

A BACKWARDS GLANCE



From top: A postcard photo of members of the Howe Sound United School Music Club 1940-41 gathered with their instruments outside the school at Gibsons Landing. The "Howe Sounder's Orchestra" was a band that played all the local halls in the 1930s and 1940s. Musicians from left to right: Eric Inglis, Chuck Oldershaw, Ted Benn, Hugh MacDonald. The West Coast Howe Sound Regatta was alternatively held in Gibsons, Granthams and Hopkins Landing. This photograph was taken in 1937 when the event was held at Gibsons Landing.

MEET ME AT THE DANCE HALL

A history of music on the Sunshine Coast

By the light of the moon, a crowd streams out of the Woman's Institute Hall while the final notes of a rousing piano number fade into the warm summer night.

What a jumping dance! The hall was packed to the rafters as bodies swayed to and fro, and man, that band was ace!

In the 1930s and '40s, the quintessential social events on the Sunshine Coast were weekly dances that brought the community together to socialize and dance the night away to the latest popular songs. Whether the dance was held in Pender Harbour, Roberts Creek Hall or at the Women's Institute Hall (now the Heritage Playhouse), people would cram themselves into the few available automobiles and travel to the

By the **SUNSHINE COAST MUSEUM & ARCHIVES**

venue where they would join folks of all ages for a carefree night of song. Dick Kennett recalls how the weekly dances brought the community together: "All the families would go — that was pretty much every Saturday night. Old Doc Inglis he would play; one of the gals would play the piano." It is easy to imagine the sense of community spirit that weekly



dances would evoke, especially considering that every smiling face in the crowd would be a familiar one.

Another community event that showcased live music was the West Howe Sound Regatta. This popular summer celebration ran from 1923 to 1948 in Gibsons Landing and featured festivities such as the "Youngest Swimmer Race" and "Canoe Tilting", alongside live music broadcast by loudspeaker to the spectators on the wharf. During this exciting event, residents and summer folk alike came out to enjoy the sunshine while talented musicians created

the ambience for the summer festivities.

Live music not only provided entertainment for the community, but also served as a creative outlet for families who often lived busy lives filled with hard work and household chores. Beatrice Helen Walker's family band "The Happy Gang" played at local dances through the 1920s and 1930s. "My sister Vera played a ukulele. She never looked at music either. We just all had a gift. And mother, she would play at the dances or weddings or anything that called for a piano." Even for families that didn't perform in public, music was much more than just a past time. Reggie Oldershaw fondly recalled the pleasant times music brought to his family. "There was always music in our home. We had a parlor organ and there was always music. My brother Chuck played the accordion. And my brother Jim played the guitar; we always had songs."

And we always will have songs. To this day, live music on the Sunshine Coast continues to bring people together through events such as Music in the Landing, the Pender Harbour Jazz Festival and the Sunshine Music Festival, not to mention regular performances and dances at many of the local halls. Whatever the future brings, one thing is for certain: if you meet me at the dancehall, we'll have a grand ol' time. **CL**