

BOWEN ISLAND

# Heritage Walking Tour

*Take a walk through  
Bowen's memorable past*



*"Nowhere else in the vicinity of Vancouver, except on city beaches; do crowds gather in such numbers on hot summer days as on Bowen Island — and there is room for them all."*

*Vancouver Province newspaper, July 19, 1925*

**B**OWEN ISLAND, ONCE KNOWN AS THE "Happy Isle", has a long history as a resort for people from the Vancouver area. This walking tour will take you back in time to many of the sites that provided enjoyment and relaxation for thousands of summer visitors.

Years ago, First Nations people from the Squamish tribe arriving on the island called the land *Xwlil'xhwm*. Europeans began to settle on Bowen in the 1870s and they did whatever they could to make a living—fishing, farming, logging, mining, working at the brick-yards and the shingle bolt camp. By the 1890s, holiday visitors could rent tent cabins set up under the trees by local residents.

In 1900, Captain John A. Cates purchased land in Deep Bay and Snug Cove. When he organized the Terminal Steamship Company Ltd. in 1902 and purchased the 300 passenger *Britannia*, the island began its history as a resort for the day excursionist. For 20 years, Capt. Cates developed his resort. In 1920, he sold his property to the Union Steamship Company of British Columbia who continued Cates' vigorous expansion program. During the summer months, thousands of people flocked to the island and Bowen became known as "the people's playground".

**Please use the foldout map at the back. Your route is superimposed on a 1945 Bowen Estates map and today's roads are not indicated.**

**The brochure photos show the sites as they appeared years ago.**

Many of the sites, such as the Union Steamship Co. General Store, the Orchard Cottages, the Causeway and Bridal Veil Falls are now part of Crippen Regional Park.

**Walking Tour Length: 2.5 km.  
Allow 1.5 to 2 hours for the circuit.**

**Y**OUR ROUTE TODAY BEGINS IN THE Davies Heritage Orchard. From the dock, walk part way up Government Road to Orchard Square. Turn left along the lane to enter the Orchard. Stop 1 is the first cottage on the right.

## STOP 1

### The Orchard Cottages

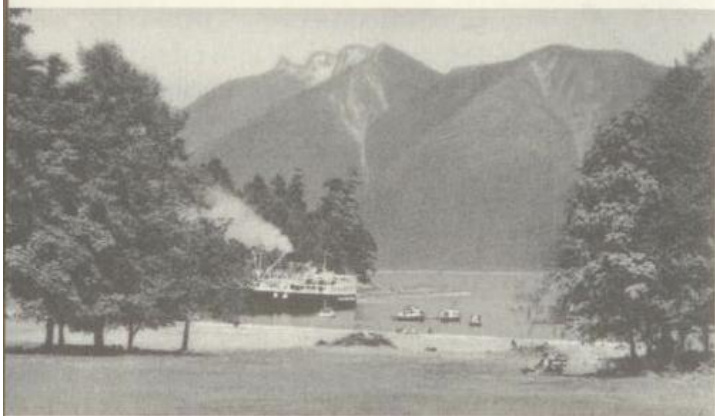
In 1887, William Davies planted an extensive orchard of apple, cherry, peach, pear and plum trees. Later he set up wooden-walled platforms covered by canvas tops among the trees to entice summer campers. Early island residents recall that "the orchard was jam full of trees and tents." Imagine how exciting it was for families to camp in such a setting.

In 1922, the Union Steamship Company bought the Davies Orchard and in 1928 they built 20 cottages to rent to vacationers. Summer cottage living was so pleasant that the same families returned every year to occupy these cottages from Easter to Thanksgiving. Only 12 cottages now remain.



Orchard Tents c.1890

**As you walk through the Orchard, look for the original fruit trees and their offspring. Can you find the chestnut and the giant cherry close to the boardwalk?**



L. Frank

No. 4 Picnic Grounds c.1930

At the boardwalk, turn right, cross the bridge and go into the field.

## STOP 2

### No. 4 Picnic Grounds

The Union Steamship Company maintained six picnic grounds and one of the largest was the No. 4 grounds. Woodwards, Spencers and the Seaforth Highlanders all came here for their annual picnics. When the Longshoreman's Union of 3000 strong arrived for their picnic, the Port of Vancouver closed for the day! Local residents were hired to prepare the grounds and fire up the outdoor stoves. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee awaited the picnickers arriving on the 10:00 a.m. boat.

Walk back along the boardwalk to Stop 3 at the cottage beside the USS Co. Marina.



Vancouver City Archives

Walkway at Head of Cove c.1930

## STOP 3

### Walkway at Head of Cove

A tamped earth path used to run from Government Road around the bay in front of the Orchard Cottages and mud flats to link up with picnic grounds No. 4, 5, and 6. On busy picnic days, crowds of people streamed along this path. In the evenings, lamps on concrete light standards were lit for a few hours and created a magical promenade for strollers.

Walk to the end of the boardwalk to Stop 4. Look across the street to the large Tudor style building.



Bowen Is. Historians

Union Steamship Company Store c.1925

## STOP 4

### a) The Union Steamship Company Store

The Union Steamship Company built its general store in 1924. Designed in the English Tudor style, it stocked much needed provisions and also housed the post office. Island residents depended on the general store for their supplies, mail and newspapers.

By the 1980s, the general store was neglected and threatened with demolition. Thanks to the dedicated and persistent efforts of concerned Island residents, the store was restored and moved from the road to its present position.

Standing in front of the cenotaph, take in the view of Snug Cove.



The Cenotaph c.1937

Vancouver Maritime Museum

#### b) The Cenotaph

The view of Snug Cove with its mud flats stretched behind the cenotaph. Once a gentle estuary formed by the depositing of fine silt from Davies Creek, abundant in reeds and grasses, it provided shelter for local water fowl and teemed with marine life typical of such an environment. This distinctive marine habitat, with its unique sounds and pungent smells, lives on in the memories of all who once wandered the mud flats.

The cenotaph was built in 1937 by members of the community assisted by the Bowen Island Royal Canadian Legion No. 150 to commemorate friends and neighbours who had given their lives in World War I.

*"When they built the base, they used old, single cot, metal bed springs for reinforcement. As they poured the concrete, we kids threw pennies in the cement."*—Cal Frost

Halfway between the dock and the cenotaph is the site of the first store in Snug Cove.

#### c) The Davies Store

In 1907, William Davies built a general store on Government Road where he sold groceries, fresh milk and the fruit from his orchard. Before Snug Cove was infilled to supply land for the marina parking lot we see today, the shoreline extended almost to the road.



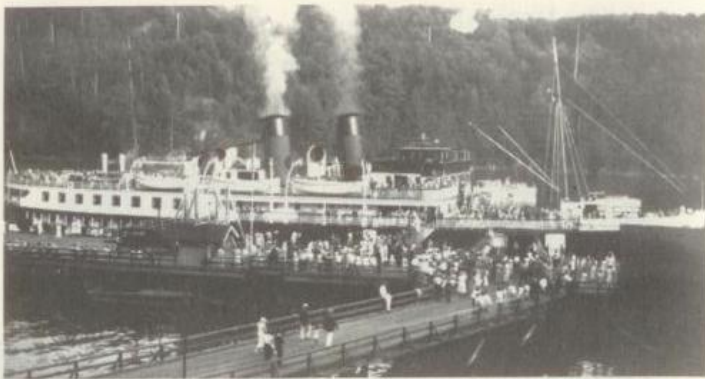
Davies Store c.1910

Vancouver Public Library

*"The Davies store was the first forever. It had one leg over the brink into the sea. It was so close to the bank and nearly down at the dock."*

—May Lister Davies

Proceed to Stop 5. Cross the ferry traffic lane to get to the centre pier, immediately to the left of the loading ramp.



*The Lady Alexandra at the Steamer Wharf c.1930*

S. Jenkins

## STOP 5

### a) The Steamer Wharf

During the Union Steamship glory days as many as 5000 people were ferried to Bowen Island on the weekend.

*The Lady Alexandra*, the pride of the Union fleet, used to deliver huge crowds for picnic excursions and Moonlight Cruises. She could accommodate up to 1400 people and boasted a formal dining room, comfortable lounges and a fine maple dance floor. Daytime visitors arrived for concerts in the bandshell, refreshments in the tearoom and enormous company picnics at



Tommy White with a Sannie c.1948

Bowen Island Historians

the picnic grounds. Weekend excitement began with the arrival of the "Daddy boats" which were greeted at the dock by wives and children who spent their week vacationing on Bowen.

Another very important presence at the dock were the Sannies, a small fleet of gasoline powered launches that taxied people and small cargo to Bowen year round. The word "Sannie" comes from the name of an Australian race horse. From 1921 to 1954, the Sannie Transportation Company provided an essential service to Island residents. Amazingly, the 25 cent fare remained the same for thirty years.

Look north for the remains of a stone retaining wall on the left shore at the water's edge. Imagine a sloping lawn where the brown house stands now. The Tearoom stood at the top of this slope.

### b) The Tearoom

Built c.1910 by Captain John Cates, the Tearoom was a popular spot for summer visitors to sip afternoon tea and enjoy the view of Snug Cove. During Union days, people came for typical summer fare such as hotdogs, hamburgers, milk shakes and banana splits. In the 1940s and 50s, music from the jukebox added to the fun.



The Tearoom c.1910

Vancouver City Archives



Dorman Family

The Merry-go-round, early 1900s

#### c) The Merry-go-round

In the early 1900s, Jake Dorman operated a merry-go-round behind the Tearoom. It had a canvas roof, a slatted wooden platform, painted ponies and a calliope that played three tunes. Jake Dorman was a religious man and did not operate the carousel on Sundays.

#### d) The Dance Pavilion

Also near the Tearoom was the largest dance hall in British Columbia. Built in 1921, the octagonal building boasted a polished, hardwood, spring floor with a central raised dais for the bandstand. It could dance 800 couples and featured some of the big bands with leaders such as Frank Scott, Barney Potts, Dal Richards



Vancouver Maritime Museum

The Dance Pavilion c.1920s

and Frank Bolney. On the popular \$1.00 Moonlight Cruises, Union Steamship Company vessels ferried merrymakers across Howe Sound to the dock at Snug Cove. Having fox trotted their way across the water, the dancers were primed for a fun evening at the pavilion. From the dock, the dancing crowd followed the band

up the hill to the dancehall. In the beginning, the Moonlight Cruises were simply fun affairs. In later years, they became rowdier and were dubbed the "booze cruises". Although alcohol was never sold on the ships or at the dancehall, people brought their own supply.

**Retrace your steps and turn right onto Cardena. Continue past the Union Steamship Company Store and turn left onto the Memorial Garden trail. Stop 6 is in front of the white cottages.**

### STOP 6

#### a) The Seaside Cottages

These two cottages were probably built by individuals who leased the land from Captain Cates. Tommy and Mary White lived in the smaller cottage. He was the popular proprietor and skipper of the Sannies; she was "the only lady skipper on the Howe Sound run". After retiring, the Whites refurbished one of the Sannies for their own use and travelled the coast.



Mary White collection

Mary White at Seaside Cottage c.1969

**Look to your left. Across the path from the White's cottage was the No. 2 Picnic Grounds.**

### b) The Playground

The only children's playground was located at the edge of No. 2 Picnic Grounds. There were swings, a teetertotter and a roundabout. This was also a favourite spot for baseball. There is a long-standing tradition of great sport and fierce pride that attends the playing of this game on Bowen. It endures to this day.



No. 2 Picnic Grounds and Seaside Cottage c.1912



The Playground c.1930s



Bowen Is. Baseball Team c.1945

**Walk back to Cardena. The First Aid Station was across the road to your right.**

### c) The First Aid Station

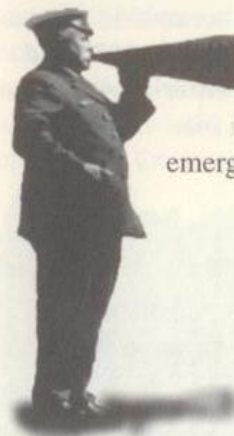
In the early days, Major Cain, the resident first aid attendant, used to go down to the wharf with a megaphone to welcome the boat loads of visitors arriving in Snug Cove. During the 1940s



The First Aid Station c.1940s

and 50s, when there were huge crowds of picnickers, as many as four volunteers from St. John Ambulance assisted the resident first aid attendant.

Today the ambulance service has a new home on Miller Road. As in the past, it provides vital emergency care.



Major Cain c.1930s

**Turn left and walk straight ahead toward the water. Stop 7 is by the weeping willow tree at the edge of the Lagoon.**

## STOP 7

### a) Lagoon Trail

The lagoon trail was a scenic walk to Bridal Veil Falls. At one time, rustic cedar rails lined the walkway. It was built in a Japanese garden style by skilled workers employed by Captain Cates.

**Look carefully by the weeping willow tree and you will see the beginning of the old trail.**



Walkway to Bridal Veil Falls c.1929

M. Fougberg

### b) The Causeway

The Causeway we see today was built by the Union Steamship Company in 1925 to link the hotel grounds and Snug Cove. It replaced an earlier bridge which was destroyed by a storm in 1924. The first settlers had crossed by boat or on a huge log which spanned the water.

**Notice the fishway on the ocean side. It was added to the causeway in 1994 and assists salmon entering or returning from the sea.**

**Look across the Causeway to the site occupied by the residence on the right. Belvedere once stood there.**



Walkway to Mt. Strahan Lodge c.1930

S. Jenkins

### c) Belvedere

Belvedere was a welcoming presence at the entrance to the Rockery, the shrub-lined path leading to the Union Estates hotel grounds. As late as the 1970s, this graceful house with its white-pillared verandah overlooked Deep Bay. Built soon after 1900 by Captain John Cates for his sister, Lillian, it stood on the site of the Mannion family schoolhouse. In later years, Belvedere served as a residence for Union employees and finally, a sports clubhouse.

Imagine the fragrance of the roses as visitors walked to the hotel grounds. It was a romantic entrance to the wonders of Mt. Strahan Lodge.

Belvedere and early Bridge c.1920

BIHPA

Cross the Causeway to reach Stop 8.

## STOP 8

Look across to the sandy beach.



S. S. Rothsay at Mannion Brickyard in Deep Bay c.1899

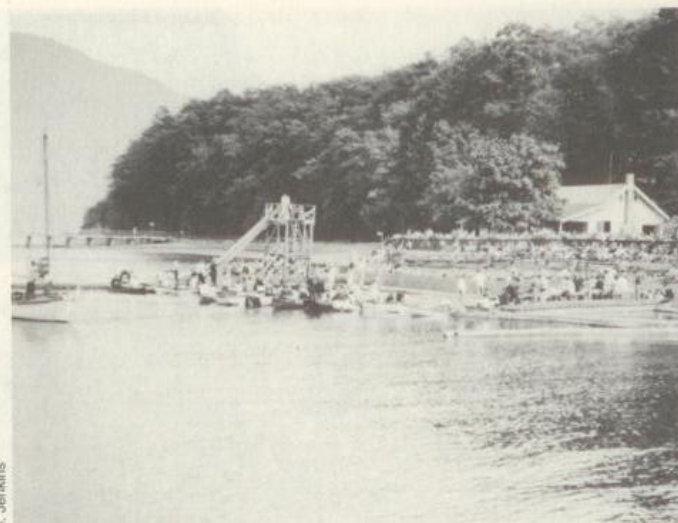
### a) The Brickyards

In the 1890s, Joseph Mannion operated a brickyard on this site which supplied bricks for a growing Vancouver. His bricks were described as "an excellent article" in the *Vancouver Daily News*, November 11, 1890. At first, horses were used to run the machinery and later a steam plant was installed.



Joseph Mannion late 1800s

Vancouver City Archives



S. Jenkins

Sandy Beach c.1930s

### b) Sandy Beach

Can you see a wee bit of old Scotland on the distant shore? In the early 1920s, golden sand from the east coast of Scotland arrived as ballast on the Union Steamship Company's new ships, *The Lady Alexandra* and *Catala*. It was deposited on the shore of Deep Bay to create Sandy Beach. This was easily the most popular beach in the Cove area. It was enclosed by buoyant logs and had a movable float with middle and high level diving boards and a water slide. Long before the regattas in the Okanagan, people came to Bowen Island for swimming events and races.



Vancouver Public Library

Sandy Beach c. early 1930s



Vancouver Maritime Museum

Men's Race, BC Sugar Refinery Picnic, c.1917

#### c) No. 1 Picnic Grounds

The large playing field on this site made it the preferred spot for the games and races that were part of every picnic. Sack races, ladies egg and spoon races, tug-of-war and other games were held on the large flat area enclosed by a low, white fence. As on the other grounds, there were long, covered picnic tables, outdoor stoves and a water tap.

#### d) The Lower Dance Hall

An early dance hall, built by Captain Cates, stood at the far left of the picnic grounds. After the Union Steamship Company built the octagonal dance pavilion, the lower dance hall became a well-used community facility. Local young people enjoyed playing badminton during the winter. Saturday nights there might be square dancing, card games or perhaps a concert or theatre presentation. In later years, summer residents gathered to watch films and eat popcorn.

#### e) The Bandshell

Summer Sundays saw hundreds of people gathered on the grass in front of the bandshell. George Brydon and his group and later Frank Scott's Vaudeville Troupe performed regularly, with fantastic acts by dancers, singers, jugglers and piano players. It was Bowen Island's version of the Ed Sullivan show. Apart from the professional entertainers, anybody who wanted to get up to sing and dance was welcome. The atmosphere was very friendly. Today Bowen continues to enjoy a rich cultural life.



Vancouver City Archives

The Bandshell c.1940s

**Continue along the path for about 300 feet. Look to your right to the newly constructed garage and grounds beyond. This was the site of the Union Estates' tennis courts and resort.**



Tennis Courts and Hotel Bungalows c.1930

S. Jenkins

## STOP 9

### The Tennis Courts

From the 1920s until the hotel closed in 1957, the Union Estates maintained six rolled clay tennis courts. These were some of the finest in the Pacific Northwest. Every Labour Day weekend, the B.C. Lawn Tennis Association hosted the Pacific Northwest Championships. Aside from these gala affairs, the tennis courts were part of the social life of summer residents.

**Continue along the path and bear right at the paved road. Stop at the first large building on your left.**

## STOP 10

### Evergreen Hall

Evergreen Hall was built in 1941 as a clubhouse for the guests of the Union Estates resort hotel, Mt. Strahan Lodge. People remember Evergreen Hall for the many social events organized there, particularly the dances held on summer evenings during the 1950s. After the hotel was demolished and Union properties sold, Evergreen Hall kept its community profile. It has hosted many Island tea parties, dinners and dances. Now, it is a private residence.



Evergreen Hall c.1940s

Vancouver City Archives

**Stop 11 is the building next door.**

## STOP 11

### The Dormitory

It was built in the late 1940s as a dormitory for employees of the Union Estates resort. There were also two other dormitories in this general area constructed much earlier. The hotel retained a large seasonal staff to provide the comfort and services for which the Union Estates was famous. Today, the dormitory is privately owned. Tastefully renovated, it retains little of its former spartan style.



The Dormitory 1982

Bowen Is. Historians

**Keep going along the road. Stop 12 is three houses past the Dormitory. Look across the street to the site of the former hotel grounds.**



Vancouver City Archives

Mt. Strahan Lodge c. late 1930s

## STOP 12

### a) The Hotel

The remains of some of the hotel bungalows nestled in the 1890s orchard recall the sparkling days people once enjoyed on these grounds. At one time, a hotel overlooked the water. It was built by Captain Cates c. 1910 and named the Terminal Hotel. In 1920, it was bought and renovated by the Union Estates and renamed Mt. Strahan Lodge which later became known as Bowen Inn. A gracious resort hotel, it had beautiful gardens, immaculate lawns and an exotic monkey puzzle tree.



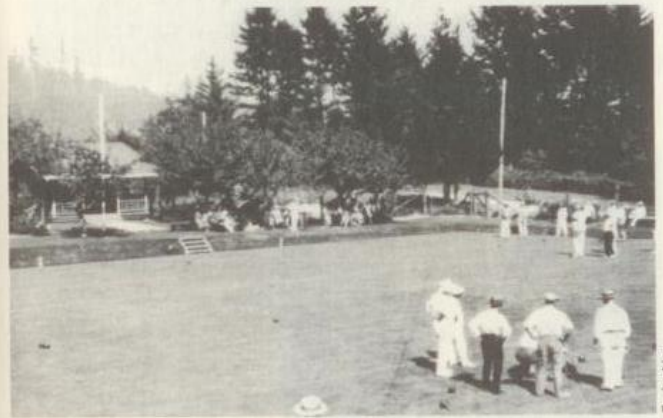
Vancouver City Archives

Deluxe Bungalows c.1940s

### b) Bowling Green

The Bowling Green, located in front of the deluxe bungalows, was the centre for a well-managed club that had elected officers and charged its members fees for the season. They arranged tournaments with city clubs about three times a year.

The little log building you see at the corner of the grassy field was once a clubhouse. Imagine the bowlers of former times milling around, drinking lemonade and chatting with their friends.



S. Jenkins

The Bowling Green and Clubhouse c.1930s

Retrace your steps and proceed to Stop 13 by following Melmore Road (about 5 minutes). Some of the homes you will pass in this neighbourhood are former Union Estates cottages. Keep bearing left until you reach the Catholic Church. Turn left at this intersection, follow the paved road and turn left onto the trail to Snug Cove.

On the left side of the trail head, catch glimpses of the pond through the underbrush.

## STOP 13

### The Duck Pond and Bridge

The Duck Pond was formed when Killarney Creek was dammed to supply water for the powerhouse in the early 1900s. Captain Cates made scale models of his steamships and floated them on the pond to the delight of local children. In 1925, a new wooden bridge, known as the Duck Pond Bridge, provided the first sturdy and convenient crossing at this site.

Continue along the trail and turn left at the Terminal Falls Fish Ladder sign. Follow the trail down the slope to Stop 14 at the water's edge.



The Duck Pond and Bridge c.1930s

## STOP 14

Look upstream. Above the falls was the site of the Humpty Bridge, used by Islanders to cross Killarney Creek before 1925, when Miller Road and the Duck Pond Bridge were constructed.



Bridal Veil Falls and Humpty Bridge c.1920s

Vancouver City Library

### Bridal Veil Falls

#### a) Humpty Bridge

Koga, the gardener employed by Captain Cates, and his crew built the graceful Japanese style bridge that spanned Killarney Creek at the top of the falls. Known locally as the Humpty Bridge, it connected with the Bridal Path, the rustic, cedar rail-lined walkway that ran alongside the creek to the outlet at Deep Bay.

Further down the creek the Lagoon Bridge crossed over to the No. 3 Picnic Grounds. Look for the footings of past bridges above and below the falls.

#### b) The Old Powerhouse

Look along the creek for the concrete footings of the old powerhouse. Killarney Creek was dammed above picturesque Bridal Veil Falls in Captain Cates' time to supply water for a hydro-electric generator. Its supply, however, was limited. During Union days, each evening an employee turned a wheel that allowed water to flow into the generator. For a few hours, cottagers had light in the living room and could



Powerhouse c.1930s

listen to evening radio programmes. The gently lit promenade along the Causeway provided pleasant evening strolling. At 11:00 p.m. the process was reversed and the power turned off for the night.

**Retrace your steps to the trail to Snug Cove and turn left. In earlier days this was known as Alder Grove.**

#### Alder Grove Trail

At one time, charming summer cottages lined the many trails in this area. The paths were named Spruce Crescent, Hemlock Hill, Birch Trail, Maple Crescent, Cedar Hill, Alder Grove and Alder Trail. The forest bustled with the happy sounds and movement of the vacationers who passed delightful days on Bowen. Children explored the woods and streams, played games, fished and swam.

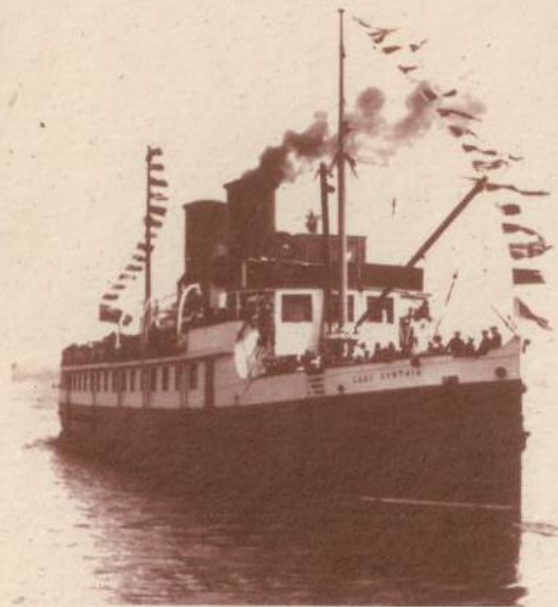
As you walk along this trail, look for clues of former cottage life. Union Estates used to organize small competitions for the best summer garden. Can you find the large rhododendron, the holly trees, periwinkle and ajuga?

**Follow the trail, bearing left until you reach the three-way junction. End your tour by taking the path opposite the Memorial Garden to exit onto Government Road.**

## THE UNION STEAMSHIP COMPANY STORY

**T**HE UNION STEAMSHIP COMPANY, FOUNDED in Vancouver in 1889, was perhaps the single most important element in opening the British Columbia coastline to European settlers and the logging, mining and fishing that provided their livelihood. For seventy years, the Union's red and black funnelled freight and passenger ships served over 200 remote coastal communities, transporting mail, provisions and people. To increase revenue, the Union entered the day excursion and resort business, establishing resorts on Bowen Island and the Sunshine Coast. The most popular excursion destination was Snug Cove on Bowen Island. By 1922 the Union Estates was firmly established on Bowen and flourished for over three decades.

Declining profits in the mid 1950s heralded change. In 1959 the Union Steamship Company sold its ships and closed the doors of its resorts forever.

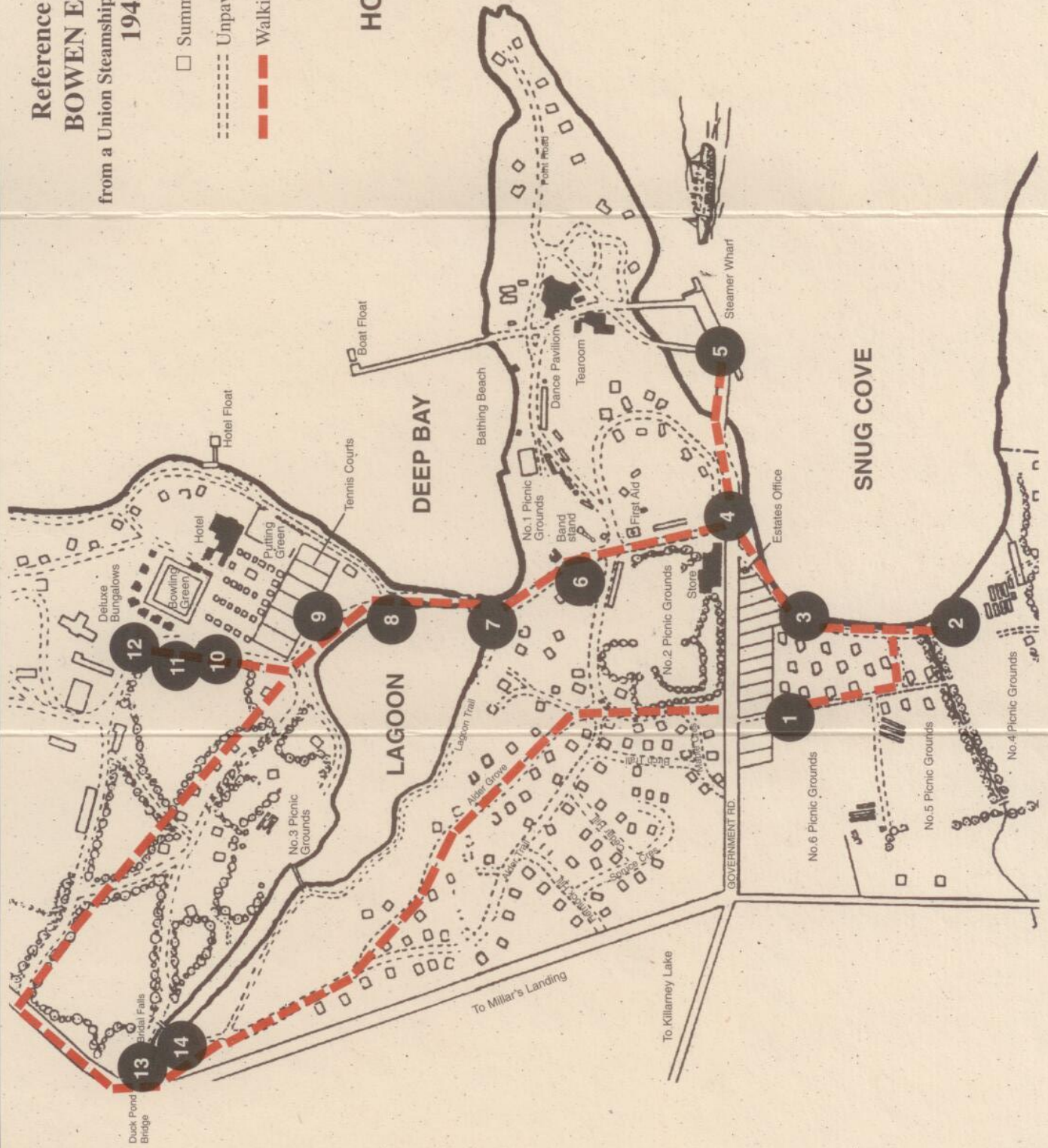


USS Co. Excursion Ship *Lady Cynthia*

**Reference Map of  
BOWEN ESTATES**  
from a Union Steamship Company brochure  
1945

- ☐ Summer Cottages
- Unpaved Roads
- Walking Tour Route

**HOWE SOUND**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*T*HIS WALKING TOUR HAS BEEN PRODUCED BY the Bowen Island Heritage Preservation Association in cooperation with the Greater Vancouver Regional District Parks Department. The Bowen Island Heritage Preservation Association, founded in 1989, is a non-profit community association that initiates and oversees projects that will identify and preserve heritage resources on Bowen Island.



Davies Orchard Museum Cottage

We wish to thank the people of Bowen Island for sharing their memories of local history. We also thank the North Shore Credit Union Charitable Foundation; Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, Heritage Branch; and Job Creation Partnerships, Human Resources Development Canada for funding.

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