

A Heritage of Hospitality by Mike Wicks

I'm not sure I believe in ghosts, but some of the patrons and staff of the CrossRoads Bar and Grill certainly do. Not surprising really, when you consider how many people have spent large chunks of their lives eating, drinking, socializing and celebrating in this spot over the last 130 years. That's how long there's been a hostelry at this junction of Sooke Road and Goldstream Avenue.

It all started back in 1879 when Andrew J. Bechtel opened the first Colwood Hotel. Unfortunately it was somewhat ill-fated and burned down just before Christmas 1895. A two-storey framed, square building took its place, built by the new proprietor Mr. Campbell; this was later enlarged and sold to a Mrs. Miller who became the owner of the Goldstream Inn.

The current Tudor-style building was built in 1936 by George T. Quincey after he razed the old Colwood Hotel. Since then the building has been extended and was until recently known as the Colwood Corners Pub.

Some places are destined to reinvent themselves time and again and this hostelry in the heart of Colwood is no exception. The new owners have turned the recently re-launched CrossRoads Bar and Grill into a European-style gastro pub that all ages can enjoy. The distinctive Tudor-style property went through extensive renovations where great effort was made to maintain the historic charm of the building while at the same time giving it a more contemporary feel. The decor is now much more inviting with a warm, comfortable ambience.

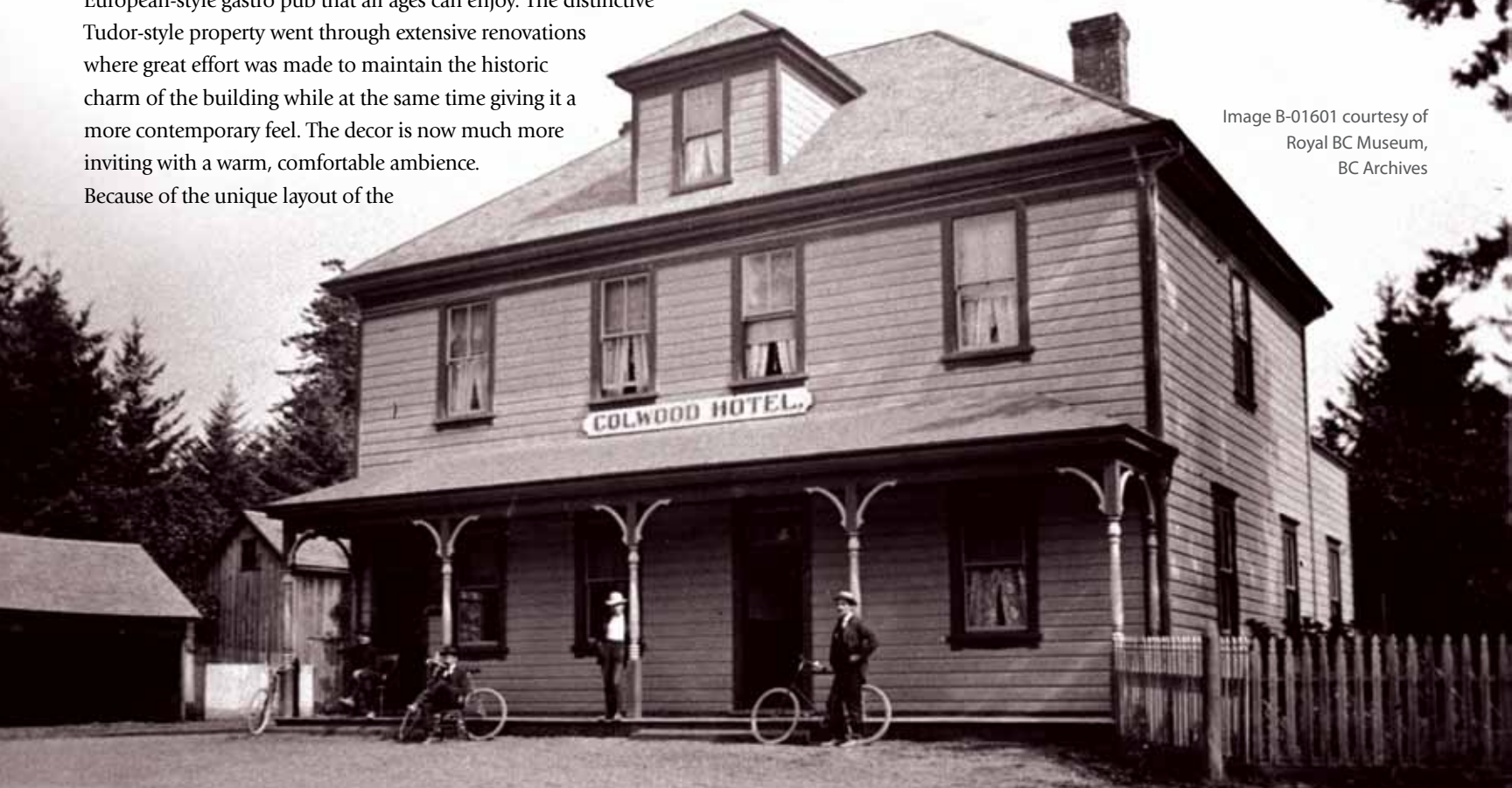
Because of the unique layout of the

building, you can enjoy very different environments. In the lively bar area you can catch a Canucks game on the HD projector screen, in the somewhat quieter main dining room get together with friends and family for some social time. The quietest and most intimate area goes by the intriguing nickname "the lover's lounge" and this time of year the patio gets great sun exposure all afternoon through early evening.

Having succeeded in creating a "neighbourhood local" as owners of the KnockanBack Grill in Saanich, Lee and Mike Spence, together with their partners, Brad Arnold and Robin Murdock, are determined to make the CrossRoads Bar and Grill the Colwood community gathering spot, where everyone feels welcome.

Mike points out, "Here at the CrossRoads we love the locals! Local food, beer, wine...and characters. We are heavily involved in the sustainable food movement and are members of the Island Chefs' Collaborative, whose mission is to "create an environment where independent local food producers can prosper." His friend Ken Hueston, of Smoken Bones Cookshack, got him interested in local food and now the two eateries work together to support Vancouver Island farms and farmers. Mike continues, "We are committed to using local produce wherever

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that includes artists, teachers, athletes, Royal Roads University and UVic students. And the kitchen crew...well they're just nuts - in a good way. The stress that they endure on a typical weekend evening is crazy. Yet you won't hear tempers flaring or pots and pans being tossed in anger. They're just a bunch of passionate foodies who want to put out a great product, and they do. Our pride is in our crew.

Then there are the wonderful friends we have made that started off as customers. A close friend who recently passed away, Daryl Forester, said to me once... 'You and Lee are really good at finding like-minded people.' Well, we love to eat and drink and we have a restaurant where people come to eat and drink, so that probably helps, but the people we have met and the friends we have made...really cool."

Mike, Lee, Robin and Brad all believe in community and as such support dozens of local organizations and initiatives. The junior and senior Shamrocks, the Grizzlies and the Juan de Fuca Lacrosse Association all receive support, and CrossRoads regularly hosts events to support local food and drink such as the Island Craft Beer Experience, and the recent Island on the Edge And All That Jazz, which showcased local food and raised funds for the WestShore Teaching Garden.

I think Andrew Bechtel, who first recognized this corner of Colwood as being the heart of the city, would be proud of what he now sees – a 'heritage of hospitality' embodied in a community-minded hostelry with a focus on great food, good ale and a friendly family welcome. 



possible, use only wild salmon, and our free-range chicken and turkey comes from just up the road at Goldstream Poultry."

On the beverage side of things, CrossRoads boasts the largest selection of island-brewed craft beers anywhere, with no less than 15 on tap. The wide range of styles from Lighthouse, Driftwood, Phillips and Vancouver Island breweries make this the closest thing the WestShore has to an actual brew pub. Completing the full circle of local food and drink is the 100% BC wine list with a full range of varietals all offered by-the-glass.

CrossRoads is a great spot for lunch. My personal favourite is a specialty of the house; the pork tenderloin sandwich with beer cheese and stout glazed onions – it's hard to resist and I'm in real danger of becoming too predictable, as I seem to order it almost every time I visit! CrossRoads really shines in the evening. While they offer a number of entrée choices, the other specialty of the house is their steaks – all AAA Certified Angus Beef – in a range of cuts and sizes. Did you know that we have a first-class steakhouse in Colwood?

What makes CrossRoads unique? Mike and Lee both quickly say...it's the people. Mike explains. "We've only been here a relatively short time yet we've had so many (close to 40) amazing people choose to work with us, who believe in our philosophy. We have a front of house team

Understanding the historical significance of the CrossRoads property, Mike Spence has approached the City of Colwood to offer the landmark spot as a central community location for gathering and showcasing Colwood stories, photos, art and artifacts. He has also offered to serve on the Colwood Heritage Commission. The city celebrates its 25th birthday in 2010.

In light of this we would ask readers: if you have any stories about past patrons, staff or proprietors; photographs of the location, or any of the businesses that have operated from this spot, please contact Mike Spence at 250.478.1311 or crossroads@shawbiz.ca.