerrold (Jerry) Vernon



Major (Ret'd RCAF) Jerry Vernon attended the 75th Anniversary, 2019 of D-Day June 6, 1944, as an Air Force Historian. He is currently Vancouver Chapter President of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society.

We are honoured to have Major (Ret'd RCAF) Jerry Vernon as a guest speaker on November 16. Jerry began his career as an airman with 442 (Auxiliary) Squadron, retiring as a Squadron Leader. He lived in quarters at the Sea Island base with the RCAF Auxiliary in the summer of 1953 and has been taking pictures of the airport around Sea Island ever since.

Jerry has volunteered with many military and aircraft organizations in the Vancouver area. He is regarded by his colleagues as an extraordinary, hard-working, knowledgeable, and engaged member of the Executive Board of the Air Force Officers' Association. In 2017, Jerry was awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers.

The topic of the illustrated chat is "TCA Flight Three", the story of the TCA Lodestar that disappeared while on approach to land at Sea Island on a stormy evening in 1947 and was not found until 1994, by chance on Mount Seymour.

Join the SIHS Coffee Chat November 16, 2023, 10 a.m. to noon. If you have misplaced the Coffee Chat Zoom link sent to members or you would like to join this Coffee Chat, please contact Eunice at eunice@genbug.ca.

In the Service of Canada - Stories from Sea Islanders

My Military Family

By Doreen King (née Forsyth)



The above is a picture of (r to l) my aunt, Phyllis Strautman (James), my maternal grandfather, Albert (Charlie) James, my mom, Doris Forsyth (James), and my uncle, Fred James. My grandfather served in WWI with the 12th Lancers. He was awarded a Military Medal for bravery. He also served in WWII with the Royal Canadian Air Force. My mom and her sister also served in WWII with the Royal Canadian Air Force. My mom earned the rank of Flight Sergeant. My uncle served in WWII with the Royal Canadian Army and was dispatched overseas. My mom's youngest brother Kenneth James (not in the picture) joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1959 as a radar technician, a job that took him all over the world. He retired from the forces in 1984. This was definitely a military family.

My parents built a home at 445 Ferguson Road on Sea Island in 1951. They later built a duplex on the property at 447/449 Ferguson Road

where we lived on one side. My grandfather lived at 445 Ferguson Road from 1962-1969.

Two Military Families from Burkeville

We thank Maureen Orrick (née Sawden) for sharing this story.



Tom Sawden Sr. (1889- 1987)

Tom Sawden (Sr.) enlisted in the Canadian Army on July 4, 1915, and was sent overseas with the 9th Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles. During WWI, he was wounded and gassed. He recovered, proud of his service. In 1939, at

the start of WWII, he found work with the Boeing Aircraft Company on Sea Island as part of the war effort. He built PBV flying boats for the first part of the war and the center section (Bombay with wing stubs) of B29 Super Fortresses during the last part of the war.

Tom (Sr.) brought his wife, Marian, and their children, Maureen, Thomas (Jr.), Frank and Ethelinda (Linda) from Saskatchewan, and settled them in Nanaimo, B.C., while he worked on Sea Island. He applied for, and soon got, one of the first wartime housing units, 225 Anson Avenue, Burkeville, either in the Fall of 1943 or April 1944 when the house was almost finished but not yet painted. The heater in the living room was a small coal and wood burner. Maureen and her brother went around to the nearby houses under construction and picked up small scraps of wood for the burner. The house next door was still under construction.



Thomas Sawden Jr. (1925 - 2015)

Tom (Jr.) was away in the Canadian Army, PPCLR 1942-1945, when the Sawdens settled on Sea Island. After coming home at the end of June 1945, he spent three or four weeks staying with his family on Anson Avenue. Then it was

off to Camp Vernon for training for the war in the Pacific. From there it was onto Shilo, Manitoba to prepare to go to the Everglades of Florida for jungle warfare training. However, two atomic bombs ended the war and saved millions of lives in early August. (VJ Day 15 August 1945).

From Shilo, Tom (Jr.) went to Victoria to await discharge from the Army, but after a couple of months of being idle, he volunteered to go back to parachuting. He was posted to #1 Test Wing at A35 Parachute Training Centre in Shilo, Manitoba. There he did a lot of testing and experimenting with parachutes and other equipment; making quite a few jumps across Canada at Weyburn, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto and other places. About 80 of them were chosen to be an honour guard to welcome Governor General Alexander to Winnipeg. Tom (Jr.) acknowledged it was a lot of hard work but fun.

In 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Tom (Sr.) Sawden announced the engagement of their eldest daughter, Maureen, to Harold Orrick, son of Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Orrick of 109 Wellington Crescent. The Orricks had lived there since 1943.



*Harold Orrick, 1951
(1930-1950)*

Harold's father, Jack, a WWI veteran, was a guard at the Boeing plant. Harold's older sister, Florence, worked as a Boeing Rosie Riveter. Harold joined the Canadian Army in the Signal Corps at age 19. Maureen recently shared that after they

were married, one of their postings was to Germany.



Harold & Maureen's wedding

(back row: Tom & Marion Sawden, Jack & Easta Orrick, middle: Harold & Maureen Orrick, botto: Linda Sawden)

Maureen and Harold's marriage brought together a valuable intergenerational lineage of service to Canada during WWI, pre-WWII, WWII, and postwar.

An RCAF Veteran from Cora Brown

This excerpt about Robert (Bob) Summers comes from *In the Service of Canada Air Force Biographies*, p. 325 and additional contributions from Bob's son, Ken Summers.



Robert (Bob) Summers, WWII - 1945

Bob was born in Vancouver, B.C. on May 3rd, 1923. He joined the RCAF and trained as a Wireless Operator at No.2 Wireless School in Calgary. However, Bob contracted scarlet fever which delayed his training by at least three months; those on his course graduated and were posted

before Bob could finish his course. Part of his training included flights in the North American Harvard and Yale aircraft.

Further gunnery training was taken at No. 8 Bombing and Gunnery School at Lethbridge Alberta. With training completed, Bob took the train to Montreal and proceeded overseas to the UK. He was sent for further radio communication training at RAF Husbands Bosworth in Northern Ireland.



Bob Summers, WWII

Bob was then sent to an Operational Training Unit where personnel "crewed up" with others to become a crew. They practiced in a variety of aircraft and became familiar with one another as a

team before being posted to 429 Squadron, RCAF at Leeming on May 5th, 1945. The war ended the day before Bob's crew was to leave on its first mission.

Bob met Mary Eleanor Wyckoff in Calgary, Alberta during WWII and they married in Vancouver, B.C. in 1946. They were living in a basement suite in Vancouver, but when they were expecting their second child, they realized they would need more space. They bought an acre of land under the Veterans Land Act in the Cora Brown subdivision on Sea Island where they built a house. They moved into their home in June 1949, with a toddler, Kenneth, and 5-month-old Steven. Eleanor belonged to the Cora Brown branch of the Red Cross, Unit #6. Bob became involved with Scouting before the boys were 'of age', first in Cubbing, then as Scoutmaster, and finally as District Commissioner for Richmond during the last 3 years prior to their expropriation in 1973 by the Department of Transport.



Bob Summers Legion Book page with insignia of 429 Transport Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force

Things we've learned about the times of WWII...

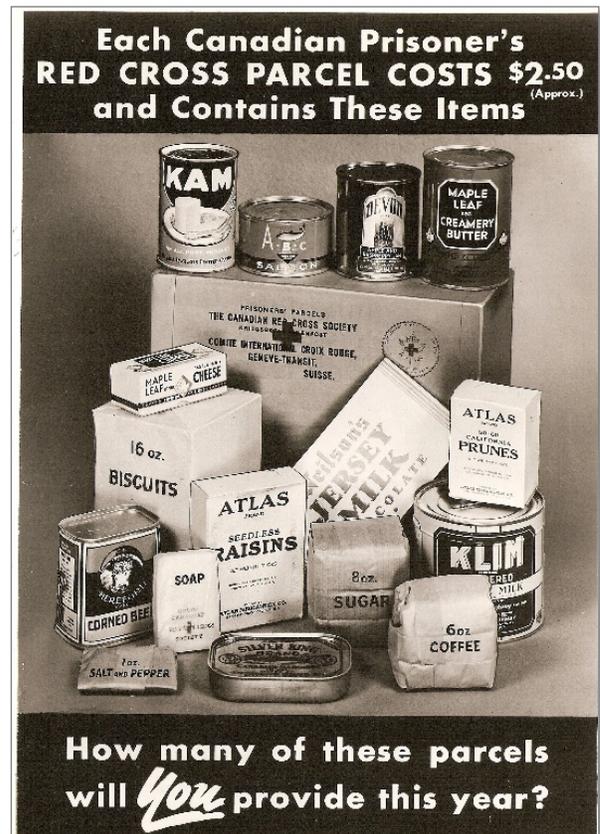
Some RCAF flight crews didn't get protective clothing until 1941.



Photo: The late Doug Burrage (left) - his first jacket as a wireless air gunner on PBV flying boats in WWII, the latter at Jericho Beach Station, Vancouver.

There was a shortage of stockings in WWII. Some women had lines painted on the backs of their legs, so it looked like they were wearing them.

Many family members sent relief parcels to loved ones that were held as POWs overseas. Parcels like those the Canadian Red Cross supplied were made by local citizens. Many formed Red-Cross Auxiliaries and made up many kits for mailing overseas. Each Canadian Red Cross food parcel weighed 11lbs and contained items like powdered milk, butter, cheese, dried or canned meat and fish, dried biscuits, chocolate, tea, dried fruits or vegetables, and soap and were critical to maintaining basic nutrition levels. Nearly 1 in 10 Canadians were contributing to the Canadian Red Cross relief effort as a volunteer during World War II.



Red Cross WWII POW Relief Kit contents at <https://bit.ly/4902iXA>.

Army vehicles or allied ambulance vehicles got out of landing crafts to enemy beaches. They had to go into the water without stalling the engine. Mechanics from the Army, Navy and Air Force were trained to alter exhaust pipes to run the outlets to the vehicles roof tops; and all moving parts of every vehicle had to be smothered in grease to prevent corrosion.

RCAF (WD - Women's Division) registered nurses could become Flight Nurses, otherwise known as Nursing Sisters. Anne Jasper wrote to SIHS in August 2023 and said both her parents were stationed at Sea Island from 1954 till maybe 1958. Her father a pilot and her mother a flight nurse. They met doing search and rescue up the coast. Robert E, Jasper, Canso Pilot and Margaret Mary Kennedy, Flight Nurse were married at RCAF Sea Island. Read more on these heroic women: <https://bit.ly/475F4xk>

“Giants of the Skies Take Shape at Sea Island Boeing Plant.”

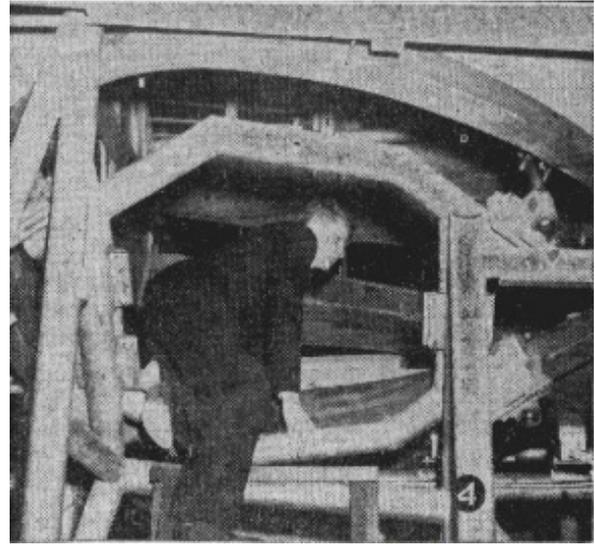
The Vancouver Sun Saturday, February 7, 1942, page 26.

PBYs (Patrol Bomber, Y was code for the manufacturer Consolidated Aircraft)

In 1942, production of the twin engine-PBY Consolidated amphibian aircraft was pushed ahead at the main Boeing plant No. 3 on Sea Island. Plant No. 4 was built six months later directly off the east end of Plant No. 3 and served as an overhaul shop.

The amphibian PBY is a large aircraft with a wingspan of 104 feet. The side blisters on the PBY patrol bombers were used for machine gunners and as observation posts.

They became rescue hatches to bring downed airmen and torpedoed surviving sailors into the amphibian PBY aircraft from the sea. These aircraft played an important part in the defense of Britain in WWII.



The size of a machine turret, or blister, of which there are two on the hull of the PBY can be judged by comparing it with the size of the man in the above pictures, Oscar Roos, who inspected the plant. The light-colored structures in the picture are sections of the jig and the black circular outline shows what the edge of the blister will be. (Vancouver Sun February 1942, p. 26.)



Doug Eastman in a PBY-5A Canso #7 C-FNJF (RCAF #11005) Vickers-built. Photo taken by former WWII Boeing illustrator, John G (Jack) Nellist, at Nanaimo Airport.

Doug Eastman (formerly of Burkeville) sits in a port waist gun blister of a PBY C-FNJE at Cassidy, March 23, 2003. This PBY was partially restored and flown to Duxford, UK in 2004. The amphibian is now registered by "Plane Sailing" as G-PBYA.

An example of the prominent side blisters is shown on this Boeing Aircraft Canada Ltd blueprint.



This is a Flying Boat blueprint of a Boeing PB2B1 drawn by Fred Hollingsworth at Boeing plant No.4. (Jack Nellist's boss on Sea Island). Note Fred's name on the corner of the blueprint under Production Illustration.

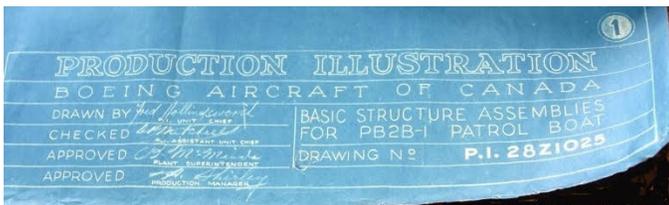


Photo credit for the two blueprint images: Don Phillips.

The blueprint is owned by Burkeville resident, Jack Baryluk, Associate Dean (retired) BCIT Aerospace Program at Sea Island.

The first amphibian PBY came off the assembly line in February of 1942. There was a dedication

held during the launch ceremony in front of Boeing's Sea Island Plant No. 3.



CVA 1184-1195 - Launch of first amphibian PBY-5A produced at the Boeing plant on Sea Island.

The photograph shows the aircraft "Athlone" being christened as RCAF Canso 9751. These were the PBY-5As. Other PBYs produced at Plant 3 were Catalina Flying Boats which were unable to land other than on water (known as PB2B-1 and PB2B-2). Flying Boats had wheel assemblies temporarily attached to them for hauling up the shore ramps.

The last Boeing building still standing on Sea Island is Boeing Plant No. 4.



From Boeing 2023 PPT by David ENGLAND - Boeing Plant 3 (B&W) and Plant 4 (colour)

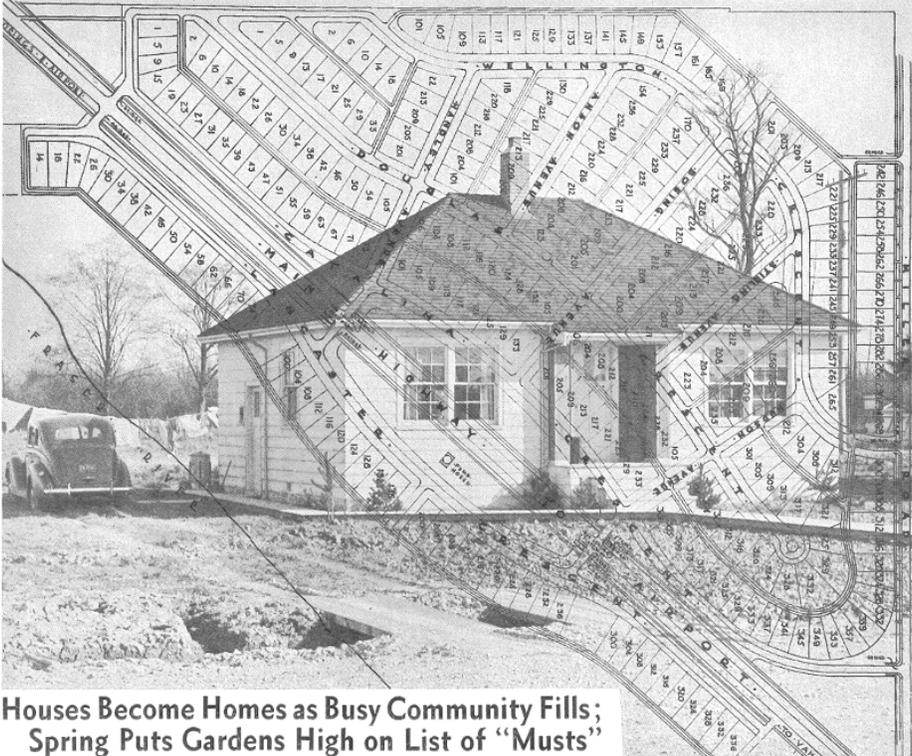
A Boeing Beam Story

Vol 2, No. 7, March 31, 1944, p. 3

From our collection of Boeing Beams, we share this story about young Burkeville - a community as vibrant today as it was in 1944.

March 31, 1944 3

Burkeville...Smart Home of Plane People



Houses Become Homes as Busy Community Fills; Spring Puts Gardens High on List of "Musts"

Burkeville is fast growing up. We've watched it from the time the first foundations were laid until that day the first moving vans made their way down the wet roads.

What was formerly but a group of houses is now becoming a little community. Strangers are becoming neighbors. The back yard of Shop 49's Jack Ormson runs into that of Charlie Hooker of Shop 35 and in no time at all Mrs. Ormson had invited Mrs. Hooker over to see her grand-daughter. And then there's quite a stream of visitors to see Jeff Horner on Catalina Crescent. Being a member of Shop 93 and something of an authority on income tax problems is one way to get to know your neighbors.

Social life isn't lacking for the younger set, either. There were great St. Patrick's Day celebrations when Teddy, son of fifty-sixer George Runge, entertained small Burkevillites at his fifth birthday party.

With spring in the air, curtains on the windows, and pictures hung, Burkeville residents are turning their thoughts to their gardens. The beginnings of these are already in evidence along Lancaster Crescent. The Goodalls and the Philpotts (of Shops 95 and 49, respectively) have the landscaping of their front yards well on the way, and there'll be daffodils blooming any day now by the home of Shop 62's Ed Davis. Further down the street, "Hap" Ritchie of Shop 56, surrounded by seed catalogues, is busy sending for his seeds and promises us thirty-pound cabbage.

Their neighbours on the west side of the highway aren't going to be outdone, however. Back on Douglas Crescent, Wayne Homer of Shop 30 has built and planted window boxes for the back of his home and has shoots ready for the front ones when they are completed. On Anson Avenue, there were rose bushes on either side of the front steps of 204 before Shop 59-er Leslie Palmer had been living there a week.

The more recent arrivals are still concentrating on the interiors of their new homes. The Palmers' son and daughter-in-law, John, of Shop 63, and Helen, devote a bit of their time to solving the heating problem while baby John keeps warm at

This is a map of Burkeville, superimposed on Number 236 Lancaster Crescent, the smart, compact home of Mr. and Mrs. J R. Goodall of Shop 95, typical of the three hundred modern houses nearing completion.

The blueprint of the townsite was supplied by architects McCarter and Nairn and redrawn by Plant Engineers. All information which would assist in directing strangers around the winding roads has been retained.

Bus loading platforms, the only points where the Richmond buses are permitted to pick up or discharge passengers within the Burkeville area, are located where Hudson and Handley Avenues meet the main highway.

The numbers in the lots are the house numbers. The top of the map faces West, and the road to the Airport continues beyond the upper left-hand corner.

his grandmother's across the way. At the home of Shop 42's Hubert Fidler, Mrs. Fidler is having her troubles getting paint removed from the window panes while, at the same time, keeping an eye on her mischievous two-year-old, Pat.

Things are really humming in Burkeville.

(For additional information about Burkeville, turn to page 4. There you will find a Richmond bus timetable and an authoritative article on treating the soil.)

In Loving Memory

Sadly, we have heard of several Sea Islanders that have passed away. Our sympathies to their families and friends.

- Brian HIRST, 1941-2023, Married to Sea Islander, Vi HIRST (née COOKE)
- David K. EASTMAN, 1943-2022. Grew up in Burkeville and later worked for Richmond Tugs Limited on the North Arm, and Canada Public Works dredging the Fraser River. He also worked in maintenance at YVR for many years.
- Doreen BRAVERMAN, 1932-2023. Remembered for her years of support to SIHS and her unending commitment to telling stories of her life on Sea Island - stories ever rooted in a rich heritage of community and deep friendships. We continue to work to ensure her stories live on.

Should we have inadvertently missed someone, please let us know at info@seaislandhome.org.

Sea Island Artifacts and Memorabilia

Over the past few months, we have had some lovely donations of photographs of sports teams, birthday parties, and school class photos. These are welcomed and appreciated. If you are downsizing or just cleaning out those boxes from the basement or attic, anything Sea Island would be most appreciated. Contact Eunice at eunice@genbug.ca.

CONTACT US

If you have questions, comments, or want to share your memories and photos, we would love to hear from you.

To submit a letter, documents, photos, or a cheque for your membership or donation via snail mail:

Sea Island Heritage Society

Box 94444

Richmond, BC V6X 8A8

To be added to our e-Newsletter, or send us an email: info@seaislandhome.org

To join, renew your membership or donate by e-Transfer: treasurersihs@gmail.com

Website: <https://seaislandhome.org>

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"Sea Island is located within the traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-waututh Peoples."