

Vancouver Island

March 5 – 8, 2019

Russ and Terri (“Bear”) Paton



Nettles in the City of Gardens

March 5, 2019

Victoria, BC

Bouchart Gardens and blue-haired ladies sipping high tea at the Empress Hotel are images promoted by Victoria, BC's tourism bureau. The City of Gardens has a reputation of old-world charm, colonial style and civility.

Victoria is named after that *bluest-haired* lady of all, Queen Victoria, and the city still exudes Victorian-era sensibilities. But what the guidebooks don't tell you is that Victoria has a dark historical underbelly.

While tea and crumpets on the terrace of the Empress sound tempting, we are going to spend the next few days searching the seamier parts of the city and the island for dirt.

Prostitution, Drugs, Gambling

We didn't have to walk far to begin our journey into the dark side of Victoria's history. Just a few blocks north of the Empress is the old Northern Quarter; an area where prostitution, drugs and gambling were tolerated (or at least largely ignored) by Victoria's citizenry. In an era renowned for universal repression there wasn't much "frequenters", as they were called, couldn't procure on Chatham and Herald Streets of the late 19th century.

To avoid offending local sensibilities; *"The chief census officer encouraged field enumerators to use "dressmaker" as a euphemism for prostitute while conducting a door-to-door survey in 1891".*
- The Globe and Mail October 26, 2010



One of Victoria's most famous brothels was in the 1300 block of Broad Street. The Duck's Building was owned and operated by Simeon Duck a prominent manufacturer and, for a time, the province's finance minister. When it opened in 1892, the brothel quickly earned a reputation as a safe place to *thread one's needle*. Victoria police didn't concern themselves with what went on in the Duck's Building, given the status of its proprietor. Other less-prominent brothels and one-room "cribs" didn't escape police scrutiny, but the occasional raid

and subsequent fines were seen as little more than a minor nuisance in an otherwise profitable enterprise. "That was the cost of doing business," one brothel owner said.

Victoria's *scarlet blush* extended into neighbouring Chinatown. In Fan Tan Alley (the narrowest street in North America, at .9 meters) a frequenter could procure companionship, and more. The alley takes its name from Fan Tan Guan, a gambling den, where opium and prostitutes were easily procured.

The drug dens and parlours have disappeared from Fan Tan Alley, but you can still spot a peephole looking onto the alley from which a doorkeeper would once have sounded an alarm about a police raid.



Murder and Mayhem

When I Googled "*Victoria BC Hangings*", the first thing that popped up was Victoria's Hanging Baskets (of flowers). Victoria doesn't give up its dirty secrets easily.

I dug a little deeper and came up with *Judge Matthew Begbie – the hanging judge*.

Judge Begbie presided over the Supreme Court of BC from 1858 to 1894, in a courthouse that now houses the Maritime Museum of BC. In September of 1864, having found five men guilty of murder, he sentenced the prisoners to be hanged in the back yard of the courthouse.



Visitors to the courthouse frequently report voices and footsteps from the public gallery as well as the smell of sweet pipe tobacco with no apparent source. Many people report seeing a very tall figure in black robes walking across the Judge's bench.

We didn't see any ghosts, or criminals hanging in the alley, but we didn't look very hard.

Judge Begbie died in 1894 but murder and mayhem continued to plague Victoria. Two Jack-the-Ripper-style murders occurred shortly after Begbie's death and have never been solved.

We toured Victoria for a couple of days, digging up weeds in the Garden City. Then ventured up-island in search of pirates and hidden places where evil dwells.

Klee Wyck

March 5, 2019

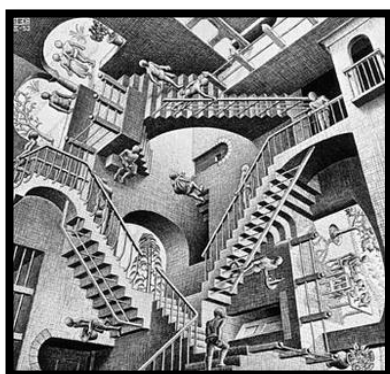
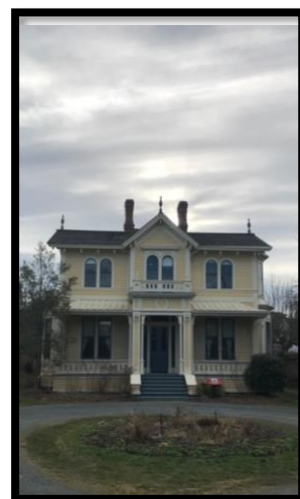
Victoria, BC

The house where Emily Carr lived as a child was just around the corner from our hotel so we stopped in to see if we could dig up any dirt on her. I spent some time researching Western Canada's iconic artist, but a strange thing happened on the way to the dirt pile - no matter where I dug, every time my spade hit something mucky, it turned up gold. There was scandal in Carr's past, but always perpetrated by others and overcome by her.

Emily spent an inordinate amount of time with her father as a child but after an incident in her early teens Carr's reverence for her father turned to utter contempt. In traditional Victorian fashion, the *incident* was never discussed but whatever occurred had a lifelong effect on her. To her great credit Carr turned broken trust into unparalleled achievement in art.

Carr struggled to find herself, both as an artist and as a woman; as a result, her talent bloomed late in life. According to one biographer "she was an artist of stunning originality and strength, but the work for which she is best known didn't start until the age of 57". Achievement in old age is an inspiration to us all.

I was able to find a bit of dirt in one autobiography. It stated; "Carr was unpopular amongst her students due to her rude behaviour of smoking and cursing at them in class, and the students began to boycott her courses". It turns out her *students* were a bunch of upper-crust patrons at the Vancouver Ladies Art Club. Carr quit teaching at the hoity-toity club after one month, which only elevates my esteem for her.



Carr struggled financially, as most artists do. Her art was not well received at home in the early years, and sales were insufficient to maintain even a modest lifestyle. Carr ran a boarding house to support herself and lived frugally most of her life. Long after her death one of Carr's paintings, *The Crazy Stair*, sold for \$3.39 million at a Toronto art auction. It was a record price for a painting by a Canadian female artist.

Carr had deep affinity for the aboriginal people and landscapes of the west coast. She made numerous trips along the shore of Vancouver Island and Haida Qwaii, up the Skeena River – all the way to Alaska. During a stay with the Nootka people near Ucluelet, they bestowed the name *Klee Wyck (Laughing One)* on her. In the words of her friend Ira Dilworth, "*she laughed a great deal - as she herself would say, there is not much of a giggle in her. But her laughter in Ucluelet went out to meet the Indians,*

taking the place of words, forming a bond between them. They felt at once that the young girl staying in the missionaries' house understood them and they accepted her."

Carr painted *The Indian Church* while with the Nootka in 1929. Lawren Harris (Group of Seven) called it Carr's best work.

Despite Carr's obvious connection to the Nootka people and her reverence for the lands they occupied, the Politically Correct Police have found a way to denigrate Carr 75 years after her death. In 2018, The Art Gallery of Ontario retitled this painting *Church at Yuquot Village* due to perceived negative connotations of the term "Indian."

The same PC Police also changed the name of *The Crazy Stair* to *The Crooked Staircase* asserting that "Crazy" is an inappropriate term.

Carr is unable to respond to this censorship, so I feel a need to say something on her behalf. As she did with the haughty ladies at the Vancouver Art Club, I believe that Carr would have first laughed at such supercilious nonsense, then she would have blown smoke in their face and told them to shove their sanctimony up their collective ass.



Try as I might to get some dirt on Emily Carr, I came up short. Carr's character was as flawless as her talent.

The Shady Side of the Sunshine Coast

March 6, 2019
Cowichen Bay, BC

We usually associate pirates with the Caribbean and Atlantic, but pirating was active on Pacific waters as well. Smuggler's Cove on BC's mainland and Pirate's Cove up Vancouver Island are testament to the fact that naval criminals were plying their trade in BC harbours in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.



After the trans-Canada railroad had been built, Chinese labourers were looking for opportunity in the US. They were not allowed to emigrate to the US legally, but enterprising pirates would smuggle them into Washington state for a fee of \$100 each. One such entrepreneur, Pirate Lawrence Kelly, ferried hundreds of illegals out of Vancouver Island ports.



Human smuggling was a capital offence, so Kelly employed a horrific insurance against detection. Before accepting anyone on board his ship, he would have them agree to be roped together and tied to a large hunk of crude iron. In the event of apprehension by U.S. customs, Kelly would throw the iron and his clients overboard. (Whether he actually did it or not is uncertain.)

Pirate's Cove on De Courcy Island was the site of another perpetrator of "downright evil". In the 1920's and 30's the Aquarian Foundation, a religious cult led by the Brother XII, convinced 8,000 followers to hand over their worldly possessions and follow him to De Courcy. Facing trial in Nanaimo in 1933 on a bundle of charges, Brother XII and a cohort disappeared on the colony's boat and were never seen again.



Victims described the man as "downright evil", "The Great Beast" and the "blackest man to have ever lived".

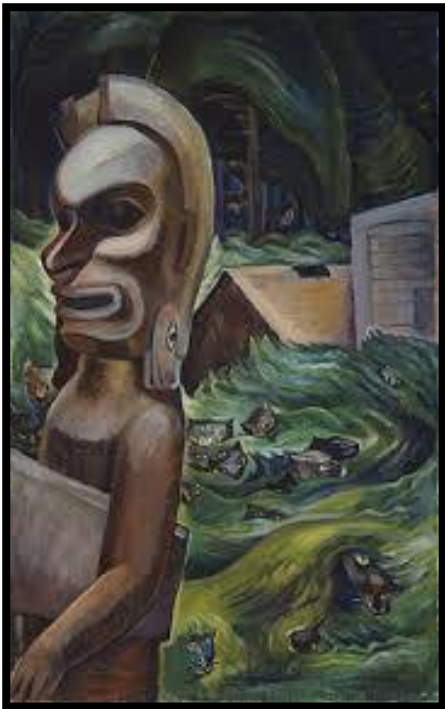
It seems that there were many shady characters on the shady side of the Island.

A Cod-Fish Swallows the Moon

March 6, 2019

Victoria, BC

Slavery is said to be mankind's most horrendous crime. Ownership of one human being by another makes other crimes pale by comparison. Even murder and torture are marginal offences compared with slavery, because slavery encompasses those crimes and a hundred more.



Zunoqua of the Cat Village - Emily Carr

We most often associate slavery with the southern USA, but the practice of human ownership and exploitation occurred in North America long before the cotton plantations of the south.

Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Coast were fierce warriors and slave-traders, raiding as far as California. The Haida and Tlingit tribes of the Pacific Northwest captured and held slaves as labourers and chattel goods for millennia before Europeans arrived.

Human captives and their descendants were passed from generation to generation. Some tribes in British Columbia continued to segregate and ostracize the descendants of slaves as late as the 1970s.

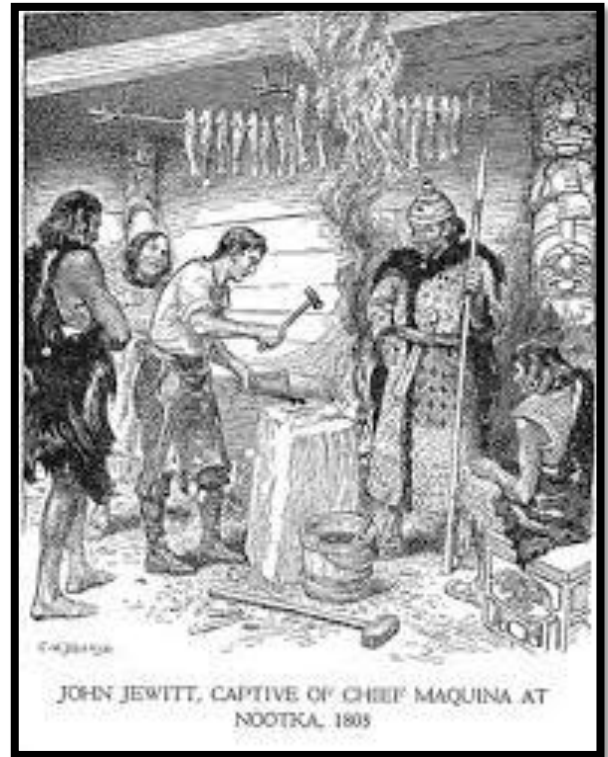
It is difficult to fathom the concept of slavery and what life must have been like for captives but, on March 22, 1803, events occurred that would paint a vivid picture of life as a slave of the Nootka. On that date, John Rodgers Jewitt, an armourer/blacksmith aboard the American ship *Boston*, was captured by Nootka warriors and enslaved for 28 months. Nootka warriors captured the entire crew of the *Boston* and killed every man but two. Jewitt was spared because of his skills as a metal worker. He was able to convince Maquinna, king of the Nootka, to pardon another man by telling Maquinna that sailmaker John Thompson was his father.

The Nootka had no concept of metallurgy but they highly prized knives, fishhooks, ornaments and other metal implements Jewitt and his "father" were able to produce.

In 1807 Jewett published *A Narrative of the Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt, only survivor of the crew of the ship Boston, during a captivity of nearly three years among the savages of Nootka Sound*. The journal is a fascinating account of life as a Nootka slave. In a broader sense, it is a first-hand, in-depth perspective on the Nootka way of life.

I took the opportunity of a dreary day on Vancouver Island's eastern shore to read the entire journal, from which I pulled some compelling tidbits:

- Jewitt gained favour with Maquinna, who he sometimes referred to as “chief”, and other times as “king” with lesser leaders being called “chiefs”. Maquinna gained stature and wealth as a result of possessing Jewitt’s metal implements so his safety, and his enslavement, were both assured.
- Jewitt learned the Nootka language while in captivity and gradually adopted their clothing and customs. The more he took on the Nootka’s appearance and speech, the greater was his acceptance and treatment.
- Much of the journal describes the daily life of the Nootka – hunting, food preparation, dress, family interaction and spiritual rituals all play out in real-time as Jewitt lived among the “savages”, as he called them.
- One ritual particularly well described, is that of hunting and dressing a bear. The animal was obviously revered by the Nootka - when one was killed, they would clean it, set it in the king’s house and dress it in the king’s headdress. After much ceremony the bear was then carved up, boiled, and eaten, “to great rejoicing throughout the village”.
- Once he had the full confidence of the king, Maquinna took Jewitt to a neighbouring village and had him choose a wife. Jewitt chose the 17-year-old daughter of a chief, who Maquinna paid a *bride price* for on his behalf. In his journal, Jewitt alleged that he was ordered to marry under penalty of death for both him and his “father”, but that story is likely a result of the cultural mores of the time. Other witnesses say that Jewitt had a passionate love for his bride.
- *"Reduced to this sad extremity, with death on the one side, and matrimony on the other, I thought proper to choose what appeared to me the least of the two evils".* (I call bullshit!)
- On one occasion, Jewitt was ordered to participate in a night-time raid on a village identified as A-y-chart. He said he took four captives, which Maquinna allowed him to keep as his own "as a favour".
- On December 21, 1803, the Nootka held a celebration to their god Quahootze, “to return him their thanks for his past, and implore his future favours.” Jewitt described the Nootka in his journal that day as; “ignorant beings, unacquainted with (Christian) religion or humanity”. Four days later, on December 25th, Jewitt and Thompson spent the day “reading the bible and praying to their god for their release”.
- On the 15th of January 1805 the entire village awoke in the middle of the night “in considerable consequence of an eclipse of the moon”, which the people interpreted as “a great cod-fish endeavouring to swallow her.”
- Just before his rescue, Jewitt was asked to file the teeth of the king's elder brother. He did so without understanding why but found out it was to enable the chief to bite off the nose



of a new wife who refused to sleep with him. Jewitt unsuccessfully attempted to dissuade the chief from carrying out this traditional punishment. The unfortunate mutilated girl was returned to her family.

On July 19, 1805 Jewitt was rescued by the crew of the brig *Lydia*. Upon hearing Jewitt's story, the captain of the ship was inclined to execute Maquinna and his chiefs, but Jewitt convinced him that bloodshed would lead to more harm of future ships visiting the island.

Before he returned to Massachusetts, Jewitt went on shore to meet with his former captor as old friends. Maquinna promised to raise Jewitt's five-month-old son as his own.

-

Slavery is a horrendous crime as seen through 21st century eyes. But, reading Jewitt's journal description of Nootka slavery, it seems that the practice was integral to the survival and cultural growth of the Nootka people. Indigenous slavery seems to have been practiced like the domestication of one tribe over another. Enslaved people's movement and habits were restricted but, provided they performed a service to the dominant tribe, the captives were not ill-treated. As the captives assimilated, they became part of the greater tribe.



From a broad historical point of view, the Codfish devours the Herring to become a greater fish.

Two Fish - Rough - Emily Carr

A Dull Edge

March 7, 2019
Victoria, BC

“If you want something done, give it to a busy person.”

Victoria is a beautiful city. I could wax on about the harbour and the architecture, about the arts and the quality of the restaurants. But that is not why we are here. This trip is about finding flaws.

Victoria, and Vancouver Island in general, don't have many shortcomings but the one that sticks out like a sore thumb is sloth. This sign, erected on Douglas Avenue, pretty much sums it up.

Everywhere we went on the island there were people lolling about, often in a cloud of green smoke. People, young and old, seemingly employed at nothing more than stargazing.

We observed one bohemian young couple sipping overpriced coffee in a downtown café. Both were obviously stoned to a dull edge. He was telling She how he spent his days; “I do nothing but draw”, He said. She seemed to agree that that was a worthy pursuit.

Watching them I wondered; Who paid for their coffee? Who pays for their healthcare and their welfare and, who will support them in their old age? Then I remembered, I must get back home and file my Income Tax return.

Vancouver Island is all about green and sustainability, but if we are going to find solutions for climate change, or fix world poverty, it won't be done by dope-smoking hippies chained to trees.

Innovators will change the world. People who get up in the morning with clear minds and a passion for excellence.



Don't bother looking for them on the left coast, they will probably be taking a nap.

Things that go Bump in the Night

March 7, 2018
The Birdcages, BC

It isn't hard to find literal dirt in an antique store, artifacts are often covered in dust, but figurative dirt isn't as easy to come by. We trudged through five or six stores and found a few things we couldn't live without but nothing that told a story about human failings.

We had visited every antique store we were able to pull up on the web but, as we passed through an old Victoria neighbourhood called *The Birdcages*, a little shop popped up on a corner. There was one lonely parking spot in front, so I wheeled in.

A tinkling mechanical bell sounded our arrival as we walked through the front door. The lady proprietor acknowledged our presence and went back to work tinkering with some broken object.

At first glance the shop looked like most Victoria antique stores. There was fussy glassware lining shelves, and portraits of long-dead grannies and soldiers hanging on the walls, in handsome frames. There were the usual mantle clocks, ornate cabinets, and objects whose purpose has long since vanished, but not much of interest to our tastes.

One cabinet with small wares had an ancient opium pipe which the proprietor offered to me for half price. I thought it would make a good prop for one of my previous journals, so it found its way into my pocket.



Once the shop-owner had sized us up a bit she invited us into a back room, which had been previously unlit. Before turning on the light, she prepared us by stating that she had recently purchased the estate of an eccentric Victoria collector, who

had travelled the world gathering macabre objects. She placed a caveat on entry into the room that what we were about to see might be a little disturbing.

Now we were getting somewhere!

Turning on the single dull bulb didn't much elevate our ability to see what was in the room. Objects scattered around the floor and propped up on the walls were shrouded in gloom, which sharpened the sense of foreboding that was creeping up on me.

The first item that emerged from the shadows was an ancient dentist's drill. The instrument was on a floor-mounted stand with a mechanical foot peddle and a flywheel, attached to a dental drill by way of belts, pulleys and cable. My teeth ached looking at it.

Many of the items on display were of medical origin. There were bone saws, forceps and scalpels, all of which were mildly disturbing, but when I got to the proctologist's instruments, I had to end my investigation of the *healing* section.

What greeted me next didn't *ease my queasy*. Lined up on narrow shelves were a haphazard collection of specimen jars, each containing a dead creature floating in septic embalming fluid. I found myself staring at a bloated frog, who stared back at me through milky white eyes. Jars, with lids that said "Mayonnaise" and "Fletcher's Jam", contained turtles and a snake. Each display was creepier than the next but the one that bothered me most was a canning sealer with a captive larva, roughly the size, shape and colour of a six-week old banana, floating in brine.



While I was examining this house of horrors, Bear had found an ancient door with a wonderful patina to hold her attention - I didn't want to distract her. I went back to the grisly display, like a moth to a flame.

There were three framed mourning wreaths on the far wall. I had seen one of these ghastly, yet ornate, weavings of human hair and fabric several years ago, and it has haunted me ever since. Now I was staring at three of them - I may never sleep again.

There were probably more things that *go bump in the night* lurking in the shadows at the back of the store, but I had had enough. Whoever the creepy collector was, he had succeeded in his quest to shock and amaze, even after his own death.



***From ghoulies and ghosties
And long-legged beasties
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord, deliver us!***

Traditional Scottish Poem

The Dark Side

March 8, 2018
Victoria, BC

I don't know why we decided to look under rocks and in forbidden crannies this trip. It could be that we have not yet emerged from the longest, coldest winter on record, or the fact that the dregs of some business deals are haunting my "retirement". Whatever the reason, digging up dirt has been therapeutic.

In fact – it is a little unsettling how much I enjoyed seeing Vancouver Island from the perspective of

The Dark Side



Unattended Garbage on Cowichen Bay - R Paton