

In city's history, 1914 holds much significance

# A year to remember in White Rock

The year 1914 – one of the most memorable in modern history – was a landmark year for White Rock as well.

It's the year our community icon, the pier, came into being with such excitement that the opening of the Panama Canal fueled dreams of White Rock becoming a deep water port.

"There is every reason to believe that ocean-going vessels will be regularly calling at the port of White Rock before the year 1914 is out," the *Surrey Gazette* predicted.

Work began in July, just a week before the outbreak of the First World War, and

approximately 750 feet were completed that summer. A striking addition to White Rock's waterfront, the pier also added to the continuing wrangle with the railway regarding public access to the beach.

Lorraine and Hugh Ellenwood

historical perspective



The economic boom created here by the opening of the Campbell River Lumber Company in 1913, carried over into 1914 and prompted a report in the *Columbian* newspaper in February entitled "White Rock Incensed." It rebuked the Great Northern Railway for alleging that White Rock "has a winter population of but 200. A careful census of the town has been made and the results show that it has a winter population of 430 people and that it would be twice that size if lower fares were granted by the Great Northern for the winter months as well as the summer season."

The roundtrip fares of \$1.35 to Vancouver and 80 cents to New Westminster were considered almost prohibitive in 1914. This, along with the ongoing battle with the railway over the narrow seafront road (Marine Drive) received in exchange for the original road (now the railroad bed) ensured that GNR officialdom was not the pet of the community.

With an estimated 200 men employed at the mill, the influx of families necessitated a larger school to replace the tiny one built on Henry Thrift's property in 1910.



White Rock Museum & Archives photos

Above, behind a group of swimmers, White Rock's new pier can be seen, halfway to completion in late summer, 1914. Left, the city's second school under construction.



The new school, built in 1914 on hilltop land donated by John Roper, drew families to settle nearby, thus creating a new subdivision.

The two-classroom building was completed in time for school opening in the fall with a complement of 40 pupils.

Other notable signs of social and economic development in 1914 included creation of the Loyal Orange Lodge "Semiahmoo" with George Radford as master; the White Rock Social Club formed with David Hughes, John Best, W. Thrift, B. LaChance, and Earl Barge as the committee; and the formal organization of the South Surrey Conservative Association under the presidency of Henry Thrift.

Dominion Day saw an estimated 2,000 people arrive to enjoy White Rock beaches.

C. Dennis was appointed local pound-keeper, "owing to the fact that stray horses and cattle have become a considerable nuisance."

The old fixed red light of 1,000 candle power at Semiahmoo Bay Lighthouse in U.S. waters was replaced by a 20-second white light of 3,200 candle power.

Alex Matheson's salary as chief of police was increased to \$125 a month.

And, not least of all, W.S. Tanguay, the local GNR agent, became the father of White Rock's first recorded twins.

All in 1914.

Within a week of the declaration of war on Aug. 4, several White Rock men had enlisted, joining the ranks of 104th Regiment recruiting in New Westminster. White Rock responded quickly. Surrey's first Red Cross branch, started at Douglas, included prominent White Rock women.

In October, steps were taken to form the local unit of the Imperial Reserve into an independent company with Henry Thrift as captain and David Hughes as paymaster.

Turmoil fomented by the outbreak of war generated an increase in nefarious border activity. It was noted that "White Rock customs officials, as well as officers at the boundary, are kept busy by a constant stream of aliens crossing the line each way."

One incident, in October, especially hit home in White Rock when popular local customs officer Clifford Adams, 22, was gunned down during the capture of a gang of 'Russian bandits' who had robbed an American bank and fled to Canada.

Even a world war couldn't stifle White Rock's enthusiasm for summer fun and entertainment. As the *Columbian* put it, "despite postponement of the regular sports day, a few sports are to be held as it seems hardly fair that youngsters' lives should be dampened as a result of actions of European diplomats."

The Peninsula's best-known mother-and-son historians, Lorraine and Hugh Ellenwood, are dedicated to preserving history through the White Rock Museum & Archives. Call 604-541-2225, or email [whiterockarchives@telus.net](mailto:whiterockarchives@telus.net)



Clifford Adams  
customs officer