

HERITAGE BUILDINGS OF THE SALISH SEA

TAKE A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE AND DISCOVER THE STORIES BEHIND SOME OF COASTAL B.C.'S MOST HISTORIC LOCATIONS BY [CHERIE THIESSEN](#)

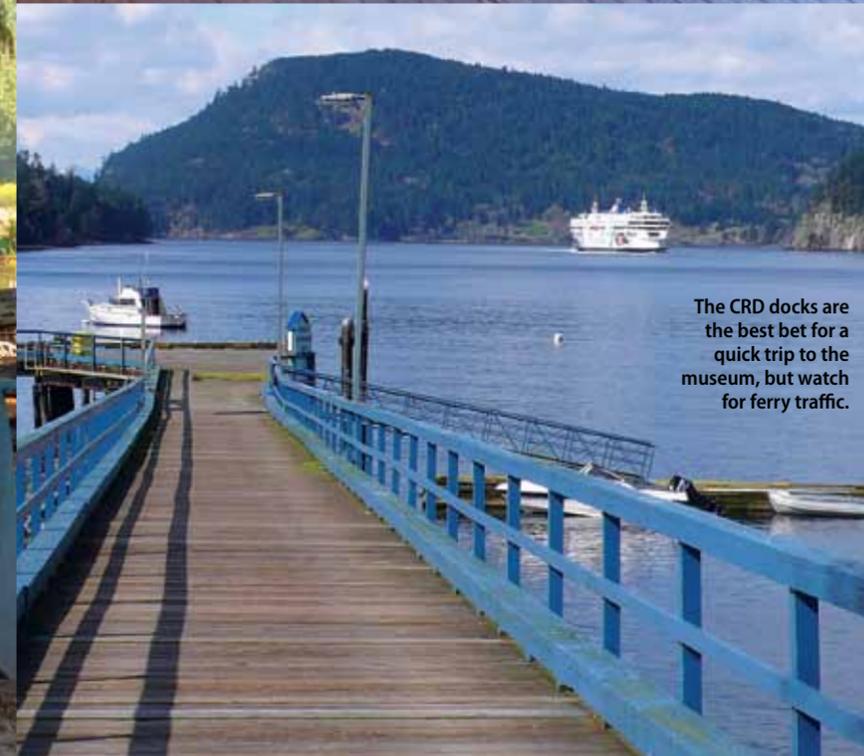
HERITAGE BUILDINGS CAN SIT ON INTRIGUING stories. A museum that used to be a jail in its early years, for example, or a store that's been moved to its new location by hand. And how many places of worship do you know that started life as lowly workshops?

Buildings are as unique as people, so last cruising season we decided to do some sleuthing about the places we routinely breezed past on a following wind or put off visiting at the end of the day because it would have delayed happy hour. Here are five of the most interesting places we found.



The Mayne Island Museum was opened in 1896, originally as a jail to hold ne'er-do-wells on their way to the gold fields.

LAUREN UNDERHILL X2; NIGHT: CHERIE THIESSEN



The CRD docks are the best bet for a quick trip to the museum, but watch for ferry traffic.

MAYNE ISLAND MUSEUM MAYNE ISLAND

Hard to believe that this tiny wooden structure perched in Miners Bay could once have contained two holding cells plus accommodation for one constable! The Plumper Pass lockup was built in 1896 but fortunately did not often have a full house. Convicted of larceny, Henry Freer has the dubious distinction of being the lockup's first overnight guest.

In the 1890s, Miners Bay was the halfway stop for gold miners coming from Vancouver Island to the mouth of the Fraser River enroute to the B.C.'s gold fields and was known in those rowdy days as "Little Hell." These occasionally drunk and disorderly would-be millionaires gave their name to the community of Miners Bay, then and now the commercial hub of the island.

The museum's offerings are eclectic, ranging from a 70-million-year-old fossil display to early First Nations stone tools, old farm implements and pieces of the oldest wreck in the Gulf Islands, the *Zephyr*, which sank enroute to San Francisco with a load of sandstone from Newcastle Island in 1872. One of the sandstone blocks is displayed in front of the jail.

IF YOU GO

Skippers can anchor in Miners Bay itself in five to 10 fathoms, but need to be wary of currents and back eddies. The CRD docks here are the best bet for a short visit, but they are also open to frequent ferry wash. The dock has about 30 metres of float space with a welcoming pub at its head. The pub, Springwater Lodge, is another building worthy of the 'heritage' moniker. Built in 1895 it's reputed to be the oldest continuously operating pub in the province.

WEBSITES

www.mayneislandchamber.ca
Miners Bay CRD.
www.crd.bc.ca/service/docks-moorage/miners-bay

THE GRAND CENTRAL EMPORIUM IN STURDIES BAY GALIANO ISLAND

This funky, '50s-style diner actually belies its age. Just look at the original stained glass sign on the door. It reads Burrill Bros. est 1903. That could well make it exactly what owner Deborah McKechnie says it is: the oldest commercial building in the southern Gulf Islands.

These days McKechnie focuses purely on serving interesting breakfasts, brunches and lunches, but the Emporium was indeed once that, along with being a general store, a butcher shop, a café intriguingly called *Café Chaos*, a pottery shop and studio, an emporium, and now a café again. Somewhere in there it was also an entertainment mecca. (I have these hazy senior memories of tying up at the old lodge in Sturdies Bay and coming here to listen and to dance to live music back in the '60s.)

Opened in 1903 by Frederick and Joseph Burrill, two Yorkshire brothers who hailed from Ripon, England, the store was the island's original food and "everything else" outlet. For 40 years the Burrills supplied islanders with their daily needs before selling up in 1947. The building is in surprisingly good shape considering the fact that in the '50s it was actually moved. Don Robson, a long-time Galiano resident, tells us: "In the 1950s it was moved a mile from its original location by my father, Fred, and my uncle Ollie Garner, using two bulldozers and putting two logs underneath for skids, just like they used to drag logs in the old logging camps." Apparently, he adds, as they were pulling away a woman ran out of her house yelling, "Stop. I need a pound of butter!"

At that time the store was owned by the Taylors, who wanted it closer to where the commercial hub was growing. All in all the building has had seven owners, and is getting ready to welcome its eighth, as its current vibrant owner is ready to slow down and the venerable Grand Central Emporium is up for sale.

IF YOU GO

The best place to overnight is at Galiano Inn's dock, which offers 200 feet of moorage space and public dock rates, unless you plan on visiting the spa or the dining room or even staying overnight, in which case, mooring is free. There's six feet under your keel at low tide.

A second option, especially if coming across the Strait of Georgia, is to tuck in to the harbour authority's docks at Whaler Bay, but call first for availability.

WEBSITES

Grand Central Emporium, Galiano Island.
www.grandcentral.ca
 Galiano Inn wharf info and reservations.
www.galianoinn.com
 Whaler Bay wharfing. Jean Jones. 250-539-5053.
www.crd.bc.ca/service/docks-moorage

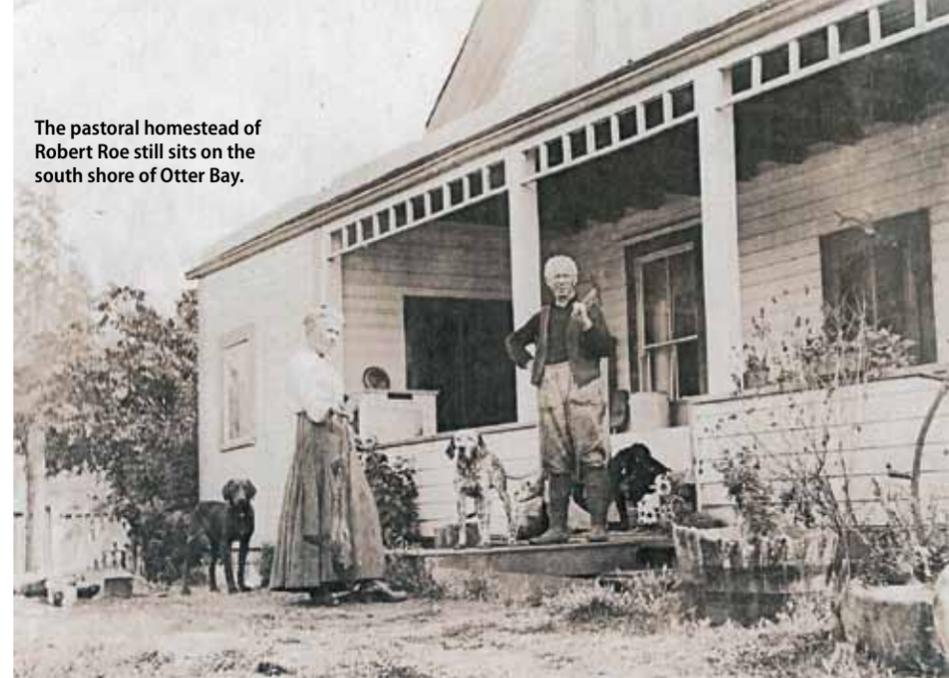


Opened in 1903 and moved to its current location on log skids, the Grand Central Emporium claims to be the oldest commercial building in the southern Gulf Islands.



KEVIN DUE X2

The pastoral homestead of Robert Roe still sits on the south shore of Otter Bay.



Anchor your boat and take the dinghy over to the parks dock in front of Roesland.

LEFT: CHERIE THIESSEN; ABOVE: PENDER ISLANDS MUSEUM

ROESLAND MUSEUM NORTH PENDER ISLAND

You could easily be forgiven for thinking that Roesland was named after the ubiquitous deer, but it was actually called after the Scottish immigrant, Robert Roe Sr., who bought 800 acres in 1905 on Otter Bay's south side, a huge property stretching to Shingle Bay and including Roe Lake.

Three years later he and his sons built the family homestead, a typical two-storey farmhouse of that era. The museum's website reports that "the house was constructed from a 'kit' with the lumber largely pre-cut to the amount and dimensions required. All components above the foundation were delivered by barge and the house was completed in five days!" The total cost: \$589.62.

In 1935 the interior walls were removed to create a communal area for the resort guests, who started arriving in the 1920s when Robert Roe and his younger son, Bert, began developing the resort, which ultimately had 17 guest cabins. David Davidson, who first visited Roesland when he was six, took over the running of the property with his wife Florence, in 1942, eventually entering into an agreement to purchase it after the death of Bert in 1969.

The resort finally closed in 1991, and under a special agreement, the Davidsons were permitted to live on in the log home David built over a period of three years. That same home is now National Park headquarters. Although most of the buildings have been torn down, the old Roes' homestead remains, as does one of the old log guest cabins.

IF YOU GO

The museum society has done a great job of furnishing the homestead with period pieces. Check out their excellent website for visiting times.

Anchorage is good in Otter Bay or you can moor at Otter Bay Marina, and you can take your dinghy over to the park docks in front of Roesland.

WEBSITES

Pender Islands Museum:
www.penderislandmuseum.org

RUCKLE PARK

SALTSPRING ISLAND

This is certainly the most difficult park for boaters to access, but for mariners interested in island history, a Ruckle Park visit is essential, especially if they can time it for the first Sunday in May when Ruckle Heritage Farm Day animates history.

At 439 hectares, it was the largest protected area in the Gulf Islands when it became a provincial park in 1979, a lasting legacy of the Ruckles. (It was Gordon Ruckle who said "You can't own land, you can only preserve it for future generations." And he did.)

Visitors get to wander amongst the outbuildings and orchards of the Ruckle's original sprawling homestead. They can go inside the oldest barn in British Columbia, built in 1900, and get up close and personal with the farm implements that Henry Ruckle and his youngest son, Daniel made. Both skilled blacksmiths, they crafted many of their tools in yet another building, the forge, the farm's oldest outbuilding and one of the few such buildings remaining of that period, constructed between 1878 and 1880. A sign on the forge recommends that visitors look closely at the log ends to see where they were cut and squared with an axe.

In the distance you can see the imposing Ruckle Home, the one building visitors cannot visit. Built in 1906 in the Queen Anne style, the 'fairy tale' mansion dominates the scene and has been meticulously kept up, and sadly is not lived in.

There is so much to see in this enormous park, however, that it is not too much of a hardship to be denied access. A more modest homestead is available for viewing and while visitors can't go inside, they can look through the windows at the busy kitchen, the set table, and the parlour awaiting its next guest. Several other nearby buildings are also accessible and adding to the ambience, a flock of turkeys, blissfully unaware of Christmas and Thanksgiving feasts looming, wander freely among the buildings, relaxing and gobbling in the shade of some of the old fruit trees.

This is the oldest working farm in the province, with 80 hectares still dedicated to farmland and with 150 lambs, highland cattle, and wild turkeys producing meat for the market, as well as egg laying hens. Fruits and veggies are still sold at the stand here and the farm continues to thrive under the management of Mike and Marjorie Lane, who host a popular farm stay programme and hold that annual Ruckle Heritage Farm Day celebration, this year on May 3. Please note, however, that dogs are not permitted on the farm itself, even on leash. Instead take them along the spectacular walk-in campsite area with its seven hectares of shoreline and views out over Swanson Channel. Everyone will be happy. It doesn't get any better.

IF YOU GO

The small cove north of Beaver Point has reasonably good temporary anchorage but several hazards lurk below, one being the underwater cable, clearly marked by the sign, and the other a barely submerged rock along the south side of the cove. The area is also exposed to winds from the northeast and ferry wash, and the one mooring buoy that used to be here has long gone. Visitors wanting a longer stay should tie up or raft alongside boats in Fulford Harbour's inner public docks or make use of Ganges Harbour's marinas and docks and then take the bus to Ruckle Park.

WEBSITES

Ruckle Provincial Park. www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/ruckle. As well as www.ruckleheritagefarm.com
B.C. Transit bus offers service between Ganges, Fulford and Ruckle Park. www.bctransit.com/regions/ssi



The Ruckle Home.



Ruckle Farm is the oldest working farm in the province.



Kids trying their hand at blacksmithing.



For a longer stay, rafting up at the Fulford Harbour public dock can be an option.

LEFT: CHERIE THIESSEN; ABOVE: COURTESY RUCKLE HERITAGE FARM X3



The quaint church with its trifoliated cross sits on a beautiful piece of land overlooking Winter Cove.



CHERIE THIESSEN X4

ST. CHRISTOPHER'S CHURCH IN CHURCH BAY

SATURNA ISLAND

Last year, when lying at anchor in Winter Cove, we decided to explore the area on foot and find out more about the tiny building in the cove that looked even smaller than the Plumper Pass Lockup. It catered, apparently, to very different "guests."

The tiny non-denominational church was originally called St. Nicholas Chapel. Tucked away and almost hidden from Winter Cove on a small cove that bears its name, the chapel was built in 1900 by Parson Hubert St. John Payne, one of four Payne brothers who settled on Saturna. Hubert came as a cleric and was soon known as the floating minister. He bought land in Winter Cove close to his brother Harold's property, and established a family chapel there almost immediately, transporting an old shed that had been built as a workshop by a Japanese boat builder. The structure was moved from its location across from Samuel Island to Church Cove. A close friend, Major Bradley-Dyne made the trifoliated cross you can still see on the roof, and donated the lectern, the carved candlesticks, the cross and the harmonium.

Although it was a family chapel, it was available to all islanders, and often a picnic would be held afterward for the up to 20 parishioners present. Parson Payne closed the chapel in the mid 1930s and in 1937 gave much of its contents to the Church of Good Shepherd on South Pender Island. During the next 25 years the church fell into disuse. The third owner, Ken Gillespie, began refurbishing the tiny chapel in 1980, adding a stained glass window in the south gable and the six pews from Virginia in the United States.

The building was dedicated on June 26, 1985, and a year later, Gillespie began a second phase of restoration, undertaken by Bernard Le Blanc, a Saturna cabinetmaker. Le Blanc worked on the chapel's interior, built the entrance archway and carved the doves on the chapel door. Later he was married in the chapel he helped to beautify. The church is on private property but can still be admired from the road.

IF YOU GO

Secure anchorage, sheltered from all but northwest winds, is in Winter Cove. Visitors can stretch their legs along a 15-minute road leading to the bay, or they can take a motorized dinghy into the tiny cove.

We often find that when you take the time to leave the boat, there are rewards waiting to take you by surprise. Exploring these five heritage buildings was no exception. Can't wait to add to the list next year. ☺