

Tom Kirstein and Chip Barrett brought the Canadian Open Sandcastle Competition to White Rock, branding the city with an identity as the sandcastle capital of the world.



Photo courtesy White Rock Museum & Archives

White Rock's image has changed through years

The recent announcement of White Rock's new trademark, "My City by the Sea," reminded us how differently White Rock has viewed itself over the century of its existence.

The image has evolved from the hopes of infancy, through self-assured, brash youth, and finally to conventional adulthood.

A hundred years ago, when the only running water was in the streams of the hillside, White Rock was hailed as the "Naples of the Pacific," or more expansively, "Naples of Canada."

The railroad had just arrived, bringing hordes of summer folk

from Vancouver and other urban centres, and visionaries were busy plotting to make White Rock a major seaport.



The White Rock Publicity Bureau, with headquarters in the *Surrey Gazette* newspaper office, was in operation by 1915. Summer folk began to outnumber the permanent residents, setting the pace and atmosphere of the community.

After the First World War, and before the sobering Great Depression of the '30s, visitors to White Rock, like the rest of North America, were bent on enjoying themselves.

Percy Elsey, manager of the Central Hotel, across from the

railway depot, advised them to "Follow the Chickens to White Rock."

J.A. Bates, editor of the *Gazette*, was a prime mover in the Boosters Club, formed in 1924. Back then, branding had a negative connotation, and was associated primarily with cattle.

The Club and the Ratepayers Association sponsored "Tune in, Ye Radio Fans," a 15-minute program to advertise White Rock.

The program featured the Sole Ticklers orchestra and the Commercial Travellers as entertainment. An appeal to submit appropriate slogans for White Rock produced the following: "White Rock: A Peach of a Beach," "Summer Resort of the Moonbeams," "The Wonderful Rejuvenator" (no doubt submitted by one of the many escapees from Prairie winters), "Everything White in

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From 'Naples' to 'Peach of a Beach'

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White Rock for White People," "White Rock sends a Clarion Call, Health, Wealth, Come One, Come All," and the winner, "White Rock: It's the Beach."

W.F. McClintock, who hardly missed a weekend in White Rock in 50 years, claimed in 1932 it had every right to be known as Canada's "All Year Round Seaside Resort" - all it needed was a sidewalk in the west end.

In 1947, the *Semiahmoo Sun* published the "Ode to White Rock," reasserting White Rock's title as the Naples of Canada.

Its overwhelming pathos is shown in the final verse:

*So here's to
White Rock
- Naples of
our land;
Where low
degrees of
Fahrenheit
are banned
Oh! To
breathe its
air - or walk
its paths,
Or sit and
watch the
seagulls on the sand.*

Ah! Naples!
Perhaps it explains a lot to know the author lived in Edmonton. A get-on-with-life mood prevailed in the '50s, and "City by the Sea" brought this instance of finding a label of identification to mind.

Chester Brown, a native son who served heroically in the Second

World War returned home a paraplegic. In 1953, his plan to open a Venetian blind business was encouraged by other local merchants.

To promote the new venture, a contest was launched to name the firm. After weeks of hype, the \$15-prize winner was announced: "White Rock Venetian Blind Sales Company."

The following decades recorded their own attention-grabbing catch phrases, one of the better remembered being, "Do it in the Sand," to invite the world to White Rock's sandcastle competitions starting in 1979.

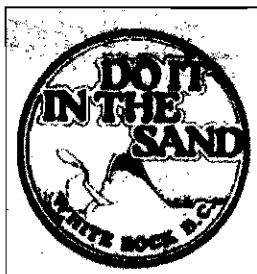
A slogan should reflect the image it's supposed to portray, and "City By

the Sea" states what White Rock is, succinctly and accurately.

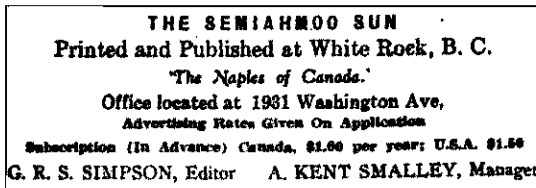
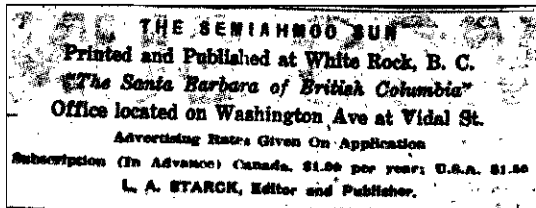
Still, "Peach of a Beach" has a certain nostalgic ring to it, and would

have won a chuckle from the late Terry Parr, White Rock promoter *par excellence*.

The Peninsula's best-known mother-and-son historians, Lorraine and Hugh Ellenwood, are dedicated to preserving history through the White Rock Museum & Archives. Call 604-541-2222, or email whiterockarchives@telus.net

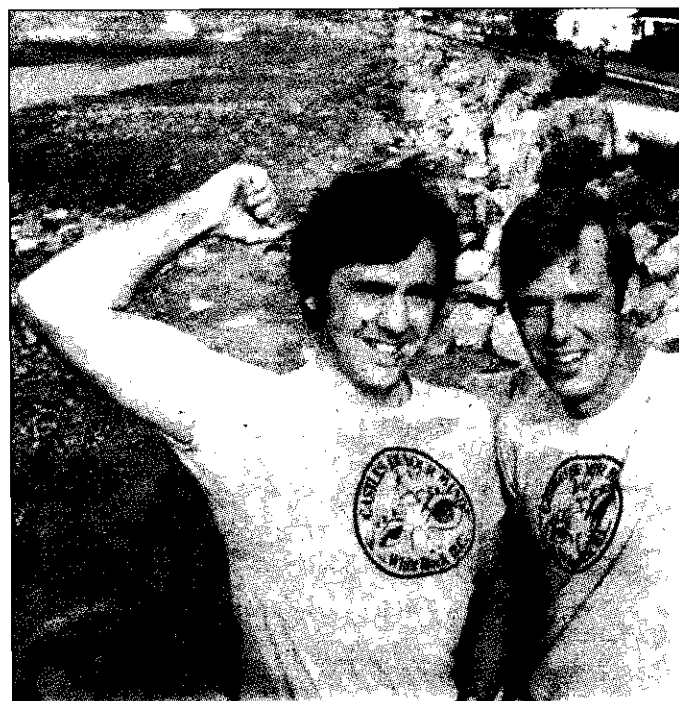


A city slogan from the late 1970s.



Photos courtesy White Rock Museum & Archives

Right, Herb Knowles, a tireless promoter of White Rock in the 1960s, was known as "Mr. Tourist." Above, ads in the defunct *Semiahmoo Sun* refer to White Rock as the 'Naples of Canada' and the 'Santa Barbara of British Columbia.'



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