

**OFFICIAL CLOSING TOUR**  
**LOWER MAINLAND REGIONAL**  
**CORRECTIONAL CENTRE**  
**OAKALLA PRISON FARM**



***Oakalla Prison Farm 1914 - 1991***

***The Ministry of the Solicitor General, Corrections Branch and the Staff of the Lower Mainland Regional Correctional Centre wish to take this opportunity to thank you for attending the Official closing of L.M.R.C.C. historically known as Oakalla Prison Farm.***

***As you proceed through your self - directed tour, feel free to direct***

***any questions you may have to the Corrections Staff posted at various positions. They will be pleased to help make your tour an interesting and informative event.***

***Direction signs and points of interest have been marked at numerous locations both in the Main Gaol and on the Grounds. We hope you enjoy the tour.***

## THE MAIN TOUR ROUTE

To facilitate your tour, three buildings are open to the public, the Main Gaol, Lakeside Correctional Centre for Women and the Old Cow Barn.

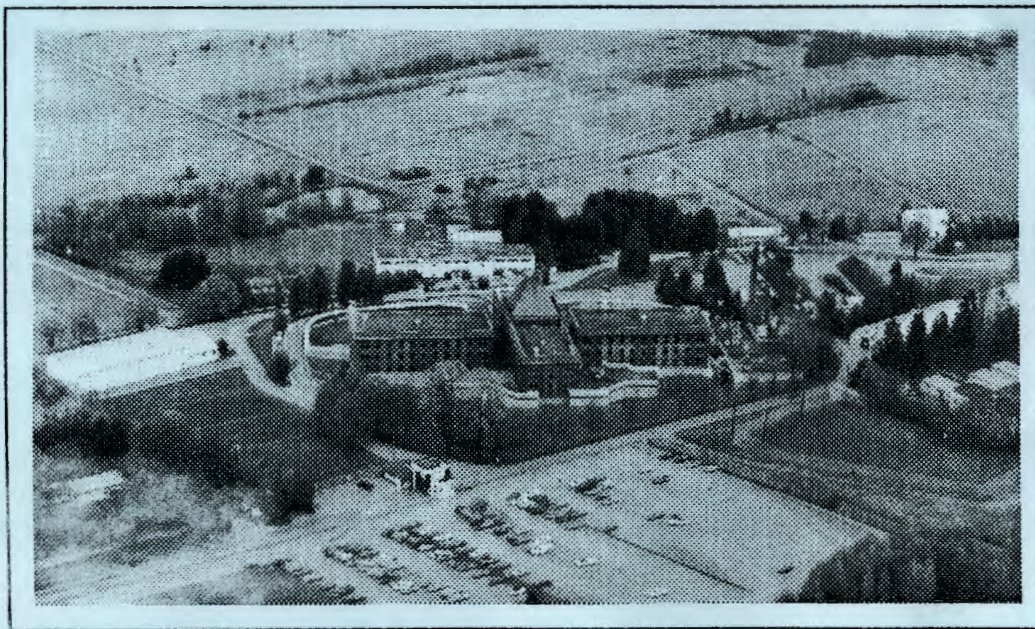
Your tour starts at the Gate House. After leaving the Gate House, stroll along the top road to Lakeside Correctional Centre for Women. If you keep your eyes peeled, you may see some of the various wild fowl such as Canada Geese, pheasants, ducks, barn owls and hawks that nest on these grounds.

Upon completion of the Lakeside Correctional Centre for Women tour, we would suggest you follow the signs to the Old Cow Barn. Used as a Segeation Unit, it is equipped with "quiet and restraint cells." This is the site of the largest mass escape (13 inmates) to take place in Oakalla's history.

As you leave the Old Cow Barn and head to the Main Gaol, you will notice picnic tables are placed over looking Deer Lake. If you decide to take a brief rest at this area, you may be fortunate to see some of the wildlife that inhabit the grounds such as coyotes, racoons, opossums and rabbits.

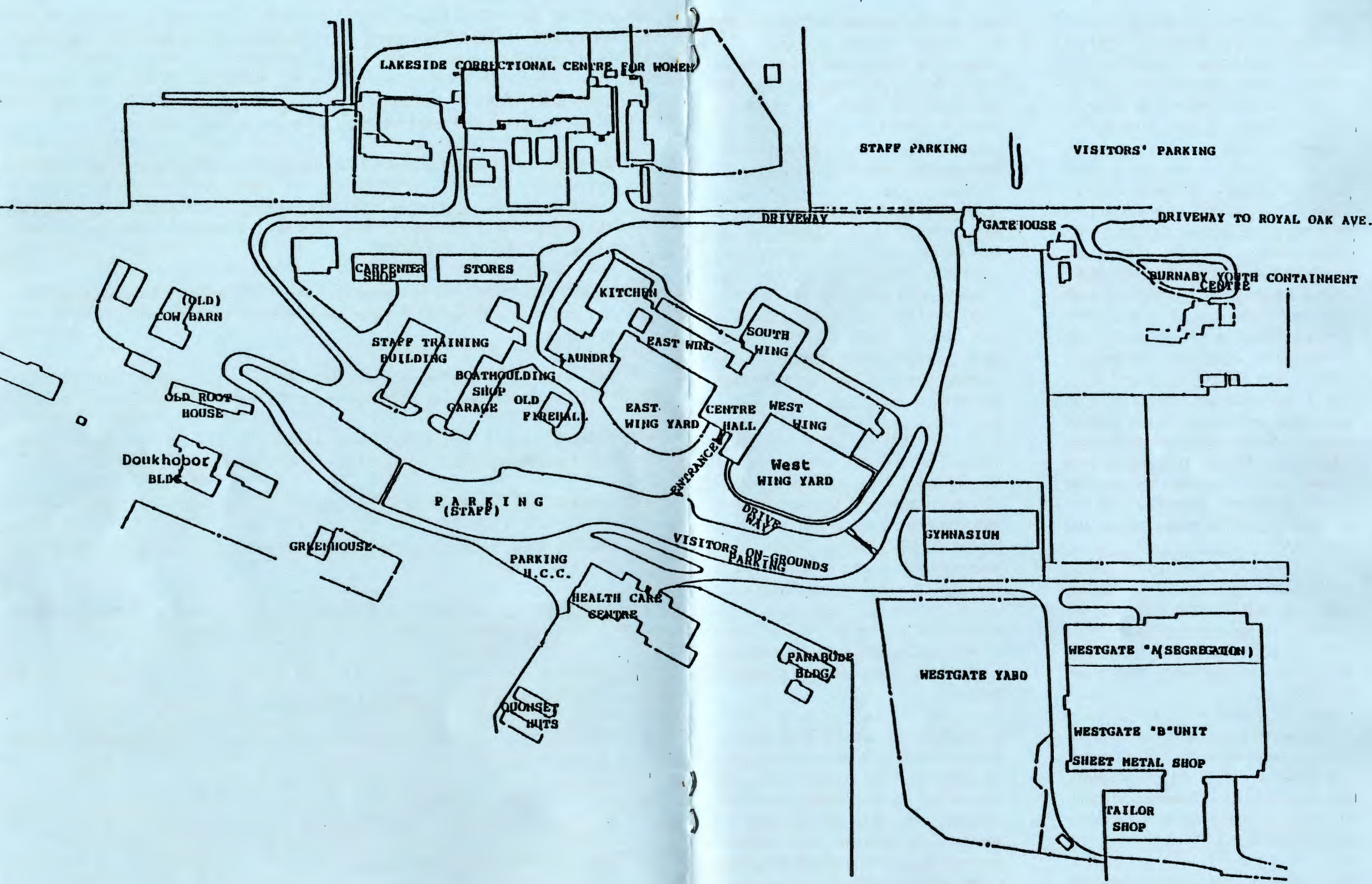
Passing the East Wing Yard, continue to the Main Gaol. Following the same route that all inmates admitted to Oakalla took, enter the Records Unit.

Leaving the Kitchen, we would suggest you head north, (left) and enter East Wing Yard. Continue up the stairs from the Yard to continue the tour of the Main Gaol including West Wing, South Wing, Death Row, the Gallows, the Warden's Conference Room and Office, and the historical display area in the Officer's Canteen.



## THE MAIN STRUCTURES

- **GATEHOUSE** Provided perimeter security to the institution. An armed post manned 24 hours daily, 7 days per week.
- **GYMNASIUM** Main community centre at the Institution. Used for entertainment, church services, family visits and sports.
- **WESTWING YARD** Used for outside activity programs by West Wing Inmates.
- **PANABODE** Rehabilitation unit for drug addicts. Accomodated ten inmates. The occupational assignment for this unit consisted of doing all the baking for the institution.
- **HEALTH CARE CENTRE** 72 bed capacity unit. Served as a base hospital for all institutions in the lower mainland as well as the rest of the province.
- **MAIN GAOL** Site of East, South and West Wings, Records, the Gallows, Death Row, Observation Unit, Warden's Office and Officer's Canteen.
- **KITCHEN** 32 East Wing Inmates were assigned to work in the kitchen. The daily number of meals prepared could surpass three thousand.
- **LAKESIDE** A 138 inmate self-contained unit for female offenders.
- **OLD COW BARN** Maximum capacity of 29 inmates including "Quiet Cells" and "Restraint Cell"
- **STAFF TRAINING • GARAGE • MOULDING SHOP** Site of the first wooden structure on Oakalla grounds used as a lockup for B.C. Police.
- **DOUKHOBOR HUT** Capacity of 18 inmates last used by female inmates following anti-abortion demonstrations in 1989.
- **FIREHALL** Housed a Ford 700 Thibault pumper and a 3/4 ton equipped prison ambulance.
- **EAST WING YARD** Recreation area for East Wing inmates providing access to Laundry.
- **WESTGATE A** Capacity 138 inmates.
- **WESTGATE B** Capacity 200 inmates.



LAKESIDE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE FOR WOMEN

STAFF PARKING

VISITORS' PARKING

DRIVEWAY

GATE HOUSE

DRIVEWAY TO ROYAL OAK AVE.

CARPENTER SHOP

STORES

KITCHEN

SOUTH WING

EAST WING

LAUNDRY

STAFF TRAINING BUILDING

BOATHOULding SHOP

GARAGE

OLD FIREHALL

EAST WING YARD

CENTRE HALL

WEST WING

West WING YARD

ENTRANCE

GYMNASIUM

PARKING (STAFF)

VISITORS ON-GROUNDS PARKING

PARKING H.C.C.

HEALTH CARE CENTRE

PANABODE BLDG.

WESTGATE YARD

WESTGATE 'A' (SEGREGATION)

WESTGATE 'B' UNIT

SHEET METAL SHOP

TAILOR SHOP

QUONSET HUTS

(OLD) COW BARN

OLD ROOF HOUSE

Doukhobor BLDG.

GREENHOUSE

BURNABY YOUTH CONTAINMENT CENTRE

# A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1910, inspection of the Provincial Gaol in New Westminster revealed both over population and poor ventilation. Response was to construct a larger central prison farm to relieve congestion and address the concern of the minimal amount of labour being done by prisoners.

In 1911 a contract was awarded for the construction of a model prison to relieve overcrowding and increase opportunity for outdoor labour. The site selected was intended to house prisoners sentenced from six months to two years less one day. The British Columbian described some of its features: "The new central prison is to be both structurally and in equipment thoroughly up-to-date, having been carefully planned with a view to obtaining perfect light, ventilation and sanitation in conjunction with absolute security. The building...has an excellent situation on the brow of a rather steep incline, the site commanding a view over Deer Lake and facing north by north east, so that all cells will get the sunshine at some time of the day."

On 185 acres, Oakalla was designed for the purpose of employing prisoners within the confines of the gaol property which eventually led to the obsolescence of chain-gangs however still emphasized punishment, security and discipline.

In 1912, a wooden building was constructed as temporary accommodation for 100 short term male prisoners. With the aid of inmate labour, construction of a permanent structure (the red brick building) began. The structure was completed in 1914.

Women prisoners, from the overcrowded New Westminster Gaol, were moved to the South Wing of Oakalla. Housed in the same facility,

women were kept separate and secluded from male prisoners and under the charge of a matron. By 1924 recommendations for a separate facility for women, apart from the main building in Oakalla, be constructed however the women's unit, which later became known as Lakeside Correctional Centre for Women, was not completed until 1942.

In 1934 the policy of segregating prisoners in adult institutions was adopted on an experimental basis. An experiment was initiated at Oakalla with a group of first offenders which eventually led to the establishment of a training school for young adult offenders called the B.C. Training School. Through a contest sponsored by CKNW radio, the name of the facility was changed to "New Haven" in 1939.

During the 1950s and 1960s, units were developed to meet the special needs of offenders and allow for individual treatment. 1951 saw the opening of the Young Offenders Unit. Rita Perkins was the first woman to be hired at the Y.O.U. in 1958. When hired, she was advised that she was the first woman in Canada to work with young male offenders.

In early 1952, professional staff were hired to assist in the planning and implementation of vocational, educational and counselling programs.

In 1953, Westgate B opened to house overflow. It was designed to be converted later into industrial shops and warehouses once the proposed new facility (Haney Correctional Institution) for reformable offenders was completed. In this same year, government funds were made available to study the problem of drug addiction before deciding on a course of action regarding the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. The project,

which completed in 1956, began at Oakalla and as a consequence of this research two treatment centres, The Narcotic Foundation of B.C. and a Treatment Centre at Oakalla were established.

To carry out an effective program of treatment and training for inmates, it was necessary to develop a better system of training staff and in 1955 the first basic training course (one week duration) was offered to all custodial officers at Oakalla. In 1960, staff training policy was altered with basic training increased to 160 hours. The program was once again centred at Oakalla.

The last execution at Oakalla occurred in 1959. By that time, the prison had been expanded to cover approximately 239 acres and housed an average daily inmate population of 900 inmates.

By the mid 1960s, Oakalla not only operated a full farm facility providing meat and produce, but also operated numerous production shops such as upholstery, woodworking, fibreglass moulding, garage, licence plate and sheet metal shop, shoe shop, tailor shop, knitting shop, plumbing shop, and electrical shop. Production goods were used by Oakalla, supplied to other institutions or donated to community groups.

The Oakalla Hospital, complete with a fully equipped operating room suitable for minor surgery, served as a base hospital for all institutions in the Province. Professional staff included one full-time doctor, four part-time doctors, one Superintendent of Nurses, four registered nurses, two psychiatric nurses, one pharmacist, one X-ray technician and a part-time physio-therapist. A ward for 12 inmates at Vancouver General Hospital (Fairview Pavillion 1) was also a

branch of the Oakalla Hospital. It operated in conjunction with the authorities there, security provided by nine Oakalla officers. All professional and treatment needs were handled by the VGH staff.

With the increased use of probation, temporary absences, community, camp and forestry programs, the prison population had been steadily declining over the years. In March 1972 a gradual phase down of L.M.R.C.C. commenced. By 1974 phasing out of the farming program and L.M.R.C.C. was implemented and all livestock and most farm equipment was transferred to other provincial locations and the farming program was closed permanently by early 1975.

In July 1975, the Isolation Unit, located under the old cow barn, was closed and moved into the Westgate A Unit. The old Isolation Unit, was permanently closed in 1988 following a mass escape.

With construction of Fraser Regional Correctional Centre, April 1990, sentenced inmates in Westgate B were transferred to PRCC allowing for the closing of Westgate B. Westgate A inmates were moved to the South Wing and Westgate A was used on weekends for the Intermittent Offenders Program. In April, 1991 with the completion of Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women, Lakeside Correctional Centre for Women was closed. Upon the completion of the Surrey Pre-Trial Services Centre, Oakalla saw its final closing June 1991.

# THE WARDENS OF OAKALLA

W. G. MCMYNN	1914 - 1917
C. S. CAMPBELL	1917 - 1923
W. G. MCMYNN	1923 - 1929
W. P. OWEN	1929 - 1943
J. H. MILLMAN	1943 - 1952
H. G. CHRISTIE	1952 - 1962
W. H. MULLIGAN	1963 - 1974
W. H. BJARNASON	1974 - 1987
R. GOBILLOT	1987 - 1990
A. G. STEVENS	1990 - 1991

Photo by: Al Riou



THE GATE HOUSE