

# HISTORIANA

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THE BOWEN ISLAND HISTORIANS

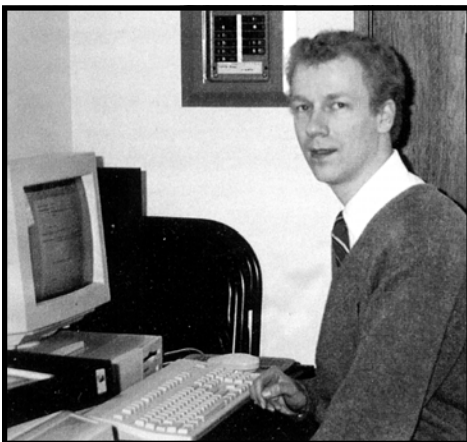
Spring 2002

## HISTORIANS ENTERING A NEW ERA

The Historians recently decided to take the organization to a new level through the professional development of engaging programs, projects and systems at the Museum and Archives.

It has been ten years since the first grant was awarded to the Historians, enabling the purchase of our first computer (see below). In that time, the volunteers with the organization have accomplished many goals, including the completion of the Museum and Archives in its present form.

With this important



*Trevor May at the keyboard of the Historians' first computer, 1992.*

framework laid, the next logical step in its development is the hiring of professional staff for the Museum and Archives. On March 4th, 2002, the Historians presented the Bowen Island Municipal Council with a grant application that requests funding to take on one part-time Archivist and one part-time Museum Curator. If awarded, this will assist in the evolution of the Historians mandate: "to promote interest in and the study of the history of Bowen Island."

At a recent Executive meeting, the Board prioritized the Museum, the Archives, the Publishing Project and the Education Program as the four major areas of development. With professional guidance, the backlog of un-accessioned artifacts and documents will be updated and computerized, the Museum will draw

in more *Continued on page 2...*

## BEARY, MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Last year, the Museum's Beary Merry Christmas featured more than 70 bears, but this year, nearly 150 Teddy Bears adorned the Christmas exhibit at the Museum. It was hard to choose a favourite. Was it the collection of tiny bears in the Bear Zoo? Was it the inch high miniature bear sitting on a chair? Was it the handsome mink bear newly made from Elaine Cunningham's old coat? Was it Harry Potter or was it Edward from New Zealand? The four classes from our Community School loved the exhibit as did more than 100 adult visitors who came in to see. The exhibit this coming Christmas will be open several more days to allow everyone more time to see this collection of Teddy Bears of the world! The Museum heartily thanks those

community members for a versatile exhibition schedule, the Publishing Project will continue to be developed and the Education Program will be marketed and tailored for eventual sale to British Columbia school boards.

*The following is an excerpt from the recent Application for Funding to the Bowen Island Municipality.*

Over the course of 35 years, the Society has accomplished many of its objectives; it has collected and preserved Bowen's historical materials, constructed the building that now houses the Museum and Archives, published the only comprehensive historical book on Bowen, developed an Education Program, and created exhibits to showcase the growing collection.

With this groundwork laid, the time has come to take the Museum and Archives to the next level, by engaging the community through relevant programming, exhibits, and artifact collection.

It is with great care and dedication that volunteers with the Historians have collected and preserved Bowen's unique historical materials to benefit

our community's heritage. Without the Historians, many of these historical resources would have been lost or placed in regional archives. When the initial collection of materials began to fill the closets of Members' homes, it was decided that a dedicated storage space, or Archives, be constructed.

Through bake sales, raffles, grants and donations, the Society finally raised enough money to erect the building that now houses the collection. This success led to the founding of the Museum on the lower level of the building, and eventually to the restoration of the logger's cabin on the same site. With the completion of the initial building phase, the Society now had a physical base from which to develop its mandate.

Community members became aware of the collection, and began to take an interest in their own historical objects and memories of Bowen.

This interest was also due, in large part, by the Historians' commission of a book on Bowen history. Bowen Island: 1872-1972 was published in 1974, and remains the only comprehensive historical book about our community.

The collection of

historical materials at the Museum and Archives has continued to grow, and the Historians have showcased many of these objects through museum exhibits. Executed by dedicated volunteers, the exhibits have been successful by drawing in interested community members, but have been unable to engage the community on a larger level. This lack of public interest has become the recent focus of the Historians, and the organization has been reaching out to the community through its annual Beary Merry Christmas exhibit, the recent Remembrance Day exhibit, and an Education Program that utilizes British Columbia's Grade 5 curriculum.

These recent steps toward engaging the community have relied on dedicated volunteers and students hired on grants. While successful, the Museum and Archives needs to take the next step, by moving towards a sustainable system that will be capable of accessioning and presenting materials, with

# You Never Know What Might Turn Up Next

When the phone rang on a busy Saturday morning my first response was "Bother!" Not for long. Was I home? Might he (Bruce Russell) deliver some Mannion things from John Wilmot? Indeed he might! One of our fondest wishes was about to be realized - a picture of Norah Mannion Wilmot. Not just a snapshot either, but a large framed and another of her husband, Alan Wilmot. Nor was this the end of the treasures. Along with the portraits was an autographed copy of the cookbook "Cooking for One, Bewildered", which she wrote and had published at the age of eighty-six. Not the one you may have or the recent republication, but what must have been the prototype.

Not long after, I received a phone call and then an e-mail from a researcher in Victoria who wanted to verify the existence of another of Bowen's pioneers, the Beckers, in 1890 from other sources than our Bowen book. This had been

requested by a family connection in Minnesota. It seems that early census records do not separate Bowen Island or other greater Vancouver communities from Vancouver. She wanted to know if we knew under



Norah Mannion Wilmot

what division she should look (if you've ever had to scroll through reams and reams of microfilm you will know what a daunting task that is). Unfortunately, the Becker's seem to have fallen through a crack in the records - they were too late in coming to Bowen

for one census and had already moved to Vancouver by the next. I'm sure they are there but it will take some searching to find them.

Being the curious archivist, I of course enquired if I might know who the person in Minnesota might be. Not only did she tell me - she passed on my address and I now I find myself in correspondence with a relative of Lucia Mobeck Becker, our valiant first postmistress. Perhaps by next Newsletter there will be further developments and the Becker fonds will be fatter.

Good things come in threes. The phone again. This time it was Mr. Pat Goode in Langley who wants to give us two standing brass ashtrays from the Lady Alexandra. Some years ago he also gave us the Union Steamship's seal which we cherish for its historic value and put to good use to validate PPP tickets. He informed me that he is

## GROWING UP ON BOWEN ISLAND IN THE 1930's &amp; 1940's

*(Excerpts from a taped interview with Joan Tennant, nee Billington)*

Who remembers the Lower Dance Hall? It was located at the edge of No. 1 Picnic Grounds, near the site of Sam Black's studio.

In summer, Joan (Billington) Tennant remembers going there to the Friday night dances, and enjoying the fish and chips sold nearby, but in winter the Lower Dance Hall became a community centre for the permanent residents. Teenagers used it for badminton two or three nights a week, and the whist drives were very popular with the adults. Since baby-sitters were non-existent, the whole family would come, the children stretching out on top of the coats piled on the benches when they became sleepy. Music was often a part of the fun. Sometimes there were visiting musicians like the country and western band, "*The Radio Rascals*," and Joan fondly remembers the wonderful square dances with callers Don German or Dot Crookall, and Ed Davis



*The Billington's Snug Cove cottage*

on the mouth organ.

One snowy winter, Joan remembers tobogganing with eleven others from the school down Government Road to the wharf, where they would make a perilous left turn and head up toward the Tearooms (there were very few cars on Bowen Island at the time!).

Some background... Joan Tennant's roots on Bowen Island run deep. Her grandmother moved to Bowen Island in the early

1890's to work for the Millers. She married Frederick Billington in 1901, and the couple moved to Bowen Island in 1905 to look after Isaac Miller's farm on a sharing basis. In 1909, they pre-empted the Grafton Bay property where Joan and John Tennant live part-time today. The second marriage of Joan's grandmother was to Pete Wood.

Joan's father spent most of his life on Bowen Island, working for the Union Steamship Company in

-Trish McGeer

## BOWEN ISLANDERS EMBARK ON CULTURAL PLANNING

*Press Release from Bowen Island Municipality* - Bowen Island residents will have several opportunities to help shape their cultural environment as part of a Bowen Island Cultural Master Planning project now underway. A Steering Committee and its consultants have organized a community survey, a series of focus groups for various stakeholders, and workshops for arts and cultural organizations. Later in the spring, after a draft plan has been prepared, there'll also be an opportunity for the community to comment on it. "We want to see if there's citizen support for BIM to promote something exciting in the arts and culture; so we'd like to see everyone participate in this planning," noted Steering Committee Chair Hamish Malkin.

The four-month planning project builds on an open workshop held last year at which key issues were identified to define the scope of the plan: support for arts and culture, facilities, staffing, advocacy, economic development, and cultural programming and education. BIM is preparing this plan to assist in establishing priorities for its support of arts and culture and in developing relationships, programs, and facilities for a ten-year period.

Members of the 15 person Steering Committee (have conducted) several hundred interviews (with Bowen residents).

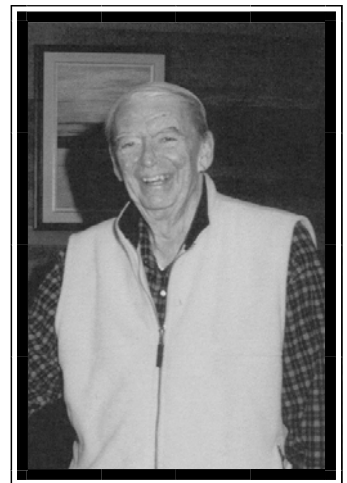
*The Historians' President Beverly Underhill is a Member of the Cultural Master*

### In Memoriam:

The Executive and Members were saddened by the death Charlie Wallace in October. Charlie was active with the Branch #150 of the Royal Canadian Legion and had many friends there. He was a dedicated member of the Bowen Island Memorial Garden Society and was a major contributor to the early success of the People, Plants and Places Tour. Charlie's super hamburgers were featured at the earliest PPP lunches. He was one of the moving forces helping to create a Bowen Golf Club. Another project which Charlie and Dolores hosted at their home was the loan service of medical equipment. He leaves his wife, Dolores and three children, Linda, Bruce and Sandra and three grand-children.

#### We will also miss:

Georgina Buchanan - October  
 Alec Clark - October  
 George Cumming - November  
 Robert Prittie - January  
 Beth Stephani - November  
 Henry Van Kervel - January  
 Horace Willing - December



*Charlie Wallace*

## WANTED!!

Do you like looking at photographs? The Archives is looking for someone who might like to spend a few hours a week - maybe two or three - helping us accession our backlog of photographs and enter them into the database so that they can be easily found and used. Like the Sorcerer's Apprentice they keep coming in - for which we are profoundly grateful, but like Alice "the faster I run the further I get behind." Don't let the word "database" frighten you. It's an easy thing to do; you just have to put the words into a form that is already there.

Or maybe you'd rather help accession the artifacts. We are behind there too. Our notebooks of forms are bursting and we've no time - or anyone - to enter them into the Artifact database.

The original letters that were used in writing the Bowen book need to complete the inventory so that we know what subjects are covered in each letter. This will help us do research quickly. There are a lot of wonderful stories in those letters that are hidden away. You know they are there, but what letter were they in???

We'd love to have you share our fun. Call Dorothy Lawson at 604-947-2655 on Tuesdays (10:00am - 5:00pm) or at home at 604-947-9526. We have an answering machine

## HISTORY MINDED GIFTS

The Museum Gift Shop is tiny - but it has lots of intriguing things. Among the selections, visitors will find the classic Bowen history, Bowen Island: 1872 - 1972, of course, but there's more: cards with historic photographs, Bowen Island samplers for needleworkers, the classic child's book, Seashore Alphabet, refrigerator magnets, T-shirts, sweatshirts, framed historic photos, and book bags. A small mailing charge will send telephone or e-

## GIVE US A CLIP!

Bowen Island news stories, obituaries, snapshots, scrapbooks, historical photographs and printed material! That's what the Archives are looking for. Over the years, many members have helped build the extensive clipping collection by cutting out stories from various newspapers. Anne Thompson, Alma Moore, Agnes Naud and many others have helped over the years. You can do this too! Current clippings or old ones - both may be useful to the Archives. Mail them to Box 97, Bowen Island - or drop them off in the outside envelopes at the Archives. Researchers of the future will thank you.

### **Bowen Island Historians - Museum and Archives**

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