

## The Coach House Inn

by Sharon Proctor

Remember the Coach House Inn (700 Old Lillooet Road)? It sat where the Holiday Inn & Suites is now – north of the Second Narrows Bridge. Built in 1964, it was once highly visible to all northbound bridge traffic.

The Coach House served both visitors and local residents. In addition to 100 rooms and suites, it had a restaurant, heated swimming pool, lounge & pub, coffee shop, barber shop, and beauty parlour. A large banquet room hosted dances, weddings, receptions, annual meetings, conferences and other events. And for special occasions, there were private reception rooms. Indeed, the BC Lions, Canucks and Whitecaps used to put up their players here!

Steve Webb has fond memories of the Coach House: “In the early 1970s, I played in a three-piece band (easy listening music) in the dining lounge. The group consisted of Spencer Sutton (Hammond B3), Linda Kidder (vocals and vibes), and myself (drums and vocals). We played Friday and Saturday nights. We’d come a bit early and spend time in the swimming pool prior to our gig, as we were already set up to play. I remember the dining lounge patrons went particularly for the Chateaubriand (beef tenderloin), which has a certain smell when it’s flambéed. The whole lobby would have this yummy smell. And there were always weekend

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Others remember the Inn for the World Belly Flop and Cannonball Diving Championships held here in the late 1970s. The contest attracted international media attention.

Actually the Inn had suffered a severe blow in the 1960s, when the Second Narrows Bridge’s entrance and exit were altered, and New Lillooet Road was constructed. Now it was no longer readily visible to bridge traffic. Plus, it was hard to get to if you did see it. After some 30 years of operation, the Coach House closed in the 1990s.

But wait!

Did you ever watch the TV show, *Viper*? Turns out that before the Coach House was demolished, a *Viper* film crew shot scenes here October 6-15, 1998. Paramount Pictures’ special effects department conducted simulated explosions here. Most were small, though the one on October 15th was a larger “Hollywood style” explosion – in the old Coach House lobby.

*Other sources: Elaine Oakes (District Hall); City Directories; Nanaimo News Bulletin (Chris Hamlyn story, reproduced at [www.dogsear.com](http://www.dogsear.com)); Ruth Sherwood; Laura Anderson (North Shore News, July 29, 2012); North Shore Communities Newsletter, July 1964; postcard captions.*



*The Coach House pool, date unknown. For a few years, the “World Bellyflop and Cannonball Diving Championships” took place around it. Postcard, NVMA 16055*



*Coach House lobby, viewed from inside the main entrance, 1970s. The doors by the fireplace led to the pool area. Upstairs were the rooms and dinner lounge. Postcard, NVMA 16066*

# The School, the Community Hall, and the Traffic Circle

by Sharon Proctor

In the late 1950s, construction of the Upper Levels Highway obliterated what remained of the historic Capilano streetcar terminus at School Road and Bowser Avenue. This had been the local business and social core. Besides streetcars, there were small stores, a post office, a fire hall and the Capilano Community Hall. When streetcar service ceased, buses took over.

Actually not all of this neighborhood nucleus was lost. Thanks to public pressure, the Community Hall and its tennis courts survived. And the Capilano Road entrance and exit ramps for the Highway's west-bound lanes ended up carrying traffic around the Hall complex. What's interesting is part of the Community Hall was the original Capilano School building.

It had been a one-room school which opened with 12 students in 1908. According to early descriptions, it sat at the corner of Keith and Capilano Roads. Keith Road at the time ran north, then apparently proceeded west to Capilano Road. Soon, however, "School Road" replaced this east-west part of Keith. The little school, meanwhile, quickly became too small for the growing population. In 1915 it was replaced by a new Capilano School at West 20th Street and Bridgman Avenue. The vacated school building became a venue for meetings, religious services and events.

Actually not all of this neighborhood nucleus was lost.

Two groups called it "home": The Capilano Community Club, which was formed in 1922, leased the building from the municipality, held its

activities here, and rented the facility to other groups. A few years later, the Capilano Tennis Club was formed. It convinced the municipality to locate its tennis courts beside the school building!

In 1934 the Capilano Community Club began constructing a larger facility, attaching it to the former school. The new "Capilano Community Hall" opened in 1936. And the Tennis Club became an associate member of the Community Club. People from all over the North Shore played tennis, badminton, basketball, and floor hockey here. Groups held dances, parties, carnivals, card parties, whist drives, junior dances, ARP work and first-aid classes here. By the late 1950s, however, the Capilano Community Club had become inactive, and it was Tennis Club members who oversaw the Community Hall.



Capilano Community Hall, as seen from Capilano Road, date unknown. The long outside staircase led to the main floor. NVMA 106-6-6



East side of the Community Hall, ca. 1950. Note the tennis courts and the building extension. The latter is the original Capilano School building. NVMA 534



Aerial view of the (north) Capilano traffic loop, showing the Tennis Club's modern courts and clubhouse, April 2013. Approximate locations of early streets, the original Community Hall (green), and the end of the streetcar tracks (red) are indicated. The stores, post office and fire hall (not shown) were clustered at the School and Bowser intersection. Photo courtesy of North Vancouver District Hall.

In 1978, the Hall (including the school) burned down. The Tennis Club installed a prefab trailer and continued using the courts. Today, it has a modern clubhouse and courts. And its members play tennis surrounded by moving traffic.

Sources: Elaine Oakes & Andrew Durnin (District Hall); Capilano Tennis Club (short memoirs by Jim Cox & Ron Richards); Dick Lazenby (newspaper notes); NV School District 44 web site ([www.nvsd44.bc.ca](http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca)); old maps and legal plans; modern GIS map (District Hall).

## The Colonial by Sharon Proctor

Bonnie Miller loves old buildings: “They’re so warm and inviting.” In the late 1980s she lived in one, The Colonial apartments (160 East 10th Street). “When I was inside, I’d feel like I was being ‘hugged.’ It had so many wonderful character features!” The three-storey structure is still there. Built in 1911 by John Dierssen Junior, it has six apartments -- two to a floor, each running front to back. The two on the ground floor have their own front entrances. The ones higher up are accessed via front steps.

Dierssen’s parents, John and Anna Dierssen, had moved the family from Germany to the US in 1892-1893, settling in Sacramento, California. Little John was five at the time. His father became a successful Sacramento merchant, and young John grew up to be a carpenter/builder. In 1905, the elder Dierssens moved to North Vancouver. John Senior (by now in his sixties) operated a fruit and tobacco stand at the North Vancouver Ferry Wharf (Vancouver side). In 1909, he set up a store on the ground floor of the new Thompson Block (65 Lonsdale), and he and Anna moved into an apartment upstairs. The store, called “Welcome Parlor,” became a popular place to buy groceries, candies, soft drinks, ice cream and cigars.

In 1910, John Junior (now 23) moved up from California and in with his parents. He soon began planning construction projects in North Vancouver. One was The Colonial apartments.



*The Colonial apartments, circa 1914-15. The Dierssens lived in the ground-floor apartment on the left. Public domain photo*

In 1911 John Senior sold Welcome Parlor, retired, and moved with Anna into The Colonial. They lived here the rest of their lives. John Junior, meanwhile, married and settled in North Vancouver, eventually moving into a house he built (152 East 10th), close to his parents. When Bonnie

“I loved living there. The Murphy bed and bathroom were especially ‘quirky.’”



*The Colonial a century later, in 2014. Sharon Proctor photo*

Miller lived in The Colonial, little had changed since 1911. Inside the front door, a central hallway extended up a stairway to the top floor and rear of the building.

All six apartments were built with the same general floor-plan. The entrance of each opened into a hallway inside the apartment, running front to back. You entered each room from this inner hall.

Bonnie’s apartment was typical: It had a large front room with a short wall extending out from each side. “You could pull out a ‘pocket door’ in the wall to create two rooms. Against the rear wall of the front room was a huge built-in cabinet. It had

glass doors above, a counter-like area below, two drawers below that, then two doors at the bottom. When you opened the bottom doors, out would roll a Murphy bed. Next to this cabinet, by the outside wall, was a door. Open it, walk up two or three steps, and you were in an old-fashioned bathroom with a deep clawed tub. The bathroom was above the Murphy bed. Down the hall was another living space, and at the back was an old-fashioned kitchen, with separate cooking and pantry areas.

“I loved living there! The Murphy bed and bathroom were especially ‘quirky.’ We’d have friends over, pull out the bed, crash out on it and watch a movie on TV and eat popcorn.”

*Many thanks to Bonnie Miller, our “Express” designer, who works at the North Vancouver Museum & Archives. Today she lives in another interesting old building.*

Other sources: City Directories; Ancestry.ca; 1900 US Census; 1901 US passport application; 1911 Canada Census; Registration of US Citizen in Canada, 1915; Brad Hodson; NV Building Permit, 1911; The Western Call, Vancouver, June 17, 1910; CNV Heritage Register.

North Vancouver's Museum & Archives exists to engage, strengthen and inspire our community and its visitors by exploring history, connecting people and sharing ideas.

Our website:  
[nvma.ca](http://nvma.ca)

New Museum blog:  
[my-museum.ca](http://my-museum.ca)

Walter Draycott's Great War Chronicles  
[GreatWarChronicle.ca](http://GreatWarChronicle.ca)

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## Culture Days coming to the Museum!

Do you have boxes of family photos and documents deteriorating in your kitchen drawer or attic? There is a solution at hand! Get some tips on how to care for these precious items at the

**Family Records Workshops** (pre-registration is required) presented by NVMA Archivist Janet Turner at September's Culture Days. Attend the talk, *Closing Time: Prohibition, Rum-Runners and Border Wars*, by noted North Vancouver author, Dan Francis.

While presenting insights into Canada's prohibition era, Dan will entertain with colourful tales of BC's rum-runners and gangsters, and of the 'cold water army' who preached hellfire and damnation to consumers of the demon rum!



Complete your visit to the Community History Centre with a **Behind-the-Scenes tour of the Archives** or join our Shipyard and Mountaineering Pals for a **Shipyard tour** or **chat at Lynn Canyon Park**.

These events will be featured at **Culture Days, September 26-28**. For more information call 604.990.3700 x 8016 or visit [www.nvma.ca](http://www.nvma.ca).

## Connections

Nancy Kirkpatrick, Director



What a busy summer it's been! I hope you've had a chance to sample some of our recent offerings.

- The Shipyard Pals, Sam and Sal, entertained crowds of people on the waterfront with stories and songs of Shipyard life.
- Artifacts came to life when NVMA's Harbottle Dairy Truck participated in the Canada Day Parade and we took a "What's It" display to the festivities at Waterfront Park.
- "Kidsworld" Day at the Museum delighted children with traditional games and vintage toys.
- A new NVMA exhibit opened at District Hall (355 West Queens Rd, NV) and will run through November. Titled "An Extraordinary Place", it explores the intriguing themes and stories being gathered for our New Museum and invites community feedback. Send suggestions to: [newmuseum@dnv.org](mailto:newmuseum@dnv.org).
- Two new websites were launched. The Museum & Archives website ([nvma.ca](http://nvma.ca)) debuted in July, while a second new site, [GreatWarChronicle.ca](http://GreatWarChronicle.ca), launches in September. "Walter Draycott's Great War Chronicle" commemorates World War I through the eyes of a soldier from North Vancouver and posts daily diary entries exactly 100 years to the day after each was written.
- A New Museum in the Pipe Shop was shown as an integral part of the Central Waterfront Development Plan presented to City Council by consultant Roger Brooks.
- City Council gave a green light to the next phases of a fundraising campaign for the New Museum.
- NVMA engaged Nicholas Locke of Optimus Fundraising as our Campaign Director to work with the Campaign Cabinet headed by Don Evans.