

MAPLE RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter November 2010



NOVEMBER 25TH PROGRAM MEETING

Author and photographer **Don Waite** will be presenting our program on Thursday, November 25th at 7:30 pm. We will meet as usual at St. Andrew's Heritage Hall, 22279 116th Avenue - just west of the Haney Bypass. Don will be bringing copies of his newly released book *Vancouver Exposed: A History in Photographs*, which he will discuss showing images from the publication.

Bring your wallet if you wish to purchase a copy of his latest venture into history through period photography. He will also have copies of the revised and enlarged book *Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows*. Both books are here just in time for Christmas.

The books are also available at the Maple Ridge Museum (\$40 each, no HST). *sn*

PROGRAM ADDITION

On the handout distributed with last month's newsletter, the May 26 program was labelled "TBA". The slot will be filled by **David Giesbrecht** Topic: Japanese Canadians: The Destruction of a Community in Democratic BC.

DECEMBER 9 CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our annual Christmas party will start off the festive season at 7:30 pm on December 9 in St. Andrew's Heritage Hall. Once again we have invited members of the **Emerald Pig Theatrical Society** to entertain us with music, jokes, skits and "jolliment."

Please sign up at the November 25th meeting, telling the organizers how many to expect, and whether you will be bringing a plate of appetizers or of sweets. Remember, this is not a dinner. Coffee, tea, punch and drinks will be provided. Call the Maple Ridge Museum at 604-463-5311 to sign up for the festivities. *sn*

WINTER DISPLAYS

Hard to believe that the winter holiday season is already just around the corner. To help get everyone into the holiday spirit the historical society will be showcasing various pieces from the museum's collection at the **Maple Ridge Library** starting December 1. This year's themes include; Top Children's Toys Throughout the 20th Century and Holiday Wrapping Paper.

The **Haney House Museum** is also decorated for the winter holiday season, so drop by Sunday or Wednesday afternoons for a visit!

If you have any holiday decorations that have been collecting dust around your house, and would be willing to donate them to the Historical Society please contact Allison at 604-463-5311 or e-mail mrmcurator@uniserve.com. *aw*



A view of the whole Spencer farm as it looked when purchased by the municipality in the late 1950s.

HISTORY OF THE ALBION FLATS

The future of the Albion Flats has been much in the news of late so we thought we'd share something about their past.

Sam Robertson was the first person to own the land south and east of Kanaka Creek from its mouth to what is now 240th Street. Sam started visiting the land in the 1860s even before he homesteaded there and is known to have planted fruit trees in any natural clearing he found. By the time he quit Fort Langley and took up his homestead, he had bearing fruit trees which were the first producing orchards in the province.

Other than orchard and hay production, there is no other historic record of development on the Flats until the establishment of the Spencer Farm.

David Spencer, founder and operator of a department store in Vancouver, bought land in Albion in 1919. He purchased 400 acres in all, a large amount even by that day's standards, which extended north from River Road and east from Kanaka Creek. This was all land that had previously been owned by Sam Robertson and his

descendants. Sam had died in 1897 and while the farm had been operated for many years following his death, hard times during the WWI years led to the tax sale of this large portion of the acreage.

The Spencer family then took it upon themselves to work their way around the Albion Flats and make sure it was all properly diked as flooding by the Fraser River and Kanaka Creek was an annual threat.

In 1920, David's son, Col. Victor Spencer, started a dairy farm on the property, complete with 150 Jersey cows. Some of the cows even came straight from the island of Jersey! It was to be a

ST. ANDREW'S | RENTAL



The St. Andrew's Heritage Church (1888) now functions as a community hall and is available to rent for weddings, social events, and meetings. The hall accommodates up to 75 people. Call Tom Little at 778-242-7261

Answer: Phleem: a bloodletting tool

prize-winning herd that brought favourable attention to the milk producers of the region. The farm also served as a drop-off point for beef cattle from the Prairies and for a time, there was a slaughterhouse just south of where the CP rail line crossed Kanaka Creek.

By 1926 the business had grown so much that Spencer added a building on the property. The *Gazette* noted that "rumor has it that one of the employees is to occupy the house." This is thought to be the small house just south of the milk house on 105th Ave. that was occupied by farm manager Oliver Evans.

In January of 1927, the Spencer farm had an open house, and the *Gazette* newspaper wrote that the two hundred people in attendance were treated to a "demonstration thoroughly practical and an entire success and covered the two great aspects, production and marketing."

In 1932, the farm was sold to the Associated Dairies who continued to use it as a dairy farm, and added hogs and turkeys as well. It was later used for raising rabbits and then hogs.

By 1959, when the District of Maple Ridge purchased the property, it was no longer being farmed. Anxious to have more land in the centre of Haney for development, the municipality offered the larger Spencer Farm site to the Maple Ridge Agricultural Association in exchange for the "Aggie Grounds" that were located between 224th and 226th Streets from just behind the business frontage on Lougheed north to McIntosh Avenue.

The Agricultural Association took over ownership of the site, including the largest single barn building available for fairs in the valley, and used it for the Agricultural Fair. The only original farm buildings remaining today are the milk house and the small home built for Oliver Evans. *vp*



Members of the Ritchie family, which was joined by marriage to the Robertson family, working in one of the family orchards in the 1920s.



The Spencer milkhouse



CPR Display: November marks the month of the completion of Canada's first transcontinental railroad, 125 years ago. The museum was fortunate enough to receive a Legacy donation that included various pieces of silverware and crockery once used on renowned CPR trains as The Trans Canada Limited and The Dominion. Pieces from this donation, alongside various artifacts and photographs from our collection will be on display at the Maple Ridge Museum from November until into the new year.

The answer is on page 2 in the St. Andrew's | Rental item.



Is this a:

- (1) hoof scrapper?
- (2) pipe cleaner?
- (3) carpenter's tool?
- (4) bloodletting tool?
- (3) can opener?

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

Every museum collection has those slightly mysterious artifacts that sometimes cannot be sussued out at first glance. However, a little description goes a long way.

If you have visited the Maple Ridge Museum lately you may have noticed our what-is-it-used-for shelf, where we have chosen artifacts from the collection and made a game out of rearranging the objects to match the descriptions.

I thought we could try a mini version of this here in the newsletter this month. From the brief descriptions can you guess what this object is used for? Give yourself bonus points if you know its proper name! *aw*

DEWDNEY-ALOUETTE



Visit the Dewdney-Alouette Railway Society's diorama in the museum.

On the last Sunday of every month, members of the Dewdney-Alouette Railway Society are present to "talk trains" and operate the Diorama. Model Railroaders are welcome on the Tuesday and Thursday evenings before the last Sunday of the month.
Info: Dick Sutcliffe at 604-467-4301 or E-Mail: ras1@uniserve.com

