

Hollyburn Heritage Society



Issue No. 8 - December 2004

Hollyburn Heritage Society (HHS), creators of the Hollyburn Ski Camp Heritage Project and the Hollyburn Cypress Heritage Project, is the official title for a group of pioneer skiers who saw fit to preserve the history, culture and heritage of this area. Come in the Hollyburn Ski Camp Lodge to have a rest, a hot chocolate, or a cool beer and see our displays of old photographs, memorabilia and ski equipment from yesteryear in the “Back Room.”

2004 was the 78th anniversary for this lodge at its present site. It was reconstructed from building materials in an old cookhouse from the abandoned Naismith lumber mill at 2,500 ft. (762 m) elevation, brought to this site by stoneboat drawn by a team of horses.

HHS is a registered society and has charitable donation registration with Canada Customs & Revenue Agency. We welcome donations for which you will receive an income tax deduction receipt.

Commemorative coffee mugs and beer steins are for sale in the Hollyburn Ski Camp Lodge. HHS also has two videos “Hollyburn, A Place of Memories” and “Eilif Haxthow, A Hollyburn Mountain Pioneer.” To order, please call 604-922-7358 or 604-926-3748.

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|------------------|---------|--------------------------|--------|
| Coffee mug | \$7.50 | Beer stein | \$8.50 |
| Video..... | \$15.00 | (Prices includes taxes.) | |

Funds from donations and sales assist in the publication of these information bulletins and support other HHS programs that advance the Society’s mandate. B.C. Parks or CBRL do not receive any funds from Hollyburn Heritage Society. Membership to HHS is by way of a donation: financial - volunteer time - items (photos, articles, stories, etc.)

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2004 In Review

A Special Thanks

First and foremost, HHS would like to express its gratitude to the heirs of Gerry Hardman who have donated substantially to our ongoing programmes. Because of their generosity, we now have a new snow post (not far from the remains of the old one erected in the 1940s) and funding to support Don Grant’s West Vancouver Schools History Program. The importance of this cannot be over estimated.

12th Annual Pioneer Skiers’ Reunion

The Reunion took place Wednesday, September 8th 2004, at the Hollyburn Ski Lodge.

Gerry Hardman’s nephew, George Hemingway was present to see the new snow post and receive the warm thanks of all who were present.

It was a great meeting. What started in 1992 as a small get-together is now in its 12th year. A cartoon says, “Old skiers never die, they just go downhill.” But you’d never know it from the lively bunch who came for the party. About 80 people showed up, including two ladies in their 90’s! This year the friendly Pacific coast clouds visited and it drizzled most of the day, so we spent most of the time in doors. Moritz Behm and John Bottomley provided foot-tapping music; CBR’s Tommy Swain served delicious goodies; and HHS dedicated Gerry Hardman’s memorial snow post and ‘opened’ the Naismith Bridge banisters.

Old friendships were renewed, and there was lots of opportunity to talk and exchange ideas. And lots of people braved the drizzle to go out and admire our new snow post and the Naismith Bridge banisters.



Pioneer skiers reminisce about the 'good old days' at the 2004 Reunion inside Hollyburn Ski Lodge. (Iola Knight Photo)

Heritage Month

February 2004, Heritage Month, HHS had a successful presentation and display in the West Vancouver Memorial Library

Naismith Bridge

In 2003, B.C. Parks and CBR installed a new bridge over Marr Creek on the Main hiking/ski Trail just east of the lodge. Banisters were installed in 2004. HHS co-chair Bob Tapp took the opportunity to decorate them with some vintage photographs. The weather proof mounting of the pictures was

made possible by a grant from The West Vancouver Community Foundation.

A Short History of Hollyburn

The John Lawson family coined the name, Hollyburn, around 1906. Lawson had brought some English holly shrubs from his previous home in Vancouver’s West End and planted them near his home on the little creek near present day Lawson Park. “Burn” is a Scottish term and Lawson’s daughters suggested combining the two words to make “Hollyburn” as the name for their home. This also became the name for the adjacent community and post office, and later the ridge above it.

Before then, the mountain had been referred to as Black Mountain and Cypress Mountain by “Sue” Moody’s loggers. Pough Pogue documents this in an article he wrote for the Vancouver Province in May, 1925 titled, “Haunted Trails of Hollyburn.”

Hollyburn Mountain is located in the southern end of the Coast Mountain Range of North America: a range which extends north into the Yukon. Many of these mountains are actually the roots of ancient, extinct volcanoes, underlain by 100 million year old granite rock. The Hollyburn area has charmed and captivated lovers of the outdoors for well over 80 years. And there were attempts in the 1920s and 30s to turn the mountain into a park. Pough Pogue argued for a park in at least one of his stories for the Vancouver Province, and, in the late 1930s, the Honourable Wells Gray, Minister of Lands advanced a scheme whereby the whole of the area, from Hollyburn on the west to Indian River in the east would be preserved in perpetuity for park purposes.

However, World War II changed the direction of events and it appears that park designation for the mountains was set aside, at least until 1944. At that point, government priorities had changed as shown by Premier John Hart’s announcement, at a cabin on Hollyburn in April 1944, that the provincial government had developed a “timber conservation plan” for Hollyburn. However, no mention was made regarding park status for area.

Local aficionados did not give up hope of a park, and the summer of 1945 saw amalgamation of Vancouver Ski Club and Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club with the new name, Cypress Ski Club. Membership of both founding clubs had suffered attrition from the war, and there was a desire to present an united front when appealing to the provincial government to develop a non-profit ski area in the vicinity of the present-day downhill ski area. The government at that time rebuffed their idea. Cypress Ski Club existed for a few years before disintegrating and retuning to the original two-club status. The current Cypress Ski Club is not related to the amalgamated club of the 1940s.

In 1952, Hollyburn Aerial Tramways Ltd., under Bob Caverley, Hi Colville and Bill Theodore constructed a single-chair lift on the south slope of Hollyburn from the top of 26th Street (present-day Chairlift Place) to approximately the 2,500 foot level. Called “Chairway to the Stars” hikers/skiers called it ‘the chairway from nowhere to nowhere’ as a 20-minute hike lay ahead before you arrived at Hollyburn Ski Lodge. To avoid

this hike, Fred Burfield had a bus in summer, and a Bombardier “Snow Cat” in winter to take people to their lodge. In 1963, the top station of the lift and the Hi-view Lodge burned. Hollyburn returned to the original mode of transport – hiking.



Hi-View Lodge and the top station of the chairlift on the morning after the fire; June 1965 (Alex Swanson Photo)

The history of the region from 1962 until the election of the NDP Barrett government in 1972 becomes convoluted; the interplay between government and business interests probably provides enough material for a book.

On May 29th, 1964, Legal Notices were advertised to effect that executive members of Alpine Outdoor Recreation Resources Ltd. published their intention to purchase land, giving legal description, but best described as being the “Cypress Bowl” area and the Romstads area on Hollyburn.

On June 9th, 1964, a plan was submitted to West Vancouver Council by a group of Vancouver businessmen to open up and develop the Cypress Bowl area as a multi-purpose, outdoor recreation resort under the name “Valley Royal.” This plan involved 6,000 acres, of which 200 would be intensely developed. The proposal was problematic from the beginning.

A key problem was the issue of Crown Land. Historically, crown land was turned over to a municipality when the area became organized. However, West Vancouver, when it broke away from North Vancouver in 1912, was not a newly organized territory and, therefore, could not claim crown land. Nor had North Vancouver claimed the territory in question when it had organized in the late 1800’s because of concerns over potential liabilities which could arise from forest fires which had been, apparently, extensive in the area. Thus the land was within the Municipality of West Vancouver but held by the provincial government as “Crown Land.”

The provincial government could give the land to West Vancouver, or sell it to the principals. But, if it went to West Vancouver, the provincial government retained mineral and lumber rights. Furthermore, there were prior watershed involvements in which land applications overlapped on three watersheds – Cypress Creek to Eagle Lake, Montizambert

Creek to Howe Sound and drainage east off Hollyburn into the Capilano area.

The municipality had been wanting a ski resort project, either as a park sponsored by the provincial government or by private enterprise. The private enterprise option faced a difficulty, however. Applicants had applied to buy 6,000 acres, but by law each person could buy only 640 acres. There was also the question of access from the Upper Levels Highway.

In June 1966, a submission was made to the District Forester-Vancouver Forest District for permission to clear selected areas of the Valley Royal Development. The map attached to the submission showed that this development was further north from the present day development, centred around Yew Lake & the Strachan Meadows area.

In November 15th, 1967, after nearly four years of negotiations among the developer, West Vancouver Council and the provincial government, actual clearing work for the first phase of Valley Royal started – an access road west of Cypress Creek and north of the highway into the chosen area together with construction of infrastructure. Logging in the area proceeded during 1968, presumably based on the map for clearing as outlined in the permission report submitted to the District Forester-Vancouver Forest District in 1966.

An aerial photograph in the Vancouver Province published in late February, 1969 revealed clear-cut areas on the lower slopes of Black Mt. & Mt. Strachan that did not appear to conform to the 1966 plan. It might be noted that this wasn't the first time for clear-cut logging on the southeastern slopes of Black Mt.. HHS has a photograph, taken in the early 1930s, of the Hollyburn Ski Camp which shows, in the distance, a logged off area on Black Mountain. Also there are photos in the HHS collection taken circa 1924-26 that reveal logged off areas in the vicinity of the 2,500 foot level where the Naismith Mill was located.



Hollyburn Ski Camp (foreground) and the clearcut on Black Mountain.(right background), c. 1931 (source unknown)

However, people were beginning to become more environmentally conscious in 1969, and the amount of removal of forest cover set off a swirl of controversy that surrounded this development of Cypress Bowl as Valley Royal. Although environmentalists were not as organized then as now, they

became established – first as Save Cypress Bowl Committee, and later, in the 1990s, as Friends of Cypress Provincial Park.



Logging scars in Cypress Bowl, July, 1970 (Bob Harris Photo)

Despite environmental protest, the developers of Valley Royal carried on. But they faced money problems as well because the investment industry has always been reluctant to finance ski resorts at a reasonable rate of interest. So they were happy to sell out to Benguet (pronounced “Benget”, not “Bengay”) Consolidated Inc. on November 26, 1969, and recover the half million dollars they'd spent.

In December 8, 1969, as the new owner of Valley Royal development, Benguet met with B.C Lands & forests Minister Ray Williston to discuss government rights that would permit it to undertake a large, high density real estate development in Cypress Bowl – something not envisioned in the original plan. Williston, as Executive director of B.C. Hydro, had prior knowledge of this change of plan because a consulting engineer had made enquiries to the utility's development division for estimates of power load required for 8,958 dwelling and commercial units in Cypress Bowl. This was the end for these developers, as it appeared someone tried to sell government rights they never had.

Williston did leave the door open for future recreational development by stating that if another proposal came along to put in a legitimate ski area development, the plan would be studied.

When Dave Barrett's NDP government was elected in 1972, a decision was made to designate the entire Cypress area as a Class A provincial park called Cypress Provincial Park. By this time, Grouse Mountain (a private company) and Mount Seymour Provincial Park had both built chair lifts and rope tows for skiing. So the government proposed a competitive development scheme: first, the construction of a three-lane highway into Cypress Bowl (rather than the proposed funicular) and the building of a water system and a sewage line to a tank which would be drained periodically and taken to Iona Island for disposal; second, the installation of chairlifts - Eagle Chair on Black Mountain; Sunrise Chair on Mount Strachan and a beginner skiers' rope tow at the base of Mount Strachan near the parking lot. A parking lot was to be carved at the base of Black Mt. and a plan for a permanent 'day' lodge built, also at the base of Black Mountain adjacent to the parking lot.

The day lodge proved too expensive and was never constructed. The province operated the two local skiing enterprises for nine years. Ski resorts require skilled managers, much annual maintenance and are subject to the vagaries of weather. All this proved too much for Social Credit Premier Bill Bennett who decided to get out of the ski business in 1984. Subsequently, the Hollyburn Ski Lodge area was purchased from the Burfield family, parcelled with Cypress Bowl, and put out to bid for private companies. Cypress Bowl Recreations Ltd. was awarded the right to purchase the Cypress development. The deal included a lease of land which the ski facilities occupied and the purchase of all infrastructure, buildings and ski lifts.

In 1988, the Municipality of West Vancouver proposed construction of a golf course on the land south of the CBRL Works Yard. This proposal was defeated by environmentalists and voters of West Vancouver in a referendum.

In 1992, CBRL proposed a Master Plan for development of the Cypress Bowl area to provide a year-round recreation facility. This Master Plan included new lifts, a gondola to the top of Mt. Strachan, with a mountain top restaurant and a golf course that could be used as a disabled skiers' area in winter. This \$40 million plan was accepted by B.C. Parks in 1997, but never implemented. Some items were discarded, such as the gondola and restaurant on Mt. Strachan and the golf course. Marketing of a ski area is important and a name was needed to cover the entire area – downhill skiing, snowboarding and cross country skiing. That old name became new again – “Cypress Mountain.” There was some concern, since there was a mountain already named Cypress. It is an insignificant mountain, so the point was dismissed.

By 2000, the principal in CBRL wanted to sell. The business required large investment. However, no Canadian corporation came forward. CBRL was sold in 2001 to Boyne Canada, a subsidiary of Boyne USA Inc. This family-owned corporation has been in the ski resort business since 1947 and owns several ski resorts in United States. Cypress Mountain is their first Canadian operation.

Also by 2000, Canada was planning a bid for 2010 Winter Olympic Paralympic Games. Several locations were examined, finally settling on a Vancouver-Whistler locale. The Vancouver organizers looked to the north shore mountains as possible sites for some events. It was decided to hold free-style skiing and snowboarding events on “Cypress Mountain.” Thus, West Vancouver will be a venue community.

When the Games were awarded to Vancouver-Whistler in 2003, with some of the ski sports to be held on “Cypress”, Rudolph Verne's proclamation in 1928 that Hollyburn has everything to offer that St. Moritz has to hold an Olympics finally came true. 2005 will see a start to construction of facilities as legacies to accommodate the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Post 2004 (a.k.a. 2005)

Summary of Directors' Meeting – January, 2005

Projects

Foremost: the collection of photographs and articles If you know of somebody who frequented the local mountains, particularly Hollyburn, and they have yet to donate their albums, tell us! And, ask them to please contact our society. Our Archivist Don Grant takes excellent care of people's precious albums. He copies the desired photographs and returns the originals. Our entire collection of almost 5,000 photos has been digitized.

Please note: unfortunately, we don't have storage space for artifacts, so we just cannot accept memorabilia. (Unless, of course, some kind soul would like to donate a premises for a museum.)

Also: Don Grant's West Vancouver Schools History Program. This will introduce students to some of the history and heritage of “Cypress Mountain.” And has been assisted financially by The West Vancouver Community Foundation, and private donors. (A special thanks to Gerry Hardman's heirs!) A pilot program is under way at Lions Bay School.

Ongoing: West Vancouver Archivist, Lois Enns, working with Robb Watt, is undertaking legal documentation for the protection of HHS copyright to their photographic collection. Do go into the Black Mountain Restaurant & Bar and see some that Tommy Swain has mounted on the walls.

Events

Late summer 2005 will mark the 13th reunion of pioneer skiers which will be held on Mt. Seymour, hosted by Alex Douglas. Watch for announcements of time and date on the mountain and in local north shore papers.

The Hollyburn Heritage Society will hold its Annual General Meeting:

- on Wednesday, May 18th, 2005
- at 7:30 p.m. (19:30 h.)
- at West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre, NW corner 21st St. and Marine Dr.

Members of HHS are encouraged to attend. All those who have an interest in the history and heritage of our local mountains are welcome.

Join this happy group of history/heritage buffs by 'donation' – photos, time, articles. Then come to their one meeting in the year.

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