

## THE VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION HUT AT THE LAKE OF THE SEVEN HILLS

SOOKE DISTRICT, VANCOUVER ISLAND

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The Hut at the Lake of the Seven Hills, in the Sooke district, Vancouver island, has already been officially opened and is now in use. Several details, however, (including the fireplace) have not yet been completed, but will be before the spring. In the meantime the main room is kept warm by a large cast iron stove, which makes the cabin available for use during the winter.

The idea of a Hut for the use of the section arose in the summer of 1928. The section itself being unable to finance such a project, several members decided that they themselves would do so on their own account, as an investment, giving to the section a lease from year to year, the chief terms being that the section should pay the taxes, keep up the property, and maintain a membership of a certain strength.

A good site was found in the Sooke district. It was selected not only because the district is connected with Victoria by a good road, but because it seemed very suitable for the purpose. A total area of about 180 acres was purchased. The area included practically the whole of the lake now officially known as the "Lake of the Seven Hills" (at an altitude of about 1450 feet), the small remaining portion of the lake being in the Provincial park known as the Sooke Mountain Park.

The Hut is a structure of some size, being two storeys in height and having, under the same roof, a kitchen and store-room. It stands within 200 feet of the lake on a solid rock foundation and is surrounded by a picturesque grove of tall lodge pole pine, white pine, Douglas fir and hemlock. The construction of the main part of the Hut is of large peeled logs of red cedar. The kitchen and store-room are of upright fir logs "cut peeled." On the outside all doors and windows are of heavy construction and are all set with hinges and fastenings of heavy hammered ironwork of special design.

The verandah extends along the front of the building its entire length (30 feet) and is 10 feet wide. The flooring is of hewn timber capable of withstanding the hardest wear. The verandah is, of course, roofed over.

Upon entering the Hut, the open fireplace faces the main door. The walls are lined with fir and are made perfectly weatherproof by placing roofing material between the upright log walls and the lining.

The windows are of extra size, four in front facing the lake, and two in each end. All windows in this room (and throughout the building) are hinged at the top so that they may be readily swung up out of the way.

The floor is double finished with tar felt between and the ceiling is of substantial cedar logs, which support the floor above.

The upper storey is reached by a hewn staircase and consists of a room about 16' x 30', with lined ends of fir and double finished floor. At either end is a large window.

The kitchen extends off the main room through a door to the north side of the fireplace. It is about 9' x 10' and leading off it is a store-room of about 6' x 9'. The floors in the kitchen and store-room are of heavy hewn planks and the walls are lined with galvanized iron, with lining between the galvanized iron and the log walls. The kitchen is fully equipped. It contains an old-style French range built in with brick and, with its equipment, is capable of handling from 40 to 50

people without difficulty. The kitchen is also supplied with cutlery and crockery of the best grade of standard pattern to accommodate 36 persons simultaneously. The outside door of the kitchen faces north, within a few feet of which an incinerator has been constructed to dispose of all refuse from the kitchen. The incinerator is built of stone and is about 12 feet long by about 5 feet high.

Closer to the lake, and to one side of the Hut, an open air dining house has been built. This building is open on all sides, being roofed over only. It is equipped with long tables and seats and is capable of seating about 50 persons at one time.

Within a few feet of the open dining house is an open air cookhouse, open on all sides, with roof. This kitchen is equipped with a stove built of stone and concrete and is adapted with a built-in oven, and is capable of handling the same number of persons as the open air dining room.

The lake has an extreme length of about half a mile, and is three-quarters of a mile wide at its widest part. Of the several islands in the lake, one is conveniently near the Hut site. A bridge has been built to this island and the island is used for the nightly bonfire. The island is of sufficient distance from the shore to make the lighting of fires perfectly safe so far as the surrounding territory is concerned.

The property and country surrounding is typical of the southern areas of Vancouver island. The mountains which may be reached from the location do not exceed 4000 feet, but, common to the mountains of Vancouver island, they present many interesting aspects, not only from the rock-work to be encountered but also from a naturalist's point of view. Almost every type of tree growth that is known to Vancouver island is to be found in this district, also the bird and animal life of the island (with the exception of the wapiti) is to be found in the vicinity, including the timber wolf. In fact within a short distance of the Hut a wolf's den has been discovered and the indications are that it had been in use in either 1927 or 1928. Wolves, however, are more or less rare, but the cougar is plentiful.

With regard to the flora, the area contains almost all the flora known to the southern reaches. One of the members of the section (Mrs. Hugh Mackenzie—perhaps one of the best known authorities on the subject) has discovered in this district and surrounding area about three hundred different varieties of mosses and hepatics and has forwarded specimens to the important centres of the world.

The Hut is reached by a good trail from the Sooke river road, where cars may be parked in safety. The trail commences at about sea level, attaining its highest point about a mile and a half from the Hut; the summit is about 1610 feet. The actual distance as the crow flies from the road to the Hut is about two and a third miles, but as one travels by trail the distance is approximately doubled. Some lovely views are to be obtained en route. The rough nature of the country (aside from some interesting rock-work that may be found in places) calls into play one's best knowledge and skill in travel and woodcraft.

The trail passes through two or three valleys containing a splendid tree growth of cedar and fir, a large proportion of which is situated within the property purchased.

The true mountaineer, who revels in the mountains be they of high or low altitude and in the Great Outdoors, will find the location of the Vancouver island section Hut a charming place to visit.