

Frederick Harling was born in Bowling, in Bradford, Yorkshire, UK in 1887, of parents who were also native to the West Riding industrial belt. His father William was an iron moulder. Fred was working in a worsted mill at 14. His older sisters Florence and Alice and brother Ralph worked in the cloth trade, too. Florence immigrated to Canada in 1904; she married James Stott in Winnipeg in 1905, and their second child Arthur Harling Stott was born in Victoria in 1909. The rest of the family immigrated in 1905. In 1911 the extended family (minus Ralph, who settled in Winnipeg) was living on Pembroke Street in Victoria's Fernwood neighbourhood.

Fred Harling shows up on the 1911 census as a "plummer." James Stott was a linotype operator; he worked for many years at Colonist Printing and Publishing.

The 1912 city directory has the three-generation family living at 1830 Crescent Road on anvil-shaped Gonzales (Foul) Bay.

William Harling died in 1917. In 1918 his widow Sarah and Fred were living in the Stott home at 1949 Crescent Road, a few doors on the Oak Bay side of the border, on a rocky eminence overlooking the eastern shore of the bay.

Gonzales (Foul) Bay is at left; Chinese (Foul) Point at centre; one of the Trial Islands at lower right. Foul Bay Road can be seen running N-S into Foul Bay and Crescent Road branching to the east (ie the right); 1949 was the sixth house east of Foul Bay Rd. Detail of a map by Captain Richards in BC Archives.

During the Great War Fred served as a mechanic in the Royal Air Force. On his return he trained as a dentist in Oregon. Dr. Harling established a dental practice in the Stott family home. A strong swimmer, he was credited with saving several lives in the Gorge when a member of the YMCA. He did not marry.

So things stood in 1934. Fred's nephew Art was by then a reporter for the *Victoria Daily Times* and had already made a name for himself as an Olympic-level competitive diver. He lived in the house on Crescent Road.

On the afternoon of January 15, 1934 Lewis Clark, a resident of nearby Hollywood Crescent, went to Dr. Harling's office to have a tooth pulled. It was getting dark when Art Stott arrived home to find his uncle Fred and Lewis looking out the living room window through binoculars. "Do you want to do something?" Fred asked Art, handing him the glasses. The day had been sunny and calm. Now it was stormy, with gale-force winds blowing up the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Not far off Chinese Point, on the Oak Bay side of the bay, a rowboat had overturned in tidal rips. Two people were clinging to the hull.

On Hollywood Crescent, on the city side of the bay, Mrs. Carmichael and her neighbour Mr. Stubbs saw the accident unfold. She told the *Times*:

I saw what I took to be a small boat out in the bay ... and got my glasses to watch it. There seemed to be two people ... They appeared to be throwing something overboard ...

Just after this the boat turned broadside to the waves and they rolled completely over it, swamping it and throwing its occupants into the water.

I could hear their cries for help quite distinctly and immediately phoned the city police and the Oak Bay police, as well as sending Hugh Craig for assistance ...

Frank Le Poidevan saw the boat capsize from the observatory on Gonzales Hill, and he raced down to the Chinese Point shore.

On the Chinese Point side of the bay, the capsized boat and the occupants' "agonized screams" for help had been noticed by Mrs Kemp. The screams, the *Times* quoted a neighbour saying, "pierced your very marrow."

Soon several hundred people gathered on Gonzales Beach and along the rocky shores on both sides of the bay. In the gathering gloom an electrifying drama unfolded as no fewer than eight people launched frail craft into the teeth of the storm to try to rescue the unfortunates.

"You can hardly realize what it was like," said one man, as quoted in the *Times*. "There were crowds who shouted frantically that it was madness. No small boat could live in that sea for five minutes, it seemed."

The objects of this massive outreach were Fairfield residents who were returning from an expedition to Trial Islands, a kilometre east of Chinese Point. Earlier in the day Arthur Hinder, Jr. had rowed to the islands to gather bark from the beaches. Hinder, 40, had worked with the Standard Oil Company in Korea, whence he had returned two years previously, suffering recurrent bouts of malaria, to take up residence at his parents' home on Moss Street.

On his return trip Hinder encountered Margaret Bales on the beach. She lived on Hollywood Crescent with her husband Clifford and two children. She accepted his invitation to gather more bark. They loaded the boat — two sacks in the stern, two between them and a couple of sacksful loose in the bow — and started back.

Mrs. Bales told the *Times*:

... The waves seemed to come up instantly. Slowly the boat began to fill with water. We had no bailing tin so I started to bale with my cupped hands while Mr. Hinder continued rowing.

I was just bending down once when, turning my head aside, I saw a tremendous wave coming. In an instant I loosened the belt of my heavy overcoat. Then the boat capsized and we were thrown into the water

I slipped off most of my clothes down to my underskirt and it gave me more freedom. Mr. Hinder had on his overcoat and I told him to take it off in the water but he said he was all right.

One can only guess that Mr. Hinder was immobilized by immersion in water that was 8°C/46°F or colder; and by fear. Mrs. Bales, however, summoned the energy to call out in the gathering gloom:

...I shouted for help over and over again. I didn't think anybody heard me and I told Mr. Hinder I would try to swim for it, as we were only a quarter of a mile from shore.

'Don't do it. Stick to the boat,' he told me, so I stayed with the boat. I appealed to him again to take off his overcoat, but he replied it was not necessary.

As darkness deepened, three small boats launched from the neighbourhood of Chinese Point. In one boat were Jack Kemp and Hugh Valiant, both of Marne Street, leaving their mothers wringing their hands. In another boat was Jack Rennie, 18, of Quimper Street. Frank Le Poidevin, 50, commandeered a round-bottomed boat shortly after. He soon fetched up on Templar Rock, known locally as the Three Sisters, at the entrance to Gonzales Bay. He lost an oar and his boat half filled with water before he freed it, only to be driven onto the shore, where his son Norman helped him wade ashore, exhausted.

Arthur Winter, of Arnold Street, put out in another small rowboat. He soon broke an oar and had to turn around.

Art Stott chose the smaller of the family's two boats, a tiny eight-foot punt, which he judged would handle better in the gale, and pushed off from the beach. Fred Harling and Lewis Clark followed some time later in the Stotts' eighteen-foot clinker-built rowboat, each pulling a set of oars.

The first to reach the capsized boat was Jack Rennie. Mrs. Bales swam to his boat and tried to climb into it but succeeded only in pulling it over, propelling Rennie into the water. He was wearing his father's gumboots, which weighed him down so much he could barely break the surface. Mrs. Bales returned to Hinder's boat. Next on the scene were Kemp and Valiant, who helped Rennie get back into his swamped vessel. Then their boat was hit by a "comber" and flipped.

At this point Mrs. Bales gave up all hope. She was utterly numbed by the frigid water. Their lapsed time in the water was approaching two hours. She actually blacked out, still clinging to the upturned craft.

Then Art Stott appeared in his little punt. He manoeuvred his stern to contact the other boat and tried to get the couple to grab hold of it, thinking to tow them, but they wouldn't budge. He decided to try to rescue Mrs. Bales and backed the stern up to her. She grabbed the stern but could not get aboard without help. Timing his moves to coincide with the waves, Stott rose from his seat, heaved her into the tiny craft, regained

the use of the oars and started for shore. He yelled to Hinder to hang on. It seemed that the overturned boat was headed for the Three Sisters.

On the way back, Stott passed Fred Harling and Lewis Clark. They were nearing Hinder when a standing wave flipped their boat. They were both injured in the mishap. Clark had to swim a ways to retrieve Harling and bring him back to the boat. They hung on, hoping the current would carry them closer to shore. Clark called for help and grew hysterical with fear.

Rennie's boat drifted across the mouth of the bay and he was pulled to safety.

Art Stott ran his boat onto the beach in Gonzales Bay. A big wave crashed over it, and he had to rescue Mrs. Bales again. He staggered up the stairs to his home. Mrs. Bales was rushed to the Jubilee Hospital.

Five people remained in the water. They could be heard calling out in the dark. The general fear was that they would be swept out to sea by the ebbing tide. But fortune smiled at last. The current carried them towards the western shore of Gonzales Bay. On the point, people formed chains reaching into the water to try to catch them. In the *Times'* account, "Albert Bevan, Ross Street, and Harry L. Smith, 1810 Hollywood Crescent, Gordon Morgan, 1820 Lillian Road, with Arthur Janes and A. McDonald, who live in the neighbourhood, were acting in groups, assisted by police officers, Lanning G. Clayards and M. Wilkinson of the city force who had arrived in response to a rush call ... At the end of the chain was fourteen-year-old Roderick Wilson, 1837 Crescent Road, to whom great credit was paid by the others." Art Winters and Russell Lyle were also at work on the lines.

Jack Kemp was able to swim to within reach of the chain. His partner Hugh Valiant was a non-swimmer. Howard Winter of 2073 Crescent Road went out to get him, and the human chain formed again to snag them.

Soon the capsized rowboat of Fred Harling and Lewis Clark came within hailing distance. Albert Bevan tried to reach them with a rope tied around his waist. Bevan and Arthur Janes then put out in an old boat with no oars and succeeded in plucking Clark off the overturned bow. Harry Smith waded up to his neck to rescue Fred Harling. Both men were nearly unconscious. Harling had swallowed a quantity of water. "I'm all right," he said. "It's terribly cold." He was taken to the Bevan home on Ross Street, and a crowd held a vigil at Bevan's Store, awaiting the physician's word. Harling died soon after. He was 47.

Arthur Hinder just disappeared. His boat turned up the next day in Gonzales Bay.

The community's response to the capsizing is amazing and heroic. Amazing, too, that more people didn't die in the improvised and ill-equipped rescue. In the days that followed, letters to the newspapers deplored the complete lack of on-site emergency response equipment or training along Victoria's south coast.

Within a week the regional hydrographer in the Department of Marine exercised his prerogative to assign the name Harling Point to the prominence previously known as Chinese Point, in memory of a neighbour who made the supreme sacrifice to help unknown persons in peril. To this day the little Oak Bay enclave is known as Harling Point.



Dr. Fred Harling (1887-1934)