



Figure 1 Tudor House-1917.jpg

Esquimalt's Tudor House Pub, lost to fire, had heart and history

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Around the world, people may be raising a glass, toasting fond memories of Esquimalt's Tudor House Pub.

“So many of the ships came into port here,” said Sherri Robinson, a historian and volunteer archivist, hours after the pub burned to the ground. “As people here email out to the rest of the

world, I think there's probably people commiserating a little. There will be a lot of people with their own memories."

The Tudor House building has anchored the corner of Esquimalt and Admirals roads since it was built in 1902, said Robinson, who wrote *The Centennial Book: A Celebration of Esquimalt's History 1912-2012*.

"It has contributed hugely to the community and in so many ways," she said, noting that it had a church-backed beginning and served as a Sunday school.

In 1901, Wesleyan chaplain Rev. John Preston Hicks worked tirelessly to raise funds to build the Sailors' and Soldiers' Home, a home away from home for the military and merchant navy.

The Sailors' and Soldiers' Home had its grand opening on May 5, 1904. "It was an important enough building that Premier Sir Richard McBride was in attendance," Robinson said.

The Colonist newspaper described the building "as being beautifully equipped to supply the immediate needs of the service man and to provide him with a place for relaxation and amusement."

There were church services in the main hall and Sunday school classes in the upper hall, Robinson said.

In the summer of 1912, the Township of Esquimalt's own history began in the building. Meetings to explore incorporation were held in the Sailors' and Soldiers' Home. The incorporation papers were signed Sept. 1, nominations for the first election were held Sept. 12 and the first brief council meeting was held there Sept. 23.

In 1917, the building reopened as the Sailors Club with Mary Ranns as its matron, providing a "well scrubbed, bright, cheerful home with good home cooked meals."

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales dropped by in 1919, commended Ranns for the good work she had been doing with the sailors, signed the guest book and gave her his gold pen.

Over the years, Ranns hosted Christmas dinners for the aged, sick and underprivileged men in the community.

“The building has terrific historical value to the community,” Robinson said. “It just holds so much history and it was a gathering space for military, for dockyard workers and for the community as well.”

In 1931, the building was bought by William and Lillian Salisburg, who ran a small tobacco and confectionery store for four years.

They sold the building in 1935 to Mount View Holdings, which applied to open a beer parlour called the Tudor House. Their liquor licence application was not approved until they made a Ladies and Escort section with a separate entrance.

“Although the Tudor House has always meant a great deal to Esquimalt, it crossed the district,” Robinson said. “We were wet and everybody else was dry. You couldn’t get a drink in Victoria until 1952, so everyone came here.”

A tower was added in 1969, giving the Tudor House its castle-like appearance. In 2004, a beer and wine store was added.

Robinson, who said she had a depressing day after hearing about the fire, has her own memories — including a roast beef dinner on Saturday night.

“It was an iconic building, a focal point for the community, a barometer of the times,” Robinson said.

“If someone didn’t know their way around Esquimalt, you could give them directions from the Tudor House.”

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