



Walking Tour Six: Gorge Park Area

Begin the walk at Esquimalt Gorge Park on Tillicum Road. This road takes its name from the Indian greeting "Klahowya Tilikum" meaning "How do you do friend." *Tilikum* was the name of the small boat, essentially an Indian dugout, that Captain J.C. Voss left Victoria aboard in 1901 on his historic 3 year, 40,000 mile journey to England. *Tilikum* was restored by Captain Victor Jacobson in the 1940s.

The Gorge Bridge has undergone many changes since the original 1848 single log crossing. The present bridge is the sixth design. Esquimalt and the Municipality of Saanich maintain the bridge.

View the midden site under the bridge. The First Nations used the Gorge waterway as a traditional food-gathering place. Read *Songhees Pictorial* by Grant Keddie for more information about the First Nations People.

To learn more about the history of the waterway and park read the very entertaining *The Gorge of Summers Gone* by Dennis Minaker.

Walk the paths and enjoy the views of the historic Gorge waterway. The B. C. Electric Railway Company purchased the land from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1904 and opened their amusement park in 1905.

From the day the park opened 26 July 1905 it was the gathering place for the residents of Greater Victoria. May 24th, Queen Victoria's birthday, was the day set aside for the annual Gorge Regatta. There were canoe races and marathon swims, and along the shoreline the big houses opened their doors to serve tea and strawberries with cream.

In 1907, the Takata Gardens opened. Yoshitaro Kishida, a partner in the gardens, brought his father Isaburo Kishida to Esquimalt from Yokohama, Japan to design the gardens. Kishida also designed the Japanese Gardens at Hatley Park and Butchart Gardens.

The one-acre Takata Gardens had many trees and shrubs imported from Japan and were highly respected for their authenticity and beauty.

The Tea Gardens were in operation until the beginning of the Second World War when the Takata family was relocated, along with other Japanese families, to the interior of the province and beyond. The Tea Gardens closed and the grounds fell victim to neglect and vandalism.

Today, enjoy the beautiful beginnings of a restored Japanese style garden. If you look closely some of the original plantings can be seen.

Walk through the park and explore the paths alongside the newly reclaimed Gorge Creek. This \$1.3 million dollar project set the standard for environmental leadership.

Cross the wooden footbridge to Sioux Place named for *HMCS Sioux*, a Royal Canadian Navy "V" Class Destroyer of Second World War and Korean War fame.

Walk south, turn left on Craigflower Road and continue east to Arcadia Street. It is a fair hike. On your right, the Gorge Vale Golf Course was laid out in the 1930s. For information call the Pro Shop at 250-386-3401 or simply stop in for a great lunch!

A unique feature of this golf course is the Veterans' Cemetery, called "God's Acre," located in the centre of the course. This National Historic Site can be reached by Colville Road. It is open daily and is a wonderful place to visit.

Cross Tillicum Road and Craigflower Road at the light and continue east on Craigflower Road.

876 Craigflower Road was the home of James Elrick, Reeve (Mayor) of Esquimalt from 1927 to 1931. James Elrick came to Esquimalt in 1910 from Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Elrick Place in the Rockheights subdivision is named for him.

Turn left on Arcadia Street and walk north towards the Gorge waters. Cross Selkirk Avenue and take a quick peek at 1010 Arcadia Street built about 1914 for Bodo and Fernadine Theodora Herberta Maria Von Alvensleben. Von Alvensleben and his brother were early realtors and investors in the Victoria



Clockwise from left: **Gorge Bridge, Gorge Regatta and Takata Gardens**

area. During the First World War there was great concern that German spies were residing in the house. Visit the Esquimalt Archives to learn more about this story!

Return to Selkirk Avenue, make a right turn and proceed west. This street was named after the Earl of Selkirk who actively promoted immigration to the Red River Settlement near Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In 1914, contractor George Young built 934 Selkirk Avenue, a ten-room house costing \$7500, for George E. Moore, a clerk in the Customs Parcel Post Department. The original property owner was Ralph Randall of the B.C. Hardware Co. Ltd.

Make a right turn at Uganda Street. This street was renamed in 1946 to honour *HMCS Uganda* launched 7 August 1941 at Newcastle-on-Tyne and outfitted by the Government of Uganda at a cost of 10,000 pounds. The Art Deco style home at 318 Uganda Street was built in 1947 for Herbert E. Stocks. There are several homes in Esquimalt built in this style.



Clockwise from left: **James Elrick, 876 Craigflower Road and 934 Selkirk**

Continue to McNaughton Street named for Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton, Chief of General Staff, Canadian Army, 1929 to 1935. He is remembered for his recommendation to cut \$2 million dollars from the navy budget, a move that had it happened would have seen the abolishment of the Royal Canadian Navy. A pleasant view up the Gorge can be seen from the foot of the street.

Walk west to Tillicum Road. The Gorge Pointe Pub is located on your right. Go in for refreshments and a rest. Enjoy the display of early photographs of the Gorge area. From 1926 to 1938 the James Bay Rugby Association used the original building on the site as their clubhouse.

Cross Tillicum Road to the entrance to Esquimalt Gorge Park. The walk concludes here. Buses are available. The Harbour Ferry leaves from the wharf on the Saanich (north) side of the Gorge Bridge. For schedule information phone 250-708-0201.



Gorge Park



Written by Sherri K. Robinson. Photos: Esquimalt Municipal Archives and Josh McCulloch.