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The History of William Head

by

Geoffrey W. Burns  
Burns  
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- Page 84 - at the end of the first paragraph ADD :- There are fourteen active groups in William Head involving some 50 - 60% of the inmate population and a considerable number of citizen volunteers.
- Page 86 - in the last paragraph lines 1 & 2 change University of Victoria to read Simon Fraser University.  
this change also applies to the same paragraph next to the last line.
- Page 87 - Paragraph 2 last sentence please delete in its entirety and insert She is now the Resident Co-ordinator at William Head Institution.
- Page 89 - line 7 after "viewers." and before "All proceeds" please insert "Agatha Christie's "Ten Little Indians" was another resounding success in the Fall of '82, followed by a well received "Macbeth" in the Spring of '83. A smash hit in the Fall of '83 "One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest" was sold out for the last nine performances in the Institution, and with support from the McPherson Playhouse, Monday Magazine, the National Parole Board, and a lot of very hard team work, the Cuckoos Nest was taken to Victoria to a sell-out audience of over 800 people for a one night stand. A local author who teaches at the University of Victoria had his play "Paper Cage" put on as a world premiere and the Fall production of "Stalag 17" will be taken to the McPherson for two nights in October '84."
- Page 89 - Paragraph 2 - line 8 - delete the sentence beginning with "So far, the... and ending "will be shown."



FOREWORD

Some said it would never be told, others doubted there was that much to tell. But these people were wrong and, in an effort to preserve the heritage and mystique of one of Canada's most beautiful and tranquil spots, a history has been unfolded with care and deliberation, to reveal the heart and soul of the land known as William Head and the people who have been associated with the area.

It is somewhat ironical that this land has been generally ignored by historians even though it has witnessed the birth and development of the West with all its glories and dramas. William Head has been the subject of much political and social controversy, providing an atmosphere and heritage which should be nurtured and preserved. A considerable amount of land is occupied by buildings of yesteryear, nestled in a beautiful natural environment, which provides a vision into the past and an understanding of the present. To not recognize and protect this atmosphere would, in itself, be an injustice.

I hope you will read and muse upon this history and reflect for one moment how much would have been lost in time had it not been written. Perhaps all that might have been left would have been provocative thoughts about the buildings, land, and people, all without substance or clarity. Let us

not forget that which has helped build the foundations of Canada's west coast. This story is to give a sense of dignity and pride to a small and remarkable area of land, so it may be recognized for the important role it has played in Canada's history.

Head, Social Development

Andrew St. Paul - Butler

Acknowledgements

It is impossible to acknowledge all the individuals who have provided assistance in the preparation of this history. I would, however, like to thank those people in Ottawa, from the Medical Services Branch of Health and Welfare Canada, the Directorate of History at National Defence Headquarters, and the Public Archives of Canada, for their assistance and the material they provided me with. On a more local level, I would like to thank the people at the Provincial Museum and Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the Archives of the City of Victoria, and all the other people who have directed me and provided me with information, and interviews, especially the several National Defence historians in the Victoria area.

Special thanks must go to the employees of the Correctional Service of Canada, to the Reference Centre of the Solicitor General, to National Headquarters (Pacific), and, especially to the staff of William Head Institution. Again, it is difficult to single out individuals, but mention must go to Andrew Butler and the social development staff for their constant assistance, and to Lisa Deakin for typing up the manuscript. I hope reading this history will provide these people with as much enjoyment as I experienced putting it together.

Stretching out over a kilometre into the deep waters of Juan de Fuca Strait, at the southern tip of Vancouver Island, lies William Head. This fir and arbutus clad peninsula has an interesting and unique history, not only for the island, but for all of Canada. It is the site of an Indian summer village, the Weir family's homestead and farm, western Canada's quarantine station, and, finally, as a federal penitentiary, William Head has witnessed the evolution of shipping in the western Pacific Ocean, and greeted people with diverse backgrounds from all over the world. It has seen native Indians paddle to its shores in dugout canoes and Spanish and British explorers sail by in weathered ships from halfway around the globe. It has welcomed the area's early settlers, who arrived in small paddle steamers, and Canada's later immigrants, brought by the famous Canadian Pacific Empress liners. It has housed Chinese labourers, brought by those same liners, on their way to France in the Great War, and local fishermen, trained in special landing craft, to protect the west coast in the second World War. These and other stories form the history of William Head. The following pages have tried to capture some of the events, ships, and people that have added to that history over the years. The story begins almost four hundred years ago.

In the year 1592, a Greek sailor from Niphalonia named Apostolos Valerianos became the first European to have the opportunity of seeing William Head and the area surrounding it. Juan de Fuca, as he is more commonly known today, was sent by the Spanish Viceroy of Mexico on a voyage of exploration to the northwest coast of America. He is reported

to have discovered a broad inlet there at about 47 or 48 degrees north latitude and to have sailed into it in about twenty days. Unfortunately, there is no official documentation of this voyage, and so it is still today classified as an apocryphal voyage.

After this expedition, there was very little activity along the northwest coast of North America until late in the eighteenth century. Spanish exploration began in this area as early as 1774, with the voyage of Juan Perez. The following year, Don Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra took possession of the coast in the name of the Spanish Crown, as far north as 57° 20' latitude. Although both the Spanish and the British were to lead expeditions to the northwest over the following years, the 'mythical' strait of Juan de Fuca eluded discovery, with even Captain James Cook passing it, but failing to sight it, in 1778.

It was not until July of 1792, when another British captain, named Charles William Barkley, arrived in the Imperial Eagle, that the Strait of Juan de Fuca was found and named after its supposed discoverer. Barkley did not take the time to explore the strait, but it is interesting to note that accompanying him on this voyage was his 17 year old bride, who has the distinction of being the first European woman to reach the shores of what is now British Columbia.

So it was left to the Spaniards to be the first to explore and chart the land surrounding Juan de Fuca Strait. On February 3rd, 1790, Lieutenant Francisco Eliza left San Blas, Mexico, and sailed north to take command of the Spanish post at Nootka. With Eliza were two other commanders, Salvador Fidalgo and Manuel Quimper, and soon after their arrival at Nootka on April 7th, Eliza ordered these two men on voyages of exploration. While Fidalgo headed north, Quimper sailed to the south, leaving Nootka on

May 31st, in hopes of finding Juan de Fuca Strait. He took with him 31 crew members and nine soldiers on the ship La Pinta Real, a seized British ship formerly named the Princess Royal.

In less than a month, Quilley found Juan de Fuca Strait and began to explore it. On June 28th he reached the area around William Head, and in his diary for that day he recorded that

"At 11:30, when in a large and beautiful roadstead, which I named 'Eliza'<sup>\*</sup>, I anchored with the port anchor in 11 fathoms in muddy sand, having previously furled the sails. A canoe now came out with four Indians... At 2 in the afternoon the longboat departed at my behest with the pilot and two second pilot to reconnoitre two points, distant from the anchorage 1 and 4

Figure 1.

Southern Vancouver Island  
showing Juan de Fuca Strait  
and Nootka<sup>1</sup>.

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\* Pedder Bay, named after Francisco Eliza, commander at Nootka.

\* Named after Francisco Eliza, commander at Nootka (Now Pedder Bay).

miles respectively, and which apparently formed inlets from the strait. At sunset they came back and the pilot told me that the first point, which I named 'Santo Domingo',<sup>\*</sup> made with the second, which I named 'San Miguel',<sup>\*\*</sup> a fine roadstead which I named 'Solano'.<sup>\*\*\*"2</sup>

Several days later, he claimed the land in the name of the Spanish Crown, recording that "At 4 in the afternoon I took possession, planted the Cross, buried the bottle with all the other ceremonies which the instructions prescribed and fired repeated salutes."<sup>3</sup> For the native people of the area, who had lived there for hundreds of years without European contact, it must have been a strange sight.

The following year, Eliza himself was to make a voyage to this area, sailing in the San Carlos and Santa Saturnina and, in 1792, Dionisio Galiano and Cayetano Valdés, sailing in the Sutil and Mexicana, sailed into the strait, touching at many of the places Quimper had charted two years earlier. In 1794, however, after several years of tense relations, the British and Spanish signed an agreement for the joint abandonment of the settlement of Nootka. This was to mark the end of Spanish activity on the northwest coast, and the beginning of British hegemony in the area. Today, little remains to remind us of the Spanish in this area <sup>x</sup>except for some <sub>^</sub>place names and some old earthworks, apparently used for fortification, which still can be seen around Metchosin.

SANTO DOMINGO\* ~~William Head, the Spanish, meaning Holy Sunday (i.e. William Head).~~

\*\* ~~Albert Head, the Spanish, meaning Saint Michael (i.e. Albert Head).~~

\*\*\* ~~Parry Bay, Named after José Solano y Bote, Marquis del Socorro, a high naval officer in the Spanish service at that time (i.e. Parry Bay).~~



After the Spanish withdrawal from Nootka, the British sought to exercise control of the northwest coast. Although Spaniards, Russians and Americans had also been trading in this area, it was only the Americans who were to vie for control of the northwest with the British. The British-American Convention of October 20th, 1818 extended the boundary between the United States and British North America from the Lake of the Woods on the east, along the 49th Parallel, to the Rocky Mountains. Beyond the Rockies the Oregon Territory, which included most of present day Oregon, Washington, and southern British Columbia, was made jointly occupied territory open to citizens of both countries, for a period of ten years. On August 28th, 1827, another convention extended the agreement of 1818 for an indefinite period of time. Under these conventions, William Head, from 1818 until the final resolution of the international border in 1846, was joint American-British territory.

Figure 2.

The Oregon Territory  
between 1818 and 1846.<sup>4</sup>

Three years after the convention of 1818, in an effort to increase her claim on the territory, the British Crown granted a monopoly for trading in the Oregon Territory to the Hudson's Bay Company. The Royal license of 1821 granted the company "the exclusive privilege of trading with the Indians in all such parts of North America to the northward and westward of the said territories for the period of twenty-one years".<sup>5</sup> This license, granted by King George V, was renewed only 17 years later when Queen Victoria granted another license to the Hudson's Bay Company for another 21 years from the "Court at Buckingham Palace, 30th day of May, 1838. By Her Majesty's Command".<sup>6</sup>

During the years of their monopoly, the Hudson's Bay Company was very active in the northwest. Presuming that the international border would follow the Columbia River from the Rockies to the coast, the company built its main headquarters at Fort Vancouver on the north bank of the Columbia in 1825. It was soon decided, however, that a new site should be found due to the hazards to shipping on the Columbia and the uncertainty about the placement of the international boundary. Different areas were studied, and in 1837 Captain William McNeill, in the steamship Beaver, was sent to reconnoitre the southern tip of Vancouver Island. Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, John McLoughlin, was impressed by Captain McNeill's report, and in 1839, he travelled with McNeill, in the Beaver, to view what is now Victoria harbour. McLoughlin noted that "It is a very fine harbour, accessible at all seasons, but it is not a place suitable to our purpose"<sup>7</sup>, thus temporarily postponing the founding of a settlement at Victoria.

Over the following years, pressure increased to move the settlement away from Fort Vancouver, so, early in 1842, McLoughlin ordered James Douglas to make another study of southern Vancouver Island. In July of that

year, the decision was made to move the main settlement from Fort Vancouver to Vancouver Island, and Douglas handed in his official report, recommending the Port of Camosack, later Victoria, as the site of the new permanent settlement.

In March, 1843, Douglas returned to Camosack harbour, chose a site, and began digging and clearing. On June 10th, Victoria was officially named after the reigning British monarch. The move was a timely one, for on August 5th, 1846, the Oregon Boundary Treaty extended the British-American border along the 49th Parallel to the coast, where it dipped south to include all of Vancouver Island in British territory.

Also in 1846, William Head received its present name. Captain Henry Kellett, appointed to survey the Victoria area in the vessel Herald and its smaller companion Pandora, is credited with naming William Head and Parry Bay after his friend Rear Admiral Sir William Edward Parry, the famous Arctic navigator and explorer. Kellett also named Pedder Bay, after another friend, and Albert Head, after His Royal Highness Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria.

In 1849 Vancouver Island became an official British colony and, on January 13th, the Hudson's Bay Company received the island through a Royal Charter of Grant, with the provision that, while the company would have full control of the island colony, it would also have to establish a settlement there within five years. In June of that year, Vancouver Island's first independent settler, Captain Walter C. Grant, arrived and settled in Sooke. His home was later to be inhabited by the original owner of William Head.

After the colony was granted to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1849, it was "considered necessary to conform with the usual British practice of first extinguishing the proprietary rights of the native people" before

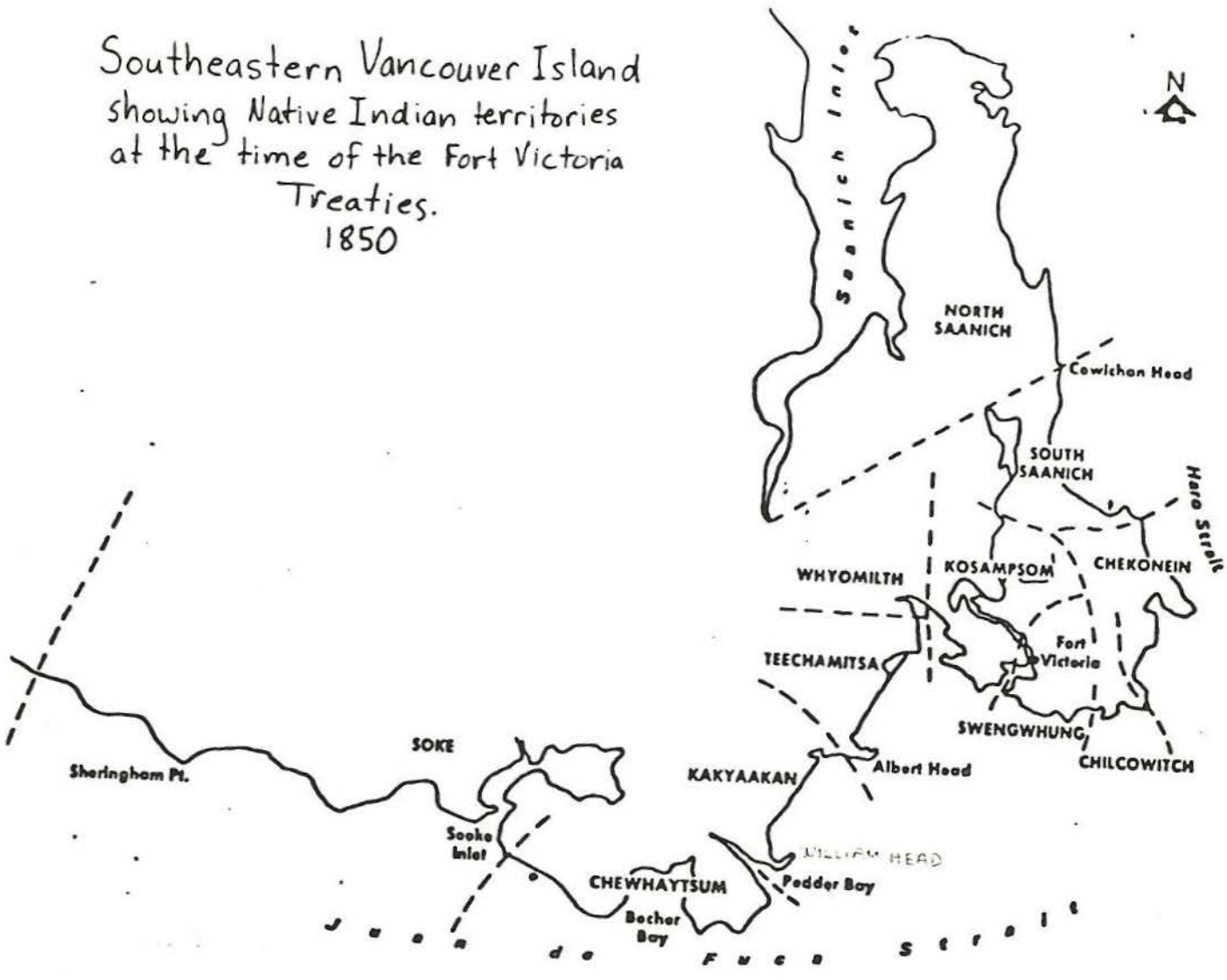
title to lands could be granted to the newly arrived settlers. As Chief  
 > Factor for the Hudson's Bay Company, James Douglas took on the task and, in  
 late April and early May of 1850, he made nine treaties with the native  
 peoples in the Victoria, Malahat and Sooke areas, now known as the Fort  
 Victoria treaties.

The native people of these areas, at the time of European contact,  
 spoke the Lekwungaynung or Straits Salish tongue, a member of the larger  
 Coast Salish language family. At the time of the Fort Victoria treaties,  
 there were four main divisions of the Straits Salish occupying the south-  
 eastern tip of Vancouver Island; the Saanich, Songhees (or Songish), some  
 Klallams, and the Sooke. The area around William Head was occupied by the  
 > Klallams ~~Head was occupied by the Klallams~~ at that time.

Figure 3

Distribution of native  
 Indian groups on Southern  
 Vancouver Island.

Southeastern Vancouver Island  
showing Native Indian territories  
at the time of the Fort Victoria  
Treaties.  
1850



The Klallam, however, had only recently inhabited the Metchosin area. Traditionally, Songhees territory stretched at least as far as Albert Head, and possibly all the way to William Head, with the westernmost winter village at Witty's Lagoon. One Songhees informant stated that Albert Head was the southern boundary of the Songhees, with the coastline beyond belonging to the Sooke. The Sooke apparently inhabited the Metchosin area originally, with a winter village at the head of Pedder Inlet. It was reported that in the early 1800's, the Sooke tribe fought with the tribe then living at Sooke, the Skwanungus. The Sooke made war on them and took over Sooke River at first, and later Sooke Harbour, thus leaving the William Head area. After moving out to Sooke Bay, the Skwanungus were eventually annihilated by the Makah.

It was not until after the arrival and settlement of Europeans at Fort Victoria that the Klallams began to inhabit the area the Sooke had deserted in Metchosin. The Klallam had previously been based on the American side of Juan de Fuca Strait, but had been in contact with Vancouver Island for many years. John Muir, close friend and, later, in-law of the original owner of William Head, who had resided in Sooke since 1850, reported that the Sooke were a hardy and warlike race and that no single tribe would attack them. But in 1848, the Klallam joined with two other tribes and nearly annihilated them. Two years later, the Fort Victoria Treaties were signed.

In 1850, James Douglas signed two of the nine treaties with the Klallam tribes in Metchosin. The two tribes were the Kakyaakan, with a population around 59 living between Point Albert (Albert Head) and the inlet of Whoyung (Pedder Bay), and the Chewhaytsum, with a population around 177, living "between the Inlet of Whoyung and the Bay of Syusung, known as

Soke Inlet".<sup>10</sup> Along with the treaties were made dated May 1st, 1851, was a payment to the Indians. The Kakyashuk village was purchased for £43. 8. 6d. and paid off with 52 blankets, while the Chewhaytsum received 54 blankets worth £45. 10s.. Not long after the treaties were signed, the Kakyashuk Giallams left the Witty's Lagoon area to join the Chewhaytsum at Becher Bay. After William Head was officially transferred by these treaties into the control of the British, it is reported that the natives continued to use the base of the peninsula as a summer camp up until the first World War. Archeologists today have found three midden sites at William Head, remnants of ancient summer camps, dating back a thousand years or more.

Once the Hudson's Bay Company had official control of the colony and the land, it attended to the problem of establishing a settlement on the Island under its first Governor, Sir Richard Blanshard, and, after May, 1851, its second Governor, Sir James Douglas. To fulfill this obligation, the

Figure -

Native Indians and shelters  
on Indian Beach at William  
Head around 1847. (P.A.B.C.  
#57322)



company purchased a ship in 1838 to bring settlers to the Island from Britain. The Norman Morrison, a 120 foot teak barque, was built in Moulmein, Burma, in 1846, was purchased by the Hudson's Bay Company two years later, and in 1849, it was fitted to bring emigrants from Britain to Vancouver Island. The ship made its first voyage to the Island in the winter of 1849-50, arriving in March of 1850. On this first journey came one of Victoria's most famous early settlers, Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken. The ship made a second voyage in 1851 and, the following year, the Norman Morrison prepared to make its third voyage to Vancouver Island, bringing with it the man who was to first own and occupy William Head.

Robert de Vere Weir was born in Scotland in 1809. Story has it that he lived in Scotland with his two Uncles Steele, both doctors, who hoped to bring him into the same profession. However, when they found that Robert seemed to grow faint at the sight of blood, they dissuaded him from a medical career, and bought and stocked a farm for him in Ayrshire. This farm experience was to lead to a job which would take him halfway around the world, as a land steward on Vancouver Island.

At the time of his departure, Robert Weir was a 43 year old widower with seven children. Although his eldest daughter Jennie married the Reverend David Jamieson shortly before his departure and remained in Scotland, the six younger children accompanied him on the long journey to Vancouver Island. They boarded the steamboat Trident at Granton Pier in Edinburgh for the voyage to London on August 11th, 1852. In London, the Weirs boarded the Norman Morrison at the East India Docks on August 14th, and tugged down the Thames the following day to Gravesend. On August 17th, the ship sailed from Gravesend with Robert Weir and his six children, William, aged 19, John, aged 18, Isabella, aged 15, Hugh James, aged 14, Robina Helen, aged 12, and

Adam, aged 11 years.

This third voyage of the Norman Morison has been well documented. The cabin passengers included Kenneth McKenzie and T. J. Skinner and their families, both men being engaged as bailiffs for the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, a subsidiary of the Hudson's Bay Company. Accompanying these men were Robert Weir, a Mr. Stewart and their families, both men engaged by Mr. McKenzie as land stewards, and selected tradesmen and labourers, with their families, for a total of 144 passengers on board.

The voyage across was marked by many events, including generally poor weather. During the trip, two children were born while two others and one adult died. The ship rounded the Horn on November 7th, and Christmas and New Year were celebrated on board. On Sunday, January 16th, 1853, the Norman Morison cast anchor in Royal Bay, near Victoria, and its passengers saw Indians in their canoes for the first time. One woman on board, upon seeing the natives, was horrified that they were "just, just naked, nothing on them but a red or blue blanket".<sup>11</sup> The next day, Robert Weir and the English passengers went ashore, followed by the Scottish passengers the day after. The ship finally came into Victoria harbour on Friday, January 21st, 1853.

On March 8th of that year, the Norman Morison left Victoria and returned to Gravesend where she ended her Hudson's Bay Company career. She was later sold for £6500 and replaced by the Princess Royal, a ship named after the seized British vessel used by Quimper in 1790. The Norman Morison was eventually wrecked in 1865-66 on a voyage from Australia to India.

Upon his arrival, Robert Weir began his five year tenure as a griever or land steward for the Puget Sound Agricultural Company under Kenneth McKenzie who operated Craigflower Farm, one of four Hudson's Bay Company

Figure 5

Robert Vere Weir

(P.A.B.C. #4506)



farms in the Victoria area. Robert's two eldest sons, William and John, also signed on for five years as labourers, and each was to receive £17 per annum and, if the contracts were fulfilled, a premium of £25 value in land at 25 shillings per acre.

The Weir family's first lodgings were at the farm at Craigflower, but conditions were poor there as no accommodation had been prepared and some forty people had to live communally in a large barn. Conditions did not improve quickly and many people soon became at odds with Mr. McKenzie. His diary notes on Friday, April 21st, 1853 that Robert Weir and others were "absent with complaint to Mr. Douglas about food".<sup>12</sup> The following months saw the Weirs absent several more times and, on June 27th, John and William absconded to Sooke to stay with John Muir and his family. Less than two months later, on August 16th, Robert Weir and the other children joined the two eldest sons at Sooke. In the fall of 1853, while John and William were being incarcerated for one month in Victoria for breaking their contracts with Mr. McKenzie, the Weirs moved into Captain Grant's old home in Sooke, a well built log house, standing between two high rocks, with two loaded cannon in case of an Indian attack.

The first Vancouver Island wedding in the Weir family took place early the next year when, on January 15th, 1854, banns were proclaimed for Isabella Weir and Andrew Muir, the son of John Muir from Sooke. The wedding took place on January 31st, with the Reverend John Stains presiding.

In the fall of 1854, Robert Weir engaged for a year to Captain Edward E. Langford, a bailiff for the Puget Sound Agricultural Company's Colwood farm, as a shepherd for the company's newly arrived flock of sheep. About the same time, he decided to purchase some property from the Hudson's Bay Company at one pound per acre. After looking around the Sooke and Burn-

side areas, he decided on some property at Pedder Bay, and on November 22nd, 1854, when Section 56, Metchosin District was registered in his name, Robert Weir became the first owner of William Head. He paid for the land over a period of 16 years, giving the last installment on December 31st, 1870. The total cost for the 120 acres of Section 56 was \$569.18, and the land was officially Crown granted to him on December 7th, 1871.

Shortly after purchasing the land, construction was begun on a homestead. This house, eventually called Swansea, was used as the family home until 1859 when the main family home, Gordon Bush, was built on Section 32. After 1859, John Weir lived at Swansea until it was sold to Dr. Alfred Tennyson Watt, Chief Medical Officer at William Head Quarantine Station at the turn of the century. Just prior to the second World War, it was taken over by the Department of National Defence after a succession of owners. During the war, it was used as sleeping quarters for the Headquarters Staff of the 5th (B.C.) Coast Regiment, R.C.A. After the war, it was deserted, and, in the early 1950's, the house was demolished after extensive damage had been done to it by vandals.

Robert Weir, affectionately known by family and friends as 'The Laird', was an excellent stockman and trainer of Scotch Border collies. He obtained some Southdown sheep, brought originally to Mr. Langford's Colwood farm, and transferred the hornless, short-woolled sheep to the more suitable location at William Head. The sheep existed there on natural food and shelter and were not fed a single bale of hay in forty years. By 1862, the flock numbered close to 800 and, with the addition of a few head of dairy cattle and almost 200 beef cattle, the total herd numbered over 1000 by 1867.

Robert Weir also seems to have been respected by the natives, who regarded him as something of a Tye or Chief among the whites, and the

settlers alike, often arbitrating disputes between the two groups. An example of this came about due to the actions of a lady who had come across on the Norman Morison with Robert Weir. Mrs. Mary Ann Reid remarried after her husband's death on Vancouver Island to become Mrs. Mary Ann Vine, an almost legendary midwife for the Metchosin and Sooke area. One day, one of the local Indian men appeared at Mrs. Vine's home asking for something. The man's requests were so persistent that Mrs. Vine, who was ironing at the time, soon grew weary of him. In order to get rid of him, she took one of her best irons, lifted the man's loincloth in the back and simply applied the former to his backside. The shocked Indian was quick to leave. Several days later, some of the natives approached Robert Weir with the complaint that one of their men was unable to sit properly in a canoe and paddle.

It was while the Weirs were at Swansea at William Head that the first apple trees in the district were planted in 1856. Some of the trees, originally brought from California by the Muir family in Sooke, can still be seen today.

✓ > In 1859, Robert Weir acquired the 111.5 acre Section 22, Metchosin, from John MacGregor, and immediately began to build a new home there. Gordon Bush, as it was called, was to be his home for the rest of his life. It was built at what is now the east end of Swanwick Road and, unfortunately, > was destroyed by fire on August 4th, 1922.

In the early 1860's, the second family wedding took place when Robert Weir's remaining daughter, Robina Helen, was married to Thomas Frountes Swanwick on July 15th, 1861. Sadly, five years earlier, tragedy struck the Weir family when Isabella Muir, Robina's sister, after giving birth to her first child on September 12th 1856, died two weeks later, on September 27th. She left behind her husband, Andrew Muir, and newborn

daughter, Isabella Helen Muir.

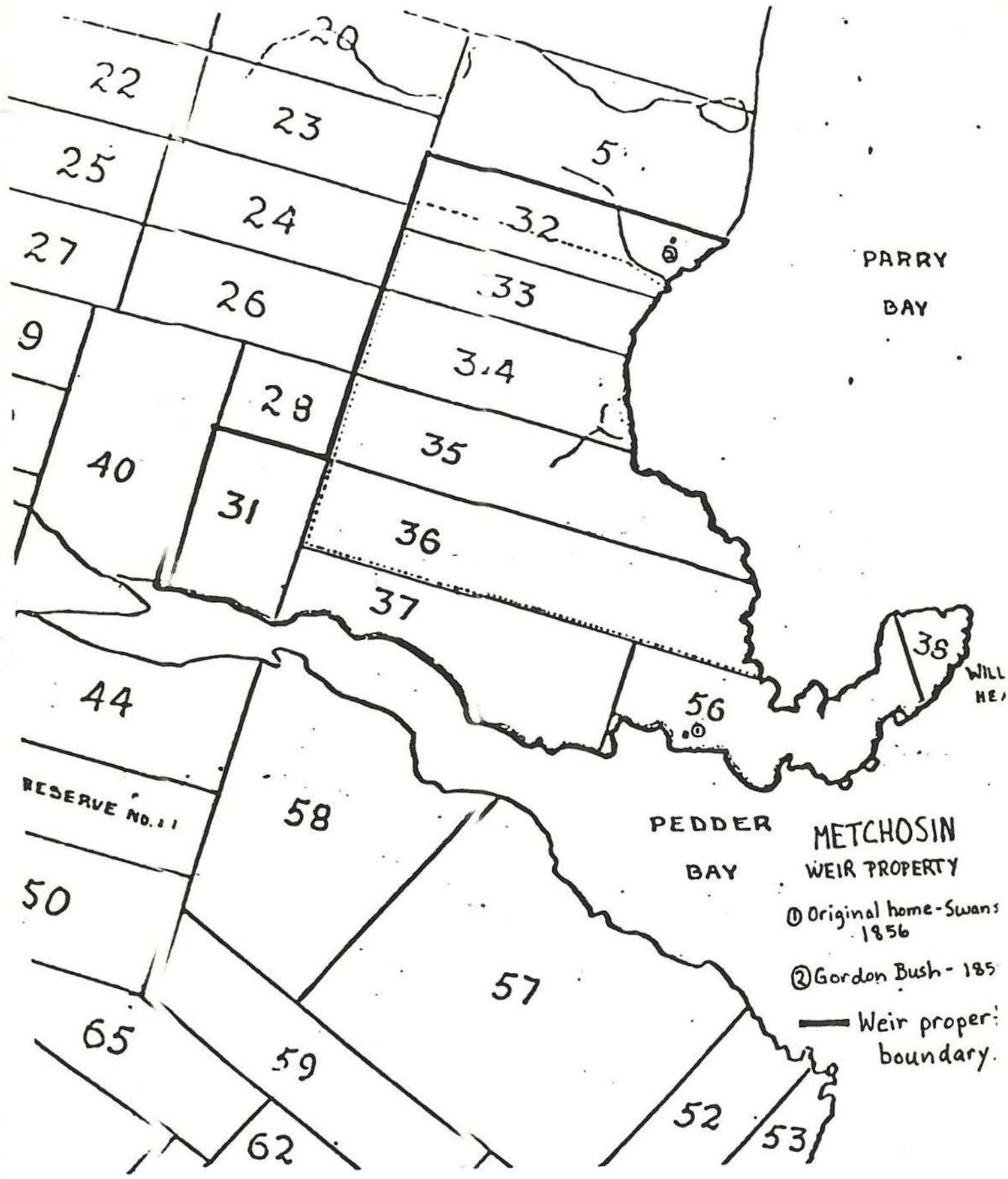
In 1862, a road was constructed by the government from Victoria to Metchosin, and the British Colonist newspaper announced, on December 10th, 1862, its opening "as far as Mr. Weir's house"<sup>13</sup> at <sup>G</sup> Gordon Bush. A <sup>^</sup>bridle path continued from there out to Rocky Point, which was soon opened to wheeled traffic. In the winter of 1868-69, the Weirs built their own road from Gordon Bush to William Head, portions of which are still discernible today. Robert Weir first drove the road on February 1st, 1869. Previous to that, transport from Gordon Bush to William Head was done mostly by boat, or on foot through the woods.

In 1866, the year of the colonial union of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, the first prize fight to be held on the island took place at William Head. Because such fights were illegal in Victoria at that time, it could not be held in the city, so a steamer, the Emily Harris, was chartered and scheduled to leave Broderick's Wharf in Victoria at 6:00 a.m. on February 23rd. The contestants and about 130 people boarded the steamer which, after several delays, headed to and anchored in Pedder Bay, opposite the Weir homestead. The people came ashore and, in a large natural amphitheatre just west of the house, they watched as the bout began. The fight, between George Baker, 5' 10" and 154 pounds, and Joe Eden, 6' and 165 pounds, went for 128 rounds and lasted one hour and fifty-two minutes, Eden winning by a knockout. It was fought by the old London ring rules and Eden reportedly jumped over the ropes twice at the end just to show how fresh he was.

Over the following years, the Weirs acquired several more sections of land, so that not long after British Columbia became Canada's sixth province in 1871, the Weirs owned Sections 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 and 56 in Metchosin, and Section 13 in Sooke, where Robert built another house called

Figure 6

The Weir property  
and homestead in  
Metchosin.<sup>14</sup>



PARRY  
BAY

PEDDER  
BAY

METCHOSIN  
WEIR PROPERTY

① Original home-Swans  
1856

② Gordon Bush - 185

— Weir proper:  
boundary.

WILL  
HEI

RESERVE No. 11

Ardentinny. By then, the amount of land totalled around 1000 acres, making the Weirs the largest land owners in Metchosin.

While they were acquiring all this land, Robert and his four sons, William, John, Hugh James and Adam, formed a partnership to operate the farm. Robert was the sole manager and took charge of all bookkeeping and accounts. For this he was to be paid an annual salary of £60 sterling. The document formalizing the partnership was signed on January 1st, 1865 at Gordon Bush in Metchosin, and was witnessed by Robert Weir's son-in-law, Thomas Swanwick, and his daughter, Mrs. Jane Jamieson, who was out visiting from Scotland.

During the years of this partnership, two more deaths occurred in the immediate Weir family. On April 5th, 1869, the eldest Weir son, William, died in Victoria after a brief illness, at the age of 36. Sadly, it was only five years later when Hugh James died on February 10th, 1874, in Victoria, at 35 years of age.

In 1887, the Dominion Department of Indian Affairs attempted to purchase the Weir's land, to use as a reserve, but the deal never came through. After this, in January, 1888, the family partnership was dissolved and the stock and property were divided between Robert and his two remaining sons. While Adam received Section 35, John received Section 56, which included William Head. Five years later, the Dominion Government expropriated half of Section 56 to form a Quarantine Station, after having already expropriated eleven acres at the tip of William Head previous to 1871, as a battery reserve. The remainder of Section 56 was sold to Dr. Alfred Tennyson Watt, the medical supervisor at the quarantine station, in 1900.

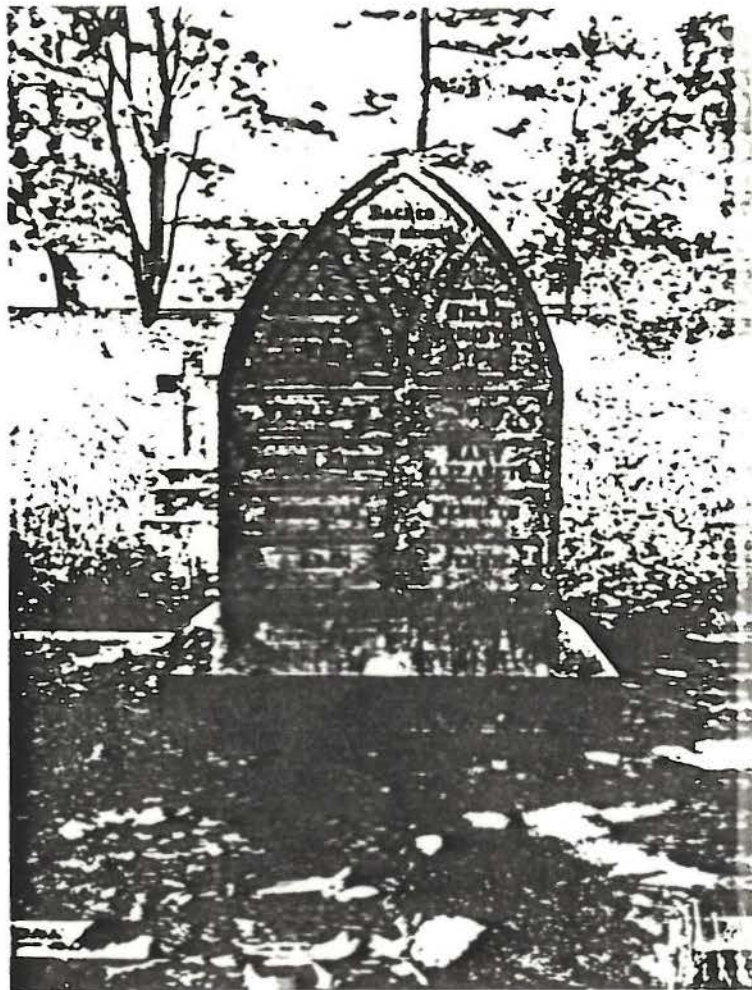
It was shortly after the government expropriated part of William Head for a quarantine station that Robert de Vere Weir died at his home at Gordon Bush at the age of 85. When he passed away, on April 2nd, 1894, he

Figure 7

The Weir family grave  
at St. Mary the Virgin  
Anglican Church in  
Metchosin.

left behind his two remaining sons, John and Adam, and two remaining daughters, Jennie Jamieson and Robina Helen Swanwick. He was buried at St. Mary's Church cemetery in Metchosin and his obituary told how "the thriving condition of Metchosin is in great part due to the late Mr. Weir's energy."<sup>15</sup>

During his life on Vancouver Island, he was highly respected and actively involved in the community. He served on the first church committee when the Church of St. Mary the Virgin was built in 1873 and was a school trustee from 1873 to 1878. He was appointed as Justice of the Peace for Metchosin in May, 1873 and was asked to run in the provincial election of 1871, but declined. He did, however, run in support of the government of the day under the Honourable George A. Walker<sup>m</sup> in the provincial election of 1875, but both he and the government were defeated.



For almost forty years, Robert Weir and his family played an important role in the history of William Head. After his death, his children continued to be active in the area, but their connection with William Head gradually declined. Some of Robert Weir's descendants still live in the Victoria area today and, known to be living in 1982, his descendants included two great-grandchildren, ten great-great-grandchildren, 17 great-great-great-grandchildren, and five great-great-great-great-grandchildren.

With the acquisition of sixty acres of Section 56 in Metchosin in 1893, the Dominion Government established a quarantine station at William Head. This station was not the first of its kind in Canada, or even on the west coast. The first quarantine regulations in Canada were passed in the first session of the first Dominion Parliament, with three quarantine stations already existing on the east coast. The quarantining of ships and their passengers, in order to control the spread of communicable diseases, became a problem on Canada's west coast as early as 1872.

When British Columbia became Canada's sixth province in 1871, quarantining was already being carried out by the city of Victoria. When the ship Prince Alfred arrived in Victoria the following year, it was put in quarantine by the Board of Health of the city. A question of authority was raised when the city asked the province to help pay quarantine expenses and to provide a place to hold people with communicable diseases, other than the temporary premises at Beacon Hill. The province refused to help and, over the next ten years, the city of Victoria continued to bear the cost and responsibility of quarantine on the west coast.

It was not until the early 1880's that the Dominion government decided to create a quarantine station on the west coast. In the parlia-

mentary session of 1882, \$5000 was voted to be used for that purpose, but, by the end of the fiscal year, no site had been chosen and no money had been spent. In August 1st, 1883, Dr. William Jackson was appointed as the first Dominion Quarantine Officer on the west coast and began working out of Victoria. A controversy had arisen in the meantime over the proposed site of the new quarantine station. Both Dominion and Provincial authorities agreed that there should be a quarantine station, but the Dominion government wanted to situate it in Esquimalt, while the Provincial government wanted it further out at Albert Head. Although the Dominion parliamentary session of 1883 voted \$7500 towards the quarantine station, due to this controversy, no site was chosen that year and only an expenditure of \$46.<sup>00</sup> was made.

The residents and prominent people of the Victoria area were against the idea of establishing a quarantine station at Esquimalt, so close to the city of Victoria. The Honourable Robert Dunsmair, elected M.L.A. for Nanaimo in 1882, and the Members of Parliament for Victoria, also elected in 1882, Nath Shakespeare and E. Crowe Baker, were among the people who fought to have the quarantine station established at Albert Head. In 1884, the decision was made and, <sup>o</sup>~~in~~<sub>^</sub> July 10th, the Minister of Public Works, Hector Langevin, telegraphed Messrs. Shakespeare and Baker to say he had adopted Albert Head as the site for the new quarantine station.

Once again, in the parliamentary session of 1884, \$7500 was allocated by the Dominion government for the construction of the quarantine station and, by September, work had been approved and started under Mr. Charles Hayward, a local contractor. Dr. W. McNaughton-Jones was appointed Medical Superintendent at Albert Head and, by January 7th, 1885, the buildings were completed and accepted by the Dominion government agent, the Honourable Joseph W. Trutch. A hospital had been constructed with a two storey

central section and two one storey wings. As the total cost of the hospital was \$8,119.98, the Dominion government allocated another \$11,100.00 to Albert Head in 1885. During that year, sheds, offices, and stables were supplied and the grading of a road from the highway was begun. In 1886 the road was completed, bringing the total cost of establishing the station to \$12,127.61.

However, even with the establishment of the quarantine station at Albert Head, complaints from the local population still continued. As immigrants passed through the station, including many labourers from the Orient coming to Canada to work on the construction of the C.P.R., complaints arose over the site of the quarantine station. The Journals of the House of Commons for April 8th, 1886 record that George Dutnall and others of Metchoosin and Esquimalt desired "that the isolation of the Quarantine Hospital lately erected at Albert Head, Vancouver Island, be made complete by prohibiting all access thereto except by water."<sup>16</sup> The native Indians were also dissatisfied with the quarantine station's situation, as it was adjacent to an Indian fishing reserve held by the Che-er-no Band of Indians of Becher Bay. This problem was resolved in 1892 when a buffer zone of four acres was purchased from the Indians for \$200<sup>x</sup> in order to more effectively isolate the quarantine station.

Early in 1889 an interesting event occurred. The C.P. Navigation steamship Premier arrived in Vancouver, from Seattle, with a smallpox case on board. Vancouver's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. R. Beckingsale, boarded the ship to diagnose the case and ordered it back to the quarantine station at Albert Head. Upon arrival there, Dr. Beckingsale found he had to remain on board until the quarantine was lifted. By January 12th, the crew and doctor were getting impatient, so Captain John O'Brien weighed anchor and steamed the 70 miles back to Vancouver. There the local Police and Fire

Departments tried to prevent the passengers from disembarking, but Dr. Beckingsale and two other passengers escaped by rowboat. The remaining passengers were transferred to the I.P.N. ship Islander, commanded by George Rutlin, which proceeded to sail back and forth across Burrard Inlet, only to have attempts at unloading stopped by blasts from the local fire department's hoses. Rutlin then said he would return to Albert Head, but, when he got the ship's steam up, he turned and quickly made for Port Moody, six miles from Vancouver, arriving there before the police. He was able to unload the passengers there, most of whom then boarded trains bound for points east.

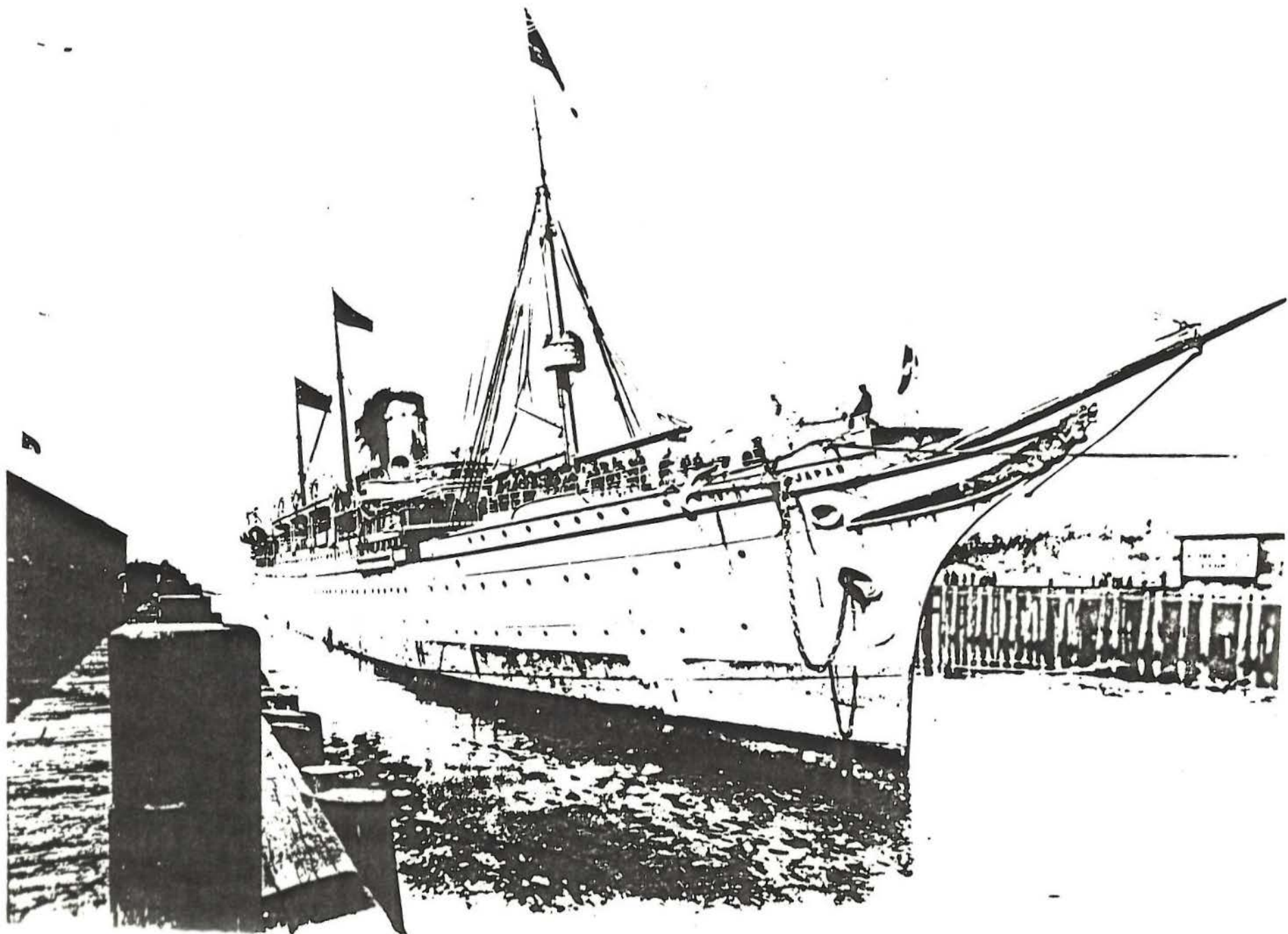
On June 1st, 1890, Dr. W. McNaughton-Jones replaced Dr. Jackson as the Dominion Government Quarantine Officer for British Columbia. That same year saw the launching of the first two of the famous Canadian Pacific Empress liners. The Empress of Japan and the Empress of India were launched at Barrow-in-Furness in 1890, followed in 1891 by the third sister ship, the Empress of China. These luxury liners steamed out to the Pacific Ocean and immediately began their record-breaking runs between Canada and the Orient.

The second round trip voyage of the Empress of China was a trying one for her crew. A crew member was killed in a fall on board at Hong Kong; high headwinds forced her to stop at Mahodate, Japan to take on more coal and, upon her arrival in Vancouver on December 1st, 1891, she was found to have a case of smallpox on board and was forced to return to the quarantine station at Albert Head. This was to be the first of many occasions when an Empress liner was held at the quarantine station, with the following year, perhaps, marking one of the more serious incidents.

Figure 1  
 The Empress of Japan  
 docking in Victoria.  
 (P.A.B.C. #200)

In May, 1892, the arrival of the C.P. Steamship Empress of Japan triggered a smallpox epidemic that was once again to raise the question of the situation of the quarantine stations. The Empress of Japan arrived on May 1st, but a case of smallpox on board went unnoticed at first. One man on board was later found to have the disease and, from this man, at least 19 cases of smallpox, including three related deaths, were traced in Vancouver alone. The annual report of the city of Victoria for 1892 records 112 cases of smallpox in the city, as well as 22 deaths from the disease. In total, the British Columbia yearbook records 150 cases in coast cities with thirty deaths, which led to a general panic among the people. Money loss due to the epidemic was great, with Victoria alone paying out some \$60,000.

The effects of such an epidemic were obviously devastating. The British Columbia government set up a committee under Chief Justice Begbie



to study the cause of the smallpox epidemic and what could be done to prevent a re-occurrence. At the same time, the two Members of Parliament for Victoria, E.G. Prior, elected in 1888, and Thomas Earle, elected in 1889, petitioned Ottawa for a new, first class quarantine station, as the old station at Albert Head was no longer suitable.

Eventually, local Staff Commander Bawden was commissioned by Commander-in-Chief, Read-Admiral Hotham, to inquire into a new site for the quarantine station in conjunction with Captain Devereaux, Superintendent of the Dry Dock, and Mr. Gamble, of the Dominion Public Works Department. Bawden, Devereaux, and Gamble unanimously recommended William Head for the new site. In 1893, within a year of the smallpox epidemic, the quarantine station at Albert Head was closed down. The land at Albert Head was transferred in 1937 to the Department of National Defense, and is still used by them today.

The acquisition of William Head, however, was not without complication. By 1893, William Head, in Section 56 in Metchosin, was in the hands of John Weir, Robert Weir's second oldest son. That year, the Department of Public Works, under its Minister, the Honourable Joseph A. Ouimet, approached John Weir and offered him \$3000.00 for sixty acres of Section 56, consisting of most of William Head. Mr. Weir refused the offer, so the matter was placed in the hands of the Minister of Justice, who also happened to be the Prime Minister, John Thompson. Consequently, the land was soon expropriated, passing from John Weir to Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, for the Department of Public Works, on March 29th, 1893. A twelve foot wide right of way was also bought, running 9,691 feet through Sections 56, 37, and 31, belonging to the Weirs, and Sections 40 and 42, belonging to a Mrs. Conway, to Quarantine Lake in Section 46. This right of way, for a pipeline

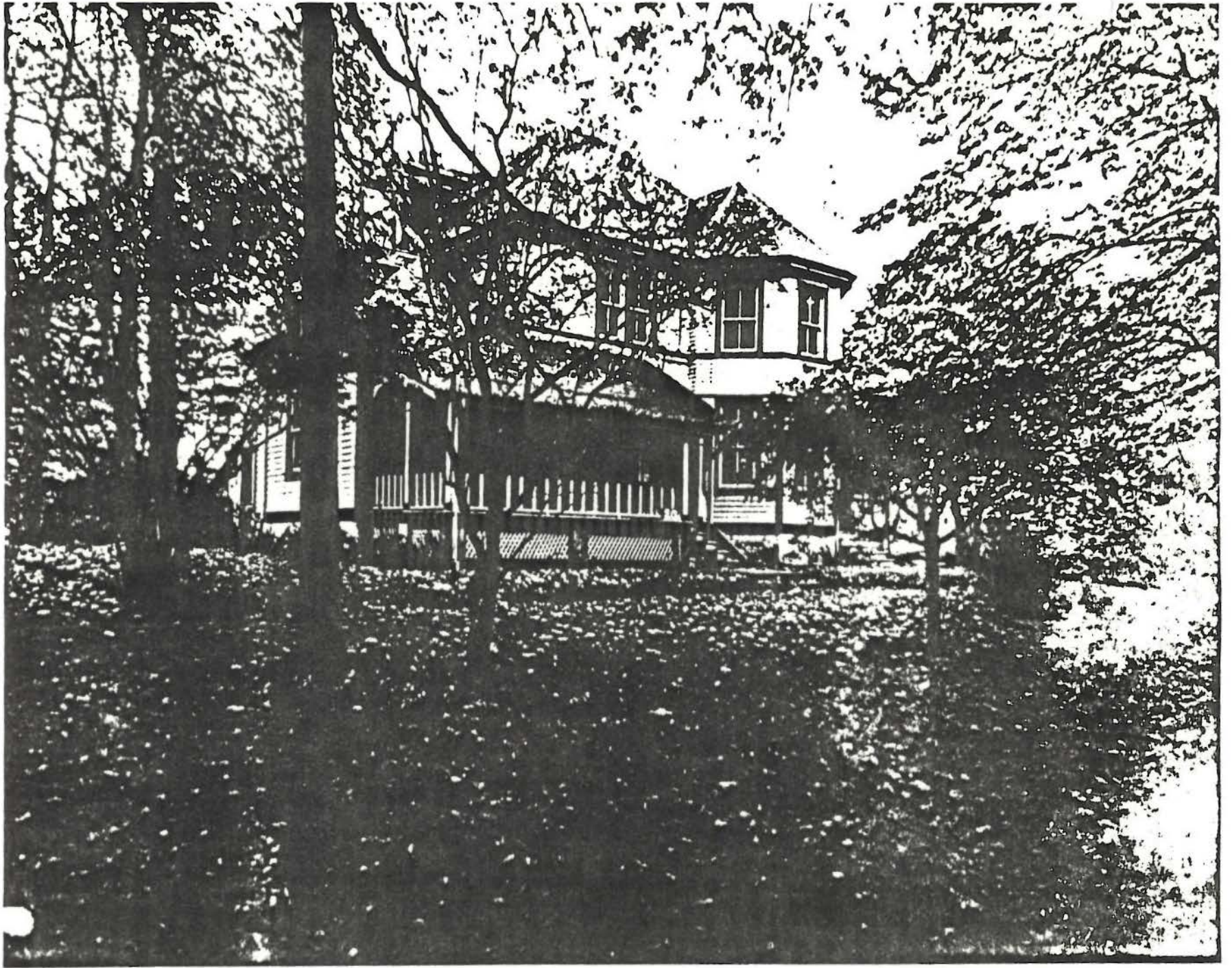
from the lake to William Head for the quarantine station's water supply, cost \$250 from the Weir's and was to be the same for Mrs. Conway, but she died before it could be finalized.

After expropriating the land, the government paid John Weir the offered \$3000 but that, seemingly, was not enough. John Weir took the case to the Court of the Exchequer, asking \$8000 for the sixty acres. The case was tried on May 15th, 1894, Mr. Justice Burbidge presiding, with the government's payment of \$3000 being upheld.

In the Spring of 1893, the local Dominion Public Works Officer went to Ottawa, consulted with the appropriate authorities, and won approval for the building plans for William Head. On April 21st, 1893, Messrs. Bishop and S. Sherbourne and Mr. George MacFarlane secured contracts for the quarantine station's buildings and, on May 1st, work was begun. The original buildings

Figure 9

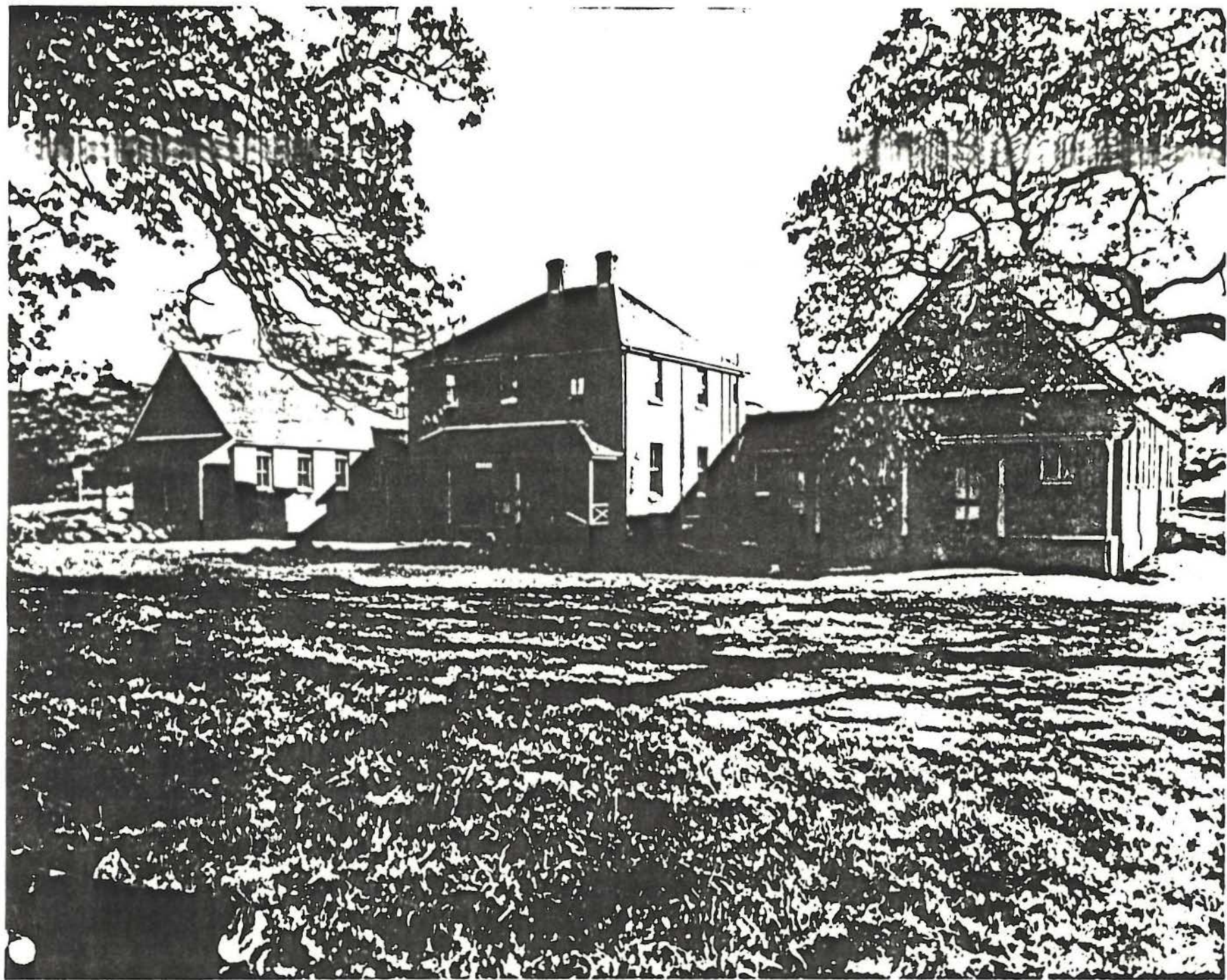
The original Quarantine  
Officer's residence,  
photographed in 1959.



consisted of a three-section hospital with a two storey centre building and two one-storey wings holding 15 to 20 beds each, situated in the centre of the property; a first class passenger shelter house, holding about eighty people, situated three or four hundred yards west of the hospital; Japanese and Chinese shelter houses, the same distance to the east of the hospital, with the Japanese building holding over two hundred, and the Chinese building holding over six hundred passengers; the disinfecting building, at the end of the wharf, with an annex for a fifty horsepower boiler and a main house building holding a super-heated steam chamber for disinfecting; and the quarantine officer's residence at the southwest end of the property. The total expenditure for this construction was \$29,539.10. Along with the buildings were erected a ten foot fence at the edge of the property, a six foot fence to separate the oriental passengers from the other people, a water supply pipe, two wells, and the wharf.

Figure 10

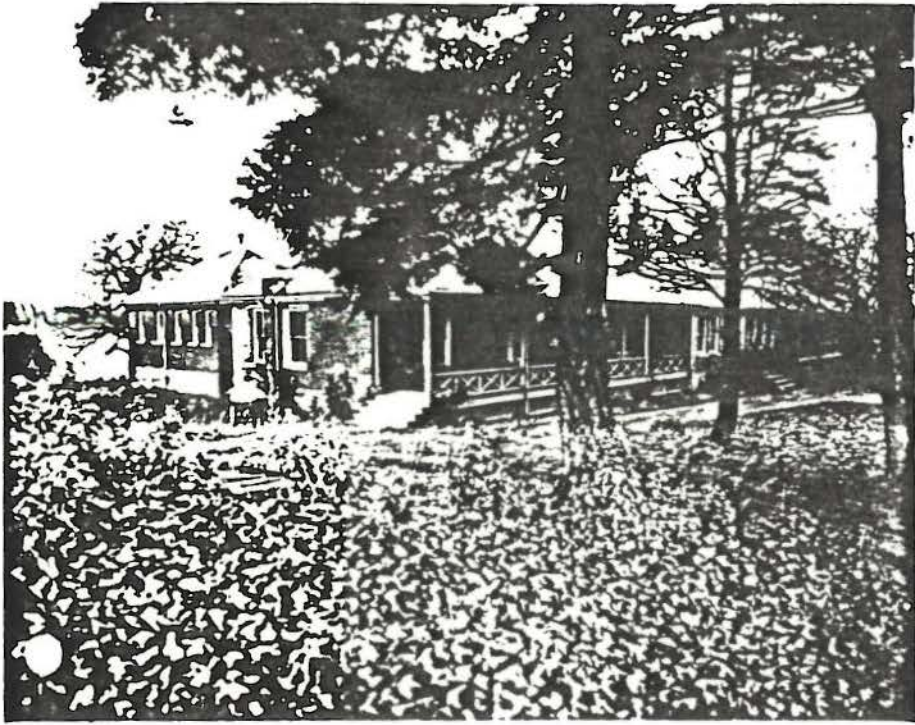
The original hospital, later  
the second class passengers'  
shelter house. (1959).



The wharf itself was quite an accomplishment for its time. When finished, it was 480 feet long and 40 feet wide, with a 320 foot approach to the south, leading to the hospital and first class passenger shelter house, and another leading north to the disinfecting apparatus and Chinese and Japanese shelter houses. The piles, which were 75 to 80 feet long and driven to rock bottom, were covered with over 20,000 sheets of copper to protect them from teredos, a kind of underwater termite. Mr. William Lorimer, the superintendent of construction, said it was the "finest wooden structure of this kind on the coast."<sup>17</sup> The dredge Mudlark was engaged for 99 days for \$2088~~x~~, clearing a 42 foot depth of water at the outer end of the wharf and a shoal 32 feet deep at the inner end, apparently deep enough for "any ships afloat, sail or steam."<sup>18</sup> It had two slips for baggage and freight, and was double braced in front and single braced at the back. There was a small railway on

Figure 11

The original first class  
passengers' shelter house  
(1959).

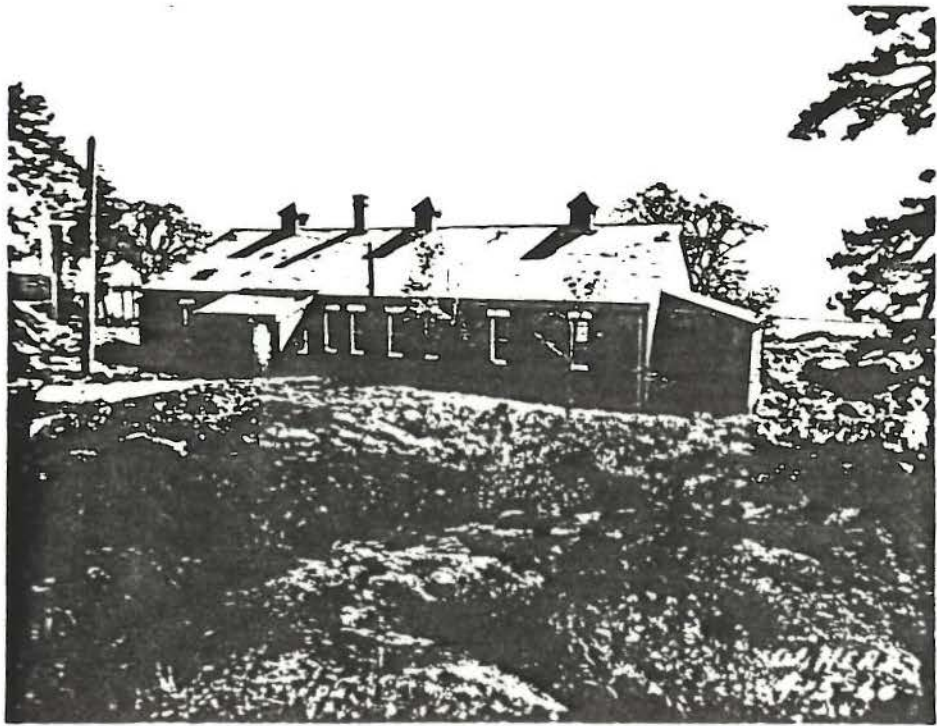


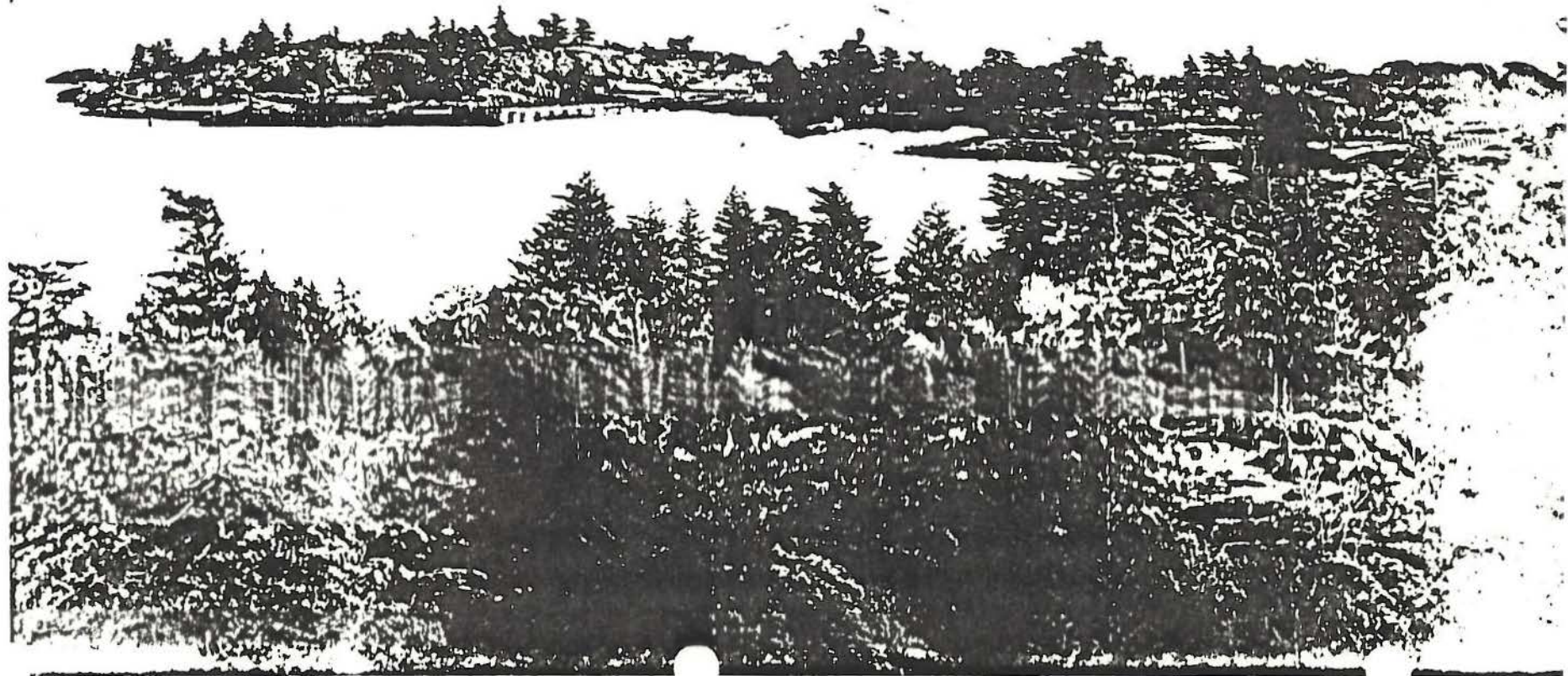
top with hand trucks on it to take baggage and passengers' effects to the disinfecting house at the east end of the wharf. The tracks led into the steam chamber, built by Albion Iron Works in Victoria, where the iron doors could be closed, bolted, and the steam turned on. A dioxide blast off the ship Earle, the quarantine vessel for the station, was also placed on a moveable truck on the wharf for fumigation purposes. The total cost of the wharf, under contract to Mr. J. Leamy, was \$24,605.71.

By the end of 1893, the quarantine station had hot and cold running water and reliable sewage. Early in 1894, the buildings and wharf were completed, a cottage was built for the caretaker, and a stable, coalshed, and other additions were constructed to finish off the station. With the addition of detention buildings and a telephone line from Victoria in 1895, the William Head Quarantine Station was in full operation.

Figure 12

The original Japanese  
shelter house. (1959).



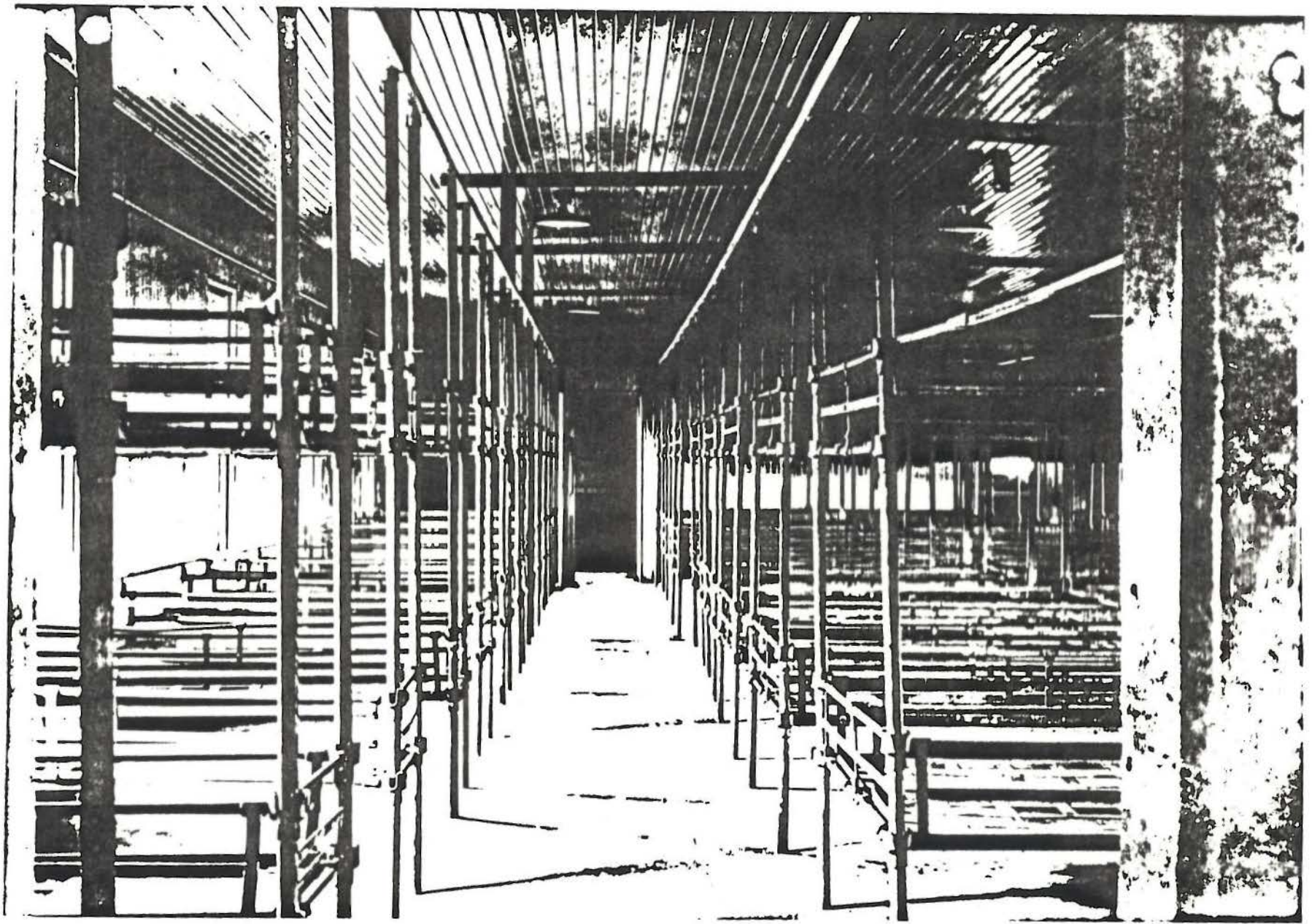


Operation of the quarantine station continued normally over the following years as many ships entering Canada were inspected and all ships with disease on board were detained at William Head. Dr. McNaughton-Jones had moved into the quarantine station at the end of 1893 and, while he was Medical Superintendent there, renovation and construction continued with various works, including a road into Victoria. In 1896, Dr. McNaughton-Jones was replaced by Dr. George H. Duncan, the old Health Officer for Victoria. He in turn was replaced in 1897 by Dr. Alfred Tennyson Watt, who was to remain as Medical Superintendent until 1913.

In his first year in that position, Dr. Watt was faced with a serious problem of overcrowding. The Empress of China arrived at William Head in late April, 1897 with an infected passenger on board. Although there was a question of whether the man had chicken-pox, a non-dangerous disease, or

Figure 13

Bunk frames inside the  
original Chinese shelter  
house. (1959).



smallpox, Dr. Watt took no chances and the ship was held despite crowds waiting in Vancouver. The quarantining of the Empress of China raised protest by some of the passengers, as almost a thousand people were detained and moved ashore, including seventy first class passengers. The staff and equipment at William Head, however, were insufficient to handle a group of that size. Dr. Watt put out an urgent call to Ottawa for expansion of the facilities, which began shortly thereafter. The following year a second wharf, 118 feet long and 40 feet wide, was built for the quarantine vessel Earle, as it was unable to dock when the main wharf was occupied.

With the new wharf and other additions, work continued at the quarantine station into a new century. By 1906, the steamer Earle had been disposed of and replaced by the new 100 foot steamer Madge. The quarantine station, with the passage of new Dominion government legislation, also received the responsibility, in 1906, of caring for the lepers on Canada's west coast, housed at D'Arcy Island.

On June 26th, 1906, Royal assent was given to federal legislation entitled 'A Bill Respecting Leprosy' bringing all lepers in Canada under the care of the Dominion government. Previous to the Leprosy Act of 1906, there was no official legislation regarding leprosy, a much feared and much misunderstood disease at the time. Medical authorities at that time thought it was best to isolate leprosy patients so, in 1844, Canada's first lazaretto<sup>o</sup> or leprosarium was established at Tracadie, New Brunswick. The west coast of Canada, however, did not have a leper colony until 1891, when the city of Victoria established one on D'Arcy Island.

Lying in Haro Strait, just east of Saanich Peninsula, the 200 acre D'Arcy Island was named by Captain George Henry Richards in 1858 while on a surveying expedition in the steamship Plumper. He named the island after

Figure 14

William Head Quarantine  
Station at the turn of  
the century. The steamer  
Earle is docked at the  
small wharf. (P.A.B.C.  
#57998).



Lieutenant John D'Arcy who was mate on the Herald in 1846 when the ship's commander, Captain Kellett, named William Head. On May 31st, 1891, the Board of Health of the city of Victoria established five Chinese lepers on the island, which was reserve land provided by the province of British Columbia for Vancouver and Victoria for the lepers. They were housed in a large building with six rooms and were adequately supplied with food and cooking utensils. They were given opium, but no medical aid was provided. A supply vessel came from Victoria every three months to deposit the necessary supplies and the patients received periodic visits from the city's Medical Officer and Sanitary Inspector. In July a sixth leper, from Nanaimo, was admitted on the condition that his share of the expenses be paid by that city.

The years up to 1900 saw anywhere from five to eight patients at D'Arcy Island at any given time. In 1894 two more lepers were found, but one escaped before he could be taken to the island, and the other escaped from the island, presumably with the help of family or friends. At the same time, six shacks were erected to house the increased population. The following year, a Caucasian man was held on the island with the Chinese lepers, but he died within the year. In the first three years of its operation, the lazaretto had a 60% mortality rate.

As the city of Victoria had little money to spare for this lepro-sarium, conditions on the island were quite poor. The medical officer from Victoria who visited the island, Dr. George H. Duncan, urged the Dominion government to take over the lazaretto. His successor in 1897, Dr. E. L. Fraser, shifted his requests from the Dominion to the Provincial authorities as conditions on the island became progressively worse. In 1897 one of the eight lepers died and, of the seven remaining, only two could work. In 1899,

two more died, one of the Chinese lepers, Lim Sam, being killed in a fire that started in the bush and destroyed the east wing of the main building. Once again the province was urged to take over as conditions on the island became deplorable.

Petitions to the government continued well after the turn of the century. Finally, in October, 1903, some degree of success was attained when the provincial government began to foot the bill for the maintenance of D'Arcy Island. After that, it was not long until the province took over full care and control of the island on January 1st, 1905. At that time there were five patients on the island, two of them having been there for over eight years.

With the passage of the Leprosy Act in 1906, the history of D'Arcy Island Leprosarium and William Head Quarantine Station became linked. The Leprosy Act put all lepers and both leper colonies in Canada under the care of the Dominion government. As a Dominion agent, the Chief Medical Officer at William Head, with the help of the staff there, became responsible for the care of the eight lepers at D'Arcy Island who were receiving treatment with the then new Chaulmoogra oil. In 1907 the lepers were all deported to a Presbyterian Mission in Canton, China and the old buildings on the island were burned. Two new buildings were erected to help lepers temporarily, until they could be deported, and, in 1908, a cottage was built to house a caretaker. By 1909, five more lepers had been returned to China and the policy of deportation continued until 1917, when only those who were legally deportable or consenting would be deported.

Meanwhile, work continued at the quarantine station. The Madge, acquired in 1906, became the main government vessel at the station. In 1913

Dr. H. Rundle Nelson replaced Dr. Alfred T. Watt as Medical Superintendent and was to remain in that position right through the first World War and up to 1923.

Just before the outbreak of World War I, a ship passed through William Head Quarantine Station that was quickly to become the centre of attention on Canada's west coast. On May 21st, 1914, the Komagata Maru was cleared by the officials at William Head and passed on to Vancouver, where it arrived on May 23rd. But once the ship arrived in Vancouver, the near 400 passengers were never allowed to disembark.

The Komagata Maru, a steamship run by a Japanese company, with a Japanese captain and crew, arrived on Canada's west coast with 376 passengers. They were East Indians from the China Coast and Japan claiming the right to enter Canada as British subjects. Most of them were to remain in Canada for just over two months without ever leaving the ship, only to return to their native country of India.

The Komagata Maru left Hong Kong with 165 passengers, and picked up 111 in Shanghai, 86 in Kobe, and 14 in Yokahama, for a total of 376. It was a German ship, in the use of a Japanese company, and was chartered by an East Indian named Gurdit Singh. Opposition to the ship's arrival arose before it had even reached Vancouver, as the somewhat anti-oriental British Columbians heard of the passengers' intentions to immigrate. When it arrived in Vancouver harbour, it was anchored away from shore to prevent the possibility of violence. The authorities wanted to get a legal ruling on whether the passengers could be allowed to enter.

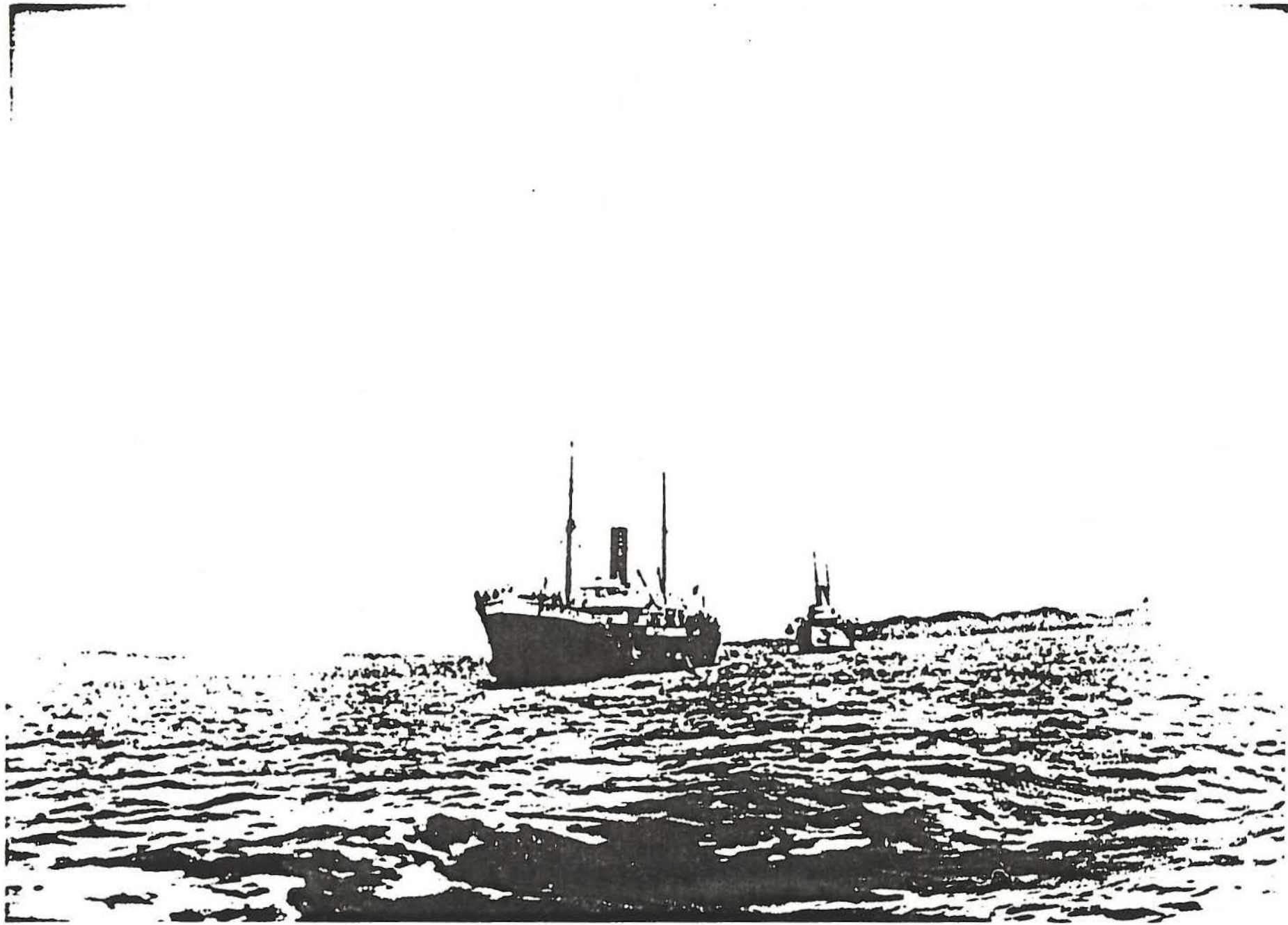
The immigration laws of the time, though not mentioning them by name, effectively disallowed East Indians entry into Canada. But, due to delays caused by Gurdit Singh and his passengers, legal action did not begin

until June 24th. In the meantime, twenty passengers were allowed to land, because they had lived in Canada before, and another ninety were deported, having been found to have contracted communicable diseases.

By July 6th the courts had reached the decision that the Komagata Maru and its passengers must return to Asia. Financial and food problems delayed the ship's departure as offers from the Canadian authorities were refused while the passengers demanded more or nothing at all. On July 18th the ship was ordered to leave, but the passengers refused to let the captain sail away. That same night, 120 policemen and 40 special immigration officials attempted to take the ship by force. Unfortunately <sup>for the police,</sup> the deck of the Sea Lion, the tug they used in the attack, was 15 feet lower than the deck of the Komagata Maru. Passengers on that ship simply hurled coal, bricks, and scrap metal down at their assailants, injuring many of the police. The tug eventually pulled away, the attempt unsuccessful.

Figure 15

The Komagata Maru being escorted out to Cape Flattery by the H.M.C.S. Rainbow in 1914. (P.A.B.C. #72634).



As a last resort, the commander of the H.M.C.S. Rainbow, a naval cruiser based at Esquimalt, volunteered the vessel to help remedy the situation. So, on July 21st, the Rainbow sailed into Vancouver harbour and anchored beside the Komagata Maru. One East Indian aboard the latter ship, upon seeing the approaching warship, reportedly sent a message in semaphore code saying "Our only ammunition is coal."<sup>19</sup> The arrival of the Rainbow had the desired effect as, the following day, the passengers of the Komagata Maru agreed to leave. The ship was then provisioned and, on July 23rd, the H.M.C.S. Rainbow escorted the Komagata Maru out to the Pacific on her way back to India. When the passengers finally disembarked at the docks in Calcutta, a riot broke out and 26 people were killed.

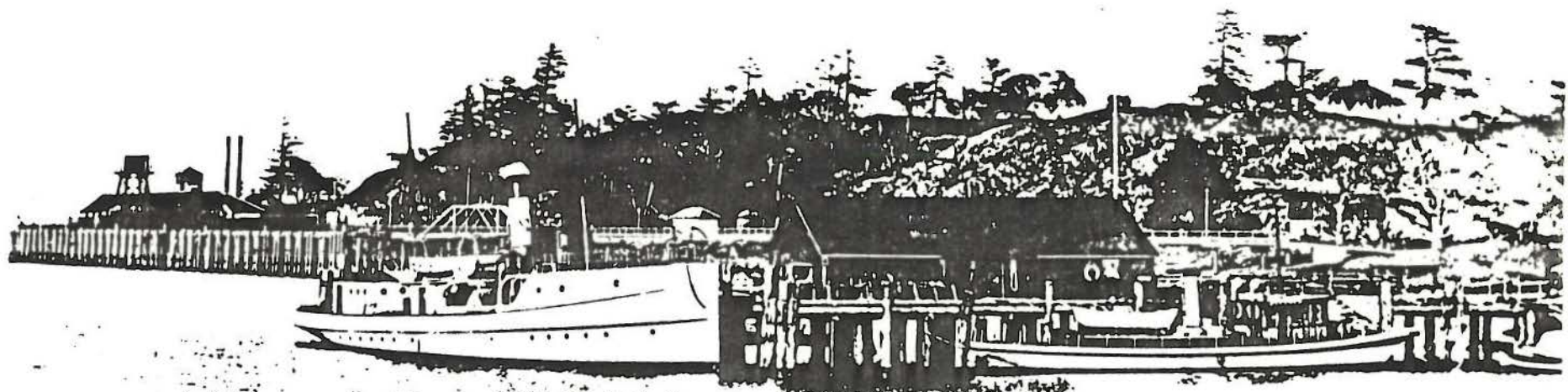
An afternote to this story came in 1942 when Stephen Raymer, a German translator for Vancouver's Department of Immigration in 1914, claimed that the whole affair was an Axis power plot to stir up trouble in Canada as war was about to break out. As evidence, Raymer notes that the Komagata Maru was a German ship, on lease to a Japanese company, with a German agent; that the Austro-Hungarian Consul in Vancouver had an interest in the affair; that the Japanese government refused to allow them to land in Japan on the return voyage; and that, upon arrival in Calcutta, the passengers were the instigators of the bloody riots there. Raymer argues that these points show an

✓ > Axis power conspiracy to collect 'riff-raff' East Indians and dump them in Canada, at the verge of war, to foster discontent and act as saboteurs. The accuracy of these speculations however, is somewhat questionable.

During the first World War, work at William Head expanded as new operations began. The normal running of the quarantine station continued, though not as actively as before the war when about 250 ships per year were inspected. While Dr. Nelson continued to visit D'Arcy Island in the Madge,

Figure 16

The quarantine vessels  
Madge and Gunhild docked  
at William Head during  
the first World War.  
(P.A.B.C. # 86370).

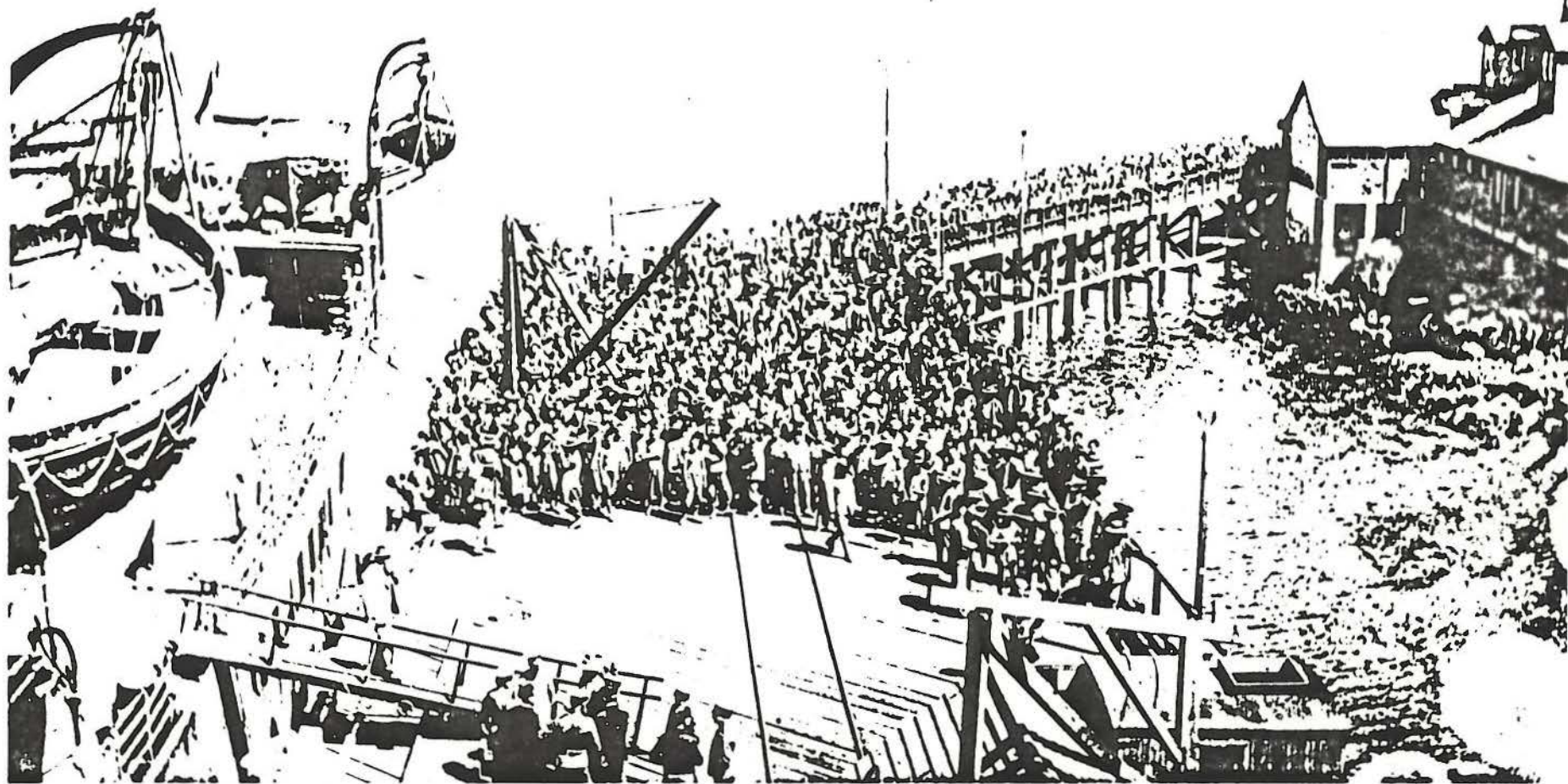


another quarantine vessel, the Gunhild, was acquired in 1914 to work with the Madge for the duration of the war. By 1915 the station also had an X-ray machine. Quite an achievement considering X-rays had only been discovered twenty years earlier by a German scientist.

But along with the war came some extra uses of William Head. Probably the most important and definitely the biggest of these was the housing and transporting of thousands of Chinese labourers from 1917 to 1919. During 1917 these labourers were recruited in China, for the Canadian Labour Corps, and housed at William Head before being shipped on to France. The Empress of Japan, after serving for a short time as an auxiliary cruiser, was one of the ships that brought many of these Chinese labourers to William Head. Once there, they were housed in bell tents until a company of the 5th Regiment, C.G.A. was detailed to William Head to see that the Chinese obeyed camp rules and remained in the camp area.

Figure 17

Chinese labourers on the  
wharf at William Head en  
route to France in 1917.  
(P.A.B.C. #86376).





While they were at William Head, these men were not idle. With two thousand arriving in the first group and up to eight thousand being held at one time, a certain amount of crowding had to be contended with, especially since most of the Chinese labourers were Cantonese or Mongolian, traditionally seen as natural enemies. Many of them were put to work cutting firewood from the logs on the surrounding beaches. They were also trained to march and build trenches, dugouts, and gunpits. After complaining about the food, the Chinese men were given huge pots, which took several men to move, so they could cook their rice and stew <sup>for</sup> themselves. For amusement, they would make pictures from the materials available to them. They would build platforms of rock and earth, about eight feet by ten feet, and construct pictures on top with grass, flowers, stones, shrubs, and other odds and ends.

One of the more interesting men to pass through the quarantine station was one of the Mongolians who measured 6' 9" tall. Many pictures exist showing this man towering above his fellow Chinese, some of whom, even on stilts, could not reach his height.

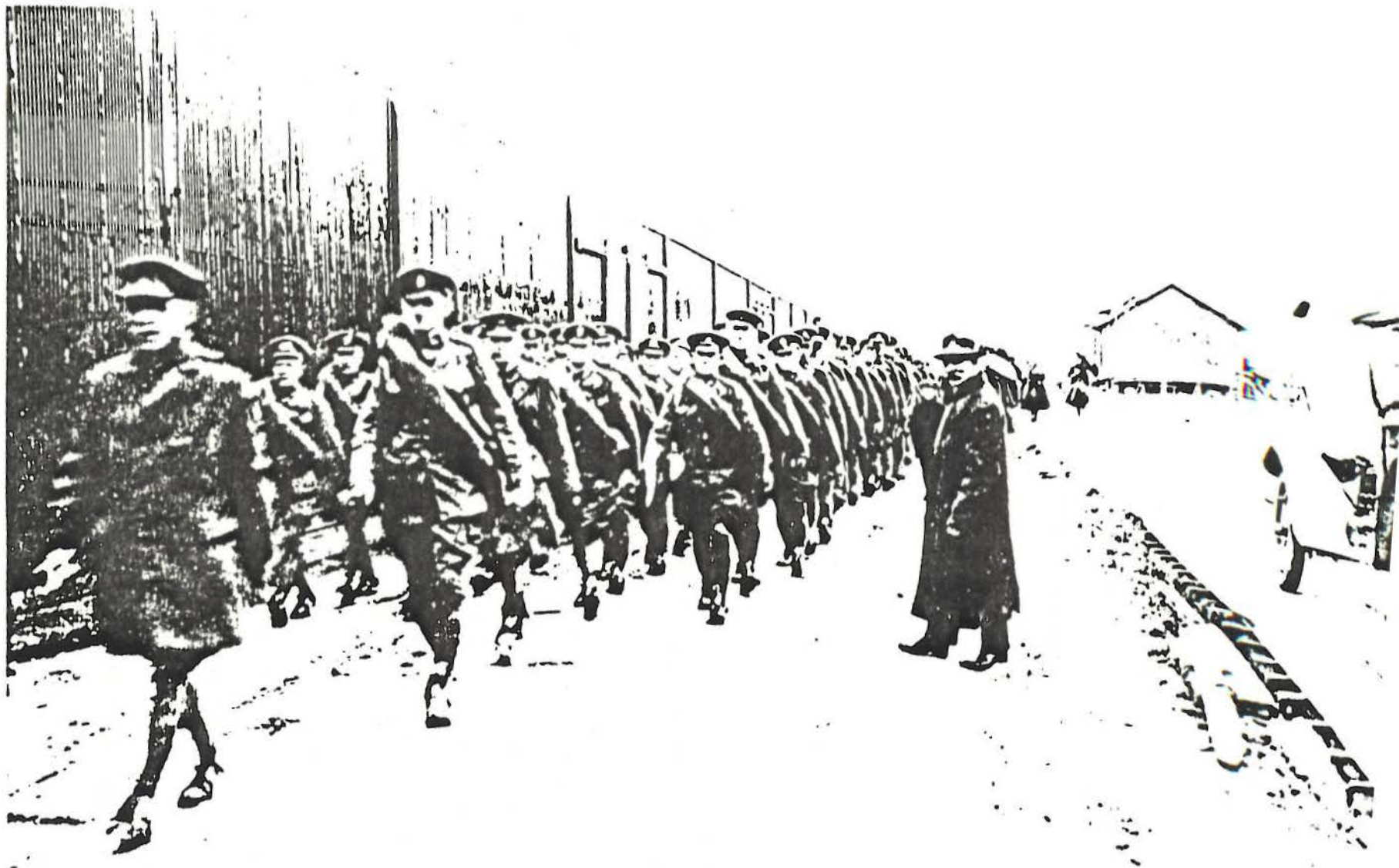
On July 15th, 1918, the Chinese labour camp at William Head was closed and its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel C. Milne, Camp Adjutant, Lieutenant W. G. Sherriff, and the remaining officers and men of the 6th Regiment, D.C.O.R. were demobilized. In the short period between 1917 and July, 1918, 84,473 Chinese labourers were housed at and shipped from William Head.

That was not the last William Head was to see of those men, however. Many were to pass through this quarantine station on their way back to China. Shortly before the first Armistice Day, 1450 Chinese labourers, guarded by Imperial and Canadian troops, arrived by train in Vancouver and



Figure 18

The last group of  
Chinese labourers,  
numbering 7,500, en  
route to France on  
March 28th, 1918 from  
William Head. (P.A.B.C.  
#57997.)



were transferred to the ship Princess Charlotte which took them to William Head. Soon more arrived, including another 3500 two months later, bringing the total at that time to eight thousand. In March, 1919, many of them began rioting and broke out of their enclosure, only to be rounded up at bayonet point and herded back to camp. Some of them still managed to escape into Victoria to become a permanent part of Chinatown.

Another large group arrived at William Head in 1918 because of the war. Fleeing from the revolution in Russia, a boatload of White Russians were detained at the quarantine station while the Dominion government decided whether they could enter Canada as immigrants. While the decision was being made, the Russians, who greatly outnumbered the quarantine station staff, plotted what to do if they were not allowed to enter. Fortunately, unlike the Komagata Maru incident, the Russians were allowed in and there was no violence.

Figure 19

Members of the Canadian  
Siberian Expeditionary  
Force on December 26th,  
1918, preparing to leave  
for Siberia. (P.A.B.C.  
#18918).

Two graves in the cemetery at William Head are also related to the revolution in Russia. In 1918 a contingent of the Siberian Expeditionary Force assembled at Willow's Exhibition grounds in Victoria and, from there, sailed to Vladivostock. The soldiers, however, did not travel far beyond there and saw no fighting. Their living conditions at Vladivostock were appalling and several of the men became sick. On their return voyage to Canada, at least two of the men were found to have blackpox, a deadly, contagious disease. The ship was detained at William Head and the diseased men treated, but, unfortunately, two of the men died. Private R. L. Massey, who died on May 30th, 1919, and Private P. R. McMillan, who died on June 6th, were interred at William Head and today their headstones, erected by the War Graves Commission, mark the resting place of these two young soldiers there.

After the war, work at the quarantine station returned to normal. A Customs Officer was added to the staff during the prohibition years and the launch Evelyn began its work as a quarantine vessel on the west coast. Ships from around the world continued to stop at William Head and, in 1922, one of the more interesting boats arrived.

On September 19th, 1922, undoubtedly to the surprise of the quarantine station's staff, a Chinese junk sailed up to the wharf at William Head. The junk, named the Amoy, was built in Amoy, China by a Danish seaman, Captain George Waard. He, his Chinese wife, his six year old son, and three Chinese seaman sailed the junk from China to the west coast, crossing the Pacific from Hakodate, Japan in just 66 days. After clearing William Head, the junk sailed into Victoria harbour, where it docked in front of the Empress Hotel. As it was such a curiosity, Captain Waard opened his ship to public viewing, for a nominal charge. It is reported that Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Mary Pickford, who were married at the time and visiting Victoria,

Figure 20

The Chinese junk Amoy  
docked in Victoria Harbour,  
September, 1922. (P.A.B.C.  
#42452).

were two of the many people who visited the junk. Waard later sailed the Amoy up to Nanaimo and then down into the United States.

The following year, a disaster half way around the world was to have an impact on William Head. On September 1st, 1923, Japan suffered one of the worst earthquakes in its history, with most of Yokohama and large parts of the Tokyo and Yokosuka area being destroyed. The death toll from this devastating earthquake and its related floods and fires was placed at well over 100,000. The day after the earthquake, the American Mail Liner President Jefferson arrived in Yokohama and presented relief to the European and American refugees in the area. In addition to its large crew and about one hundred passengers, the President Jefferson took on 468 refugees, overcrowding the ship so much that on the voyage to Canada, rationing had to be imposed. The authorities in Ottawa ordered the Medical Superintendent at



William Head to prepare accommodation for those who wished to disembark at Victoria. The staff at the quarantine station prepared itself and, with help from the local Red Cross, were ready to treat the first refugees when they arrived on September 15th.

✓ The following year, 1924, the leper station at D'Arcy Island was closed. Since 1917, those lepers who were not legally deportable and desired to stay in Canada were housed on the island. Over the seven year period from 1917 to 1924, twelve lepers were held on the island. At the time of its closing, there were eight lepers still at the lazaretto. These patients were then moved, in March, 1924, to Bentinck Island, where a new leper colony was set up. Because D'Arcy Island was thirty miles from William Head Quarantine Station, where the medical officer for the island worked, it was decided to move the leper patients to Bentinck Island, only three miles from William Head.

Once deserted, D'Arcy Island was left until 1926 when, on November 11th, the island and its buildings were taken over by the provincial government. The province considered selling the island, but never did. so, on June 16th, 1932, it was reserved by the federal government as a penitentiary site, with thoughts of using it to hold recalcitrant Doukhobors. It was never used as such and, on April 16th, 1957, the federal government reserve was relinquished. The following year, on October 7th, 1958, the British Columbia government reserved D'Arcy Island for "the use, recreation, and enjoyment of the public"<sup>20</sup> and, today, D'Arcy Island remains a provincial park.

Bentinck Island, the site of the new leper colony, was named after the Bentinck family of the noble House of Portland. The 112 acre island, originally a lighthouse reserve that was never used due to the inadequacy of

Figure 21

Bentinck Island, with Rocky Point Military Establishment in the background. The leper colony was situated on the largest of the three sections of the island, near the centre of the photograph.

the Race Rocks lighthouse, is situated just off Rocky Point, only a short distance from William Head. When the eight lepers, six Chinese and two Russians, were moved to Bentinck Island, there were 15 residence cottages, a nurse's residence, a doctor's or caretaker's residence, an examination hospital, and a confinement building to hold the patients when they became wild drunk or depressed. The island was to remain the home of these and other leper patients on the west coast well into the 1950's.

Back at William Head, after the slowdown of shipping during the war, the number of ships being inspected at the quarantine station each year increased rapidly through the 1920's. The number of ships being inspected rose from 285 in 1923 to 427 in 1924 and further to 716 in 1925, a rate of almost two ships per day. The number dropped slightly from 819 vessels per year in 1926 to 755 vessels per year in 1927, but rose quickly again in 1928

to 889 ships for the year. The all time high was hit in the fiscal year ending March 31st, 1929, when 1068 ships cleared the quarantine station, a rate of almost three vessels each day.

The inspection of ships at William Head were held not only through the day, but during the night as well. The stop was usually short, unless disease was discovered, whereupon the yellow flag, the international signal of a diseased ship, would be hoisted and the ship held. If it was found to have smallpox or some other communicable disease on board, it would go through a fumigation process. The quarantine station had a sulphur burning furnace, with a hose to convey the fumes to and around the ship. A small gauge railway would carry passengers' luggage and effects from the ship to the fumigation building where they were fumigated either by steam or formaldehyde. There were also nearby bathrooms for personal fumigation. In 1926, a system of duplicate pratique was developed, whereby ships clearing quarantine in Canada, the U.S.A., St. Pierre and Micquelon, or the Panama Canal would automatically be cleared for the other countries as well.

Construction at the quarantine station continued intermittently as the station grew. In the early 1900's, a second, smaller hospital was constructed and a laboratory was built to study the contagious diseases. As staff grew, extra residences were built, adding eight new cottages between 1899 and 1925. For the benefit of the large staff at William Head, a recreation hall was built in 1914, which was later used as a school and chapel for the staff and their children. The following year, a new first class passenger house was constructed, with two storeys and 58 rooms to hold 116 people. Three more minor disease hospitals were added after the war and, for the benefit of both the quarantine and customs officers, a large residence and office building was constructed in the centre of the property in 1927.

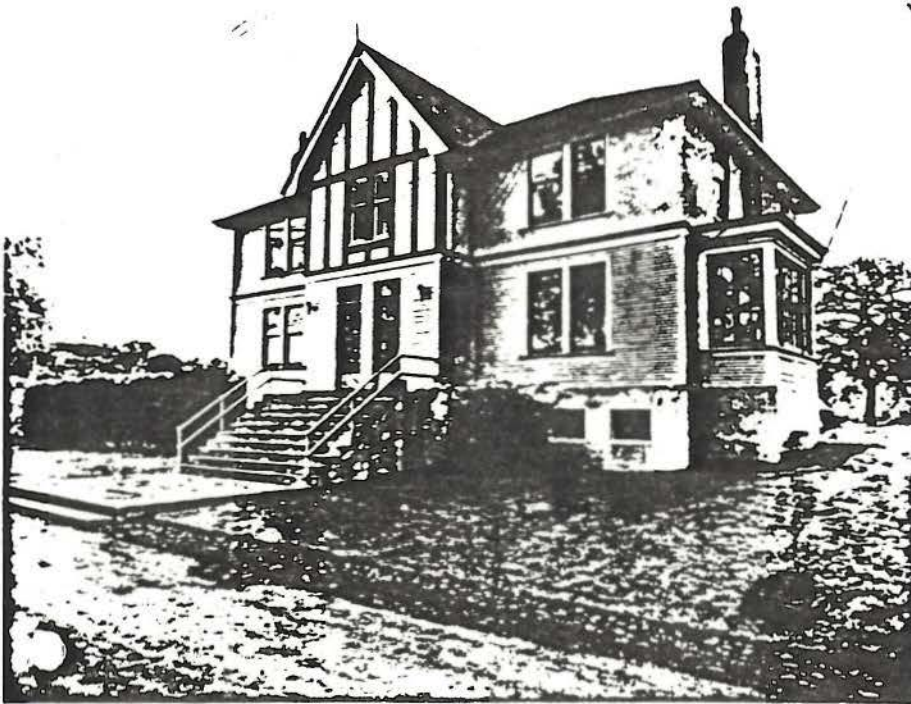
Figure 22

The Recreation Hall, built in 1914, later used as school and chapel. The original first class passenger house is in the background.

Figure 23

The second first class passengers' shelter house, built in 1915.







Shortly before this, in the mid-1920's, the daughter of a New York millionaire was held at the quarantine station for 21 days. When she arrived, she was suspected of having smallpox, so she was held, her husband, mother, and father all staying with her. While here, her parents learned of high quality British goods in Victoria and went shopping every day, returning each day with \$500 worth of goods for their daughter. The entire episode ended up projecting about \$10,000 worth of capital into the Victoria economy.

Life on Bentinck Island, however, was not so extravagant and the isolation of the island was hard on the lepers. By 1926 there were ten patients on the island, eight Chinese and two Russians, being looked after by two attendants and a nurse, the wife of one of the attendants, all of whom lived on the island. The leper's cottages were small, but comfortable, they cooked their own food, and were well fed and warm. Their only luxury was some

Figure 24

The Customs and quarantine  
staff offices and residence,  
built in 1927.

tobacco and their only recreation was the gardens they were encouraged to grow, each having his own plot and supply of seeds. They managed nevertheless, one Chinese doing especially well, but the two Russians were very temperamental.

There was also a slight controversy in 1926 at Bentinck Island. In December of that year, a commission of enquiry was held at the quarantine station to ascertain whether the caretaker at Bentinck Island, Mr. Henry Thomas McKee, was mentally fit to continue in that position. Due to his apparent excitability and a possibility of violence, the enquiry decided to retire Mr. McKee early, as he was about sixty years of age at the time. More problems arose at the island when, less than three years later, the leper patients' complaints about the quality and quantity of their food reached Ottawa. This problem was resolved when the Quarantine Officer at William Head wrote a letter to Ottawa explaining the situation, complete with a list of complaints from all the patients.

Dr. Chester P. Brown had replaced Dr. Nelson as Medical Superintendent at William Head in 1923 and, throughout the late 1920's and early 1930's, he would travel across to Bentinck Island on one of the quarantine station's vessels. During the 1920's, the Quarantine Service was transferred from the Department of Agriculture to the newly created Department of Health and all vessels under this new department were eventually renamed 'Salucan' derived from the Greek word for health and the first three letters of Canada. Although the Madge was sold to the San Juan Tug Company, the Evelyn, on November 10th, 1931, was renamed the Salucan I.

Also during the 1920's and 1930's, William Head's own public school was in operation. Located in the Recreation Hall and staffed by the British Columbia authorities, it served the fifteen families at William Head.

The school had one big class with grades one to eight, with a maximum attendance of 16, dropping to two after the second World War. The original teacher lived in the back of the school and did not retire until she was well into her seventies.

After the peak year of 1928-29, the number of ships being inspected at William Head began to decrease, dropping to 952 vessels in 1930. But although the number of ships was decreasing, the tonnage inspected yearly was increasing, as the quarantine station saw fewer small tramp ships and more large steamships. This trend did not last long, as the real effects of the depression hit the shipping industry in the Pacific Ocean. The number of ships inspected at William Head decreased rapidly through the early 1930's, reaching the pre-World War II low point in 1934 of 65 vessels in one year, quite a drop from 1068 ships per year only five years earlier.

During this time, a new ship, the Salucan V, was added to the vessels at the quarantine station, under the command of the Department of Health skipper at William Head, Captain Edward Cole. Dr. H. E. Tremayne replaced Dr. Brown as Medical Superintendent at the station in 1934, followed by Dr. J. S. Douglas in 1938 and Dr. T. D. Bain in 1939.

It was while Dr. Bain was superintendent that, in the spring of 1939, the British freighter Rugely arrived with the yellow flag flying high. It was filthy beyond words when it docked, with ten of the 29 crew members suffering with blackpox. The citizens of British Columbia scrambled for vaccination and shunned Dr. Bain and the staff of the quarantine station for months. Later in 1939, two more British freighters arrived with 139 cases of smallpox. Dr. Bain only remained one year at William Head, albeit an eventful one, and was replaced in 1940 by Dr. R. B. Jenkins, who was to remain as Medical Superintendent for the duration of the second world war and into the

1950's.

As did its predecessor, World War II saw William Head put to new and different uses. Although there was no attack made by the Germans or Japanese on the west coast of Canada, the threat of such an attack existed during the war, especially in the minds of the Canadian public. Accordingly, plans were made for the fortification of the west coast based on the recommendations of a report by Major H. C. C. Treatt, R.A., a British officer and expert in coast defences. Among other recommendations, the Treatt Report called for the establishment of several searchlight stations, so, in 1938 and 1939, several small lights were placed around Victoria and Esquimalt harbours. In the fall of 1940, the base at Esquimalt began to receive shipment of eighty modern "60" lights and, soon thereafter, detachments of the 17th Searchlight (C.D.), R.C.A. were operating nine new fighting lights and eight

Figure 25

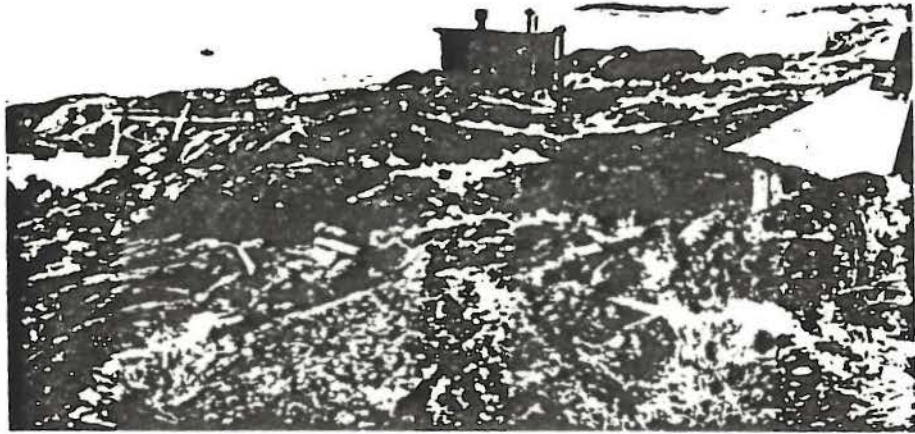
One of two searchlights  
established at William  
Head in World War II.

~~AFR 100-10050~~  
(Photograph from the Collection of the  
Director of History, ND.H.G., courtesy  
of [unclear])

illuminated area searchlights in the Victoria and Esquimalt areas. Two of the latter, powered by a 45 horse--power diesel engine housed in a small building nearby, were placed on this point at William Head and operated from Mary Hill, the defence base and artillery battery on the bluff just west of the quarantine station. A few hundred yards along the beach from the searchlights was a concrete abutment which stuck out into the water and was used to mark the rise and fall of the tides. This information was needed to aim the guns at Mary Hill accurately out into the strait.

Along with the establishment of two searchlights in World War II, William Head was also used as a training ground for the Fishermens' Reserve. Due to the increasing possibility of war, the Fishermens' Reserve was created in 1938 to meet the defence needs of the west coast. It was expected that, when war broke out in Europe, all naval vessels in the west would be transferred to the east coast of Canada. The Fishermens' Reserve was to fill the gap left by the move and patrol the west's long, indented coastline. But the coast, with its many inlets which could provide hiding places for enemy craft and small raiding parties, was not the only cause of concern. The local Japanese, who knew the coast well, were also considered a problem by the authorities, since the Royal Canadian Navy did not have enough strength to undertake effective control of the coast.

In September 1939, the Fishermens' Reserve was mobilized, but the men were not ranked the same as regular navy due to lack of official training. The acquisition and conversion of local craft was made possible on September 3rd, when the Minister of National Defence was given power to requisition any British ship registered in Canada. So, at the beginning of the war, with both men and ships being brought into service, ten Fishermens' Reserve vessels were immediately assigned to duty; four in the Esquimalt area,



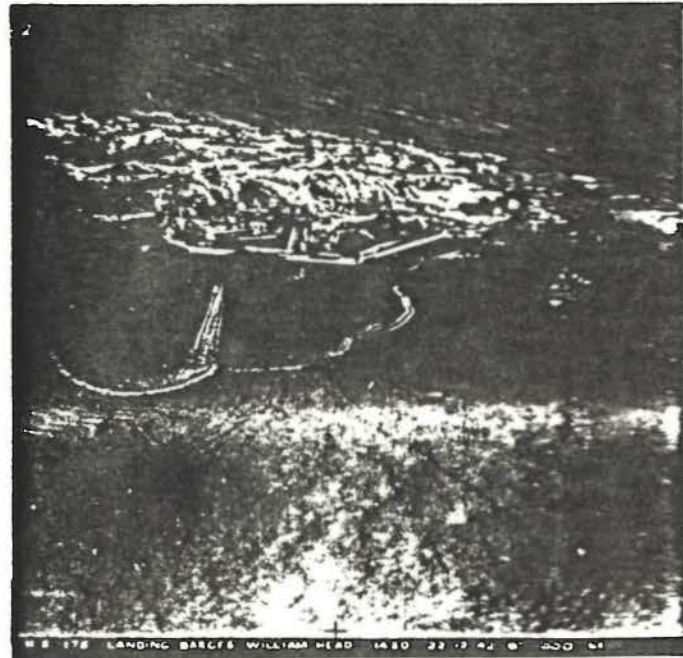
four around the Queen Charlotte Islands, and two off the west coast of Vancouver Island. Due to the lack of vessels for search and attack, the ships were to carry out patrol and minesweeping duties in their areas. By October, 1940, the Fishermens' Reserve had 17 vessels and 150 officers and men who, as they were not intended for offensive operations at first, were armed only with .303 inch Lewis guns.

In August of 1941, proper training began with a month long course being given at William Head. By the end of the course the strength of the Fishermens' Reserve had risen to 275 and the training ceased temporarily. In December, 1941, recruiting resumed, five more ships were requisitioned, and William Head reopened for training. After the attack on Pearl Harbour and the seizure of twenty Japanese fishing boats, fear of a Japanese landing on the west coast increased, so the training continued until May, 1942 when the suggestion was made that Fishermens' Reserve personnel should be trained in commando tactics and man the seized Japanese vessels. By then the Fishermens' Reserve had 48 ships and 475 officers and ratings.

In June, 1942, the Canadian Army agreed to provide one hundred wooden landing craft, to be manned by the navy and maintained by both. At the same time, the Fishermens' Reserve recruited 400 more men, bringing the total complement to about 900. Training began in July that year at William Head, with a three month course in visual signalling, carpentry, seamanship, rigging, pilotage, and motor mechanics. In October, further training was offered by the army, in Courtenay, and, early in 1945, the entire operation became based in and around the Comox area.

During the Quebec Conference of August, 1943, arrangements were made for Canada to man a squadron of 36 major landing craft in the invasion of Europe the following year. In hopes of obtaining trained officers and

SECRET



RS. 178 002-11-  
LANDING BARGES - WILLIAM HEAD - 48°20'N 123°32'W - S. 100 - 100X

F. 24 CAMERA - 8" LENS - CONTACT

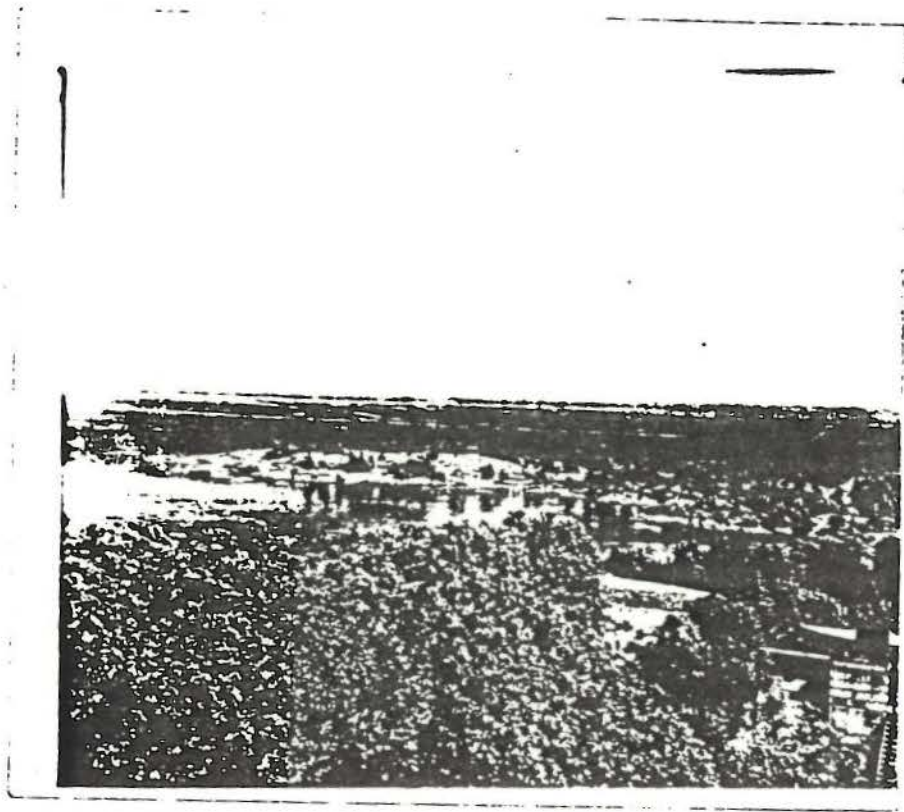


Figure \_\_\_\_\_ 26

Special landing craft  
at William Head for the  
training of the Fishermens'

Reserve in 1942. (~~PRH-P-1816~~)

(Proceedings of the  
District of Columbia  
of Fish and Wildlife)

ratings for this, the Fishermens' Reserve crews were given the choice of volunteering for duty abroad or leaving the service. Eventually, 35 men volunteered and were sent overseas while, of the remainder, 100 men transferred to general service and proceeded overseas, some returned to west coast service, and the rest were discharged. In August, 1944, it was decided to abolish all patrols which the Fishermens' Reserve had continued to maintain on the west coast and, by the end of that year, the Reserve ceased to exist.

As in the first World War, the number of ships passing through William Head dropped again during World War II. But in 1945, the quarantine station had one of its biggest jobs ever when the 83,673 ton liner Queen Elizabeth returned to Esquimalt. The liner had originally come to the area in 1942 when she was ordered to drydock at Esquimalt, the only dock large

enough to accommodate her on the Pacific, after the fall of Singapore. After being refitted and painted as a troop transport, she sailed to Los Angeles, picked up 15,000 American troops, and sailed for Australia. She returned to Esquimaux in 1945 to be refitted back to a liner and 7000 pieces of her furniture were moved on scows to William Head where they were deloused, keeping the staff of the quarantine station busy for quite a while.

Despite the ragings of war, life at Bentinck Island continued quite normally. During and after the war, the lepers received visits from the doctor at William Head twice weekly. Any outgoing mail was fumigated for twelve hours before it was sent out. In 1944, the caretaker of the island, Mr. Guy Pears, welcomed a new nurse, Dorothy B. Fairweather, to the island. She was to remain on the island until it closed more than twelve years later. Two years after the war, in 1947, Bentinck Island received electricity and a telephone line for the first time.

In 1948, two newspapermen were allowed on the island for the first time. Writer Cy Young and photographer Bill Hackett, working for "The Province", sailed over to the island on the 65 foot Salucan V with Dr. Jenkins. At that time, there were only three lepers on the island; one Chinese, one Japanese, and one Irish woman who had contracted the disease as a missionary in Nigeria.

Although life at the leper station had been described as a living death, Cy Young reported that no patient had ever committed suicide on the island and there had only been one escape, prior to World War II. Lepers seldom die from leprosy, but usually from a secondary disease. Two of the lepers on Bentinck Island actually died from old age, both living until they were over eighty years of age. While people under 21 years old were not allowed on the island, no visitor, nurse, or caretaker of the island had ever

Figure 27

The remains of the  
last surviving leper  
cottage on Bentinck  
Island.

contracted leprosy. By then, supplies were coming to the island from William Head every three or four weeks, in an attempt to make the lepers' lives as comfortable as possible.

Less than ten years later, in 1957, the leper colony at Bentinck Island was closed. Of the three remaining lepers, one died and two were discharged in 1956. Any lepers found on the west coast after 1957 were sent to Canada's other leper colony at Tracadie, New Brunswick, which remained open until 1971. Although most of the lepers were Chinese, in its history Bentinck Island also held two Russians, two Japanese, one East Indian, one Canadian, and one Irish woman, the only woman to be housed on the island, for a total of thirty patients. The only reminder left of these people is the small cemetery on Bentinck Island with its 13 white, unmarked crosses which bear testimony to the sad and simple life which the leper patients on Canada's west coast led.

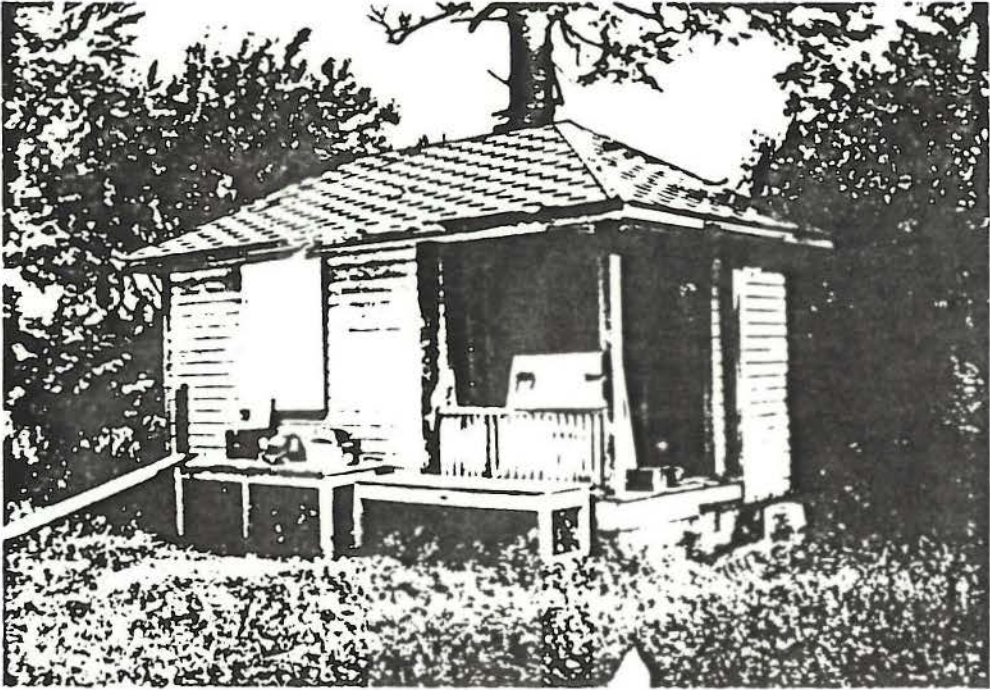
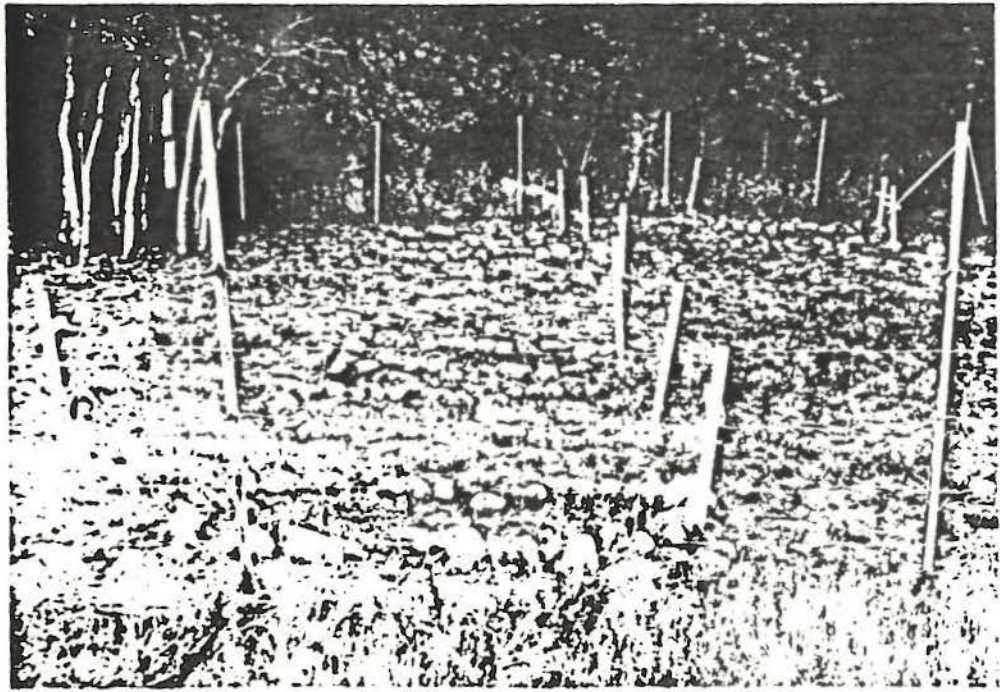


Figure 13  
Part of the leper  
cemetery on Bentinck  
Island.

After the leper colony was closed, the Department of Health and Welfare kept the island in its charge until 1959 when the Department of National Defence took over the island. They tried to rent the island for \$40 per month and, later, attempted to give the island to the provincial government as a picnic area. But as there was still a fear of leprosy in the mind of the public, neither offer was taken up. In 1962, the Department of National Defence began to use the island as a training ground for demolitions use. The Weapons Underwater branch used the island until 1969 when the Boatswains' Division of Fleet School took over the courses, remaining in charge of them up to the present day. Demolitions training included blasting channels, blowing up large boulders, and cutting steel girders with small blasts. Between August, 1962 and 1964, 171 officers and members of the Royal Canadian Navy completed the course. Today, only the old doctor's residence



and one leper cottage stand as the last buildings on Bentinck Island. If the Department of National Defence were to give up the island, it would become a parks reserve under the provincial government. Hopefully by then, people may be over their fear of leprosy.

Back at the quarantine station, the number of ships inspected there never really picked up after the war. The fumigation equipment at William Head was last used in 1948 on the Canadian destroyer-escort H.M.C.S. Atanabaskan, the second of three ships to bear that name. On its maiden run from New York, the ship came in contact with some polio cases and, as there was a bad polio scare at the time, it was thoroughly fumigated when it reached William Head.

By this time, the quarantine station consisted of 106 acres and over forty buildings including a hospital which held 49 patients, a first class detention building which held about 120 people, a second class detention building which held 90 people, and the third class detention buildings which held between 500 and 800 people. The minimum inspection time for a ship at that time was thirty minutes, as the staff of 16 had mastered the process.

By 1954, a system of radio pratique was being used at the station. By this method an arriving ship would radio information about its passengers, cargo, and ports of call, so that it could be cleared without stopping. This system and the duplicate pratique started in 1926 did not apply to ships coming from Indonesia, China, Africa, or the Phillipines, which had to stop anyway. The Medical Superintendent at this time, Dr. R. B. Jenkins, was not only inspecting ships, but immigrants and civil servants as well. Dr. Jenkins would examine immigrants to see if they were physically and mentally fit to enter Canada without being a burden and, also, civil servants for ad-

mittance and retention in the public service.

By 1956, the quarantine staff numbered 13 and was led by Dr. Frederick Blundell who had replaced Dr. Jenkins as Medical Superintendent. Work at the quarantine station continued to decrease throughout the 1950's so that it began to serve more as a customs office. A newspaper article of that time noted that, with the advent of modern drugs, better living conditions world-wide, and the efficiency of the quarantine station, the staff at William Head would soon be out of work. It was only a few years later when, in 1959, the article's prediction became reality and the quarantine station closed down completely.

Through the first half of 1959, the quarantine staff shared the premises with staff of the Department of Justice and, on March 5th, 35 acres of the land was transferred from the Department of Health and Welfare to the Department of Justice. After more than six months of sharing the premises, on August 1st, 1959, William Head Quarantine Station was closed, with the staff of 14 opening offices in the Canada Customs Building at 816 Government Street. Dr. Blundell got rid of the quarantine vessels at William Head so, operating from their new office, they had to use B.C. Pilotage Authority craft. By September 1st, Dr. Blundell and the others had completely vacated the premises and the penitentiary service readied to take over the rest of the property. Although the closing of the quarantine station at William Head was a tribute to better health and medical conditions world-wide, it also marked the end of an important and unique era in the history of William Head.

All through the 1950's, as work at the quarantine station was slowing down, there were rumours of closing the station and making the land available for other uses. Between 1951 and 1953, Victoria's newspapers ran headlines and stories telling how William Head was being considered for such purposes as a naval base, a drug treatment centre, a gunnery range, a haven for the elderly, a hospital, a park and a provincial mental home. A decision was finally made on the future of William Head in November, 1958 when the planning committee of the Justice Department decided, rather than scrap the buildings, to use part of William Head to help relieve overcrowding at B.C. Penitentiary, which, at the time, had 769 inmates where only 550 should have been. When the Medical Superintendent at the quarantine station, Dr. Frederick Blundell, heard that William Head was to be used as a penitentiary site, he remarked that it was "unlikely the convicts will be allowed to fish."<sup>21</sup> Interestingly enough, he was soon proven wrong.

Because it was only an overflow camp, all administration for William Head was done through B.C. Penitentiary. On December 13th, 1958, a staff of officers left the main prison at New Westminster, arrived at William Head at 1:30 that afternoon, and established headquarters in the old Customs and quarantine office building. The next few days were spent surveying the area, checking what worked, what didn't work, and what needed repairs. Several buildings were renovated to fit the needs of a future penitentiary. On December 23rd, the officers went home to New Westminster for Christmas recess, but returned to William Head on December 29th to continue their renovation and preparation. Finally, on January 9th, 1959, the first three inmates, two cooks and a plumber's helper, arrived, escorted by four guards. On January 11th, two days after the inmates, the resident electrician arrived and, today, that man, Mr. Doug James, is the longest employed staff member at William

### Head Institution.

As western Canada's first open prison and British Columbia's second federal penitentiary, William Head camp had no bars, no cells, and no high stone walls. Inmates were initially housed in the old first and second class passengers quarters. As work was to be the main therapy for the inmates, some of the other old buildings were equipped as carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical shops. The only barrier to keep the inmates from escaping was a small fence which was more effective in keeping gawkers out. Fortunately, B.C. Penitentiary warden F. C. B. Cummins said that no dangerous criminals would be transferred there, only the older, more stable prisoners. It was to operate initially as a pre-release centre, to help cushion the prisoners' shock of sudden freedom. A planning committee studying prison methods in the U.S.A. and Europe was to make recommendations for the permanent use of the prison.

The camp, originally under the direction of John Grant who had 25 >years' experience in the Penitentiary Service, grew quickly to 21 inmates by the end of the first week. Contrary to Dr. Blundell's observation, the inmates were fishing within ten days of their arrival. The first recorded catch was a two foot long mud shark that was later used for bait in a crab net. On February 1st the daily report tells how one inmate, after a 15 minute struggle, caught a five foot octopus. Chief Supervisor Grant described it as a "most horrible looking specimen" and, after its picture was taken, it was returned to the sea, "no one being in the mood for soup."<sup>22</sup>

Late in January a television was purchased for the inmates, whose population, by the end of that month, had risen to 55. Inmate activities at that time were restricted to the south end of the peninsula, with a fence stretching across the land, just south of the existing hospital area, for

the control of movement at night.

Activity programs for inmates began almost immediately, with church services beginning in January, 1959. Father W. J. O'Brien led the Catholic community then while the Protestant services were led, at first, by the Gideons and, later, by the Salvation Army. Soon after that, the first John Howard meeting was held on February 2nd. An Alcoholics Anonymous group began on March 3rd and, the same day, 37 inmates registered for the first Dale Carnegie Course, which began on March 7th, conducted by Len Parkin and Wal Angus.

On Thursday, March 5th, the federal government officially transferred 35 acres of William Head from the Department of National Health and Welfare to the Department of Justice. At the same time, a proclamation was issued declaring the land to be a penitentiary site, thus establishing William Head officially as a prison. The remaining quarantine staff continued to occupy the rest of the property.

The institution, in the meantime, continued to grow. By May 4th, less than four months after its opening, the inmate population had reached one hundred. It did not stay at that level for long, however, with the number of inmates dropping as low as sixty over the following months. During that time, work continued up-grading the buildings, clearing the land, and cleaning the whole area. Overseeing this work and running the prison were the thirty staff officers employed at William Head at that time.

Inmate activities carried on and, on June 20th, 1959, the first Dale Carnegie Course held its graduate banquet, with 23 inmates receiving diplomas. Later that year, a Dominion Government Meteorological Inspector set up a weather station at William Head, which has operated for over twenty years and continues to operate today.

But life was not all work for the inmates. In December, 1959, Jerry Gosley presented his famous Smile Show for the inmates, the first of many performances of that show at William Head. In March of the following year, as well, a group of square dancers gave a performance for the inmates in the old school.

By July of 1959, the old quarantine staff at William Head was preparing to move out altogether. On August 1st the quarantine station was officially closed and, the following day, the staff opened office at the Canada Customs' building in Victoria. Some stores and equipment were left by the quarantine staff, to be picked up at a later date, and they presented a piano to the prison staff before leaving. Dr. Blundell contended with the disposing of the quarantine station's vessels and, in September, he moved off the station himself.

Soon after that, John Grant, Chief Supervisor at William Head, left the institution. He had lived in the upstairs of the old administration building, now the Living Unit Resource Centre, and it is said that he used to swim in Parry Bay and then wash himself under cold water from a hose. No doubt the hose water was warmer than the bay. In October, 1959, he was promoted to Deputy Warden at B. C. Penitentiary and was succeeded by Mr. H. A. Collins, who had been the keeper-in-charge at William Head. Mr. Collins headed a staff which included some of the old quarantine workers, since they had been given the opportunity of finding employment within the new institution when the quarantine station closed.

On February 11th, 1960, after the recommendation by Warden Cummins that the remaining land at William Head be taken over by Penitentiary Services, the federal government transferred another 53 acres from the Department of National Health and Welfare to the Department of Justice, bringing

Figure 29

William Head in 1959, being converted to a prison. Note that the wharf has already been partially dismantled.

the total size of the prison then to slightly over 88 acres. The total property included about forty buildings of various types, including some built at the opening of the quarantine station in 1893.

By January of 1961, the inmate population at William Head had again risen over a hundred. Because of the emphasis on rehabilitation, the inmates' time was split between attending classes, learning trades, and working in and around William Head. The staff included a teacher, who taught up to the grade eight level, and all work was done under maintenance staff supervision.

The inmates were kept busy in 1961 as several new buildings were added to the property at William Head. That year, the greenhouse, Building 50, was built, the first of many to be constructed using inmate labour. Several surplus barracks and other buildings at nearby Fort Hood Hill were also officially transferred to the care of the installation at William Head

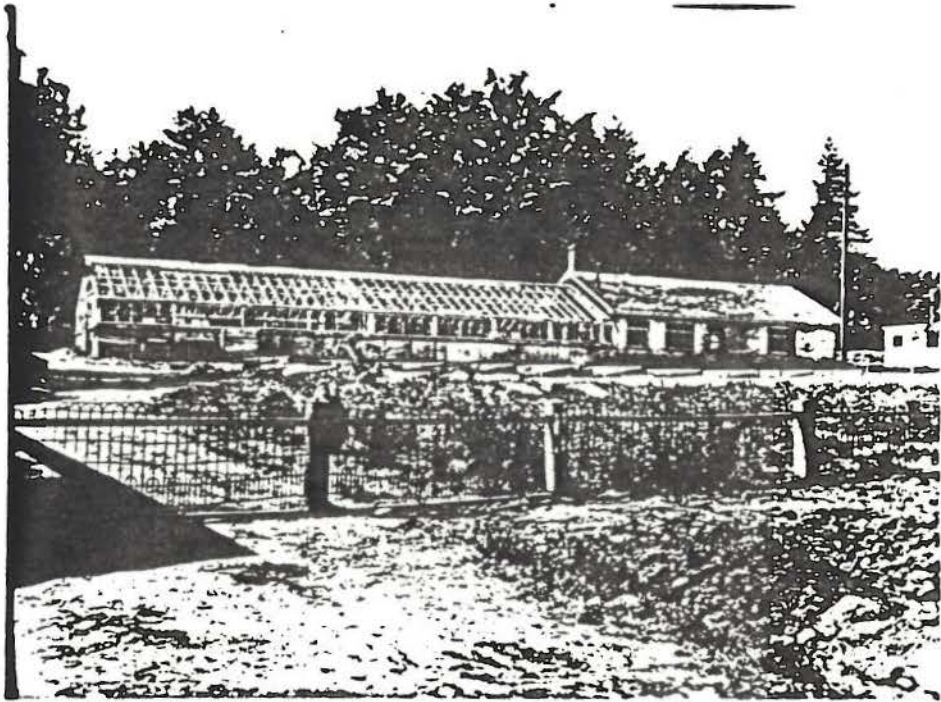
Figure 30

The greenhouse at  
William Head, built  
in 1961.

that year and were dismantled, with all salvageable materials being taken to the prison by a crew of inmates. By June 9th, two buildings had been dismantled and, on August 31st, approval was granted for the transfer of six more buildings, which were later salvaged in the same way. Later in the year, a crew of staff and inmates worked at Rocky Point Naval Establishment constructing fire roads there, which are still in use today.

The following year, the prison acquired some additional land, On March 1st, 1962, by an Order-in-Council of the federal government, 6.21 acres of land were transferred from the Department of National Defence land at Mary Hill to the Department of Justice installation at William Head.

An article, written by an inmate at B.C. Penitentiary in 1962, claimed that the inmates at William Head were initially confused by their new-found freedom there. At the time, the prison had 120 inmates, with 70



in the dormitory, and 50 in private rooms in other buildings. One of the work programs then was a modern farm which produced food and plants for the penitentiary in New Westminster. The various vocational programs continued, with the carpentry instructor seeing 90% of the men released through his program obtain and retain employment.

Once again, in 1962, attempts were made to acquire more land for William Head prison, this time from Mary Hill. The land was to be used as a drug addict camp for about a hundred inmates, as the prison at Matsqui, with its special section for drug addicted prisoners, had not yet opened. Though much effort was spent to obtain the land, it was never acquired. Eventually, however, 21 buildings at Mary Hill were transferred to the control of William Head prison and, in the fall of 1963, they were dismantled and salvaged as were the buildings from Fort Rodd Hill.

In an attempt to improve the visiting facilities, permission was given, in March, 1963, for 18 yards of sand to be moved, by the inmates, from Weir's Beach to the prison. It was placed on a small beach in the visiting area at William Head, as a play area for visiting children.

In 1964, Harry Collins replaced John Grant as Deputy Warden at B.C. Penitentiary and, on June 16th, Gamaliel (Neil) Milner replaced Collins as Superintendent of the prison at William Head. When Milner took over, the prison, with facilities for 150, had an inmate population of over 140.

Just before Christmas of 1964, a terrible and unfortunate accident occurred at William Head. On December 23rd of that year, an inmate was changing a light bulb on a power pole, when he received a 7000 volt jolt of electricity and fell 25 feet to the ground. He was taken to hospital in Victoria and placed on the critical list. He eventually recovered, but, sadly, only after his right leg had been amputated.

In 1965, William Head cut its ties with B.C. Penitentiary and became an autonomous institution. New dormitories were built that year, the tender having been called the previous November. It was to be the first step in an overall ten year plan for construction. Several old buildings, including the isolation hospital, the morgue, and one of the old residences, were also demolished.

The Indian Educational Club was developed in 1965 as well, marking the first of several groups to develop native consciousness at the prison. The John Howard Society, a group always active at William Head, held an open meeting within the gates of the prison that year. It was the first such meeting in a Canadian prison, with approximately ninety men and women present.

In May, 1965, a small group of inmates at William Head joined the provincial fire-fighting organization, to fight blazes in and around the

Figure 31

The inmates'  
dormitory, built  
in 1965, near  
completion.



area. They worked under the supervision of fire-fighting crews and prison staff, and were paid the regular fire-fighting wage of \$1.00 per hour. Before joining, they went through a training program led by Langford Forest Ranger, Donald Jones. By 1970, the fire crew was busy helping in the Metchosis area and backing up other departments. William Head Institution still has its own fire crew, complete with hall and truck, today.

The second building to be constructed with inmate labour, the kitchen and dining room, was built in 1966, with a wing for a staff dining room and lounge being added in 1978. The institution also began a pre-release program in 1966, whereby inmates would live in one of the old staff houses on the property and go out into the community on a daily basis to work, returning to the institution each night. The program began with nine men working in Victoria and other local communities.

Figure 31

The Fire Hall at  
William Head.



The Bayview Junior Chamber of Commerce also began in 1966. The group had its charter ceremony on February 4th, with 38 inmates as members and 130 guests attending. Later that year, in September, William Head Institution entered and won the glory at the Victoria Horticultural Society Annual Show. Placing first in corn, potatoes, and cucumbers, second in apples, and getting honourable mention for their vegetable display, the William Head group had the best vegetable collection overall, to win the ribbon and trophy for that year. Special thanks went out to grounds and garden officer, Mrs. Arthur Attree.

Inmate labour was used again in 1967 when a fourth wing was added to the dormitory by contract and finished by the inmates. The Laundry building was also built by the inmates in 1968 and, the following year, the present, Inmate Training building was constructed, partially using inmate labour.

In 1969, a plan to build four major institutions in the William Head area was put forward. Only one of them, the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific, was built in this area. Of the others, the three B.C. Universities' Biological Laboratory was stationed at Bamfield, the Federal Ocean Sciences Institute was built at Patricia Bay, and a centre for the International Sciences Foundation has not yet been constructed. There was also a rumour around at the time that Jacques Cousteau had expressed interest in establishing his headquarters at William Head, if the prison was ever moved.

By 1970, William Head was one of 14 minimum security prisons in Canada. The selection of prisoners coming to William Head was made by the Regional Classification Board in New Westminster, with the inmates coming from B.C. Penitentiary and Matsqui medium security prison. Being a minimum security prison, the guards at William Head had no weapons then and the

R.C.M.P. had to be called if needed.

Continuing its emphasis on rehabilitation, William Head Institution offered both general schooling and vocational training. In 1970, the Sooke School Board took over the supervision of the school at William Head and granted credits to all students recommended by the teachers. The schooling specialized up to the grade ten level, but grade twelve could be obtained under the first teacher assigned there, Mr. Olson. The library there, at the time, had several thousand books for loan to the inmates.

The training centre at William Head also offered a choice of trades, taught by qualified instructors. One project, in 1970, was the building of apparatus to be set up in the visiting area. That year, swings, see-saws, and monkey bars were all designed and built by the inmates and were set up for the children of family and friends visiting on weekends.

Figure 33

The visiting area at William Head, showing the apparatus designed and built by the inmates.



Up-keep and maintenance of the prison grounds was also looked after by the inmates. Their work was paid for using four pay grades, ranging from 35c to 65c per day, with the higher pay grade getting the higher wage. Inmates began at grade one and moved up by initiative, effort, and attitude. Fifty per cent of the wages went to a compulsory savings account, while the rest could be spent in the canteen. As well as pay increases, good behaviour and co-operation could also earn inmates time off their sentence. Up to three days per month could be taken off, but, if behaviour slackened, the days could be put back.

In mid-December, 1971, a 77 year old building was destroyed by a fire of unknown origin at the prison. While Superintendent Milner praised the co-operation of the inmates in handling the fire, it was estimated that \$25,000 to \$30,000 damage was done. Although used at the time as an inmate training centre, it was the original quarantine officer's residence, built when the quarantine station opened in 1893. Milner reported that the building contained a schoolroom, classrooms, a library, and vocational and academic training areas. Along with the ten man William Head fire team, help was given by the Rocky Point and Metchosin Fire Departments. One wing of the building was saved, but was torn down later.

The year 1970 also marked the first occasions of violence and death at William Head Institution, with its first verified suicide and first hostage taking incident, both occurring within a month of the other. On June 25th, a 23 year old inmate was found dead on the property. The young native Indian from Bella Coola committed suicide by hanging himself with an electrical cord. He had served six months of a two year sentence for breaking and entering and theft when he died. No foul play was suspected at the time.

Less than a month later, on Saturday, July 18th, William Head had

its first major disturbance and attack on a guard in its history. Early in the evening that day, a guard noticed that one of the inmates appeared to be drunk. The inmate was summoned to the main office and, upon arriving there, he attacked the administration officer, Al Dolny, who suffered minor injuries. The inmate was later charged and taken to Victoria jail by the R.C.M.P. Violence continued later that evening when a fracas occurred in the prison auditorium, during a movie. Three prisoners were treated for minor injuries and released.

After the movies, back in the dormitory, violence continued when two inmates overpowered, beat, stripped and robbed a dormitory officer, Michael Lee, of \$100 and held him hostage. A guard, Rod Keeler, tried to rescue Lee, but received a stab wound in the abdomen and was also taken hostage. The two inmates then took Lee's clothes and keys and disappeared. Although he was too hurt to take any action, Keeler called for help and by 11:30, all 15 Colwood R.C.M.P. officers had arrived. One inmate was caught on the grounds by 4:00 a.m. that night and the other was caught at 12:45 the next afternoon. Those two inmates, and the one who attacked Mr. Dolny, were all charged and had more time, up to four years, added to their sentence.

In 1972, the inmates at William Head Institution became the first prisoners in Canada to receive the federal minimum wage for work performed in a prison. The Canadian Penitentiary Service took this major step as a pilot project to construct a vocational training centre, now Building 105. At the beginning of the project, the inmates were presented with chromium-plated tools by Solicitor-General Jean-Pierre Goyer at a special ceremony on May 5th, with several M.P.'s and M.L.A.'s present. The inmates received the minimum wage of \$1.75 per hour, with some deductions, but if they slacked off, they were returned to the normal wages of 55¢ to 85¢ per day.

At the beginning of the project, six inmates were employed, with twenty inmates working at the peak of the project. Construction began in mid-May under the supervision of a project manager who worked with the selected inmates. They were granted special privileges and concessions, such as temporary absences and spending money, as an experiment to see if the inmates' construction could be placed on a scheduled practical basis. Specialized areas, such as high voltage electrical equipment, earth moving, and built up roofings were carried out by outside contractors, working as subcontractors to the Canadian Penitentiary Service. Cost estimates for the project were around \$278,000 and the program was such a success that work was completed in eleven months, with large savings for the taxpayer and good training for the inmates. The old dormitory, Building II, and the old Chinese living quarters were finally demolished when the new building came into operation.

The other big event of 1972 was the sighting of what some people call William Head's resident ghost. One of the Living Unit Officers, Danny Lord, went to investigate a disturbance in the small cemetery on the property, left over from the quarantine station. There, in the dark of night, he saw a sight that he finds hard to explain. It seemed mostly like a glow, about seven feet tall, which was vaguely in the shape of a human body. Many people believe this is the ghost of the 6' 9" Mongolian who was at the quarantine station during the first World War.

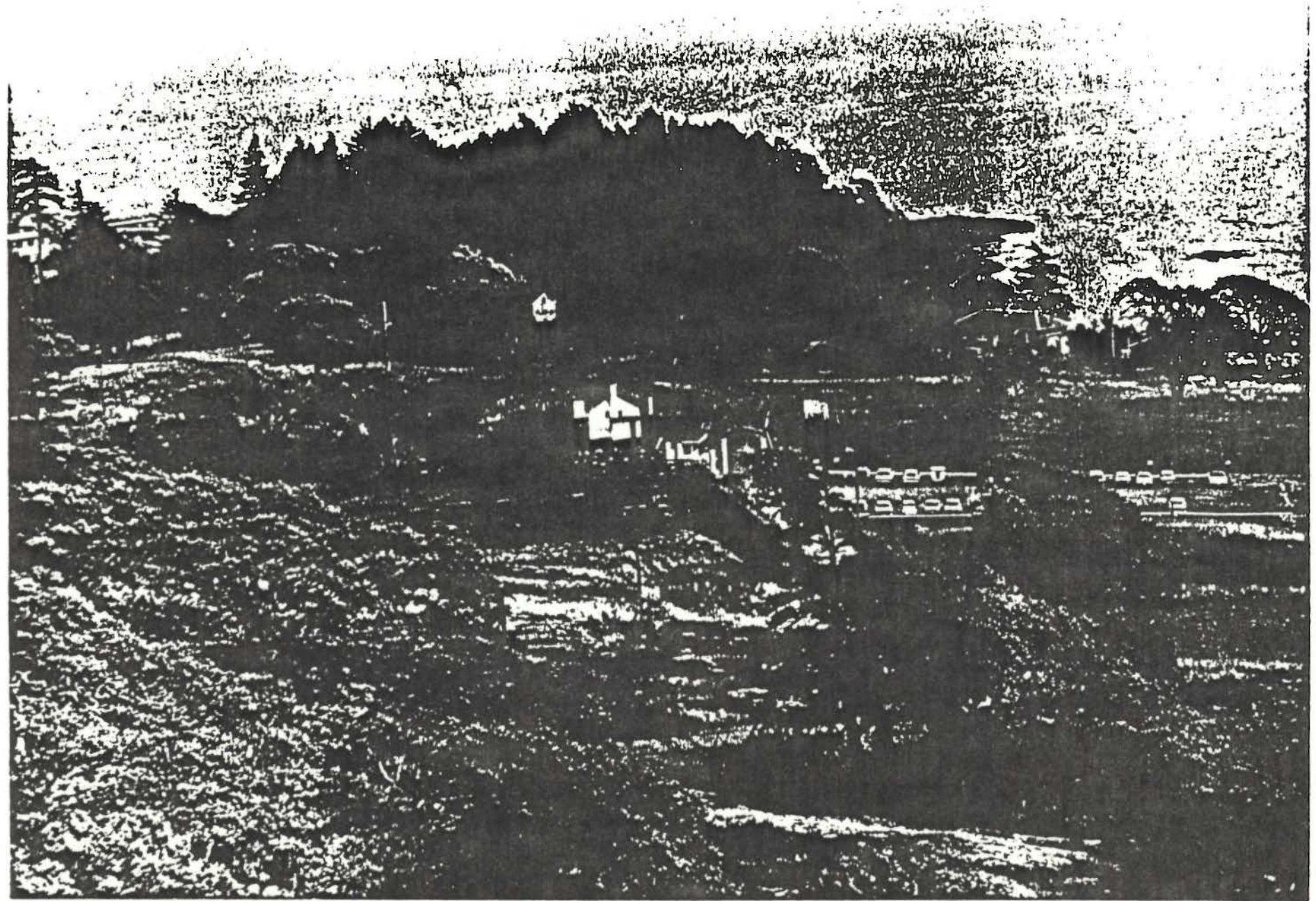
Early in 1973, with an inmate population that fluctuated between 140 and 150, security at the prison began to tighten after a two year long rash of escapes and walkaways. During the year, the fence was extended and raised to 14 feet, with a higher gatehouse and an addition of a dozen Living Unit Officers. This marked the beginning of the change of William Head from

Figure ~~15~~<sup>27</sup>

The main entrance and administration building at William Head before the tightening of security in 1973.

a minimum to a medium security prison. Inmates getting transferred to the prison were not to be more dangerous, but simply more prone to escape. The capacity of the prison remained at 150, with a staff, at that time, of 24, before the addition of the new Living Unit Officers. In October, Superintendent Milner left to become director of the new Pandora Correctional Centre. John Sheridan became Acting Superintendent until John Mulroney was appointed as director in October, 1974, when the institution was officially reclassified as medium security. Mulroney had come to William Head after serving in the Saskatchewan Penitentiary at Prince Albert for three years.

One of the programs at William Head that operated through 1973 was a tree-spacing program which had begun the previous year in Toba and Knight Inlets on the west coast of the B.C. mainland. The inmates, ten at a time, would be driven to Comox, where they would fly into one of these two inlets.



The first group worked ten days, had three off, and worked another ten days before returning to the institution. The second group worked for two 14 day periods, with a one week break in between. This program lasted for three years, from 1972 to 1974.

A program which began in 1973 was the construction of houses on Becher Bay Indian Reserve. During the late spring and summer of 1973, the vocational training program at William Head constructed the first of five houses at the reserve. For this first house, only the oil furnace was contracted out.

Also in 1973, as if to spite attempts to tighten security, the worst escape attempt ever at William Head occurred. Since its opening in 1959, the institution has had some problems with escapes, some of which have interesting stories. In 1964, an inmate supposedly escaped under the cover of a dense fog. After a three day search, the inmate was found in an old, unused building on the prison grounds. Another inmate, after disappearing for eleven days, turned himself in to a Sooke family. Apparently he was hungry. There are many other stories of escapes, but none worse than the event in May, 1973.

Late on Sunday night, May 13th, a 32 year old inmate escaped from the institution and made his way over to nearby Weir's Beach resort. There, in an attempt to steal some money, he first beat an elderly couple and robbed them of \$30, and then proceeded to a nearby house, beat up another man, and threw him off his sundeck. All three ended up in Royal Jubilee Hospital in fairly good condition. This incident triggered off a massive outcry from the people of Metchosin to have the prison moved and an intense manhunt to find the escapee.

The following days saw the prison officials involved in two activ-

ities; tracking the escapee and defending the prison's existence. Searchers worked 24 hours a day, with the help of tracking dogs and helicopters. William Head guards were armed in the search as leads from local residents were followed. The escape attempt ended after only three days when a local lady spotted the escapee in Saanich. In a short while, the R.C.M.P. arrived with dog teams and the inmate was discovered hiding in a bush. He offered no resistance at his capture and was later taken to court and charged with crimes relating to the episode at Weir's Beach.

Unfortunately, the outcry from local residents did not end so quickly. Due to a five man escape from the maximum security Correctional Development Centre near Laval, Quebec, a Parliamentary Inquiry into the Canadian penal system was called for at the same time as the William Head escape. Neither of these events reflected well on the penal system in Canada, and the local outcry against William Head did not disappear quickly.

In 1975, the transition from minimum to medium security was finished, with an inmate population of 150 and a staff of 103 at the prison. Emphasis on education and vocational training continued, with such courses as bricklaying, plastering, carpentry, cooking, and industrial electricity. All of these were six month apprenticeship studies and required completion at Camosun College or some other educational institution. The director of vocational services at the time, Tom Horsley, said that they tried to work in pre-trade training during the six months before an inmate's release.

Experience, as well as education, was gained by the inmates as they finished the second of five houses at Becher Bay Indian Reserve. A group of five inmates also constructed a Brownie Hut on Sooke River Road near Milne's Landing, complete with fireplace and barbeque. Another program at the time was a co-operative market selling inmate crafts in Victoria. Conarts, as it

was known, operated on Fort Street and proceeds were split between the cooperative and the inmates.

A local newspaper article in December of 1975 told of the success of the William Head day pass program. The article reported that the program was 99.91% successful, with only three of 3,300 inmates released on escorted and unescorted day passes not returning. The day parole program, where parolees are under the care of the National Parole Board, had an 84.75% success rate. Of the 59 inmates released under this program, five violated parole rules, two were charged with new crimes, and two escaped.

In 1976, a marine biology course was offered at William Head as a part of the ongoing education program. It was instructed by Bob Pauwels, with about six students attending. An air-brake course was also offered in conjunction with Camosun College and, on September 19th, 13 inmates won their air-brake certificates.

On December 1st, 1977, the present warden of William Head Institution, Mr. Arlie Bender, was appointed to that position. He had, at that time, about 16 years of experience with the Canadian Penitentiary Service, having worked at Collins Bay, Ontario, Stoney Mountain Prison, Manitoba, and B.C. Penitentiary, Matsqui prison, and Regional Headquarters in British Columbia. Before coming to William Head, Mr. Bender was Assistant Director of Industries at Matsqui.

Not long before his appointment, there was a second hostage taking incident at William Head, this time involving one inmate and two officers. On November 20th, 1977, an inmate, who had been drinking home brew, entered a control area where two guards were stationed and robbed them of \$30 at knifepoint. He was soon overpowered and taken to Colwood R.C.M.P. where he was later charged and had three more years added to his four year sentence.

In 1979, it seemed as if the residents of Metchosin who wanted the prison moved were to have their way. On February 16th, Program Director Colin Sheppard announced that by 1984, with the construction of a new 400 man unit near Kamloops, William Head Institution would be made redundant. While the 127 staff members were told they would be offered equivalent jobs elsewhere, the news sparked the revival of speculation over the future use of William Head. In Kamloops, some hiring was done as well as some site preparation, but any plans were soon stopped when the whole idea was dropped early in March. The decision was apparently made without the consent of Solicitor-General Jean-Jacques Blais who vetoed the idea, reiterating a statement he had made at Kamloops that the only federal penitentiary to be phased out would be the maximum security B.C. Penitentiary. Today, there are still no immediate plans to close down the institution.

Although the following year, 1980, was marked by a rash of escapes, it came after a long period of escape free operation. After the tightening of security in 1974, escapes continued to be a slight problem. In August, 1976, three inmates escaped with the help of a young woman in a boat, who picked up the inmates in the water off William Head and took them into Victoria. Two months later, a more violent escape occurred when a pair of inmates crashed through the prison gates in the institution's fire truck. This escape led to a tightening of security which apparently worked, for, from ✓ > January, 1978 to January, 1980, there were no escapes at all from William Head over the full two year period.

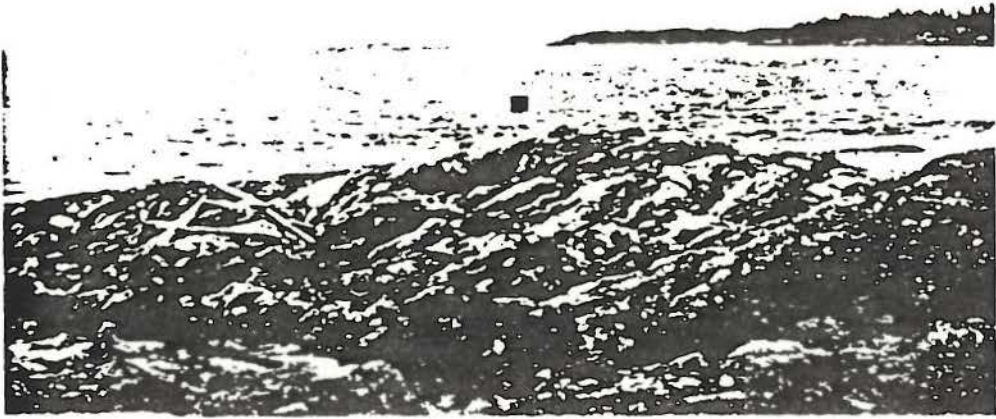
The escape free years, however, were broken in February, 1980, with an attempt that marked the beginning of a rash of escapes that lasted for over six months. Late in February, two inmates tried to escape by water, but sadly met their end in the icy waters of Juan de Fuca Strait. But their

Figure 36

Looking south off William  
Head towards Race Rocks.  
Several prisoners have  
attempted to escape into  
the waters of Juan de Fuca  
Strait.

deaths did not act as a deterrent as only a month later, another pair of inmates tried to escape on a makeshift raft. They were, fortunately, picked up within 24 hours. Early in July, an inmate escaped successfully by raft, followed by two others on a raft less than a week later. Towards the end of July, another three inmates escaped by raft, after attempting to fool the dormitory officers by placing dummies in their beds. Finally, on July 30th, one more inmate escaped by riding out with the trash in the garbage truck, bringing the total number of escapes, in less than six months, to eleven. Two other inmates tried to escape by raft in September of 1980, but were soon picked up in Juan de Fuca Strait, barely alive.

The other main event of 1980 was the prison's first and only verified murder. On March 16th, a 52 year old inmate was stabbed to death by a fellow prisoner, after the two had had an argument in the prison kitchen.



The wounded inmate managed to struggle to the hospital, but died soon after. The accused inmate tried to claim the other had stabbed himself, but was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to another five years in prison.

Today, William Head Institution, under the direction of Warden Leslie Bender, remains as a medium security federal penitentiary. Although the institution has lost some of its original freedom of activity, as security has tightened, it is still unique in its setting among Canadian penitentiaries. As a receiving institution, the inmates at William Head are no longer specially screened before transferring to the institution. The inmate population of 150, with a 100% turnover every six to eight months, is now controlled by a staff of about 135.

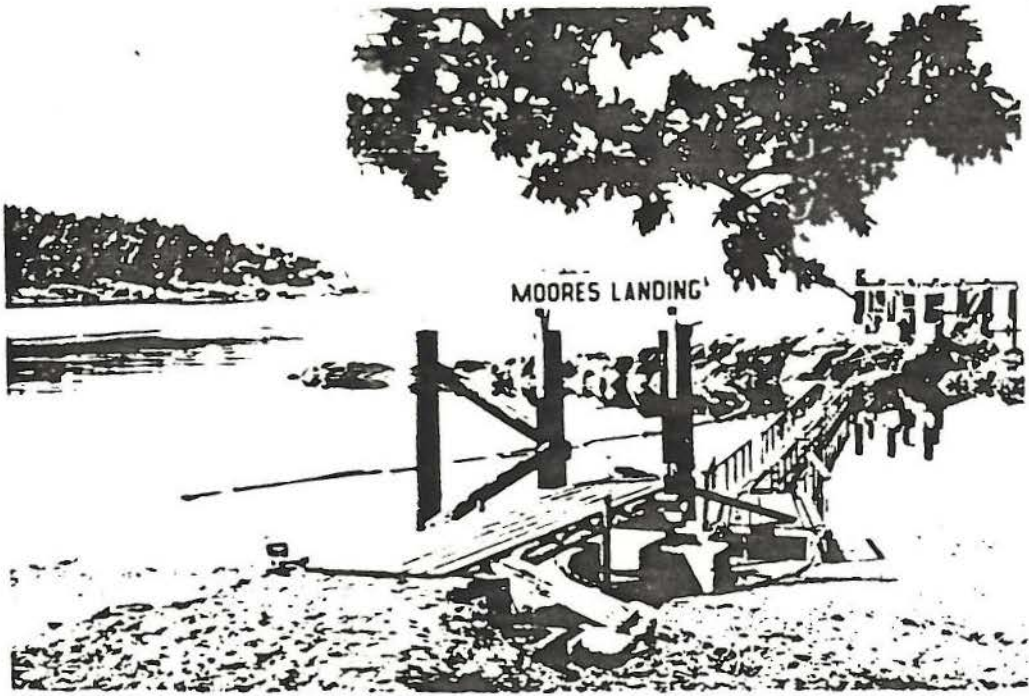
Various programs still exist today for the inmates' personal development and resocialization. Some of these programs come under the direction of the recreation department, which facilitates opportunities for physical education, recreation, and entertainment. The recreation officers, Helge Bjolffson and Wally Klein, provide instruction and coaching, direct recreational Open Houses and socials, escort inmates on temporary absence programs for recreational purposes, as well as supervising all other recreation programs. Facilities at the institution now include tennis courts, a golf course, a gymnasium, a pool room, a cards room, a weight lifting area, a jogging trail, a fishing wharf, three television rooms, and a soccer and softball field. While 30 to 40% of the inmate population is involved in active physical recreation, about 90% of the inmates participate in the less active programs such as cards and pool. Golf and fishing are the most attended year round programs, but, during the summer, softball attracts a large crowd. Films and video movies are often brought in and they also attract a large portion of the inmate population all year.

Figure 37

The remains of the old  
Quarantine Station's dock  
are now used as the inmates'  
fishing wharf.

Arts and Crafts are another dimension of the inmates' personal development. Participation in this program, as in recreation, is totally voluntary, with inmate participation varying from year to year. As well as being a means of self-improvement and a constructive use of leisure time, an inmate can actually supplement his income by selling his craft. Several displays have sold William Head crafts through the Saanich and Jaycee Fairs. Facilities at the institution include a pottery shop and four special hobby areas, but some arts and crafts can be worked on anywhere. Arts and Crafts Officer David Otke arranges periodic workshops and supervises the purchasing of tools and materials and the marketing of the finished crafts. The inmates are responsible for buying their own tools and materials, but receive a little monetary assistance from the institution.

Many clubs and groups exist in the institution under the direction

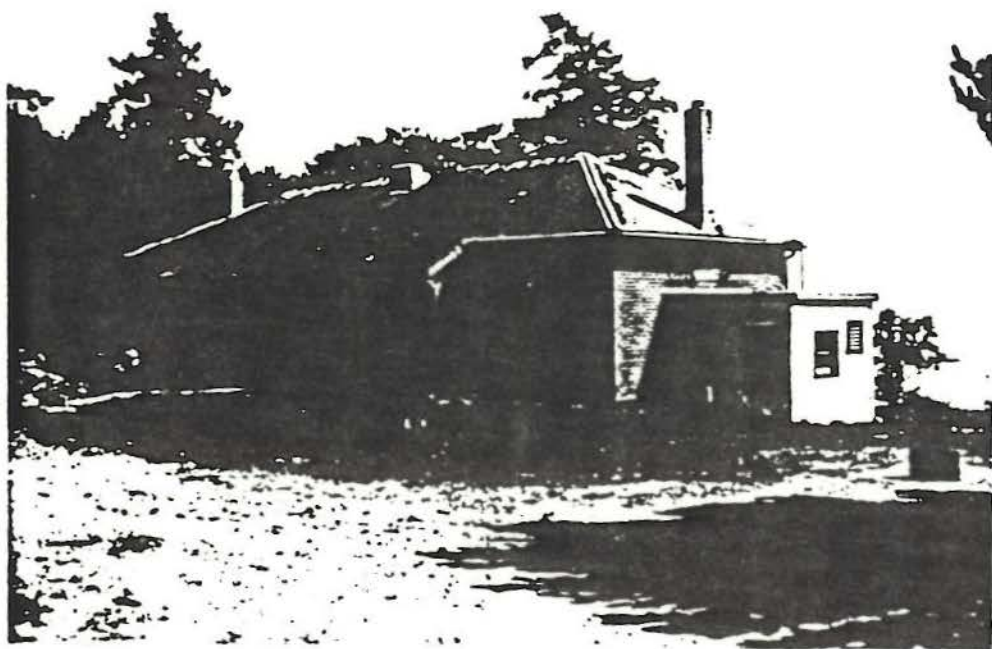


of Social and Cultural Development Officer Richard Pugsley. Over the years, these groups have included a native Indian group, a Toastmasters' Club, a Quest group which helped out at Silver Threads, the Parry Bay Jaycees who help out at the annual Jaycee Feast, and the long-lasting Alcoholics Anonymous group.

The Glendale program, where inmates work on a one to one basis with handicapped people, has existed since 1974. The inmates are first given lessons and lectures on working with the handicapped and then spend one day a week in training and three days a week working with a patient from Glendale Hospital. When they get their day parole, some inmates do volunteer work at Glendale Hospital. There are presently seven inmates working out of a small building on the prison grounds and, with the one to one work at William Head, patients progress faster than they would at Glendale Hospital alone.

Figure ~~38~~ <sup>37</sup>

The Glendale building  
at William Head, where  
the inmates work with  
handicapped people.



Another program, which does not exist today, was the Vic West Youth Program, a project of the Optimum Group, later called the All-purpose Group. Limited to twelve members, the group of inmates worked with youth at risk in association with the Vic West Community Association. The young people would come to William Head to rap with inmates from 7:30 to 9:30 once a week. The group, however, found two hours was too long to talk, so they got into arts and sports. After that, the group would spend the evening involved in a sport or art activity, with the last half hour being used for the rap session. The program worked so well that judges would recommend young offenders to attend it as a part of probation. The program began in 1973 and folded shortly after the opening of Vic West's new centre in 1978.

A further step in the resocialization of inmates is the Temporary Absence (T.A.) program, where they are actually allowed to leave the institution. The first step in this program is E.T.A.'s or escorted temporary absences. After serving a certain amount of his sentence, an inmate may apply for an E.T.A. for a specific reason, which may or may not be approved. If it is approved, he would be escorted by a prison official. After this, the inmate may apply for U.T.A.'s or unescorted temporary absences, where the inmate leaves the institution on his own honour. This type of absence is much more difficult to attain than <sup>an</sup> E.T.A. After U.T.A.'s; day and full parole are the next steps in the gradual release of inmates back into society. The length of time an inmate actually spends in the institution is largely dependent on his behaviour there. The length of his sentence can be lengthened or shortened by good or bad behaviour, as are the possibilities of getting a T.A. program.

Education is still an important part of the operation of William Head. Up to 1980, the education program was run through an extension of the

Sooke District School Board, but, in August, 1980, the University of Victoria took over the education program at William Head. The University of Victoria began this program at B.C. Penitentiary in May, 1971, as an experiment and in September as a full-time program. The following year, a parallel program was begun at Matsqui Institution, with courses, at that time, only going up to the second year level. In 1976, however, due to student interest and demand, third and fourth year courses were also offered. In 1979, with the closure of the B.C. Penitentiary, the program was transferred to Kent Institution and, in August, 1980, the program began at Mountain Institution and William Head Institution.

When the program began at William Head, under Resident Co-ordinator Henry Hoekema, it had both a General Educational Development (G.E.D.) Program, to bring inmates equivalent to the grade twelve level, and a University course program. At the outset of the program, there were twelve G.E.D. students and twenty University students. Under the direction of Henry Hoekema, who had been at Matsqui and B.C. Penitentiary for several years, such courses as English, Psychology, and Theatre were offered. The first semester ended with eight G.E.D. students and fourteen university students finishing. Originally the G.E.D. was taught by outside workers, but now inmate tutors, who have received 45 units or more, teach it.

Today, William Head is an official off-campus area of the University of Victoria. The program is run from the Educational Building, which has two classrooms, two small study rooms, a couple of offices, and a library. The building is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., with only inmate staff operating in it from 5 p.m. onwards. Although the program is run solely by University of Victoria staff, there is a student council and nothing is done without the full knowledge and consent of the students. About 35% of the

Inmate population is presently involved, the number varying between thirty and fifty students, while other institutions attract about 20% of the inmate population.

The education program at William Head tries to produce a critically thinking student, rather than an educated criminal. The emphasis is more on developing cognitive abilities and a sense of moral reasoning through a liberal arts approach than simply getting a degree. But working with an inmate population is very different to the usual university life. The high turnover rate of inmates makes it difficult to develop a sense of continuity in the program. Henry Hoekema originally worked alone on the project, hiring teachers on four month contracts to teach specific courses. In 1981, however, Jacquie Nelson became the first woman to become a full time assistant co-ordinator when she was hired for that position at William Head. She has now left that position to become Resident Co-ordinator at Matsqui.

Along with the usual courses offered at the institution, correspondence courses are offered for pre-G.E.D., G.E.D., and university courses. Inmates who are involved in some aspect of the education program have had fewer charges, and security around the Educational building is not a problem. A study concluded in 1981 stated that inmates, who have taken at least two courses a year for two years, have a recidivism rate of 14 to 16%, compared to the usual 55%. It is interesting to note that the man who began the university program at B.C. Penitentiary in 1972 was actually a high school level teacher at William Head in the late 1960's.

One of the more well-known programs at William Head has developed out of the university program. One of the early theatre courses at William Head required that a play be produced. So, in May, 1981, a Harold Pinter play, "The Birthday Party", was put on in the chapel, with over 600 people

Figure 5

The chapel at  
William Head,  
where the first  
play production  
was put on.

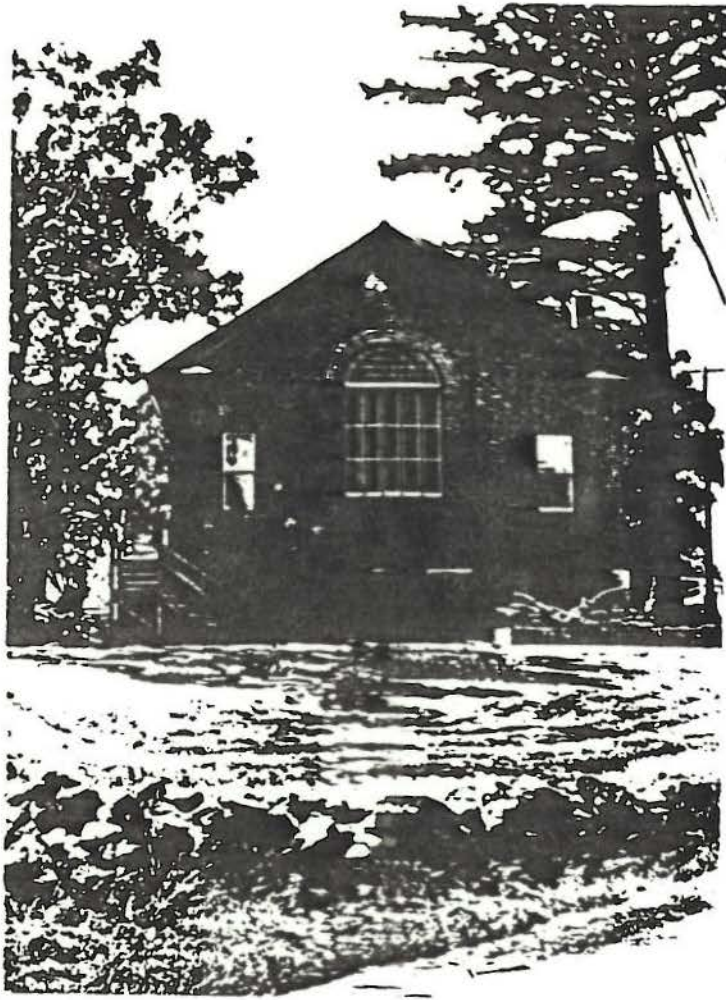
coming to view the play over its six night run. The production was such a success that, immediately after the first play finished, the William Head Amateur Theatre (W.H.A.T.) Society was formed as a non-profit organization. Since then, two other plays have been produced; "Dracula", shown over nine nights in October, 1981 and drawing about a thousand people, and "The Knight of the Burning Pestle", shown over 14 nights in April and May of 1982, again drawing around a thousand viewers. All proceeds from these productions are used to finance further dramatic productions.

Today, the W.H.A.T. Society is open to all inmates who have an interest in theatre, either on or back stage. For each of the productions, about thirty inmates have been involved, with around a dozen outsiders, including female theatre students from the University of Victoria to fill any female roles. Although the plays are put on inside the prison, with large numbers of people attending, there have been no security problems. To help develop their talents, inmates have received workshops in lighting, costume design, voice and other areas. So far, the three plays produced have done very well, receiving very good reviews, and the next production is planned for October, 1982, when "Ten Little Indians" will be shown.

Inmates at William Head Institution continue to work as well as participate in the various programs at the institution. Each inmate is assigned to a certain area and task and is paid on a scale that ranges from \$1.60 to \$6.45 per day. The wage is determined by the type of work and position held, and inmates may receive raises if their work is done well.

Although it has changed dramatically over the years since its inception in 1959, William Head Institution remains a unique prison among Canada's penitentiaries. With no barbed wire fence surrounding it and cats, rabbits, Canada geese, and a pet goat named Radar roaming freely around the





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Storage

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