



All members are entitled to voting privileges at Annual and General Meetings, receive four Newsletters a year and access to the Society library and archives which contain information on over 10,000 buildings in the Capital Regional District. Memberships are due September 30th and are tax-deductible. The Society also offers special events and tours for members. New memberships are pro-rated quarterly.



Membership Application

- Student.....\$15.00
- Individual\$25.00
- Family.....\$35.00
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I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the Hallmark Society of \$ _____

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Dedicated to Preserving Historic and Architectural Landmarks



Hallmark Society Awards Night
Tuesday, May 4, 2004
St. Ann's Academy Auditorium
8:00pm
Refreshments to follow

Your voice in heritage preservation in the Capital Region since 1973



Administrative Director: Helen Edwards
 Hours: Wed. 8:30 am - 12:30 pm, Thurs. Noon - 3:00 pm
 Location: #10 Centennial Square
 Phone/ fax: (250) 382-4755
 office@hallmarksociety.ca
 http://www.hallmarksociety.ca

Mandate

The Hallmark Society was formed in 1973. Our mandate is to encourage the preservation of structural, natural, cultural, and horticultural heritage within the Capital Regional District. We accomplish these goals through education, public speaking, advocacy, tours, exhibitions, and the annual Awards Night. We are a non-profit society, financed principally by membership dues and members' contributions.

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Cover Photo

The Bilston Farm in Metchosin is in danger of being lost. See page 8 for story. Christopher Stevenson photo. 📷

Photo credits

All photos by Helen Edwards or from Hallmark Society files except for pages 8 and 9 which are courtesy of Christopher Stevenson. 📷

**Deadline for Summer 2004 newsletter:
 May 15, 2004.**

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For Sale
 Would consider selling my duplexed James Bay heritage home to a compatible party who would allow me to continue to occupy the upper floor (as renter).
 Leave message at the office at 382-4755 or email office@hallmarksociety.ca.

General Meeting Reports December

The December meeting of the Hallmark Society was held on December 8, 2003 at the James Bay New Horizons Centre.

President John Edwards reported on several heritage issues including the Avalon Heritage Conservation Area (which has subsequently been approved by Victoria City Council), the Cook Street/Sutlej Street proposal which was defeated by Council (a new proposal is to be presented shortly), 512 Pembroke Street in Rock Bay, the sale of the Caroline Macklem home on Rockland Avenue, the approval of the Gonzales Neighbourhood Plan after 40 meetings, and the sale of Jeffries Silversmiths on Fort Street.

The Beacon Hill Heritage Management Plan is in progress and will be presented to Council in the spring.

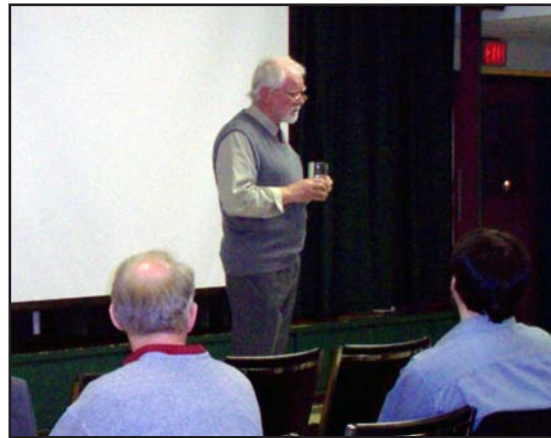
Ken Johnson was confirmed as Society Treasurer.

Author Robert Whittle spoke briefly on his books and how he weaves real history into novels. He has a series of 3 books set in London England - the Lizzie series - and two set in Victoria - Bound by Loyalty and Loyalty's Reward.

After the break, John Adams presented an illustrated lecture on "Christmas in Old Victoria" to the delight of those assembled. We discovered that Christmas was celebrated quite differently in the days of our ancestors. John read us quotations from diaries which helped us to visualize Christmas day from different perspectives. A lively question and answer session followed. Copies of John's book of the same title were offered for sale. 🏠

February

The Heritage Week meeting of the Hallmark Society was held on Monday, February 23, 2004 at the James Bay New Horizons Centre. There were 40 members in attendance. Our guest speaker was John Stuart, Curator of the North Vancouver Museum, who presented an illustrated lecture on industrial heritage. Using examples of successful industrial heritage preservation from Europe and North America, he was able to demonstrate that it is possible to reuse former warehouse sites, manufacturing plants, etc.



We have copies of John's article "Rededicating our Industrial Heritage" which was published in the Spring 2003 issue of *architectureBC*. Contact us if you would like a copy.

Members were encouraged to seek out industrial sites and to encourage their preservation. The BC Gas Works site at 512 Pembroke Street is a prime local candidate for redevelopment. It is up to us to keep BC Hydro, the current owner, aware of the need for sensitive rehabilitation. 🏠

President's Message

by John Edwards

Last week, some two hundred of us attended the Downtown Victoria 2020 Conference on how to come up with some concepts for the future of the City. As you are well aware, the City core needs a lot of thought as to its future, and this is facing similar cities in North America. Each city has to have its own vision. There were six speakers in all and it is impossible to report on all that was said, but here are some of the comments that made an impression on me.

Michael Heller, architect and planner, and now doing the Burnaby Mountain development at Simon Fraser University, talked about "mortgage helper", by having units with three bedrooms, and a main corridor, so part of the suite could be rented out. This means the addition of schools and stores downtown. He also said the federal government should be taking the lead in the "hard-to-house". Bing Thorn, an award-winning architect, spoke about creating a city of culture and intellect. "So it drives a few developers away," he said, "so what." As one from the audience said: "Who wants the harbour ringed with twelve- or fifteen-storey buildings, or another Songhees."

The third speaker was Larry Beasley, Director of Current Planning for the City of Vancouver. He said that most people like to live in communities that have the qualities of a small town. So those living downtown must attract a knowledge-based economy, that becomes interesting, and that will enhance the vitality of the city core. We should allow developers to build bigger elsewhere in exchange for renovating heritage buildings. Curtis Johnson who is President of Citistates Group, paid us the greatest compliment when he said, "Victoria is one of

the great places in North America for anyone to live and work." Victoria is a "jewel." It has the same problems of transportation, parking, congestion as everywhere else. He felt a lot of these problems should be handled by a regional government. Any transit authority should deal with the issue of where business and people are.

The following morning we heard Judy Oberlander, who we all know as the Director of City Program, at the Harbour Centre Campus of Simon Fraser U. She is always so full of energy and enthusiasm. She visited Victoria in January and February and said the downtown is dead in these two months. She had examples of creating green space in privately-held lands and buildings in places like New York. She also said there needs to be a direct walkway to Beacon Hill Park from the downtown core.

Kevin Montgomery-Smith of Portland (the last speaker) said they face the same problems with renovating heritage buildings, because of rigid building codes and earthquake-proofing. The codes in Oregon are being revised, and there was mention that inspectors have to have a little leeway with heritage structures. Also noted from their Portland experience was the use of tax incentives to get renovations under way in the city core. Portland gave \$20,000. loans to people interested in renovating older homes in the downtown and these were forgiven to anyone who lived there more than five years. These are only some of the comments forwarded at the 2020 Conference that I thought would be of interest to you.

Upcoming Tours

The Hallmark Society is pleased to offer a series of tours to its members. As some of the dates are yet to be determined, please contact the office at 382-4755 or via email at office@hallmark.society.ca to reserve spaces.

Government House

This tour will take place on July 7, 2004 at 1:15 pm at Government House on Rockland Avenue. As attendance is restricted to 30 persons, it is vital that you call the office to reserve a place. The tour will last approximately one hour, followed by refreshments. There is a cost of \$2.00 per person which can be paid on the day of the tour. This is a unique opportunity to see "behind the scenes" at British Columbia's newest National Historic Site.



Newman Farm

The District of Central Saanich has invited us to tour this virtually untouched site - once the fields are dry. In order to facilitate numbers and details, please let us know if you would like to attend. We will be contacting only those who indicated an interest in the tour. Further details will also be posted to our website once they are confirmed.



Wrinch Farm

We will be touring this award-winning site later in the year to take advantage of the glorious roses. Again, if you are interested in this tour, please let us know.

Training Opportunity

The Use of Statements of Significance for the Conservation of Cultural Landscapes and Historic Districts. This course will focus on how key features of cultural landscapes can be integrated into "Statements of Heritage Significance". These statements, an integral part of the Historic Places Initiative, are an important preservation planning tool for local governments. Participants will draft a "Statement of Significance" about a cultural landscape in Western Canada.

June 3, Thursday, 9 am-5 pm
Fee \$195 (includes GST) / CITY 120
Venue: Shadbolt Centre, 6450 Deer Lake Avenue, Burnaby

Instructors: Alastair Kerr, BA, MA, Senior Heritage Planner, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services; Douglas Paterson, FCSLA, ASLA, BSc, MLA, Professor, Landscape Architecture, The University of British Columbia; Susan Buggiey, BA, MA, Heritage Landscape Consultant, Ottawa; Victoria Angel, BA, MA, Canadian Registrar, Canadian Register of Historic Places, Parks Canada, Ottawa.

This workshop precedes the Heritage Society of British Columbia's annual conference, "Cultural Landscapes: Precincts, Places & Parks" at the Shadbolt Centre in Burnaby, June 4-5, 2004. 📍

Land Titles Office Moving?

Last year, it was announced that the Victoria Land Titles Office would be closing and all material moved to New Westminster. At the time, then-Minister Stan Hagen said the decision was final and not open to discussion. He did not anticipate the public outcry at the removal of significant historical documents from the provincial capital. Users from diversely different walks of life joined together to protest this untimely closing. From First Nations leaders who require original treaty documents for their land claims, to realtors who need to trace owners of properties, to historians who rely on original documents for accurate information, all were unhappy. A public meeting early in 2004 drew hundreds to the grounds of the legislature. The media has reported on several previously-undiscovered treasures found among the current material.

Of further concern is the fragile nature of original documents, some dating from the mid-nineteenth century. If these are damaged or lost, they cannot be replaced. In addition, it will be necessary for Vancouver Islanders to travel to the mainland to conduct research - costing time and money - for something that could be done much more efficiently here. There is now light at the end of the tunnel. New minister George Abbott has decided to look into the matter and will take Vancouver Islanders' concerns into account. We await his decision. Please let Mr. Abbott know your feelings on this issue. 📍

Calendar

- May 4, 2004** Hallmark Society Annual Awards Night. Ceremony begins at 8:00 pm at St. Ann's Academy Auditorium with reception to follow at the Parlours. Mark your calendars and plan to attend! Reservations necessary.
- May 7, 2004** Historica Heritage Fair, Royal British Columbia Museum, second floor exhibition space. 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.
- June 3, 2004** The Use of Statements of Significance for the Conservation of Cultural Landscapes and Historic Districts, Shadbolt Centre, Burnaby. 9 am-5 pm. Visit <http://www.sfu.ca/city/> for further details.
- June 4-5, 2004** Heritage Society of British Columbia annual conference. Shadbolt Centre, Burnaby. Visit <http://www.heritagebc.ca> for details.
- June, 2004** Newman Farm Tour. Contact the office to book a space. Date to be determined.
- June, 2004** Wrinch Farm tour. Contact the office to book a space. Date to be determined.
- July 7, 2004** Tour of Government House. 1:15 pm. Restricted to 30 members. Call the office to reserve a place. Cost \$2.00 per person.
- September 27, 2004** Hallmark Society Annual General Meeting. Guest speaker yet to be determined.
-

Thank-you

As you may be aware, Patricia Murray volunteered to work in the office on Monday and Tuesdays to cover lunch hour time and the afternoons. Due to personal reasons, she is unable to continue with this valuable volunteer service and has had to resign from the board as well. The Board wishes to thank Patricia for her hours of dedicated work and for her contributions to the Society.

We are also looking for volunteers to work in the office. Training will be provided and the tasks are not too onerous. If you can spare a few hours a month, please let us know. Thank-you. 🏠

Awards Night 2004 - May 4, 2004

The thirtieth annual Awards Night will be held this year at St. Ann's Academy Auditorium, 835 Humboldt Street, commencing at 8:00 pm. As in previous years, the evening will begin with local municipalities presented plaques to property owners who have received heritage designation status during the preceding year.

The Awards Jury will be selecting winners from the numerous nominations received. Who will win this year? Will there be a Louis Award? Will there be a winner of the Michael Williams Award? If you do not attend, you will get the news second hand. We are now soliciting sponsors for this important event. If you know of a potential donor, please let us know. Sponsors are mentioned in the awards program distributed at the ceremony and in a special edition of the newsletter, and receive a tax receipt.

Please note: To assist with catering and seat assignment, admittance to this event will be by reservation only. One of the benefits of membership is a seat for the ceremony. Seats will be available according to your membership category: individual members/students - 1 ticket; family membership - 2 tickets; group or corporate membership - 3 tickets. Additional tickets will be available from the office at a cost of \$10.00 each. Reservations will be accepted, and tickets sold, at the office between April 21 and April 30. Complete the form below and return it to the office, phone 382-4755, fax your request to 382-4755, or send e-mail to office@hallmarksociety.ca. Late reservations may be accepted, depending on availability of seating. Tickets can be picked up at the office or held for you at the door.

PLEASE DO NOT ASSUME WE KNOW YOU ARE COMING. EVERYONE WHO WISHES TO ATTEND THE CEREMONY MUST MAKE A RESERVATION.

Name _____

Telephone Number _____

I wish to reserve _____ tickets for the Hallmark Society Awards Night.

Payment enclosed (if applicable) _____

What Will Become of the Crystal Garden?

The historic Crystal Garden, designed by Francis Rattenbury and Percy Leonard James, has housed a conservation centre since it was rescued from certain demolition in the late 1970s through the foresight of the government of the day.



Opened on June 26, 1925, the design recalled London's 1851 Crystal Palace and was built on the site of a former city garbage dump. According to a December 29, 1923 newspaper article, citizens were urged to support the construction of the "amusement centre." The CPR would build the centre as a cost of not less than \$200,000 and would operate it for a period of 20 years, with a provision of an extension for another 20 years provided that the city: agreed to give a free lease on the site, exempted it from taxation for 20 years, permitted the present fixed charge for water (\$5,000 per annum) supplied to the Empress Hotel of continue for the same period, supplied free water to the Amusement Centre for 20 years, and aided the company in obtaining foreshore right for the erection of a pumping station at Beacon Hill for the supply of sea water for the pool. In fact, the measure passed with a vote of over eight to one.

The new building was touted as a "garden of tropical plants, ferns and flowers." It also contained a large salt water swimming pool, hot salt water baths, dancing floors, picture gallery, and a refreshments area. Generations of Victorians learned to swim at the Crystal, then learned the social graces of formal dances and teas.

However, by the 1970s, the pool had fallen into disrepair. It was closed and a new Crystal Pool was used for swimming. Determined that this significant landmark would not be demolished, a group of concerned citizens formed the Crystal Gardens Preservation Society and set about to convince the provincial government who by now owned the property, that it was worth rescuing. After careful consideration, it was decided to take advantage of the tropical atmosphere in the building and use it to house not only warm-climate plants but also birds, butterflies, and animals. The centre has an international reputation as a breeding centre and many of the current residents are rare indeed.

However, the Provincial Capital Commission, with its changed mandate, has decided that a conservation centre is not appropriate for this building, nor is it relevant to the province of BC. With little fanfare, the board decided that the Crystal Garden would close this fall, the animals and birds be resettled and a new "appropriate" use found.

Heritage Week Tour

The Work Point Arts Project Society (WPAPS) celebrated Heritage Week February 16-22 by offering free guided walking tours of historic buildings at the former Work Point army barracks site in Esquimalt, including the historically significant harbourfront former Officers' Mess and Quarters the group is trying to save.

"Defending Canada: Our Military Heritage Places" was the theme for Heritage Week 2004. The Greater Victoria region offers a wide range of historic military sites and built heritage to celebrate. Work Point Army Barracks, for example, was home to Canada's most westerly army garrison from 1887 to 1994.

Retired Canadian Army Lt.-Col. J. Cecil Berezowski led 57 people on the Work Point walking tour of historic buildings, some of which date back to 1890, on Saturday February 21 at 11 a.m. A second tour on Sunday attracted 36. The Work Point Arts Project Society was formed in 2001 to save the 1890 Officers' Mess and Quarters, Building 1027 *in situ*, and to adapt it for use as a regional visual arts centre and museum of Canadian security and coastal defence history in BC. The Work Point Officers' Mess and Quarters building is featured in the current issue of *Heritage* magazine, published by the Heritage Canada Foundation, in an article written by local architectural historians Martin Segger and Helen Edwards. 📍



Subscription Offered

Last fall, the Hallmark Society joined the British Columbia Historical Society. As members, we receive bi-monthly newsletters and the quarterly *British Columbia Historical News*. This is an excellent publication which contains interesting articles on all aspects of history, including heritage buildings and landscapes. Membership in the Society is restricted to groups, but individuals who belong to a member-group can subscribe to the quarterly journal.

One year's subscription to the journal is regularly \$18.00, but we are able to offer subscriptions for the member-rate of \$15.00. Contact the office if you would like us to send you a subscription form or visit the Society's website at www.bchistory.ca for more information. 🏠

Heritage Update

There is good news regarding the South Park Elementary School seismic upgrading.

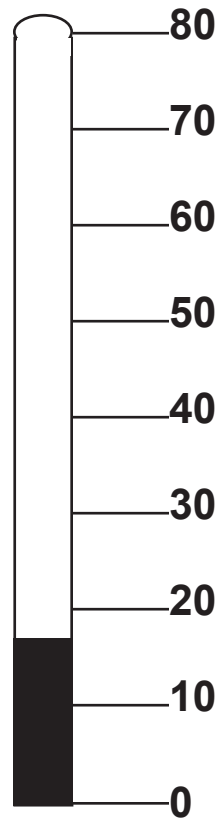
The roof tiles do not have to be changed but the roof finials have fractures and are being replaced by casting replicas. The terra cotta ridge caps are not affected by the work. A new roof access is being installed at the rear of the building and the interior seismic work includes concrete columns in the gym.

The old finials may be put on display inside the school. 🏠

President's Challenge

One of the goals for this year's Board of Directors is to increase our membership roster by 80 by the end of September, 2004. As you can imagine, we cannot do this alone. If each member would find us just one new one, we would more than meet our goal.

We will post a thermometer in the next three newsletters to record our progress. Help us reach to top. 🏠



Given the lack of public consultation, it is no surprise that rumours are flying. A new group has been formed to try to save the current use, noting that it has won "many awards for its participation in international breeding programs and has been recognized for its pioneering work in biological pest control. The Centre educates thousands of students every year and works to spark environmental awareness in the next generation of global and local citizens."

Should the Hallmark Society be concerned? Given the lack of public information, YES. Our primary concern is the retention of the architectural integrity of the structure and its remaining original features. The Crystal Garden was resurrected in 1980 and deserves to be respected, no matter what its future use. Once again, our provincial government is putting everything on the bottom-line. When will they learn that heritage cannot be valued solely on a financial basis; once it is gone or destroyed, it cannot be recreated. Watch the local media for public meetings and events. Listen to both sides of the issue and make an informed decision. This building cannot be neglected again; fight to preserve its unique architectural character. 🏠




HISTORICA Fairs
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Royal BC Museum
 May 7, 2004
 10 am - 3 pm

SUPPORTED BY:


The J.W. McCreesh Water Park
 An investigation on the
 history of the structure.

Local Residents Seek to Save Historic Farm

by Christopher Stevenson

Bilston Farm has a long history that dates back to the earliest development and settlement of Vancouver Island, during the period when the Hudson's Bay Company ran the Island as a colony. The original 300 acre parcel was purchased in 1851 by Captain James Cooper. His partner, Thomas Blinkhorn cleared and settled the land, living there with his family for many years. The farm passed through several owners before John and Charlotte Witty Family purchased the farm in 1867; they and their descendants would work the land at Bilston Farm through to the middle of the 20th century, and would continue to own it until 2002, when the CRD purchased it.

Bilston Creek Farm is an amazing place. Although the buildings are quiet now, empty and in need of attention, there is a warm peace that pervades the site – the accumulated atmosphere of more than a century of activity. Behind the house is a grove of fruit trees that probably date back to the 19th century – a heritage orchard of old (and by now, rare) varieties that grow untamed and are in desperate need of some careful pruning and attention. Ancient pathways lead visitors throughout the site, from building to building, area to area, in amongst the hedges, fences and gates. Though it appears that a hasty cleanup was done, much still remains to interest the curious. If one looks carefully while exploring the grounds, the remains of many things can be seen beneath the overgrowth – a 1940's Plymouth sedan, an ancient trailer, a homemade outdoor stove, farm implements, a serendipitous collection of things that found a place here during more than a century of human occupation.

The house is a simple expression of rural design and construction. While not extravagant in its design or ornamentation, it nevertheless has its



own charm – a charm derived from the honest unadorned simplicity that characterized so many of the homes of early settlers. It is a time-capsule of sorts – left relatively alone for nearly a century, without being subjected to the forces of “progress” that changed or destroyed most contemporary buildings. Here is a rare item indeed – an intact, original pioneer farmhouse that has been altered very little since Billy Witty built it in 1902. Though the weathered siding is faded, unpainted wood, and the shake roof is now covered with a layer of green moss, beneath the wear and tear, the care that went into building and caring for this home is apparent.

Architecturally, the real treasure of Bilston Farm is the barn. Built in 1928, the barn is a 20 x 60 foot two story structure that features a whaleback roof with splayed eaves. Near the peak, a square window is placed at a diagonal. Inside the barn, the ground floor stalls are vacant, waiting patiently for the livestock to return. Various pieces of rusting equipment lie on the floor. On the upper story, where hay was once stored, thin rays of light now pierce the roof in a thousand places, throwing patterns of alternating light and shadow onto the rough-hewn floorboards below.

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Walking amongst the buildings, one has the sense that time has somehow slowed – here one steps back to the early decades of the twentieth century, when the Witty family ran the farm as a mixed dairy / agricultural operation – and even earlier – to a time when Thomas Blinkhorn and his family opened their home to weary travelers making their way along the road between Victoria and the outlying districts that lay past the farm. James Douglas reportedly visited the farm, as did many other colonial “celebrities” of B.C. history. At the back of the property, a single lane dirt roadway leads down the hillside slope towards Witty's Lagoon below, which was originally part of the farm property (prior to it being expropriated in 1967 by the CRD for use as a public park). The road would have been an important link to the outside world, as the original mode of travel and transportation was done via the lagoon and the ocean beyond it. Here lies a rare opportunity for heritage conservationists – a chance to preserve and enjoy a remarkably intact pioneer farm that has not been significantly altered – one that has ties to the earliest period of settlement of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, the Hudson's Bay Company and several of the very early pioneer families that carved their homes from the wilderness of Metchosin. Very few places exist that so vividly capture a sense of Vancouver Island's pioneer agricultural history. However, if there is any hope that Bilston is to be saved, work needs to proceed to stabilize the buildings. Time, neglect and weather are working to destroy the wooden structures of the farm; without intervention, little will soon remain to mark this as a place where people lived for so long.

The CRD purchase was carried out to protect Bilston Creek through the implementation of covenants on the property alongside the waterway, a goal that has been accomplished. The creek is now safe – but now, the CRD

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intends to sell the rest of the farm later this year; without action, this historic property will be sold to a private interest, without any assurance of protection for the heritage that makes the farm so special. Currently, a group is working on organizing a non-profit society to raise money for the purchase and preservation of Bilston Farm, to protect it for public use for all time. Time is of the essence – the group has less than three months to raise enough money to purchase the property. With public support, purchasing and protecting Bilston Farm will happen, ensuring that this important heritage asset is protected and preserved for public use.

Bob Witty, in the January 7th, 1962 Daily Colonist, (seven months before his death) speaking of the farm, said: “The one and continuing force for good in my life has been this land. It is as beautiful now as it was when I first played in it almost ninety years ago, and it will be just as beautiful after I'm dead.”

Anyone who wants to help out with their time, expertise or financial support should contact Bev Bacon at 474-7202. 📞

