



H e r i t a g e H e r e

SUMMER 2013

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THE COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION (CHC) would like to welcome our two newest commissioners, Steven Ranta and Michael Robinsmith. They have deep roots in our community and lots of experience. Steven is a second generation Maple Ridger and Michael has served previously on the CHC. We are now at full complement and just in time as we work our way through the process of creating a Heritage Plan to guide our work over the next 5 to 7 years. We look forward to presenting the plan to Council in the fall.

Earlier this year we had the great pleasure of recognising the lovingly restored Dr. Broe house in Hammond with a heritage award. The owners, Becky Robinson and Gary MacNeal put a lot of effort into bringing this beautiful home back to its original glory and the CHC is very grateful to them.

I would like to personally thank Cyndy Johnson-McCormick for all her good work on preparing the nomination for this award.

The newly formed Hammond Neighbours community group are planning a 130th birthday celebration for Port Hammond on August 17th, which includes a walking tour of the Hammond neighbourhood. In support of the event, the CHC is contributing two new "Welcome to Port Hammond" signs to the community. Additionally, the CHC is preparing an information plaque for the Hammond Cedar Mill to celebrate the mill's long standing contribution to the Hammond neighbourhood and the strong connection they continue to share.

We have committed to hosting the yearly provincial heritage conference on November 30th. This exciting conference will feature presentations from around the province plus a tour of some of Maple Ridge's heritage assets. More details to follow.

The CHC continues to work on a variety of other projects as well as addressing any heritage matters Maple Ridge Council sends our way and we look forward to the fall with our new Heritage Plan that will give us a much clearer view of our future as we aim to protect and promote our past.

Cheers,

Craig Speirs
Chair



COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

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DR. LAURENCE BROE'S HOUSE

by *Cyndy Johnson-McCormick*



THIS PAST FALL I nominated Becky Robinson and Gary MacNeal's beautiful home known as Dr. Broe's house for a Heritage Award and this Spring it won a beautiful brass plaque to be mounted on the house for all to appreciate. I spent many hours with Becky, Gary and their neighbour "Craig" unravelling some of the home's history but I think we only scratched the surface.

After hearing about the property from their family doctor, Gary and Becky on a whim, with no intention to buy looked at the 5,000 square foot, four-floor house built for Dr. Laurence Broe by the Skyette Brothers Building Company. Upon seeing the tattered but stately, grand, old "Gambrel" roofed home they fell in love with it and having known the prospected buyer's plans for the building they knew at once that they must save it. Gary and Becky had renovated and "flipped" many houses before and had their own home renovation business but this one was different, this was the exact kind of home that Becky's mother had always dreamt out loud of having but had never had the chance to have. The couple bought the home in August of 2008, when Becky's mother was in the latter stages of Alzheimer's Disease and almost as a tribute to her lovingly started the restoration work.

As only the 4th owners of the 85 year old home they were amazed that the house was incredibly intact and structurally sound. Six solid months of full-time restoration took place with the addition of more than 5,000 lineal feet of crown and chair-rail moulding, the restoration of the original fir floors throughout, and a full bathroom en suite added to the fourth floor. The massive, grand fireplace's masonry had been painted a bright yellow and they underwent the tedious and nasty task of sand-blasting them back to their original state. The undoing of eras before, primarily the 1970's was particularly prevalent in the kitchen which had been painted an extremely bright yellow complete with large hippy-style flowers on the cabinets and a large deer head tile mosaic in the middle of the floor.

Along the way the couple discovered more and more about the previous home owner's eccentricities. A man by the name of Ken Irish, who'd been dealt a bad hand of cards in life, lived alone with this mother until she passed away. He then continued living in the house almost like a hermit until his death. It was obvious that Ken loved his mother dearly and as she loved the sound of a piano he did buy her at least 5 pianos including a baby grand and 2 pipe organs that were all still present in the dining room when Becky and Gary viewed the home in 2008. It is not known if either mother or son played. After his mother's passing Ken owned a chimpanzee and kept it in the house!

By today's standards Ken might be called a "Doomsday Preparer", someone preoccupied by their thoughts, planning and preparedness for the end of the world, though it may make little sense to us to hide strange things including cans of ashes inside the walls and floors, carved into the mouldings in the top of doorways to each room and installed reflectors. A religious shrine took up the entire 4th floor attic, all of which Gary and Becky removed.

What is known about Dr. Laurence Broe is that he was American, born in North Dakota, who came to teach on Barnston Island for several years, practiced in Anyox in Northern BC and later came to settle in Port Hammond. Records indicate that Dr. Broe was "engaged" as the company doctor for the Port Hammond Mill in 1923, though the house and where he settled on Dartford Street was built later in 1927. He was only the second doctor in all of Maple Ridge at that time and the only one with privileges at the Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster, which was the closest hospital.

As well, apparently Dr. Broe was very involved in athletic and social ventures, such as being an avid bridge player, and he was involved with both the Hammond and Haney Boxing Clubs. Dr. Broe was also an ardent hunter and member of the Alouette Rod and Gun Club. Surely, with Hammond Cedar Mill, logging, fishing, farming in full production and the town of Port Hammond booming Dr. Broe must have been a very prosperous man.

In fact, he was so prosperous that his family even had servants. Upon restoration of the first floor boards a brass plug was found smack dab in the middle of the dining room floor and after some research it was discovered to be a foot buzzer that would have been at Mrs. Broe's foot under the dining room table to notify her servant of the necessity of the next course at dinner time. Also, several hidden staircases and trap doors were found in the home during the restoration. It is not clear if Dr. Broe is responsible for one or all of them or if a successor to the home may have added them. It is mysterious though that they all lead to and away from Dr. Broe's study to other parts of the house upstairs and to the outside. Hand-written letters dated from the 1920s for many years from a person not his wife, were found inside the walls of the dirt floored basement, (which is where his patients might have waited for treatment) indicate that Dr. Broe had a very interesting life outside and away from Port Hammond. As Dr. Broe has one son still living in the United States, out of respect for him those letters will not be pub-

lished but they do shed a very different light on how life was eight and half decades ago, yet so much the same.

Sometime after the restoration was complete Becky's mother passed away without ever being able to come to the house that Becky had restored and decorated with era accurate furniture and antiques that her mother would have loved. Becky found it fitting to have the memorial family gathering at this house. At this gathering it was discovered that her great uncle had spent much time working at the Hammond Cedar Mill and had spent much time here during the very time Dr. Broe had lived in this house. Since neither Gary or Becky came from or had any ties to this area this was considered a bit ironic.

Dr. Broe also owned the Edwardian Bungalow next door with the bellcast hip roof at 11329 Dartford Street, known later as the "Thompson Residence" and later sold it to Syd Church who ran "Syd's Taxi" out of the home, Port Hammond's first taxi service. In later times it became a rooming house.



Beckie Robinson and Gary MacNeal

Special Note: the sole reason the house still exists today may be largely due to the actions of a man named "Craig" (he doesn't want his last name used), a neighbour who still lives on Lorne Avenue and befriended Ken Irish in the last days and weeks of his life. Craig became the Executor of Ken's Estate and decided on the matter of who would buy the property and for what reason. Very few people would do what Craig did for nothing in return. Craig's love and appreciation of the home is evident as it still stands today, he deserves much credit in this regard.

FROM DONALD LUXTON'S BOOK



DR. BROE RESIDENCE
11339 Dartford Street
1927

Dr. Laurence Broe was the first doctor in Hammond, and the second in all of Maple Ridge. He acquired this property in the mid-1920s, and built this elaborate Colonial Revival residence for his family, while retaining the original smaller house as his office. Located on a prominent corner site, this was one of

the more impressive homes in Hammond at the time. The unusual gambrel roof is a typical feature of the Colonial style. The Broe Residence remains in substantially intact condition, with the major change to its appearance being a later coat of stucco over the original wooden siding.

Dr. Broe's residence is one of the most significant heritage resources in Maple Ridge.

*This is the entry about the house from *The Heritage Resources of Maple Ridge* by Donald Luxton & Associates, 1998.*

A digital version of the book with its many photographs and entries is available on Web site of the District of Maple Ridge.



Events + Projects

The Maple Ridge Community Heritage Commission is preparing a Heritage Plan that will establish the actions of the Commission for the for the next five to seven years.

Through the Heritage Plan process, three public questionnaires will be used to obtain input from the community. Questionnaire #1 was online between February and June 2013 and you are encouraged to complete Questionnaire #2, which will be available online until July 31st. Please visit the Community Heritage Commission Web page at www.mapleridge.ca, then click on "Municipal Hall" tab, scroll down to "Committees & Commissions" and select "Community Heritage Commission".

It is anticipated that the project will be completed in the fall of 2013.