

How did Rudd Park get its Name?

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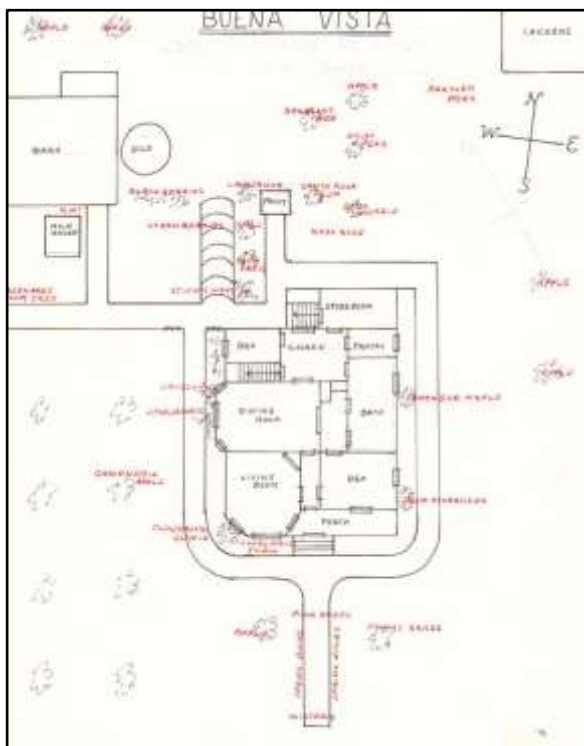
Children's playground group at Rudd Park, ca. 1946 (2012-008-016)

Rudd Park was named after **Martha Newton Starkey Rudd** who was born in England in 1850. In 1876, Martha married John Rudd and, a few weeks later, the couple left on a steamer for Australia. According to letters that Martha exchanged with family and friends back in England, though the couple were very much in love when they left for Australia, John became physically abusive and was often away from home for long periods looking for work. Martha described their time in Australia as lonely and difficult. In 1884, after 8 years struggling to earn a living and suffering the death of a son, Martha, John, and their 5 children sailed to San Francisco where they purchased a section of land at Schellville in the Sonoma Valley. California also proved to be a disappointment, however, and so in 1890 the Rudd family immigrated to Canada.

They lived for a time in James Bay in Victoria before moving to Prevost Island, followed by Galiano and Mayne Islands. Shortly after arriving in Canada, Martha discovered that she was pregnant again. In 1892, with John absent and no one else to help her, she gave birth to Anne on Prevost Island. A few years later Dorothy, the 8th and last Rudd child, was born. Martha and John's children remember their time in the Gulf Islands as particularly difficult. The family were dragged from island to island with John absent for long stretches, often taking one of his daughters with him, leaving Martha not knowing when or if he would bring the child back. When he was home, John was physically abusive to Martha and the children.

In 1900, John wrote to Martha from Ladner, BC where he had gone to look for work, begging her to bring the children and join him there. By now Martha had had enough of following John from place to place on the promise of a fresh start, and instead decided to start over by herself in Victoria. In the summer of 1901, Martha arrived in Victoria. Her daughters, Bessie (only 15 at the time) and Mattie, had gone to Victoria in 1897 and found work as mother's helpers. Her son George had also left home and was working on Westham Island. Her son Jack and the rest of the children had remained on Galiano while Martha went ahead to find work. John had always been unreliable and had never brought home a steady income, so once in Victoria, Martha supported the family by scrubbing floors and cleaning houses. By 1906, the children had rejoined their mother in a house she was renting on Rock Bay Avenue. John visited them a few times, but he wanted to return to England. Again, Martha refused to go with him.

In 1906, now a single mother, Martha used the money she had saved over the past 8 years to buy a plot of land at 296 Burnside Road. Her son George, now a professional builder, built her a house which she called "**Buena Vista**," where she and her 4 youngest children would live. She bought a herd of cows, planted a vegetable garden and an orchard, and with help from the Department of Agriculture built Victoria's first grain silo. Inspired by the fine homes she had worked in, Martha spared no expense in furnishing her new home. The home featured elaborate candle holders, alabaster framed mirrors above the marble fireplaces, and a crystal chandelier over the dining room table. In the evenings, the family would crowd around the piano and there were plenty of spare rooms upstairs for overnight guests. A few of her eldest children lived in neighbouring houses on Burnside Road and her grandchildren were frequent visitors to Buena Vista.



Hand-drawn plan of "Buena Vista" and property (courtesy of Frances Howey)



Muriel Rudd (Martha's grand-daughter, daughter of Fred and Isobel Rudd) with Robert and Madeline Pridmore on the Pridmore's Burnside Road Farm, 1928 (2007-033-026)

After Martha's death, her youngest daughter Dorothy, who had lived with Martha at Buena Vista until her death, married George Farmer and they lived in the family home for another 42 years. When she died in 1928, Martha left part of her land to her son Fred, who continued to run the dairy farm until his death in 1965. She left the other part of her land to her son George. George served as a Saanich Alderman and was a member of the Saanich Parks and Recreation Committee. Around 1943, George Rudd donated five acres of his land to the District of Saanich. The new park was named Rudd Park.



Colonist, 15 August 1952



Children's playground group at Rudd Park, ca. 1946
(2012-008-006)

Special thanks to Frances Farmer Howey (daughter of Dorothy and George Farmer) whose unpublished history of Martha Rudd, *Among my Souvenirs: Martha's Story*, served as the primary source for this article.