

White Rock 100 years old

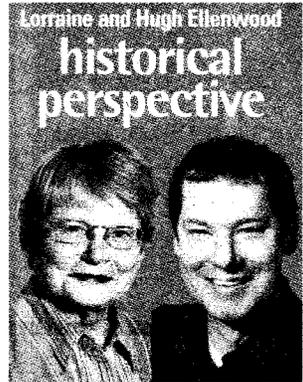
Looking back on '15...1915

As the new year approaches and we say goodbye to 2015, we thought we would share some stories of White Rock from 100 years ago.

Although 1915, the first full year of the First World War, was to prove a disappointing one for the Allies, White Rock was doing its part to remedy the situation.

White Rock men had been prompt to volunteer at the outbreak of hostilities. One of these, Will Barge, sent home from overseas at the end of March, was 'disagreeably surprised' to find that his name

had been struck from the voters list because he had ceased to be a resident for a period of six months. His name was reinstated when he explained what he had been up to during that time.



The Home Guard was in good hands, as well. In early 1915, the White Rock Company of the Imperial Reserve was officered by Capt. Henry Thrift, a veteran of the British army, and Lieut. B.D. Grant.

The company numbered 40 men initially, but ultimately a great many, including Grant, went overseas. Thrift carried on with his rousing patriotic rallies.

The civilian population responded as quickly.

A subsidiary White Rock unit, formed a month after the war began, shouldered the Red Cross work for the whole municipality until 1918.

Dedicated women diligently knitted socks and scarves for servicemen. Supper dances, concerts, debates and whist drives figured among the fundraising events.

On Aug. 4, the first anniversary of the declaration of war, 200 people, "practically the



White Rock Museum & Archives photos

Above, Mr. and Mrs. Will Barge. He was justifiably upset to be stricken from the Surrey voters list while serving overseas. Right, swimmers take a dip, with an under-construction White Rock Pier in the background.

entire population of White Rock," gathered on the beach to witness a prayer service led by Rev. W.E. Gilbert. The collection of \$7.50 was donated to the Red Cross.

Weeks later, on Labour Day, a large crowd was present at the GNR station to hear MPP F.J. MacKenzie, H.T. Thrift and the White Rock Boy Scouts welcome Australian cadets on a tour of the Empire.

Opened with great fanfare the previous year, the White Rock school was still without a water system. Several attempts to drill a well had ended in failure.

Since all the money appropriated for the well had been spent, it was decided to suspend drilling until the following year.

To add to the dilemma, the student



population had more than doubled by June, but was still under the instruction of two teachers. Is it any wonder that Dora Simon, the popular principal, resigned at the end of term and fled to Shanghai?

Another blow to the routine of White Rock's way of life came when Great Northern Railway Company made application to the Railway Commission to discontinue the train popularly known as the campers' special.

By order, the company was compelled to operate the train from June 15 to Oct. 15

each year. It ran from Blaine to Vancouver in the morning, and returned in the late afternoon.

The GNR asserted that the run had never paid operating expenses. Despite protests from the communities serviced by this convenient and cheap transport, the commission granted the request, "subject to the company agreeing to stop certain through trains at flag signal."

In April, local citizens were relieved to hear that the federal government had appropriated \$10,500 to extend the wharf to 1600 feet, realizing the completion of the pier was necessary to make it of practical use for larger vessels.

The Campbell River Lumber Company was given the order for the timbers and planking, and once more the Fraser River Pile Driving Company was called in.

Work was completed within two months, and under budget. The last pile was driven on Aug. 2, following which the fisheries vessel *Fispa* was the first to tie up.

During the month of September, 62 vessels were reported to customs as being moored at the White Rock wharf for foreign shipping. The positive feedback from all skippers sparked hope that White Rock could become a significant port.

Despite the overriding pursuit of a victorious ending to the war, time was still found for distracting activity to suit residents and the many visitors to the seaside Mecca. Dances were held regularly, and clubs carried on.

Public debates were all the rage.

One, labelled "War and the Liquor Question," cast a trio of women contending that liquor was the greater evil against a male team maintaining that war had far greater consequences.

A draw was declared by the tactful judges.

Our vote for sheer entertainment, however, goes to the International Club, open to Canadian and American members. The club's express purpose, "To Have a Good Time," is hard to top.

As the year was winding down, the hometown *Semiahmoo Gazette* commented:

"The summer season which has just passed brought to White Rock a large influx of visitors, tourists and summer campers. The requirements of this summer population were numerous and taxed the resources of White Rock considerably; in the majority of cases these visitors have returned to their homes well-satisfied with the treatment accorded them by the permanent residents, merchants and businessmen of White Rock."

A century later, the same observation could be made.

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