

Newsletter

Queen Elizabeth II (1926-2022)



In 2001, Wendy Stuart donated her Sea Island School copper Coronation Medallion commemorating Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the British throne in 1953 to SIHS.

The Sea Island Heritage Society add our condolences to the Royal Family. Queen Elizabeth II was a remarkable woman, leading a life of dignity and service to the Commonwealth.

WHAT'S NEW

THIS ISSUE

Do you remember your school days as a Sea Islander - your teachers, classmates, the school(s) you attended? This Newsletter honours all teachers, celebrated nationally as *Teacher's Day* on October 5, and highlights stories of Sea Island teachers, students, and the schools they attended.

REUNION FEVER

The first Sea Island Invitational Reunion, held this past May, was so successful many requested that this be an annual event. We can't promise, but we can tell you to mark your calendars for a second reunion to be held on

Saturday, May 27, 2023

COFFEE CHAT THEMES

Starting Sept. 15, SIHS are including special Sea Island topics or themes in our monthly Coffee Chats. In general, theme discussions, will be held during the first hour followed by open forum. They may be held in-person or on Zoom. See the poster of theme schedule sent as a separate file with this issue.

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

President's Message

"A life not documented is a life that within a generation or two will largely be lost to memory."

Although a few months have passed, we are still basking in the glow of our first successful Sea Island Reunion. It was fantastic to see so many of our friends and former neighbours gathering to reminisce and reconnect. We are planning to hold another reunion on Saturday, May 27, 2023. So, make sure you are on our Contact List, and we'll ensure you will receive an invitation. If anyone is interested in helping with the reunion, please let us know.

The Sea Island Heritage Society participated in the Richmond Doors Open event again this year. Our contribution was virtual, but we did have several people contact us as a result. We also attended the annual Burkeville Daze celebration in June. Several Burkevillians stopped by to share their stories and memories with us. A couple of younger ladies spent quite a bit of time filling in the names on the school class photographs. This was really appreciated.

As you will see from this Newsletter, we have developed themes for our upcoming Coffee Chats. We hope that with this more structured approach more of you will be interested in joining us and sharing your knowledge and information. Don't see a topic that you are interested in, then please let us know.



With this being our September issue, memories of school days are being featured. How many of you have photos of your first day of school? We'd love to have you share these with us. Here is me all dressed up and on my way to school - notice the navy raincoat and lunch kit.

Remember those metal lunch kits, complete with thermos? My favourite one was blue, with Hopalong Cassidy on the front. Do you remember Hopalong Cassidy? Of course, if you lived in Burkeville or on the Air Force Base, you probably didn't have a lunch kit as you were able to walk home every day for lunch. But for those of us who had to take a bus to school, a lunch kit was a must.

In sharing these memories, I hope the stories in this newsletter remind you of many happier (maybe even naughty) times of your school days on Sea Island. We'd love to hear them!

Eunice Hamalock Robinson

President

UPCOMING EVENT



COFFEE CHATS

Every 3rd Thursday of the month, up to and including June, from 10 a.m. to noon - on Zoom until we can meet in person at the Sea Island Community Centre. For most chats, we will start with a theme that leads to open discussion of stories about Sea Island life.

We created a separate one-page document for the Coffee Chat themes which will be attached to the same email as this Newsletter. We thought it would make it easier for you to either print or save the one copy for future reference. The Coffee Chat themes for the online version will be attached at the end of the Newsletter.

Join us for the next one on Thursday, October 20th. Send an email to Marylin at seaisland20@gmail.com for the link.

SEA ISLAND TEACHERS

Maureen Stark Ross researches and writes teacher biographies for the Sea Island Heritage Society. Included here are three biographies: Mr. Acheson W.N. (Bill) Lucey, Mr. Philip Gibbes (Major), and Miss Mary Leona Thompson/Mrs. Paxton. Mr. Lucey's biography is a paraphrased excerpt of his earlier bio and the last two teacher bios have been shortened for the Newsletter.

LUCEY, Acheson W.N. (Bill) - (1926-2005)

Did you know that Mr. Acheson W.N. (Bill) Lucey, born in Princeton, BC, was a master-of-all-trades and a man for all seasons? He built a cabin on Grouse Mountain for skiing...in the days when one had to hike up to ski. He was an avid sailor, sailing off Jericho Beach where he kept his boat, and he helped co-found the co-operative Viking Sailing Club, still a viable enterprise today. He built a 43-foot sailboat with the hull being made professionally, but completed and refinished it himself, and then sailed extensively in Georgia Strait and the San Juan Islands ever after. This was after building his 4000 sq. ft. home on Galiano Island on weekends and holidays for seven years in the 1970s.



Mr. Lucey

Somewhere along the way he found time to teach (and inspire) young children at a logging camp in Georgia Strait in 1951, and Sea Island Elementary from 1952 to 1955. He became vice-principal at Lord Byng from 1955 to 1964, a principal at Sea Island/Duncan McDonald Elementary for five years and then took further principalships at three other elementary schools: Mitchell, William Bridge and Alexander Kilgour, culminating in a 32-year teaching career. He also managed to buy a construction company on Galiano Island to bulldoze a path if houses were being moved there. On top of this, he had a talent for gourmet cooking and indulged in it if he was stuck on a house project or maybe a problem with finishing the sailboat...he would cook, yes, cook, think the whole problem over and keep cooking until he had worked it out in his mind. As his wife, Mrs. Julia Lucey, said: *"He might make croissants over and over until they were absolutely perfect or prepare an entire gourmet meal."* *"What's glacé sugar?!"*

How did he learn to do all these things? By reading and taking courses! Stay in school, kids!!

Fondly remembered by former students:

Bev Sloan, a life-long resident of Burkeville and a good friend who just passed this year, said she saw Mr. Lucey in a restaurant many years ago. Finally getting up her nerve, she approached him and asked if he were Mr. Lucey. He seemed very touched and asked: "How on earth did you remember me?" She replied he was one of her favourite teachers in Grade 5 and she would never forget him.

Colleen Brooks (née Cruikshank), a former Sea Island Heritage Society founding member who passed in 2021, recalled Mr. Lucey was a butcher at Woodward's downtown store on Saturdays. Her family used to shop there, and the kids would go and see Mr. Lucey at the meat counter. (Colleen worked assiduously on the SIHS calendar for many years and was instrumental with Don Gordon assembling the 1994 TV presentation, *"Sea Island Then and Now"*.)

Gail Young-Conlin recalls Mr. Lucey as one of her favourite teachers at SIS in the late 1960s.

Lin Nielsen recalls on the Richmond website: *"Mr. Lucey was the nicest man. He took me to the opera with his two daughters when I was in Grade 6"*.

Do you recognize yourself or anyone else in the class picture below? Please contact SIHS if you do.



Sea Island Elementary School Grades 5-6 (1953-54) - Mr. Acheson N. Lucey, SIHS Memorabilia Reference M0001321

GIBBES, Philip (Major) - (1912-1988)

Mr. Philip Gibbes (also known as Gibbs) seems to have been the only one of his English family to move to Canada from Cornwall, England. His four sisters, one of whom was his twin, and his parents, William Arthur Gibbes and Esmee Edlitham Fisher, all appear to have remained in England, other than when his father worked as a banking executive in Delhi, India, and where his two older sisters were born. His parents were English citizens but married in Boma, Goa, India in 1906. Mr. Gibbes was born 1912 in St. Austell, Cornwall, England (his twin was 'Margaret') and appeared on ship manifests as a "Company Manager" when travelling to Southampton via New York as well as to and from Bombay and Delhi, India. His home address sometimes was the Overseas Club in London, England, a not-for-profit members' organization that offered "accommodation and social, cultural and educational activities for like-minded people."



Mr. Gibbes

Mr. Gibbes has been rather a mystery to trace. His first classes at Sea Island Elementary were in 1958-1960, Grades 5 and 6, and he was hired as the boys' Phys Ed instructor. Part of his Teacher Information Sheet is illegible, making it difficult to figure out where he was situated prior to arriving in Vancouver in the early 1950s (we

think!). After his two years on Sea Island, he appeared in a staff picture at Thompson Elementary in 1964 and eventually was a principal at Don McKay Elementary circa 1972. On Canada Voters Lists he is shown living in Vancouver's West End as well as in South Vancouver in the 1950s through the 1980s. He was single. On many occasions he was known to regale his students with stories from his military background and with the fact he had attained the rank of 'Major'. However, there are too many P. Gibbes (or P. Gibbs) in the British military to track and nothing substantial has turned up so far. It may take some digging. Stay tuned for a further update on Major Gibbes.

There have been several inquiries after Mr. Gibbes, especially from Cora Brown. Barry Miller remembers the interesting tales he would spin about the India partition when the Indian Independence Act of 1947 dissolved the British Raj forever on the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1947, and India and Pakistan became legal, self-governing entities. Rob Etches remembers his challenging him in very productive ways. His unusual spelling class was one of them—he would give the definition of the word on the list and the task was to spell the word matching the definition (this definition was always obscure in the extreme). Additionally, neat and tidy writing was a must, and he stressed the MacLean Methodology of Cursive Writing. Rob said he spent many hours getting his scribble into a perfect MacLean model of penmanship, with a nibbed straight pen! Doesn't that bring back memories? Marion (Meneice) Menzies remembers his making her feel good about herself and important and Bill Marles said the very same thing.



Sea Island School, Grade 6, Division 2 (1958-59) - Mr. Philip Gibbes, kindly donated to SIHS by Mrs. Janet Etches of Cora Brown, SIHS 0002797

Mr. Gibbes appeared to make frequent trips to England and India and possibly other countries. However, he chose to settle in Vancouver in the early fifties, took his teacher's qualification at UBC Teachers College, and started at Sea Island Elementary in 1958. He died on October 18, 1988, at St. Vincent's Hospital in Vancouver of respiratory failure, and was cremated. The informant's signature on his Death Registration is illegible and the person who signed was also his executor. Rest in peace, Major

Gibbes, and we shall try to find more information on your history. You were well thought of by your students at Sea Island Elementary. You challenged your students, treated them like young adults

and gave them friendship, praise and encouragement and those kinds of good memories are what remain forever in their lives.

THOMPSON, Mary Leona (1905 - 1981)

Leona Paxton was the interviewee for this biographical sketch of her mother, Mary Leona (Thompson) Paxton, and her pioneer family background. Thank you, Leona, for being so gracious with your time and family history for this interview.



Miss Thompson

Mary Leona Thompson was born in 1905 at Terra Nova, Lulu Island (one of the few people to have this recorded on a birth certificate) to James Thompson of County Derry, Ireland, and Esther Abercrombie from Grey County, ON. James Thompson came to Canada at age 13, farmed in Eastern Canada, and worked his way across the country to Richmond, BC by 1878. After working as a farmhand and managing, then leasing, the 640-acre Milligan Farm on Lulu Island for approximately 15 years, he was able to purchase 110 acres and build his own house on River Road near Gibbons. It became known as Thompson Place. It is rumoured that James met Esther in Ontario so that in 1890 when the Abercrombie family came west from Ontario and settled on Lulu Island, James would row up the river to New Westminster to pick her up. No mean feat, so much so that in 1893 they married and moved into Thompson Place. Thereafter, 'Thompson' and 'Abercrombie' became well known pioneer family names in Richmond over the many years to come.

The seven Thompson offspring, two sons and five daughters, travelled to Bridgeport School by horse and buggy, from Grade 1 to senior matriculation. There was a stable on the property to house the children's horses. Does this take you back?

At age 18, Miss Thompson completed writing her own History of Richmond Municipality for a school history project. Composed from a young person's point of view, it consisted of 40 pages of photographs (which she took herself) and descriptions of pioneer homes, churches and early schools. It is currently held at the Richmond Archives. Try these links to the Mary Thompson Virtual Exhibit if you are interested:

- <https://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/exhibits/history/39i117.htm> (her photographs)
- https://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/exhibits/history/mt_texta.htm (her book).

Miss Thompson decided she wanted to be a teacher and enrolled at the Vancouver Normal School in 1923, Class 7. She even had H.B. MacLean as an instructor. Remember "The MacLean Method of

Muscular Movement Writing? How painful it was, but not for her—her handwriting was meticulous and masterful.

Graduating in 1924, rather than teach full-time, she decided to substitute at the six Richmond schools opened at the time—Bridgeport, English, Lord Byng, Trites, Mitchell and East Richmond. By 1929, she applied to the Sea Island Japanese School in the southwest corner of the island, got a full-time job and stayed for 11 years.

The Japanese School consisted of three rooms, two in one building and one in another, both erected on a planked deck supported by pillars. A pot-bellied stove at the back of each room was the only source of heat. Electricity flowed through two bare light bulbs hanging from each ceiling. The toilet was on the back part of the deck. There was no office and no phone, but the parents were very supportive—they always showed up for special events like the Christmas concert and May Day celebration at Minoru Park. At first many of the children were afraid to try to speak English, but they gradually lost their fear and picked up the language as children so easily do - especially when playing with other English-speaking children. Once again Miss Thompson got to school by horse and buggy but soon qualified for her driver's license and graduated to a car. A garage was even supplied for her at the school but when the war machine began to rear its ugly head in 1939, she was told she could not use the garage anymore. Other teachers at the school who were there, for a number of years, at the same time, were Miss Minnie Ebert (Mrs. Best) and J. Norton Fitchett, Principal.

In 1923, Charles Ephriam Paxton, a pulp and paper millworker from England, arrived in Canada and worked his way to the West Coast, arriving in Gastown when it was skid row (after it was gentrified, he said he could never return there). He then found work on the Thompson farm where he met Miss Mary Leona. They married on June 26, 1940, in the Richmond United Church at River Road and Cambie (formerly Richmond Methodist) which later became Minoru Chapel in the Park. The couple received many wedding gifts from the generous Japanese families and daughter Leona Paxton says she still has her mother's periwinkle blue dress and crystal necklace that she wore for her wedding. As was the custom at the time, the very year Mrs. Paxton was married she had to leave teaching since married women were not allowed to teach. This was a rule difficult to fathom.

In the interim, Mrs. Paxton concentrated on caring for her father until his death and raising a son and daughter. Sporadically she was able to substitute as the need arose, most likely starting in the early 1950s when stipulations were beginning to relax slightly. Leona Paxton said that she actually had her mother as her teacher in Grade 6 at Garden City Elementary when the principal, Mr. Fred Aberdeen, fell ill.

When the rules finally changed and married women were allowed to re-enter the classroom, the Thompson family put their heads together to discuss things like 'would the family all chip in with

household duties if Mom went back to work'? The answer was an emphatic 'yes'. With two additions to the family, Leona and James, both of an age to assist in the duties, Mrs. Paxton returned to the classroom at the RCAF Annex. From 1956 to 1962 she taught grades 2 and 3, replacing Miss Cara Whatmough, and took on Head Teacher duties for Miss Margaret Logan (on a one-year teaching exchange to Manchester, England). Leona recalled her mother mentioning in the late 1950s when Governor General Georges Vanier visited Vancouver, on his departure from the RCAF base on Sea Island there were about 400 people waving flags and cheering—most of them pupils and teachers from the RCAF Annex and Sea Island Elementary.

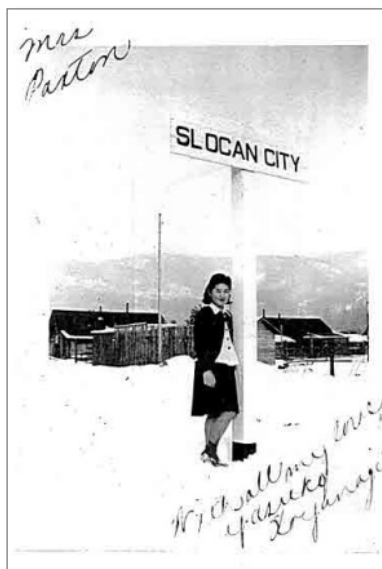


RCAF Annex, Grade 2, Division 4, March 1958 - Mrs. Mary Leona Paxton

When the Annex closed in 1962, Mrs. Paxton taught a Grade 2/3 combined class at Duncan McDonald Elementary which had just opened with four bright new classrooms. Mr. Jim Doyle was Principal and Mr. Don Carter, Vice Principal. For two years following this, Mrs. Paxton moved to Sea Island Elementary where she happened to have Donald Dixon, formerly of Cora Brown, in her Grade 3 class. The aforementioned Mr. Carter was secretly engaged to Donald's aunt Beryl (his mother Vida's sister) but Donald was told under no circumstances was he allowed to tell anybody about the engagement!!

However, he did just that, to Mrs. Paxton, who immediately and unwittingly told everybody on staff. Needless-to-say, Mr. Carter was not too happy with his future nephew, especially after the staff held a "shower" for him. And Leona still has her mother's marks book with Donald's marks plainly visible!

Her entire teaching career was done at the elementary level, and she had the notable distinction of having taught at three of the four original schools on Sea Island plus the RCAF Annex. A special retirement dinner was held at the Airport Inn in honour of her 21 years of service along with three more retirees: the beloved caretaker of Sea Island Elementary, Mr. Bill Bowman, with 16 years of service, Mrs. Gwendolyn Murphy, 21 years and Mr. John Charles Mizibrocky, 10 years a principal.



Mrs. Paxton did not believe in individual awards—she presented each of her pupils every year upon graduation with a book, in recognition of her time with them. Clearly her reputation was strengthened by her actions as she earnestly cared very deeply for each-and-every one of her little charges. Each was a unique little person deserving of equal individual attention. Just after the war, Mrs. Paxton received pictures from one of her former pupils at the Sea Island Japanese School, Yasuko Koyanagi, “with all my love”. These were sent from Slocan City, BC where Yasuko’s family was interned during World War II.

1946, from Slocan City, BC,
Yasuko Koyanagi

Mrs. Paxton had 14 years of retirement, nine during which she was not in the best of health. She had several strokes and spent five years in extended care in Queens Park, then four in Richmond, before passing away in 1981. While in a Richmond care home, a nurse asked: “Is this Mrs. Paxton from Sea Island Elementary?” She explained that her son had a learning disability and he felt she was the only teacher that really cared about him. So, he brought her a beautiful orchid!

SEA ISLAND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Students and the ‘Second’ Sea Island School

In hopes of filling some gaps

We thank Kelvin Higo and his aunts, Patricia (Higo) Chan and Barbara (Higo) Shishido for their contributions to this story.

At different times, three schools on Sea Island held the name, “Sea Island School.” The first Sea Island School opened in 1890 at the corner of Grauer and McDonald Roads in support of the education of settler-farmers’ children. The “third” Sea Island School, the one we know best, opened in 1947 for veteran families (read more below in the section on schools). The “second” Sea Island School consisted of three rooms in two buildings on the wharf outside of the dike, established for the Japanese children who lived in the cannery houses and Japanese cabins.

Two students who attended this second Sea Island School, Patricia Higo Chan and Barbara Higo Shishigo, share memories with their nephew, Kelvin Higo, helping us to document what we know about this school, its students, teachers, and curriculum. While some information has been written by others, we hope you will help us fill in gaps and/or clarify misunderstandings of this important piece of Sea Island's heritage.

Recently, Kelvin spoke with his Aunt Pat, now 97, who remembers Miss Thompson as her teacher. She recalled they were taught the standard school subjects, such as English and math, as were taught in other public schools in Richmond. They then attended Japanese language classes after their normal school hours. His aunt remembers that they only attended school until the 8th Grade as they were then removed from the Coast during the internment of the Japanese Canadians.

The class picture is of Division 2 at Sea Island School in 1929. Miss Mary Leona Thompson is the teacher (see Miss Thompson/Mrs. Paxton's biography this Newsletter).



Sea Island Japanese School, Division 2, 1929 - Miss Mary Leona Thompson, City of Richmond Archives photo 1985 39 65

Another of Kelvin's aunts, Betty Higo Kawaguchi, is second row from the top, third from the right. An uncle, Jerry Nagata, is in the third row, third from the right.

Barb Higo Shishido, now 94, shared with her nephew, "Too bad you didn't require this info when Terry Koyanagi was around. He would have been able to give you all the info you needed." She goes on to say, "I remember a teacher named Miss Ebert and a male teacher named Mr. Thomas. I went to Richmond High after I graduated from grade 8, but only for two months or

so because of the War. We had a Japanese Language School which we attended after our regular English Classes. I think the name of our teacher was Hidetaro Nishi."

Kelvin confirms there is not much written history that can be found that references the Japanese Canadian school on Sea Island. Initially each school was governed by their own school board and then these were amalgamated to become the Richmond School Board in 1906. Only property owners could send their children to the public school and, as most Japanese Canadians lived in cannery houses owned by the canneries, they were not allowed to go to school.

In 1922, the Richmond School Board approached the Japanese community to see if they would contribute to the expansion of Lord Byng School. The local (Steveston) Japanese community agreed to build two of the four classrooms in what we now know as the Annex. In exchange, the

Japanese Canadian children were allowed to attend Lord Byng public school and Richmond became a fully integrated school system. We ask, what about the students at Sea Island Japanese School and wonder about the timeline of events during the years the second Sea Island School was open.

Gaps in our understanding of events and timelines regarding Sea Island Japanese School:

- When did the second Sea Island School open?
- Who hired the teachers and what did they teach?
- What was the language of instruction?
- Why, during the 30s, did some Japanese Canadian students on Sea Island attend Bridgeport School and others attend Sea Island School?

If you can help us answer these questions about the second Sea Island School, please contact Marilyn Low at seaisland20@gmail.com.

BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL

Recollections by Doreen Braverman

Doreen writes of her experiences attending an off-island school as so many Sea Island students did.

I attended Bridgeport School from 1937 to 1942 - during World War II. Miss McNeely was the principal. She drove a grey convertible - a Chevrolet, I think - and she whistled as she drove.

There was one main building and three small buildings in front - two were classrooms and one was the gymnasium. It was also used for Brownies and Girl Guides after school. The main building had three floors: the ground floor was for storage and some play time. Because Lulu Island is below the water level, you could not excavate for a basement. Originally the upper floor was a senior school but, when I attended, grades 1 - 3 were on the main floor and grades 4 -6 were upstairs.

We played outside at recess and lunch hour - sun, rain, or snow. The boys liked to tease the girls. We didn't think of it as bullying - but sometimes they would throw snowballs at us with rocks inside. That really hurt!

If you didn't get passing marks in your grade, you failed and repeated the year. I remember some of the kids who failed. Most of them really weren't healthy - had bad adenoids or allergies - but the public nurse only came around once a year to vaccinate us for measles, mumps, or smallpox. Later they added polio shots.

I started school in 1937 when I was five because Marion Henderson, my neighbour friend, who was six, was starting. On the first day of school, they lined us up in pairs outside. A girl grabbed my hand to be my partner. She was Mary Racich and we have been best friends forever. Mary was born in Canada but her parents and older siblings spoke Yugoslavian so she recognized that I spoke English and that suited her.

Our grade one teacher was Miss Chapman. The grade two teacher was also Miss Chapman, her sister. One was thin and the other was not.

Those of us who lived on Sea Island took the school bus. Mr. Jewel was the bus driver. It went from Vancouver Cannery on Cannery Rd, down Miller Rd, left on McDonald, right at Grauer Rd. and across the Lulu Island Bridge to the school. It picked me up at 8:15 in the morning and left the school grounds at 3:15 in the afternoon. We didn't have much time to play after school if we took the bus home. If we missed the bus in the morning, we could hitch a ride from anyone crossing the Island and walk across the bridge to the school.

Senior pupils took turns cleaning the blackboard brushes. We clapped them together leaning over the railing on the first-floor landing. One day, I decided to clean them on my hair until it was pure white. Along came Miss McNeely. I was sure I was in trouble! All she said, is "Doreen, don't try to look like me before your time".

We danced the Maypole on May Day. I think that was really Victoria Day. I was the shortest girl in the class and Isabaro Ito was the shortest boy so we were partners. Isabaro did not come back to school one day in February 1942. The Japanese were transferred 100 miles inland for security reasons. They sold their fish boats and other equipment to Crown Assets for 10 cents on the dollar. (My father bought one from our neighbour, Toshi Koyanagi, but gave it back to Toshi when he came back to Steveston. That boat, the Iona, was later donated to the Gulf of Georgia Museum).

Those of us who could not go home for lunch brought our lunches to school. I don't recall ever leaving the school grounds during the day. There were no stores close by. My uncle's gas station was not far away at the east end of the bridge and that was the only business in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Fitchett was the only male teacher in the school. He taught grade four. I remember when I was in his class, he told me that my tongue hung in the middle and wagged at both ends. I guess I talked a lot. Mr. Fitchett was our next-door neighbour.

Miss Westman taught grade five. Her classroom was also the auditorium so we could do big displays on the stage. Our class designed a French-Canadian habitat. We dried apples and made things from straw. It was ironic that, many years later when I did my practicum for teaching at Bridgeport School, Mr. Fitchett was the principal and Miss Westman was my sponsor. Grouping of students for projects was the new teaching style of the day but Miss Westman said children really

preferred the security of their seats. I thought, to myself, that it was Miss Westman who liked the security of children in their seats. Perhaps after teaching for so many years, she deserved that security.

Miss Westman also led the school's war effort. We practised air raids. When the siren went off, we filed outside onto the field and sat down with our heads down. Some of us peaked thinking we would see a Japanese balloon. We were encouraged to save our money to buy war bonds. I still have my blue bank for saving pennies and nickels. We also knit squares to make blankets to send to England. Some of the squares were pretty flawed but we were never criticized. Our mothers were encouraged to knit socks. (I remember my mother knitting them at the movies.) Miss Westman also organized pen pals from England for us. Some of us still have these friends. Her favourite song was the Minstrel Boy: The Minstrel Boy to the war has gone.... Everything for the war effort!

Every one of Miss Westman's classes had to learn to recite Trees, a poem by Joyce Kilmer:

"I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who ultimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree."

How times have changed when, today, God cannot be mentioned in many school districts.

Bridgeport School is published here with Doreen BRAVERMAN's permission (2022). First published in the Richmond Retired Teachers Association newsletter at <https://bcrrta.ca/richmond/download/newsletter-april-2011>.

SEA ISLAND SCHOOLS

For most Sea Islanders, we have fond memories of our school. But although Sea Island School was not the first school on the Island, it has stood the longest, and educated generations of Sea Island children.

Prior to the building of Sea Island Elementary, the children were bussed over to Bridgeport School and Lord Byng on Lulu Island.

The contract to build the school was awarded on September 26, 1946, and the building completed in September 1947. Originally there was only plans for a one story, four room school, but this was amended to a two story, six room building.



Sea Island School, September 1947. City of Richmond Archives.

There were three names proposed for the new school – Sea Island, Princess Elizabeth and Frasea. Reeve Grauer, who was instrumental in pushing for the building of the school, chose Sea Island.

The official grand opening took place on October 17, 1947. And a rendition of the new school song was composed by the Grade 1 teacher, Miss Elinor Daly. We have the words to the song (see below), but unfortunately no one can recall the tune.

Many of us will recall the primary wing of two classrooms added about a year later. Who was your Grade 1 teacher? Two that come to mind are Miss Bernice Leversage (she married that summer and became Mrs. Bernice Douglas) and Miss Lucille Mackenzie (later she married and became Mrs. Lucille Challoner).

With the arrival of many RCAF families, the school wasn't big enough. In an agreement between Richmond and the RCAF, the base converted one of the barracks buildings into four classrooms, known to students as the RCAF or Annex. Many of us went there for Grades 2 & 3. Do you remember the slides from the 2nd floor?

With more families moving into the Tapp Road subdivision next to Cora Brown subdivision, another school was built to accommodate those children. Duncan McDonald School, named after pioneer Duncan McDonald, had its official opening on November 15, 1962. This school was only a 4-room school and had a Head Teacher. The Principal was shared with Sea Island School.

Sea Island School suffered a further blow when the RCAF base closed, and even more children left. The school did carry on for many years, but was closed in June 1981, and the children of Sea Island were once more bussed off the Island. In 1991, the Sea Island Community Association petitioned School District No. 38 to reopen Sea Island Elementary School. The school was reopened on November 14, 1991, but classes did not resume there until the 1992-93 school year with only primary grades. By 1999-2000, Sea Island School became an annex of Samuel Brighthouse School where the Grades 4 through 7 would attend. Sadly again, due to the falling enrollment, Sea Island School once again closed its doors to Sea Island students in 2019 and for now it remains closed.



Duncan McDonald School, November 1962. City of Richmond Archives.

In September 2022, Sea Island School celebrates 75 years of built heritage. With such strong heritage value, we would like to see the Richmond School District identify the school as a heritage site. We are learning about the process in support of this designation.

Sea Island Heritage Society has an extensive collection of class photos from Sea Island School, the RCAF Annex and Duncan McDonald School, but many are still missing. If you have a class photo that you could donate or share with us, please contact Eunice at eunice@genbug.ca.

SEA ISLAND SCHOOL SONG



In June 2008, a sheet of paper with the words to the Sea Island School song was found by Charlotte Whitaker, who was working at Sea Island School. The Sea Island School song was composed in 1947 by Miss Elinor Jean Daly for the Official Opening of the Sea Island School on Oct. 17, 1947.

Miss Elinor Jean Daly from her 1947/48 class photo (SIHS Collection)

Charlotte Whitaker sent us the words. Do any of you know the melody?

Sea Island standards are clear and high
Keep them reaching to the sky
Sea Island school is honour bright
Keep it facing the light
We think that every game is fun
In the rain or in the sun
And happiness just comes our way
Coming to school each day.
So raise your voices high above.
Sing with loyalty and love.
Of everything in S.I.S.
That leads to happiness.

On June 28, 2015, at Burkeville Daze, former Burkeville resident, Jane (MacDonald) Duval recalled the words to the song, which used to be sung (along with God Save the King/Queen) at regular assemblies, presided over by Mr. Scott. Jane believes the S.I.S. song was originally written by the "lovely Miss Daly, who later married and became Mrs. Frost." There are some slight differences in the two versions.

If you remember the melody, please let us know.

SEA ISLAND CLASS PHOTOS

One of the ongoing projects for the Sea Island Heritage Society is the collection of class photos. Most have been received from us, the former students, but several of the missing were in the collection at the City of Richmond Archives. We are still missing quite a few - mainly from the RCAF Annex classes.

Taking this project one step further, we are endeavouring to name all the children in the photos - and this is where we need your help. Some of our parents or even ourselves wrote down all the names on the back of the photos, others didn't.



For example, we have only have a few names for Mrs. Anne Reid's class of Grade 3 students from 1947/48.

Any assistance in identifying the students in this class would be greatly appreciated.

While others, like this Grade 6 class photo with Mr. Andrew S.G. Scott, is complete:



SEA ISLAND SCHOOL - Grade 6 - 1948/49, photo borrowed from Grant Thompson & Ray Gibbs & donated by Bob Martin (Boswell, BC)

(Top Row) - Raymond Gibbs, Clarence Burgess, Mike Sheppard, Jack Alexander, Ron Hoff, Ron O'Sullivan, John Campbell

(Middle Row) - Wynona Cochrane, Marlene Morrell, Bob Martin, Wayne Greenman, Jack Pyefinch, Grant Thompson, Sheila Wilson, Diane Allen

(Bottom Row) - Doris Stewart, Elaine Gibbs, Donna McKissock, Helen Wilson, Teacher Mr. Andrew S.G. Scott, Colleen Power, Lydia Robson, Esther Greenlay, Barbara Hoggard

If you have any of your class photos, and wondering what to do with them, we would love to add them to our collection - names or not. If you want to donate the original photos, please send to our post office address. If you still want to hold on to them, then a jpeg scan, sent to us would be much appreciated.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In 1889, the Sea Island School District was formed with trustees Captain W.F. Steward, William Nicol, and Duncan McDonald.
- The McDonald family donated land to build the first school on Sea Island at the corner of McDonald and Grauer Roads. Named Sea Island School, it opened in 1889 and closed in June 1913. Students wrote on slates, cleaning them with damp rags.
- The Richmond School District was formed in 1906.
- Initially, only the children of property owners could attend schools in the Richmond School District.
- When the first Sea Island School closed in 1914, students were bussed to Bridgeport School which was an elementary school from 1908-1980 and a high school from 1910-1927.
- The Hill farm at 234 Miller Road (then #13 Road) on Sea Island grew Daffodils until expropriated by the War Department to build the Burkeville subdivision. The third Sea Island School sits on what had been the Hill farm.
- The following Richmond schools were named after Sea Island property owners who petitioned with others to incorporate Richmond as a municipality (incorporated in 1879):
 - Howard DeBeck Elementary
 - John T. Errington Elementary
 - R.M. Grauer Elementary
 - Alexander Kilgour Elementary (closed in 2003)
 - Robert J. Tait Elementary
 - Hugh Boyd Secondary
 - Hugh McRoberts Secondary

References:

- Mary Keen, A Bridge to the World at - https://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/abridgetotheworld38325.pdf.
- Bill McNulty, Sea Island. Draft manuscript, 2022.
- Leslie J. Ross, Richmond Child of the Fraser at https://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/childofthefraser34680.pdf, <https://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/exhibits/schools/ww2.htm>.

A BIT MORE ...

MOVING SOON?

You'll be surprised at what you might find among your family's treasures from Sea Island. SIHS has benefited from two recent moves of SIHS members.

- We thank Duncan and Rob Etches for donating:
 - their father's gear - the boots, coat, and helmet Jim ETCHES wore as a volunteer member of the Sea Island Fire Brigade in the 1950s; and
 - an original Richmond Presbyterian Church Silver Anniversary, 1960-1985, booklet.
- Chevy ANDERSON (Bonnie HAMILTON) kindly donated original newspaper clippings, Sea Island School pamphlets from 1970.

If you are packing to move or just cleaning up and come across memorabilia from Sea Island that you are willing to part with, please let us know.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR AVIATION ENTHUSIASTS:

Remember Jack Nellist? He was the young man who worked for the Boeing plant on Sea Island. The plant opened in 1939 and closed mid-1945. Jack will be speaking at the Qualicum Beach Family History Society (QBFHS) meeting on November 16, 2022, at the Rotary Hall, 211 Fern Road, Qualicum Beach. The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. and Jack will be speaking at 8:00 p.m. You can join via Zoom. Any requests to view the meeting/talk can be made at INFO@QBFHS.ca.

Also, SIHS will be showing a short video produced by Jack, of his days at Boeing at the Coffee Chat on November 17, 2022.

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 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: seaislandbc@gmail.com

Website: <https://seaislandhome.org>

Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/seaislandheritagesociety>

COFFEE CHAT THEMES

Below are the themes for our monthly Coffee Chats. Generally, the format follows this pattern: the first hour (10 a.m. – 11 a.m.) focuses on the theme, the second hour (11 a.m. – noon) is an open forum of discussion. Themes may end before the hour or spill into the next, depending on the interest of the participants.

| 2022 | 2023 |
|--|--|
| <p>September 15 – Heritage Markers – Part 1 What heritage signs already exist on Sea Island? Imagine you had the chance to place signs/markers that would document Sea Island’s history and heritage. What and where would they be?</p> | <p>December 15 – Sea Island Aviation and the Vancouver International Airport (YVR) The Vancouver Civic Airport & Seaplane Harbour opened on Sea Island in 1931 and became Vancouver International Airport in 1948. Learn about the airport’s expansions and expropriations over decades of change in the field of aviation.</p> |
| <p>October 20 - Heritage Markers – Part 2 Get an update on the signage plan and give your input and feedback on signage and possible walking tours that provide information about Sea Island’s past.</p> | <p>February 16 - Family life stories Using maps that show sections of the island, we share stories of the people who lived there.</p> |
| <p>November 17 - Sea Island Aviation Activity during WWII, 1942 - 1945 Remembering through stories from workers at the Boeing Canada Plant and others who had wartime roles on Sea Island.</p> | <p>March 16 – Remembering the Grauer Store View images of existing location now interspersed with photos of original buildings. Discuss family history and politically what happened to their business.</p> |
| <p>January 19 – Who’s behind key road names? What do you know about Ferguson or Shannon or Miller or McDonald or Grauer? Join our chat to learn about the people for whom these roads were named.</p> | <p>April 20 – Sea Island Invitational Reunion May 27, 2023 South Arm Church Hall is booked for 2023. Join us as we chat about the successes of the 2022 reunion and some changes for 2023.</p> |
| | <p>May 18 – Sea Island’s Heritage View Sea Island’s heritage by joining us for a journey through images of the past.</p> |
| | <p>June 15 – Sea Island teachers, students and schools Memories of Sea Islanders going to school are full of heritage. Have a report card to share? Hear stories about the where, who and what of being educated and add your memories to the Collection.</p> |

Contact Marylin Low for the Zoom link at seaisland20@gmail.com