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Artist Brian Scott donates paintings of Mack Laing homes

The Mack Laing Society of the Comox Valley has been honoured with the donation of two beautiful paintings by Vancouver Island artist Brian Scott. The paintings and prints will assist the Society in its defence of Mack Laing and the fulfillment of his wish that a natural history museum be created.

Laing, a renowned ornithologist, naturalist and writer, was a Comox pioneer, clearing land and building his waterfront home, Baybrook, in 1921. He married in 1927 and he and his wife Ethel created an extensive, commercial nut farm.

Laing recorded this effort, as well as writing hundreds of articles for major outdoor publications during his long life. He also wrote a biography of his friend, artist-naturalist Allan Brooks, which was published by the BC Museum in 1979.

Ethel died in 1945 and Laing sold the home and several acres in 1949, building his second home, Shakesides, a duplicate of Baybrook, on the adjoining lot. In 1972, he deeded his remaining land and home to the Town of Comox. He lived there until his death at the age of 99 in 1982. In his Will he asked that his home be turned into a natural history museum and left a sum of money to do so. This was never done. The Town rented out the home until 2014, when flooding compromised its structure. Comox acquired the Baybrook property in 2011, with the assistance of the Nature Trust of BC.

In 2013, on learning that the Town of Comox intended to demolish both Mack Laing houses, the Society engaged an engineer to examine them. While Shakesides had suffered from tidal flooding, it was determined that Baybrook could be restored and re-purposed into a small nature house and museum, as Mack Laing wished.

In late 2013, the Society presented Comox Council with a plan that would preserve Baybrook at no expense to the Town. Despite supplying a long-term financial plan in 2014, the Society's proposal was rejected and Council voted in early 2015 to proceed with demolition of both houses.

Brian Scott's exuberant art is well-known in the Comox Valley. He has recorded countless historic buildings and local scenery, in all the communities in the area. His distinctive and colourful scenes also decorate a number of Hydro boxes in downtown Comox.

On learning of the Society's mandate to preserve Laing's legacy, Scott visited both Baybrook and Mack Laing parks and was immediately taken with their beautiful location and the homes themselves. He presented the two paintings to the Society on March 20, 2015.

His donations will be used, at his request, to defend Mack Laing's legacy and assist in the fulfillment of the wishes stated in his Will.