

Commercial Services

From the very early days, the hub at 16th Avenue and 128th Street (or North Bluff Road and Stevenson Road, as they were known then) was a focus of commercial development in the community.

In 1926, Mrs. Cope rented a wooden building on the United Church campground and operated the first store in Ocean Park during July and August. The next year she opened a small store on her farm at the north-east corner of North Bluff and Stevenson Roads. The Ocean Park General Store was run as a summer operation only in the beginning. Mr. and Mrs. Cope, who had a small farm, lived in a house directly behind the store, and planted fir trees to try to shield the property from the dust generated by traffic on the gravel roads. The store had the only gas pump and phone in the area.

By c. 1939, Mr. Parrott and John Greene (later postmaster) ran the store. In those days the store had a gravity-feed gas pump. You pumped up the amount of gas you wanted to buy into the glass cylinder at the top of the pump (it showed the amount) then you released the gas through the hose into the car's gas tank.

Jim Carruth bought the store from Mr. Parrott and moved it across the street to where the Arco service station is now. Shortly after, he built a much larger store just north of the present Subway outlet. Ice cream was hard to come by and he used it as a 'come-on'. People from miles around did their grocery shopping there because of the ice cream. At Carruth's store, a single big scoop of ice cream was \$0.05, a double was \$0.07. Business boomed. He decided to build a new store right next door. When it was half-finished, the original store burned. The community took action together to complete the new store because they needed it. Cam Yule wired it; Derek Uren pulled wires for him. This was a typical response: people getting together and pitching in to deal with a problem or an emergency in the community.

The present Arco Service Station was a Shell Station when it was built and run by Gene and Dora Hoefle. Their son, Stan also worked in the garage.

However, some early entrepreneurs set up businesses on their own properties.

Initially, the closest electrician was Pop Taylor, who lived in Crescent Beach and did wiring and plumbing. He worked on the local fire halls and was reputed to be 'a character'. Then Cam Yule ran a similar business from his home in the 2500 block of 128th Street.

Pete Cotton, a notary public, had a real estate office near the edge of 128th Street, on his property just before 20th Avenue.

Johnny McKean's Grocery store, was located on 16th Avenue at the north end 126A Street. Peter Broatch helped Johnny build his store in the late '40s. In the back of the store Johnny repaired radios and small appliances like toasters.

Initially, a hardware store with adjoining cafe were built on the S.E. corner of 16th and 128th. It burned down. Then Paul Uren built a new building to house Webb and Mary Hoover's Ocean Park Cafe. The Ocean Park Cafe survived the threat of fire in 1960, but burned down a few years later. A new building was built for the Bank of Montreal.

Ocean Park had its own motel called Pleasant Cabin Court. It consisted of a few small cabins plus a small cafe and grocery strung out along the east side of 128th from 14th Ave. to about half way to Marine.

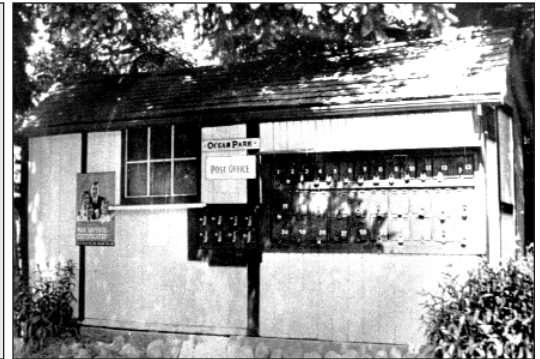
In a 1967 ad, Jimmy Milne and W. Johnson's Ocean Park Plumbing was located at 12853 - 16th Ave.

Noseworthy's Real Estate, Ocean Park Realty, William Arthur Edward Wall Real Estate and the Archie McArthur Real Estate offices were all clustered around 16th Avenue and 128th Street.

Commercial development in Ocean Park progressed in 1967 on land purchased by the Saba family of Vancouver. Their firm, Rural Properties Ltd., developed the land adjoining the Canada Safeway property. The first phase of development consisted of a bank, dry cleaner, drug store, coffee shop, bakery, hairstylist and flower shop. Approx. two years later the completed project had a total of 22 shops.

As the number of permanent residents in Ocean Park increased, the need for additional specialized shops and services was apparent. Professional service providers and merchants now number over 80,

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'SMALLEST
POST
OFFICE
IN THE
WORLD'
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Prior to 1921, the nearest Post Office building for Ocean Park was at 'Crescent' (likely present-day 'Crescent Heights'). 'Crescent Beach' was recorded in Wrigley's Directories as having a summer post office as well. Miss Horner during 1917 to 1919 and D. McArthur in 1919 and 1920 had to pick up the mail from Crescent and bring it back for distribution in Ocean Park.

In 1921, Mr. F. S. Pratt, a returned soldier, first used a wooden building at the end of the tent line on the Kwomais property as a post office, then he obtained a 6 foot by 6 foot knockdown building which he placed on the south-east corner of 126A St. and 16th Ave.

Mr. Pratt was post master until 1924 then Professor A. K. Henry, who had recently retired from the English Department of UBC, took over. He was an avid botanist whose garden on Ocean Park Road was featured in postcards of the area. He was also the author of a textbook used by the B.C. schools in their botany courses for many years.

He served until 1928 when Reverend Robert Hughes, who lived on the south side of North Bluff Road in the 12900 block, took over and continued until 1949. Reverend Hughes had been a padre during the Klondike goldrush but increasing deafness forced him to retire from church duties in 1927. During his time as post master, he became totally deaf but was an excellent lipreader who conducted tours to Britain and Europe. He increased the size of the post office to 6 feet by 12 feet and later to a slightly larger size again. In the late 1920s, the building was featured in 'Ripley's Believe It Or Not' as 'the world's smallest post office'. This historic structure was later moved to the Cloverdale fairgrounds, just inside the gate off 60 Ave., on the right-hand side at the site of the Surrey Museum & Archives. It was vandalized and the City decided to burn it down rather than pay for repairs.

The second post office, on the north-east corner of 16th Avenue and 128th Street (present site of Safeway parking lot), was operated by Mr. John Greene from 1950 to 1965. It was across from Carruth's store.

Sources: 'The Story of Ocean Park', Wrigley's Directories, OPCA Minutes, anecdotal evidence.
- Anne Helps

including branches of four major financial institutions.

At present, the Ocean Park Business Association has 40 local business members. Association members are keenly interested in promoting the benefits of living, working and doing business in Ocean Park.

- Lipa Meroniuk, Anne Helps, Ed Fader, Shirley Stonier



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