

Newsletter

"A life not documented is a life that within a generation or two will largely be lost to memory."



President's Message



Whenever I see Sea Island School, I'm reminded of how deeply those early school years shaped my life. The May 25th year Celebration brought those memories to life through the stories shared with many I

hadn't seen in years, though being together made it feel as if no time had passed.

Enjoy the Celebration photos this issue. Plan to join us next year or find us at several events we attend throughout the year, some of which are described in *The ongoing work we do!* below.

Upcoming Events reminds all members of importance of attending and voting at the virtual SIHS Annual General Meeting, October 15, 2026, at 7 p.m. via Zoom. We'll host a Coffee Chat the following hour, an opportunity to contribute ideas for future SIHS activities.

For those of you living on Vancouver Island or islands nearby, we are excited to host an in-person

Coffee Chat in Nanaimo September 18, 2026. See details this issue. Hope to see you there!

While many of us handle record-keeping as part of our roles, we are seeking a member to manage the minutes of our monthly meetings and AGM, which are recorded and transcribed electronically. Contact me if you want to join this dynamic team at eunice@genbug.ca.

We are saddened to learn that several Sea Island friends have passed away. We honour their memory and the stories they shared.

Eunice Robinson



President
Sea Island Heritage Society

The ongoing work we do!

Springtime always is a whirlwind of activities for the Society. As you can see below, this year was no different. The Society was extremely busy throughout the Spring, and a bit into the summer. Here are highlights of what we've been up to.

Unveiling of the Vampire Pavilion



On April 1, 2026, members of the Society attended the long-awaited unveiling of the new Vampire pavilion at the Comox Air Force Museum on Vancouver Island. The 1948 DeHavilland Vampire Mark III, tail number 17031 was stationed at Sea Island for eight years and flown by Barbara Nielsen (née Thomas) and Darryl Thomas' father during WWII. It had been in storage for 26 years. You can view a short film created for the Sea Island Heritage Society, documenting the journey of Canada's first jet on its journey to public display on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVXyjodkjeo>.

Midtown Press & Marpole Tea Book Launch



On April 11, 2026, David England and Eunice Robinson attended the Midtown Press and Marpole Tea Book Launch hosted by the Marpole Historical Society. The event was held at St. Augustine Church in Marpole. Sea Island Heritage Society was invited due to the interest in Bill McNulty's book, *Sea Island British Columbia The Beginning of Richmond*. There were a few authors who each spoke about their published books. Although not a 'real' author, Eunice was invited to speak about Bill's book and share with the audience. They had also brought along a copy of Doreen Braverman's book. David took several photos which he shared with the Marpole Historical Society, much to their appreciation. A couple of people came up

to share their memories of visiting Sea Island back in the years when the Marpole Bridge was the link to Sea Island. This was also an opportunity for the authors to sell their books. We did not sell any of Bill's books at this event but were very happy to have been invited.

Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives' Community in Bloom

On May 2, 2026, Eunice Robinson and Barbara Nielsen represented SIHS at the Community in Bloom — Richmond Services Expo, an annual event presented by Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives (RCRG) and

Lansdowne Centre. Held in Lansdowne Centre's Kiosk Court, the spring showcase brought together residents, local agencies and volunteer groups. Visitors showed strong interest in the Society's work, asking many questions about Sea Island's history and heritage, which we were pleased to answer.

Society's 25th anniversary celebration

On May 23, 2026, the Society held its 25th anniversary at the Sea Island School gym. Thanks to our volunteers and guests the day was a great success!

Over ninety guests showed up to help us celebrate, including Chak AU, Member of Parliament for Richmond Centre-Marpole and Melissa Zhang of the Steveston Historical Society. Some descendants of Sea Islanders brought their families to learn about their ancestors. All were officially welcomed by the Society's president, Eunice Robinson, and invited to socialize and enjoy the numerous displays. You can see a few photos of the event starting on page 8.

Doors Open Richmond 2026

On Sunday, June 7, 2026, the Sea Island Heritage Society proudly participated in Doors Open Richmond. For the day, we opened the doors of our Heritage Centre at Sea Island School from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., welcoming visitors eager to learn more about the rich history and heritage of Sea Island. This year we were included as a stop on one of the official Doors Open bus tour routes. To learn more about our day and view a few photos of the event, go to page 12.

Burkeville Daze 2026

On Sunday, June 28, 2026, the Society participated in Burkeville Daze 2026. Although competing with the Canada-South Africa FIFA soccer game, we still had a great group of people stop by, especially once the game was over – yes, Canada won that game! In honour of our 25th anniversary, we set up a photo booth. The Society sent out a digital photo to the few families and individuals who took advantage of the free photo booth. To view a few photos of the event, go to page 13.

Celebrating 50 Years of Steveston History

On Sunday, July 26, 2026, the Society's VP, David England attended the Steveston Historical Society's 50th Anniversary celebration where he took photographs of the event. What a wonderful day it was! The festivities took place in the park beside the Post Office at the corner of Moncton Street and First Avenue in the heart of Historic Steveston. Despite a few showers, the weather certainly didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the many people who came out to celebrate this important milestone.



Figure 1. [Entrance to the Steveston Historical Society's 50th celebration]. (July 26, 2026). (Source: David England).

The afternoon began with the powerful sounds of traditional Japanese taiko drumming, setting the stage for a memorable celebration. Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie then officially welcomed everyone before joining members of the Steveston



Figure 2. [Taiko drummers at the Steveston Historical Society's 50th anniversary celebration]. (July 26, 2026). (Source: David England).

Historical Society's Board for a ceremonial cake cutting. It wasn't long before slices of anniversary cake were being shared with the crowd—a sweet way to celebrate fifty years of preserving Steveston's remarkable history. There was plenty to see and do throughout the afternoon. Visitors enjoyed demonstrations of gyotaku, the traditional Japanese art of fish printing and explored exhibits presented by the Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site, the Steveston Historical Society, and the Pioneers of Steveston.

One of the highlights was chatting with longtime Steveston residents, including Harold Steves, who shared artifacts and stories from Steveston's early days. These personal connections reminded everyone that history isn't just found in museums—it's also carried by the people who have lived it. It was a fitting celebration of the Steveston Historical Society's first fifty years. Filled with music, history, conversation, and community spirit, it was a day to remember—and one that proved not even a little rain could wash away.

Request for assistance –

Japanese Canadian Legacies Monument Project

With the recent events around the World and in the United States, the great American historian, Heather Cox Richardson recently said that “heritage and historical societies” have a large role to play in making sure that history and heritage are preserved. It is what the Sea Island Heritage Society strives to do. Although summers are usually quieter, we still get interesting requests like two recent ones.

On August 6, 2026 a research assistant for the Japanese Legacies Monument Project (<https://iclegacies.com/programs/monument>) out of the University of Victoria sent us an email and attachment saying she was writing short bios for Sea Island and Eburne, giving a brief overview of the general history of the communities focusing on the Japanese Canadian history (in 250 words or less), and asked if we



Figure 3. [Steveston Historical Society's 50th cake cutting: LtoR: Melissa Zhang, Cheryl Grattan, Linda Barnes, Joanne Teraguchi and Mayor Malcom Brodie]. (July 26, 2026). (Source: David England).

could review her bios to make sure no important history or details were left out. Of course, the Society gladly assisted!

Judy Rutch (née McRoberts), descendant of Hugh McRoberts

On August 13, 2026, the Society received an email from Judy Rutch (née McRoberts) from Brisbane, Australia. Judy is a descendant of the Hugh McRoberts' family. Her great-great grandfather, James Chambers McRoberts was the brother of Hugh McRoberts from Sea Island. Both Hugh and James first travelled to Australia from Ireland together. James stayed while Hugh came to Canada. Judy read about Hugh McRoberts' exploits in Canada. She provided some information and had a few questions. The genealogists in our midst will be connecting with Judy to both share and glean new information on the McRoberts family.

Sea Island Heritage Society Fonds – Richmond Archives

On August 20, 2026, members of the Society handed over the administration documents for the first 25 years of its existence to the City of Richmond Archives to create the Sea Island Heritage Society Fonds. The documents included annual reports, financial reports, meeting and AGM minutes, along with an electronic copy of the newsletters up to the end of 2025.

Fundraising

SALE OF 18-MONTH CALENDAR (2026-2027)



In honour of the Sea Island Heritage Society's **25th anniversary**, our calendar fundraiser is back.

You can get a copy of our 18-month, 2026-2027 calendar full of photos from Sea Island.

The cost is:

- \$15.00 if picked up.
- \$20.00 if mailed to you anywhere in Canada.

If you want a calendar, please send us an email at

info@seaislandhome.org.

Upcoming Events

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)



Calling on all members to join us at the virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held on **October 15, 2026**, via Zoom (email notice forthcoming).

Just like our AGM 2025, this will be an **evening event** combined with our monthly Coffee Chat. The AGM will start at 7 p.m. followed by the Coffee Chat. The whole evening event will be held from **7 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

Current members can vote on SIHS matters.

COFFEE CHATS

Coffee Chats are SIHS events that offer opportunities online and in-person to engage in fun, interactive activities where participants share stories, ask questions and learn about the on-going heritage of Sea Island, Richmond, BC. They are open to the public, inviting those interested in the history and heritage of Sea Island to join the conversation.

An in-person Coffee Chat will be held in Nanaimo, Friday, September 18, 2026, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. See details in the ad below.

Online Zoom Coffee Chats will be held in October and November 2026.

- The October Coffee Chat will follow the SIHS AGM October 15, 2026, at 7 p.m. We hope you will join us for both the AGM and the Coffee Chat where we will reflect on the past year and explore the future work of the SIHS.
- The November Coffee Chat will be held on November 19, 2026, from 10 a.m. to noon. Join us and share your knowledge and experiences of Sea Island while we remember our veterans with pride.



Information about upcoming Zoom Coffee Chats will be promoted on Facebook and via email to those on our contact list. If you received this newsletter from the SIHS, you are on the list. If you have joined our CCs in the past, we use the same link each time. Send a message to David England at davidwengland911@gmail.com if you need the Zoom link.



The Sea Island Heritage Society
Is inviting you to its NANAIMO in person Coffee Chat

Friday September 18, 2026

Where? Beban Park Social Center Room 1

2300 Bowen Road Nanaimo, B, C,

1PM - 3PM

Learn about the Vampire Jet, once stationed on Sea Island and now permanently housed in the Comox Heritage Air Park. Watch the Video Made April 1, 2026, commemorating completion of a permanent cover for the aircraft. Find out who's Parent flew one of these aircrafts. Other Displays as well. All FREE

PLEASE RSVP at info@seaislandhome.org by Sept 11, 2026 if attending

Society's 25th Anniversary Celebration (May 23, 2026)

What a great day! With a floor plan in hand, our volunteers quickly set up the displays and tables to greet the guests. And shortly after 11 a.m. the crowd started to arrive. They were greeted at the door, handed a memento and encouraged to tour the displays.





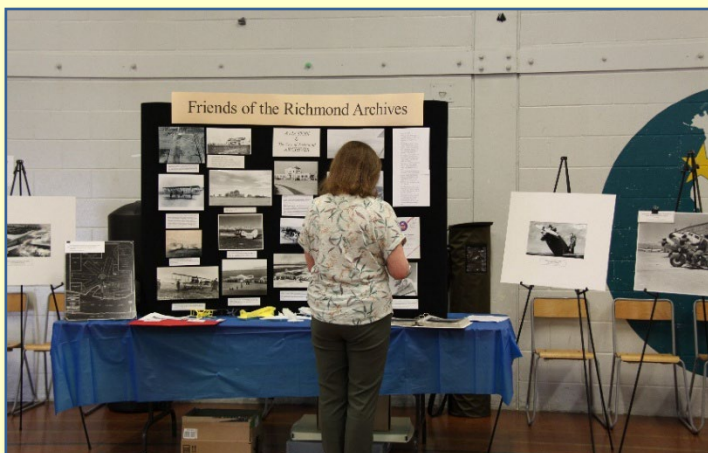
Eunice, our President, welcomed the guests. Some socialized and had lunch while others went on a tour of the Sea Island School. Some guests learned that their grandparents were neighbours, while others sat at the different display tables and viewed the hard work of the Society's volunteers through the years.



Dick McClellan and Doug Eastman hosted guests at the RCAF Station Sea Island display table and took interested guests on a tour of the Sea Island School.



The Friends of Richmond Archives (FOTRA) set up a display about early aviation on Sea Island. Guests also tested their knowledge of Sea Island in a new interactive display, where they learned that once upon a time, Sea Island attempted to secede from Richmond.





All in all, our guests came to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Society & enjoyed a great day!



Doors Open Richmond

(June 7, 2026)

On Sunday, June 7, 2026, the Sea Island Heritage Society proudly participated in Doors Open Richmond, an annual community celebration that invites residents and visitors alike to discover the people, places, and stories that make Richmond unique.



For the day, we opened the doors of our Heritage Centre at Sea Island School from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., welcoming visitors eager to learn more about the rich history and heritage of Sea Island. Throughout the day, guests explored our exhibits, asked questions, shared memories and discovered the important role Sea Island has played in the development of Richmond.

This year was especially exciting as we were included as a stop on one of the official Doors Open bus tour routes. At one memorable point, a group of fourteen visitors arrived simultaneously. While that number may not sound

overwhelming, anyone familiar with our cozy space at Sea Island School can appreciate that it quickly became a lively and engaging gathering. The close quarters created a wonderfully captive audience, leading to enthusiastic conversations and a genuine interest in the stories we shared.

As in previous years, our participation proved to be a tremendous success. Events such as Doors Open provide invaluable opportunities to connect with the community, promote awareness of local heritage and inspire appreciation for the unique history of Sea Island. We were delighted by the interest shown by visitors and grateful for the many meaningful conversations that took place throughout the day.

We look forward to opening our doors once again and sharing the stories of Sea Island with new visitors during Doors Open Richmond 2027.



Burkeville Daze

(June 28, 2026)

On June 28, 2026, the Society participated in Burkeville Daze, the annual family-oriented summer festival hosted by the Sea Island Community Association at Burkeville Park (1060 Catalina Cres) in Richmond from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. The weather was perfect to celebrate the start of the summer.



This year, as part of our 25th anniversary celebration, we decided to set up a free photo booth where families or individuals could have their picture taken and receive a digital copy of the photo. We supplied a few props to have fun with the photos.



With the Canada-South Africa FIFA soccer game going on at almost the same time, the attendance to the Society's table started out a bit slow and picked up as Canada won and people came out in their soccer shirts and Canadian flags. As usual, the binders containing the information about the houses of Burkeville and the class photo binders were a great hit with the crowd.



A few dignitaries of different levels of government stopped by to chat and have their picture taken.

City of Richmond: Alice Wong (councillor), Malcom Brodie (mayor), Bill McNulty (councillor) and Chauk Au, MP for Richmond Centre-Marpole.



How your newsletter stories come to life!

Have you ever read one of our stories and wondered, **“How on earth did they find all that out?”**

Well, there’s a bit of detective work involved!

Five years ago, we launched our quarterly newsletter to share the stories, photographs and treasures tucked away in the Society’s Collection. Not everyone is on social media, but most of us have email—so a newsletter seemed like a pretty good way to bring Sea Island history right to your inbox.

What started with one feature story and a few historical tidbits has grown into two or three feature stories in every issue, along with Society news, upcoming events and our **“In Loving Memory”** section.

So, how does a story actually make it onto the page?

It usually starts with you. A question, a comment, a photograph, a name—or sometimes a “Hey, did you know...?”—can send us down a fascinating historical rabbit hole.

From there, the hunt begins!

We start digging. The editors work with our archivist to see what treasures the Society’s Collection can reveal. Sometimes we strike gold. Other times, we find one tantalizing clue and have to start hunting!

We follow the trail. We search beyond our own collection, checking sources such as the Richmond Archives, Vancouver Archives, Nikkei National Museum, Royal BC Museum, Library and Archives Canada, Ancestry.ca and plenty of other places.

We ask questions. Sometimes the best information isn’t in a file cabinet. We talk to family members, former residents, and people connected to the story. Interviews might happen over coffee, around a kitchen table—or on Zoom.

Then come the pictures. We search for photographs in our Collection and elsewhere, track down permissions and, when necessary, send our volunteers out with their cameras to fill in the gaps.

We write... and rewrite! As the clues come together, the story begins to take shape. There are usually several drafts, plenty of editing and the occasional surprise that sends us back to the research.

Finally, the test! When we think we’ve got it right, the story is handed over to fellow volunteers to proofread and offer suggestions. Only then does it earn its place in the newsletter.

And that’s how a few names, dates, photographs and clues can turn into a story about the people and places that made Sea Island what it is today. Throughout the research, interviews, requests to other organizations, the editors continue to author the story, often having multiple drafts.

So next time you read one of our stories, remember: there’s a little detective work behind everyone and you never know where the next clue will come from!

We encourage all of you to join us in writing some of the stories about the history and heritage of Sea Island. We understand not everyone is a writer but send us a draft at info@seaislandhome.org and we will work with you to refine it into a story worth adding to our newsletters.

Gwendolyn Minnie Murphy (née Patterson) – A Teacher's Story



Gwendolyn Minnie Murphy (née Patterson), a much-loved teacher at Sea Island Elementary, was born March 7, 1902, in Calgary, Alberta. Her name was synonymous with Grades 4 and 5 (and earlier, the primary grades) and someone who cared immensely for her students.

One might say she was “old style,” insisting on having her students cross their arms on their desks and lay their heads on them for a short nap after lunch. She would then read them a story—a way of calming down after a raucous lunch period. (Thank you, Eunice Robinson, for your remembrance.)

Her parents hailed from England: her father, Harry Patterson, was born in London (1879) and her mother, Edythe Annie Leece, in Liverpool (1878). At some point the family emigrated to Canada, first Manitoba, Alberta, and then British Columbia and in 1921, their daughter, Gwendolyn Minnie, found herself at the marriage altar with Irvine (Urban) John Murphy in the Methodist minister's residence in Chilliwack, British Columbia. Miss Patterson's age read '21', but she was still 19! And, peculiar to the times, the marriage certificate really did read: 'Can

the bridegroom read and write? Can the bride read and write?' And, yes, they both could.

Having already attended Vancouver Normal School in 1919-1920 and achieving her *Permanent First Class Teaching Certificate*, Mrs. Murphy decided to put her qualification aside for 18 years of 'being a mom' and raising two sons, Ralph E. and John Leland, and a daughter, Doris L. And, it may be added, another daughter, Vivian, yet to be substantiated. Her husband, a CNR patrolman, was “on the rails” for long periods of time—44 years to be exact. It was not until their marriage dissolved in 1939, at age 37, that she took up employment as a housekeeper in Vancouver. It must have been a difficult time on her own raising three (four) children and trying to earn a living at the same time. By 1942 her children were of an age to fend for themselves, as the saying goes, so she resurrected her teaching certificate and filled a position at Lord Byng School in Steveston, Richmond, British Columbia.

After almost five years at Lord Byng, it was on November 26, 1946, that a fire broke out in the school, thought to have started in the furnace room. Temporary accommodation on double shifts was allocated to Lulu Island Bridgeport Elementary School grounds for the 140 children affected, all of whom were from Burkeville. This was a devastating disruption for all concerned—teachers, families and the school board combined. Mrs. Murphy's grade two *Register of Pupils* below shows first term in 1946 at Lord Byng (terminated by the fire November 26, 1946) and second term in 1947 at

what was by then dubbed the “Burkeville School”. Plans for a new school were put in motion.

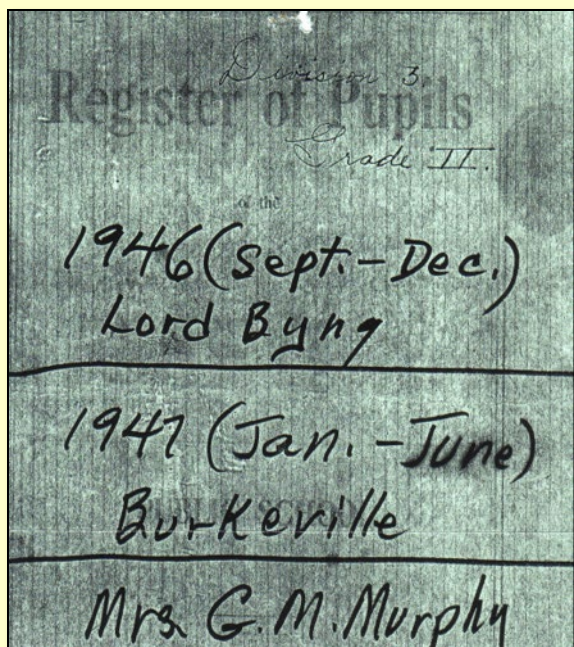


Figure 4. [Register of Pupils, Lord Byng - Burkeville (Sea Island School) - Mrs. Murphy]. (1946-1947). (Source: Sea Island Heritage Society).

When the new Sea Island Elementary School opened in September 1947, Mrs. Murphy was one of its first teachers, remaining until her retirement in 1967—20 years total plus the five at Lord Byng and the “Burkeville School”. Over the years she established herself in a grandmotherly role with a kind, nurturing manner and 'expected' daily routines. One of these routines involved the children lining up for health inspection...the girls on one side of the room and the boys on the other. There was a regular fingernail and hand inspection and an absolute must was a hanky in a pocket. “Did you brush your teeth today?” (thank you to Marjorie Charlton Clough and Carol King Gordon for these memories). Carol also remembers Mrs. Murphy patiently teaching them all to knit squares, for an afghan to be donated to a charity. And it is assumed that Mrs. Murphy supplied ALL the

materials and did ALL the combining for that afghan!

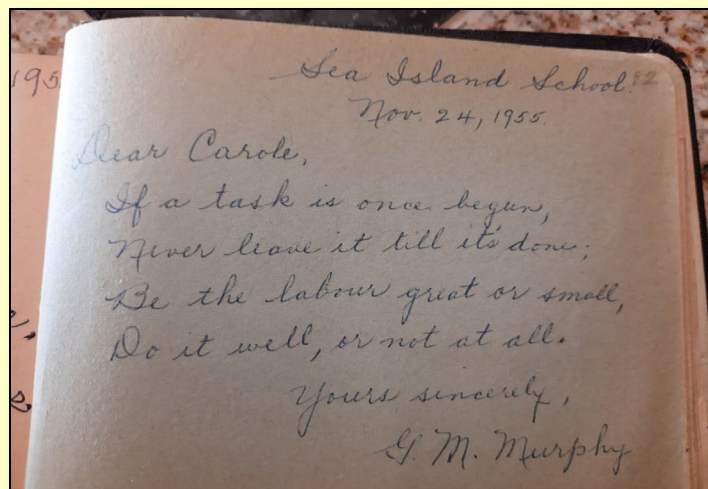


Figure 5. [Autograph, Mrs. G.M. Murphy to Carole Lefler]. (November 24, 1955). (Source: Carole Lefler).

Another memory from Adeline Trice Jurick: “Mrs. Murphy was wonderful. As I remember it, she was caring, kind and understanding all the time. I think she was my grade 4 teacher. I have no real specific memories but her smile and quiet demeanour come to mind.”

Through all Mrs. Murphy's struggles and her teaching years, her Patterson family ties remained healthy and strong. Her family consisted of two sisters: her twin, Dorothy Edythe and Ethel Bertha (1904) before the death of their mother, Edythe Annie, at the tender age of 29 in 1908. With her father's second marriage one year later to Bertha Louisa Robb Bruce (1889), three brothers were born: Henry Lyle (1910), Albert Frederick (1911) and James Donald (1914), and a sister Doris Lynne (2026). Tragically, Henry Lyle died at age 12 after a very serious accident and James Donald in 1945, age 31, passed away from pulmonary tuberculosis after six long years of suffering. Two young lives gone so soon. (Note: James' birth is recorded as

1915 in the British Columbia Archives but as 1914 on his headstone).

All Mrs. Murphy's children will have passed on considering they were all born in the 1920s. It is known that her youngest son, John Leland, passed in 2000 at the age of 72. The Patterson/Murphy family was a close-knit one as arrangements were often made for ashes not to be interred but to wait until one of the other sisters or brothers died, so that their names could be engraved on the same headstone and ashes placed simultaneously. For example: Mrs. Murphy died in 1990. Her ashes were not interred until 1996 when her twin sister, Dorothy Edythe, died and they were memorialized together on a headstone at Mountain View Cemetery in Vancouver. It brings to mind the adage: "Twins Together Forever." There are two family headstones at Mountain View. Only one sister is not mentioned on either of the headstones and that is Ethel Bertha Patterson (aka Clare, Pearce and Skinner) (1993).



Figure 2. [Mrs. G.M. Murphy (nee Patterson)]'s tombstone, Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, British Columbia). (unknown date). (Source: Mountain View Cemetery).

However, she is still remembered at Mountain View Cemetery under the name 'Skinner'. It is encouraging to realize that most all the sisters and

brothers lasted well into their late 80s and 90s—they came from hearty ancestors.

Retirement loomed on the horizon in June 1967, at the same time as her some of her colleagues were making the same decision: Mr. John Mizibrocky, Mrs. Mary Leona Paxton (née Thompson) and Sea Island's beloved custodian, Mr. Maurice (Bill) Bowman, friend and mentor to everyone who knew and loved him. And everyone loved Mrs. Murphy. She was an institution to be revered and honoured at our little old Sea Island Elementary School. She not only had a family with each successive class she taught but she had her own all-inclusive real family close beside her all the way with the most immediate members living in and around the Vancouver metropolis. Rest in peace, Mrs. Murphy. You shall always remain in our hearts.

Baba family & Baba Bros. Boat Works

The BABA family story is not complete. The Society continues to work with BABA descendants to tell their story. The following is a much shorter version with a few photos. If you wish a copy of the long version with many more photos, please contact the Sea Island Heritage Society.

The BABA family were like many Japanese immigrants in the late 1800s, fishermen and boat builders from coastal Japan who brought woodworking tools and techniques across the ocean to build a new and better life. From Steveston, in Richmond, British Columbia to the North Shore of Vancouver and all the way up the coast in the Fraser River, families set up boat works along rivers and coastlines. The BABA family set up BABA Bros. Boat Works on Sea Island by the Acme Cannery.

With WWII and the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, in a matter of hours, the Royal Canadian Navy cancelled 2,090 fishing licences and impounded 1,137 boats. These boats were turned over to the Japanese Fishing Vessel Committee for disposal. Some sank, many were re-painted and sold to the canneries or given to the Canadian Admiralty. Nets, fishing gear and boat works were all sold at rock bottom prices. On April 1, 1949, four years after WWII ended, Japanese Canadians were finally able to move freely again in Canada. Many like the BABAs never returned to their communities.

Like the over 20,000 people of Japanese ancestry, the BABA family of Sea Island was forcibly removed, evacuated and first interned in British Columbia, then uprooted a second time (except for Tomio and his family) to other areas of Canada when the Canadian government, using the *War Measures Act*, required all Japanese Canadians living in interment camps to choose between relocating east of the Rocky Mountains or face “voluntary repatriation” (deportation) to Japan.

The BABA family story begins in Japan where Magosaburo BABA (1867-1925) was born in the County of Kamo, in the Prefecture of Shizuoka to Yonehaike BABA (father) and the name of his mother is unknown.

As a young man, Magosaburo apprenticed for fifteen years as a “miyadaiku” builder (*a traditional Japanese carpenter who specializes in the construction, maintenance, and restoration of shrines and temples*). After his training, Magosaburo left the Sagami county adjoining Kanagawa-Ken for Yokohama where he met Hatsu YAMAZAWA (1876-1942).

In 1897, Magosaburo and Hatsu were married, and two years later (1899), their first son, Takajiro BABA, was born in Yokohama.

In 1900, Magosaburo decided to join his brother-in-law, Matabei IRIE, in Vancouver, British Columbia. Hatsu and Takajiro remained in Japan where Hatsu worked at a friend’s restaurant. After a while in Vancouver, Magosaburo got a position as a millright at a mill located near the entrance to Stanley Park. He was able to send money to Hatsu in Japan to join him in Canada with their son Takajiro.

On June 12, 1909, Hatsu arrived in Canada aboard the Empress of India steamship with Takajiro, who was 11 years old. Sute IRIE (Mrs. Matabei IRIE), aunt to Takajiro, also travelled with them.

Magosaburo and Hatsu settled into the Acme Cannery community on Sea Island, where they had four more children: Shimpei "George" (1910-1971), Mitsu (1912-1926), Tomio "Tom or Tommy" (1915-1993) and Noboru "Harry" (1917-2003).

Magosaboru started building boats prior to the introduction of power boats on the Fraser River. He built as many as 200 commercial and pleasure boats in his lifetime.

Magosaboru died of tuberculosis on March 5, 1925, at the Vancouver General Hospital in Vancouver, British Columbia. A year later, Mitsu, Magosaboru & Hatsu's daughter, passed away on Sea Island at the age of 14 years old, also from tuberculosis.

On May 17, 1942, Hatsu was forcibly uprooted and interned in Kaslo. Seven months later, on December 14, 1942, she died while interned. She was 66 years old.



Figure 3. [Mrs. Sute IRIE and her infant son, Seihachi, Mrs. Hatsu BABA and her infant son, Shimpei "George" BABA and her son Takajiro standing]. (1910). (Source: Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre 2010.23.2.4.672, original source of the photo is Mr. & Mrs. H. BABA).

Takajiro "Tom" BABA

After the death of his father, Takajiro (at 26 years old) found himself as the head of the family, looking after his mother and younger siblings. In an era of great hostilities between European settlers and Japanese fishermen, Takajiro was concerned about burying his family's ashes in Canada. He decided to place the ashes in a church in Vancouver for safekeeping, which he later retrieved.

On November 1, 1930, Takajiro married Shizuko "Jean" KANAGAWA (1906-1991) who had arrived from Japan the month before. Takajiro and Shizuko combined their two businesses, boat building and operating a grocery store on Columbia Street in New Westminster, where they lived and raised their children until internment. Takajiro and Shizuko had three children, a son, Takashi "Tony" (1932-2015), and two daughters, Hatsue "Pat" (born October 27, 1934) and Kazuko "Kay" (1936-1997).

On April 25, 1942, Takajiro was forcibly evacuated to Kaslo, British Columbia. Takajiro was appointed as supervisor of 20 carpenters to upgrade houses and other living quarters in Kaslo, where his family was first uprooted and interned.

In 1943, Takajiro's family was uprooted to Allison, Ontario, then Luther, Ontario and Fletcher near Chatham-Kent, Ontario. In 1946, Takajiro's family moved to Chatham, Ontario so Takashi "Tony" could attend high school. Takajiro was able to start building boats again, and later, concentrated on building houses.

After WWII ended and Japanese Canadians were allowed to move freely in Canada, Takajiro retrieved his family's ashes from the church in

Vancouver. Takajiro died in 1986 and was buried with his parents at the Park Lawn Cemetery in Toronto. His wife, Shizuko died in 1991 and is buried with her husband and his family at the Park Lawn Cemetery.

Shimpei “George” BABA

Shimpei “George” BABA was born on August 25, 1910, on Sea Island.

On September 14, 1940, Shimpei married Etsuko (Etsu) UJIYE at the Acme Cannery.

On March 30, 1942, Etsu was forcibly removed to New Denver, British Columbia by way of Hastings Park where Japanese Canadians were first corralled before being dispersed inland. Etsu’s Custodian file shows a doctor’s invoice and lab tests dated March 1942, where it was confirmed that Etsu had tuberculosis. A 100-bed sanatorium was built in New Denver to house tuberculosis patients transferred from Hastings Park.

On the night of May 6, 1942, Shimpei and his brother Tomio, were evacuated to Kaslo, before Shimpei was forcibly uprooted to Chatham, Ontario.

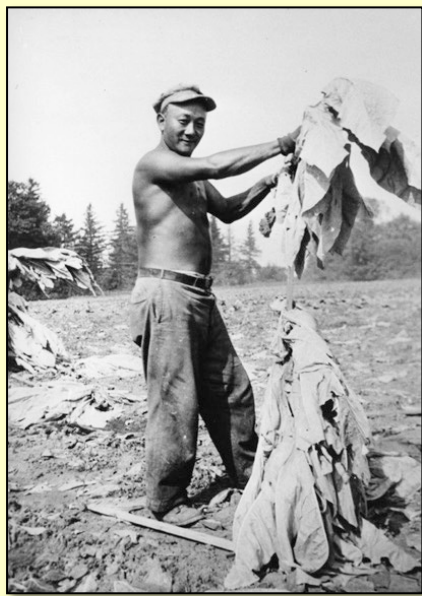


Figure 8. [Shirtless Shimpei “George” Baba harvesting tobacco with his hands, Chatham, Ontario]. (1947). (Source: Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre 2010.23.2.4.152, original source of the photo is Mr. & Mrs. H. Baba).

Shimpei died in 1971 and was buried with his parents and sister Mitsu at the Park Lawn Cemetery in Toronto. The Society is still looking for information about what happened to Etsu.

Tomio “Tom” BABA

Tomio “Tom” BABA was born on April 10, 1915, on Sea Island.

In 1939, Tomio was one of six young Japanese fishermen who rescued a toddler, Jim Critchley, from drowning. Jim Critchley had fallen overboard into Howe Sound and his parents were frantic. Tomio, Kanao NISHI, T. KAYAWAGI, Roy T. MORI, S. SASAKI and T. YAMADAKI snatched the child from the water and applied artificial respiration. Mr. Robert Critchley, the son of James Critchley (the child rescued by the Japanese fishermen), crafted a gillnetter in honour and memory of the Japanese fishermen who saved his father from drowning.

Tomio was evacuated the night of May 6, 1942, along with his brother Shimpei. Tomio said that his other brother, Noboru “Harry” BABA, was evacuated two weeks prior (April 23, 1942) to both himself and Shimpei because Tomio and Shimpei were working on a boat requisitioned by the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), the Amorita II, renamed the M.449 Jager (R.C.A.F). This was one of the last boats built by the BABA brothers on Sea Island. The BABA brothers received permission to remain in the “protected area” long enough to finish building the boat. The M.449 Jager was launched on May 2, 1942.



Figure 4. [The launching of the Amorita (V422L) on May 2, 1942, from BABA Bros. Boat Works area on Sea Island. The Amorita, renamed the M.449 Jager by the RCAF, was the last boat built by the BABA family on Sea Island]. (1942). (Source: Harold BABA family).

On April 10, 1943, Tomio BABA married Fumiko IWASA (1923-2003) while interned in Kaslo. Together, they had eight children, all born in Kaslo: Ronald Tokio (1944), Helen Nobuko (1945-2000), Harold Haruo "Harry" (1948), Cherrie Noriko (1950-2007), Anne Michiko (1952), Carolyn Midori (1954), Ray Shigeo (1957) and Doug Sekio (1967).



Figure10. [Tomio and Fumiko BABA with their eight children]. (April 10, 1993). (Source: Harold BABA family).

Tomio died on August 26, 1993, at the age of 78 in Kelowna, British Columbia. Fumiko died on September 8, 2003, at the age of 79. Tomio is buried at the Kelowna Memorial Park Cemetery, plot D-5-203-21 with his wife, Fumiko.

Noboru "Harry" BABA

Noboru "Harry" BABA was born on July 4, 1917, on Sea Island. He passed away in 2003.

On April 23, 1942, Noboru "Harry" was evacuated to Kaslo at first, then to Chatham, Ontario.

On November 3, 1951, Harry married Takeko FUJIMAGARI.

Takeko was born on September 13, 1921. She died on January 18, 2015.

Takeko was the second of four children born to Fusakichi FUJIMAGARI and his first wife, Misu HAYASHI, in Burnaby, British Columbia.

Noboru and Takeko had three children, Richard BABA, Kathleen WILLISON (née BABA) and Frances HALL (née BABA) and continued to reside in Ontario area for the remainder of their lives.

The descendants of Tomio and Noboru recently reconnected and had a mini family reunion in Richmond, British Columbia.



Figure 5. [Wedding photo of Noboru "Harry" and Takedo FUJIMAGARI]. (1951). (Source: Ancestry.ca).

BABA Bros. Boat Works – Sea Island

The first BABA Bros. Boat Works was located immediately east of the Acme Cannery, built on the banks of a small creek at the bottom of Shannon Road on Sea Island. The business's phone number was **Richmond 1178-R1**.

Brothers Shimpei, Tomio and Noboru each owned one-third of the land and boathouses located on the southwest corner of Section 27, Block 5, North Range 7 West purchased from William NICOLL and his estate. The land size was approximately 1.6 acres. They had two boathouses, one 36 x 80 feet and one 36 x 25 feet.

Brothers Tomio and Noboru each owned half of the residence, a five-room frame house with a metal roof on the property. All three brothers, including Shimpei, lived in the house.

Tomio, Shimpei and Noboru built at least one vessel per year at BABA Bros. Boat Works, usually during the winter months. They kept the newest boat and sold the oldest in their small fleet which they used for fishing during the busy summers. The boats built by BABA Bros. Boat Works were based on original Japanese designs from across the Pacific where fishing had been practiced for centuries.

On May 4, 1942, Shimpei and Tomio went to Hastings Park (Office of the Custodian) to make all the arrangements for their evacuation. Shimpei and Tomio hired young people to board up the house and the boathouses before getting on the CPR train to Nelson. They then stayed overnight in the train car before arriving in Kaslo the next morning.



Figure 6. [North Cap boat built by BABA Bros Works on Sea Island]. (1941). (Source: Harold BABA family).

During and after their period of internment, BABA brothers Tomio, Shimpei and Noboru grew frustrated dealing with the Department of the Secretary of State, Office of the Custodian, Japanese Evacuation Centre over their assets confiscated by the Canadian government. The status of the confiscated land, buildings, boats both completed and partially built, the building supplies, tools, equipment, as well as personal belongings were unknown. Many letters were written trying to resolve basic issues. All the assets were equally owned by the three BABA brothers, with separate Custodian accounts. Shimpei resolved his part of the dealings by agreeing to compensation from Tomio and Noboru. Shimpei's wife was very ill (tuberculosis) and he needed money for her care.

In May 1945, the BABA brothers were notified that their tools and equipment had been auctioned off

for a sum of \$520.50 less fees and advertising, leaving a net proceed of \$433.45.

The 1.6 acres of land had been up for sale either with or without the BABA Bros. Boat Works business. There were no interested parties wishing to purchase the BABA property and/or business. The property had been appraised at \$480.00. One offer was received for \$400.00, which was accepted.

BABA Bros. Boat Works – Kaslo

Of the four brothers, Tomio was the only one who remained in Kaslo with his family. The other three were sent to Ontario.

Like his brother, Takajiro, Tomio was one of the advanced carpenters sent to Kaslo to fix buildings he would end up being interned in - like the Langham Hotel (now the Langham Cultural Centre).

During the internment years and after, Tomio was a core employee of Kaslo Motor Transport. Tomio was a gifted rigger, driver and swamper as well as a master woodworker.

When Japanese Canadians were granted freedom of movement in April 1949, many tried to return to re-establish their businesses and livelihoods and found all kinds of hardships. Boat builders often found their yards derelict or destroyed, tools unaccounted for and the prospect of business slight. This convinced Tomio to stay in Kaslo.

In the early 1950s, Tomio purchased the dilapidated Langham Hotel building where many Japanese, including himself, had been interned and used it for his shop for about 20 years. A large door was built in the rear and the Langham Hotel became the new BABA Bros. Boat Works and carpentry shop.



Figure 13. [Large door at the rear of the Langham Hotel and one of the gillnetters built by Tomio BABA in Kaslo, British Columbia]. (circa 1950s). (Source: Harold BABA family).

Like many of Tomio's generation, Tomio never talked about the years of internment. As Tomio's children work with the Society to write their family's story, they are learning about the resilience and courage it took their parents to survive the hardships of internment and how lucky they were to have loving parents who worked hard to make life easier for them. It has also allowed them to recently reconnect with their cousins in Ontario.

In Loving Memory

Sadly we have heard of seven Sea Islanders who passed away since our last newsletter.

ANDERSON (née Hourie) Elizabeth “Liz” (1941-2026)



Elizabeth (Liz) Emily Anderson (née Hourie) passed away peacefully on April 12, 2026, at Deltaview Care Home. She was predeceased by her husband, Jack, and her brother, Alex. She is lovingly remembered by her children, Cheryl and Peggy-Sue, and her grandchildren, Melissa (Matt) and Kassey.

At the age of 85, Liz was a beloved mother, grandmother and cherished friend.

Liz dedicated many years volunteering at the Richmond Crisis Centre and was later hired as Volunteer Coordinator, a role she held for 20 years. She was an avid gardener, creating beautiful landscapes and ponds in her gardens both in Steveston and Ladner. Liz is remembered and missed by her friends from Sea Island.

MARTIN Robert “Bob” Geoffrey (1936-2026)



Robert (Bob) Geoffrey Martin passed away quietly in his sleep on April 5, 2026. Bob was 89 years old. He lived in Burkeville at 712 Miller Road with his parents, next to the Sea Island Community Centre. Bob, Grant Thomspon, Jack Alexander and Tom Ross – all from Burkeville – became lifelong friends.

Beloved by his family, Bob leaves behind three daughters, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He now joins his wife Diane and can go back to enjoying their lifelong cribbage tournament.

Bob is the young man in the middle in the photo.

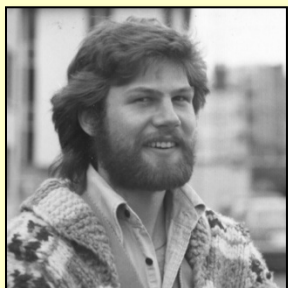
NOEL (née Zaruk) Lee Purdy (1944-2026)



Lee Purdy NOEL (née ZARUK) passed away on February 8, 2026, at the age of 81. Lee was born in 1944 in Winnipeg, Manitoba to Frank and Margaret ZARUK. Lee was raised on Sea Island but spent her summers with her extended family in Winnipeg.

After graduating from high school, she moved to Calgary and then Winnipeg where she met her late husband, Gordon Andrew NOEL. Lee leaves behind three daughters and a son, Carla (Stuart) PARKER, Michael (Karren) NOEL, Lizanne FERNHOUT and Deborah (Randy) HACKBART, several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

NOVAK, Brian (1953-2026)



Brian Edmund NOVAK spent his final years happily in long-term care, passing away peacefully on June 6, 2026. He often remembered fondly his years spent in the Cora Brown neighbourhood. After earning a science degree from UBC, Brian travelled the world before returning to Sea Island to work in security at YVR. He later moved to Comox, married and welcomed his daughter, Taeryn.

Brian is remembered for his inquisitive mind, kind heart and lifelong curiosity about the world. He will be missed by his daughter Taeryn, brother Paul, brother-in-law

Norm, ex-wife Jan and his Sea Island family.

PADULA Antonio “Tony” (1926-2026)

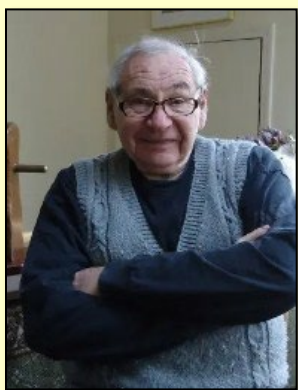


Antonio “Tony” PADULA passed away on February 17, 2026 leaving behind Hazel, his loving wife of 74 years, his three sons and their families, his niece Lori and her family, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Tony grew up in the Strathcona area of Vancouver starting in 1926. He joined the RCAF (Auxiliary) 442 Squadron military band on Sea Island in 1949 and was discharged in 1964. He enjoyed 15 years of playing in what he called a great military band. Tony then formed his own independent shoe agency, Tony Padula Agencies. Tony went on to be the president of the Western Shoe Travellers Association. This led him to later become a founding father of the Shoe Travellers Association of Canada.

Tony never sat idle. His plans always worked for the best for the people he loved the most. He will be deeply missed as the family planner.

SLACK, Terry (1940 – 2026)



Terry Slack passed away on May 2, 2026. Terry is survived by his loving wife, Sharon, daughter Leslie, son-in-law David, and grandson Jeramie.

Terry immigrated to Canada with his family in 1948 from Nottingham, England, when he was eight years old. He grew up on the Fraser River, first on a float home on the North Arm Jetty that was then moved to the Booming Grounds. He spent most of his life as a commercial gillnet fisherman and log salvager. Terry became a well-known local historian, a gifted storyteller, and a devoted friend of the Fraser River. Deeply committed to conservation, he helped protect natural spaces including Pacific Spirit Park, Deering Island Park, and the Fraser River Trail. He was also well known for his

engaging historical walks. Terry was recognized with numerous awards for his conservation work.

He was a dear friend of the Sea Island Heritage Society. His passing is deeply felt by all who knew him.

TRAUTMAN, Michael Walter James “Mike” (1953 – 2026)



Michael Walter James “Mike” Trautman passed away suddenly on April 19, 2026, surrounded by his cherished treasures.

Mike grew up in Burkeville on Lancaster Crescent with his parents, Ray and Jessie, and siblings Pat, Keith, Deb and Jean. He and his siblings attended Sea Island Elementary School. After marrying and having two children, he moved his young family to the Interior, eventually settling in Lone Butte, British Columbia.

Sea Island Artifacts and Memorabilia

Over the past few months, we have had some lovely donations. Donations are welcomed and appreciated. If you are downsizing or just cleaning out those boxes from the basement or attic, anything “Sea Island” would be most appreciated. Contact Eunice at eunice@genbug.ca.

CONTACT US

If you have questions, comments, or want to share your memories and photos, we would love to hear from you.

To submit a letter, documents, photos, or a cheque for your membership or donation via snail mail:

Sea Island Heritage Society

Box 88051, Lansdowne Mall
Richmond, British Columbia
V6X 3T6

To be added to our e-Newsletter, or send us an email: info@seaislandhome.org

To join, renew your membership or donate by e-Transfer: treasurersihs@seaislandhome.org

Website: <https://seaislandhome.org>

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“Sea Island is located within the traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-waututh Peoples.”