



# Museum Muse

OCTOBER 2011

**If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday.  
~Pearl Buck**

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## The Malahat

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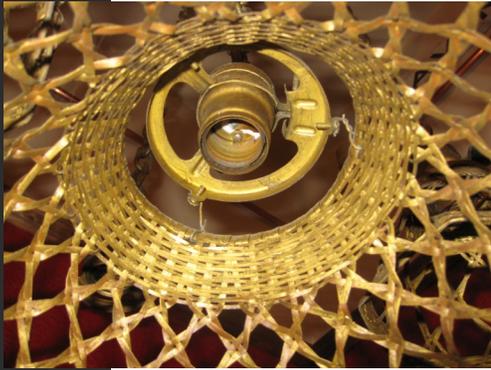
Prior to the Malahat highway there were two land routes to the Cowichan Valley. The first, known as the Goldstream Trail, was a five foot wide trail carved through the wilderness in 1862. Although this was upgraded, it never achieved the status of a real road. The second land route, which made the Cowichan Valley accessible by automobile, was the Old Victoria Road. This road passed by the Goldstream Hotel then carried on out to the Sooke Lakes before following the east side of Shawnigan Lake to Cobble Hill and on to Cowichan Bay. Cowichan Valley residents began petitioning in the late 1800's for a *new* road.

The Malahat Drive was built in response to pressure from the increasing number of residents and automobile owners who demanded that the Government provide a decent, direct route to access up-island communities.



The new 17 miles of highway over the mountain were constructed in 1910 for approximately \$200 000. The first vehicle to take the trip over the new Malahat road did so in January 1911 through 18 inches of snow. The Native name "Malahat" was officially adopted in the summer of 1911. The new highway was not for the faint of heart. The original gravel road was mostly one lane with turn-outs so that vehicles could pull over when cars were approaching from the other direction. The road was steep and narrow, with no railings, and with stretches that went on forever with no place to turn around. Accidents were frequent and brakes were often destroyed in a single trip. Many old-timers can tell stories of harrowing trips over the Malahat. At the entrance to Goldstream Park there was a tight curve known as "Suicide Corner" that was the scene of many accidents. Fortunately for us the 'Hat was "modernized" in 1956.

Even in the early days the Malahat was the scene of regular speed traps. In those days the speed limit was 12 miles per hour. If you exceeded the limit you would receive a \$20 fine which was a princely sum at that time...and apparently it was impossible to argue your way out of paying. (Continued on pg. 3)



### WHAT IS IT?

Can you name this artifact in the Shawnigan Lake Museum? The correct answer will be announced in the November issue of the Museum Muse!

People tend to forget that the word “history” contains the word “story”.  
~Ken Burns

## *The Museum's New Roof*

The Shawnigan Lake Museum recently got a new roof! Thanks to a generous donation by the Vancouver Foundation, the museum was able to remove the old roof, which was nearly thirty years old, and replace it with a brand new one, which should hopefully keep the exhibits (and volunteers) warmer and dryer!

## SHAWNIGAN LAKE'S MILEPOST

The Shawnigan Lake Museum has recently put in a new milepost showing the distance from the museum to various points of interest in Shawnigan Lake, such as Memory Island Provincial Park and the Kinsol Trestle. The milepost is complete with a cut-out of a crow at the top because of the fact that the distance to each location is measured “as the crow flies.” The museum’s milepost is modeled after that of the milepost that was once on the Malahat Highway that showed the distances to Tokyo, Victoria, and other such cities.



## The Malahat (Cont. from pg 1)

The Malahat Drive is a scenic route through coastal rainforest, old growth forest and over mountain tops that provide spectacular views for travelers. Bliss Carmen, Canada's first poet laureate, was inspired enough after his trip over the mountain to write a poem titled "Malahat". In 1911, only the privileged owned a vehicle. By the 1920s, cars replaced many family horses. Today, thousands of commuters use the route daily to access jobs in Victoria. And, as they say, "history repeats itself"...most residents today would agree that we are due for a new or, at the very least, an up-graded route to the Cowichan Valley.



### *This Month in Canadian History...*

In October 1874, William D. Lawrence, the biggest wooden ship ever built in the Maritimes, was launched in Maitland, Nova Scotia.

## Remembrance Day Exhibit

Starting October 15th, the Shawnigan Lake Museum will be opening a new temporary exhibit for Remembrance Day 2011 that will run until November 20th. The new exhibit will be dedicated to telling the story of Shawnigan Lake's involvement in Canadian wars. Many items will be on display in the new exhibit such as helmets and ration books, as well as some "touchable" artifacts, too! Please drop by and learn a little bit about the men and women from Shawnigan Lake who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

## Did You Know?

**The Malahat turned 100 years old this January?**

**Happy Birthday Malahat!**

## Shawnigan Lake Museum

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# Membership!

**Are you a museum member? If you are, have you renewed yet? If you aren't, drop by and see us as we would love to organize a membership for you. Membership to the museum is only \$10 for an individual or \$15 for a family, and you receive a 2012 museum calendar, free!**

## Movie Night at the Museum!

**The Shawnigan Lake Museum will be holding a movie night for museum members on Wednesday, October 26th. Doors will open at 6:30pm and the movie will start at 7pm. Please note that due to limited seating, you must RSVP prior to the event by emailing [shawniganlakemuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:shawniganlakemuseum@shaw.ca) Admission is by donation.**

**The movie that will be shown is “October Sky” (1999):**

*In a 1950's mining town called Coalwood, Homer Hickam is a kid with only one future in sight, to work in the local coalmine like his father. However in October 1957, everything changes when the first artificial satellite, Sputnik goes into orbit. With that event, Homer becomes inspired to learn how to build rockets. With his friends and the local nerd, Homer sets to do just that by trial and a lot of error. Unfortunately, most of the town and especially Homer's father thinks that they are wasting their time. Only one teacher in the high school understands their efforts and lets them know that they could become contenders in the national science fair with college scholarships being the prize. Now the gang must learn to perfect their craft and overcome the many problems facing them as they shoot for the stars. Courtesy of: [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)*

**We hope to see you there!**