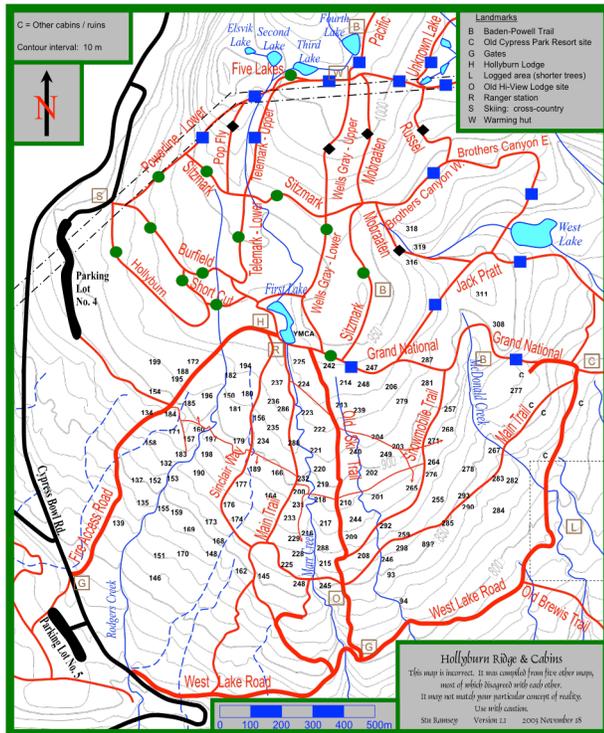


**Statement of Significance  
Hollyburn Cabin Community  
West Vancouver, B.C.  
January 2016**

**Description of the Hollyburn Cabin Community**

Fig 1 Map of Hollyburn Cabin Community



*“West Vancouver residents place a high value on their natural environment, the recreational opportunities, and the landscapes that define both.”* (West Vancouver’s Heritage Context Statement, 2008). The Hollyburn Cabin Community epitomizes this value. Nestled in the mature, Coastal Western Hemlock ecosystem of Hollyburn Mountain’s south slope, this unique group of ~100 ski cabins (Appendix A) occupies an area of approximately 1.5 km<sup>2</sup>. Its borders are:

- \* Northern boundary – Power Line
- \* Western boundary – Cypress Bowl Road
- \* Eastern boundary – West Lake Road extended north to the power line
- \* Southern boundary - West Lake Road (See Appendix B for larger version of Fig 1)

Through the cabin area run 4 main creeks draining a number of small lakes the largest of which is First Lake situated at Hollyburn Lodge. Small wetlands exist throughout the area where gradient allows.

A number of trails tie the community together connecting cabins with each other and providing recreational opportunities such as hiking, snowshoeing and cross country skiing for all who wish to access the area. Westlake Road along with the Fire Access Road and Old Ski Trail provides limited vehicle access in the summer. The map above illustrates the close connection between the cabin area trails, First Lake Lodge, the Ranger Station, and the cross country ski trails of Cypress Bowl Recreations. (See also Appendix B)

**Heritage Value of the Hollyburn Cabin Community**

**Aesthetic Value:** The Hollyburn Cabin Community is important aesthetically for its unique spatial organization. Small cabins are irregularly arrayed along narrow winding trails. These trails were established by early cabin dwellers as they hauled materials in for building, visited back and forth sharing building techniques, and helping each other in a tradition that continues to this day.

**Historic Value:** The Hollyburn Cabin community is significant in its heritage value because it is the only surviving ski cabin community on the North Shore. The heritage value of this community exists both in the cabin buildings, representing the pioneering spirit and skills of early British Columbians, and in the people who built, maintained and enjoyed the cabin community over the past 90 years.

**a) The Cabins:** Scandinavian immigrants, who brought with them traditions of winter sport and cabin building, constructed the first cabins in the late 1920's to support the newly established Hollyburn Pacific Ski Camp at First Lake. Soon other young people searching for a simpler way of life based on community cooperation were drawn to the mountain to build their own cabins. By 1931 the community consisted of over 200 cabins.

To establish a cabin site, builders would look for a suitable location close to fresh water and building supplies in the form of scavenged flume boards or usable trees. A typical Hollyburn mountain ski cabin had a barn style roof, one main room for living and a ladder up to a sleeping loft. The loft extended over the entrance porch on which firewood was stored for use during the winter months when snow depth could reach 14 feet. Shared knowledge gained from experience was common between cabin groups and in this way, a strong sense of community developed, one that continues to this day.

The Hollyburn cabins are of two basic types: board and batten or log, depending on the availability of source materials. While salvageable material from the logging mill and flumes remained, board and batten cabins with rot resistant yellow cedar support structures, board walls and cedar shake roofs were built.



*Fig 2 "The Cabin" (1932)* Note the board and batten design with typical cedar shake roof and yellow cedar base log. This cabin was built from wood scavenged from the Nasmyth mill flume. (Gerry Harman Collection)

As flume materials became scarce, builders either carried boards up the mountain on their backs or built cabins entirely from logs. Logs provided natural insulation and, if built from yellow cedar, longevity from the wood's natural preserving oils. Many of these cabins maintained the tried and true structural design with slight variations reflecting the builders' imagination.



*Fig 3 Challenger Inn (235)* Log structure, shake barn roof



*Fig 4 Pastime (240)* Log structure, cedar shake peak roof

Cabin building continued through the Depression years ending when World War II took many of the young people away from the mountain. A number of the cabins fell into disrepair as a result of the harsh, subalpine conditions of the mountain, or were deemed unsafe by the Ranger of West Vancouver and thus demolished. Currently there are about 100 cabins remaining in the community, the majority of which are now 80 to 90 years old. Until 2014, no new cabins had been built on the ridge since 1965, making the youngest of the cabins 50 years old.

**b) The People:** Amongst the cabin owners and frequent visitors are several people who have made notable contributions to the heritage of the cabin community:

- Pollough Pogue – Prolific poet, writer and editor of *The Hiker & Skier* in the 1930's
- Jack Harmon – Purchased and named “*Harmony Hall*” in 1945. Recipient of the Order of British Columbia for his outstanding achievements as a sculptor.



Fig 5 & 6 Building the addition to “Harmony Hall” Cartoon by Jack Harmon 1947 based on the 1946 photo at site

- Gerry Hardman (1920–2002): Builder of “*Sigi’s Hideout*” (cabin 182) in 1935. Long-time resident of West Vancouver, avid skier and cabin dweller. Snow pole at First Lake dedicated to his memory.
- Scotty Finlayson – built the “*Canuck*” cabin in 1931. The first Ranger of Hollyburn Mountain.
- Alf Staley (1909 – 2003): Builder of the “*Haida Lodge*” (cabin 183). Accomplished mountaineer, ski racer, and tennis pro.
- Peggy Pratt (1920 – 2013): Avid skier and mountain enthusiast –The Jack Pratt Ski trail and Ski Jump is named in honour of Peggy’s father.
- Fred Burfield (1918 – 2013): Owner/Operator of Hollyburn Lodge from 1946 to 1983.
- Bob Tapp – (1929 – 2014): Owner of “*Holmenkollen*” and of the Hollyburn Western Telephone Company operating in the 1950’s and 1960’s, which connected several cabins on the mountain to the Ranger Station. First director of the Hollyburn Ridge Association. In partnership with Gordon Knight, formed the Hollyburn Heritage Society.
- The Hollyburn Ridge Association – established in 1973 by Bob Tapp and Jack Rockandel, the HRA carries out its mandate of “Preserving the nature and heritage of Hollyburn Ridge, West

Vancouver". The HRA has twice received Heritage Achievement Awards from the community (2007 and 2011).

**Cultural Value:** The cabin community is culturally significant because of its association with people and events related to the emerging ski culture on the north shore. Today the strong association between the cabins and the ski culture continues with 50% of the cabins purchasing annual ski passes.

The maintenance of these cabins in their traditional form embodies an approach that places high value on the continuance of an earlier generation's simple direct enjoyment of the mountain while assuming responsibility for the conservation of the natural environment. Cabin owners now bring in all replacement logs and building materials from off the mountain while continuing to use traditional building materials when structural maintenance is needed. The cabins exist in harmony with the creeks, wetlands and subalpine forest ecosystem that is this place. Minimal disruption to the natural order is the goal of the cabin community as they carry out their self appointed stewardship of the area.

**Social Value:** The Hollyburn Lodge, social center for the Hollyburn cabins, was the first site to be recognized by West Vancouver for its heritage value. It and the cabins associated with it are a symbol of the outdoor recreation and social life on the North Shore that is highly valued by the citizens of West Vancouver.

**Scientific and Educational Value:** The cabin community adds to educational and scientific knowledge, through the architecture of the cabins themselves, the study of the second growth Western Hemlock Forest ecosystem, and through the work done by organizations such as the Y.M.C.A., Girl Guides and Boy Scouts each of which established cabins on the mountain. The Ranger Station hosted, until recently, a park naturalist who provided a presence on the mountain much valued by day visitors as well as the cabin community.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

#### **Natural Systems and Features:**

- Creek beds
- Adjacent lakes – First Lake and West Lake
- Wetlands and Ponds on level terrain
- Shallow soil layer supporting acidic tolerant vegetation

#### **Vegetation**

- Coastal Western Hemlock Biogeoclimatic zone with its natural vegetation:
  - Canopy: western hemlock, amabilis fir, western redcedar, and yellow cedar
  - Undergrowth: blueberry dominant
  - Forest floor: moss layer, mushrooms and fungi, bunchberry
  - Lakes and Wetlands: skunk cabbage and water lily
  - Various grasses in open areas

#### **Wildlife:** A variety of large and small mammals inhabit Hollyburn Ridge including:

- Large varieties: Black bear, cougar, coyotes
- Small varieties: Squirrel, chipmunk, skunk, various rodents
- Birds: Ravens, blue jay, gray jay, chickadees, warblers, woodpeckers, grouse, hawks, owls

## Land Use

- Recreational

## Spatial Organization:

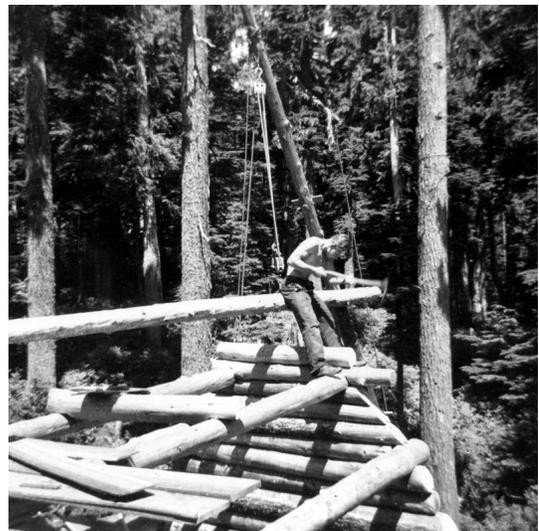
- Trail systems (Hiking, Skiing, Snowshoeing)
- Fire Access Road and West Lake Road – limited summer vehicle access

## Buildings

- Cabins – See Appendix A for Cabin Names, Cabin Numbers, and photographs
  - Most cabins are named with the majority retaining their original name
  - Aesthetically important for their uncomplicated forms and locally sourced building materials employed in traditional ways (refer to *Figs 2 -4*). Replacement logs now must be brought in rather than by harvesting the forest.
  - Lightly situated on and amid undisturbed or lightly modified ground
    - Cabins are built on braced posts (*Fig 4*)
    - Minimal connection to ground surface to prevent rot of base logs
    - Cross bracing used to support structure and to prevent tilting during heavy snow loads
    - Many cabins raised due to frequent deep snow conditions
  - Cabin types
    - board and batten
      - yellow cedar posts and supporting frame
      - board walls
    - log structure
      - yellow cedar posts and supporting frame
      - log walls (yellow cedar preferable)
        - limbs removed and trunk debarked
        - tapered in nature so placed in way to keep overall wall level
        - notched at corners (*Fig 7*)
      - ridge pole & intermediate poles (*Fig 8*)



*Fig 7* Making a joint. These are floor strings that the saw is on  
(A. Charboneau collection 1936)



*Fig 8* Jack Harmon moving ridge pole into place  
(J. Harmon collection 1947)

- Cabins now skirted hiding base logs and bracing posts
- Roof lines either single peaked or barn style (*Fig 2 - 4*)

- Gables extend 1' to 1.5' to protect walls and log ends from weather
- No gutters as they would be destroyed by sliding snow
- Original roofs of cedar shakes are now all metal roofs mitigating the risk of fire
- Outhouses – Pit style
  - Supporting base of logs
  - Walls of lumber
  - Steep metal roof to allow for accumulated snow to slide easily
  - Built several feet off the ground to allow for accumulation of snow

### **Constructed Features**

- Man made dam at the south end of First Lake
- Foot bridges spanning creeks
- Boardwalks to protect wetlands
- Fire Access Roads
- Culverts
- Cabin names marking their access trail

### **Views**

- Forest ecosystem
- Neighboring cabins where close in proximity

### **Governance**

- The cabins rest on land leased from the District of West Vancouver.
- The cabin owners abide by the rules set out in the November 1, 2011 “Permit to Occupy”
- The current “Permit to Occupy” is valid until November 1, 2021.
- The cabin owners maintain a close relationship with the Department of Parks, West Vancouver
- Cabins undergo Inspections on a 10 year cycle required by cabin owners to maintain their ownership
- 86% of the cabins are represented by the Hollyburn Ridge Association

### **Intangibles**

- Sense of place and spiritual connectedness with the natural environment when traversing mountain trails or staying in the mountain cabins
- Living time capsule: pioneering lifestyle where water is drawn from creeks, cabins are heated by wood, and gas lamps and candles provide illumination on dark winter nights.
- Inspiration for generations of poets, writers, artists and musicians.