

## May Queens (continued from page 1)

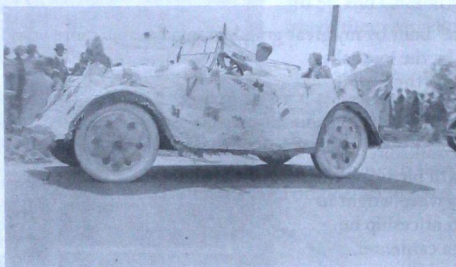
Queen of her realm, presiding with her entourage over her loyal subjects. This was the second largest such festival in Canada; only New Westminster's was bigger.

West Vancouver's Edenic beauty parallels the innocent charm of the youth who assumed centre stage. In the words of a contemporary, it was "one big happy community where the spirit of highjinks and wholesome fun prevails". It provided a sense of renewal and celebration in the tough days of the Depression. At the same time, Victoria Day expressed the spirit of empire and allegiance to Britain that characterized life in West Vancouver at this time.

In 1930 six-year-old Mavis Whipple, crowned Miss West Vancouver, rode in a horse-drawn carriage borrowed from Shelley's 4X Bakery. The next year Peggy Barker was the first official May Queen. Junior High students voted for the top three candidates, then a draw selected first the Queen, and then her two Maids of Honour. The May Queen planted a tree, was given a silver bracelet and the key to

the City, and acted in a queenly manner. In 1954 May Queen Ann Johnstone (now Brousson and former president of the Historical Society) recalls the occasion as a total community enterprise. Jimmy Mitchell, former principal of West Van High, was a long-time emcee.

Mrs. Sybil Small, who oversaw



West Vancouver Archives. May Day collection. 005.WVA.MDC.  
Decorated car in West Vancouver's first May Day parade. May 25. 1931.

the event, was known for many years as the backbone of the organization. A group of dedicated ladies fashioned the elaborate costumes; Gertrude Lawson was also a major supporter. Maids of Honour, Guards of Honour, Bearers of the Mace, Bearers of the Crown, Bearers of the Sceptre, a Page and Chancellors made a formidable retinue. And, of course, Flower Girls were necessary to adorn with petals the Queen's path to her throne. Ian MacDonald recalls being paraded through his school's classrooms before being voted an eight-year-old Chancellor — completely unaware of what was going

on. A parade — two miles long in 1940 — included floats by local merchants and organizations, numerous bands, kids with decorated bikes, and firetrucks. Sporting activities, especially a hotly contested relay race between high school students from North and West Vancouver, along with

speeches, awards and entertainment, attracted as many as 7,000 spectators.

And then there was the Maypole dancing. As many as 400 dancers, mostly Grade 4 students, wove patterns around 25 maypoles strung in

alternating colours, with streamers in red,

white and blue. Dances included the "ruffy-tuffy", "gathering peascods" and "the spider's web". Arthur Delamont's West Van Band and others provided the music.

The May Day Ball held at West Van High capped the festivities. This day marked the unofficial beginning of swimming at Ambleside Beach and summer fun.

Lack of volunteers ended the May Day Festival in 1973. But on May 9 this year a May Day community event, including Maypole dancing, was held at the Caufield Shopping Mall.