

Langley Heritage Society

{Fall 2017}

Langley Heritage Society
P.O. Box 982
Fort Langley, B.C.
V1M 2S3

"Providing the window into the past to preserve Langley's heritage for today and tomorrow"

President's Message - Fall 2017

{By Fred Pepin}

I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer and is looking forward to the great schedule of events we have for you to enjoy this fall and winter.

It has been a pleasure to see many of our members out and supporting events that are reminding the community of its history. We were represented in the May Day parade, the dedication of the new maple tree at Glover and 96 Ave, and the July 1 Canada Day celebrations.

The CN Station railway site opened for the season on the May long weekend and maintained the regular four day a week schedule through the summer. However, we certainly missed Bays who dedicated so much time and energy to our activities in Fort Langley. Several of our members devoted a great deal of time to the management of the Station over the summer in order to keep everything running smoothly.

Our contribution to the BC Farm Museum's mural project assisted in a wonderful attraction being opened to the public.

We have just completed our annual participation at Country Celebration, where the public appreciation and support of the work of the society was expressed many.

We look forward to the celebration of Douglas Day on November 16 at the Fort Langley Community Hall. Get your tickets soon at the Museum or from one of your Directors.

Fred Pepin
LHS President

Life at Sperling General Store
Page 2

Surrey Stories Book
Page 4

Douglas Day Dinner Details
Page 5

Pepin Picnic
Page 5

Fraser Highway Mile Markers
Page 6

BC Farm Museum Murals
Page 6

Volunteer Opportunities
Page 7

Upcoming Programs
Page 8

Want to Know More?

Langley Heritage Society
is online and updated!

Go to www.langleyheritage.ca
for society news, membership
information, photographs, project
updates, and more.

To contact the LHS, please email us
at: info@langleyheritage.ca

Community Stories: Life at Sperling General Store

{By Marv Woolley}

Marv Woolley shares memories of living at the Sperling General Store & Post Office, once located beside the BC Electric Railway tracks at Brown Road (240th Street) and 72nd Ave. His parents Art and Dorothy bought the store the year Marv was born in 1945. The store closed in 1962 when the new Highway 401 cut it off from a large part of the community. People then lived in the building for another 10 years before it was burned down as practice for Fort Langley's volunteer fire department in 1973. Originally built around 1905, Sperling General Store & Post Office was a vital part of community life for decades.

Mom was the postmaster and they both operated the store, Mom taking orders by phone, then Dad delivering groceries and hardware throughout north Langley until the 401 Freeway forced the closure of the store in 1962.

Dad had driven the delivery truck for Harry Berry in the 1930's thru to 1945. *Langley's Heritage – A Listing of Heritage Resources published in 1995 notes that: "Much of the surrounding community survived the Depression due to Berry's generous extension of credit."* Dad certainly followed Mr. Berry's generous example and extended credit to local farmers and fishermen hoping to settle the account at the end of each season. Although many customers were not able to clear their debt by the time the store closed, one family kept a record of their account and paid in full many years later.

The mail would arrive in heavy sealed canvas bags which were thrown onto the platform of the Sperling Station from the interurban tram. Sperling was a flag station and meant that the tram nor the BC Electric Train would stop at the station unless a red flag was placed on the platform close to the tracks to indicate that passengers or freight was waiting.

Mom would pick up the mail bags and take them to a little alcove in the northeast corner of the store, known as the "Sperling Station Post Office", to sort and hold the mail in small wooden slots for every family in our community. She used a very tall desk that I could walk under without hitting my head. That desk along with other artifacts were donated to the Centennial Museum in Fort Langley.

The store came with an ESSO Dealership with one old original gas pump that was operated by hand. A customer would pull in and request the number of gallons they wanted and share some local news while watching Dad go through the operation. The pump handle was vertical and when forced back and forth, pumped the gas up into the glass cylinder on top which could measure from one to ten gallons each cycle. The pump was located very close to the building and the motor oil, kerosene and barrels of other flammable products were stored against the wall just outside our living room under an open porch-like structure.

We could look out the front window to see someone dropping by for gas or groceries. Barrels

would have taps or valves placed in the top then were tipped onto a built-in bench. The motor oil was dispensed into one quart glass bottles for resale and the kerosene was measured and poured into the customer's container. No waste and no disposable containers. However, the wood surface supporting the barrels was soaked and preserved with the oils, giving it a unique color and odor. A replacement "modern" gas pump was located at the northwest



corner of the store, still very close to the main building and the adjacent lane.

As people entered the store, the door would trigger a bell to announce their arrival. The lack of insulation in the building facilitated hearing the bell from any location. Handy for the person tending the store, but annoying for a teen trying to sleep in. The door had a thumb latch and handle and was covered with decals advertising tea, coffee and pop. A window in the top third of the door would often shake loose and rattle and the aging tongue and groove wood floor would complain with the first step taken inside. The smell of the oiled floor and the products was confirmation of the age of the building and its current use.

The National Cash Register was very ornate with cast and polished scrolls on every surface and it had a very distinctive "Ka-Ching" when the cash drawer was opened. While I was cleaning the old till years after the store closed I realized that the cash drawer was not opening smoothly or roll all the way out. When I removed the drawer I found a crumpled piece of paper caught in the rollers. It was an Old Age Pensioners cheque that had been cashed for Mr. Cripps. I think Mom was serious when she said, "Why Revenue Canada will be wondering why Mr. Cripps never cashed his cheque." She mailed it in explaining the many years of delay and she actually received a response along with a cheque for the full amount of \$12.85. Our grandchildren are delighted when the old cash drawer rolls out with a "Ka-Ching".

The candlestick phone was a classic and was connected to a "party line" used by a number of neighbors. Each phone on the party line had a unique ring controlled by the BC Telephone operator. When we heard a short then long ring, we knew the Dahls had received a call. If we picked up our phone, gently, we could listen in. The store was two short rings and the neighbors would know who the call was for, particularly on order day! Customers would phone with a list

and be ready to alter their requests based on what meat, fresh fruit or dairy products were available. There would be weeks with blocks of cheddar cheese or an aged side of beef or pork from Mr. Datwiler's "meat market on wheels." Dad cut the meat on a special board placed on top of the freezer chest.

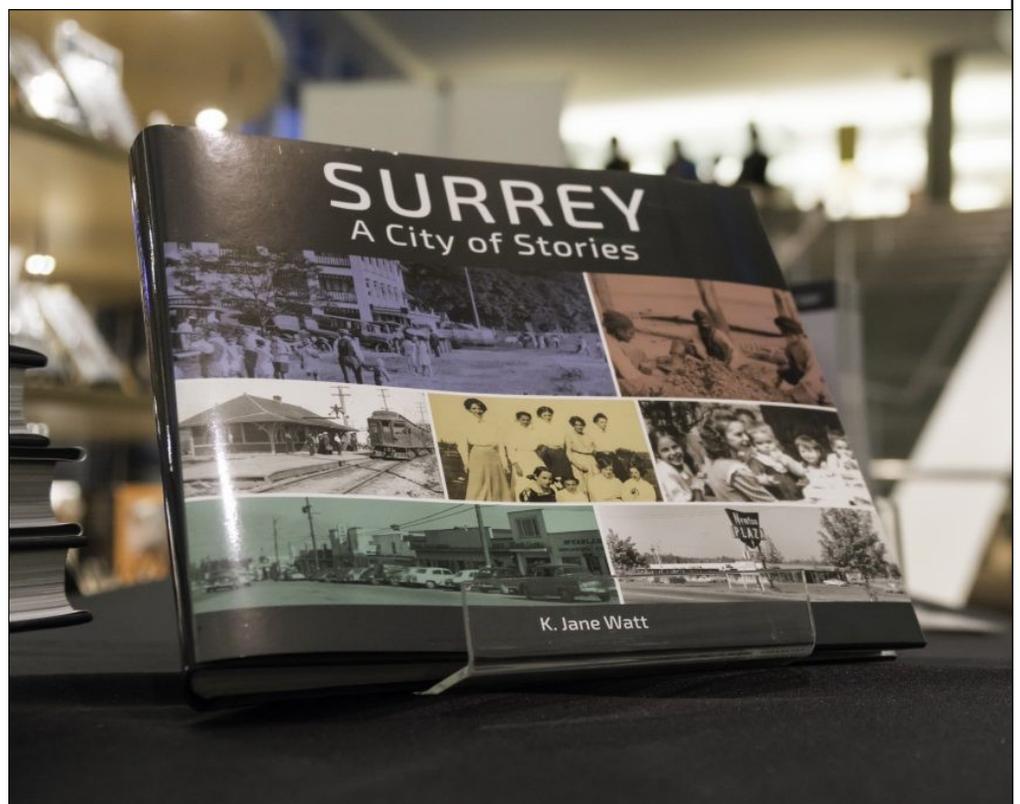
Delivery day was Saturday. Orders were placed in cardboard boxes with family names written with a marker pen and of course the "live stock" as Dad called it, went in last. (Meat, milk, butter, etc.) I got to go along sometimes. Dad carried the orders on his shoulder right to the kitchen of each home. It seemed to me that he was checking in to see how the families or the old bachelors were doing this week. Over the years he found an elderly man that passed away in his bed and another that took his own life with his hunting rifle. Little kids would greet him with excitement as though he was Santa Claus, however they were actually hoping that their mother had ordered a special treat this week, perhaps because they heard their dad or uncle say the fishing had been good this week.

Surrey: A City of Stories

Good friend of the Langley Heritage Society, Jane Watt, has just released a new community heritage book, focused on our neighbours in Surrey. *Surrey: A City of Stories* showcases historic photos, maps, documents, and artifacts from Surrey's archives and museum collections, features the reminiscences of Surrey citizens, and includes rarely-seen historical photos in a format enticing for general readers and history experts alike. The book includes over 500 visuals, spans the distant past to the present, and features a great number of artifacts from the City of Surrey's collection.

Order your copy online for only \$25 at www.surrey.ca/heritage or pick it up in person at one of the following locations: Surrey City Hall, Surrey Archives, Historic Stewart Farm, or the Surrey Arts Centre.

Author Jane Watt, who has donate numerous books to LHS AGM raffles, us an award winning author based in Fort Langley. Jane won the Lieutenant Governor's Medal for historical writing for *High Water: Living with the Fraser Floods*.



Douglas Day Dinner Details

Please note the following details for this year's Douglas Day Dinner.

Date: Thursday November 16, 2017

Reception: 5:30pm

Dinner: 6:00pm

Location: Fort Langley Community Hall

Cost: \$20.00 for a full catered dinner

Tickets will be available at both September and October regular meetings, and, of course from any of the LHS Board of Directors. Vancouver historian, John Atkin, will be presenting on the very interesting history of his 1890s house.

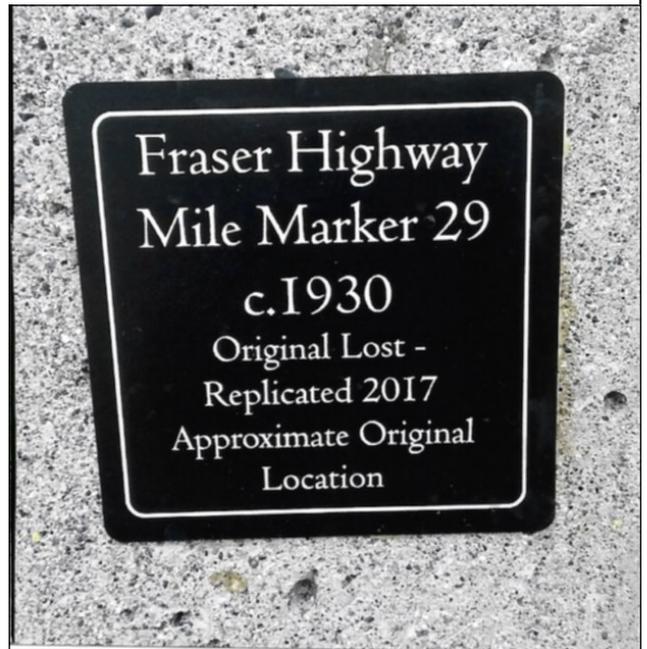
Pepin Picnic - Another Successful Summer Event

Thank you to Fred & Maureen Pepin for once again hosting the annual summer picnic for Langley Heritage Society members. Great food and great conversation — and perfect summer weather too!
Photographs below courtesy of Marky Forsythe.



Fraser Highway Mile 29 Marker: Dedication Ceremony

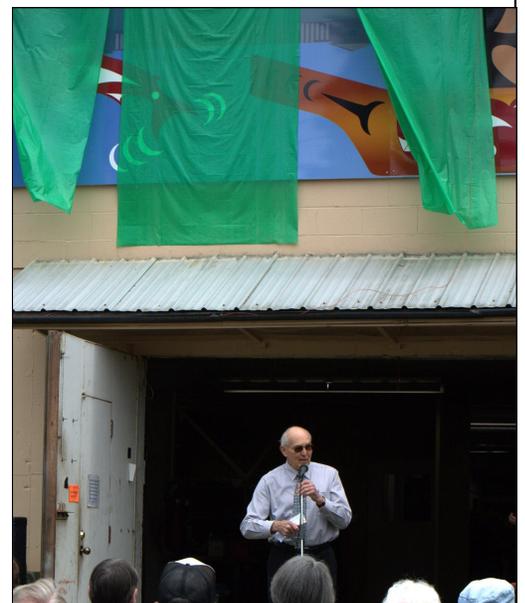
On June 27, 2017, the Fraser Highway Mile Marker 29 (located at 22057 Fraser Highway in Murrayville) was dedicated in a small ceremony attended by numerous Langley Heritage Society directors. In the days before GPS, this marker was one of a series of markers that were first erected in the 1930s that told drivers how far it was to Vancouver. A few of the mile markers, which are located on the south side of Fraser Highway, include: mile marker 28 - across the highway from Derek Doubleday Arboretum, adjacent to 21151 Old Yale Road), mile marker 34 - west of the bus stop in the 256000 block, and mile marker 36 - in downtown Aldergrove in front of 27256 Fraser Highway. For more information on this story and the mile markers restoration project, visit www.langleyheritage.ca. *Photographs courtesy Ellen Edwards.*



Check Them Out! BC Farm Museum Murals

The Mural Painting Project at the BC Farm Museum in Fort Langley was officially unveiled over the summer. Photos do not do justice to these amazing murals. If you can, go see these 32 wonderful murals depicting farm and pioneer life that are mounted inside and on the exterior of the museum. The Langley Heritage Society is proud to be one of the financial sponsors of this project.

Congratulations to the talented local artists: Darlene Mehrer MacDonald, Phyllis Atkins, Vivian Harder, Toni Williams, Judy Jordison, Alan Wylie & Janice Robertson. (BC Farm Museum is at 9131 King Street, Fort Langley). *Photograph courtesy of Mark Forsythe. Photograph shows Sid Pickerell of the BC Farm Museum welcoming people to the unveiling.*



Langley Volunteers

HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF VOLUNTEERING AND NOT SURE WHERE TO START? HERE IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO LANGLEY NON-PROFITS AND EVENT PLANNERS..



Meet & Greet

SAT, SEPT 23, 2017 - 10:30 AM TO 1:30 PM
WILLOUGHBY COMMUNITY HALL
20809 - 83 AVENUE, LANGLEY
** PLEASE RSVP TO: **
INFO@LANGLEYVOLUNTEERS.CA
604-897-7278

Langley Heritage Society 2017-2018 Speaker Schedule

Members' meetings occur on the fourth Tuesday of September, October, January, and March at 7:30pm at historic Milner Chapel, located at 6716 - 216th Street. Stay for social time after.

September 26, 2017

Speaker: Brian Pegg

Topic: Archaeology of Indigenous cultures

October 24, 2017

Speaker: Allan Snowie

Topic: Canadian Museum of Flight's Vimy Ridge Anniversary Participation

November 16, 2017

(Douglas Day Potluck)

Speaker: John Atkin

Topic: His 1890 year old home

January 23, 2018

Speaker: Chelsea Bailey

Topic: Life and times of Surrey photographer, Neville Curtis

February 2018

Heritage Week Social
Details TBA

March 27, 2018

Details TBA

For further details, see:
www.langleyheritage.ca/speakers/

Upcoming Programs and Events

{September 26, 2017}

Brian Pegg & Indigenous Archaeology

The Langley Heritage Society launches its fall Speaker Series with Brian Pegg, Kwantlen Polytechnic University archaeologist. Brian has explored indigenous cultures in British Columbia, Ontario, the Northwest Territories and California, and will share stories from recent fieldwork and excavations in the Fraser Canyon involving the Spuzzum and Boston Bar First Nations (Nlaka'pamux). He will also discuss how the Gold Rush and Canyon War of 1858 affected indigenous people.

{November 16, 2017}

Douglas Day Dinner

Tickets to the catered Douglas Day Dinner are \$20 and can be purchased from any of the LHS directors. See page 5 of this newsletter for additional details.

Supporters & Suppliers

The Langley Heritage Society wishes to express our gratitude to supporters who contribute to our projects.

We endorse the following businesses:

Bob McPherson, electrician
(604-530-8715)

Terry Tokiwa, plumber
(604-533-1983)

Robertson Plastics
(604-533-4055)

Charlie Ness, plumbing/renovation
(604-626-2911)

Dave at DJ Hockin Painting & Decorating
(604-850-8520)

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