

Gonzales
bellDANDA
HUMPHREYS

While it was mainly the men among the first settlers here whose names are recorded, **On the Street Where You Live** today looks at a selection of place names that recall women who were here in the mid-1800s.

Walbran's women

John Walbran, master mariner and longtime Victoria resident, published a fascinating book, *British Columbia Coast Names: Their Origin and History*, in 1909. In it are the names of women — some well known to us, others not so well-known — who are remembered up and down our coastline.

October — International Women's History Month — seems like a good time to remember even just a few of them. See how many street names you recognize along the way.

◆ Catherine Mountain, by Knight Inlet, was named in 1865 after Catharine Balfour Macdonald, wife of Sen. W. J. Macdonald of Victoria. After their 1857 marriage, the Macdonalds moved into Glendale Cottage, not far from where the Union Club stands today.

In 1877, they moved their growing family to a grand new home in James Bay, designed by architect Thomas Trounce. "Armada" was modelled after a castle in Skye. As her sons and daughters married and moved away, and she and her husband spent more time in Ottawa, Catharine's castle became an empty shell. It was sold and eventually demolished in the 1940s, 30 years after Catharine and her husband were laid to rest.

◆ Sarah Island and Jane Island in Finlayson Channel are named after two daughters of John Work, of Hillside Farm. Sarah Jane, the second oldest, met Roderick Finlayson at Fort Simpson in 1842 and married him seven years later. Finlayson was in command of Fort Victoria until James Douglas returned in 1849. The Finlaysons lived in a large home toward the western end of what is now Finlayson Street.

Sarah was a loving mother to five sons and seven daughters. She survived her husband by 14 years, then in 1906 was buried beside him at Ross Bay.

Jane Work was 20 years old when she married 38-year-old Dr. William Fraser Tolmie at Fort Victoria in 1850 and returned with him to Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River.

Like all the brave young wives of HBC men, Jane followed him into wild country. Their first children were born in primitive conditions, and Jane strived to educate mixed-blood wives of fur traders and help them build better lives for themselves. In 1859, the Tolmies moved back to Victoria and into a 15-room home called "Cloverdale."

Ten of her seven sons and five daughters were still living at the time of Jane's death in 1880.

◆ Joan Point, in Dodd Narrows, is to remind us of Joan Olive Dunsmuir, who in 1847 married the man who would one day build Craigdarroch Castle.

Joan and Robert Dunsmuir sailed to Vancouver Island with their young family in 1851. They lived at Fort Rupert, near today's Port McNeill, then in Nanaimo, and eventually settled in Victoria in the 1880s.

When her husband died suddenly, Joan moved into his newly completed castle with her unmarried daughters. A fierce fight with her oldest son James over Robert's estate left Joan a bitter, disappointed woman. She died in 1908, a near-recluse in her grand castle-home atop the Fort Street hill.

◆ Alice Arm, in Observatory Inlet, reminds us of Alice Mary Tomlinson, second daughter of Richard Woods of Victoria and wife of Rev. Robert Tomlinson. Her husband was in charge of the Church Missionary Society's mission at Kincolth from 1867-1879.

They were married in Victoria in 1868, her husband-to-be having travelled down the coast in a large Haida canoe with eight native men and a native woman to attend the bride. It took them 24 days to make the return journey to Kincolth. They spent the rest of their days on the northern coast.

◆ Emily Islet, in Mayor Channel, was named after the youngest daughter of Thomas Harris, Victoria's first mayor. Born in Liverpool in 1851, Emily moved to Victoria with her parents, three brothers and a sister at the age of seven.



Anne Walbran (wife of Capt. John T. Walbran), left, Miss Sweet, Florence Walbran and an unidentified woman on Dallas Road cliff top in 1903.



B.C. Archives A-01967

Sarah Jane Finlayson, left, second daughter of John Work, married Roderick Finlayson in 1849. They lived in a large home toward the western end of what is now Finlayson Street.

At right, Joan Dunsmuir first lived at Fort Rupert, then in Nanaimo, and eventually settled in Victoria with her husband Robert in the 1880s.



B.C. Archives A-01257



Alice Mary Tomlinson, second daughter of Richard Woods of Victoria and wife of Rev. Robert Tomlinson. Married in Victoria, they then travelled by Haida canoe for 24 days to his mission at Kincolth.

B.C. Archives A-02496

Her father built a fine home for his family at the northwest corner of Bastion Square and Government Street, where the old Bank of Montreal stands today. Emily's father enjoyed good food, good wine, and horse racing, and was never happier than when thundering around Beacon Hill Park's rough race track on his favourite mount, George.

Harris's shipping company launched a steamboat named after his youngest daughter. Ten years later, the Emily Harris exploded off Saltspring Island. All hands and the captain were lost.

◆ Cape Anne in Smith Inlet and Florence Island

and Ethel Island in Rivers Inlet commemorate *British Columbia Coast Names* author John Walbran's wife and daughters. Like her husband, Anne was born in Yorkshire. Florence and Ethel were born in Victoria.

The family lived in James Bay, in a house that still stands on the corner of Dallas Road and Menzies Street, near the picnic-perfect beach and the ocean that their husband and father loved so well.

Danda's latest book, *On The Street Where You Live, Volume III: Sailors, Solicitors and Stargazers of Early Victoria* is now in local bookstores.