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news



Hamilton was vibrant in 1949 with soldiers returned from War service and beginning to produce baby boomers shown here in the front row at the community picnic held August 28th at Balcarra Park. This photograph was donated to the City of Richmond Archives by the Hamilton Community Association. Copies will be available at the Archives Tea in October in the hopes of identifying the picnickers.

In The Works

The Archives Tea will be held October 12 in the Lecture Hall of the Cultural Centre. For more information about this popular event, or to donate archival materials related to Hamilton and East Richmond, contact the City of Richmond Archives at 604 247-8305.

Finishing touches are being applied to a volume of history about Richmond's post offices. Author Bill McNulty, an avid philatelist, has provided many images from his personal collection for use in this book which we hope will be available for purchase before Christmas.

Hamilton and East Richmond to be featured at Archives Tea October 12

The Archives Tea, to be held October 12th at the Cultural Centre, will be featuring research and photographs of the far-flung neighbourhood of Richmond including East Richmond and Hamilton. The Archives crew and the Friends of the Richmond Archives Book Committee are hoping to see the donation of documents and photographs from past and present residents of Richmond's 'far east' to facilitate and enhance the project, another volume in the Richmond Neighbourhoods series.

This is just one of the many publications projects underway at the City of Richmond Archives. One of the articles inside this newsletter talks about the third reprint of Thomas Kidd's book, "History of Lulu Island." Throughout the spring and summer archivists Jennifer Douglas and Bill Purver, and champion volunteer Graham Turnbull have been struggling with the digitization of this book in preparation for both web publication and hard-copy printing. Their many hours of concentration have resulted in new life for Richmond's oldest history book which continues to be in demand.



Ann Forman holds a 1968 photograph of Victoria Cold Storage, a British Columbia Packers Plant. The operation is now defunct. The photograph was found in insurance files and provide a graphic and detailed view of the company's buildings and activities in that era.

British Columbia Packers Maps and Photographs to be Published Online by City Archives

by Ann Forman

This summer, the City of Richmond Archives embarked on a digitization project that will see the scanning of hundreds of insurance photographs and maps belonging to the British Columbia Packers Limited fonds and ultimately, their publication into the Archives searchable, online database. In addition, the creation of an introductory web exhibit will provide background and context to this historic and significant body of archival records. This valuable endeavor was made possible by funds from the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, British Columbia History Digitization Program, along with a grant from the Friends of the Richmond Archives. It was from these generous contributions that I was hired as a Contract Archivist for the project in early June.

The records provide an important photographic and cartographic record of the assets of what was historically the largest fishing company that operated on the coast of British Columbia and that which had a major impact upon many coastal communities in this region, including our own. They originate from a series of the records consisting of maps, site plans, and photographs related to the administration, improvement, insurance and transfer of property held by the B.C Packers Limited. Work continues on the project, and when completed next winter, researchers can expect to find around 700 photographs and 200 maps from this series available

The photo on the right, from the BC Packers Insurance Series, shows Victoria Cold Storage Plant in 1961.



Thomas Kidd's "History of Lulu Island" Reprinted For Third Time

For the third time the "History of Lulu Island" is to be reprinted, proving that local history has a lasting popularity. First written in 1927, and reprinted in 1973, the book was sold out in early 2007. This time, in addition to a print copy, the City of Richmond Archives will be publishing a digital copy on the Archives web pages. The URL is: www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/exhibits/lulusland.htm. Funding for the reprint and web publication is from the Friends of the Richmond Archives.



During his lifetime Mr. Kidd was a Councillor, Reeve, School Trustee, and MLA. His public spirit extended to taking the time to write a history of the young community of Richmond up to 1898.

Photographs On Ice!

by Libby Coyner

Last year, the Friends of the Richmond Archives generously donated a brand new upright freezer to the archives for photographic frozen storage. This summer, the City of Richmond Archives got a chance to put the new freezer to work. I came to the City of Richmond Archives as a professional experience student from UBC's Masters of Archival Studies program, and spent two months getting Richmond's photographic frozen storage program started.

When conservator Rosaleen Hill came to do her report on the archives last year, she identified 99 acetate negatives that were in urgent need of care. The negatives had begun to deteriorate, and without frozen storage, they would continue to go downhill. Cold temperatures and dry conditions retard the deterioration of photographs. City Archivist Lynne Waller also hoped to freeze the Graham Elliston accession, a collection of 2,500 slides featuring wooden fishing boats in British Columbia. With the slides and negatives selected for frozen storage, I set to work researching photographic frozen storage techniques.

I opted to use the same process for frozen storage that the Vancouver Archives had initially used, which was carried out and documented by conservators Sue Bigelow and Rosaleen Hill. Graham Turnbull and I, following Vancouver's example, baked mat board in a convection toaster oven, and sealed it inside two layers of thick plastic zip-closure bags with the negatives.

The plastic bags kept most of the moisture from the freezer out, while the mat board absorbed any moisture that did get in. We added relative humidity indicators, which will let the archivists know that the materials are staying safely dry. Thanks to the new freezer, the photographs will remain cold and dry for years to come.

Once the slides and negatives had spent some time in the freezer, conservator Rosaleen Hill came to survey the project. She gave it her stamp of approval, and invited me to present on the project at an Archives Association of BC photograph conservation workshop later this year. Once again, she was happy to see that the City of Richmond Archives is taking a lead among small archives in the Lower Mainland to be proactive about conservation.



Libby Coyner with a package of negatives labelled for storage.



Above - Graham Turnbull and Libby Coyner place the fragile negatives and dried mat board in heavy plastic envelopes. The project is expected to add many years of life to the photographs.

The Barker Letter Book Project

By Christine McGilvray



July 17, 2007 Esther Rabinovitch, left, and Carol Farrell, right, seated, complete the 637th and final letter of the Barker Letter Books. They are being congratulated by new volunteer Christine McGilvray, left, and Friends of the Richmond Archives President Mary Keen, right, standing.

In the weeks prior to my retirement from the City of Richmond, where, as Manager of Lands and Property, I had worked at buying and selling land and negotiating leases and rights of way for various City land needs, I mentioned in passing to City Archivist Lynne Waller that I would love to get involved in volunteer work at the Archives. I had used the services of the Archives many times for my work at the City and love to read and handle old documents and records that have meaning and relevance still. The job offered to me was proof-reading and correcting transcriptions from the Henry Barker Letter Books against the originals.

In the past few months I have come to be familiar with Mr. William Henry Barker. He was a man of letters. Not quite a Samuel Pepys, but a writer with some elegant turns of phrase and nice formalities for his time, he was the General Manager of British Columbia Packers' Association based here on the West Coast, and wrote expansively and descriptively on all issues of the fishing industry. The letters are what used to be called "daily copies" produced by copy-typists, stenographers, and secretaries working in offices from the invention of the typewriter on. They are on very lightweight and fragile paper called "onion skin" and the quality of the copy varies, dependant upon the condition of the carbon paper. The letters have been transcribed into a database which will be made available to interested researchers online. The transcription has been done by Richmond Archives volunteers Carol Farrell and Esther Rabinovitch.

Most of Mr. Barker's letters were addressed to a gentleman by the wonderful name of AEmilius Jarvis. (The capitalized first two letters makes it rather unique, I think). Mr. Jarvis was the Vice President of BC Packers based in Toronto. Mr. Barker updated Mr. Jarvis frequently on the myriad business matters surrounding the West Coast fishing industry. Woven into the letters is information providing snapshots of the era which, along with Mr. Barker's stream of consciousness writing, bringing life and depth to the correspondence. He mentions the San Francisco earthquake of 1906; the blasting in the Fraser Canyon which resulted in the inability of salmon to return to their spawning grounds; and the onset of motor boats, and the movement to ban their use in fishing. He fights long and hard against government bureaucracy and cites astounding examples of favoritism and patronage in the distribution of licenses and other largesse from both Ottawa and the Province. He vigorously tries to protect the jobs of Japanese, Chinese and Indian fishermen employed by BC Packers, when the government is embarking upon job protection strategies for "white fishermen".

From his letters, I perceive Mr. Barker to have been a man of principle, exhibiting great loyalty to his employer. He laid out his thoughts and plans firmly and clearly, and took pains to ensure his motives were understood. Volume 1 of the letter books is nearly ready to go online and I am looking forward to accompanying Mr. Barker through Volume II. I love my new job!!



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Appointment recommended