

A story from Seymour Mountain's history

When you hike or snowshoe out to the bluffs we call Dog Mountain, do you stop at First Lake, look up and see the red cabin and wonder, "Why is it there? Who uses it? How do I get to it?"

One day John Heinonen was talking about it with Louise Archibald, a librarian with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Imagine his surprise when she said, "My uncle and his friends built that cabin." Her uncle, Edward Rayner, is now in his 80s and lives in Roberts Creek. John encouraged Louise to visit her uncle to learn more about the cabin and its history.



Cabin on Seymour Mountain, circa late 1940s

Louise has fond memories of the years when her family used to go for hikes and blueberry picking on Seymour Mountain. "The hike to the cabin was a lot of fun with all the cousins and sometimes friends along too. In groups of up to 30 of all ages, we'd have simple picnics in and around the cabin with the little lake below it and the whiskey jacks begging for food. There were lots of places for kids to climb and it has such a gorgeous view, you always felt wonderful after a day like that." Louise interviewed Uncle Ted on February 6, 2011. Here are his recollections.

Ted started hiking up Seymour Mountain¹ when he was 15 years old (about 1938). He and four friends around the same age, who all lived near each other in the Vancouver Heights² area, would cycle to the bottom of the mountain near Deep Cove, hide their bikes in the bush and hike all the way up the mountain by trail. They did this most weekends and holidays except in the summer if they went swimming instead.

They built their first cabin, known to them as V13 (for Victory 13), starting in 1939. The friends were Fred Sampson, Art Weston, John Ballantyne, John Robertson, and Edward (Ted) Rayner. The first two named were known as 'the brains' of the group as they had some building expertise and both went on later to become engineers.

In order to build a cabin on Seymour you had to have a permit from the Ranger who lived on the mountain. When they decided they'd like to have a second cabin higher up on the mountain, closer to the ski hills, they were told no more permits were being issued. Fortunately the park ranger approved of the way they had looked after the first cabin (hadn't taken more wood than they could use, etc.). He said he would let them have the permit for the first which had burned down. The foundations for the second cabin were finished in 1942 at which point Ted was 19 years old and had decided to enlist in the air force. When the war ended, cabin building resumed (with the help of his wife Georgie whom he'd met in Ottawa).

He recalls they were able to make roof shakes from a tree they cut down that was 2 to 3 feet in diameter. They only needed one tree for the whole roof. Custom windows were packed in from Deep Cove (no road up at that time) as were parts for a wood stove and wood heater. All of this was done on 'pack boards' on their backs. They also constructed a 10 foot high water tower over a spring to supply water to the cabin. At another time they moved the door of the cabin to another side because of the way the snow tended to drift covering up the door. Windows were

A story from Seymour Mountain's history *cont'd*



*Cabin on Seymour Mountain being built in the 1940s
(Left Georgie Rayner, right, John Robertson)*

also shuttered outside to protect from the elements and vandals who were sometimes a problem.

The friends came up with the names *Cliff House* or *Hycienda* for the cabin but they didn't stick. Eventually, because the cabin was on the Water Board side of the mountain, it had to be phased out. They continued to use into the 1980s but they were not allowed to do any further maintenance on it.

After a career with the Vancouver Police force, Ted Rayner retired to Roberts Creek. He has enjoyed a lifetime of camping, fishing, and summer holidays on the Sunshine Coast.

From its vantage place overlooking Suicide Gully, the cabin has a panoramic view of the Lower Mainland. Today it is used as a base for search and rescue operations on Seymour Mountain by the North Shore Rescue³. Even though the cabin has been extensively refurbished to serve their requirements, the exterior improvements that have been made are over the original cabin built by Ted Rayner and his friends over 60 years ago.



*January 2011
Photo by John Heinonen*

Footnotes

¹Mount Seymour Provincial Park was established in 1936 and named for Frederick Seymour, Governor of British Columbia from 1864 to 1869. It is 3,508 hectares. "Mount Seymour" was first opened for skiing in 1937 under the ownership of Harold Enquist.

²The "Heights" is the area north of Hastings Street to Burrard Inlet, and west of Cassiar Street. Boundary Road divides the city of Vancouver from the city of Burnaby.

³North Shore Rescue is a volunteer community-based search and rescue team founded in 1965.

Acknowledgements

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