

## **Saanich Auto Repair/Brookman's Grocery & Flowers/Craigflower Bridge Store Saanich, British Columbia**

In 1928, Arthur Brookman Senior, his wife, and young son left Guelph, Ontario and drove West across Canada. Brookman, originally from Bath, England, had a dream—to open his own business.

The family arrived in Victoria, British Columbia, and Arthur set about looking for a good location.

He found it in the village of Saanich, a stone's throw from Victoria. Saanich started as an agricultural settlement in the mid 1800s, where the Hudson's Bay Company operated the Craigflower Manor farm on fertile land near the Gorge Waterway. By the 1920s, Saanich was still relatively undeveloped.

Son Arthur Brookman Junior wrote in his diary:

“Whenever the family drove by the land along the Gorge Waterway (at Admiral Road near the Craigflower Bridge), my father would say, ‘That is the place we are going to build our store!’ There was nothing but trees around here at that time.... It was quite wild... pheasant, mink, quails, and coons ...”

In just two years, the senior Brookman had purchased a piece of land on the Gorge. He opened the Craigflower Bridge Store, a modest two-storey gable-roofed building with living quarters on the second level. The store soon became popular, especially with school children who used it as a tuck shop for snacks.



Brookman's Grocery

Photo courtesy J & C Barr Collection, Saanich Archives



Saanich's first automobile and service garage

Photo courtesy J & C Barr Collection, Saanich Archives

Arthur Junior grew up in the store. He raised homing pigeons and bantam roosters, which caused quite a ruckus when they ran around and picked food right out of sacks.

After the war, Arthur Junior joined his parents' business, which had expanded to include a two-storey apartment/commercial block and marine shop. The buildings were unusual commercial examples of a pre-fabricated log building system manufactured by The Pan-Abode Company in Richmond, B.C.

Over time, the Brookmans earned a reputation as astute but generous business people. They adapted to changing times, and refitted the marine shop as Saanich's first automobile service garage. If you take your car in for a tune up, you can see the original boat hoists on the walls.

When Arthur Junior retired, he passed the business on to dear family friends. Eighty-five years after Arthur Senior opened his first store, the commercial enterprise that was his dream endures.