

Sent: Wednesday, January 07, 2009 8:55 AM

Subject: Cabins at Fernwood

Dear Charles;

While on a family holiday on Salt Spring last September, I met Tamar Griggs at a local coffee shop. We spoke a while and learning that she was a long time resident of the island, I asked her if she knew anything of 2 or 3 cottages that had been built in the early war years at Fernwood. My Great-Grandfather, William Hoye, spent a number of years on Salt Spring in the '30's and built the cabins and a store at Fernwood. While Tamar didn't know anything of the cabins, she mentioned your name as Island Historian (and as her friend) and I looked up your email address in the Salt Spring Island telephone directory.

My Grandfather Norman Hoye, who now resides in Delta, told me that great granddad purchased 5 acres of land on the waterfront at Fernwood. He ran a store there for a number of years. When we drove into Fernwood, I could see no evidence of cabins near the waterfront, although I did note there are 3 or so small cabins a bit further up the hill. Would you know anything about the wartime cabins? My grandfather has given me his permission to send you the relevant excerpt from Great Grandad Hoye's memoir. It reads as follows:

From the Memoirs of William Hoye

It was approximately 1936 when I had a run down condition. Some friends of ours, Mr. and Mrs. Welfore, had previously gone over to Salt Spring Island. Bert, the husband, had a bad breather condition, an after effect of being "gassed" during the first war - and had to retire early. We had been invited to visit them. On doing so, we decided that it would no doubt be good for me too - I could rest and regain my strength. So we decided that a lot at Fernwood on the North Road would be a good location. This lot was on the corner of a road leading up from the Beach, approximately 150' waterfront backing up two or three hundred yards to make five acres. We didn't need that much, but couldn't buy less. As a comparison, the \$800 we paid at that time was all we could afford. At the time of this writing, "1979", \$80,000 would be cheap.

Frank, my eldest son, and Rene had agreed to take over the store and they would live in our home on Fleming Street. Bob, our first grandchild, was quite small, probably his first year. We continued in touch with Mr. and Mrs. Welfore and they invited us to go and stay with them until we could have a cottage built. This arrangement turned out well. Their home was perhaps half a mile further along the seafront from the corner we had purchased so it was easy to take a lunch, walk down to our place, and start building - Salt Spring Islands at that time consisted of perhaps 1,000 people, one general store, and four or five small shops, therefore, mostly retired people with small farms, etc. The point of call was Ganges Harbour - where the C.P.R. Steamboats called on their way to Victoria. On the south side of the Island, ferries crossed over to Sidney on Vancouver Island. The Islanders in general used Victoria on Vancouver Island as their shopping centre. The village of Ganges got its name from the name of the vessel that had brought a number of Negro people to settle there after the Emancipation, from Southern United States. There were not very many Negro people when we were there, probably scattered to other Island and worked their way to the Cities. One particular thing I do recall was seeing a curly

headed black boy with "Red" hair. Our nearest neighbors were not a Negro family, probably part Indian. I don't remember any Native Indians on the Island. There were traces of them having lived there for many generations back, by the "Middens" along different parts of the shoreline. I think "Midden" is the right word. There were mounds of Sea Shells that the Indians had apparently feasted with and disposed the empty shells in a huge trench anywhere from a few feet to 20 or 30 feet long and piled up sometimes three or four feet above land level, making mounds (of course, after many years, they were covered with the shifting sands). The cottage we built was quite small, consisting of kitchen, living room and bedroom. We had no water or electricity. I tried to dig a "well" under where the kitchen would be so that we could pump up water to the kitchen sink. I did not have to go down very far, about 6 to 8 feet and water came in overnight. I thought how lucky we were. It started gradually going down and then started to taste a little salty. We discovered that what we thought was good water at first, was only seepage water, seeping through after the rains and then the Natural Salt waters took over and we had to just use it for washing dishes and general cleaning. My second attempt was halfway up the sloping land, but it only lasted a little while - next stop was to try the advice of a "water witch", who used to feel, or thought he could, divine water underground by walking around with a three pronged willow branch. Holding it in both hands, the prong in his hands would revolve and point downward if there was water. We were now trying a slight raise in the land at the far end of the "Lot". He said we would find water at 10 or 15 feet down.

So now I start another well, about four feet square at about 12 feet down. I ran into a rock formation. Leaving it overnight, I found in the morning that a little, perhaps a bucket full had tricked through the Rocks - On the advice of a friendly neighbor, I decided to leave it alone and wait. He had suggested that he could put a small dynamite shot into it that might shock the thing right up.

We were planning a visit home to Vancouver, so went. On returning, water was near the top of the "Well" - the trickle that we knew was there had gradually cleared a way through. The water was good drinking water, but we had to go and fetch it by two pails full at a time. This we overcame later by finding out the level of the land was higher than the cottage, and the water could gravitate down through pipes to a tap in the kitchen. We were getting settled in, and I took the notion of building two or three cabins - each one room, with the idea of renting them during the Summer months. On the beach, where I spent hours, there was always lots of stuff to find suitable to help building the cabins. The best was 4 x 4 about 8 feet long that were thrown overboard by the tugs passing. If these sharpened ends that set in a socket on the side of the tug were broken, they were no good to the tug people, but made wonderful foundations for one room cabins. I think the time we spent on Salt Spring Island must have been from about 1936 - 1939. We had a contented life - living from the garden - with seafood, more than meat, although we could get meat from the Village Store. The seafood consisted of clams, crabs, and "Grilse" or young Salmon we would catch from the Row Boat. One time we received a pail full of Herring given to us by a neighbor who had a boat big enough to fish from with about four lines out. It was a great day for me when he invited me to go with him. Of course, we couldn't eat a pailful of Herring and we had no icebox or refrigerator, but Grannie cooked up a big bunch of them, in their own fat, and they lasted several days. During the winter

months when we could keep fish longer, down in our first little outside small storage "well", we used to be able to buy the odd 8 to 10 lb. Salmon from an Indian couple who rowed around and sold the Salmon to people living close to the sea. One thing I recall was an Indian coming up to the cottage one day, and asking - "You got tabac?" - Yes, I said, going for my tin of tobacco. I was surprised to hear his remark. I no smoke - my wife - pointing to a boat at the wharf - "She smoke like Hell." Another time, the wife called at the door - Missus, you give me "a cup of tea". My Cousin, pointing in the direction of a neighbor - "She no clean." - Then, in conversation, she told Grannie when preserving fish in the glass jar - never no water - never no water- So we learned something from the Indians.

Another, I don't recall who, told me - or I had heard somewhere that fish dropped in the ground made good fertilizer. One day, I tried going down the pier to the wharf. I would collect "Star Fish" and when planting potatoes seed - place one Star Fish in each prepared hole dropped in the fish, cover with a little soil - place the seed on top and fill in - We had lovely crops of potatoes.

After we had our little cottage all finished, I decided to build some "cabins" for summer rental - eventually, I had three built and Camps furnished enough for two people. The owner of the General Store in the Village was a Mr. Mowatt. I had seen and talked to him a few times. He had bought the lumber from the Government when the Doukabor prison camp on a nearby Island was dismantled. We had arranged that I could get anything I wanted, at 10% over his laid down cost to his store. (Courtesy of me having a store of my own.) This included lumber for building and furnishing the cabins with bed mattress, stove, chairs, and odd dishes, etc. This worked very well, as he delivered them to me, each week with our own groceries.

We were able to go across to Vancouver and home two or three times a year. The C.P.R. Boat from Vancouver to Victoria called each day and it was a nice quiet trip. The Boys - Norm and Stan, were able to visit us once in a while, Norm now being in the Services. Claire came and stayed with us for a while with Ronnie, the baby - Ronnie took his first steps while with us.

We rented the cabins in the Summertime by the week or month and that gave us closer neighbors. Towards the end of our stay, we had two brothers. I think their name was "Sewell". One was an amateur artist and asked if he could make a picture of our cottage. Of course we said yes - and when he had completed it, he asked us to accept it, and he would have it framed as a thankful gesture for allowing them to come and listen to the Radio News, etc. in our little home. This was important to them at that time as it was the pre-War days of the Second World War - Then after the War was declared, they returned to Vancouver to enlist. Mother and I soon after returned to Vancouver and I took over the Store again.

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The "Claire" referred to above is my grandmother (now deceased), and 'Ronnie the baby' is my father. Any information you may have on the cabins would be much appreciated. Thanks very much for your time;

Yours truly,
Holly Hoye

