

## *A Chronological History of* **PARKSVILLE**

Coast Salish Native Indians originally lived in the central Vancouver Island area.

1792 - The Vancouver Island area was first explored by Captain Vancouver.

1850's - The area became first known as Englishman's River. It is said that an English gentleman drowned while crossing the unnamed river in the 1850's.

1855 - The area was first surveyed up to the Alberni Valley in 1855 by Adam Grant Horne for the Hudson Bay Company.

1860 - A trail was "Blazed" up the island from Victoria to Comox.

1873 - **John Hirst**, a businessman from Nanaimo took out the first land claim in the area. He pre-empted 300 acres along both sides of the Englishman's River but never actually moved here himself.

1880 - John Hirst is said to have built a dike near the mouth of the Englishman's River to secure more grazing land. The farm was said to have been leased to a Theophilis Dupuy.

1883 - The first non-native permanent resident was John Hirst's son **Albert Hirst**. He settled on the Englishman River.

1884 - Mr. **Nelson Parks** registered his land claim in 1884. The 1884 Tax assessment for Englishman's River lists; Hirst Brothers (John Sr. had died) with 635 acres; **John Hirst Jr.** with 160 acres; Albert Hirst with 320 acres; H.M. Austin with 160 acres, D. McLaren with 160 acres; James Parks with 320 acres; Nelson Parks with 160 acres; George Parks with 160 acres and **Thomas Hirst** with 80 acres.

1886 - In the early spring **James and Robert Craig** made their first visit to the Parksville area. A wagon road from Nanaimo was completed in 1886. The 24 mile wagon road from Nanaimo to Englishman's River was completed and then extended to the Comox area. The building of this road included the first bridge (completed in 1887) built across the Englishman River canyon. John Hirst jr. promptly opened a hotel called the Sea View in the Englishman's River area. Joe McCarter opened a hostel known as the Halfway House, in Errington, which served as a stopping place for the horse-drawn stages which made regular trips between Nanaimo and Alberni. On May 1st, the Englishman's River Post Office was established with Mr. Nelson Parks appointed postmaster. William Rath, an Irishman, came to the area in search of gold. Henry Lee comes to the area in 1886.

1887 - On February 2nd the Englishman River Post Office that Nelson Parks was operating was renamed the Parksville Post Office. James Craig staked his claim for 160 acres just south of Englishman's River cove for \$1 per acre. James writes in 1933 that there was one woman, (Mrs. Albert Hirst) and 15 bachelors in a 15 mile radius at this time.

1888 - Richard Wallis came to area in 1888. Mary (May) Rath was born on May 12th and is said to have been the first white child born in the area. A Post Office was established in French Creek on August 1st, and Mr. W. H. Lee was the first Postmaster. This Post Office remained open until April 30th, 1911 when the mail was again routed through the Parksville Post Office. Area Census (Nanoose to Errington) showed 150 persons. Other surnames now in the area included; Despard, Gaetjen, McMillan, Morison, Cheney, Mills, Lewis, and Renz.

1889 - The population of Parksville was 38 people! Enough to be an official settlement. The boundaries extended from Englishman River to French Creek. Jack Belyea, a blacksmith, came to the Nanoose area, Mrs. Belyea ran the Arlington Hotel for a time.

1890 - The community of Errington was established.

1891 - **Census was taken of the Parksville area.** On the 22 of December 1891, Nelson Parks resigned as Postmaster of the Parksville Post Office.

1892 - On the first of January, Andrew Hirst was appointed the new Postmaster of Parksville.

1893 - A government wharf at Arbutus point is completed. Reverend Charles Edward Cooper was the first minister appointed to the area, he oversaw the building of the St. Anne's Church.

1894 - St. Anne's Anglican Church was built in French Creek. The Sea View Hotel burned to the ground.

1895 - William Rath purchased two parcels of land from the E&N railway.

1898 - St. Anne's church, the only church in the area , reported having 11 families and 48 individuals on the parish role. The new Rod & Gun Hotel was opened by John Hirst at its present location.

1900 - On January 20th, Postmaster Andrew Hirst died. On the first of May his sister-in-law, Ann Hirst was officially made the new Postmaster of Parksville.

1901 - **Census of the Area (Nanoose to Errington)** showed 251 Persons. Other surnames now in the area included, Ponsford, Robertson, Williams, Plummer, and Huren

1903 - William Rath, died at the age of 72. He was the Justice of the Peace for the Parksville area. The Rath farm slowly developed into a campsite with a 25 cent fee for overnight and 50 cents for a whole weekend.

1904 - Large scale logging began in the Parksville area.

1908 - The population of Parksville is still listed as under 500 people.

1909 - Custance Bros. came to area, T.T.M. Custance and R. M. Custance. They would run the general store during the 30's. Thomas Kinkade and Frank Plummer brought the first Ford car to the area to use as a taxi. The Rushton family came to the area and operated a garage for many years.

1910 - The Esquimalt and Nanaimo (E&N) Railway connected Nanaimo to McBride Junction, the site of the current Parksville rail station. Richard McBride was the premiere at the time. Will Stanhope came to area in 1910. A school photo was taken. William Cameron was the teacher. The students included 3 of Joseph Hirst's daughters, Nellie Cheney, Ina Cheney, Ray Ford, Len Hillier, Bert Hirst, Hattie Plummer, Hattie Hirst, Janet Robertson, Bessie Hirst, May Rath, Lilly Rath, Gertrude Robertson, May Plummer, Hazel Hirst, Jim Kingsley, Frank Plummer, and Tommy Hirst.

1911 - Albert Herman Doehle came to area. Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Harison arrived in Parksville and established Harrison's resort on Parksville beach. Charles Robert Tryon came to French Creek area.

1912 - Knox United Church was built in downtown Parksville. (The original building is now located at the Craig Heritage Park). The French Creek post office was closed and the mail was again routed through Parksville post office. Edgar Dundas Thwaites open the first Real Estate office in the area. Edgar Thwaites is also the Postmaster for Parksville. There was an influx of settlers to the area. The businesses in Parksville at this time where the Vancouver Island Fruit Land Limited office,

Custance General Store, Thwaites & Hickey Real Estate, Bank of Commerce, Skinner's Blacksmith Shop, and a bakery. George Wilson opened a grocery store in the new shopping centre he built on the Comox Highway (Island Highway) across from the Island Hall.

1913 - **Frederick Shelly** moved to Parksville.

1914 - John Hirst, son of John and Annie Hirst went off to serve overseas during the War and passed the Post Office job to his sister Leah Hirst.

1915 - H. T. Hindmarch became the first resident manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

1917 - The Island Hall was opened by Winifred Philpott and Joan Foster on March 31st, Good Friday. It had 28 rooms and stood on less than 1 acre.

1918 - Parksville has by this time a full telephone switchboard and office. The population of Parksville and District is listed as 1,000 people, Parksville more than doubled in size in the last 10 years.



The Island Highway just north of Parksville in 1919.

1920 - A co-op for poultry and farm produce was started near the Parksville railway junction. William Stanhope was the manager and E. D. Thwaites was the secretary. About 80 % of the farmers between Qualicum and Nanoose provided produce for the society.

1923 - The community park property was purchased by a group of interested local residents who formed the Parksville District Community Society.

1925 - St. Mary's church was built in Errington, the property was donated by the Jones family.

1926 - St. Mark's church was built in Qualicum Beach.

1927 - Winifred (Philpott) and Dr. Woodman moved to China. Winifred ended her association with the Island Hall.

1937 - On January 16th there was a fire in the government liquor store. Volunteer fireman fought the blaze and prevented the spreading to nearby homes and businesses. The liquor store stock was valued at \$5,000.

1942 - The first firehall was opened in Parksville. The first firetruck was a converted vegetable grocer's truck.

1945 - World War II ended on May 5th, Victory in Europe Day. Parksville became a village on June 19, 1945 with a population of 425 people.

1946 - On the 26th of August 1946 Ann Hirst resigned her position as Postmistress of Parksville.

1947 - Mary Sutherland and Eileen Allwood bought the Island Hall Hotel, and would run it for the next 16 years. Work was started on a new community hall. An army drill hall was taken apart at the Nanaimo army camp and reassembled in Parksville Community Park. Parksville's main industry was logging. Retired Provincial Police Constable Harold James (Smokey) Parsley became the new postmaster at Parksville, a position he held for 20 years.

1948 - The Parksville Progress newspaper, the first area newspaper, started printing. It would publish until 1982.

1950 - A new harbour is built in for the Parksville area at French Creek.

1963 - Eileen Allwood retired and ended her association with the Island Hall.

1966 - The population of Parksville was 1,426 (4.1% growth rate).

1967 - On October 19, Postmaster Harold James Parsley died after holding the position for 20 years. Frank Walton was appointed the acting Post Master.

1968 - On February 21, E. A. Ratelle was appointed the new Postmaster of Parksville. When George Rath died (the son of William Rath) the Rath Campsite became Rath Trevor Provincial Park and B.C. Parks took over operation of the site.

1971 - The population of Parksville was 2,169 (10.9 % growth rate).

1975 - The Arrowsmith Star started a free weekly newspaper in Parksville.

1976 - The population of Parksville was 3,420 (11.5 % growth rate).

1978 - Parksville became a town on April 1st 1978.

1981 - Parksville became a city on June 1st, 1981. That meant there were more than 5,000 permanent residents. Census population was 5,299 (10.5 % growth rate).

1982 - The last issue of the Parksville Progress newspaper was printed. The Parksville News Advertiser would be the new local paper.

1983 - The Craig Heritage Park was started.

1986 - The population of Parksville was 5,828 (2.2 % growth rate).

1988 - Highway 19 was widened to 4 lanes from the Englishman River bridge westward through the city.

1991 - The population of Parksville was 7,306 (22.3 % growth rate).

1996 - The population of Parksville was 9,472 ( 12.8 % growth rate).

2001 - Parksville's population reached 10,323 (9 % growth rate).