

The Historian

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Our Past in Perpetuity

September 2011

Gorillas at work at the Museum!

By Heidi Smith, Gorilla Gardener Volunteer

Before



If you haven't checked out the side gardens of the museum lately, you are in for pleasant surprise! The weeds, grass, blackberries and unmentionables have been transformed into a tranquil garden with a brick lined meandering path. Amongst the new plants are two industrial sewing machines that had been hidden in the previous disarray of the museum grounds. In order

to properly compliment the Edwardian era (1901-1910) of the museum building, our gardeners chose an Edwardian theme for the garden as well. But what makes the garden Edwardian? Edwardians craved a rural idyll to capture the romance of the countryside within the confines of the ever-expanding urban and suburban landscape. The colour palette is green and white and the plantings feature small shrubs, perennials, ground covers and edible strawberries. A copy of the landscape plan is available on the MDHS website (www.missiondhs.com).

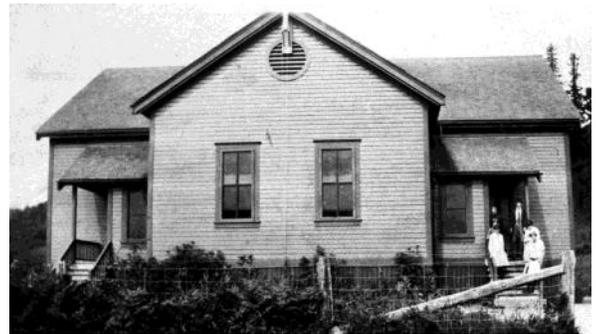
So how did the garden come to life? Local *Gorilla* Gardener, Heidi Smith approached the Mission District Historical Society in the spring with a plan to landscape the museum grounds. A professional landscape plan has now been donated by Peggy Jessome of Idea Garden Designs in Chilliwack. It turns out that there has never been formal landscaping of the grounds since the building was moved to its current location on 2nd Avenue in 1947. The local community has generously funded the garden; to date, fundraising efforts have raised almost \$2500.00 in cash or 'in kind' donations. Many volunteers have provided strong backs to build the garden. Everyone will be recognized in a 'recognition book,' which will be held inside the Museum after the project is finished.

Three dedicated *Gorilla* Gardeners are maintaining the garden. If you would like to join this group either through volunteering or donating to the next phase, please contact Heidi at 604 826 4504. All volunteers welcome!

After



Back to School Edition



Hatzic Elementary School, c. 1911, celebrates its 100th Anniversary this year.
Courtesy of Mission Community Archives

Upcoming Events

Celebrate Mission

When: September 17th

Where: Heritage Park

Cost: FREE

Paths & Pathfinders: Women of Mission Program

When: October 1st, 1:30 to 4:00pm

Where: Cedar Valley Mennonite Church

Cost: \$10 or \$12 at the door

Haunted Halloween

When: October 31st

Where: Mission Museum

Cost: \$2.00 per child

Archives Open House:

Archives Exposed

When: November 17th

1:00-4:00pm and 6:30-8:30pm

Where: Mission Community Archives

Cost: FREE

For more information visit
www.mission.museum.bc.ca or
www.missionarchives.com

Back to School: Mission's School History

This issue of the newsletter features resources of the Heritage Places Branch, Mission Museum, and Mission Community Archives on Mission's School History. If you or someone you know has records, objects, or information on this topic, contact the Heritage Places Coordinator or Archivist at 604 820-2621 or the Curator at 604 826-1011.

Milestones of the Past

By Jenn Murray, Heritage Places Branch Coordinator

The start of a new school year is an opportune time for looking back at the milestone events of school years past. These significant moments, including the building of the first schools, provide us with insight into the character and strength of a diverse group of pioneer settlers that made their homes in the outlying areas of Mission.

One of the first schools to be built in Mission was Silverdale School. It opened in 1892 (1893 by some local accounts) and was situated on the corner of Silverdale and Cooper Roads. The story behind this school's creation is really an account of the tenacity of one Silverdale woman, Mrs. J.O. Manzer. Her efforts to procure a school for her own children and those of the Silverdale community are something of local legend. Arriving in Mission from Ontario in 1890, the mother of five soon began organizing a petition to have the school built. Carrying that petition, Mrs. Manzer undertook a long journey to Victoria hoping to convince the Superintendent of Education that Silverdale needed a school and right away! Initially, Mrs. Manzer was met with resistance but after fifteen months of letter writing, the Silverdale community finally got its school; followed by a teacher, Miss. Agnus H. McNutt. The one room structure was built high on a hill and had a long iron box stove in the center of the room surrounded by double-seated desks.



Steelhead School, 1916
Courtesy Mission Community Archives

In 1914 the community of Steelhead opened their first school on Cardinal Road. The single story log structure was twenty by thirty feet and started with an enrolment of twenty students. True dedication from students and teachers

was required for faithful attendance. The first teacher Mr. Tibault (also recorded as Theaubault) was driven to Steelhead each day and had to proceed by horseback to get to the school. Treacherous roads made the school even more difficult to get to in the winter. In fact, the school was often closed during the worst winter months and stayed open through most of the summer to compensate.

However, mosquitoes were known to plague students and teachers, which forced closures during periods of the summer too!



Silverhill school children, 1918
Courtesy Mission Community Archives

For the residents of Silverhill, the only school available to their children was the Silverdale School, located 3.5 miles down a rough wagon road in the wild countryside. Because of the difficult terrain only the older children

were able to make the trip. The community approached the school board with a request to have a school built, and received an offer in turn -- build the school and we'll provide you with a teacher! Community collections were taken to fund construction, and the land was donated by Mr. Charles Wolf. Silverhill School, a log building, finally opened in 1916. Another interesting challenge followed, as Mrs. Verchere, the first teacher at the school, could only speak English, while her students spoke mainly Swedish!

These communities realized the importance of an early childhood education almost right from the start. Comprised of local and recently immigrated families, the residents of Silverdale, Steelhead, and Silverhill faced many obstacles, including financial, geographic, political, and language barriers. But faced with these challenges, they did not give up, and helped to build a strong foundation for education in Mission.

Back to School Shopping: Artifacts of School Days Gone By

By Jane Lemke, Curator

When we think of September, most of us think of one thing - 'back to school shopping'! Mission's early pioneers had similar rituals. The Museum's collection is home to many objects that were purchased by prominent Mission families to get ready for the school year.



This 1930s vacuum flask (or thermos) and kit were donated by the Shook family, who owned and operated

the Shook Berry farm on Hatzic Island, the largest output of berries in Canada in the 1930s. The berry farm was purchased and operated by Frank Shook who became known as the "Berry King of BC" owning over 110 acres of berry land. A 1922 article of the Fraser Valley Record claims that the "story of [Frank Shook's] rise is as wonderful and fascinating as any romance of the west ever penned. He did not gain success by doubtful practices... [but] found out what that land was specially suited for producing - and produced that".



This school supply flyer is from DesBrisays Department Store, circa 1940. The flyer advertises school supplies for both 'boys and girls'. Some of Mission's residents may remember the old DesBrisays Store as one of the largest older buildings around. However,

this was not the original store. Merrill DesBrisays first opened his general store in a 1889 in a shack at the Fraser River bank. DesBrisays chose this local to attract men constructing the bridge over the Fraser River. He later expanded the store when he bought Mrs. Tretheway's store at the CPR tracks after the 1894 flood. In 1909, he built the large department store on the corner of Horne and Washington Street (now First Avenue) which was known in Mission until its demolition in 1964. DesBrisays himself was one of the most important businessmen in Mission, owning many businesses and canneries, including the influential Gulf of Georgia Cannery in Steveston, Richmond.

Mission's pioneer settlers also made objects for their children to return to school, such as back to school clothing. The Museum's collection of school artifacts is growing every day but if you have an artifact with a story - please consider donating it to the Museum in order to tell Mission's school history more fully.

Preserving the Heritage of Our Schools

By Val Billesberger, Archivist & Records Manager

In 2002, the Community Archives received grants from the Vancouver Foundation, Mission Foundation and District of Mission to implement a district wide School Archives Program (SAP). Endorsed by the School Board, SAP is an innovative program designed for students, staff, and parents to play a proactive role in preserving their school records on an ongoing basis. To our knowledge, it is the first program of its kind in British Columbia.

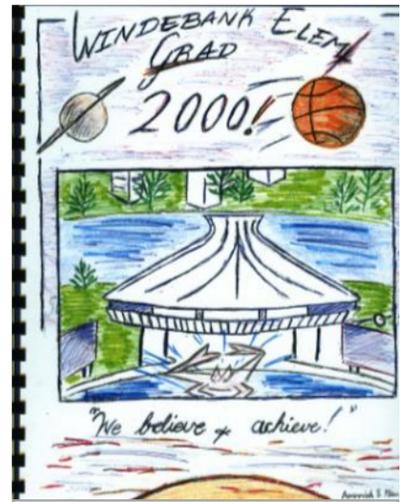
Now in its 10th year of operation, SAP has made it possible for the archives to acquire records from every school in the district. Val Billesberger, Archivist and founder of the program stated that prior to the establishment of the program, the archives acquired school records on an adhoc basis from

former students or staff. As a result the archives had no records for many of the schools.

Through SAP, the archives has collected a broad range of records. These items include students' artwork, recordings of school choirs; and photos, VHS, CDs, and DVDs of student activities and programs.

Some examples of records received this year are: Dewdney Elementary Student Anthology—it contains poems, short stories, and artwork from students of all ages—and a DVD from Windebank Elementary recording events of the entire school year—starting with the "Welcome Back BBQ", to the Gr. 3 "Pine Beetle Tree" entered in the Mission Springs Christmas Tree Contest, to Crazy Hat Day—no doubt inspired by the Royal Wedding.

The program has also helped to ensure that the records of former schools are preserved and accessible in the future. When Ferndale, Fraserview and Stave Falls Schools closed in 2008, for example, the archives received over 3000 photos and 3 metres of records from them. To find out more about SAP, visit our website or call the Archivist.

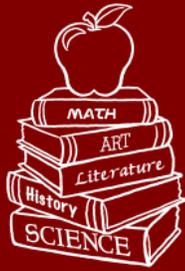


Produced by the grade 7s, this annual offers a rich source of information about student culture at the turn of millennium. It includes a list of "What's hot" and "What's not" for "Boys" and "Girls."
Courtesy Mission Community Archives



Schools also contribute records of former ones. In 2009, for example, the archives acquired this & other photos of Hatzic Prairie Elementary (closed 1984) from Durieu Elementary.
Courtesy Mission Community Archives

Volunteers Opportunities



Docent

The Mission Museum is launching school programs for grades 2-5 and is looking for enthusiastic volunteers

to guide these programs as "docents".

Researcher

If you are interested in research, then the Archives, Museum, and Heritage Places are all looking for volunteers to conduct research for a variety of projects.



For more information:

604-826-1011 or
604-820-2621

An Abridged History of Schools in Mission

- 1863** St. Mary's Mission and Residential School officially opens with classes for boys in religion, reading, writing, math, geography, carpentry, agriculture and music
- 1890** Nicomen is established as a rural municipality school district and a one-room school is opened
- 1901** Hatzic Lake is established as a rural municipality school district and a school is opened.
- 1921** McConnell Creek is established as a rural municipality school district and a school opens
- 1938** Mission Junior-High School formally opens
- 1948** Steelhead School "wired for electric power"
- 1952** Newly constructed Mission Junior-Senior High School officially opens
- 1958** West Heights Elementary School opens
- 1965** All of the buildings on the St. Mary's Mission lands demolished
- 1972** Hatzic Junior Secondary School opens for grades 8 to 10
- 1984** St. Mary's grade school and residence phased out. All First Nation's children are fully integrated into the public school system.
- 1990** Newly constructed Mission Central School opens
- 2001** Riverside Trades, Training and Career Centre opens
- 2008** Ferndale Elementary, Fraserview Elementary and Stave Falls Elementary close at end of school year

Want to Participate?

We would like to encourage our members to contribute to our next issue with a story that relates to Mission's history. If you would like to contribute to our next issue, please email missiondhs@yahoo.ca The deadline for the next issue is November 1st.

Our 2012 exhibit's will be focusing on the use of power and electricity in Mission. We are currently looking for objects or archival documents to help us tell this story. If you would like to donate an object or document about this topic, please contact the Museum or the Archives.

Mission District Historical Society

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