

## Tell me your stories!

Lisa Wilson, Community Engagement Curator

Whenever I start a new position, the most exciting part is figuring out what kind of projects I will be working on. Two months into my job as Curator of Community Engagement with the NVMA, this excitement has not abated. Over the next year, I will be working on North-Van125 – a project geared towards helping the District of North Vancouver celebrate its 125th anniversary as a municipality in 2016.

One way that we'll be doing this is through the creation of the North Van Voices and Views website. An interactive space for exhibiting community stories, reflections, and photographs directly from the people who live here, it will be a celebration of North Vancouver's living heritage—a contemporary tool to help us explore an ever-changing identity. The potential for this project is immense, which is why I'm so excited to be involved.

While the NVMA environment is new to me, the kind of work I'll be doing here is not. For the past five years I've been working and living in Newfoundland as a heritage professional—a career I began while earning a master's degree in Folklore at Memorial University. This fieldwork-based program sent me all over the province to document local knowledge, buildings, and traditions. The interviews and photographs I collected

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Lisa Wilson interviewing Carl Piercy in St. John's, Newfoundland, 2011.

were then used to promote a community's heritage assets on blogs, in videos, and in publications.

The goal was to connect with community members, and help them to promote their local identity. Our goal at the NVMA is to achieve something similar. I hope to engage with the community of North Vancouver and learn about this beautiful place from the people who live here. People like you, your family, and your friends!

Some of the themes we will be exploring include Teenage Years, Vanished Places, Encountering Nature, and North Van Innovators. Did you spend your teenage years exploring the ravines? Are you an avid gardener or outdoors enthusiast? Maybe you work in an innovative industry? If so, please get in touch.

Not only are your memories valuable, but your old family photos are too. Do you have any albums to share - maybe some good ones from the 70s or 80s? We'd love to take a look! Our archival collections are in need of a boost, and copies of your photos from the 1970s-2000s would be welcome additions!

For more information, please see our website at [nvma.ca](http://nvma.ca) or email [wilsonl@dnv.org](mailto:wilsonl@dnv.org).



Teen culture: North Vancouver High School Bowling Club, 1974, NVMA 13557.

# Homewood Enchanted Forest

by Sharon Proctor

It was full of surprises for families as they explored forest trails. Native animals lurked in trees, behind bushes, and around bends - a moose, a deer, a cougar, a bear, otter, raccoon, mountain goat, hawk, eagle or some other wild creature. From the 1957 to 1964, Homewood Forest (3505 Capilano Road) operated not far from the Capilano Suspension Bridge (3735 Capilano Road). Most of its animals were taxidermy specimens, purchased from hobbyists. To protect them from moisture, some were covered with layers of varnish, a couple were made of fiberglass, and others were covered with tarps when it rained. There were driftwood creatures as well, plus a water-wheel and a viewing platform extending over the Canyon.



Homewood Forest entrance, late 1950s. The children's playhouse (left) was moved here to serve as an admissions booth. That's the family home behind. NVMA 106-1-81

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It all began in 1945 when Ralph and Bessie Homewood bought the Tudor-style home of Bertram McEachran, brother of "Mac" McEachran who once owned the Capilano Suspension Bridge (*Express*, September 2012). It sat near the Canyon edge on five acres of forested land. Later they decided to turn 2 ½ acres into a tourist attraction. (They'd sold 1½-acres earlier.)

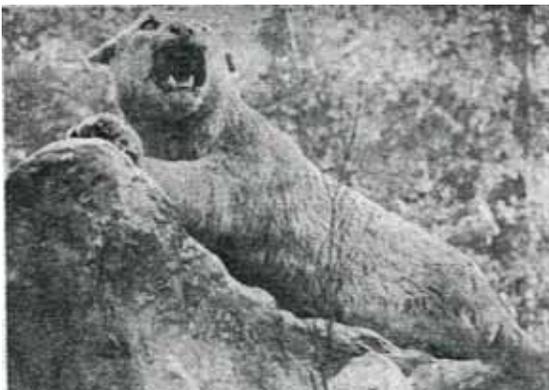
The whole family (including all four children) pitched in. They cleared trees and underbrush, created trails, made signs, built fences, and distributed the animals and driftwood art along the trails. Once the attraction opened, the children helped with maintenance and operation. "In the early days, admission was by donation," recalled daughter Heather Simard. "Dad had carved an opening in an upright tree stump, and visitors dropped the money down a chute to a locked tray at the bottom. Later we had an admission fee, with one of us there to make change." In the "off" hours, Homewood Forest was the kids' own special playground. "We would tear through the forest paths on our bikes."

Guests entered the driftwood area first. "Once they'd passed through it, they'd wander to the right, to the left, or down the middle. The paths had names like Driftwood Lane, Mystery Corner, or Bear Country. There was no map. We just told people to look up, look out, look under, and they'll see animals in locations where they'd be if they were alive in the woods." Kids loved the moving water wheel, which splashed water and sent it down a man-made creek. As guests wandered around, they'd eventually approach the Canyon edge and viewing platform.

In 1962 Hurricane Frieda sent ten tall Douglas firs crashing down, destroying several animals and the playhouse. The Homewoods removed the debris and rebuilt the exhibits. At the entrance, they built a pan-abode museum filled with collectibles - with an admission window by the gate.

*Many thanks to Heather (Homewood) Simard of White Rock for sharing with the Express and our North Vancouver Archives her memories, photos, and other information on Homewood Forest.*

Other sources: City Directories; Ancestry.ca; *The Laughing Bridge*, by Eleanore Dempster (2004); *The Province* newspaper, 14 December 1957 (photos of cougar, sheep & driftwood figure are from old news clipping).



Left to right: A cougar lurks atop a rocky bluff made of fiberglass; a Rocky Mountain sheep stands alert and ready to flee; one of many driftwood figures in Homewood Forest created by William Donaldson of West Vancouver.

## A New Fire Hall in 1912 by Sharon Proctor

In 1907 the City of North Vancouver built its first fire station - Fire Hall No. 1. It was a two-storey structure located on the southeast corner of 4th and St. Georges. Its "fire engines" were horse-drawn wagons. Soon a second fire hall was needed. Problem was, people were settling higher up the hill, and it was hard for horses to pull heavy fire-wagons up and down the gradient. So in 1911, Fire Hall No. 2 was built higher up, on the south-west corner of 13th and St. Georges.

Both stations kept their fire-wagons and equipment on the ground floor, using the second floor as a dormitory for their firemen. The new station, however, boasted a third floor gymnasium.

The new station boasted a captain, one driver, four firemen, and two horses.

In 1912, Fire Hall No. 2 had a horse-drawn chemical hose wagon equipped with a tank and chemicals, as well as a regular horse-drawn hose wagon, 1000 feet of hose, four nozzles, two three-gallon fire-extinguishers, and first-aid medical boxes. And there were ladders, including a horse-drawn aerial ladder.

The new station boasted a captain, one driver, four firemen, and two horses. The horses lived in a stable attached to the building, each in its own stall, each facing its outside door to which it was tethered. Their hay, stored on a "mezzanine," dropped down to each stall via trap doors. If more than one fire wagon was needed to fight a fire, Fire Hall No. 1 sent its two horses. And if a third was needed, two horses from the City's garbage collection team chipped in.



Fire Hall No. 2 with fire-wagons, horses and firemen in front, circa 1912-1913. NVMA 4419.



Firemen and a horse-drawn ladder wagon. NVMA 2635

One day in 1912, the men at Fire Hall No. 2 demonstrated to a newspaper reporter how they answered a call reporting a fire. It began with a gong sounding. This alerted (or woke-up) the men in the dormitory, who quickly slid down brass poles to the ground floor and dealt with horses and wagons. At the same time, the gong mechanism turned-on the stable lights and opened its doors. Pulleys in the ceiling dropped harnesses over the horses, who were immediately attached to a fire wagon. Each man had his own buckle to fasten, strap to tighten, and his own assigned place on the wagon. From gong to departure took just under 15 seconds!

Late in 1912, a new technology came to Fire Hall No. 2 - a motorized, 90-horsepower, chemical combination hose wagon. It had the latest fire-fighting chemicals and equipment, could go up to 30 miles an hour, and could carry six men. In a few years, Fire Hall No. 2 would be totally motorized!

Sources: Local 296, *History of City of North Vancouver Fire Department*; *The Express*, October 8, 1912; City Council Minutes.



Today's Fire Station No. 1. It was built in 1972, beside Fire Hall No. 2. When the latter was demolished, its old site became part of the new station's parking lot (seen here). Sharon Proctor photo.

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)

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

*Express* is a quarterly publication of the North Vancouver Museum & Archives. All text represents the opinion of contributors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Museum & Archives.

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The NVMA is supported by the Friends of the North Vancouver Museum & Archives Society, a charitable organization. All donations to the Friends Society are tax deductible.

Charitable Registration Number:  
89031 1772 RR0001

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## The Watchman's Cabin

Nancy Kirkpatrick, Director

The Globe & Mail called it "the little cabin that tells a big story about Vancouver's history". A home and studio to artists Al Neil, 90, and Carole Itter, 75, for over four decades, the "watchman's cabin" at the McKenzie Barge site near Roche Point has been in the news lately because it sits in the way of a project to remediate the foreshore habitat and build a new housing development.



Burrard Inlet was once dotted with hundreds of houseboats, floating shacks and cottages providing homes to people of modest means. Malcolm Lowry wrote much of his novel *Under the Volcano* while living in successive shacks just east of the Neil/Itter cabin from 1940-54. A group of free-spirited individuals and artists lived on nearby Maplewood Mudflats in the 1960s and 70s.

Recent efforts to save and re-locate the cabin may have paid off. There are plans to move it temporarily to a waterfront industrial site in North Vancouver until a permanent home can be found.

## Connections

Anna Wilkinson, Reference Historian



2015 has seen a surge in NVMA's digital outreach initiatives. Building on our success with Facebook and Twitter, we are exploring new possibilities with the photo sharing app Instagram and Pinterest, a collection sharing website. Across all of these platforms we've been encouraging conversations with diverse, multi-generational audiences. Whether posting archival photos for "Throwback Thursday" or behind the scenes shots of our collections (which we've nicknamed "shelfies") we encourage our digital visitors to make personal connections to North Vancouver's tangible history.



One recent example of how social media has helped us share North Shore stories came when we posted a photo of the first SeaBus on Facebook. One of our followers responded with this fantastic memory: "I was on that maiden voyage! I put my fare in the machine in pennies so it would print out the longest possible ticket strip (it would 'photocopy' all the coins you inserted into the box on the back of your ticket). I remember the SeaBus steaming into the Vancouver berth and wondering if it would manage to stop in time! (I still wonder that, sometimes!)"

We love hearing how you connect the past to the present in North Vancouver and beyond. Join the conversation and start sharing your own stories by following us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest!