

Property at Indian Point: Lots and Owners from 1910 to 1960

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The Savary Island Heritage Society is grateful for information received from Sandy Fisher, Barb Graham, Laurie Kerr, Marie Langton, Paul Leighton, Alice Mowbray and Will Thomson. The Society will be pleased to receive additional information.

The lots at Indian Point, like Cinderella, were overlooked for many years before their charms were widely appreciated. The approximately 600 lots surveyed in 1910 at Indian Point all had a single owner for 17 years, until 1927. By 1932, in addition to the 10 lots comprising the site of the Royal Savary Hotel, 26 lots had passed into other hands and, as well as the Hotel, there were six houses. By 1960, although another 26 lots had been sold and five more houses had been built, 90% of the original lots still remained the property of one owner.

The energy and enthusiasm of George Johnson Ashworth and his wife Katharine, which had played an important role in establishing the community at the wharf end of Savary, were even more central to events at Indian Point. Around 1926 they decided to build a hotel there. They surmounted daunting hurdles. They contracted with Ashton Spilsbury and his son Jim to build a road from the wharf to Indian Point and persuaded the government to pay for it. They also arranged property and financing for the hotel venture with the Vancouver Reliance Company which, under the direction of Carl Weeden, administered the estate of Harry Leroy Jenkins, who had died in 1921, and which was the sole owner of all the lots. Starting in 1927, George and Katharine Ashworth, along with their son Bill, managed the construction of the hotel and opened for business in June 1928. The Ashworth family owned and managed the Royal Savary Hotel until 1975. During that time the hotel dominated all the activities and events at Indian Point.

At the same time as the Ashworths were planning their hotel, Alice and Archie Stevenson, who had previously spent time on Savary near the wharf, arranged to purchase lots at Indian Point from the Vancouver Reliance Company. During the summer of 1926 they returned to Savary with their young daughter Margaret and became the first family at Indian Point to build on lots they would soon own themselves. Apparently they were surprised, on returning to Savary the following summer, to find the hotel under construction just a couple of lots away from them towards the point. The Stevensons' camp grew slowly over the years.

Initially Alice and Archie did the building themselves as their camp grew into a cottage. By the early 1930s, with some assistance from carpenters, the cottage was finished. It was used by the family until a year after Archie Stevenson died in 1958. After the summer of 1959, the property was sold to the Paul and Margaret Jaffary family.

Later in 1927, at the time the Vancouver Reliance Company transferred ownership of the Hotel and Stevenson lots, other lots that were on the side of Indian Point facing Lund were also sold. Rose Willis, who had been at the wharf end of Savary for many years, and Frankie Keefer, daughter of Savary personality and postmaster Harry Keefer, had also arranged to purchase. No house was built on the Keefer lots, which were beside Rose Willis's lots on the Indian Point side, and were to become, long after 1960, the lots chosen by Alice and Archie Stevenson's daughter Margaret Leighton, when she returned to Savary in 1978. Rose Willis contracted with Bill Mace to build a log house on the lot above the current boat launch, on the Indian Point side of the current Trite Lane, that was, after the Hotel and for many years, Indian Point's most impressive building. After some years of use by Mrs. Willis and her sons Harry and John, the log house was sold during the 1940s to Dr. Trites who used it for many years with his wife and children, Ted and Louise.

These four properties – the Stevensons', the Hotel's, the Willis's and the Keefer's – are the only remaining lots at Indian Point from the original 1910 subdivision. In 1927 the Vancouver Reliance Company cancelled the original subdivision for the Indian Point area and re-subdivided with a new and different layout of the lots. During the next five years, before 1932, The Vancouver Reliance Company sold about twenty of these 'new' lots.

In 1927, when the Ashworths came to an agreement with the Vancouver Reliance Company to start building a hotel at Indian Point, they received a number of lots in addition to those comprising the hotel site. It was intended that the sale of these lots would contribute to payments owed by the Hotel to the Vancouver Reliance Company. An early sale of one of these additional lots was to William Russell Beaty of Vancouver, whose family was among the first guests at the Hotel in June, 1928. The Beaty family lot was on the beachfront several lots further away from Indian Point than the Stevensons'. The family camped there for a number of summers but eventually the lot reverted to the Crown for unpaid taxes. In 1948 Harry Keefer acquired it by Crown grant. Iain and Norah MacLean purchased the lot from Harry Keefer in 1959 and commenced building a cottage which remains the property of the MacLean family.

Three more of these additional Hotel lots were sold to John Ashworth, one of George Ashworth's younger brothers. John had been a lawyer in Ontario before retiring to Victoria. In 1928 John and his wife Maggie built a small house across the lane from the Trites' log house, and they also bought the two adjoining lots on the side toward the hotel. However, John and Maggie did not come to Savary frequently, and during the 1930s the house was sold to Charles and Grace Hornsby. Charles had been so severely injured in WWI that at first he was thought to be dead, but after receiving medical attention he eventually recovered, except for a complete loss of vision. He married Grace, one of the women who had assisted him during his recovery in England. Charles and Grace arrived on Savary during the 1930s where Charles revealed a personality that earned him great respect from all who knew him. He led a life that made no concessions to his blindness. He would split his firewood with a wedge and maul and move the wood with a wheelbarrow which he was often seen pushing around the roads and trails. Charles and his dog would frequently walk to Harry Keefer's Post Office at the wharf end of the island to pick up mail. When Charles went swimming, his dog would run up and down the beach barking, giving him the direction home. Charles was also an enthusiastic card player, using braille cards. Frequently, George Ashworth, Charles, Grace and Grace's sister Blanche, who spent time with them, would make a foursome for bridge. On the morning of April 13, 1937, after one such evening, Charles walked over to the Hotel to chat with George and discovered that his friend had passed away a few hours earlier. As Charles and Grace grew older, their house was rented for a number of years during the late 1940s and early 1950s and then was purchased by William and Ruth Turney in 1954.

Between 1928 and 1930, several lots were sold in the row behind the beachfront lots that face Hernando. Proceeding westward, toward the interior from the current boat launch ramp, the first of these lots was the one sold to Mrs. Glynes. The Glynes family had spent summers at Savary camping at the wharf end, prior to establishing themselves at Indian Point. Jim Spilsbury was involved in building the initial tent platform on the lot which evolved, in several stages over a number of years, into a permanent cottage. Jim, by then in his late twenties, was honing the knowledge and skills that would soon earn an international reputation for the radiotelephones built by his company. Around 1930, however, he still found time for other activities that included construction, and in partnership with his father Ashton, property sales. In 1937 Jim married Mrs. Glynes' daughter, Glenys. In 1938, after Mrs. Glynes passed away, Glenys and Jim Spilsbury inherited the property which is now owned by their daughter who recently replaced the original structure with a new cottage.

The adjoining lot away from the current boat launch ramp was acquired by Mrs. Perry. Divorced and living in Victoria, Mrs. Perry was sufficiently enamoured of the Glynes cottage – at the time a tent platform with half-height walls – that, around 1930, she arranged with Jim Spilsbury to purchase the lot next door and build a similar structure for her. As with the Glynes', Mrs. Perry's cottage was enhanced over the years with complete walls and a permanent roof. Later, in 1945, she also purchased a beachfront lot but did not build on it, and the lot was subsequently sold to the Aileen Goddard family. Mrs. Perry continued to use her cottage until the 1950s. After her death, the cottage had other owners and fell into extreme disrepair for a number of years. It was eventually purchased by the current owners and named 'Nick of Time' to commemorate the timely intervention that saved the cottage from collapse.

Three more lots along the same road, now Spilsbury Drive, were also sold about the same time. By 1932 the lot that was two beyond Mrs. Perry was owned by Mme. Edith Stuart, the lot several lots beyond that was owned by Miss Amelia McAusland, and the lot next to that was owned by the Misses Dorothy and Agnes Miller. By 1960 the only cottage on these lots was the one built for Miss McAusland during the 1930s. By the 1950s Miss McAusland, now elderly, was noted for her eccentricities. Her companion, Miss Holmes, always appeared in black clothes while Miss McAusland favoured the striped coveralls and cap of a railroad engineer. They frequently dined at the Hotel, which required Andy Rhodes to chauffeur them both ways in the Hotel limousine. Miss McAusland stopped coming to Savary during the 1960s and her cottage, after a couple of intervening owners, became part of Will Thomson's establishment.

Between 1928 and 1930, although only one cottage had been built on the row of beachfront lots facing Hernando, a number of these lots had been purchased. Irene Long, wife of Powell River pharmacist Charles Long, acquired three of them. The Long family had a cottage near Green's Point for many years, and Irene Long also owned, from 1933 until her death in 1951, the Savary Inn at the foot of the wharf. The inn was managed for a few years by one of her two daughters, Lorraine, while she was married to Val Nichols. Around 1950, these three Indian Point lots were sold to the Spilsburys, who sold them to the Thomas Simons family in 1969. Further along the beach, away from Indian Point, the three lots adjoining Irene Long's lots were purchased jointly by Ferdinand Drexel and his wife's cousin, Alexander Wilson. The latter was well known in Vancouver as one of the founders of the local Seaforth Highlanders Regiment and was its Brigadier-General during WWI. At that time, Ferdinand Drexel had recently acquired a house near the tennis courts at the wharf end of Savary,

which is still owned by his descendants, and after some years the three Indian Point lots were sold to Canada Trust to add to the holdings associated with Archie Stevenson. After Archie Stevenson's death the lots were purchased, in 1959, by Will Thomson.

Further along the beach, a single lot had been purchased by Edith Forester, who in later years taught school on Vancouver Island. She built a modest cottage on her lot. In 1932 this was the only cottage along the beach facing Hernando. Some years later the adjoining lot on the Indian Point side was bought by Lottie Lawrence, a friend of some of the artists who attended the Vancouver Art School classes held at the Hotel during the 1930s. In 1944 Alex and Lois Fisher purchased Edith Forester's lot and cottage and, having tracked down Lottie Lawrence, purchased the adjoining lot in 1947. During the 1940s the Fishers employed their Savary neighbour, Charles Lynn Bates, as well as Bill Mace from the wharf end to expand and improve the original cottage. During the 1950s, they acquired additional adjoining lots.

Charles Lynn Bates was a civil engineer who, around 1930, bought a lot further west along the beach from the lots that became the Fishers'. Later in the 1930s he acquired the adjoining lot to the west and then, in the 1940s after retiring from the PGE Railway, built a house on his original lot. Later came outbuildings – one for the 1930s model Ford he used on Savary for transportation, and a boathouse to which he added a track and carriage for winching his 14' boat. Being qualified, competent and resourceful, he was willing to undertake maintenance and building jobs to help out the Fishers and others. In 1961, then eighty years old, C.L. Bates sold his property to Dr. Archie and Marjorie Johnson.

The beachfront lot beyond Bates, at the west end of the sand beach facing Hernando, along with the two lots behind it, were bought around 1930 by Dr. Ernie Gillies. Dr. Gillies, like Ferdinand Drexel, had recently purchased a house at the wharf end and soon relinquished his three Indian Point lots. They were purchased around 1938 by Allan and Ruth MacDougall of Vancouver who built a house on the beachfront lot which they called 'The Sheiling'. In 1967 the house was acquired from the MacDougalls' daughter by Peter and Arden Manson who were friends of the Jaffary family. In 1948 the Aileen Goddard family purchased Mrs. Perry's beachfront lot, which was about halfway back to Indian Point from the Mansons' house, and over the next five years they acquired the four adjoining lots toward Indian Point and had a cottage built.

By the 1950s the Vancouver Reliance Company had sold about 60 lots around

Indian Point, and the Hotel complex and 10 cottages had been built. The Vancouver Reliance Company was still the major landowner, holding the bulk of D.L. 1377 comprising about 450 surveyed lots and an unsubdivided area. Around 1954, island logging operations extended toward the cottages at Indian Point. The resulting depredation caused dismay, and motivated Archie Stevenson to arrange, in 1956, for Canada Trust to buy from the Vancouver Reliance Company all its property in D.L. 1377, the Indian Point end of Savary. Covenants to limit the removal of trees and to require a minimum building value of \$1500 were applied to these lots. In 1958 Archie Stevenson passed away. Acting for the estate, Canada Trust offered the lots for sale. Although the preference was to sell all the lots in one transaction, Canada Trust separated the lots that had been acquired from Ferdinand Drexel and Alexander Wilson and, in 1959, sold them to Will Thomson, who began to build his family cottage. At the same time, on the other side of Indian Point, Iain and Norah MacLean were also building their family cottage on the lot acquired from Harry Keefer. Thus, by 1959, there were a dozen cottages built or under construction at Indian Point. Later in 1959, Canada Trust sold all the remaining lots and land to Al Taylor, who, within months, was demonstrating his enthusiasm and ability to showcase their beauty and charm to prospective purchasers. Before long many lots were sold, and a new chapter in the story of Indian Point was well launched.