

## HIGHLAND PROFILE:

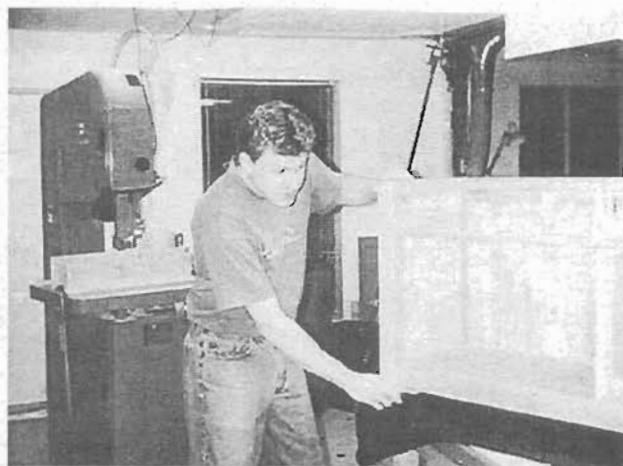
### Woodstock Designs - An interview with Rick Heatley

by Bob McMinn

Rick Heatley is a craftsman who makes fine wood furniture in his shop on the Finlayson Arm Road. One of his pieces, such as a sideboard may take him three months to build for a discerning client. Last year four clients kept him busy most of the year making connoisseur pieces. *The Highlander Magazine* interviewed him earlier this year.

*Highlander:* How did you get started?

*Rick:* I started woodworking at school in Powell River when I was 13. Carpentry took my fancy more than other kinds of shopwork. During the rest of my time at school, I took two or three courses in carpentry every year as my electives even in Grades 11 and 12. After high school I wanted to find work in a shop to continue up-grading my skills but found that there was little opportunity in Campbell River where I was then living. So I enrolled in a ten month fine-woodworking course at Camosun College with classes five days a week. As well as how to use tools and work with wood, we studied drafting, history of woodwork, and small business practice. All this gave me an excellent foundation.



*Rick Heatley showing a piece of fine furniture in progress*

I decided to stay in Victoria and found work with a Danish craftsman in a custom shop for five years. When the shop decided to change direction away from fine woodworking, I thought it was time to start my own shop. This place in the Highlands seemed to fill my needs. A ground floor basement that I could use as a shop with living quarters above. Being on

a small acreage, I thought the shop would not bother my neighbours.

*Highlander:* How did things go when you moved here?

*Rick:* For the first two years I made just about anything to pay the bills, to pay for my tools and to keep the shop alive. Custom furniture is a hard way to make a living until you secure some clients that will support this kind of work. In the low and mid range there is lots of competition from big manufacturers who can mass produce products so fast it makes competing with them very hard. In the third and fourth years I was able to move more and more into the high end market through word of mouth. Once I had enough pieces out there, people could see my style and quality for themselves. Being able to see and touch pieces is very important in this type of work. Sometimes I would make small things like a jewelry box. If this was well received, I would get an order for a table for example. During the past year, four clients have kept me very busy, so I haven't had to spend too much time searching for new clients. I have one client now that has placed orders for pieces for his dining room, bedrooms, living room and office.

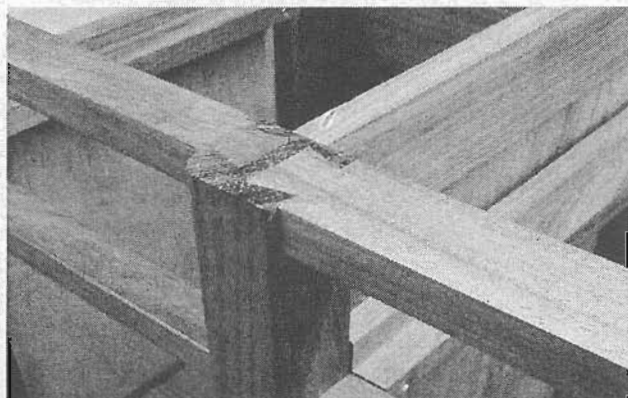
*Highlander:* Apart from word of mouth how do you get the word out now?

*Rick:* At first I developed a portfolio [collection of pictures] of my work. I would take this to show a potential customer. It might take 20 visits to different people before I got an order. That was a lot of time away from the shop unable to do work for which I was paid.

Now I have a website ([www.woodstockdesigns.ca](http://www.woodstockdesigns.ca)). When someone calls interested in my work I can direct them to my website so that they can see the type of furniture that I make. This gives me more time to spend in the shop. The Internet has given me new clients I otherwise would never have met. I have received substantial orders from clients that have only seen pictures on the website.

I also use e-mail to send pictures of the client's piece in progress. Every few weeks I send images of the processes involved in the construction of their piece.

They can see how things that will be hidden in the finished product were made. How the many little joints fit together. This way the client can feel more closely involved. Sometimes they also visit the shop to see the piece in person. A client's furniture usually has to fill a specific need for size, shape, and style. Progress pictures help us to keep on track and make sure there aren't surprises on completion.



*Work in progress: dovetail joinery*

The Internet is also important for locating sources of materials. Fine woodworkers used to spend considerable time at conventions meeting new vendors in order to find certain materials. Nowadays, you can get on the Internet and track down sources from all over the world. Recently I located a source for Danish cord. This is a material used in weaving chair seats and it is manufactured in Copenhagen. I found that I could get it through an importer in California. I also find sources for specific woods I might be looking for.

*Highlander:* What kinds of wood do you use?

*Rick:* I like to use local woods including arbutus, yew, cedar and maple. I match specific woods to specific designs. Local woods, with the exception of cedar tend to be pale coloured. Tropical woods add exciting alternatives.

Cherry has become very popular with the large US manufacturers. This has driven the price up to \$8 a board foot [1 foot long by 1 foot wide by one inch thick]. Consequently, using cherry can be very expensive, especially if half of it has to be thrown away if boards are too knotty or have too much sapwood.

Paduak from Central Africa, which is logged by elephants, can be purchased for \$6 per foot even

after shipping. A piece of furniture fashioned from tropical wood can be made in a small shop like mine for a price that is competitive with a large manufacturer using more costly cherry. It's nice to use clear lumber. Weyerhaeuser is marketing "lyptus" which looks like cherry but reaches 20 in. in diameter and 100 ft. in height with virtually no taper, knots or sapwood. Trees grow in plantations, looking like gigantic fields of corn. One can now get ecologically harvested, fair traded tropical wood.

Douglas fir must be edge grain, old growth which is not cheap. Flat grain wood will not sand because the difference between spring and summer wood causes the grain to lift. I think that edge grain fir is a boring wood, although some can be used for panels.

Alder is popular. When it is stained it can look like cherry. It is strong and holds fasteners like staples. It is still cheap at \$3 per foot.

Local maple can be attractive but must be sawn and stickered [each board in a stack is separated by narrow strips of wood] for drying immediately because whole logs begin to rot quickly. Maple can be a little difficult to work at times but makes nice furniture and flooring.

Furniture makers used to use particular woods for particular parts of a piece of furniture. For example, they used oak or hickory for the backs of Windsor chairs that were steam bent into shape. Now with modern tools we do not have to be so critical. I like to provide some adventure with different species of wood, although generally people like what they are used to.



*Work in progress: Twin tenon joinery*

Rick Heatley

*Highlander:* Do you use veneers?

*Rick:* I make my own veneer. Manufactured veneers are very thin, sometimes as little as 1/64th of an inch thick. If a manufactured veneer surface is dented, it is hard to sand smooth again because you can go right through to expose the material underneath. Manufactured veneers are also fragile at corners, easily breaking up. With my veneers, cut 1/8th of an inch thick, you can smooth out dents and corners do not shred.

I also at times make my own hardware for doors and drawers.

*Highlander:* What kind of finishes do you use?

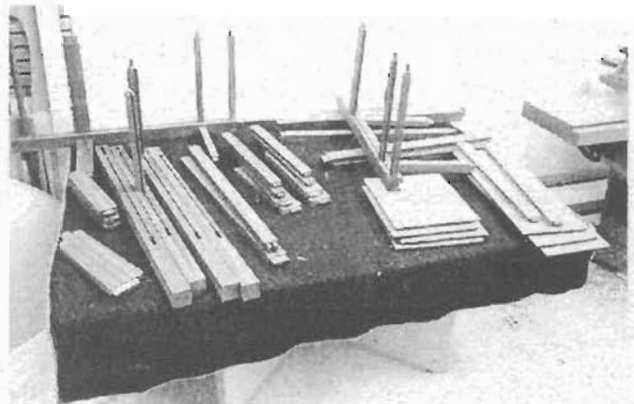
*Rick:* Mostly oil finishes. These types of finishes help to bring out the colours and grain patterns of the wood and are durable for average, everyday use. If a surface is to receive heavy use, like a dining table top, I use a varnish or lacquer. Generally, I try to avoid the plastic look that varnish gives.

It is generally wise to avoid putting things on flat surfaces for a month or more until the surface hardens. A vase, for example, can leave a depression which can be very difficult to remove. Caution should be used when leaving items on new furniture for long periods of time. Certain woods continue to darken for some time after they have been finished. Covering an area with a cloth or bowl can leave a light patch which will take some time to darken to the same shade as the surrounding wood. Light patches can also happen on vertical surfaces when something leans against the side of a piece of furniture exposed to sunlight through a window.

It is also good to leave a finish for as much as one month before machine buffing, otherwise it smears. It takes time for solvents to evaporate and the finish to cure.

*Highlander:* How long does it take you to make a piece of furniture?

*Rick:* A sideboard can take 350 hours. I work a ten hour day in the shop and perhaps another couple of hours on paperwork for orders, e-mails, etc. I am single so I can work 50 - 60 hours a week. Even so, a fine piece of furniture can take a couple of months. It might take longer if I have to bring in wood for special panels and make hardware. I fill in with other jobs if I am delayed. Generally clients do not mind waiting because they are looking for something special which they can hand down to their children.



*Work in progress: Sideboard parts*

*Highlander:* What about prices?

*Rick:* Prices vary according to species of wood and the amount of detail put into a piece. When a piece takes months to complete the labour costs begin to outweigh the material costs and prices can exceed \$10,000. Most people who have shopped around and know what's involved in this type of work are willing to pay these types of prices. \$4,000 to \$7,000 for an extending dining table is not uncommon. Detailed doors and dovetailed drawers take time, inlays and fancy finishes are also very time consuming. A small project would be a coffee table which usually starts around \$1,000.

*Highlander:* Do you have a helper?

*Rick:* Generally I do not. An inexperienced person takes a lot time to teach. A little mistake can burn up expensive material and time already spent. Some jobs I pass on to other custom furniture makers. I generally do not work with pine, but another craftsman I know does very good work so I refer potential customers to him.

*Highlander:* Thanks Rick for giving *Highlander Magazine* readers a peak at fine furniture making. Several other craftspeople do high quality work in their shops and studios in the Highlands. I hope that when the heritage schoolhouse is ready for use we can display and sell local crafts like silver jewelry and pottery to visitors coming to the Gowlland-Todd Park. There will also be a place for custom crafted furniture if you have pieces for display.



## LOOKING BACK: The Corry Clan in the Highlands

by Peter L. Smith\*

**F**REDERICK CHARLES STUART AUGUSTUS CORRY. The very name may be apocryphal, since all official documents identify him simply as Frederick Charles Corry. But there was always a romantic aura of mystery that clung to my grandfather, a truly unforgettable character. It seemed only right that he should lay claim to a name that was heroic and unlikely, though my mother Alice affectionately dismissed the "Stuart Augustus" part as yet another of her Dad's harmless fantasies. Several of his nine children, including my mother, developed his tendency to embellish or embroider a good story, perhaps a consequence of their Celtic heritage. There is not much documentary evidence; for example, neither he nor his wife ever kept a diary or journal. Thus there are many facts of his life that we cannot pin down with certainty. Still, after making all due allowances, we can state confidently that he must have been among the more colourful and interesting of the Highland District pioneers.

If nothing else, Fred and Bessie Corry plus their nine children had a statistical impact on the district's minuscule population. It was in 1908 that Grandpa—I shall refer to him as Fred or FCC—pre-empted and began developing his 115-acre property on the crest of the lovely hill between Third Lake and Pease Lake. In theory, this was a retirement move, for he had been born in 1856 and she in 1863; but Fred and Bessie were to enjoy well over thirty years of vigorous activity on their ranch, until the constraints of age and World War II caused them to spend their final years closer to family in Victoria. "Old man Corry" would become well known for designing, building, and maintaining the most difficult section of the Ross-Durrance road that would link his property with West Saanich. All his children were shaped by their Highland experience, especially the five youngest who came of age while sharing that sublime and remote environment. Nowadays his surviving grandchildren treasure their memories of a magical world on the Corry ranch, before it and other family properties nearby were sold in the early 1940s.

Because Fred and Bessie were so much a product of their past—as were their nine children—we must say something about the many years before the family arrived in Victoria.



*Bessie and Fred Corry enjoy a frisky moment together on their ranch in the Highland District.*



\* Grandson of Fred and Bessie Corry, Victoria native Dr. Peter L. Smith is the son of Alice Corry and Henry L. "Harry" Smith. His childhood summers (left) were all spent at the Smith family cabin near Durrance Lake. A graduate of UBC and Yale, he is now retired from the University of Victoria, where he has a long career as Professor of Classics and Dean of Fine Arts.

Fred was born in Gillingham, Kent, on July 20, 1856. A modern birth certificate definitely confirms this fact. FCC himself either became confused about the date or chose deliberately to ignore it. (He celebrated his birthday on Valentine's Day.) His father, who was also named Frederick Corry, is believed to have moved to England from County Monaghan in Ireland, where his father may (or may not) have been one Thomas Charles Stuart Corry—army colonel, Member of Parliament, and owner of Rockcorry Castle. For my own part, I have always

### *The Corry Clan*



*Fred and Bessie Corry pose with the five oldest of their nine children, in Falmouth, Cornwall; the year is 1894 or 1895. Young Fred (8) and Win (6) sit in front; Ern (5) and Alice (3) stand near their father; and George (1) is held by his mother.*

found these murky claims to ancestral glory far less interesting than the fact that FCC was so clearly a self-made man. He himself seems to have had only hazy memories of his childhood. After the death of his father and remarriage of his mother, he left home at age fifteen to enlist in the Royal Engineers, and never again made direct contact with any of his close relatives. About a dozen years later, he had some long-range correspondence with a paternal aunt in Exeter, but she could not provide much enlightenment.

Fred's thirty-year army career (1872-1902) was eventful, adventurous, and in many ways rewarding. Although he had had some boyhood training as a draftsman at Chatham Dockyard, and would later pursue that trade in the Royal Engineers, it was as a bugler that he was sent first to Malta—one of several exotic overseas postings that he never precisely clarified in later life. We do know that he spent some years in Bermuda. His next overseas posting, to Halifax, led to his marriage in 1885 to Bessie Alice Pickles, a third-generation Canadian whose grandfather William Pickles had fought under Wellington at Waterloo.

The young couple was soon transferred to Britain, where Fred spent the second half of his army career in a peripatetic round of postings that took his swiftly expanding family from Yorkshire and Cornwall to Wales

and Scotland. In 1896 he was appointed a Warrant Officer, and in 1902 he retired at the rank of Sergeant-Major. A parchment Certificate of Character testifies that he was well regarded: "His conduct and character while with the Colours have been, according to the Record: Exemplary. He is a superior Draftsman & a superior Electrician."

It is apparent that Fred mastered a number of practical trades while in the Royal Engineers; he had become thoroughly and impressively self-reliant, able to design, build, and fix almost anything. This would set him apart from the majority of genteel but technically inexperienced British remittance men so numerous two or three generations ago on southern Vancouver Island.

His army pension sounds dismally inadequate to support a family of nine (soon to become

eleven): his entitlement was four shillings sixpence a day, providing a uniform quarterly payment of £20.10.11, for the grand sum of £82.3.8 per annum. Now aged forty-five, he would obviously need to find gainful employment, and he did work briefly as a draftsman at the Woolwich Arsenal and Dockyard. But Fred and Bessie had decided to emigrate to her native Canada. In July 1902, about a month after the birth of their eighth child, Kathleen, they booked passage for Halifax. Here the Corry family was warmly welcomed by their Pickles relatives, with whom most of them lived for the better part of a year. FCC and his eldest son Frederick Vernon, now 16, headed west to seek their fortune. Bessie stayed behind in Halifax with her four other sons—Ern (14), George (9), Perce (6), Art (3), and her three daughters—Win (13), Alice (11), and the infant Kath.

In the spring of 1903, word arrived that Bessie was to bring the children virtually all the way across Canada to Nelson, B.C., where FCC had found a position with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. For over four years this thriving city of Nelson was home for the Corrys, while Fred senior worked for the CPR variously as rodman, draftsman, and transitman. Eldest son Fred now had a job, too, and his brother Ern would soon leave school to earn a living. Their father had taught them self-reliance,



The children of Fred and Bessie Corry, in descending order of age  
(including the names of their spouses and the twenty grandchildren of Fred and Bessie Corry)



Frederick  
(1886-1938)  
m. Annie Gill  
Allan, Margaret, Arthur



Winnifred  
(1888-1974)  
m. Sidney Grist  
no children



Ernest  
(1889-1969)  
m. Coral Traviss  
Desmond, Michael



Alice (1891-1976)  
m. H.L. Smith  
Paul, Brenda, Barbara  
Winsome, Peter



George  
(1893-1966)  
m. Marjorie Binns  
Beryl, Patricia



Percival  
(1896-1915)  
Killed in action,  
World War I



Arthur (1899-1957)  
m. Janie Bryant 'Bar-  
bara, Percival, Jean,  
Shirley



Kathleen  
(1902-1996)  
m. C.J. Frederickson  
Diane, John



Muriel  
(1905-1990)  
m. N.C. Stewart  
Anne, Joan

and they made their own way in life. Meanwhile, in March 1905, Bessie gave birth to her youngest daughter Muriel—very soon dubbed “Babe,” a nickname that clung to her for the rest of her life.

This recitation of family history is needed to understand the circumstances of the Corrys' eventual move to the Highlands, where the younger children become a very important part of the story. By the time that move occurred, the four eldest were completely or mainly independent, but the five youngest formed a tightly-knit ensemble who grew up together on the ranch.

There was one final preliminary stage: in the fall of 1907 FCC was granted sick leave, and decided to move his family from Nelson to Victoria. Here they lived for at least a year in a rented house at 1646 Dallas Road, still extant as 204 Memorial Crescent, at the corner of May Street. The three younger boys continued their schooling at Boys' Central, while Alice completed her matriculation year at Victoria High. From March to August 1908, FCC resumed his service with the CPR in Victoria.

After periods of recurring ill health, it was a doctor's advice that prompted FCC to retire to the Highlands. Some retirement! After scouting suitable properties, he filed a pre-emptive claim to Highland District Section 62 (see map, page 15), 115 acres of wilderness near the very end of the long, rough carriage road from Langford Station of the E&N. Next he chose to design and build a spacious house for his family, a task that required him to fell and dress most of the lumber required.

No doubt he received substantial support from sons George and Perce, now husky boys of 16 and 13; at age 10, Art was still too young to be much help. (Their younger sisters Kath and Muriel would now be 7 and 4.)

We do not know just when the family moved in, but it was perhaps in the spring or summer of 1909. The two oldest sons, Fred and Ern (now 23 and 20), had not come to Victoria with the rest of the Corrys, though they made occasional visits from the Kootenays. In 1909, the two oldest daughters chose to stay in the city: Win (21) was now well established as a seamstress in Victoria and

### The Corry Clan



*The five younger Corry children in Victoria, probably about a year before moving to the Highland ranch.*

*(L-R) George, Perce, Art, with Kath and Babe in front.*

lived on her own, while Alice (17) managed to complete her studies at Victoria College by serving as a kind of live-in nanny at the Rockland home of Victoria architect Elwood Watkins. These two young women seized every opportunity to spend time with their family in the Highlands. Of course, each visit would mean a train journey to Langford Station, where one was met usually by the boisterous Perce for the long buggy ride up Millstream Road and onward past Third Lake to the ranch. Such an adventure had to be planned in advance, but mail service was swift and regular.

One would suppose that many domestic improvements, such as the lofty water tower and the ingenious pumping system—all FCC's own work—were completed only after some time in residence. In the early years, much of the construction was bound to be rough and temporary, but over a period of time the property assumed a rustic charm. The sprawling house was built in sections, a plan that suggests a gradual, incremental growth.

The main two-storey section had neatly finished upstairs bedrooms; downstairs there was a grand and spacious drawing room that witnessed many a glorious party. (FCC always supposed that young revellers were drawn to the Corry ranch by his personal magnetism, but it is possible

that the chief attraction was his splendid dance floor.) Outhouse sanitary facilities would always be basic and primitive, but the indoor plumbing was more than adequate. It is ironic that FCC had been cited as a superior electrician, for he had no chance to ply that trade on his beloved ranch. In a supreme stroke of irony, the B.C. Electric would run a high-power transmission line directly through his property—a project on which son Perce was actually employed—but there was never a way to transform that power for domestic use during all the Corry clan's years in the Highlands.

Coal-oil lamps were the order of the evening, and entertainment came in the form of an upright piano and a wind-up gramophone (along with an artfully varied selection of 78 rpm records).

There is no documentation on the acquisition of livestock or the degree to which the ranch was developed as a working farm. The very term "ranch" was a euphemism, because we all know that the Highland District is severely limited in its capacity to sustain agriculture or the herding of animals. In this part of the Highlands, the only places that could be cultivated were the swamps, of which the Corrys had only one. An undiplomatic English visitor once exclaimed, "But Corry, after all, what have you here?" FCC replied, "I have some beautiful rocks."

According to Alice, her father never harnessed a horse or milked a cow, but his sons became able ranch hands and expert outdoorsmen. In addition to a few cattle, sheep and goats, FCC bought driving horses (one named Mickey) and two heavy work-horses, which



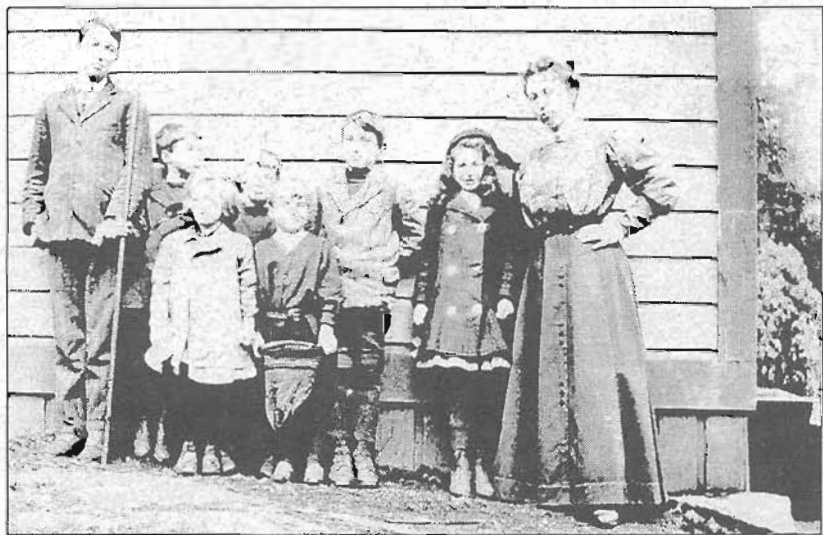
*This bleak photo of the Corry ranch house was taken by George Corry after his parents' final move to Victoria. The water tower is on the left.*



performed various tasks in the district. Perce was about sixteen when he used these in his job of clearing the B.C. Electric power line. There was a good-sized barn to house the animals and various pieces of equipment. (The decaying framework of this barn was the only clearly visible evidence of the Corry Ranch for many years after World War II.)

An event of note occurred in the spring of 1910. Alice, who had just completed second-year Victoria College at age eighteen, received an emergency appointment to teach at the one-room Highland Public School, whose regular teacher had suddenly resigned. A photo dated in her handwriting to June 30, 1910 (*Highlander*, a June 1996, p. 17) shows Alice with a class of thirteen pupils: these included all five of her younger siblings, plus three Pikes, two Gregorys, a Bernard, a Dixon, and a Berryman. A somewhat later school photo (*above*) shows seven students, of whom four were Corrys. Father Fred had well earned his right to be a School Trustee!

When one consults a map and discovers how far these children had to travel each day—in the Corrys' case, over six miles round trip—on foot or by carriage over twisting and undulating dirt roads, we can only marvel at their resourcefulness. It is also easy to understand why strong friendships were fostered by this



*Perce Corry towers over his six classmates, (l.-r.) Eric Bernard, Babe Corry, Robin Gregory, Cecil Gregory, Art Corry, and Kath Corry. The teacher is probably Miss Kate M. McKinnon, if the year is 1911.*

school experience, among children and parents alike. The Corry family was especially fond of the Gregorys, their relatively close neighbours at Fizzle Lake.

While still in his teens, George Corry pre-empted Highland District Sections 58 and 59A, a vast spread of 173 acres that lay to the north of his father's Section 61 (see map, page 15). He received title to this land in 1916, but much earlier he had built a substantial log cabin high above the road. Always a strong, quiet man, he said he needed this space of his own to escape the continual female chatter of the family ranch. (Having witnessed my mother's exuberant reunions with her three sisters, I can sympathize: none of the four could be described as taciturn.) Around the same time, in 1912, his eldest brother Fred married Annie Gill in Cranbrook; when Fred later joined the army, Annie and her first two children Allan and Margaret made several extended visits to the Corry ranch.

World War I had a huge impact on the Corry family, as all five sons enlisted and three served overseas. Lance-Corporal Percival Archie Corry—the happy-go-lucky extrovert Perce—was killed in action on December 6, 1915, aged 19. It was a devastating blow, but the Corrys were nothing if not resilient. At a sombre Christmas gathering some three weeks



*George Corry appears to be driver of this carriage, which is arriving at the ranch in 1913 (?). Alice and Kath may be his front-seat companions.*





*The carefree and fun-loving Perce was a great worker on the ranch. Here he is using the Corry team and wagon to clear the B.C. Electric power line, very likely acquiring a fine supply of fire-wood in the process.*

later, when it seemed that no one would ever smile again, Perce's older brother Ern, an irrepressible clown, dressed up as Charlie Chaplin and soon had the whole family roaring with laughter.

This is an appropriate place to introduce excerpts from a tribute to Art Corry written jointly by his daughter Jean Rathgaber and her daughter Lynn. It paints an evocative picture of life in the Highlands, and its effect especially on the younger Corry boys:

*There was some sibling rivalry between George and Perce, but Art got along with both. When bedtime came, all three boys had to sleep together in one bed. The two older boys made Art sleep between them as a sort of buffer. Then George and Perce would each grab their end of the blankets and turn their backs on each other, pulling the covers taut. Sometimes in the middle of the night sisters Kath and Babe [Muriel] would hear Art's plaintive voice whimpering, "I'm cold, I'm cold." He also took more than one stray blow from one of the elder brothers intended for the other!*

*As a boy, one of Art's chores was to round up the cows and bring them home at the end of the day. Sometimes the cows would wander for miles, searching for a bit of better pasture, and it would be twilight before he found them. As he fetched them home, he remembered seeing eyes glowing in the darkness as cougars or other wild animals watched the young boy and the cattle . . . a frighten-*

*ing experience for a youngster that he still remembered years later.*

*Babe recalled that her brothers were terrible teases. Once Perce was discovered lying apparently unconscious in a horse's stall. The usually placid mare was rearing and plunging about him, and they feared that she had harmed him. His sister Lal [Alice] and his father rushed to help him. As they were bent over him, frantically feeling for a heartbeat, Lal happened to notice that with one hand Perce was reaching up and pinching the mare to make sure she kept rearing and didn't spoil the show!*

*George was a great gardener, and helped his mother a lot in the garden. Perce was the dashing, tall, adventurous brother, who also loved to tease. Art loved animals, and would find birds with broken wings to mend. The three younger Corry boys never completed*

*their education, mainly because they lived in such a remote location, and also because the First World War interrupted their lives. When the news was announced that Canada had entered into the war, Kath and Babe were outside discussing it. They heard a whooping and a hollering, and Perce, on horseback, came dashing toward them as fast as he could gallop, shouting and waving his arms. He swerved at the last minute, just missing them, and yelled, "Hooray! War!" He and his brothers thought the war would be a great adventure; all three enlisted and were sent overseas. Art at the young age of 16. He was so eager to join up that he had lied about his age on the enlistment form. The great adventure did not turn out as they had expected. George returned from the war with a steel plate in his head which caused him head pains all his life. Art returned with stomach ulcers caused from being gassed. For the rest of his life, he could tolerate only bland foods like milk puddings and porridge made with milk. He never complained about this diet and lived on it for 40 years. And sadly, Perce never returned at all. He was shot and killed in 1915.*

*Art's boyhood days in the Highlands developed in him a deep love for the outdoors. He loved to hunt and fish, and knew every swamp, hill and valley in the Highlands. He knew where the deer came down*

to drink, and where to find the fishing "hot spots" in Brentwood Inlet. He would hike over the Highlands and come down on the shores of Brentwood Inlet, where he kept an old canoe on the beach. There he would take a fishing spoon hand-formed from a steel shoe-horn, attach a hook, launch the weathered canoe, and catch large fish almost every time. The fish today are more fussy and would never bite at such primitive equipment! He hunted in the Highlands almost all his life with his brothers as his companions. Half the enjoyment of the hunt lay in retelling it afterwards as George, Ern and Art relived their day. George always maintained that Art hunted right up to the day he saw the movie *Bambi*, in which *Bambi's* mother is shot by a hunter, and that spelled the end of his hunting days!

Art shared his love of nature with his family. On a Sunday, the family would drive to the Ranch, stopping on the way especially to look at the water lilies blooming on Durrance Lake, or checking the mossy banks of the small creek to see if the lady slippers were in bloom. Once he spotted a humming-bird's nest half-hidden in a tree and helped his children to peek into it, watching week by week as the miniature eggs hatched into tiny birds that grew until they could fly away. He helped the children hunt for fungus to carve their names onto, and showed them where to find the sweetest wild strawberries of the summer. He often took them to Third Lake, which the children considered their own private lake. While Art fished for lake trout, the children would swim, row their boat around the lake, and enjoy their picnic lunches.

Life for the Corrys changed in many ways during and after the Great War. First Kath and then Muriel wished to continue their schooling, and this at the time meant only Victoria High; so they were required to live most of the year in the city. Because Alice had by now completed a B.A. at McGill and was back teaching in Victoria, and Win had been living in town all along, the family began the practice of renting a communal house for the winter, usually in South Fairfield or Foul Bay. Fred and Bessie continued to live year-round on the Ranch, but there was always a convenient urban pied-à-terre. This was also shared at first by the two sons who returned from the war, as George found work with Sidney Roofing and Art with the B. Wilson Company (and later the Post Office). As the years passed, all the siblings married and most settled in Victoria, with the two exceptions of Fred, who became a teacher at Vancouver Technical School, and Kath, whose own teaching



Highland women seemed as fond of outdoor recreation (and guns!) as their male counterparts. Alice and Win appear in both these photos of a hike to McKenzie Bight.



career took her to Kelowna, where she married fellow teacher C.J. "Fred" Frederickson. After high school, Muriel pursued a secretarial career until her marriage to Norman C. Stewart, later Surveyor General of British Columbia.

Meanwhile, patriarch Frederick Charles Corry—now in his 60s—had begun yet another career. The Corrys and the Rosses (their closest neighbours at Pease Lake) lived a long seven miles from Langford Station, which was then the only existing point of entry, via Millstream Road, to this part of the Highlands. In contrast, the distance was only about four miles to the West Saanich Road, and there was already a road from Pease Lake to Durrance Lake. Upon enquiring about the possibility of closing the two-mile gap between Durrance Lake and the Durrance homestead near West Saanich Road, FCC was told by a government road foreman that the terrain was so difficult that the cost would be insurmountable. FCC took out his transit, surveyed the entire route, and drew up plans that he then took to the Parliament Buildings. The result was his appointment as road engineer and foreman at full salary.

His road up the switchback and through the canyon was basically completed between 1918 and 1920, but





*Brenda and Paul Smith at the Corry ranch in 1925*

FCC stayed on as part-time road foreman until the 1930s. For several years, the Corrys and the Rosses could commute from town through West Saanich via the B.C. Electric Interurban, but that service was discontinued at the end of October 1924.

FCC became upset when Federal authorities later restricted road access, ostensibly because of concern about stray bullets from Heal's Rifle Range. On March 19, 1935, Senator J.H. King wrote him a letter from Ottawa supporting FCC's contention that an unrestricted right of way had earlier been granted on "your road." During a modern legal controversy about access to Willis Point via this long-established route, the late Frederick Corry's name was invoked as a ghostly ally. A brand new black-topped Willis Point road was built soon afterwards, re-located to the south of Durrance Lake and the canyon. (This attractive alternative was not available to FCC, very likely because of the B.C. Electric right of way.)

Frederick Corry had nothing directly to do with the inconspicuous road behind Third Lake that commemorates his name, although it is close to the Corry ranch. Ern Corry's sons Des and Michael believe that this road was surreptitiously assigned the Corry name by their father, during the time when he was employed as

a draftsman in the B.C. Department of Lands. The two sons detected Ern's distinctive printing on the original map, which they had managed to track down; if their theory should be wrong, at least it is a story that Ern would heartily enjoy.

Any account of the Corrys in the Highlands should make it clear that the topic is considerably broader than the original family ranch on Section 62. We have already noted that FCC's third son George Corry pre-empted an even larger acreage than his father, and built a log cabin on it while still in his teens. Around 1926, George designed and built another more substantial house on this property, providing a home for his wife Marjorie and their baby daughter Beryl—and later their second daughter Pat. For some years they also had a city residence on Empire Street, while George worked at Sidney Roofing, but they always spent much of their time in the Highlands. In 1935 they moved to a house facing Heal's Rifle Range, where George was caretaker from 1935 until 1958.

FCC himself acquired substantially more land in later life: one suspects that he had visions of a vast Highland empire under his Stuart Augustan authority. In 1926, aged 70, he must have applied to purchase Section 51, since we have a letter from the B.C. Superintendent of Lands, dated September 15, 1926, disallowing his application. That decision is hardly surprising, given the fact that Section 51 included the west end of Durrance Lake, which had been dammed to provide drinking water for Brentwood. Nonetheless he was allowed in 1932 to buy Section 51A, a property lying north of Ross-Durrance Road, since the Lake portion had now been removed by subdivision. In 1936, at age 80, he managed somehow to buy Section 46, 160 acres of forest on the Partridge



*George Corry had driven a carriage to the ranch in 1913. This is how he arrived in 1933, with Marjorie and daughters Beryl (left) and Pat. It is still an adventure driving 12 km via Millstream Lake Road to this site.*





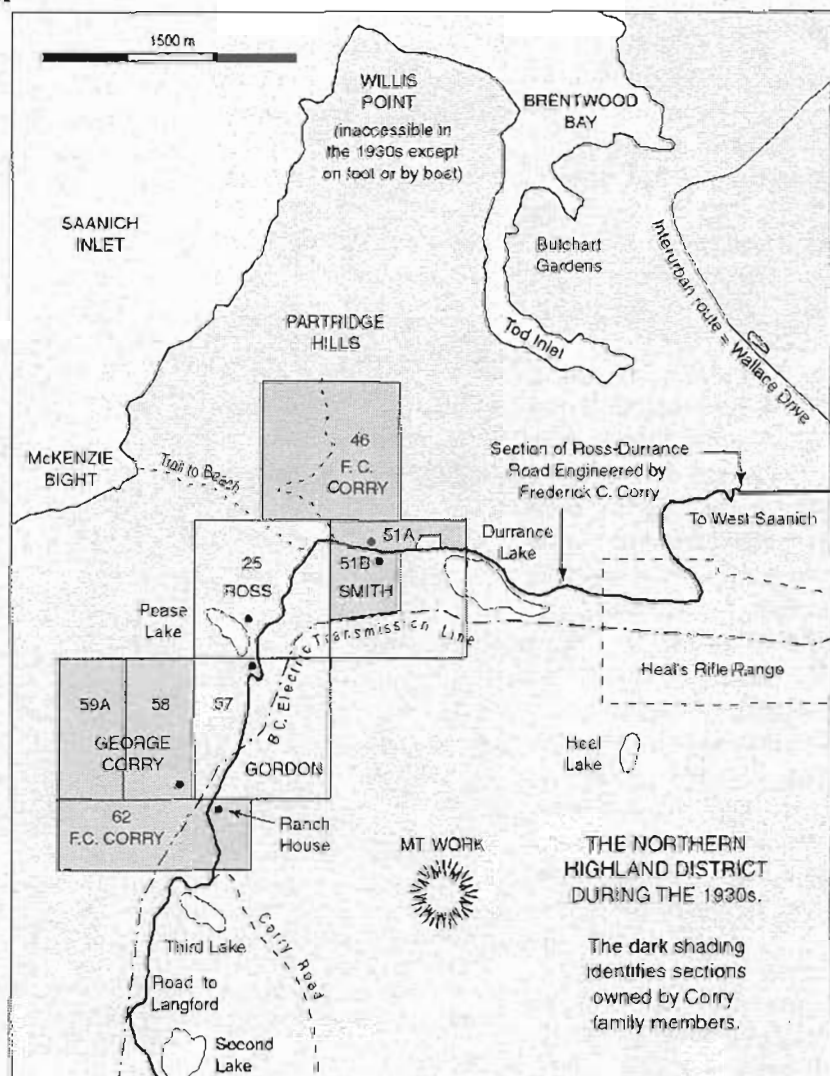
*It is late summer 1932. Harry Smith has almost finished nailing his hand-split cedar shakes on the Smith cabin. He and George Corry had felled and trimmed the logs, and the Smith girls chinked the walls with moss and mud.*

extending up the north slope of Mt. Work to the B.C. Electric power line. With a lot of help from his brother-in-law George Corry, Harry Smith now built a fine two-storey log cabin on this property, which became the Smith family's July-August residence from 1933 through 1941. On May 7, 1936, our family acquired title to this land for the princely sum of \$155.50 (\$5 an acre).

Hills, adjacent to and north of Section 51A. (He had enjoyed intermittent part-time employment over the years, but still had no obvious source of income beyond that meagre army pension.) He was definitely not losing his stamina or self-reliance: he was already in his eighties when he suffered a sudden appendicitis; without either a car or a telephone, he saw no alternative but to walk the four miles plus to the West Saanich Road, where he caught a bus into town and then took a streetcar to the Royal Jubilee Hospital. Such is the value of good genes and a regular physical fitness program. (A prophet before his time, FCC pursued a daily regimen of weight-lifting and calisthenics.)

In 1919 my mother Alice Corry had married Henry L. (Harry) Smith, a fellow English teacher at Victoria High. From 1927 to 1932, they made it their annual practice to spend the months of July and August, along with their children, in George Corry's original rustic cabin on Section 58. In 1932 my father signed an agreement to buy Highland District Section 51B, directly across the road from FCC's Section 51A. It comprised 31.1 acres of magnificent old-growth forest lying south of Ross-Durrance Road, immediately west of Durrance Lake and

For me—and I know it was true of





*Swimmers at Third Lake in the early 1930s: (back L-R) Barbara Smith, Beryl Corry, young Art Corry, Brenda Smith; (front) Winsome Smith, Pat Corry, Paul Smith.*

my older brother and three sisters—our idyllic Highland property was an earthly paradise. Paradise also included the already legendary Corry ranch, to which we made regular excursions, and where Grandpa secretly served me huge chunks of his own home-made fruit cake. No physical fitness regime for me! Paradise included the towering and majestic Mt. Work (which to us was always Big Saanich); clam heaven at McKenzie Bay—or Bight, if you must be high-falutin'; Rosses' Lake—some may have recognized it also as Pease Lake—where I had my first (accidental and almost final) swim at age 3 or 4; and Grandpa's Hill, known to city-slickers as the Partridge Hills. Paradise meant sweet icy water pulled up in buckets from our family well or, better yet, scooped up by hand from the Rosses' enchanted spring; and creamy-thick fresh milk delivered by one of the Gordon boys on a noisy motorcycle. Paradise extended in one direction to Durrance Lake, our virtually exclusive swimming hole, only five minutes' walk from the cabin (tough bare feet on gravel); in the other direction over a mile to the Corry Ranch, and farther yet to Third Lake, which had once been the exclusive preserve of our mother's generation.

Still too young to understand, I was profoundly saddened by our family's decision to sell all the Highland properties, for a variety of good reasons, in the middle of World War II. FCC had then become ill, and would die in January 1943, at age 86; Bessie was also 86 when she died seven years later. Their ranch house and property had already been sold shortly after their final move into town, and the house was destroyed very soon afterwards in a highly suspicious fire. George Corry decided to sell his holdings at about the same time. The final blow was a forest fire that leapt out of control across Durrance Road and through our own Highland property; it seemed hard to believe that the ugly scars would ever heal.

My mind was put to rest years later when so much of that earthly paradise was transferred into the public domain by its inclusion in the Capital Regional District's visionary park system. Today I can still picnic in the woods on the very spot where our family cabin stood, though the surrounding terrain has been much altered by the construction of that spiffy highway to Willis Point. Hordes of swimmers from the city now descend on once-idyllic Durrance Lake, for it is still quite splendid. The Highlands have changed greatly, but not beyond all recognition. For this, the entire Greater Victoria region owes an enormous debt to Nancy and Bob McMinn, who were always front and centre in preserving and enhancing our priceless heritage.



*Bessie Corry's 75th birthday in August 1938 was a festive celebration at the Corry ranch. Bessie is flanked by Kath (left, holding John Frederickson) and Alice, then Muriel (holding Joan Stewart). Far right are Paul, Barbara, and Brenda Smith (with Diane Frederickson), and in front are Peter Smith and Anne Stewart. The husbands must have been camera-shy. This picture captures some of the warmth and charm of the ranch in its heyday.*

## THE PIKE HOUSE: What Happens, Who Built It

by Highland Heritage Park Society Executive

Eager pre-schoolers, seen on the front cover of this issue, emerge from the back door of the Pike House to join the annual **Easter Egg Hunt**. Letting the older children rush out of the front door avoids the risk of their bumping into the younger ones. Little ones are generally helped by a watchful parent as they search for brightly wrapped chocolate eggs. It's not long before all the eggs hidden in the orchard by the Easter Bunny are gathered into baskets and bags. Savouring the scrambled egg sandwiches provided by Richard and Deborah Flader is another part of the Pike House Easter Sunday ritual. This first outdoor gathering in the Pike House calendar year is a good time for Highlanders to swap news with old friends and meet new neighbours.

The Pike House is a hub of Highlands community activities. It was named after Caleb Pike, the pioneer builder of this heritage farmhouse, located at 1589 Millstream Road. The surrounding orchard of venerable apple trees provides a tranquil setting which is shared by resident deer, unperturbed by the presence of human activity. The Easter Egg Hunt is just one of the community events at the Pike House.

The **Garbage Gala**, on a Saturday morning in early May, is a community event which starts at the Pike House. Following a delicious pancake or french toast breakfast, Highlanders select a stretch of road to clean up, garbage bag in hand. The garbage littering Highland roadsides ranges from fast food wrappers to sofas and mattresses, old engine parts and even derelict washing machines. By noon, pickups bring roadside collections back to the Pike House to be recycled or sent to the landfill. Before the annual cleanup was

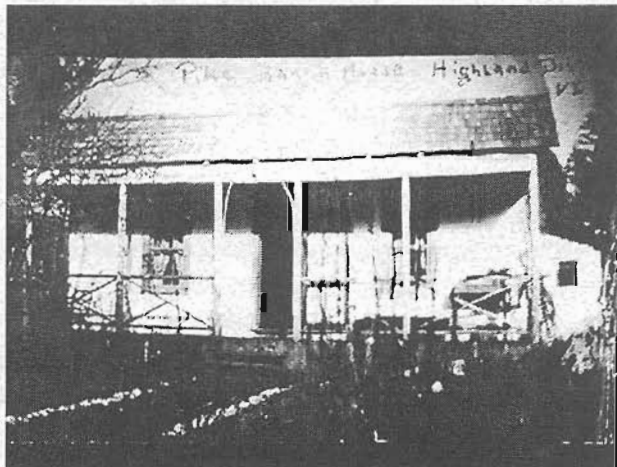
started some fifteen years ago, roadside garbage just attracted more garbage. Now, only a few hours on a Saturday morning are needed for our roadside cleanup because many hands make light work. Of course, more hands are always welcome next time!

On the last ~~Saturday~~<sup>Sunday</sup> of the month, May through September, the Pike House hosts the monthly **Highlands Market**. From 10 am to 1 pm Highlanders and visitors can purchase home baking, home-made pickles, chutneys, jams and preserves, hand-made crafts, local honey, fresh vegetables, cut flowers, plants, and whatever else is in season. Part of the pleasure of going to the market is chatting with friends and neighbours in this pleasant setting.



*A view of the Highlands Market*

The **Highland Fling** in the heritage orchard beside the Pike House is evocative of a gathering on a village green in Olde England. Now held on a Sunday in early September, the Highland Fling is a great opportunity for family and friends to enjoy a late summer community event, complete with a clown. The main stage has showcased a brass quartet, Morris and belly dancers, pipers, comedians, singers and other accomplished musicians. The talent show gives neophyte and more seasoned performers among the younger members of our community a chance to perform before a sympathetic and appreciative audience of neighbours and friends. Chili, Saanich sweet corn, home-made ice cream, lemonade, coffee and tea, are sold at "heritage" prices. Home cooking and donations by local merchants make the Fling an affordable family event. Neighbourhood cooks load the potluck dessert table with mouthwatering delights. And there is generally free popcorn for those with room to spare. Fun and games for children and grown-ups include the dress-up trunk with polaroid photos to remind us of how



*Pike House, circa 1907*



### The Pike House

fine we looked, egg and spoon, sack and three-legged races, egg and water balloon tossing and other games fill the afternoon. The grand tug-of-war is the finale of a fun-filled day which ends at 4 pm. The organizing committee welcomes new volunteers to help make a great summer community event even better next year!



*Dressup at the Highlands Fling*

**Halloween** during the past few years has seen the Pike House decorated to give our smallest kids a fun place to warm up with hot chocolate after "trick or treating". The bonfire and fireworks which enliven the night when kids and even some grownups don spooky costumes are now part of the gathering across the road at the West Fire Hall. Halloween is also celebrated with a bonfire at the Fire Hall in the East Highlands, with hot dogs, dessert, and piñatas and hay toss for the kids.

The **Highlands Annual Christmas Craft Fair** in late November is a great place to buy Christmas gifts and meet neighbours and friends. For the first time in 2003, the newly restored Schoolhouse was used as well as the Pike House. Highlanders display dolls, baked-goods, jewelry, jams and preserves, greeting cards, pottery, Christmas decorations and handcrafts on colourfully decorated tables. Friends from neighbouring communities also exhibit and sell the high quality crafts they have been making during the past year. Coffee and mulled juice pressed from apples recently gathered from the Pike House heritage orchard are popular refreshments along with home-made cookies. Even on a cold early winter day, the Pike House is warm and festive, decorated with holly and other greenery, paper streamers and coloured lights. A great place to mark the start of your holiday season.

The **Coffee House** provides year-round live entertainment at 7:30 pm on the second Saturday of each

month. The variety of musicians, dancers, poets and storytellers from far and wide, as well as the home-grown talent, is truly impressive. The last Coffee House in 2003 featured Rig-a-Jig, a lively group which provided the caller and music for line dances enjoyed by young and old. Some performers cater especially to our youngsters who enjoy the show until it's time to head home for bed. The coffee house also provides a place for young people to perform before a friendly audience. Harpists, singers, fiddlers, guitar and woodwind players have entertained us with everything from celtic to klesmer music. The organizers of the Coffee-House do an impressive job of finding highly talented musicians to entertain us, and together with volunteers, they provide an entertaining and welcoming place for children and adults, to have an evening with their families, friends and neighbours full of enjoyable music, good company and heart-felt chuckles. The acoustics provided by the intimate space and log walls of the Pike House delight both audience and performers. Refreshments provided by the volunteer organizers and other community members persuade many of us to skip dessert on the second Saturday of each month. Admission is free, with donations gratefully accepted. Anyone wishing to perform or with suggestions for entertainers to contact can call Zhinoos or Brian at 727-9561.



*Highlands Coffee House: Island Thyme Morris Dancers*

In addition to community events, the Pike House and surrounding grounds is a good place for **private functions**. The site can be rented for **birthday parties, family anniversaries, office parties, workshops, classes, weddings and memorials**. Guests at a 50th anniversary enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the Pike House as much as families holding pre-teen birthday parties. In summer, kids can race through the orchard

in the extra space it provides for party games. In colder weather, the woodstove keeps everybody snug. Large weddings generally use caterers and a marquee for the wedding refreshments. The heritage orchard provides a lovely place for guests to mingle. Wedding dress can be informal in such a setting. At one large wedding, most guests came in fancy costumes including a bishop in his mitre, a wild west cowboy and wild, kilted Scots. In 2003, even before it was completed, the schoolhouse was used for the nuptial ceremony with refreshments served in the Pike House. In the past few years, there have been three memorials at the Pike House. The dairy, the small building nearby, is equipped with stove, fridge and sink to facilitate catering for parties. For information on booking the Pike House or Schoolhouse, please call caretakers Allen or Vivienne Dobb at 474-7601

Recently, the District of Highlands decided to hold all **Council Meetings** at the Pike House because the Pike House has more space than the East Highlands Fire Hall. Until this change, council meetings alternated between the Pike House and the East Highlands Fire Hall. Meetings on the first and third Monday of each month are now scheduled to start at 7 pm. Inaugural meetings at the beginning of a new council's three year term have been treated to a red-coated Mountie honour guard and live music.

Some council meetings attract only a handful of residents to observe council's deliberations. At other times, there is standing room only when issues before council are more controversial. Highlands council meetings are usually more informal than council meetings held in larger municipalities. There is always an opportunity to address council during the time for Petitions and Delegations at the start of each of council meeting.

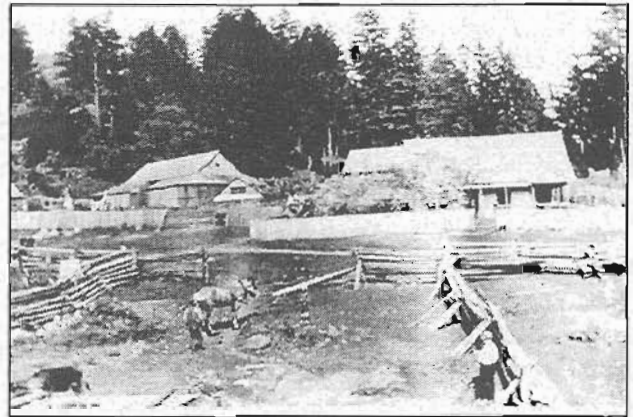
Most **Public Hearings** and **Committee of the Whole** Council meetings are also held at the Pike House. Meetings of the Council's **Advisory Committees** and groups appointed by council to look into special issues, such as the **Housing Task Force**, are generally held at the Pike House. The Pike House has been the scene of many workshops and open houses, such as the one held recently to update residents on progress in developing the revised Official Community Plan.

Last year, municipal meetings (council, advisory committees, task forces and open houses) filled the Pike House during more than 100 afternoons and eve-

nings. Community and private functions occupied more than 40 other days.

#### WHO BUILT THE PIKE HOUSE?

Caleb Pike left England in the autumn of 1849 with his brothers Jonas and William on board the *Norman Morrison*. After a small pox epidemic and storms at sea, the 120 foot sailing barque arrived at Fort Victoria on March 24, 1850. Twenty year old Caleb was indentured to work for the Hudson's Bay Company for five years. When his term was up, he opted to stay and receive a grant of 25 acres of land.



*The Pike "Ranch" about 1912, showing the farm buildings constructed by Caleb and Henry Pike; the addition at the right hand end of the farmhouse was built by William Holmes.*

In 1856, Caleb married 16-year-old Elizabeth Lidgate, who had come to the colony with her parents on a later voyage of the *Norman Morrison*. Caleb and Elizabeth established three pioneers farms over the next twenty years. Sadly, years of hard work and bearing 10 children took their toll on Elizabeth's health. She died in 1877, aged 37, leaving Caleb on a farm near Mud Bay on the Mainland with five children to care for.

In 1883, Caleb decided to move back to Victoria and started pre-emption of Section 35, 160 ac of virgin timber and wetlands in the Highlands. Pre-emption meant making sufficient improvements to earn the right to purchase the land from the Crown. With his two teen-aged sons he built his fourth homestead. House logs were squared with an adze and fastened at the corners with dove-tailed joints in the style of Hudson's Bay forts, using skills that Caleb had learned while in the Company's service. Floor joists of small logs were flattened to carry the plank flooring. Pole rafters and strapping provided the support for the roof shakes. Caleb Pike's 20 ft by 30 ft, one and one half storey building contained a kitchen, living room and



### *The Pike House*

five bedrooms. Rail fences enclosed the farm yard and buildings which included a hewn-log stable, dairy, cabin, root house, woodshed, granary and post and beam barn. Caleb and his sons raised sheep and sold some of their produce such as butter, cream, eggs and game (venison, grouse and ducks) in the city.

Caleb Pike died in 1888, aged 58 years. His eldest son, Henry completed pre-emption of Section 35 in 1892. In addition to farming he was road foreman for the Highlands. Part of this hands-on job was fixing potholes with materials transported by wheelbarrow.

In 1912, William Cuthbert Holmes bought Henry Pike's "ranch" in the Highlands. Holmes had retired to Victoria on a comfortable Indian Civil Service pension. Although the family lived some of their time on Rockland Avenue, Holmes liked the Highlands so much that he decided to expand the Pike House. After his wife moved back to Victoria full time in the 1920s, Holmes spent decreasing amounts of time at his Millstream Road property. Terrence, his youngest son, inherited the house and considerable surrounding property when his father died in 1930. At the time, Terrence was studying at UBC and did not return to live in Victoria for many years. The house was rented to various tenants during the next 50 years.

The Highland Heritage Park Society was formed in 1983 to acquire and restore the Pike House for community use. The house and one acre of land was donated to the Capital Regional District by the developer who bought the property in the late 1970s. Most of the surrounding land was developed into two-acre lots. Before the Highlands was incorporated in 1993, the CRD acted as the local government for the Highlands. Following incorporation, the Pike House and grounds became municipal property.

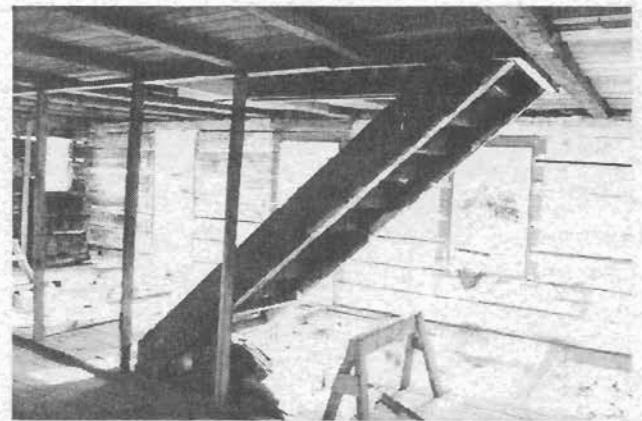
During the years after the Holmes family moved out, considerable deterioration took place. Logs had rotted where water leaked down walls beside the lean-to additions. Aided by grants from the federal and provincial governments, the Highland Heritage Park Society restored the house to its original 1883 condition. Early photographs helped the Society make an authentic restoration. Lean-to additions were removed, rotten logs replaced and replicas of the original doors and windows installed.

During the twenty years since the Society took over management of the Pike House, the dairy, the other

original building still standing on the property, has been restored and refitted as a kitchen. A replica of the Gregory House, another pioneer farmhouse near Fizzle Lake, was built for a resident caretaker and an outbuilding for washrooms and woodshed has been constructed. Restoration of the original 1893 Highlands Schoolhouse is nearing completion. The Schoolhouse, originally located about 3 km further south on the Millstream Road, was dismantled board by board in 1997 and rebuilt at the south end of the Pike House orchard.



*A replacement log being slid into place during restoration of the Pike House.*



*The interior of the Pike House was gutted during the restoration. The staircase was removed to open up the main floor. Log joists supporting the ceiling did not meet current code requirements for use of the upper floor.*

The Highland Heritage Park Society's Management Agreement with the Municipality mandates care of the buildings and grounds and making them available for community recreation. If you have not already visited them, we hope that now you know more about the Pike House and grounds, you will join us soon for a community event in this charming, historic site.