

## Loyalist Trails Sunday, 30 April 2023 UELAC Conference Edition

Have you chosen TOUR B {Steveston Heritage Tour} for your preferred Friday 02 June 2023, UELAC Conference Tour? Be sure to check out their information site.

### Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site



Britannia Shipyards is an authentic representation of a once thriving community of canneries, boat yards and residences. Many of the buildings date back to 1885 and tell the stories of multi-ethnic residents and workers at the Britannia Cannery and Britannia Shipyards: Chinese, European, First Nations and Japanese. This collection of buildings has national value and was designated a National Historic Site in 1991 by the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board. Learn about the important history of Britannia Shipyards in the [Statement of Significance](#). City of Richmond staff and dedicated volunteers work together to preserve and present the Shipyard and surrounding buildings as an active heritage park.

<https://stevestonheritage.ca/visit/britannia-shipyards-national-historic-site/>



*Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site*

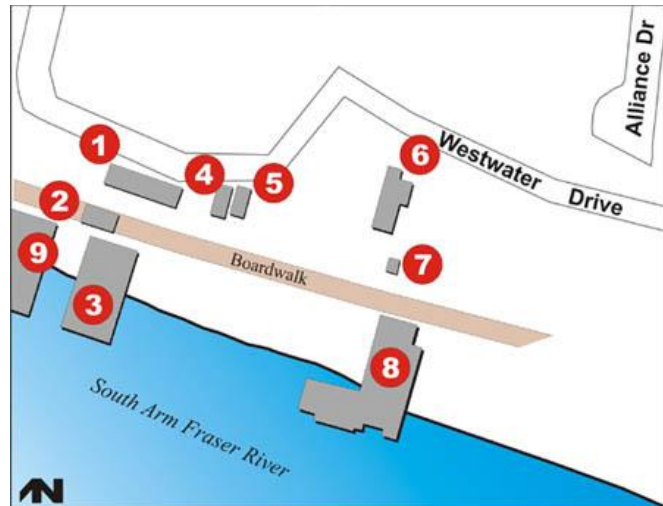
Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site is supported by the **Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society**. Their volunteer Board of Directors are dedicated to preserving and celebrating the history of the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site, a living museum, in collaboration with the City of Richmond and the community.

**Britannia Shipyards Video Link:**

<https://fb.watch/k9aibNRFFp/>

- 1 [First People's House](#)
- 2 [Japanese Duplex](#)
- 3 [Phoenix Seine Net Loft](#)
- 4 [Murakami Boatworks](#)
- 5 [Murakami Residence](#)
- 6 [Richmond Boat Builders](#)
- 7 [Cannery Office](#)
- 8 [Shipyard and Cannery Complex](#)
- 9 [Phoenix Gill Net Loft](#)

**Map of Britannia Shipyard Buildings**



**Manoah Steves and wife Martha Taylor**



**BENJAMIN BABCOCK UE and the STEEVES FAMILY** by Marguerite Colpitts

*This first appeared in **Cataraqui Loyalist Town Crier** 25(2): 3 (March 2006). The original Steeves family came from the Principality of Moravia in 1759, the year of the battle on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec. At that time, their name was the Germanic Stief. Like many others from areas of Germany they migrated to Pennsylvania; indeed, those German immigrants are the original Pennsylvania Dutch, Dutch being the version of 'Deutsch' i.e., German. At this time there was a very close connection between England and Germany. Queen Anne died in 1714 leaving no children and the English lords were determined not to have a Roman Catholic Stuart on the throne so they offered the crown to George of Hanover great-grandson of James I and a Protestant. George I never learned to speak English*

*which helped to further establish the power of Parliament. In the Pennsylvania census of 1771, the Stiefs had become Steeves. Presumably concerned by the rumblings which were to lead to 1776 they left Pennsylvania in an open sailing sloop! After a long and difficult voyage, they sailed into the Bay of Fundy and*

landed in the Hillsborough area, Albert County, where they decided to stay. This is the area which in 1784 petitioned King George III to allow it to be called New Brunswick though it was part of Nova Scotia, because the inhabitants were mainly German and did not want to be ruled by Scots. The Steeves were practical and hard working. They had brought with them in the sloop planting seeds as well as household possessions. They farmed, mined gypsum from the local quarry and built masts for sailing ships. In addition to useful articles, they brought 12 beautiful ones - pressed glass plates, 10 inches octagonal, with the classic beehive and thistle pattern. Each plate weighs over one pound. This [shown at meeting] is the only one remaining. The Steeves family probably told friends left in Pennsylvania that they had found a good place to live because in 1783 many Loyalists began to come up the St. John River, settling into the area around what is now the capital, Fredericton. The Steeves were very proud of the fact that they even pre-dated the Loyalists. My husband Rolfe Colpitts has deep Maritime roots. His Colpitts ancestors are Robert and Margaret Colpitts of the Colpitts settlement in the Salsbury area in Albert County, New Brunswick. Robert was an army officer, an engineer. He and Margaret now have many, many descendants in North America who all came to the 200th anniversary in New Brunswick in 1983. I, Marguerite Babcock Good Colpitts, am descended from Benjamin Babcock, United Empire Loyalist who came to Canada from Pennsylvania bringing possessions on an oxcart. (The yoke is still in good shape in Verona). My mother Sarah Babcock, his direct descendant, was born on the family farm in Oak Flats near Verona. When she married my father, Frank Good, they moved to the farm in Parham where I was born. My mother lived to be 102 years old! In the circle of life's coincidences our niece Sara Victoria Good Avila went to Pennsylvania to take her PhD in biology at Penn State University. In checking records there she discovered that an earlier Sarah Good had been burned as a witch! Sara is now a Maritimer like Rolfe and is on the faculty of biology at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. This summer Rolfe and I intend to go to the Albert County Museum near Hillsborough, New Brunswick to return the Steeves plate to its original home in Canada. Note: Jack Layton, late leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP), laid claim to Steeve's ancestry of Hillsborough, New Brunswick with reference to the Fathers of Federation - The Father of Confederation was Wm. Henry Steeves.

**Source:** United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada (UELAC) Archives: Marguerite Colpitts, *Cataraqui Loyalist Town Crier* 25(2): 3 (March 2006).



# STEVESTON

## A SPLENDID OPENING FOR CAPITALISTS

From a mud flat on the Fraser River to a spirited boom town, this community struggled packing the finest Sockeye that would showcase its heritage to world prominence by 1890.

**N**EW Brunswick native Manoah Steves, now living in Baltimore, Maryland, considered his next move carefully. Before returning to Canada, he studied maps and geography. Impressed by British Columbia, he wrote to the postmaster of Victoria and New Westminster. As a result, he received the name of William Ladner on the lower mainland and an invitation to visit the area.

In 1877, Manoah landed near Point Garry on Lulu Island, a delta on the Fraser River in southwestern B.C. Finding a heath of 400 acres free of rocks and boulders, so unlike his native province, Manoah bought some property and began a modest homestead. He built dykes on his land and started a dairy farm. To New Westminster residents, these island pioneers were known as "mudflatters," a pejorative for the tidal marsh plain on which they lived. With few other settlers, the land was exactly that: a mud flat of lush and lustrous grass. But to this pioneer it was a new life for his wife and six children. In 1878, they bid farewell to Maryland and rejoined their father on the homestead.

In the wake of Manoah's ambitions, William Herbert Steves, his oldest son, imagined the area becoming an energetic metropolis. William laid out the town of "Steves," envisioning a major seaport terminal competing with Vancouver. He mortgaged himself with land purchases and speculative business deals. In 1889, at age 29, William instilled the family name in Steveston. He also started the town's first newspaper. On January 31, 1891, the *Steveston Enterprise* made this bold, though now sentimental prediction: "Vancouver will be a future suburb of the city of Steveston."

Steveston truly possessed its founder's ambition. In the 1890s, the construction of waterfront wharves, fish camps, and boat yards created a boom for the salmon canning companies and fishermen. In the 1891 edition of the *British Columbia Directory*, the following promotion appeared on the inside cover: "Steveston is the Coming Town of B.C. . . this place has been designed by nature for a large town. . . Splendid Opening for Capitalists who wish to reap big profits." Although pretentious by today's standards, such advertisements were not uncommon.

It was indeed a splendid opening for capitalists. In 1882, only the Phoenix Cannery occupied the wharf. Then in 1889, Henry Bell-Irving, a civil engineer from Scotland, purchased nine canneries in Steveston and formed the Anglo-British Columbia Packing Company Limited. By 1893, four more canneries started on the three mile waterfront strip known as Cannery Channel. In total, 14 canneries packed nearly 200,000 cases of salmon, at 48 pounds per case, that year. By 1897, the 23 canneries that competed for shoreline space, packed over 500,000 cases, mostly for overseas markets. With the construction of hotels, saloons, stores, an opera house, and a post office, Steveston became a pioneer boom town.



(Above) A coloured postcard depicting the salmon fisheries at Steveston, B.C.

(Right) A typical salmon cannery, this coloured postcard shows Ewen's Cannery.

(Below) An 1895 salmon label from the Gulf of Georgia Cannery at Steveston. The Sockeye depicted on every label was the symbol of prosperity for the canneries and the community.

