



March, 1892-February, 1983



Dec. 2, 1982



Dec. 31, 1982

# Brewery goes down the demolition hatch

Only the dregs of Labatt's brewery remain at the corner of Government and Discovery streets.

After more than eight decades of non-stop beer production — it was the oldest continuously operated brewery in B.C. — the demolition of the historical building was completed this week.

In recent years, it turned out 5.5 million dozen bottles of brew annually.

Labatt's Blue was the best seller,

Labatt's spokesman Earl Beard said.

The cornerstone for the brick and stone building was laid March 7, 1892, and the brewery opened as the Victoria Brewing and Ice Co. in 1896. The brewery cost \$60,000 to build.

The brewery did more than provide thirsty Victorians with cool beer. Several times a day a steam whistle — taken from a CPR boat, according to Walter Spershott, a Labatt em-

ployee for more than 40 years — signalled the noon hour, quitting time and a 9:30 p.m. curfew.

The whistle also heralded major events, such as the death of Queen Victoria in 1901.

In 1968, a rotating neon time and temperature sign was perched atop the building as part of a restoration program.

The sign was visible for miles, but it came down in 1975 when city council banned rooftop signs. That year, Labatt spent \$200,000 on a facelift which returned the building to its turn-of-the-century appearance.

The three-ton wrought iron gates that hung at the Government Street entrance were there when the brewery opened and when it shut down. But in

between, they spent a few years in hiding at Shawnigan Lake.

During an early renovation, the gates were removed and Spershott, wanting to ensure they survived it, took them up to Shawnigan Lake.

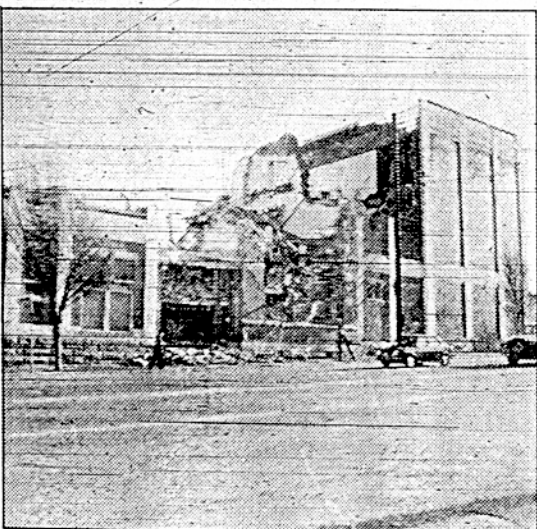
They remained there for years until he sold them to the Dutch Latch restaurant on the Malahat.

"When Labatt's remodelled later (in 1975) they bought the gates back.

God knows how much they paid for them."

The last bottle of brew was capped Oct. 30, 1981.

About 10 of the 80 employees that worked at the brewery when it closed are now employed at the Victoria Labatt's distribution centre. Beer for Vancouver Island is produced at the New Westminster plant.



Jan. 11, 1983



Jan. 24, 1983



Feb. 9, 1983

Ian McKain photos