

Hollyburn Heritage Society



Issue No. 13 - December 2009

Since 1998 Hollyburn Heritage Society has been producing an annual newsletter to inform you of the history & heritage of the “Cypress Mountain” ski area. A small group of society volunteers have preserved almost 100 years of recreational activity since the first ascent of Hollyburn peak in 1908 by Vancouver Mountaineering Club, forerunner of the B.C. Mountaineering Club.

Incorporated in April 2000 and having a registered charitable status with Canada Customs & Revenue Agency. We welcome financial donations for which you will receive an income tax deduction, if over \$25. Funds assist in the publication of these information bulletins and support other HHS programs that advance the Society’s mandate. HHS membership is by way of donation: financial – volunteer time – items: photographs, news articles etc. (please, no equipment – we have no place to store it!) Cypress Bowl Receptions LP, the ski operator permits us to display panels in the “Back Room” Hollyburn Ski Lodge.

Restoration of this lodge is the centerpiece for our society. It was constructed at this site, 3,000 ft. elev., beside First Lake in 1926, using reclaimed materials from a building at 2,500 ft. elev. part of then abandoned Nasmyth logging operation

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Accomplishments

This year has been a quiet year for our society. It might be said, we’re taking a sabbatical! Not to say there hasn’t been any activity. Archivist, Don Grant with HHS magnificent collection of historic skiing photographs has been assembling a film for HHS, District of West Vancouver and VANOC. Also, we were pleased to receive a significant photo collection – Irish Beaumont’s donated by his son, Doug. Beaumont. Three albums originally assembled by Kay Park, Irish’s wife showcasing Irish’ ski jumping and Gordon Park, one of Irish’s partners in “Orphan Eight” cabin.

In connection with Hollyburn Ski Lodge, its ownership and restoration project, From Cathy Matheson, Cultural Services Manager for District West Vancouver, it has been determined that things have been progressing slowly. As we all know, The 21st Winter Olympiad is the dominating interest until March 21st 2010.

Since November 2008, sales for the book by Francis Mansbridge, “Hollyburn, The Mountain and the City” published by Ronsdale Press, Vancouver have been progressing better than many of us had thought. If you haven’t already got your copy, ask for it for this Christmas. It is available at Indigo Books.

What’s on for 2010! One event -

2010 Pioneer Skiers’ Reunion

HHS will be hosting 18th Annual Pioneer Skiers’ Reunion to be held on Wednesday September 15th at Hollyburn Ski Lodge, 12 noon to 4 p.m. As we mentioned last year, to keep this happy get together going, we’d like to see skiers from 1960’s & 70’s come and carry on a tradition started by those 20’s & 30’s skiers, whose ranks are beginning to thin. Who knows, what old friends you might meet! Maybe renew a long dormant friendship.

Hollyburn Heritage Society AGM

We will be holding our 10th Annual General Meeting on Wednesday May 12th at 7:30 p.m. in the Seniors’ Centre West Vancouver Community Centre, northwest corner 21st & Marine Drive.

The Winter Olympic & Paralympic Games will be history, so come out and find out what’s new!

The Lions



The Lions from Hollyburn Peak, 1964 (A. Swanson)

Over yonder on the northwest horizon at the top of Capilano River valley are those two peaks, icons of Vancouver, The Lions. At the beginning of the 20th century, the North Shore Mountains were virgin territory for European mountaineers. These prominent peaks were known by the Squamish people as “Chee-Chee-Yoh-Ee” and by early pioneers as The Sisters, The Twins, Sheba’s Breasts – “The Lions” came into use circa 1886

At 1648M (approx. 5400 ft.) they are the highest Vancouver’s northshore mountains. Of a granites rock, they are part of the most southerly of N.A’s Coast Mountains Range, and were not completely glaciated by the last Ice Age, 10,000 years ago.

Peaks always intrigue mountaineers. This was no exception when the Latta brothers, William S. (Will), Robert P. (Bert), and John F. in 1903 on Labour Day weekend to set about to explore and hopefully climb them. They lived in 1000 block Homer Street, then outskirts of town. With no streetcar service – it was hoof it all the way to North Vancouver ferry then onward and back home!

Their gear was simple. Very basic items – tin cup, knife, fork, spoon, lard pail (‘billy can’) fry pan, small sauce pan, small towel, soap and a candle. Food – 3 lbs. bacon, 2 lbs. beans, 1 lb rice, 2 lbs. dried peaches, ½ lb. butter, ¼ lb tea, 2 loaves bread, 1 lb. tin canned chicken, some salt & sugar; camp equipment pair blankets, 10 x 12 canvas tarp, hand axe, a 30x30 Savage Rifle, matches in waterproof container and 50 ft. ½ in. manila rope. The rope was included because they had seen pictures of climbers being tied together. John felt they should travel light, but the others felt that if John had his way they would live on dog biscuits & dried fish.

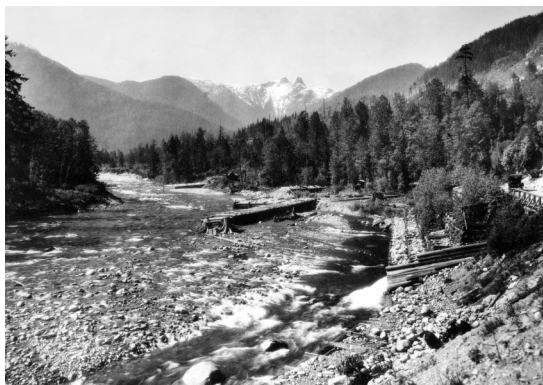
From their previous experience, their garb would be old suits and boots, no longer fit for city wear. Good judgment? We’ll find out later.



Hiking party, North Shore Mountains, c. 1910
(G. Barker)

Starting out Saturday September 5th, their objective was the East Lion. The West Lion was first ascended in August ’08 by Arthur Dalton, Atwell Dalton King and George Martin. It was 21/2 miles from ft. Lonsdale to Capilano River, 5 miles up a rough road to the water intake, a log dam across the river and a locked gate with an elderly guard. They dodged him and made their way up the west side of Capilano River to Sisters Creek that drains off the northeast slope of Hollyburn Mt. Hiking up its boulder-strewn bed for about a half mile they made camp in an area where they found a large log supported by

boulders. Using their tarp, this would help shelter them from the rain.



Capilano River Valley c. 1920 (HHS Archives)

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, they continued on their way. After hiking over boulders and log jams for some hours, they reached the glacier that then existed on the east side of the East Lion. Its melt water drained into Sisters Creek via a tunnel under the ice. Above them was solid ice. They climbed the steep talus slope to arrive later afternoon at a plateau between the two Lions. Here they made camp. Looking at the East Lion, its south and west faces were precipitous and unclimbable.

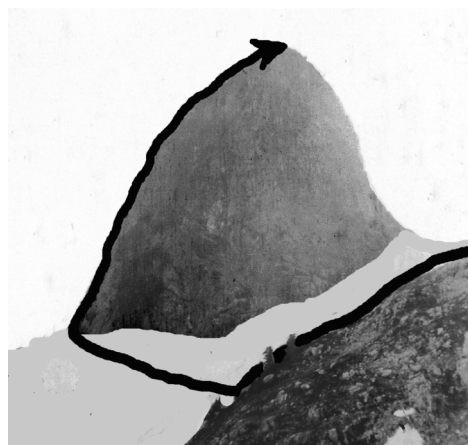


Approximate location of the Latta campsite between the West and East Lion, 1988 (D. Grant)

Dinner that evening was the beans – they took all night to cook, so they dined on bread, bacon & stewed peaches. The beans were consumed for breakfast. During the night there was an unidentified prowler.

Labour Day dawned crisp frosty clear day. So they climbed the West Lion – its second ascent. From the summit they viewed Howe Sound and an interesting gash on the west side of the Lion. Later decades, the West Lion is ascended from Howe Sound &/or Howe Sound Crest Trail over a mountain referred to as Unnecessary, above Lions Bay and separated by Harvey Creek from its neighbour, Harvey Mt. To reach the peak, this gash is crossed. They camped again at their plateau camp.

The next day, while exploring this plateau area, they passed an ice field on the north side of the East Lion. Will decided to take a look. Using the hand axe, he cut steps in the ice to the top of the field. From this vantage point, he called down saying that the peak might be climbed from this side. The others dropped their packs and followed Will's steps. Meanwhile, Will had climbed down the bergshrund, the space between the ice and the rock of the peak. It was a 5 or 6 feet wide. Not much of a jump to the other side, but if you missed a foot hold and a hand hold, it was an unscheduled fall 300-400 feet under the ice! They all made the leap – the remainder of the climb to the summit of the East Lion was easy. They started to use the rope, and be like real mountaineers, but with their inexperience, it was more a nuisance than an asset.



Latta brothers' route up East Lion (B. Creer)

On top, it was obvious nobody had been there before – they were the first! They were exalted! The downclimb was pleasant and uneventful. On

the way down a small herd of mountain goats were seen on cliffs on far side of the glacier.

Wednesday the 9th, they decided to explore the plateau area, that reminded them of the highlands of Scotland, when two of them heard a single shot. Will had brought down a large mountain goat that they left where it fell until later when they would skin it and take the head. When they returned later, they found that ravens had gouged the eyes. They also found deer bones, probably a cougar kill. Except for ravens, they noted an absence of any birds.

It had been a wet day and they were quite soaked, so they made a large fire and dried their belongings, and had dinner “arrayed as Nature’s children.” Thursday dawned another wet day; they now had to return to the city. Will carried the wet goat hide and head, about 60 lbs.; the others shared the gear loads. Their clothing had by now taken quite a beating – John was in moccasined feet and navigating wet boulders, he fell, but only broke the blade of his 7“ hunting knife. As they plodded down Salmonberry and Devil’s Club finished off John’s pants except for the waistband. Going hour after hour through a spruce swamp, they had hoped that they could camp somewhere else. However, with failing light camp was made in the swamp.

Friday September 11th, rain had stopped which raised their spirits, but with empty stomachs, as the last of their grub was eaten last night except for six pieces of dried fruit being held for emergency. They plowed on only to discover that in 20 minutes they emerged from the swamp to higher ground that they so wanted to see yesterday.

On the west side of Capilano River they noticed a man-made trail and decided to make the crossing of the rain swollen swift stream. The 50 foot manila rope was now valuable. Will with the rope around his waist using a pole to steady himself, he made the crossing; Bert crossed using the rope held taut between Will and John. He made it, as finally did John. After this crossing and on solid ground they finished off their six pieces of

emergency rations. They hiked down the riverside, aware there was a logging camp a few miles downstream. Stopping here, Will went in to see if somebody would sell a pair of pants for John. One guy found a pair and John got them for 50 cents. Despite the enormity of their size, at least John was again decent to travel in public. This little band of motley mountaineers made a fast trek for the last ferry at 6:30 p.m. Will sped on ahead to a small store to buy some biscuits to keep them going until they reached home at 8 p.m. They made it home to a good supper, a hot bath and a sleep until 10 the next morning.

The Lions, particularly the West Lion, are a ‘must do’ by local climbers. On Thanksgiving weekend, UBC Varsity Outdoor Club often makes it the “long hike” in order to join the club. 1946, with a vet-swollen UBC student population, VOC put 55 hearty climbers all on the summit at once. Spring of 1946, an Alpine Club of Canada & BCMC group thought they were going wonky when they were on the summit – not really, it was only an earthquake in the Alberni region on Vancouver Island. Before the Sea to Sky Highway, a water taxi either from Vancouver or Horseshoe Bay was needed to take hikers to St. Mark’s Camp at now Lions Bay, so the hike was a two-day journey. Today, trailhead is top of Lions Bay Village or from Howe Sound Crest Trail

Not all lion tamers have climbed the Lions in order to descend. February 17th, 1969 Dag Aabye, 27 and already well known ‘wild skier’, had a helicopter land him on the saddle between the two Lions. He had hoped to go to the summit for his descent, but the almost vertical peaks showed many rocks in the snow. While the helicopter crew watched, Deni Eagland photographed Aabye’s descent. They watched in awe as Aabye descended then in horror as a slab of snow 100 feet wide by 300 feet started to slide, carrying Aabye with it. The snow engulfed the skier, then seeing nothing, they feared the worst, only to see Aabye at the base of a tree – safe! However, he broke a ski on the way down and had to ski one foot on the unsettled snow to where he could be picked up by the helicopter.