

History of the Village of Anmore

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANMORE by Al Harmer (an adaptation from research by Lawrence Holbrook)

Anmore's first community organization was the Farmers' Institute. This brought together the male residents in 1915 to increase purchasing power and to provide a unified voice on Anmore Valley issues. While initially the Institute acted as a co-op to buy bulk quantities of homesteading goods such as stumping powder, lime and fertilizer, it eventually, through debate and discussion was able to resolve many issues with respect to development of the area in the 1920's to the 1950's. The Institute was instrumental in getting government approval for the school house and lobbied for road improvements.

The Ladies' Guild was created in parallel to the Farmers' Institute to provide for many of the social functions that occurred in the Valley. Activities such as the Fall fair, the Christmas party and the Halloween party, were organized and supplied for in such a way that the "loco Times" described it as an "exhibition of home canning, cooking and domestic science".

In the early years, Anmore was socially vibrant with many activities centered around the school-house. A social club formed and raised funding to acquire a piano and furniture for the school that in effect served as a community hall.

The late 30's and early 40's saw an increase in cars in the area and thus social life migrated to a degree to loco where there were new and exciting activities. The building of a hall on Cecil Hart's property on East Road though did spark a resurgence in the social scene and increased local awareness of the area.

As an aside of miscellany, the first settlers who came to the Anmore Valley referred to it as "stump land" or the "stump ranches" in reference to its logged condition. The name that lasted though was Sunnyside until it was changed to Anmore when the area got its post office.

Anmore is an adaptation of the name given to the creek that flows in the northern area of the Village. Franklin John Lancaster, a part-time homesteader wished to secure water rights to the creek which ran through his property in an effort to prevent the Port Moody Sand and Gravel Company from redirecting the waters' flow for industrial purposes. To stake his claim he had to create a name for the creek. The contraction of his wife's and daughter's first names, Annie and Leonore produced the name of Annore, which was given to the creek in 1917. By 1947, the Vancouver City Archivist noted that people had gotten into the habit of saying Anmore. Firms printed calendars with the name on it and the store was named Anmore grocery. Thus in time its widespread acceptance led to the post office adopting it and the region was officially recognized as such by the Geographical Board in Victoria.

Homesteading began in earnest in the Anmore area after the government sale in 1914. As part of the terms of issuing of land title, settlers were required to pay a \$10 "homesteading fee" as well as paying \$25 of the cost up front. The remaining payments were to be spread out over three years. To qualify settlers had to be in residence on the property for at least six months of the three years of paying off the debt. The owner had to clear at least two acres of land and build a home of a value of \$300 or more. After the conditions were met inspection was done by a Federal Inspector and a grant

was issued to be exchanged for land title. Not all settlers stayed. Some abandoned the land on first inspection while others left discouraged after making slight improvements. However, by the 1920's nearly all of the liveable land had been purchased and settled.

Urban homesteaders must have been shocked by Anmore's landscape at the time. The area was covered with burnt stumps and bush. The stumps were a result of pre-settlement logging operations. Fire had swept through the area before the turn of the century. The resulting small growth trees were burned again by another fire in the 1920's that raged through the valley and cleared timbers from the northern mountains. The new barrenness of the rock helped facilitate the naming of Eagle Mountain due to a rock formation that had the shape of an eagle. Goat Mountain got its name because of the wild goats that inhabited its open rock faces. The rumour was that a Buntzen Lake Power Project worker had released the animals into the hills after the project was completed in 1913.

Housing in the early settlements was modest, consisting of tents or one room shacks. By the later 1920's though, the area was settled and houses increasingly were built for comfort. Wood was the home fuel of choice until oil eventually supplanted it. Electricity arrived in the 40's for Sunnyside and the 50's for East Road and with that came electric washers and fridges. Indoor plumbing was available to a few who had a flowing creek that allowed a gravity feed. Outdoor pumps were required for other homes. The issue of water though has always been a problem for Anmore.

Transportation was lacking in the Anmore region for many of the early years. Before 1915 settlers had to cross Burrard Inlet by boat because there was no road around the inlet. In 1915 a road was finally built around the north side of Burrard Inlet to loco but this was just a small logging trail through the bush. The government started a dirt and gravel road up to Buntzen Lake. Funding, being limited allowed only for the road to be built around the stumps and rocks instead of removing them. Poor road quality led to serious mud problems in wet weather.

There were few public buildings in the Anmore region in the pre-1950's. There was however a small one room schoolhouse built in 1916 at the corner of East and Sunnyside Roads. A teacherage was built adjacent to the school to provide modest accommodation for the school's teacher. The school provided for 10 to 16 children ranging from grades 1 to 6. The Farmers' Institute was instrumental in getting the school built through government assistance.

The group also built the facility that served as schoolhouse and town hall for most of its existence. The school closed in 1963 and the building demolished in 1973.

The first store in Anmore was started in the 1930's by Mrs. Montgomery on Sunnyside Road. Another was started by Johnny Bedard that became the first post office in Anmore

The war years in the valley saw preparations for W.W.II raids. The ARP (Air Raid Precaution) and the PCMR (Pacific Coast Militia Rangers) were two organizations set up to prepare and protect citizens. Blackout was enforced by requiring that houses have curtains of tar paper stapled on the wooden frames. Cars were required to have blackout headlights that allowed only a 6" by 1.5" sliver of light to illuminate the road. The ARP were equipped with overalls and hard-hats and had two ratchets



with which two people were to run up and down the road warning of imminent danger. The PCMR were a well-organized group of male residents who had not yet been called to serve in the Armed Forces. They were trained as guerrillas and were allowed to keep their rifles after the war. Their numbers dwindled by wars end as the younger members were called to serve. The group disbanded in 1945.

The 1950's to the 1990's saw development plans emerge as Anmore's road access improved. Anmore's sense of intimacy waned as residents found social and recreational activities outside the region and outsiders discovered more of the quiet idyllic area.

The 1952 release of "The Lower Mainland Looks Ahead" by the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board proposed that the Anmore Valley be considered for urban development. A subsequent report called Chance and Challenge in 1964 also recognized Anmore as acreage suitable for dense urban development. Anmore was to become one of several "compact communities that build around regional town centers"

In 1968 the Provincial Government announced that it was going to construct a housing cooperative on 300 acres of land at the north end of the Valley. However, problems arose with the land chosen as the building site was not under the jurisdiction of the government's plan. Geological tests revealed that the terrain was unsuitable and eventually the LMRPB considered the area unserviceable because of the distance from facilities.

In 1971 development of medium densities occurred when a mobile home park was constructed on the northernmost end of Sunnyside Road. Approximately 16 acres of land were utilized to house 88 units on A.H. Peppar's land and fish hatchery. Earlier in the 1950's a home park evolved on land known as Hart's Homestead on East Road. Thirty-nine units grew on 6 acres. All other residential developments occurred on large five acre minimum lot sizes.

The "Anmore Advance Development Plan" or AADP prepared for the GVRD in 1978 outlined a pattern of roads to facilitate subdivision in Anmore and ensure access to all dwellings. In response to public pressure for zoning for smaller size lots the AADP called for holdings of a minimum three acres in areas of proposed urbanization and proposed a road system adequate enough to facilitate the transportation needs of 15,000 residents. The population explosion envisioned by the urban planners was expected to occur in ten years.

With the GVRD's 1978 vision of Anmore to have 15,000 residents by 1988, Anmore's residents had a ten year window in which to oppose the proposed urban development. One plan of opposition involved the inclusion of 80% of its land in the Provincial Government's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The Valley's unsuitability for farming rendered the plan not viable.

The "Anmore Concept" was born as a realistic alternative to the planner's dreams of widespread urbanization for the area. The "Concept's" genesis can be traced to Anmore resident and first president of Greenpeace, Bob Hunter as well as active Anmore resident and current mayor Dr. Hal Weinberg. The "Anmore Concept" called for a traditional plan of to uphold a "ruggedly individual way of life" with limited services, houses on acreage, and community control with respect to local



issues. The plans novelty lay in its promotion of a "small is beautiful" goal, in contrast to Canadian planners that saw progress as bigger is better.

The scheme was to merge successfully the people's desire for a rural lifestyle with their wish to remain connected with the nearby urban culture.

In 1979, Hal Weinberg became Director of Electoral Area B – an area that included at some time or other loco, Belcarra, and other jurisdictions within the GVRD. To secure the vision of the "Anmore Concept", Hal Weinberg deemed it necessary to pursue incorporation for the Valley.

Incorporation was a long outstanding issue in Anmore. In the early 1970's people begun to question the GVRD's development plans for the area. Incorporation was viewed as the best option to avoid urban development. The loco-Buntzen area had submitted a proposal as early as 1973 for incorporation as a distinct municipality. However the provincial government of the time chose not to carry it out.

The Report "Future Options for Electoral Area B" concluded that this was the most viable option. The status quo was of questionable suitability because the GVRD prioritized its concerns on a region wide basis rather than on any given concerns of an area such as Anmore. The option of amalgamation was also rejected. Combining with Belcarra was ruled out because it had "little, if anything, to offer the Anmore area". Amalgamation with Port Moody did offer the promise of access to many city resources, but Anmore's possible exclusion from some resources while paying higher taxes and its limited political input precluded the option of joining Port Moody.

At public meetings of the time, overwhelming public support for the incorporation option was voiced. A study in 1985 confirmed that it was viable to incorporate and maintain the public's taxation and servicing expectations. The report proposed that incorporation would likely build "a stronger sense of community, give quicker response to certain local problems, and serve as a focus for planning the orderly development of the area".

The City of Port Moody though had plans for annexation of Anmore. Previously, annexation had been rumoured until development of the North Shore began in earnest in 1974. Plans had been stalled by citizen protests. The City in the 1980's hoped to expand its tax base by annexing the single largest source of Anmore's revenue (85% of all Anmore taxes), Imperial Oil's loco Refinery. In 1982 the City, breached a tacit agreement on non-annexation by asking the Provincial Government for funds to proceed with amalgamation. The City's intransigence and manner in undertaking annexation campaigns provoked anti-Port Moody, pro-incorporation attitudes in Anmore. The fear of higher taxes and widescale subdivision made the action to incorporate Anmore all the more vital.

The campaign to incorporate as a Village with a Mayor and Council, began in earnest in the mid 1980's. Initiated by the people of the Anmore region and Electoral Area B Director Hal Weinberg in 1985, an application was made to the Provincial Government for incorporation. The proposal was put on hold pending the completion of a government study regarding municipalities. In 1986, another application was made to the Provincial Government and again resulted in delays by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Restless residents mounted a letter writing campaign in support of the action. As



the Provincial Government stalled, a report recommended against municipal status for Anmore, and recommended that amalgamation with Port Moody was a viable alternative.

However in spite of the numerous delays and unfavourable study, the citizens of Anmore remained stalwart. Finally in 1987, the Provincial Government gave Anmore the right to hold a vote on incorporation and the Minister of Municipal Affairs vowed to act on the voters' wishes. Voter turnout was 78% of eligible voters, 333 votes were cast with 296 voting for incorporation. While the vote was positive, Anmore as a concession in a three-way agreement between the Province, Port Moody and Anmore lost the tax revenue of Imperial Oil.

Anmore officially became a Village on December 7, 1987. Municipal elections were held shortly after and produced the first council with Hal Weinberg as Mayor and Harry Anderson, Jim Jones, Leo Stroh and Gary Tremblay as Councillors.

Anmore's municipal affairs were initially administered out of a trailer situated at the corner of Sunnyside and East Roads. In 1988, the Village was able to rescue the former dwelling of "Ma" and George Murray from the wrecking ball. With the assistance of the Provincial Government, the Village was able to purchase the land while the owners, the Smurthwaites donated the structure to the Village.

The heritage home provided a splendid municipal hall for the Village while sparing the cost of planning and building a new structure. The building included a museum that served as a focus for the Murray's legacy and Anmore's heritage. Unfortunately, the building was deemed uninhabitable in 2016 and Municipal Hall was moved.

