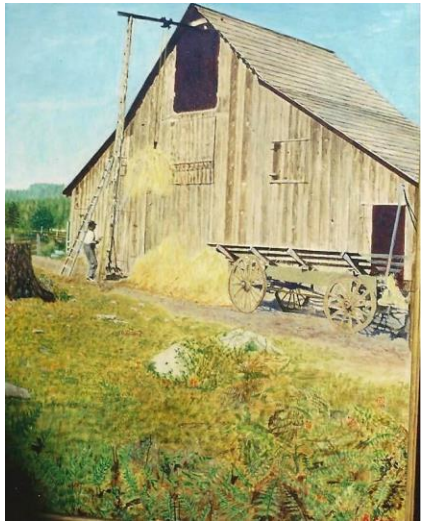
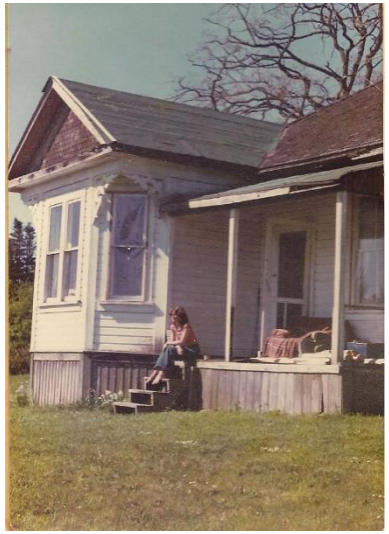
Jim, Anne, and Tracy Fiddick and dog Perky,
Leask Road, July 1965



The barn, painting by Ron Eccles



The old house 1960s, with renter Ingrid Hill

Painting by Tom Hutton

Cedar By The Sea

1890-1970

The Fiddick Farm

The Long John Silver subdivision

Ivor Thomas

After The Aquarians

Photos of the Fiddick farm provided by the Fiddick family
Cover painting by Tom Hutton

Thanks to

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Many thanks to all
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Cedar By The Sea is a neighborhood of Cedar, south of Nanaimo, described as the area at the seaward end of Barnes Road, from Cable Bay boundary in the north to Haro Road in the south, and to Fawcett Road in the west.

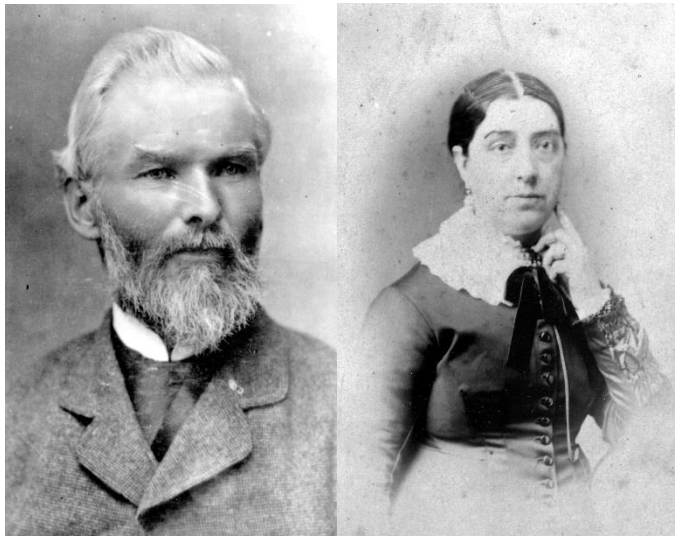
Beginnings

The area was the traditional home of the Snuneymuxw people, who fished, hunted and maintained seasonal camps along the shore and higher ground, and who left petroglyphs and middens marking their presence in the area.

After Nanaimo was colonized in 1852, Vancouver Island was formally surveyed for settlement over two years, 1858 to 1860. Four districts in the central Island area were mapped - Cedar, Cranberry, Bright and Oyster.

The Cedar district was mapped from approximately the Nanaimo River eastwards to the sea and south from Northumberland Channel to a boundary line approximately at the current Hill / Cedar Road intersection. The land was divided into blocks of 100 acres running east-west.

In 1861 land in the south island was declared available for pre-emption initially at 150 acres for a single man and 200 acres for a married man, but reduced the next year to 100 acres for a single man and 150 for a married man. Land in the Cedar area was declared available for preemption in May 1863. Colonists could claim one or several blocks on payment of $100 per 100-acre block, and with a commitment to invest improvements of drainage and clearing of standing timber for agricultural development.



Samuel and Elizabeth Fiddick, Nanaimo approx. 1870

The Fiddick Family

Samuel Fiddick was descended from a tin-mining family in Cornwall, and came to North America overland across Panama in 1858. After trying gold-mining in California and in the B.C. Cariboo, he established in Nanaimo as a miner.

Elizabeth Grandam came to Nanaimo from Northumberland with her family in 1862. Initially intended as a family holiday for her brother's health.

She met Samuel Fiddick and they were married in Nanaimo on April 4, 1863. They lived in a house on Chapel Street where their first children were born. Altogether the children were Adoris, Charlie, Alice, Samuel (died 1871), Samuel, Maud, Christopher (died 1877), Christopher, Richard, and Harry.

Coincidentally, 150 years later one of their many descendants, Greg Fiddick, moved into a condo on Chapel Street very near the location where the family history had its early roots.

In 1872 the family preempted 250 acres on the west side of the Nanaimo River on Akenhead Road where they built their home. It was on the corner of Wilkinson and Akenhead, since demolished and now an open field. The property was later bought by the Armishaw family for dairying, and much later bisected by realignment of Akenhead when the Duke Point highway was built.

In 1886 to coincide with the inauguration of the E&N Railway, Samuel and Elizabeth built the Occidental Hotel adjacent to the Nanaimo station. The $8,000 cost either came from the sale of their first mine claim in Extension, or from Elizabeth's family.

Samuel died in in January 1900. Elizabeth sold the hotel in 1911 and subsequently proved to be a shrewd and formidable investor, accumulating many properties in the area.

In 1904 son Richard Fiddick owned the property where Harmac now stands. He logged in there extensively until letting it go for taxes during the Depression.

The Fiddick/Richardson mine in South Wellington operated from 1907 to 1912, and was sold in 1913 to the Pacific Coast Coal Mines Ltd. who operated it until 1917. It was reopened in 1927 and operated until 1939. After a protracted battle with James Dunsmuir over access rights, the company drove their coal on their own rail line via Fiddick Junction, under the E&N past the Mordern Mine to Boat Harbour.

The Fiddick family farm early 1900s

The following is an excerpt from Charles and Anna Fiddick Family History, By Eva (Fiddick) Eccles and Walter Mayer zu Erpen
1977 (revised 1988, 2019)

On 25 August 1896 Charles, the oldest of Sam and Elizabeth's seven surviving children, married Anna Leighton Stewart in Vancouver.

Anna was born 7 January 1873 at the family home in Schultzville, Pennsylvania. The family came first to San Francisco, and then to the lower mainland, and to Vancouver where Anna's father was involved in real estate. Anna was among the first graduating high school class at the Central School in Vancouver in 1890. She came to Nanaimo about 1892 and boarded with the Hemer family while teaching at the North Cedar school, then at Stovely by the Cedar bridge.

After their marriage, Charles and Anna lived on a farm on Thatcher Road, commonly known as "The Raper place" after its original preemptor. It was much later bisected by the Island Highway and is currently the EagleQuest Golf Course. The farm had been acquired about 1881 by Charles' father Samuel. After Charles and Anna moved to Cedar By The Sea, the Thatcher Road farm was occupied by Richard Fiddick.

Four of their five children, Samuel (1897-1923), Adrian (1899 - 1995, Eva (1902- 1982) and George (1904-1977) were born there.

Charles worked as a logger, farmer and contractor, and during this time bought 120 acres of un-cleared land near Dodd's Narrows at $4 per acre. It had one-quarter of a mile of sea frontage facing Stuart Channel. The property extended from the sea inland to what is now McPherson Road, being split in half by what is now Leask Road, with 25 – 30 acres below Leask and 30 – 35 acres above.

Charles cut a rough road over a mile from the Holden Corso trail through the bush to the site where he built a five-room house, which they moved into in October 1904. A large barn and outbuildings were added later. Charles cut mine timbers from the property while clearing it. The timbers were hauled by horse to the beach where they were rafted on skids and then towed to Nanaimo where they were cut to length for the mines.

Charles and his brother Chris felled the large trees working a cross-cut saw. Charges of powder were put under the stumps to split them, then smaller logs were piled on top and the piles set afire. In the Spring the cleared land between the stumps was seeded and in the summer the crops were cut with a hand scythe.

Between crops, more stumps were removed and slowly acres of cleared land emerged. At first piles of brush were used as fences, but then as the brush was burned for more land, snake fences were built from cedar logs which were split into rails. One side was fenced with

palings salvaged from a wrecked barge in Dodd's Narrows. Cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, ducks and sometimes turkeys and geese were kept on the farm. Anna churned the milk for butter, and as more cows were bought, the milk was taken to the creamery in Nanaimo.

Ham and bacon were cured and the fat rendered down for lard. The grease from the fat was also used to make soap. An extensive orchard was planted of apples, pears, plums and quinces. The orchard also had two very large walnut trees which produced large quantities of nuts. One tree is still standing. In addition to baking bread, Anna canned fruit from the farm, and made jams and jellies, all on a wood-burning kitchen stove.

Charles and Anna's house

Anna Fiddick

The farm and surrounding area also produced many kinds of wild fruit and berries, some of which Charles collected while out hunting.

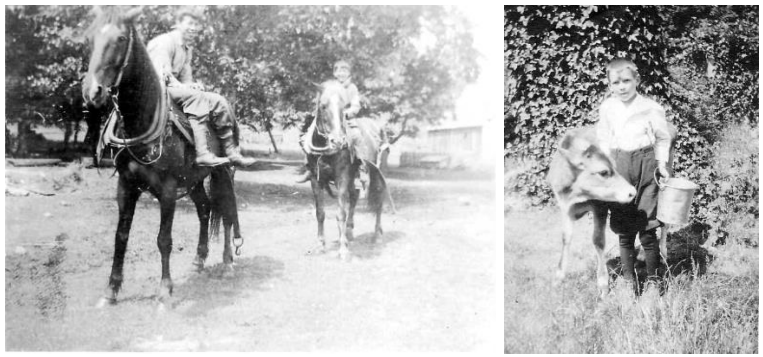
Each week, a trip was made to Nanaimo to buy grain for the stock and groceries. Flour and sugar were bought in one-hundred-pound sacks. During the early years in Cedar, wild game was plentiful. In the Fall at dusk, grouse could be shot in a willow tree right in front of the house. Deer meat was used for mincemeat, and salmon and cod were caught from the shore. Clams and oysters could be picked up anywhere on the beach.

Initially water was carried from a free-running spring in a maple grove just above the corner of the current Fiddick and Barnes. Later a pipe was laid and water fed by gravity to the house. The benefits of city life were missing for many years, and the isolation of Cedar district resulted in many inconveniences. It was not until 1926 that running water, hot and cold, was installed inside the house. Washing

was done in rain water collected in large barrels at the corners of the house, and heated on the stove. The clothes were washed on a scrub board and ironed with a sad iron.

About 1910 the government put the unpaved road through to the homestead. It was paved in early 1950's. In 1938 electricity was brought down Barnes Road. Telephone service followed in 1940.

In 1903 Sam and Adrian started school and walked four miles a day to and from the third North Cedar school, which was a one-room building that had been erected in 1894, now the Cedar Heritage Centre. Eva started school at age seven for a few months, and then again until age eight.



George Fiddick – early days on the farm

By that time Sam was able to tend a horse, and the children were able to drive to school in the winter. In the Spring the horse was needed on the farm.

By 1915 there were 40 students attending the school, and a second room was built. There was a stove in the middle of the room and a pail of drinking water with a dipper on a table. The school house was swept and cleaned by the older pupils during the noon hours.

Over the ten years while their children were in school, Charles and Anna served respectively, as Trustee (one of three) and Secretary of the North Cedar school. Anna also played the organ at the Cedar Anglican church. Adrian and George attended high school in Nanaimo, biking the ten miles each day, but quit after a few months. Eva attended high school in Nanaimo for two years, boarding in Nanaimo during the week and coming home on weekends.

On quitting high school, George remained on the farm helping his parents, and Adrian went logging, driving a team of horses, and later moved to Detroit.

In 1908 Charles sold 20 acres on the north side of the property to a Mr. Barnes, an English remittance man, who intended to farm it, but returned to England. The property was later bought by Ivor Thomas.

Charles and Anna celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary August 1946

George and Doris Fiddick and family

George Stewart Fiddick and Doris (Adora) Lucienne Loucks were married on June 3 1936. Doris came from Hornepayne, Ontario. They raised six children Charles, Robert, James, Daniel, Rose Marie and Georgina.

In 1934 George bought one of the miner's houses from Granby when the mine closed. The house was disassembled and moved to the corner of Barnes and what was then known as the side road, but which later was named Leask. The house is presently occupied by his daughter Rose Marie.

The side road track that became Leask Road was originally a logging road through the property up to the area now known as Cable Bay. Charlie says the road was named after Percy Leask, who ran a hardware and fuel supply business on Bruce Avenue in Harewood near where the Mall is now located. Percy Leask had much earlier built a cabin at the far end of Leask, but actual location is unknown.

George and Allan Galloway bringing in the harvest

The Fiddick family 1936 Front, Anna and Charles
Rear, from left, Doris, George, Eva, Adrian, Velma (Adrian's wife)

As well as their sheep on the farm, George also managed sheep owned by Mrs. Cox on Mudge Island which then had only three settlers, all on the south False Narrows side. Another resident was named Rolf. Mrs. Cox had a large barn and corral on the property, and a large orchard. The sheep became quite wild and could roam the whole island. In the early Spring George would check on the new lambs, give them medicine and dock their tails. The older sheep were shorn in the late Spring, using hand-cranked shearing gear. George and his sons would then bring the bigger lambs back usually 4-5 at a time in a 12 foot rowboat they kept on the beach below the farm into market. After the Farmer's Market closed, they were sold to butchers in Ladysmith and Nanaimo.

The black wool was prized by the Native people in Nanaimo, Cowichan and Washington state, who used it in their Cowichan sweaters. Sheep from the property were also shorn in the barn and chickens and pigs were butchered in a shed located about the current corner of Fiddick and Frontier.

The produce was sold on Saturdays through a stall George kept in the Farmers' Market on Terminal Avenue in Nanaimo until it closed in 1940.

They also had a Billy goat which became notorious for butting people when they weren't looking. Finally after one too many incidents, George took the Billy and a female goat and marooned them on Round Island.

They accessed the beach by a track along the bottom of the property which George eventually had widened with a bulldozer. The cabin was eventually washed away in storms.

Rose remembers her mother was always able to feed the family with produce from the farm. The boys hunted and brought in a lot of venison. Also there was cod fishing from the rocks along the Narrows, oyster and clams were plentiful, and Natives would often bring salmon in return for access to the beach.

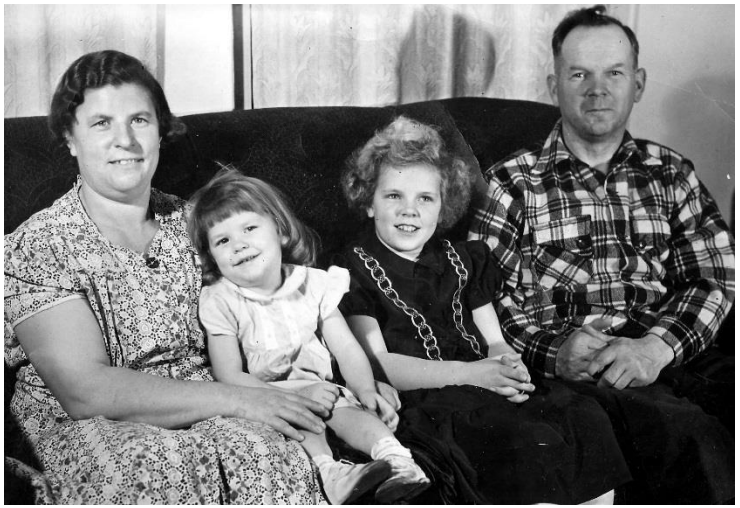
Doris also canned large quantities of the fruit and vegetables grown on the farm. All the heavy work on the farm was done with a team of horses, up until the early 1950's when a tractor was bought.

After World War 2 the family also farmed a further acreage on what is now Cedar Heights Road, off Nicola, where they grew potatoes and strawberries and grazed cows. There was also a pond there which froze in winter and where the family had skating parties and campfire picnics. There was no back fence to the property and often the cows could stray all the way to Harmac, and after school the children would have to find them and herd them back.

Jim also remembers walking the family's poll Hereford bull to service cows in the area, as far away as Holden Lake.

George horse logging on the beach

The beach and cabin



Doris, Georgina, Rose Marie and George, 1950s.

In the early days the children walked out Barnes to the North Cedar school, now the Cedar Heritage Centre. Later a school bus served the area, but winter conditions on the S-bend hill often meant a Snow Day holiday. Rose remembers it was a bit lonely at the end of the road with no other children to play with, until the Gilchrists bought a five-acre lot on the corner of Leask and Barnes from Adrian.

In the late 1940s a sawmill was operated by Pete Snow on acreage on top of the hill now owned by Jim and Anne Fiddick. The sawmill was powered by a coal-fired steam engine. Jim remembers visiting the mill and logging operation as a boy, and particularly a big white horse which hauled the logs between the logging area and the mill without supervision.

Charles died in 1947 and Anna died in 1951; the old house and five acres were passed to Eva, and finally rented out until the farm was sold. Adrian later bought two acres of the lot to build his house.

The farm is sold

By the late 1950's George and Doris had sold off most of the livestock, and in 1963 George sold the approximately 35-40 acre waterfront section including the farm to Mayor Frank Ney's realty company. George subsequently worked at the Co-op feed store.

The property was marketed as the Long John Silver subdivision, following Ney's fixation on things piratical. Forty-eight lots were advertised at between $1,600 and $1,800, financed at $18 down and $18 per month. Waterfront lots were $3,450.

At about the same time, Ney formed the Great National Land Company, and also bought and subdivided Mudge Island and Protection Island, all with similar piratical theme names.

Two lots were sequestered within the property; George and Doris' family home site at the corner of Barnes and Leask where they continued to live, currently occupied by Rose Marie (Fiddick) Spencer and two acres on the site of the original homestead on Fiddick. Subsequently Adrian Fiddick built a new house there in 1965 and the remainder was later divided into lots. The barn, original house and outbuildings were demolished. Subsequently, another block outside the Fiddick property to the north was subdivided and the five new lots added to join Seaspray.

The 32 acres west of Leask east along Barnes were retained and divided among the children.

Adrian Fiddick building his house 1965

Early homebuilders

1965	1482 Fiddick - Adrian Fiddick.
1966	1448 Seaspray - Carl Hensel
	1464 Frontier - Nancy Tweit
1968	1481Frontier - Tom and Marie Hutton
	1463 Seaspray - Jody and Elliot Jackson
	1451 Frontier - J. Westhead (H. Saunders)
1971	1430 Seaspray - Al Vermet
1972	1479 Frontier – Pete Meluish
1973	1454 Fiddick – Al Martin
	1431 Frontier – Gino Manzini
1974	1439 Fiddick – Vic Price

1975 1489 Fiddick-
1465 Frontier – Peter and Joan Lloyd
1448 Frontier –
1976 1421 Seaspray -
1977 1484 Leask – Bill Ball
1468 Leask – Ken Wright
1978 1460 Leask – Dell and Grace Nielsen
1480 Seaspray – Tom and Marie Hutton
1979 1439 Seaspray – Peter & Marlene Schmidt

Ivor Thomas, 1970
Stephanie Williams photo

(Edwin) Ivor Thomas

(From recorded interview, Nanaimo Community Archives)

Edwin Ivor Thomas was the youngest of six boys and eighth of nine children, all born in Cedar. He was born January 5 1889. Their parents were John and Ann Thomas who emigrated from the Swansea area in 1876.

The Thomas family preempted several blocks of land from Holden Lake south and west of Boat Harbour over 1884-86 and were involved in logging and farming. The family name is also remembered by the Thomas-Haley Forest on Yellow Point Road, and the Thomas Park subdivision off Tiesu Road.

The family attended church at St. Phillip's Anglican until it burned down. Ivor remembered the stained glass window which recognized Charles York who donated the land for the church. Ivor walked about a mile across their fields to the school when it was on the Steiger property on Cedar Road at Haslam Road. Later he attended the North Ward High School when it was on Campbell Street in Nanaimo.

The family had a mixed farm near Quennell Lake, with animals and vegetable growing. The farm had riding and hauling horses, and Ivor had to take the horses into Frank Shaw's blacksmith shop in the Cedar village (site of the old Fire Hall) regularly to be shod. The family had two horse-drawn buggies, one plain and one fancy, and the children only went into Nanaimo once or twice a year.

Ivor worked on the family farm until he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force for service in France. He served with the artillery from 1916 to 1918, mainly tending the horses that pulled the guns and ammunition carts. He survived the Battle of Vimy Ridge, despite having to stay out of the trenches, tending the horses around the gun emplacements. He vividly remembered men being killed around him.

After the war he worked the 50 acres of the family farm. He remembered they always had plenty to eat off the farm, but not much money. Ivor's father was involved in the building of the new community hall after the old one opposite the blacksmith shop burned down.

In 1919 he married Margaret Baird Miller in Penticton. His second wife was Leslie MacPherson.

At some point in the late 1940's Ivor Thomas acquired the parcel to the north of the Fiddick farm and subdivided it for housing. He and his wife Leslie built several houses in the area before settling in their final house in 1952 at the junction of Ivor and Leask.

It was at this time that MacMillan-Bloedel had taken over property along Northumberland Channel to build a pulp mill and to hold adjacent forestry lands as a Tree Farm. The Harmac pulp mill was completed in 1950, and many of the new employees coming to the new mill did settle in Cedar By The Sea.

Among the first to build on the Thomas subdivision was Phil Darbyson, in 1949 who built several cabins in the orchard at 1398 Leask as holiday lets. It was later bought by Frank Boe. Next to build were Christopher and Margaret Couchman in 1967 at 1373 Leask, and Jim and Pat Gilchrist in 1969 next door.

An American family named Hodson bought the point of land at what is now Leeson Lane, and built a big pan-abode house, which was later bought by Stan Leeson.

At the far end of Leask on the uphill flat land Roger Gervais had an acreage with a small house, since demolished, where the Mains family built a duplex in 1958. That property was in turn bought by Dr. Holding and subdivided.

Margaret and Earl James first met Ivor Thomas in the 1960s when he called at their rental house at Barnes and Brightman in his capacity as the local Census Recorder. They subsequently bought their lot from him in 1966 and built on Ivor Road in 1973. Margaret remembers Ivor had a unique sales procedure in which he asked for a small deposit and a $500 cheque once a year.

Ivor's wife Leslie bred and showed Siamese cats and also wrote a Cedar News column. Ivor drove an old FarmAll tractor, and said that when his tractor gave out, he wouldn't be far behind. And that's what happened July 16 1981, aged 92.

The Aquarian Foundation and afterwards

In 1928 Edward Wilson, an English devotee of Mysticism and Theosophy that became popular worldwide after the trauma of World War One, came to Nanaimo looking for a base for the organization of his movement, the Aquarian Foundation. Using funds provided by his devotees, he bought 120 acres from the Western Fuel Corporation.

The property ran from the sea at the end of Barnes Road, on the south side from the Fiddick farm, west to Brightman and south to what is now Nelson Road.

In 1928 he built a central headquarters and other houses for principal members.

1544 Fawcett (Centre House) (1928)
1560 Fawcett (1928)
3030 Murdoch (1928)
3079 Barnes (1928)
1650 Brebber (1929)
1571 Fawcett (1929)
1598 Nelson (1929)
1581 Fawcett (1930)
1583 Fawcett (1932)
2960 Nelson Road (1936)

The property was fenced and the entrance was at a guarded gate at the top of the entrance driveway that became Fawcett. The track and what became Botwood and Nelson were originally paths between the houses, and led down to a boat landing on the beach beside the current boat ramp from where they accessed the colony's other properties on DeCourcey and Valdez. What is now the field along Barnes below Murdoch was then heavily treed, and the Foundation's members planted vegetable gardens wherever they could.

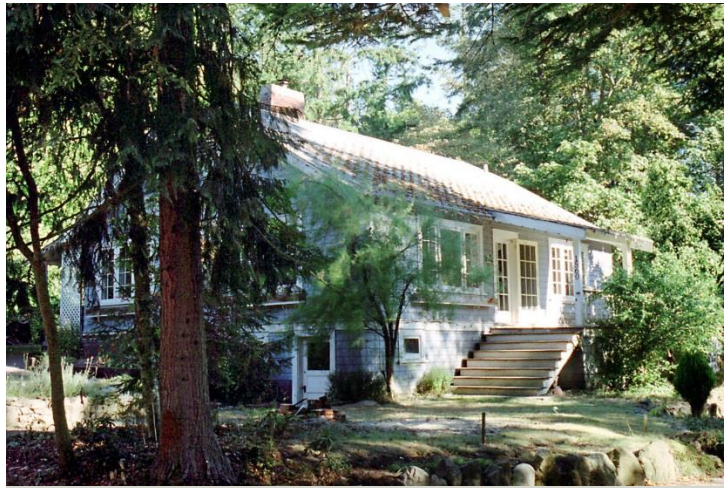
An independent water and electricity system served all the houses. The well and power plant were located at the west end of Nelson, past Art Nelson's house, and on to the other side of Brightman. Water was pumped through pipes up to a water tower at the corner of what is now Fawcett and Aquarian, then fed by gravity to all the houses. A notable feature of the houses was that they all featured electric stoves, which were common for the mostly American cult members from California, but uncommon locally.

The Aquarian Foundation eventually disintegrated in 1937. Most members left but several stayed on, among the last being Ethel Squier, in a house just off Fawcett. Miss Squier lived in the house until her death in 1962.

Local resident Dave Lassam remembers his mother Greta assisted with the weaving. His grandfather's company, Cedar Transfer, trucked all the lumber and supplies for construction up from the barge landing on the beach.

After legal and survey issues were resolved, properties were made available for purchase in the early 1940's. Mrs. Sybil Fawcett bought the Van Platen house with double garage opposite where Brother 12 lived, and it is presumed that the access road was named for her.

At that time the local postal address was Rural Route 2.



The Squier residence at Cedar By The Sea was built in 1928 by early colonist Maurice Van Platen for his family friend Ethel Squier, an art teacher, and her mother Lucinda, and second daughter Lucita. The house contained a weaving studio, since the Squiers were accomplished weavers, and it was intended that their work would provide a source of income for the colony. (J. Santucci)
The colonists also ran a herd of Angora goats on DeCourcey, presumably for the wool for weaving.
From Nanaimo Museum archive 2019- "A baby blanket with several surprising layers of stories went into the Nanaimo Mysteries exhibit almost immediately after donation. The artifact was woven in 1952 by Ethel Squire (sic), a member of Brother XII's Aquarian Foundation. Ethel and her mother, Lucinda, were from New York and joined the cult in 1928. They operated a successful weaving business, Squier Studios, from their property at Cedar by the Sea. Squier Studios had employees and prominent clients such as the Empress Hotel in Victoria. This is the first business found to be operating at Brother XII's colony."Ethel Squier's loom was donated anonymously to the Museum.

Also among the early buyers was City of Nanaimo official Andrew Murdoch, who bought the first house above the farm that had been occupied by Brother 12's accountant. He also bought all the acreage below, and the new road down to Nelson was named Murdoch Road.

After the big forest fire of 1946 which burned the rest of the trees on the lot, his grandson Ross Murdoch completed the clearing and seeded the hay field as it is today.

A Mr. McMorran, a plumber, bought the house next door to the Murdochs. His wife was a daughter of the McLean family who bought the Aquarian's Centre Building for their home, and also 50 acres on the west side of Fawcett facing Barnes, and built large barns and ran a turkey ranch.

Brother 12's house next door to the Centre Building was bought and occupied by Brigadier D.R. Sargent, who was the commander of the Nanaimo Military camp through the war years.

The Jane family bought property off Nelson Road and planted a large hazelnut orchard, remnants of which can still be found.

Brebber Road below the old farm acreage downhill from Murdoch was named for Nanaimo physician Dr. Brebber who bought the Aquarians' large guest house.

In the early 1960s the property south of Nelson and along to Haro Road was subdivided and marketed as White Sands, after the beach below the cliff. The boat ramp in its current form was put in by the realtors marketing the subdivision. The Baker and McLeod families were among the first to move in.

Early builders on the cliff above the beach encountered many middens accumulated over hundreds of years of Sneneymous occupancy. The Nelson trail was also part of early history, being a traditional path between the beach and Holden Lake and the Indigenous people's ancestral site there.