

Bowker Creek Bowker Creek was named after John Sylvester Bowker, one cleared; when salmon used to go up and thick vegetation grew of the early settlers of Oak Bay. Born in Massachusetts in along its banks, and youngsters swam in the pools of crystal 1821, he came to British Columbia in the 1850s to work in water. Now the balance of nature has been lost. It takes a lot the Cariboo gold fields. Eventually he turned to farming of poetry in a man's heart today to hear it sing its way through and bought some land on the San Juan Islands. He would the cement arches. It is a sad sack of a creek, shorn of its paddle to Oak Bay to visit his friend, John Tod, an early fur beauty, slipping back to a mere trickle of polluted and

frustrated water."

Although the creek no longer supports a salmon run, many groups are working to return the creek to a more natural state. In particular the Friends of Bowker Creek Society educates the public about the other wildlife values of creek habitat and promotes Bowker Creek as a valuable community asset and potential greenways corridor. They are also working with the Capital Regional District, local and senior governments and other community interests to implement a watershed management plan for the Bowker Creek drainage that outlines a positive vision of the creek for the future.

2 Craigflower Creek

Craigflower Creek was once known as Deadmans River. The traditional First Nations name for the creek was "Pulkwutsand", place of ghost(s) or haunted by ghosts(s). This is perhaps where the title Deadmans River came from. It was labeled Deadmans River on maps of the area up to 1930. The change to Craigflower Creek was officially adopted in 1932 to recognize the nearby farm established by Kenneth Mackenzie in 1853. Mackenzie developed a thriving farm complete with sawmill, bakery,

grist mill, blacksmith shop and a general store. In May of 1856 the McKenzie manor was completed. The impressive building was built to resemble the McKenzie's family home, Reston Hall, in Scotland. The name "Craigflower" was chosen by McKenzie after the home of Hudson's Bay Company Governor Colville's farm in England. Craigflower manor still exists today and been restored to its original conditions by the B.C. provincial government as an historic site.

A major upgrade to the Trans Canada Highway in 1995 impacted Craigflower Creek as the new highway alignment travelled through the existing creek bed. In order to mitigate the impact of this construction, 800 meters of artificial stream channel were created but the course of the stream was permanently altered.

Today the creek continues to support populations of coho and chum salmon as well as cutthroat trout thanks largely to efforts by the Esquimalt Anglers Association and the Goldstream Hatchery. Volunteers from these groups have put years of hard work and thousands of dollars worth of improvements into the creek. They also operate a smolt fence, which counts the juvenile salmon returning to the sea in the spring.

3 Cecelia Creek

Cecelia Creek has the undesirable title of being one of the Capital Region's most polluted creeks. It is a highly contaminated tributary of the Gorge waterway that drains an area of approximately 900 hectares, two-thirds of it in

Saanich and the remainder in Victoria. A former salmonbearing stream, it was transformed through paving, piping and pollution to a short, dirty channel that empties into one of the largest estuaries on the Gorge.



Newly day-lighted section of Cecelia Creek, 2003

The main type of pollution in Cecelia Creek comes from urban runoff as approximately ninety percent of the watershed is covered by paved surfaces. As water runs over these impervious surfaces, debris and pollutants are picked up. They flow into the storm drains and then into Cecelia Creek. Another issue, highlighted by Capital Regional District (CRD) stormwater quality monitoring programs during the 1990s, showed that sewage entering the creek from homes whose sewage pipes fed into storm drains fouled the creek at levels hundreds of times higher than is considered safe for recreational use. In addition the CRD discovered high levels of metals such as mercury, copper, lead, zinc and cadmium. Add in oils, solvents, and paint from industry in the drainage area and the result is a toxic soup.

The creek is located in one of the earliest settled areas of Victoria and was impacted by development as the city expanded. Originally Cecelia Creek started where Mayfair Mall is now located. At the turn of the last century the creek was confined within a brick storm sewer and by 1919 the above ground portion of the creek was reduced to 212 meters in length.

In 1998 public awareness of the pollution and habitat destruction of Ceceila Creek and Cecilia Ravine Park, one of the only greenspaces in the Burnside/ Gorge Area, increased. This was due to two factors. In 1992 part of the Galloping Goose regional trail was constructed parallel to the creek through Cecelia Ravine Park and the creek problems became more visible to the community as they began to use the trail. And in 1996 students from the nearby Burnside Community School began to monitor the water quality of the creek. This

resulted in members of the local community, and in particular the Burnside Gorge Community Association, advocated to have the creek made safer. The outcome was the creation of the Cecelia Creek Clean-Up Plan. Representatives from the Burnside Gorge Community Association, the Chamber of Commerce, City of Victoria, CRD, District of Saanich, Ministry of Environment, Land and Parks, Pacific Capital Commission and Veins of Life Watershed Society contributed to the plan.

As part of this plan, best management practices to prevent pollution were developed for the automotive sector in the area and many of the sewage/storm drain cross-connections were fixed by the municipalities. More recently, in the summer of 2000, the City of Victoria completed one of the first daylighting projects in Greater Victoria, exposing an

This cooperative effort has led to a remarkable example of urban renewal. If one of the regions most polluted creeks can be improved it provides great hope for many of the other 'lost streams' of Victoria.

additional 133 metres of the creek to the daylight.

4 Empress Creek

The stream that the Empress hotel was built upon was unnamed and flowed from a wetland in the vicinity of Cook and Moss streets. This wetland was connected to another creek which ran into Ross Bay thus linking the bay with Victoria's inner harbour. Oral history indicates that the First Nations would use this waterway as an alternate route during heavy winter storms. During wet winter periods when the tides were high they would be able to paddle from Ross Bay to the inner harbour thereby avoiding the heavy weather on the outer coast.

This wetland undoubtedly provided valuable fish and wildlife habitat. And stories indicate that people would hunt waterfowl in the wetland and sell them to merchants in Victoria.

Construction of the Empress Hotel began in 1904 by the Canadian Pacific Railway. The hotel was designed by Francis Rattenbury, who had also designed the Legislative Buildings across the inner harbour from the Empress. The ambitious plans for the hotel included building a causeway across James Bay and filling in the flats behind with mud dredged from the harbour plus thousands of yards of gravel. Pilings were then driven 125 feet through this fill in order to create the foundation on which to build the hotel. The hotel was completed in 1908 but soon expanded and in 1929 a new wing was added. However it was found impossible to locate a footing where the new wing was to joint the old, so a bridge was built that now arches between the two buildings over what once was a stream flowing to the inner harbour. This stream still flows through the sub-basement of the

Gorge Waterway

At the end of the last ice age approximately 13,000 years ago, the Gorge waterway, like most of Victoria, was underwater. The land was pressed down under an enormous weight of ice. As the ice melted the land rose and 5,000 years ago the land settled creating a saltwater inlet with tides as far as Portage Inlet.

At the time Fort Victoria was established in 1843, there was no permanent native village on the Gorge but the waterway was utilized by the local First Nations. The Gorge was an exceptionally rich and diverse habitat, providing a variety of fish and shellfish. Archeological records indicate the presence of herring, anchovies, coho, chum and spring salmon as well as steelhead and cutthroat trout. Shellfish included oysters, bent-nose and littleneck clams and mussels.

The Gorge is lined with a number of archaeological sites. As early as Sept 6, 1874 a Colonist article made reference to such finds "a Mr. Martin Dodds of the Gorge and Mr. James Deans, have been investigating a shell-mound near the Gorge Retreat. While excavating for a kitchen, skulls, arrow-points, spearpoints, and an adze, all of stone, were found." One of the oldest archaeological sites on southern Vancouver Island was discovered beneath the footings of the Gorge Bridge in 1991. This midden site is over 4,100 years old, indicating that the falls have been part of the native history for thousands of years. Many of these sites have been permanently lost or badly damaged through development.

During the early years of Fort Victoria's history the Gorge waterway was a favourite fishing, picnic and camping area. In 1865 the first rowing club on the Gorge was formed. Soon after came enterprises such as the Gorge Hotel, Gorge Pub and Victoria Gardens. The gardens were designed as a summer resort and were located opposite the present Kinsmen Gorge Park.

May 1st, 1867 saw the first of many regattas on the Gorge The event was covered in the May 3, 1867 Colonist: "Victoria Arm has never before bourne, at one time, as many boats as glided over its bosom, like Venetian gondolas, on May Day. Hundreds of persons of both sexes indulged in the delightful pastime and the picturesque groves that lined the banks of the lovely sheet of water were filled with pioneers, who made the welkin ring with their merry voices."

During the late 1880's and early 1890's the Gorge became a highly desirable area for real estate. Although some of Victoria's prominent citizens built on the Gorge as early as the 1860's, as was the case with Point Ellice House, nothing rivaled the estates constructed at the end of the 1800s. One vestige still visible today is the rock wall along Craigflower Road, a remnant of 'Burleith' the estate of James Dunsmuir

On May 26, 1896 a trolley car was headed across the Point Ellice bridge carrying passengers to Esquimalt when the

bridge gave way and the car was plunged into the Gorge. Fifty-five of its 142 passengers perished. After this disaster the B.C. Electric Railway (B.C.E.R.) took over the Victoria trolly lines in 1897. Residents of the Gorge petitioned the railway company for an extension to the Gorge. This led to a streetcar line which increased the popularity of the area. In 1901 the B.C.E.R. purchased 15 acres of land on Victoria Arm and created a park.

bathhouse and saltwater pool, Japanese tea gardens and amusement park. The June 23rd, 1907 Colonist ran a lengthy feature article on the virtues of the Gorge which highlighted the view of Victorians toward the Gorge at the time. "Among its pleasure grounds not the least of them is the Gorge, a magnificent area of native forest, and glen, and nook, the crow, the twitter of the songbird, the merry laughter of pleasure-seekers or the beating oars upon the blue waters of a finger of the sea that seems to point the way to this glorious retreat where a dual sensation takes possession of the visitor, "so near and yet so far", so near to the great throbbing heart of a growing, developing city, and yet so peaceful, so impressive; the majesty of nature is around and about one..." The new tramway led to an influx of new residents and pollution of recreation on the Gorge had its beginnings early in the in the Times in which a local businessman outlined several problems including fish being killed by lumbermen blasting

Swimming still remained one of the Gorge's most popular pastimes in this era and in 1910 the Gorge Park hosted the B.C. Swimming Championships as well as the Island Championships. It is interesting to note that this same year a park swimming instructor suggested installing a swimming pool in the park because cut feet due to broken glass were becoming a problem in the Gorge. The City of Victoria also wanted to supply swimming facilities on the Gorge and in 1911 constructed a bathing pavilion opposite the Gorge Pub. On some days as many as 170 swimmers would use the change house.

In 1910 Esquimalt proposed a drainage system into the Gorge. The B.C.E.R. did not approve as it was feared that the polluted water would stop bathing in the Gorge entirely. However in January 1912 Esquimalt installed a drain emptying into the Gorge just above the park. 1919 saw the commercial entry of the motor vehicle to get to the Gorge making it even more accessible and creating another source of pollution to impact the Gorge.

In August 1923 the Victoria Gardens went up in flames ending 56 years of resort activity. The land was subsequently

The park was electrified and would eventually contain a and cove, where the peaceful stillness is only broken by the cay of the waterway increased. The current conflict of industry and 1900s. For example, on March 09, 1908 an article appeared logs in the water, the blocking of Victoria Arm by log booms and the practice of draining sewage into the water.

subdivided and private residences built. Another landmark the Gorge Pub also went up in flames the same year. In 1926 management of the Gorge Park was turned over to Harry Takata. He had managed the Japanese Gardens for the previous 19 years and been the park's most successful businessman. Although the city's bath house was to remain a few more years it would also burn down in the 1930s. Many of the new homes along the Gorge and in the

drainage area contributed sewage effluent to the Gorge. The nutrient rich effluent added to the process of eutrophication especially in Portage Inlet. Large algal mats started to appear on the water's surface and then decayed, adding to the layer of muck on the bottom exposed at low tide. Following an inspection by the provincial government, City of Victoria and Saanich Municipality the Gorge was closed to swimming on June 09, 1938. One of the main sources of pollution was the runoff of septic tanks through open drains and ditches. Municipal officials claimed it was the Province's responsibility to clean it up. Matters escalated in July of 1939 when typhoid fever was diagnosed and attributed to the unsanitary condition of the Gorge. The community now felt the effect as properties along the Gorge lost value. Public perception of the Gorge had sunk and it was viewed as a health hazard, a sink of

pollution and a detriment to the community. In an excerpt from the Provincial Health Officer of the day, Dr. Young refers to the Gorge as an "unsanitary and common sewer to all intensive purposes and of necessity must be condemned, that is if nothing is done to remedy this existing evil."

Jigging for herring - Gorge waterway, 1956

The outbreak of war in 1939 diverted much attention from the Gorge. Unfortunately the war was to deliver another blow to the Gorge. For many years Harry Takata along with his brother Kensuke and his family had run the Japanese Gardens in Gorge Park. In April of 1942 all people of Japanese ancestry were ordered removed from the coast. And, with one weeks notice, the Takata family were removed and the gardens shut down on April 22, 1942. For at least 5000 years the Gorge had been a special place to the residents of Victoria and now in a few short decades it had been virtually laid to waste.

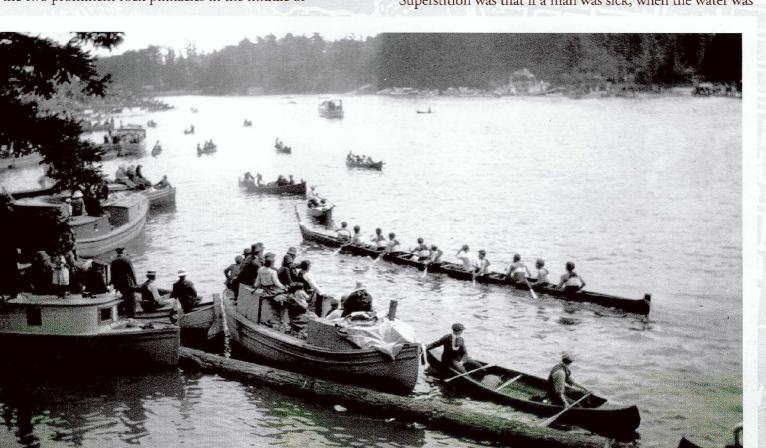
After the war concern for the Gorge once again increased. By 1954 a group calling itself the Gorge Waterway Improvement Association had been formed. Under the chairmanship of Victoria Alderman Geoffrey Edgelow the group had plans to "restore the entire Gorge waters as a large scale aquatic playground." Around this time the B.C.E.R. was prepared to donate the now deteriorating Gorge Park if an agreement could be reached that the park would be maintained. The City of Victoria agreed to a proposal from Edgelow that Victoria and Esquimalt jointly accept Gorge

Over the next few years progress was made in decreasing the pollution flowing into the Gorge. In 1956 Saanich installed sewers which removed much of the septic tank effluent. Esquimalt quickly followed suit and by 1958 the Gorge was once again declared fit for swimming. Sewer installations also gave the public and civic groups renewed hope for the Gorge and it wasn't long before the Victoria Kinsmen Club was working on ideas. The Kinsmen first turned their attention to the city owned Gorge Park and in 1957 announced that the Kinsmen were prepared to put \$22,000 into the development of Gorge Park on the Saanich side, the site of the old "free" bath house. The Kinsmen required that the park become known as Kinsmen Gorge Park. Unfortunately the City was not prepared to dedicate the park and instead tried to sell it to Saanich. Therefore the Kinsmen crossed the Gorge and successfully negotiated with Esquimalt. On August 15, 1958 Kinsmen-Gorge Park opened on the site of the old B.C.E.R. park. As part of improvements to the park a saltwater pool was dredged out to create a swimming bay on the site.

Popularity of the Gorge increased with boaters and in June

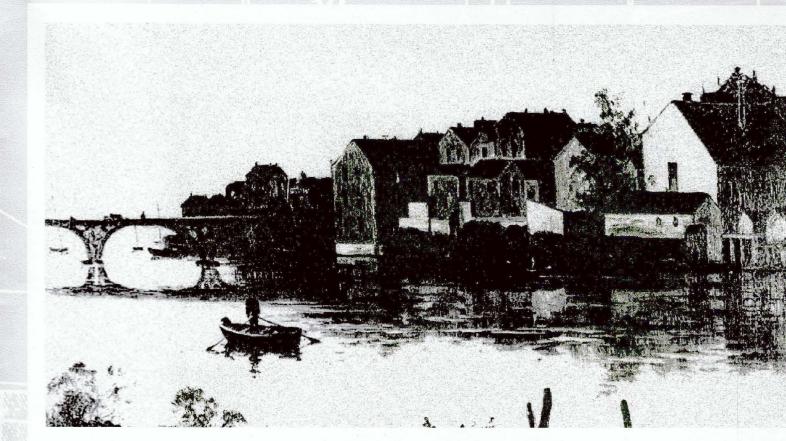
the Gorge Falls were blasted by Robert Southwell, operator of the Gorge Boathouse. The rocks, which were central to several ancient native legends, had also been responsible for many damaged boats and accidents. Backlash was swift and in the June 15, 1960 Colonist, Saanich Council was recorded as being "miffed" that the blast was permitted without prior consultation. One counselor reminded council that the Gorge falls was one of only two reversing falls in Canada. Home owners along Portage Inlet were also upset claiming that lower tide levels in the inlet exposed more mud. However the falls were not completely destroyed. And, although not nearly as spectacular, they stil

continue to put on a good show at low tide. Many of the First Nation peoples were also upset by the blast which desecrated the Spirit Rock of Camosun. One of the native legends appeared in the November 27, 1963 Victoria Times as told by Jimmy Fraser. "Camosun is the name of a Songhees princess who lived here many years ago. When Fort Victoria was established in 1843, the area was known as the Land of Camosun. The princess, according to the Songhees, was a wise and prophetic woman who ruled in accordance with the democratic ways of her people that is through persuasion and advice". First Nations women also believed that garments washed in the foam from the falls protected them from drowning. The early Songhees First Nations believed a great water-god dwelt in the falls. Superstition was that if a man was sick, when the water was



Songhees First Nations, Victoria inner harbour, 1886

Regatta on the Gorge Waterway, 1922



Area behind old James Bay bridge on which The Empress now stands. Painting by Aubiniere, 1887

flowing inland he would recover. But if the current was seaward he would die.

Water quality in the Gorge was again questioned by the mid 1960s as new housing beyond the sewered areas was allowing septic tank effluent to reach the Gorge. With an increase in infectious hepatitis in the city the Gorge was once again posted "unfit for bathing."

A beautification of the Gorge was started in the 1970s by the Capital District Improvement Commission. This resulted in the development of a walkway and sea wall construction between Admirals Road and Gorge View Drive. A similar wall and walkway were constructed on the opposite side from Kinsmen beach to the Gorge Bridge. The walls allowed pedestrian access and eliminated the muddy shores. In his 1970 report "The Gorge Waterway" municipal engineer F.E. Neate made a number of recommendations to the Municipality of Saanich. These included that the Gorge area be treated as a nature reserve, and that there be no further construction of retaining walls and that every effort be made to conserve and enlarge the remaining groves of native trees. He also stated that people seeking the tranquility of the Gorge would prefer the natural appearance of the blending of the shore and water as opposed to the distinct separation of land and water by the wall. Unfortunately few engineers or developers share this viewpoint. New developments have again artificially shored up the banks of the Gorge destroying the natural

The late 1980's saw an increased public interest in the Gorge. The lumber and plywood mill owned by Fletcher Challenge, a feature of the Gorge for decades, closed and the site was cleared. It was eventually replaced with the Jutland Road complex of residential buildings, businesses and a Waterfront Park. The Gorge Pub property was also developed for residential use. Similar developments are occurring on the south shore; these include the "Upper Harbour Centre" and the "Railyards" another residential development.

Despite these alterations, fish stocks are returning to the Gorge. The ecological health of the waterway has improved as water quality and habitat concerns join recreation as priorities in planning and management decisions. Community groups, businesses, developers and governments work together in bodies such as the Cecelia Cleanup Committee, Veins of Life Watershed Society and Gorge Waterway Action Society to reduce pollution and improve water quality. Hopefully a new chapter in the history of the waterway is being written.

Locating Lost Streams It's not an easy task to trace old streams. In order to recreate these historic waterways I have had to rely on old maps, many of which had different scales

and different degrees of accuracy. In some cases streams were not mapped at all and in these instances I have had to rely on oral history. This map contains several of the well know streams that existed when Victoria was still in its infancy but many may still be missing and some of the information may be

For some streams I also made a decision not to show where they ran historically but to show where they are now located underground in pipes. In the hopes that, with this information, some of these streams may once again see the light Jennifer Sutherst May 2003

attributes of much of the shoreline.

1960 the two prominent rock pinnacles in the middle of

