



## Museum Muse

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### SHAWNIGAN LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*"OVER THIRTY YEARS IN THE COMMUNITY"*

2008 slipped by surprisingly fast and we are now well into a new year. Although regular newsletters were intended, only one was actually distributed last year. With the best of intentions we hope to add to that in 2009.

With our small, but devoted, group of volunteers we have accomplished a great deal. The office was completely renovated with new paint and carpet. This was the first update of the office since the museum opened in 1983. Filing cabinets were added to house our increasing archive collection. The map collection was catalogued and organized to make maps easier to access and currently our picture file is undergoing an organizational improvement. We are striving to digitize most of the archival collection to improve research capabilities. Although our space is limited, we have an excellent collection of Shawnigan Lake history, through archives and artifacts.

We were involved in many exciting events in 2008 including participating in the underwater search for the mill boat "Lady of the Lake", and later, the raising what was left of the "Shawnigan Queen" the launch from the old Shawnigan Beach Hotel.

Our EJ Hughes collection has grown again with the addition of furniture from Mr. Hughes' home and certificates from his art school. Another great donation is a wooden box (purpose unknown) addressed to one of the "British Colonels" that settled at Shawnigan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We appreciate these contributions which help keep the history of Shawnigan Lake alive and exciting.

Some displays have been upgraded and new historical power points are available for viewing in our theatre. Visitors to the museum have increased and, judging by the visitor log, their experience was good.

The Museum website has been completely revamped and now provides a lot of great information with some interactive opportunities. Please visit the website and check it out:

[www.shawniganlakemuseum.com](http://www.shawniganlakemuseum.com)

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

**Aitken and Fraser Store opened on its current site in 1938. W.E. Fraser had operated the mill store until it burned down. Archie Aitken had been a travelling grocery salesman.**

# PEOPLE WATCH

## Chief Justice Hunter

Gordon Hunter, born in 1863, practiced law in Victoria and eventually became the Chief Justice of British Columbia. Near the turn of the last century he bought an old house in Victoria, on Bellville at Oswego, which became known as the Judge's House. He also owned a large piece of property on the east side of Shawnigan Lake. Rockvale was built, in 1908, on four acres of land just south of Strathcona Hotel. There was a main house, guest houses and beautiful gardens with ponds and statues kept in shape by a group of Japanese gardeners.

Chief Justice Hunter is remembered for his "high order of ability and a rare combination of talent, powerful intelligence, penetrating eye and his formidable vocabulary".

Judge Hunter at Shawnigan Lake was apparently a bit more relaxed. One Shawnigan old-timer talked of his father spending time with Judge Hunter. His father would often row down from the North end of the lake to the Hunter's landing for lunch and/or a few drinks. There was a good garden on the property and Mrs. Hunter would load him up with preserves and relishes that she had made. Mrs. Hunter, even though a summer resident, was a good supporter and worker for the old Shawnigan Lake Athletic Association hall.

Another favourite activity of the men was to meet at the old hotel in the village for a few drinks. Hunter had a 12 cylinder Cadillac which was quite a sight to behold (in fact, he once drove the car over the Malahat in high gear). The men at the hotel would always enjoy having a look at this impressive machine. In one instance they counted all of the spark plugs and then raised a toast to spark plug number one, then spark plug number two etc. until they had thoroughly toasted the old car.

Another indication of his personality is demonstrated in his commission of a stone lion that was built on his Shawnigan property in the 1920's. The impressive lion, which still guards the lakefront today, was positioned so that its posterior pointed directly toward the legislative buildings in Victoria. This alignment was due to the fact that Judge Hunter was appalled at what he perceived to be the abuse of justice in Victoria. To further prove his belief that politicians were making an ass out of justice, the lion is an exact duplicate of the ones on the steps of the legislature. The lion was created by Shawnigan resident George Gibson, an architectural carver, who had done considerable work on Christ Church Cathedral and the legislative buildings in Victoria.

After Judge Hunter's death, Rockvale was used as a hotel until, through neglect, it fell into disrepair. After a short time as a riding school, it was taken over in 1959 by Mr. Curtis, formerly of Shawnigan School, who established the preparatory school Cliffside on the site. The old barn

was completely renovated to provide classrooms, a chapel and changing rooms. Hobby rooms and a library were opened in the tower. Just off the lakefront a small island called Treasure Island was accessible by the three rowboats and one inboard boat kept in the two boathouses.

Cliffside Preparatory School adopted the aforementioned lion as their school symbol. The school colours were green and gold. In 1977, Cliffside closed and the BC Lion's Society bought the property to house Camp Shawnigan a retreat for disabled children. Lakeside Preparatory Academy, an international boarding school, currently operates on this site as well.



## MUSEUM

The museum will host a variety of activities this year including:

*“An Evening with EJ Hughes”.* Pat Salmon will talk about Mr. Hughes and his art. A power point presentation will follow.  
Date: TBA

*Jul 1<sup>st</sup> - Seeds and Salt Theatre Company - founded under the direction of the Bamberton Historical Society will offer live, outdoor performances based on Island history. Not to be missed!*

*Jig knitting workshops. Make beautiful scarves for gifts*

*Wreath-making workshop - late fall.*

A history museum is a benefit to any community. However, it is essential to enlist the support of the community to ensure its ongoing success. We thank our members and volunteers who are already involved and encourage new members and volunteers to come forward. We welcome new ideas and new faces.

*“If not you, who? If not now, when?”*  
Talmud

Please share this newsletter with friends, family or anyone who might be interested in the history of Shawnigan Lake. Contact us:

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### **PLEASE NOTE:**

For administrative reasons we are adjusting our annual memberships to coincide with the calendar year. All memberships will now be due in January of each year. Adjustments will be made for new and renewal mid-year memberships