

By Robert Taylor, President, Oak Bay Heritage Foundation | Photos provided by the Oak Bay Heritage Foundation

Stir The Pot

The view of the Heritage Foundation is that Oak Bay stirs the pot and provides a living example of the social success of corner stores and restaurants.



For thousands of years, the diet of Lekwungen-speaking people, living in the village of Sitchanalth, which is now known as Willows Beach, was balanced through the wide variety of local, seasonal, food sources. We think of salmon and camas immediately, but also whale and seal, and berries and other plants. In addition, the intertidal seafood included clams, other crustaceans, and eggs; and deer and elk were hunted.

In the settler community, Oak Bay's neighbourhood family restaurants and grocery stores have provided social cohesion, where neighbours, in the words of Noel Coward, "meet

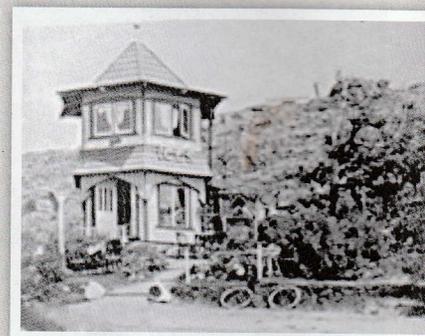
coming out of shops". The restaurants and stores, with their familiar faces, provide a sense of belonging, and become heritage-valued nuclei, creating micro neighbourhoods. The restaurants are more than food providers; they become community meeting places.

The Oak Bay Grocery and Post Office opened in 1912, in the building that is now home to the **Oaks Restaurant**.



Willows Park Grocery opened circa 1912, located at the corner of Eastdowne Road and Dalhousie Street, continues serving the neighbourhood.

The Shoal Bay Tea Room served teas and ices to McNeill Bay campers, 1913 to the 1930s. The building permit describes a two-storey tea kiosk; over the next decade a dwelling was constructed attached to the kiosk. The marvellous part of this local history is that the tower-like kiosk is extant, hiding in plain sight on Beach Drive.



Casey's Market, at the corner of St. Patrick Street and Central Avenue, operated for approximately 80 years, closed recently. It was demolished, but Liv Café and Bistro continues the tradition.



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