

# Tahsis Historical Walking Tour



*Old Lathe Mill on Barnacle Beach Road*



## Site One

### Maquinna Resort Hotel & Mall

The property on which the Hotel and Mall are situated was owned by the owner of the local mill and TFL and leased to the hotel owners. The Hotel was built and opened in November 1965 as the Delta Hotel and owned by Coast Hotels until the current owners (a partnership from Washington State) bought the Hotel in 1995 and renamed it the Maquinna Resort.

The water-side of the mall was originally entirely occupied by the Tahsis Co-Op, which supplied all needs from sides of beef to clothing. The Co-Op located here in 1965 and was run by an elected Board of Directors. In the mid 1970's the Co-Op unionized and priced itself out of the market. People started shopping out and the Co-Op closed in 1980. The land-side of the mall had two banks, a men's wear store, a barbershop, pool hall, laundromat, bakery, and the Tahsis Post Office, which has resided here since 1965.

The home at the end of Maquinna Resort (now part of the Resort property) was the RCMP office, residence and jail from 1965 to 1990 when the new detachment was built on Harbour View.



## Site Two

### Cook Shack Restaurant

The road to Tahsis was completed in 1971, although the public was not allowed access until 1972. Before that time and for many years after, the main form of transportation in and out of Tahsis was by air. The building that now houses the Cook Shack was built in 1978 and was originally used as the Tahsis Air Terminal Building by B.C. Airlines, Island Air, Westcoast Air, Gulf Air, Air Nootka (formed in February 1982 and locally owned and operated). This building was the main terminal building for the central west coast of Vancouver Island and in its hey-day saw three flights a day to Gold River, two flights a day to Campbell River, three flights a day servicing Zeballos and Kyuquot as well as charter flights to logging camps in the area. About 1966 the ramp (now used to launch boats) was built so that the amphibious planes, the Mallard (12 passengers) and the Goose (9 passengers), could crawl up on land to load passengers and freight. The hanger beside the wharf was built in 1989 as a government requirement to have airplane repairs done in a covered building.

Over time, the road was used more extensively for freight and passenger service, the population of Tahsis and surrounding area shrank, and by 1992 no scheduled flights were leaving Tahsis. Air Nootka still flies from Gold River and will stop here three times a week, if requested, on its way to or from Kyuquot to pick up or deliver passengers.



## Site Three

### Government Wharf

Take a stroll out to the Government Wharf for a breathtaking view of Tahsis Inlet. The wharf and building was constructed in 1972, and the building is used by fishermen and kelp farmers to store their product and equipment. The M.V. Uchuck III docks here on Mondays, bringing passengers and freight to Tahsis, as it has done since 1960. Before the road from Gold River was opened to the public in 1972, groceries, appliances and small cars were brought in to Tahsis on the Uchuck. Travel arrangements had to be booked well in advance to make sure passenger space was available.



## Site Four

### 1233 South Maquinna

Now owned by Sandra Naylor, a long time resident, the house was built as a float home in the forties by John Schoppel, an independent logger of Austrian descent. John came to the area in 1938 and worked for the Olsen Brothers and was well known as a log salvager. The float house was moved to this present site in the sixties and sits on old growth fir timbers.



## Site Five

### Meares Avenue

This street, as well as our local school, Captain Meares Elementary Secondary School, was named for John Meares. History tells us that Meares was young, good-looking, impetuous, brave, a romantic with an eye for a quick pound, an imaginative man with a weakness for self-glorification and a cheery disregard for fact when distortion or prevarication offered more immediate rewards. The Indians called him Aitaita Meares "the lying Meares". He was an instrument of destiny.

In England 1788 Meares had two ships, the Felice, which he captained, and the Iphigenial, commanded by Captain William Douglas. They departed for Nootka Sound after hearing tales told by the men returned from Captain Cook's voyage of the rich fur trade available there. Meares proposed not only to barter for furs but also to found a permanent colony made up of Chinese coolies and Hawaiian women - an experiment that never came to fruition. At Yuquot they erected a dwelling and a shipyard on land that Meares claimed he had acquired from Chief

Maquinna. Here the schooner *Northwest America* was built and launched. After the ship was launched, Meares set off for other adventures in the Orient leaving Captain Douglas to manage the little colony at Nootka which was soon to be the subject of a conflict between England and Spain. Spain backed down, agreeing that both nations should have the right to establish posts on the Northwest coast, promising to return the buildings which Meares said had been taken from him at Nootka, and undertaking to pay indemnity.

Meares turned the full force of his considerable talents to the task of preparing a suitable expense account, and in the fullness of time produced one that ranks as a triumph of imaginative literature. He claimed that his ships were hulked with otter skins when seized by the Spanish; he inflated the going price for skins; and he reached his climax with a successful demand for \$210,000. Meares thereupon retired from the fur trade and devoted himself to publishing his memoirs, whose accuracy was quickly challenged by other explorers.

The houses on Meares Avenue were all brought to Tahsis by floats from the British Properties in Vancouver and were used as housing for mill staff and their assistants until 1974, when they were sold to private owners

## Site Six

### Barnacle Beach B & B

This large white building overlooking Tahsis Inlet was built and used for the Tahsis High School from 1952 to 1972 when the new high school was opened. In 1973 the building was used as a residence for teachers and their families, and was sold to the present owners - Bill Griswold and Bernadette Prior - in 2000.

## Site Seven

### Townsite

Tipperary Park Road takes us up to an area of Tahsis that local residents call the Townsite. The Townsite was established in 1958 when the owners of the mill (East Asiatic Company) built most of the houses seen today. Residents rented the houses from the Company and in 1974 were able to

purchase them from the Company. Going up the hill, turn right on Resolution Road, named for Captain Cook's ship the *Resolution*, and take another right hand turn on Princess Victoria View Drive to the top of the hill to the little enclosed Tipperary Park. The Park is enclosed in wire fencing and contains the anchor from the *Tipperary Park* which was the first freighter to come in to Tahsis to export lumber in 1946. The *Tipperary Park* was a war transport ship and she hauled lumber out of Tahsis until she quit operating in the fifties. Her anchor was put here in the 1960s and the ship loaders built the rock walls when they were off shift that you see here today surrounding the Park.



## Site Eight

### Village Office and Library

The building housing the Village Office and Library was built in the early 1940s and served as a hotel as well as single supervisor accommodation for the lumber company staff. In January 1986, after extensive renovations, the Village of Tahsis municipal offices moved into this building.

### South Maquinna Drive

The name of the road from the bridge in town to the Maquinna Resort is called South Maquinna Drive and takes its name from Chief Maquinna, a high ranking chief of the Mowachaht at the time of Captain Cook's arrival in Nootka Sound. He led the Yuquot people, who were the first to fully exploit the resource of sea otters. These people grew to be a powerful and prosperous force on the coast. Maquinna had the advantage of owning the right to the Friendly Cove area, and thus could control

access to the lucrative trade. In 1789 the Spanish moved onto the land at Yuquot and Maquinna moved his people to the other side of the island to what was likely an ancient fishing site. When the Spanish left in 1795, Maquinna moved his people back to Yuquot. In the winter the Mowachaht moved to the site of the Leiner River Estuary to camp until spring. Maquinna grew to be a powerful leader during the European fur trade period.

The houses at 876, 892 and 924 South Maquinna were float houses and were some of the first houses established in Tahsis. They sat on fir posts and you can see that 892 has been substantially renovated.

## Site Nine

### Barnacle Beach Road

Before the road from Gold River was developed this was the entrance and only access to town for float planes arriving at the docks at the end of Barnacle Beach Road. The Gibson Brothers first camp was on this road and the blue building you see was the site of the first gas station.

The building at the very end of the road has been here since the late 40s and in those days operated as the town's marina and coffee shop. You can still see the old yarding winch and the old marine ways where boats were hauled out for repairs and maintenance. You can see the huge logs on which the ways is constructed, cut down and installed in the late 1930s.

Harry Calleia built the large wooden building in 1968 for the purpose of building a luxury motor cruiser. Harry owned the marina and his wife was the doctor for the Village as well as the mill. The building is on land owned by Doman-Western. After Mr. Calleia departed Tahsis the site was taken over by the Baracco family and transformed into a lathe mill. The site was then taken over by C. Murtak who besides running the lathe mill transformed the upper stories of the building to luxury suites. Currently, the site houses The Lodge at Tahsis Harbour and has luxury accommodation and fishing charters.

Copies of the Historical Walking Tour of Tahsis brochure are available at the Tahsis Recreation Centre or online at [www.tahsis.ca/guides](http://www.tahsis.ca/guides).

Note: walking the Historical Tour is at your own risk.