



JOHN ARBUTHNOT

John was born in St. Catharines, ON. on 7 January 1861, the son of John and Mary Arbuthnot, Irish immigrants who arrived in Canada in the 1850's.

He married Agnes Barbara Savage in St. Catharines. They had one son and one daughter. Agnes dies in 1916. The couple were living at Robleda, 1337 Rockland when she died. A 1908 full page newspaper article about all the Prairie people who had moved to Victoria described Robleda like this:

"Robleda" reminds you of some old feudal castle in days "long syne". It is also "up Rockland way" where the folk in society foregather. "Robleda" was bought a few years ago for \$20,000, and its owner refused \$50,000 for it this year. Its walls are ivy-green, and its many gables and long low piazza carry out the idea of age and antiquity. Large grounds, very beautifully arranged by a landscape gardener add to the general effect of grandeur: and the owner, John Arbuthnot, formerly Winnipeg's popular mayor, has become a prominent citizen of Victoria."

Sadly, in 1927 Robleda burns down so in 1928, he moves to 550 Foul Bay Road to a house called Ellora, named after the caves in India. It is now designated as a heritage house. John's house in Winnipeg is also a heritage house.

John remarries and has another daughter, born in Seattle in 1919, with his 2nd wife Lillian Haggerty.

As a young man, John worked for the CPR for 10 years constructing railways in western Ontario. By 1892, he was living in Winnipeg where he started his own lumber company.

He was elected an alderman to Winnipeg City Council and served in that capacity from 1896-7 and then spent 2 years as chair of the City Parks Board. During his tenure, a boulevard committee was formed and its role was to create boulevards along city streets and green them. They also began Assiniboine Park, the main park in Winnipeg. And so began the wonderful urban forest of over 200,000 elm trees in the city. They were highly influenced by an urban parks movement that started with the Chicago World Fair in 1893. From 1901-03, he was the mayor of Winnipeg and a strong advocate of public ownership of utilities. He was a staunch conservative.

In 1907 he moved to Victoria and started Pacific Coast Coal Mine with his brother-in-law, James M. Savage. It became a highly successful business on the Island around Nanoose. He also owned the Red Fir Lumber Company until about 1911 when he sold it to a former mayor of Ladysmith. Also in 1907, John and 3 other men were the first members nominated to the Victoria City Parks Board.

In June of 1910, the British Colonist reports:

Mr. John Arbuthnot, who has been appointed commodore of the International Power Boat Association, will be a prominent figure in connection with both the long distance motor race, which this year will start at Tacoma and finish at Victoria with upwards of twenty entries, and the yacht events. His fine new gasoline cruiser, purchased in Seattle, is lying in the harbor and is being fully prepared for the commanding part it will take in the forthcoming competitions. Between 1000 and 1500 yachtsmen are expected here from Vancouver, Seattle, Bellingham, and other points.

John Arbuthnot died Sept 17 1931 in New Westminster at 70 years of age.