



# Victoria Historical Society Publication

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## ~ VICTORIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ~ PROGRAM 2011-2012

24 May 2012 7:00 p.m. start for Annual General Meeting.

In honour of the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Victoria, VHS vice-president Sylvia Van Kirk will end the season with a talk on *Thomas & Eliza Harris: The First Mayor & Mayoress of Victoria*.



## PROPOSED SATURNA ISLAND TRIP JUNE 13, 2012

This spring we are organizing a day trip to Saturna Island. The ferry arrives at the Island mid-morning and we will drive up Mount Warburton Pike and enjoy the magnificent view to the south that overlooks the old Pike's and later the Campbell's acreage, and then proceed to the Saturna Island Winery and Bistro for lunch.

In the afternoon our local guide, Richard Blagborn, will escort us to the East Point Light house and east Point Fog Alarm Building. Richard has been heavily involved with saving the fog alarm. Many large ships pass the lighthouse, through Boundary Pass each day and the area has a colorful history.

On the way back to the ferry we will pass Tumbo Island, the scene of many savage and ancient battles, and enjoy the picturesque Boat Pass that separates Saturna from Samuel Island.

Our Boat leaves about 4 pm. and we will return to Swartz Bay just after 6.

John Whittaker

## SATURNA ISLAND

According to Walbran, Saturna Island was named in 1791, after the schooner *Saturnina*, alias *Horacitas*, 7 guns, commanded by José Maria Narvaez, which vessel in company with the *San Carlos* 16 guns, Lieutenant Commader Eliza, who was in charge of the expedition, left Nootka Sound on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1791 to explore the channels to the northeast of the strait of Juan de Fuca. Passing through Haro Strait, named by Quimper the preceding year, the large opening now known as the Strait of Georgia was discovered and named Canal de Nostra Senora del Rosario la Marinera, the exploration being carried out as far as Cape Lazo. During the cruise Eliza left a portion of the exploration to Narvaez in the *Saturnina*, scurvy having attacked the crew of the *San Carlos*. The expedition returned to Nootka in August. Galiano when anchored with the *Sutil* and *Mexicana* in the Port of Cordova (Esquimalt), in 1792 makes the following reference to *Saturnina* in his journal:- It was in this port that the schooner *Saturnina* had to fire upon the canoes of the inhabitants to defend the launch of the *San Carlos* which came in her company and of which they obstinately endeavoured to gain possession.

A lighthouse was established on the east point of the island in 1888.

An atrocious murder was committed on Saturna island in 1862, by some Lamalchi indians. A father and his daughter, while moving their household effects from Waldron island to Mayne island, were driven ashore by bad weather on to Saturna island. While preparing to keep warm and shelter until the storm abated they were attacked by Indians and murdered. The body of the father was never found, but that of the daughter was discovered hidden under some rocks. It was taken to Victoria for

burial in the Quadra street cemetery. As may be imagined this story roused anger among the Victoria citizens and gunboats were sent to discover and punish the perpetrators of this murder. Resistance by the local inhabitants of Lamalchi bay resulted in its later destruction by fire. Fifteen persons were arrested, four of whom were later hanged.



## CALL FOR SPEAKERS

We have been approached by a nursing home in the city and a seniors assisted living home in the Sidney area, both of which are looking for speakers on historical or other topics that may be of interest. If you are able and interested in doing anything along the lines of speaking to small to medium size groups, please contact Ron Greene, with your topics.  
phone 250-598-1835, or e-mail [ragreene@telus.net](mailto:ragreene@telus.net)



## SYMPOSIUM

To recognise the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Victoria, the VHS together with the Old Cemeteries Society, the Hallmark Society and the Friends of the BC Archives will jointly sponsor a symposium entitled *Victoria in 1862*.

It will be held on 29th and 30th of September, 2012 and will comprise introductory welcomes from civic officials and native leaders, a number of presentations and a walking tour of significant buildings in the old town.

Full details and a registration form are attached hereto.



## CHANGES IN THE SOCIETY ACT

Significant changes in the Society Act came into force November 2004, and the B.C. government is currently proposing new amendments to the legislation that governs more than 26,000 societies in the province. Recent information sessions held in Vancouver and Victoria on these amendments were full.

Board members of not-for-profit societies might do well to check if their organizations' constitutions

and bylaws are in good standing. Due-diligence legal housekeeping is recommended every few years. Less governmental vetting of documents is being done and more responsibility falls on the non-profits themselves.

The Community Legal Assistance Society in Vancouver has posted online the Revised Guide to the Society Act updated to May 2011. The guide, funded by the Law Foundation of British Columbia, includes sample documents covering the recommended basics. One source for it is ClickLaw, a B.C. web-site of legal information and education designed for the public:

<http://www.clicklaw.bc.ca/resource/2238/>

Eight related sites that might be useful will be posted on the VHS website.

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The remainder of this issue is devoted to more or less nautical subjects.

Following the recent publication of the journals of Captain Richards of HMS *Plumper*, reviewed recently in the Times Colonist, it might be appropriate to examine the details of his survey ship, and in addition present the views of one of his fellow officers, Richard Mayne who, in 1862, published some recollections of his four years on and around Vancouver Island.

## HMS PLUMPER

HMS *Plumper* was a wooden auxiliary screw sloop, one of a number of Royal Naval vessels that carried that name. The one in which we are particularly interested is the fifth one of the name, built in Portsmouth dockyard and completed in 1848. She was 140 feet long and carried a total complement of 100. She was classified as a wooden screw sloop, having both sail and mechanical power. Her hull was constructed of oak and mechanical power was provided by a two cylinder steam engine driving a screw propeller. These were the early days of steam propulsion for the RN and these engines were regarded with some suspicion by the Admiralty. In addition, the technology of the steam engine in that era was such that it would not have been possible for a ship to carry sufficient fuel and water for the boilers to undertake anything but short voyages using engine power alone. A voyage of 18 to 20 days was probably all that could be achieved, so under ideal circumstances covering perhaps 1800

miles. *Plumper* therefore relied on sails for her longer trans-oceanic voyages.

The part of her career we are most interested in is her third commission when she was tasked to conduct surveys on the Pacific coast of North America.

She left Plymouth at the end of March, 1857, under the command of Captain G. Richards, supported by Lieutenants William Moriarty and Richard Mayne. After a series of minor mishaps en route, she arrived in Esquimalt on 10th November.

Her first task involved work for the Boundary Commission to establish the point where the 49th parallel meets the coast in Semiahmoo Bay.

Most of 1858 was spent in a variety of survey work in Georgia Strait among the Southern Gulf Islands. The winter months were used to consolidate the readings from the season's survey work and transform them into sailing directions and charts.

Before survey work could recommence the following spring, *Plumper* was sent by Governor Douglas up the Fraser River to Fort Langley, tasked with 'showing the flag' to the increasingly large number of miners, mainly from California, drawn to the area by the discovery of gold deposits on the Fraser River. A few weeks later two more warships arrived from the China station to reinforce the notion that this was British territory and subject to British law.

In early April 1859 *Plumper* conducted a survey of Victoria Harbour and then proceeded to the mouth of the Fraser River to assist *Satellite* in picket duties controlling the entry of prospectors to the mainland.

*Plumper* continued her surveys of the Southern Gulf of Georgia and found herself in the middle of the boundary dispute regarding the interpretation of the Oregon Treaty and the location of the westernmost extension of the 49th parallel into the Gulf of Georgia and thus the water boundary between Vancouver Island and the USA. This led to the stand-off familiarly known as the 'Pig War', the stuff of legend to this day.

Later that same year surveys were conducted north from Esquimalt but they encountered that typical November weather which we all know and love, and decided to return to Esquimalt to make-up their survey results.

1860 became a busy year for *Plumper*. In February, 1860 she left sailed for San Francisco to undergo

some repairs which required the use of a drydock. She returned in mid-March and recommenced her survey work north to Discovery Passage and on to Fort Rupert, returning south to Esquimalt in June. Later that month she was sent around to Victoria Harbour to police some discontent among the indigenous population and then continued north to Nanaimo for coaling. From there she sailed north as far as Hope Island, returning south to prepare charts from the survey data.

In December, HMS *Hecate* arrived under the command of Commander A. Hoskins and she and *Plumper* exchanged crews. In February 1861 Commander Hoskins and *Plumper* sailed for England, arriving at Portsmouth on 26 June 1861.

The ship spent nearly four years as a reserve vessel at Portsmouth and was broken up in 1866.

Other notable names among the crew of HMS *Plumper* were Daniel Pender and Edward Bedwell, both of whom shipped as Second Masters but following the death of Master John Bull in 1860 were later promoted to the position of Master; Pender in 1859, and Bedwell as Additional Master for Surveying, in 1860.

Mike Harrison



## RICHARD MAYNE

Richard Mayne was educated at Eton and joined the Royal Navy in 1847. He served as Lieutenant on HMS *Plumper* during her commission in the Pacific Northwest in the years 1857 to 1861. He then transferred to HMS *Hecate* and was promoted to Commander in August, 1861. He then commanded HMS *Eclipse* in New Zealand waters during which time he was wounded and earned a CB for his conduct. He carried out surveying work in the Straits of Magellan with HMS *Nassau*. From 1875-1876 he commanded *Invincible* and retired with the rank of Rear Admiral.

Following his retirement he entered politics and in 1866 was elected to Parliament as MP for Pembroke and Haverford West, in which position he remained until his death in 1892.

In 1862 he published some of his memoirs in a book entitled *Four Years in British Columbia and Vancouver Island*. Following is an extract from that book giving his views on Victoria and the surrounding country:



Eight miles north of the Race Islands is the harbour of Esquimalt, and three miles northward of that lies Victoria, the capital of Vancouver Island, and the present seat of government for both that colony and British Columbia. As a harbour, Esquimalt is by far the best in the southern part of the island or mainland. It offers a safe anchorage for ships of any size, and although the entrance is perhaps somewhat narrow for a large vessel to beat in or out of with a dead foul wind, it may usually be entered easily and freely. It is moreover admirably adapted to become a maritime stronghold, and might be made almost impregnable. Its average depth is from five to seven fathoms, and in Constance Cove, on the right-hand side as the harbour is entered, there is room for as large a number of ships as we are ever likely to have in these waters to take refuge in if necessary. As yet the want of fresh water in the summer time is felt as an inconvenience ; but there are several large lakes a little up the country, at a level considerably above that of the harbour, and from them, when the resources of the colony are developed, water can easily be brought down to the ships.

Each new admiral that is appointed to the North Pacific station appears to be more and more impressed with the evident value and importance of Esquimalt as a naval station. It is to be regretted, indeed, that more land in the neighbourhood of the harbour has not been reserved by the Government, and that steps were not long ago taken to develop its resources. Had, for instance, a floating dock been built here in 1858, it would by this time have more than paid for its construction; and we should not be dependent, as we are now, upon the American dock at Mare Island, San Francisco, for the repair of our ships of war. During the four years of my service on this station, such a dock would have been used on five occasions by Her Majesty's ships, and at least a dozen times by merchant-vessels, who, as it was, were put to great inconvenience and even danger. For instance, when HMS *Hecate* ran ashore in the autumn of 1861, we were a fortnight at Esquimalt patching her up, before we ventured to take her to San Francisco, whither after all we had to be conveyed by another man-of-war. This occurred too, as it may be remembered, at a time when war with the United States seemed imminent. Had it broken out, the *Hecate* must have been trapped, and the services of a powerful steamer would have been lost to the country.

Esquimalt has seen, and is still likely to see, many startling changes. I found it altered very much from the time when as a midshipman, I first made its acquaintance in 1849. In that year, when we spent some weeks in Esquimalt Harbour on board HMS

*Inconstant*, there was not a house to be seen on its shores; we used to fire shot and shell as we liked about the harbour, and might send parties ashore and cut as much wood as we needed without the least chance of interruption. Now, as we entered, I was surprised to catch sight of a row of respectable, well-kept buildings on the southeast point of the harbour's mouth, with pleasant gardens in front of them, from which a party of the crew of the *Satellite*, who had been expecting us for some time, received us with a round of hearty cheers. This was, we found, a Naval Hospital erected in 1854, when we were at war with Russia, to receive the wounded from Petropaulovski, and since that time continued in use. Opposite the hospital, our attention was directed to a very comfortable and, standing where it did, a rather imposing residence, which was the house of Mr. Cameron, Chief Justice of Vancouver Island, and in which I have since spent many a pleasant hour. At the head of Constance Cove, at the east end of the harbour, might be seen through the trees the buildings of Constance farm, in the occupation of the Puget Sound Company; and as we held on beyond the hospital, we came in view of the site of the present town of Esquimalt, whose growth is of a more recent date than that of which I am now writing.

Nor were other signs of the already growing importance of Esquimalt wanting. It must be remembered that as yet gold, although known by some to exist both upon the island and mainland, had attracted no notice ; but the colony was growing slowly yet surely without its stimulating aid. Further up the harbour stood another building, named *Thetis Cottage*, and at the north entrance of Constance Cove the new bailiff of the Puget Sound Company was building a house. So, everywhere ashore, there were changes and improvement visible. Nine years back, we had to scramble from the ship's boat on to the most convenient rock: now Jones's landing-place received us; and in the stead of forcing a path over the rocks and through the bush to the Victoria Inlet, whence, if a native should happen to be lounging about in the Indian village of the Songhies, and should see us or hear our shouts and bring a canoe over, we might hope to reach Victoria, a broad carriage-road, not of the best, perhaps, and a serviceable bridge, were found connecting Esquimalt Harbour with Victoria.

Victoria, too, was altering for the better, though slowly. The Hudson Bay Company's fort was still the most imposing building in the town, and its officers the chief people there ; but it had grown into a more important station of the great Fur Company than of yore, and Mr. Finlayson, whom we had left



chief in command nine years before, we now found Mr. Douglas's lieutenant.

As the capital of the island, Victoria undoubtedly owes its pre-eminence to Mr. Douglas, the present governor. As far back as 1843, when it was considered desirable by the Company to establish a station in the island, Victoria had been selected by him for that purpose; and later, when the Oregon boundary question was settled, and the mouth of the River Columbia, on which Fort Vancouver, the principal station of the Company in Western America, stood, fell into the hands of the United States, it was to Victoria that their head-quarters were transferred by Mr. Douglas, who was then, and had been for some time, their chief agent in the countries west of the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Douglas was guided in his selection of Victoria simply by its possessing qualities which met the requirements of the Company he represented. No one ever dreamt then of the mineral wealth of the valleys that sloped from the Rocky Mountains to the sea; or that in a few years cities (I should say, perhaps, their promise) would spring up upon shores almost unknown to the civilised world. But, long before the present rush of immigrants to these regions, Victoria, as a port, had been virtually superseded by the adjacent harbour of Esquimalt.

The entrance to Victoria is narrow, shoal, and intricate; and with certain winds a heavy sea sets on the coast, which renders the anchorage outside unsafe, while vessels of burden cannot run inside for shelter unless at or near high water. Vessels drawing 14 or 15 feet may, under ordinary circumstances, enter at high water, and ships drawing 17 feet have done so, although only at the top of spring-tides. But it is necessary always to take a pilot, and the channel is so confined and tortuous that a long ship has considerable difficulty in getting in. With every care, a large proportion of vessels entering the port run aground. No doubt steps might be taken to improve the harbour of Victoria, but it is highly problematical whether it can ever be made a safe and convenient port of entry for vessels even of moderate tonnage at all times of the tide and weather. Under the most favourable circumstances, accidents happen constantly. Last year, and again this spring, the *Princess Royal*, a vessel of but 600 tons burden, which goes from London to Vancouver Island every year, in the service of the Hudson Bay Company, grounded in entering Victoria, although she was commanded by a very able man, thoroughly acquainted with the place, and was towed at the time by a steamer which plied in and out of the harbour two or three times at least every week. Nor when she was brought into the harbour was there sufficient depth of water to allow her to get

alongside the wharf, and her cargo had to be discharged into lighters. Under these circumstances, therefore, although Victoria is, no doubt, quite well adapted for the vessels trading up the Fraser River, and the many small craft that will be required among the islands and ports of the coast, ships of larger tonnage must always prefer Esquimalt. I cannot imagine any sensible master of an ocean ship endeavouring to wriggle his vessel into Victoria with the larger and safer harbour of Esquimalt handy.

Very possibly, could the future have been foreseen, Victoria would not have been selected as the chief commercial port of Vancouver Island. But the selection has been made, the town is built or building, the commerce already attracted. The fact must be regarded as accomplished beyond the possibility of change; and the only thing that can now be done is to connect it with the harbour of Esquimalt, towards which task the natural formation of the country lends itself admirably.

In the way of this, however, stand several obstacles, and chief among them, perhaps, is the jealousy of the landholders of Victoria, who, believing that the elevation of Esquimalt into the harbour of the colony would lower the value of their property, have persistently opposed such a project. Nor have the landholders of Esquimalt been altogether free from blame. Irritated by the opposition of Victoria, and convinced that in the end their demands must be conceded, they have placed a value upon their land which is quite exorbitant. Many of the merchants of Victoria would, I believe, long ago have been glad to transfer their wharves to Esquimalt, could they have obtained the necessary land at anything like a fair price.

Some efforts had, however, been made to connect the two places. As I have before said, in 1849 the country between them was impassable, and the only communication possible was by creeping round by the shore and crossing the head of the inlet in a canoe; but now we found a broad road carried from Victoria to the Naval Hospital, passing through what has since become the site of Esquimalt town, with branch ways to several important points of the harbour. At that time this road fulfilled its purpose moderately well; but later, when the rush to British Columbia commenced, it broke down miserably, and it was, in the autumn of 1861, when I left, a disgrace to the colony. In the winter it was practically almost useless, and the waggons had to take to the grass by the side, with what result may easily be imagined; and when the mails were expected, the express-men and waggon-drivers had to go over the ground the day before and patch it

up sufficiently to enable them to get to Victoria at all.

Very few words need be given to the description of Victoria. Reaching it by the road just mentioned, the traveller passes the Hospital, supported by voluntary contributions, and first established by the Rev. E. Cridge, who was the Hudson Bay Company's chaplain at Victoria for some years, and did much good in many unobtrusive ways before the arrival of the present bishop. Beyond, situated upon a point of land that juts out between the first and second bridges, has since been built a foundry, about which, in the winter season, may generally be seen miners busy building flat-bottomed boats, raising the gunwales of old canoes, and in other ways making preparations for crossing the Gulf of Georgia and ascending the Fraser River early in the spring. Further on, across the first bridge, the road ascends a little hill, on the summit of which lies the Indian village of the Songhies, once the sole inhabitants of this place. The close contiguity of these Indians to Victoria is seriously inconvenient, and various plans for removing them to a distance have been discussed both in and out of the colonial legislature. In consequence of their intercourse with the whites—chiefly, of course, for evil—this tribe has become the most degraded in the whole island, having lost what few virtues the savage in his natural state possesses, and contracted the worst vices of the settlers. It is scarcely possible to walk along the road by which their village lies without stumbling upon half-a-dozen or more, lying dead-drunk upon the ground; and it is no uncommon thing at night to hear a ball whizz past your head, fired, not at the traveller, but from a hut on one side of the road to one on the other in some drunken squabble. Altogether, what with the drunkenness and the gambling—for Indians are great gamblers, and numbers may be seen squatted on their haunches by the roadside playing for whatever they have earned or stolen—this village of the Songhies presents one of the most squalid pictures of dirt and misery it is possible to conceive. To the right of these, and stretching far along the northern side of the harbour, are the tents of the tribes who come down several hundred miles from the northernmost part of our West American possessions to barter furs, buy whisky, and see the white men.

The Company's fort, long the chief feature of the place, is situated on the north-east side of the harbour. Upon my first visit to Victoria in 1849, a small dairy at the head of James Bay was the only building standing outside the fort pickets, which are now demolished. But shortly after, upon Mr. Douglas's arrival, he built himself a house on the south side of James Bay; and Mr. Work, another

chief factor of the Company, arriving a little later, erected another in Rock Bay, above the bridge. These formed the nucleus of a little group of buildings, which rose about and between them so slowly that even in 1857 there was but one small wharf on the harbour's edge. Still, the least experienced eye could see the capabilities of the site of Victoria for a town, and that it was capable, should the occasion ever arise, of springing into importance as Melbourne or San Francisco had done. As it was, the place was very pleasant, and society—as it is generally in a young colony—frank and agreeable. No ceremony was known in those pleasant times. All the half-dozen houses that made up the town were open to us. In fine weather, riding-parties of the gentlemen and ladies of the place were formed, and we returned generally to a high tea, or tea-dinner, at Mr. Douglas's or Mr. Work's, winding up the pleasant evening with dance and song. We thought nothing then of starting off to Victoria in sea-boots, carrying others in our pockets, just to enjoy a pleasant evening by a good log-fire. And we cared as little for the weary tramp homeward to Esquimalt in the dark, although it happened sometimes that men lost their way, and had to sleep in the bush all night.

*Four Years in British Columbia and Vancouver Island* is available from Google Books as a free download, or as facsimile reprint from, among others, Amazon.ca.



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