

Nauticapedia.ca Project Article

Caretaker of Twin Islands Lodge - A Retreat for Royalty and Celebrities in the Strait of Georgia

by George Duddy 2018

Introduction

Shirley Whitehouse spent six years, from 1958 - 1964, on Twin Islands at the northern end of Strait of Georgia where she and her then-husband George Lott were caretakers and hosts of a magnificent log lodge—Twin Islands Lodge—frequented by well-known royal and celebrity guests. The lodge also served as home for their three young children.



Location of Twin Islands Lodge with Shirley's children: Richard, George and Carmen

Early History of the Island

The two islands, now joined by a causeway and henceforth in this article referred to as either Twin Islands or the island, was originally named Ulloa Island by Spanish explorers Galiano and Valdes in 1792. The details of recorded ownership of the island are beyond the scope of this article other than it was originally divided into five crown grants that were issued starting in 1896. After being owned by a hand logger, it was purchased in 1912 or 1913 by the Reverend Harpur Colville Nixon, a well-to-do Anglo-Irish gentleman. A strange story of possible murder emerges from the murky details of an injury that Nixon sustained aboard his boat anchored between the Islands in 1915. Before his passing, he insisted that no investigation into the details of this incident be pursued.

The story, however, unfolds in detail in the on-line article *The Mysterious Deaths of Harpur and Margaret Nixon of Twin Islands BC* by Jeanette Taylor.

Richard Magill Andrews: Builder of the Lodge

After the islands had been partially logged of their first growth they were purchased by importer Richard Magill Andrews in 1936. He was responsible for the construction of the spacious nine-bedroom lodge (7 guest rooms plus 2 servant rooms) and the out-buildings that are still in active use. During the war years, he commuted between the Lodge and Vancouver aboard his beautiful yacht *Twin Isles*. Andrews owned the lodge until 1956.

Richard Andrews was born in the United States in 1885 and, as young boy, moved to China and a few years later to Japan with his father where his father Henry Andrews founded a trading company with Edward W. George: the Andrews & George Company Ltd. He lived most of his early life in Japan and Korea only returning to the U.S. for two years to receive training in mining at the Michigan College of Mines.



Andrews & George Company Ltd. Tokyo Office 1915 - with permission from Wendy Andrews

After completing this training Andrews lived in Korea working in gold mining and importing mining machinery. He was married to Ethel Hoskings in 1909 in Yokohama. Ethel and her father had an adventure en route to the wedding as they were shipwrecked off the coast of California while journeying to their departure port of Los Angeles to embark aboard a cruise liner. After the wedding, the couple moved to Korea where two of their three children were born. In the late 1918s they moved to Tokyo where Richard worked in his father's business, taking over management control after his father died in 1919.

In 1922, Richard became embroiled with Japanese officials and was under suspicion of spying. After taking some photographs from his boat of Japanese military facilities, Richard's house was searched by Japanese officials and he was charged with espionage and fined (operating a motor boat without a licence - they could not make any other charges stick), an act that was protested by U.S. consular officials. Later, the Andrews' business was destroyed by an earthquake and resulting tsunami that levelled Tokyo in 1923. Overcoming adversity, the business was rebuilt and thrived with established offices both in Tokyo and New York.

After Japan entered World War II, the company assets and bank accounts were seized. Andrews anticipated this and made plans for the evacuation of his family in advance, leaving the company in the hands of his employees. He spent most of the war "hunkered down" at his lodge on Twin Islands. Happily, when he returned to Japan in 1947, he found many opportunities existed and with his business still intact the company soon flourished again.

The Andrew's Lodge was completed in 1938/9. According to Jim Spilsbury it was built on property purchased "from old George Macauley, a hand logger" by a Lund contractor. Spilsbury (a famous BC radio manufacturer, airline pioneer, artist and writer) was contracted to install a radio set in each bedroom and a radio telephone for the lodge, as well as one aboard the *Twin Isles*. Spilsbury's report about the lodge is as follows:

"He let a contract with a young guy from Lund, Rick Rasmussen, to build him a fourteen-bedroom log cabin on the neck between the two islands. He was a very trusting old man. He'd meet you once, look you in the eye and either he would trust you or not. Half the time he got stung. This young guy from Lund did a beautiful job, put in power plants, central oil heating, every luxury."



Richard and Ethel Andrews on the beach with one of their beloved Irish wolf hounds - beach log is representative of first growth original timber - with permission from Wendy Andrews

Despite the fact that Andrews was a naturalized Canadian citizen, he was treated with a degree of suspicion by local citizens throughout the war due to his Japanese connections fuelled by the hysteria created by enemy submarine attacks on the coast and associated fear of invasion. On one occasion, Andrews had Spilsbury accompany him to a meeting with a local official during which he explained that his radio-telephone was for local use and could not be used to connect directly to Japan, except through an exchange.

Although Shirley never met Andrews, she did host a visit to the Lodge by his widow Ethel and her son Richard Magill Andrews Jr. in 1963. Her guests later presented her with an album of magnificent photographs of the lodge. The montage at the head of the article showing Shirley's children and the five following photographs are part of this document.



The Lodge with vessels at the dock - forest is mainly second growth



The interior of the Lodge



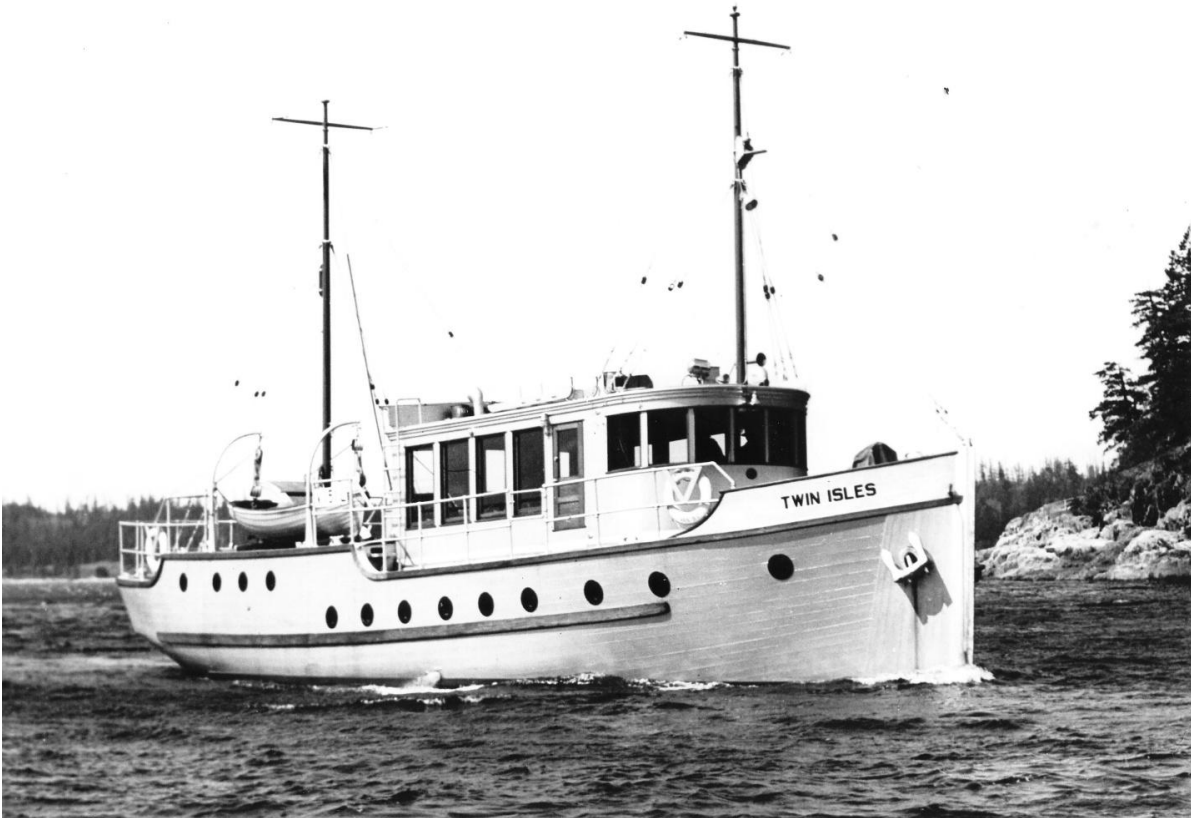
Dining room - most furniture was constructed on the island except for the chesterfield and easy chairs



Corner showing log joints with sign above door made by varnishing wool thread onto the wood surface and signed by Alex and Don.

The verse reads as follows:

“Built where nature fondly smiles
Tempting as a mermaid's wiles
Peaceful view the soul beguiles
Home at last sweet home Twin Isles”



Andrews' beautiful yacht - his second so named. She was equipped with an expensive radio-telephone from Spilsbury which was stripped out when requisitioned by the government for war service. Soon afterwards they decided she was not required and the silenced vessel was returned to Andrews.

According to Shirley's notes, Andrews sold the lodge in 1956. For a time he lived on his third yacht the wellknown *Fifer*. The two *Twin Isles* and the *Fifer* were registered under his company Maquinna Investments Ltd. Andrews passed away in 1960 followed by his wife in 1972. The trading firm Andrews & George, which his father co-founded, still exists in Vancouver today and is owned by his grandson John Harrison operating as an importer of fine Japanese tea.



The *Fifer* - Powell River Company photo of company yachts - photo courtesy John Campbell

Shirley's Employment with Max Bell

The island had three owners during Shirley's employment as caretaker. The first was well-known Canadian businessman and philanthropist Max Bell, mentioned in author Peter C. Newman's *Canadian Establishment*. Apparently, Bell co-owned the island with Calgary oilman Cliff Walker. Shirley recalled Cliff and Ruth's summer stay at the lodge with their five children—four boys and one girl. Bell was at heart a newspaperman. He inherited the *Calgary Albertan* and its great debt from his father. Nonetheless, his strong business acumen and investments in the Alberta oil patch proved very successful and allowed him to expand his interests in the newspaper industry and other large Canadian companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway. Eventually his newspaper empire extended to ownership of many of Canada's major papers including the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Victoria Colonist*. Wealthy, and with a passion for race horses, he along with his long term friend oilman Frank McMahon and another investor friend and Hollywood star Bing Crosby, had the winning steed in the Irish Derby in 1956. Shirley remembers Bell as a kind and thoughtful person.

Bell purchased the lodge shortly after acquiring a famous American power yacht the *Southern Seas* in 1957. The original name of the boat in 1930 was *Acania*. She was rumoured (presumably by yacht brokers) to have been employed by Al Capone for rum running (supposedly the first two letters of the boat's name were based on the gangster's initials). Bell

had the east coast yacht sailed to Vancouver in May 1957 via the Panama Canal. After initially operating from the Royal Vancouver Yacht club on leisure outings, she was later used for chartering and commuting to the Twin Islands. When he registered the former *Southern Seas* in Canada he changed her name to *Campana*, which in Spanish, is "Bell". (She was the second vessel owned by Bell of that name). The first was an ex-RCN Fairmile motor launch later renamed *Jormholm* when acquired by former hockey star and executive and construction owner "Red" Dutton. Shirley's employment on the island was a consequence of her then-husband George Lott's employment as mate aboard the *Campana* by Captain Bill Mounce. George had nautical training in Germany prior to immigrating to Canada. He, Shirley and infant son George junior moved into the Lodge's caretaker house in 1958.



Bill Mounce, captain of the *Campana*, and his wife Helen - photo from Shirley's collection

Although Shirley and George were often required to host famous people such as Bing Crosby and Bob Hope who visited while on fishing trips on the *Campana*, their biggest challenge and accomplishment was hosting the Twin Islands Conference in 1959. This event, which Bell was encouraged to host by Lester Pearson, was hoped to be the start of a series of conferences where prominent Canadians and Americans got together to discuss cross-border subjects in a private relaxed setting emulating the style of the more well-known peace conferences that had been started in 1957 in Pugwash, Nova Scotia, by industrialist Cyrus Eaton. Both the *Campana* and the *Jormholm* were used to ferry over twenty invited guests to the three-day event and to supplement the Lodge's accommodation during the event.

G. Max Bell

Host for the first annual Twin Isles Conference, Mr. Bell is president of F.P. Publications Ltd., a group of seven Canadian newspapers extending from Victoria to Ottawa. A graduate of McGill University, and resident of Calgary, Mr. Bell is a leading figure in the Alberta oil industry. As a partner in Alberta Ranches, he has brought many fine horses to North America from abroad, and seen them run in the Derby at Epsom Downs as well as many of America's leading stake races. Other hobbies include low-handicap golf, yachting, professional football, badminton and the collection of early Canadiana in art.



Biography from Conference Agenda - G Max Bell
Host of Twin Isles Conference 1959



Hon. Lester B. Pearson

Internationally known to diplomats, statesmen and press as "Mike," Mr. Pearson is present leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and, as such, of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in the House of Commons at Ottawa. Educated at Toronto and Oxford, he holds (at last count) honorary degrees from 14 universities, from Yale to Ceylon. He was Canada's ambassador to Washington in 1945 and 1946; Chairman of NATO council in 1951-52, and President of the seventh General Assembly of the United Nations in 1952-53. In 1957 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his vital role in preserving the peace following the Suez crisis. His book, "Democracy in World Politics," has been widely praised. Although his hobbies are listed as golf and curling, his private ambition is said to be the managing of a World Series pennant winner.

Biography from Conference Agenda - Hon. Lester Pearson - Pearson encouraged Bell to Host the Conference. There were of twenty two participants

This is Shirley's note that she penned on the back of her copy of the conference agenda.

"Mr. Bell's dream was to have Twin Isles Conference every year – a copy of Eaton's Conference in Pugwash NS. But it was only held once. George Sr. Lott did all the guiding for fishing Shirley Lott did catering and Hostess work."

U.S., Canadian Participants Praise Twin Isles Parley

VANCOUVER (CP) — If the hand-hewn log walls of Twin Isles Lodge were able, they'd tell some tall tales—and true—of the first Twin Islands conference.

As it is, it's up to the 20 United States and Canadian men who attended the three-day private sessions to spread the benefits of their discussions among the peoples of the two nations.

From their comment as they returned to Vancouver, they will spread those benefits far and wide — benefits measurable in a greater understanding of each other's ways, likes, dislikes, hopes and fears.

The group, representing politics, business, newspapers, education and labor from both countries, met as guests of Calgary publisher and oilman G. Max Bell. In the quiet, informal atmosphere of Mr. Bell's lodge on Twin Isles, 100 miles north of here in the Strait of Georgia, they discussed Canadian - American relations.

TALKS FRANK, FRIENDLY

Those travelling aboard two private yachts which took them to and from the island hideaway said in interviews Monday that discussions were frank, friendly and without friction and in all cases highly successful.

Bruce Hutchison of Victoria, a noted Canadian editor and author, summed up the general feeling:

The conference had given the United States participants a better perspective of Canada, its problems, hopes and fears; has given the Canadians a better understanding of the U.S. attitudes;

and most of all had brought a personal contact that brings more than the written word.

Measuring the benefits would be difficult, he said.

"It's like throwing a pebble into a pond. You never know how fast or how far the ripples will go."

Basil L. Walters, editor of the Chicago Daily News, said: "It was tremendously useful to me as a United States editor. After the first day I felt I had a better knowledge of Canada than I had gained in all the years I've been coming to this country."

NEW OUTLOOK

Mr. Walters said he will return home with a new outlook towards Canadian news in his newspaper. It would not stress items for the sake of getting Canadian items into the paper, but would pick good domestic stories in Canada and would try to background and explain them so that its readers have a better understanding of their northern neighbor.

The background gained for instance, by Edward T. McCormick, president of the American Stock Exchange in New York City, would no doubt be passed on to the persons Mr. McCormick deals with in financial circles.

Mr. Bell, who last December decided he had two "facilities"—his secluded lodge and luxurious yacht—to offer for such a conference, said he felt the meeting had accomplished what he intended, free and frank discussion that tightened bonds of friendship, at least among those directly involved.

It had been an experiment, apparently successful, and it would be repeated.

"I don't know at what intervals," Mr. Bell said, "but I expect we'll do this again."

Excerpt from the *Edmonton Journal* Sept 16, 1959

During the Bell ownership a wide variety of guests, who stopped by on the *Campana's* charter trips, were welcomed at the Lodge. These included celebrities such as Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Phil Harris. Shirley remembers Crosby as a "generous tipper". She shares a couple of incidents about that time that remain firmly wedged in her mind. One of the guests at the Lodge, a trained dietician, raved about Shirley's chocolate cake and asked for the recipe. Shirley did not let on that she had taken it from her freezer after making it from a commercial cake mix several weeks earlier. A scarier incident involved a beautiful new dress that her mother had made for her to wear when serving guests at the Lodge. A serviceman from the Finning Company was working on the diesel power plant—he had removed the safety guards on the

machinery for servicing—when Shirley entered the building to call him for a meal. Unfortunately she ventured too close to the machinery and the skirt of the dress was caught in the fan and swept off her body! Luckily the serviceman grabbed Shirley before she could join the same fate as the dress. Shaken—and with slip showing—she retreated rapidly for a replacement so the meal could be served. Understandably, she never told her mother about the half-hour life of the dress. Bell's wide-ranging activities left little time for enjoying his island retreat and his yacht so both were sold soon after the conference. Although not privy to details of the transfer Shirley thought the Lodge was briefly owned in 1962, by Prince Joannes von Thurn of Germany, who had been investing in British Columbia real estate. Shirley and her husband hosted a honeymooning couple on the island for two weeks in 1962. As their guests referred to themselves as the Count and Countess von Thurn, Shirley thought they were relatives of the Prince. The island was soon-after passed on to another couple of German nobility.



Count and Countess von Thurn in 1962 with a nice Spring salmon - photo from Shirley's collection

Retainer of the Margrave of Baden

Berthold, the Margrave of Baden, purchased the island in 1962. His wife Margravine Theodora was Prince Phillip's sister. The purchase of the island by the House of Baden paved the way for subsequent visits by Queen Elizabeth: The first visit was when Royal Yacht *Britannia* anchored off the island in 1971 and a second visit during a retreat from the royal visit to Canada of 1994 when Prince Phillip later made a sojourn to the NWT on his own.

During Shirley's employment the German royal couple spent their summers on the island arriving via floatplane from Vancouver after their long trans-Atlantic flight from Germany. They loved the seclusion and the fishing. In 1963 they were joined by their daughter Princess Margarita and son Prince Ludwig. Berthold died in 1963 and ownership of the island passed to his son Maximilian. The family continued to visit the island until it was eventually sold in 1997.



Margrave Berthold of Baden, his wife Margravine Theodora of Baden (Prince Philip's sister), daughter Princess Margarita, Shirley and son Prince Ludwig of Baden about to board a floatplane June 1963. Shirley was pregnant with her daughter at the time. In accordance with the Margrave's wishes her daughter Carmen was later christened in front of the fireplace at the Lodge - photo from Shirley's collection.

As a testament to the cordial relationship, far beyond any business arrangements, are the private letters and greeting cards that Shirley preserves in her care—her relationship with the

family was a warm and friendly one that continued after she had left the island. Her relationship was particularly strong with Margravine Theodora and her daughter Margarita. Most of the contents of the documents are kept private but Shirley permitted publication of this amusing comment from one of the Margravine's letters regarding the contemplation of a speculated visit to the island by her famous uncle Lord Mountbatten:

"Lord Mountbatten would have kept you very busy. I have known him tuck away 28 Frankfurters for breakfast! He is hardly older than me, but our appetites are not quite the same. Unfortunately, he had a job to do also on the other coast and said that Canada was much too large to cross over for just a fortnight. I know he is right but it is such a pity."

Shirley has many interesting stories during her employment on Twin Islands. One involves the tracking down of a pair of Irish wolf hounds to extend Andrews' tradition of having this breed on the island. A story that illustrates the Margrave's love for birds involves the creation of a detour around a humming bird nest near the path to the dock. Ladders were installed to isolate the stretch of path near the nest and walkers were required to descend to the beach to continue their journey. Another story involves her loyal family dog Rex and some mountain sheep that had been donated to the island. Soon after their arrival the sheep were found dead in their pen and Rex was observed licking blood from the carcasses. Poor Rex was summarily tried and executed on the spot but it was later determined the sheep had been shot by poachers or other unknown gunmen.

Personally, her most scary incident occurred when a log perched on the rocks above the beach tumbled down and swept her young son George into the water, dragging him below the surface. He was rescued and flown to Campbell River where seventeen stitches were used to close up a head wound. George suffered no long-lasting effects and today is a valuable employee of BC Hydro.



Prince Tomislav of Yugoslavia and his bride, formerly Princess Margarita of Baden, talking with Prince Philip after their wedding at Schloss Salem, Germany. Photo: AP

In the spring of 1964 Shirley and her family resigned their position and moved to Vancouver Island to take care of the needs of a growing family, including exposure to a proper education system. In 1966 her marriage with George Lott Sr. ended and she was left to raise the three children on her own.

Subsequent Events on Twin Islands

Detailed coverage of events subsequent to Shirley's employment on the island is largely outside the scope of this article. Margrave Maximilian's family continued to own and visit the Lodge until 1997. His uncle Prince Philip and HRH Queen Elizabeth visited in 1971 and 1994. The island was then sold to logger Mike Jenks and the well-known Vancouver investor Peter Shields (Seaspan Island Tug). Their plans to clear-cut the island's second growth provoked outrage and a well-organized resistance, which attracted the notice of an anonymous buyer who purchased it from them and relieved the threat of logging.

Conclusion

In an age where people's eyes are glued to smart phones, it is interesting to listen to real people and hear their stories. I discovered this small part of Shirley's unique life at a brown bag lunch which I attended at our local church. At age 82, she continues to live an active and caring life. With children and grandchildren to keep tabs on, she still finds time to help others in the world. Over the last few years, for example, she has made dozens of quilts that have been distributed to families in Africa by Lutheran World Relief. I am grateful to her for sharing this story about a unique location and people who lived near us but few know much about. Most of us in the nautical community know about or have observed the fabulous vessels mentioned in the article but few knew where they were going or whence they came. For Shirley, it was a remarkable experience that she continues to fondly recall.



Shirley Whitehouse and the author (George Duddy) September 2018

References and Acknowledgments

The chief source of material for this article are documents provided by Shirley Whitehouse and her personal recollections of her life at Twin Islands. Most of the books, websites, archival sources and articles used for reference purposes are mentioned directly in the article.

Spilsbury's Coast by Howard White and Jim Spilsbury provided valuable information about the building of the lodge. On-line articles (searchable by title): *The Mysterious Deaths of Harpur and Margaret Nixon of Twin Islands* by Jeanette Taylor provided background on the early settlement of the island and *The Twin Islands Story* by the Denman Community Forest Cooperative provided insight into its subsequent history. The Andrews and George Company website, as well as the Andrews family tree on Ancestry.ca compiled by Wendy Andrews, were useful sources of information on the Andrews family. Material on vessels was obtained from the Nauticapedia.ca vessel database.

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