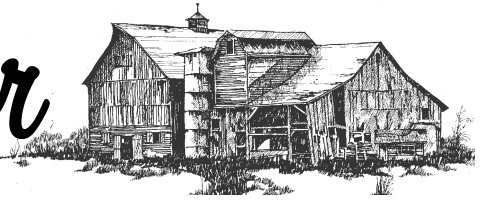


# Mouth of the Fraser

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## TERRA NOVA: A DETECTIVE STORY

The Fraser River carved the point of land we now call Terra Nova. Red-top grass and crab apples shared the flat open space with brush and swamp. The Musqueam people visited the during the salmon and sturgeon fishing season. The earliest non-native settlement occurred in 1868. In 1890 a small group of early settlers were joined by a group with connections to Nova Scotia. Eight irregularly shaped homesteads were plotted from the northern riverbank south to an area not far from today's Westminster Highway.

It was one of the Scotians, James Mellis, who named the area "Terra Nova" or "New Land." Homes and dykes were built, the land farmed, and two canneries spanning the dyke were added to the eight homesteads. Settlers mostly used the river as their road, private docks as their entry ways. Eventually a road was built along the dyke and a stage line to Vancouver set up. The canneries closed and more houses were built, but the name "Terra Nova" continued to be the designation of the place.

Terra Nova has an interesting history, but does it have heritage value? That requires some sleuthing. The City plans to develop Terra Nova as a park. A unique approach to planning this park has been adopted. Three consultants have worked

independently and together to examine the potential of the area. One consultant looked at environmental issues (wildlife, vegetation). Another consultant investigated the "landscape" to understand the interplay between the original land and the plantings and changes made by humans (e.g. orchards, fields). The third, Denise Cook, explored the heritage aspects. Jointly their efforts will provide the

City's Parks people with material to form the basis for a formal park plan.

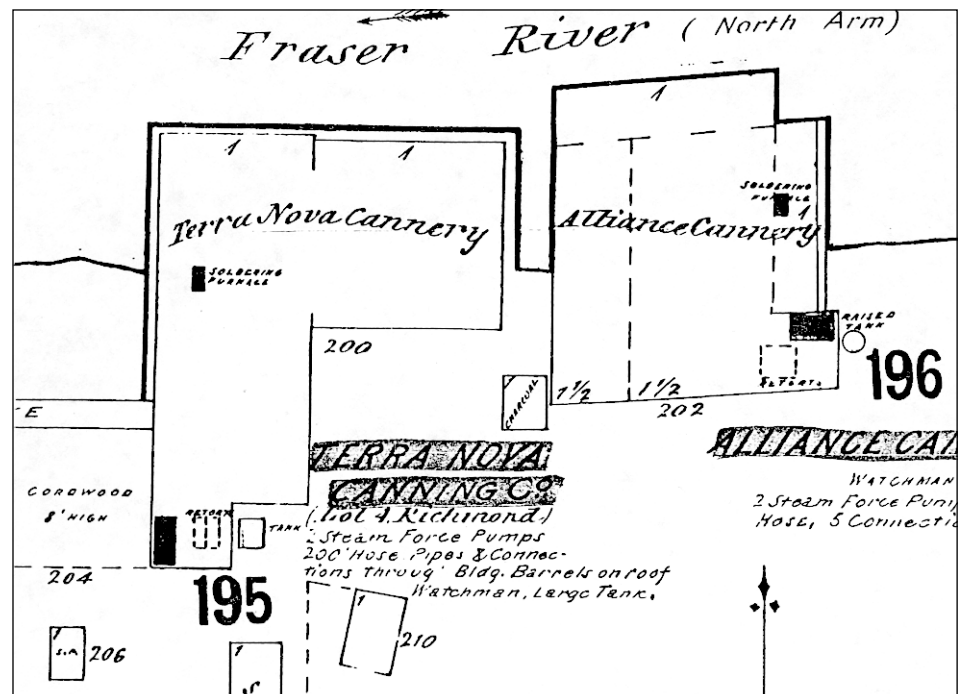
Denise Cook prefers bulky sweaters and a camera to the well-known trenchcoat and briar pipe, but she gathers clues into an intelligible story. She discovers mysteries and solves them. Her task in Terra Nova is to make sense of an "evolved vernacular cultural landscape", a disorderly collection of things that humans have done to the landscape as they went about their daily

lives. The humans (the early settlers forward) had no idea, of course, that anyone would have such an interest in "Terra Nova." If she succeeds, the disorder of the evidence will provide a rational, orderly way of scanning through our past and learning from it. This, in turn, could be a key part of any public park.

Important clues are the remaining buildings on the site, five of which are on the Richmond Heritage Inventory. Some of them, like the curious Cold Comfort Farm at 2840 River Road, connect many strands of history: an early settler (James Mellis), a distinctive architecture (mid-Gothic revival), and a notable use (the base of Jame and William Mellis' stagecoach operations). The Edwardian cottage at 2680 River Road and the Cannery House at 2740 River Road may have connections to the cannery workers and the Rowan family.

Elsewhere only faint signs of habitation remain: driveways, fences, bridges. But these clues nevertheless provide us with a way of looking the landscape and visualizing how it must have been to live and farm

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on Terra Nova a 100 years ago. Denise uses aerial photographs from the 1930s and 1940's to piece together the way in which land was accessed, used, settled on. There are many spots on the site where it is possible to see the way in which the settlers set apart their long thin strips of field, and how they must have paused from time to time to gaze across the landscape to the far distance with its water and mountains and sky. Gradually a picture begins to emerge. Where people lived, how they made a living (remnants of fields and orchards, the half submerged pillars of the canneries), what they thought was attractive, how they expressed their aesthetic views. Archives both in Richmond and elsewhere are searched for historic photographs-and some fine old pictures have been uncovered.

The conclusions of the detective are that Terra Nova has an important story to tell and that there is enough evidence left to

provide the links between the parts of the story. Think of Terra Nova as a old canvas, with some erasures, some cracks, some spots where the paint has peeled, but nevertheless a lot that can still be seen. The environmentalists and the landscape people have come to a similar conclusions, and they seem very optimistic that the results of all three studies can be integrated into a single park plan.

In a sense Denise and her colleagues have shown that story can be told. How it is told will be another challenge. This involves carefully integrating the environmental features with the landscape and heritage features into a place of passive recreation that allow this generation to both take pleasure in the place and connect with the past. Pathways, parking, interpretative signage, adaptive reuse of existing buildings all need to be part of this blend of heritage and recreation.

*by Mark Bostwick (all the material for this article is derived from the report of Denise Cook)*



Gordon Property c.1912



View of Tera Nova c.1915



Tera Nova's agricultural fields



Mellis' stage coach operation

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## COMING EVENTS

### Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site

**Go Wild Art Contest** ..... Sat. May 11 - Sat. June 8th  
View original children's art based on salmon fishing, preservation and habitat.

**Fraser Estuary** ..... Thur. June 6, 7 - 9 pm  
Informative presentation, video & museum tour. An Environment Week in Richmond activity (June 2-8). Complimentary admission.

**Trade Marks & Salmon Art** ..... Thur. June 13- Sat. July 20  
Features contemporary artwork in conjunction with historic salmon can labels exhibit.

**Canada Day** ..... Mon. July 1  
Celebrate Canada's National Day at the Cannery. Complimentary admission.

**Parks Day/take A Hike** ..... Sat. July 20, 9am - 5pm  
Explore Steveston's cultural history and heritage sites. In conjunction with Steveston Museum, Britannia Heritage Shipyard and London Heritage Farm.

**Cannery Day 2002** ..... Sun. August 4, Noon - 5pm  
The Cannery's largest event traditionally salutes ethnic groups who have worked in the fishing industry. This year focuses on the people, vessels and gear of the sailing era.

**Kid's Cannery Day** ..... Thur. August 22, 1 - 5pm  
Complimentary admission for Kids World members.

#### Fishing The West Coast

**Photo Display** ..... Mon. Sept. 2 - Sat. Oct 12  
Annual photo show opening and family activities on Labour Day. Fishing the West Coast photo display runs through October 12 and features scenes of the fishing industry and marine environment.

**Bc River Day** ..... Sun. September 29  
Engaging family activities that focus public awareness on the Fraser River and other BC waterways.

### London Farm

**Annual Plant Sale** ..... Sat. May 4, Sun. May 5, 10 - 3pm  
Offering a wide selection of heritage flowers, herbs, and bedding plants.

**Mother's Day Tea** ..... Sat May 11, Sun. May 12, Noon - 4pm  
An afternoon delight with London Lady Tea, home baked scones, jam and other goodies for \$5.00 per person. Tea is served by the men, a London Farm tradition.

**Father's Day Tea** ..... Sun. June 16, Noon to 4pm  
Tread Dad to a relaxing afternoon and enjoy tea(or coffee) and an assortment of goodies along with home baked scones and jam. \$5.00 per person.

**Summer Pops Youth Orchestra** ..... Sun. July 14, 1pm to 3pm  
Enjoy a musical concert by the 100 piece Summer Pops Youth Orchestra. By donation for Orchestra. Refreshments available and Tearoom will be open.

**Take A Hike/parks Day** ..... Saturday July 20, 9am to 4pm  
A day to celebrate by walking and enjoying the fresh air. Starts at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery. Stop for a rest and tea at London Farm.

### Richmond Museum

#### Asian Heritage Month

**Comes to Richmond** ..... May 25, 11am - 4pm  
*Richmond Cultural Centre, 7700 Minoru Gate.*

Join in for a fun-filled day of community celebration at the Richmond Library and Richmond Museum. 11am - Opening Ceremonies by His Worship M. Brodie

#### Performance:

- Shao Lin Hung Gar - Lion Dancing
- Richmond Chinese Folk Dancers
- Stand up Comedy with Henry Mah
- Original Song and Music with LaLa
- Contemporary Asian Canadian Music with Running Dog Lackeys
- Jazz with May Cheung Quint
- Sunday Naik performing Bharata Natyam

**Collectors Showcase and Sale** ..... June 15, 1pm - 4pm  
\$10.00 a table or free to the visiting public.

Meet local collectors. Buy or sell antiques, collectables and memorabilia. Phone 604-231-6460 for more information.

**Hastings Park Racecourse Trip** ..... June 23, 10am - 3:30pm  
\$40.00 per session

Take in a "Day at the Races" and experience Richmond's past. Includes admission and brunch.

#### Richmond's Temples

**of Faith Tour** ..... August 24, 10am - 4pm  
\$30.00 per person

Experience the rich diversity of cultural traditions in Richmond on this tour of local places of worship. Lunch is included.

**Quest for the Bay** ..... July 18, 7:30-9pm  
By Donation

Rob Clark shares stories of his experience paddling, pushing, and sailing a 40 foot boat across Manitoba re-enacting the 1840 historic route of the hardy York men.

**On the Waterfront Tour** ..... July 7, 1:30-4pm  
\$10.00 per person

Tour through Steveston's historic waterfront and town centre. Learn about the days of the tall ships and Steveston's colourful past as one of B.C.s largest fishing and canning communities.

#### Heritage Camps at the Richmond Museum

Let the Games Begin! Play traditional indoor and outdoor games from around the world. Choose from a variety of dates and ages for children. Contact 604-231-6457 to register.

#### Time Travel Adventures

A mystery thriller from Richmond's history. Discovery and outdoor adventure as you unravel clues from Richmond's mysterious past. junior detectives will search for archaeological clues, artifacts, documents, old photos, and visit heritage sties Richmond to close a mystery. Sessions are offered from 7-9 years, and 8-10 years on dates in July and August. Contact 604-231-6457 to register.

**Young Archaeologists** ..... August 21, 22 & 23, 9am - 3pm  
\$27.00 per session

Spend a day unearthing "historical treasures" on an archaeological dig at the Britannia Heritage Shipyards.

*For more info on these programs please contact 604-231-6460.  
All Museum programs with a program fee must be pre-registered*

## RICHMOND'S SUBURBAN HISTORY

The Richmond Heritage Commission has asked Denise Cook to begin charting the most exciting and in some ways most elusive aspect of our history. How did Richmond become a suburb? An aerial photo taken in 1940 exhibits a landscape with only a few tell-tale cross hatchings of settlement. Similar bird's eye view photographs in the 1950's and 1960's trace a near explosion of subdivisions. Examined closely the patchwork is as complicated as grandmother's quilt, and clearly the work of more than one artisan.

How did this happen? What is the logic behind Richmond's evolution from an agrarian and fishing community to a bustling suburb just "over the bridge" from Vancouver? Who made it happen? What were the specific contributions of developers like J. S. Wood, Fraser Valley Land, Hullah Corp, Greczmiel Construction?

How did suburban house designs evolve to meet the needs of the landscape, the market, changing tastes, and the concerns of planners? Is Richmond the child of the automobile, new bridges, cheap mortgages, the dreams of a place that was neither city nor country, as far from Manitoba winters as possible, or all of these? From the air we see a variety of street patterns; at the street level the evolution of houses from small World War II bungalows to ranchers, split levels and beyond. Part of the story is the growth of public space and public places to serve the needs of this growing suburban population?

See the next issue of the Mouth of the Fraser for the answers to some of these questions.

### *Mouth of the Fraser*



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Subdivision in Shellmont Area. Aerial photograph of a subdivision located between no. 4 Road and Shell Road just north of Steveston Highway. circa 1960



Richmond Gardens. Aerial photograph of Richmond Gardens subdivision looking south west. 1965



Burkeville. Aerial photograph of the newly constructed Burkeville subdivision on Sea Island. 1944

*Photos compliments of the City of Richmond Archives*



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