

# Langley Heritage Society

{fall 2023}

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 @LangleyHeritageSociety

 [langleyheritagesociety](https://www.instagram.com/langleyheritagesociety)

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

## President's Message

I hope that you have enjoyed the wonderful fall colours and had a happy Thanksgiving.

The work on restoring the barn in Old Yale Park should begin shortly. I will supervise and assist when possible but will leave the heavy work to others. Your board of directors envisions this restored building becoming a useful and well used contribution for activities in the park.

The Township held an Open House to gather feedback on the options for Old Yale Road improvements. The society has always supported commemoration of this historical engineering work of 1922. We are currently involved in the dismantling of a rare example of early log building construction. It has deteriorated beyond repair but parts can be saved for interpretation of the unique craftsmanship of the past.

I thank everyone who participated in Memorial Day services on behalf of the society and was happy to see so many at the Douglas Day dinner.

Fred Pepin  
*LHS President*

"The Langley Heritage Society is located on the traditional and unceded lands of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Matsqui, and Semiahmoo peoples. We respect this land and its original occupants."

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# Remembering Their Sacrifices

After a wild night of rain, howling wind, and toppled trees, the sun broke through for Remembrance Day ceremonies in the Langleys. Our society laid wreaths at Murrayville, Aldergrove, Langley City, and Fort Langley, where people gathered to commemorate sacrifices made during the Great War, Second World War, Korean War, peacekeeping missions, Afghanistan deployments, and more.



LHS director Ellie Bosch placing a wreath at Langley City cenotaph on behalf of the Langley Heritage Society.



Each year there is more recognition and understanding of the contributions made by women, Indigenous soldiers, and minorities who were often refused enlistment, but found a way to serve. It was also heartening to see many young people engaged in the ceremonies. — from Cadets to Cubs and Sparks. The reality of wars and horrors in the Ukraine, Middle East, and Somalia added urgency to calls for peace.

"In Flanders Fields, the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below."

—John McCrae



(Left) Leaving a poppy on the Fort Langley cenotaph. Photo Mark Forsythe

# Celebrating James Douglas

Our annual Douglas Day Dinner was a well attended affair at the historic Fort Langley Community Hall. Thank you to Scott Sheffield, Associate Professor of History at the University of the Fraser Valley whose talk explored British Columbia's relationship with the Second World War, and the many layers of community affected by it on the home front: women, Indigenous peoples, Japanese Canadians, farmers, and soldiers' families.



(Above) Pierce Smith, Fred Pepin, and Scott Scheffield.



Thanks to LHS director Pierce Smith for sharing some items owned by James Douglas from the Fort Langley National Historic Site collection.

On display were Douglas' travel bag, replica foot stool, a metal mace used to declare the colony at Fort Langley, and the original foot stool that Douglas travelled with.

Special thanks to Glenn Disney for taking photos during the evening.



(Left) Station volunteers Margot McKenzie and Bonnie Hartup.

(Right) Anita van Weerden and Tom Hammel, photobombed by LHS director Jim Foulkes. Photos Helen Williams



# Preserving Langley's Agricultural Built History

Fred Pepin says it's the **oldest pioneer cabin** he's seen in the Fraser Valley, and the quality of workmanship is, "amazing." Located near 244th Street, just off the Fraser Highway, the cabin rests on property that has recently been sold. Fred and LHS director Jim Foulkes are working to salvage some of its key elements, including its finely crafted corner joints and one wall.



Spoke-shaved corners. No sealant material (typically called chinking) was used as there were no gaps between the cabin's logs.



Fred and LHS member Ted Lightfoot talk shop during first site visit with the Township Rural Task Force.



Log cabin circa 1890.  
Photos Helen Williams

Fred says this isn't a typical homesteader design, and suggests it may have been a European carpenter or tradesperson who built it. The cabin's interlocking corners were spoke-shaved, the log tops rounded, and a channel was carved along them to receive the next log positioned above. As Fred says, "We'll never see another one like this."



The logs were held together by hand-carved wooden dowels or pins. (See cross section above.) It's hoped that the rescued pieces will one day go on public display.  
Above photo Jim Foulkes

## Barn Reboot!

The Langley Heritage Society has saved and preserved heritage structures in Langley Township for more than 40 years. Some of these buildings have received official Township heritage site designation, including the Fort Langley CNR Station and Dixon House & Barn project; they also appear on the register of Canada's Historic Places. We're proud of this record of heritage preservation and restoration.

Our next project: The Old Yale Barn (circa 1915) is a hip-roofed structure that served as a dairy barn for decades. It reflects the story of the development of farming, which continues to be an important underpinning of the local economy. The barn sits inside the Township's Old Yale Park, directly beside a community garden, walking trail, and a newly developed off-leash dog area. It is in serious need of repair, with portions of the roof and siding missing, the structure is open to the elements and needs prompt attention. It is also an important owl habitat.

People in the surrounding community have told our Society they want to see the barn saved, and put to good use. Langley Heritage Society will replace the roof and siding, at our expense. The barn will continue to be managed by the Township of Langley's Recreation, Culture & Parks Department. There could be multiple uses for this restored barn – park and community events, improved garden storage, and new park interpretation. The Great Northern Railway laid its track through this area; Old Yale Road is an historic transportation route; and some of Langley's earliest farms were established in the immediate area. It's rich in possibilities for historical interpretation and fits directly into themes outlined in the Township's 'Our Shared History' document.

We'll track the renovation and share images on our website [www.langleyheritage.ca](http://www.langleyheritage.ca), Facebook, and future newsletters.

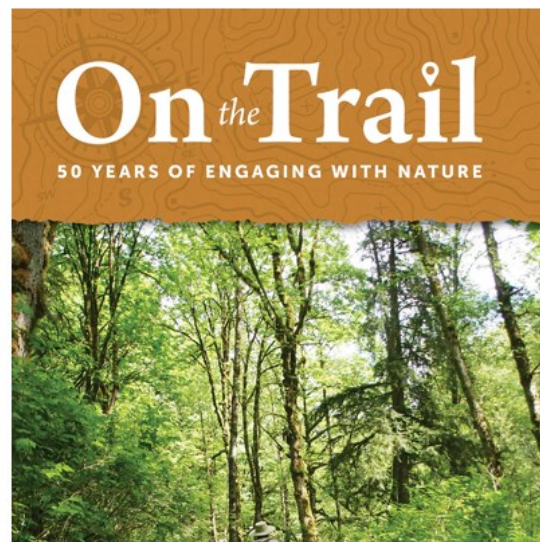


Photo Mark Forsythe

## New Book: On the Trail: 50 Years Of Engaging with Nature

To mark half a century of exploring the natural world and working towards conservation, the Langley Field Naturalists have released a new book.

Published by Hancock, *On The Trail* retails for \$19.95. Langley Heritage Society hopes to highlight the book during a speaker event in January. Order a copy in advance at, [lilianne101@shaw.ca](mailto:lilianne101@shaw.ca)



*continued on p. 8 ... read about the Beetle Project*

# Wheels of Time: A 1929 Christmas

A fierce north wind slapped against the station windows. A thick crust of snow was plastered against the waiting room door, from bottom to top. Not a night for man, beast, or steam engine.

Massive drifts had buried train tracks throughout the valley. Engines rigged with giant, wedge-shaped blades worked to clear stretches of steel. As the plows crept forward, more snow swirled in behind. Relentless.

Station master Richard Simpson sighed. "Could be a long Christmas Eve." He hummed fragments of a song on many lips this year. "No one to talk with, all by myself...ain't misbehavin..." People were doing more singing these days, anything to divert their attention from two market crashes that were rippling around the world. Businesses were shuttering and countless jobs headed down the drain with them.

The telegraph erupted with a click and clack, like horse hooves on ice. A message travelled down the frosty line from Hope Station. Richard could tell who was sending it from its speed and cadence. "Precious...cargo...Fort Langley...be ready." 'Stumble Finger' Clive was on shift.

"Precious cargo...what's that about?"

A tumble of messages revealed that the freight train from the east was at least 3 hours late. It was pulling into sidings to let the snowplows clear a path. Stopping and starting, creeping down the tracks like a giant centipede. With luck, it might make it to Fort Langley Station by midnight.

Richard tapped out his return message. "Patience is virtue. Happy holiday." Clive's reply was quicker than usual: "Don't fall asleep." Clive would now be heading home

to his property above the Fraser River on a fertile bench — a patch large enough for a small farm. His garden, birds and rabbits made a world of difference right now. And there were always fish to be had, if he worked at it.

Richard was back to work, checking freight orders for the next day. Christmas would be busy; 25 bags of flour, tractor & wagon parts, a piano.



Kimberley Perkins collecting her catalog order at the CNR train station. Photo Helen Williams

The door connecting the telegraph room with the CNR station's living quarters creaked open. Mary Simpson stepped through carrying a tea pot that was dressed in a cheery green and red Christmas cozy. The heavenly scent of fresh cranberry scones wafted from the tray. "Mary, you have a gift for knowing when to spoil me."

*continued on next page*

“The coal fire is ready for you, whenever that last freight arrives. I’ll get back to my seed catalogues.” Richard’s eyes danced a jig. “Seeds! Spring! Just the thought of it makes these creaky bones young.



Snowy evening at the historic Fort Langley train station, where sounds of the telegraph keys can still be heard during the opening season.  
Photo Mark Forsythe

Another 2 hours passed. The wind had finally stopped howling and the station platform was now buried beneath a foot of snow. Richard stepped outside into the muffled, eerie silence with a shovel. He was surprised to see that the sky had cleared and the northern constellations were pulsing a pure light. Ursa Major. Cassiopeia. Gemini. It felt like a special show, just for him.

The low moan of an engine’s whistle drifted down the valley, along the river that was now icing up at the edges. The station clock chimed 12 bells as the freight train clunked to a stop. Steam seared the frozen night. A boxcar door rattled and slid open. “Special delivery, Richard.” He peered inside as a metal cage was dragged to the platform’s edge. A perfectly proud turkey gobbled a greeting. Its breast was adorned with a red ribbon and a note scribbled onto a freight slip. “Better days are coming. Clive”

- author, Mark Forsythe

## Hope Carriage House

Built in 1912, this carriage house was part of Charles Edward Hope’s mansion Illahie, located behind what is today the Fort Langley Community Hall. Hope was a land promoter who married the

daughter of Alexander Mavis, who had purchased a large block of land from the Hudson’s Bay Company.



Illahie burned in 1929, but the carriage house that was once used for horses, feed, storage, and a caretaker’s residence, remains. Photo Mark Forsythe

In his book *Nothing Without Effort*, Warren Sommer writes:

“Some in Fort Langley began to put on airs, naming their oldest rose-covered bungalows after the fashion then popular in England...The grandest of all was Illahie, an impressive Arts and Crafts style residence worthy of Vancouver’s Shaughnessy.” Hope was also a key member of the White Canada Association which crusaded for a purely white nation through exclusion and repatriation to countries like Japan and China.

## Supporters & Suppliers

Langley Heritage Society wishes to express our gratitude to all our volunteers and supporters who contribute to our projects.

**Bob McPherson**, Electrician  
604-530-8715

**Nufloors**, 604-533-4231

**Robertson Plastics**, 604-533-4055

Ken Wong @ **Genesis Alarms**  
604-588-1313

Rod Nicol @ **Go With The Flow  
Plumbing & Heating** 604-803-7951

Barbara Bryson @ **Wisteria Guest  
House in the Fort** 604-888-4912

## On The Trail

continued

"This book celebrates Langley's wonderfully diverse natural areas and their inhabitants: the plants and animals that live in forests, fields, streams, bogs and lakes. It also pays tribute to a group of like-minded people who have loved and cared for these natural areas over the past 50 years. This group, known as the Langley Field Naturalists, learned much about working together as a team and facing both failures and successes in conservation battles.

*On the Trail – 50 Years of Engaging with Nature* reveals tactics that worked to help protect nature. It also reveals that joy, community, and flexibility are critical to a society's success and endurance."

Lilianne Fuller led the collaboration, which began in January of 2020. She dubbed it, "the pandemic project" which required ample time on Zoom. A short excerpt on this page introduces a chapter about conservation, and their war to eradicate Purple Loosestrife.

*continued, next column*

## On the Waterfront

An old ferry is moored at the former Albion Ferry dock on the Haney side of the Fraser River. MV Tanaka was built in 1964 for BC's Ministry of Transportation and Highways and was christened the *Comox Queen*. She served on various routes, including Comox to Powell River, and the Quadra Island to Cortes run for many years, carrying 30

cars and 150 passengers. Former BC Ferry employee Del Phillips says there was beautiful woodwork in the bridge area, she could handle rough weather, and the crew loved working aboard. BC Ferries sold the vessel in 2016 to the company that once operated the *Lady Rose* out of Port Alberni. It has changed hands again and a Private Property sign is taped to the window.



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## On The Trail: The Beetle Project

Inside a large tent, we are sucking up beetles. Wearing contraptions with clear tubes hanging out of our mouths, we home in on the densest clusters of beetles. Like some kind of alien anteater, each of us "sucks". Only, to my relief, the sucked-up beetles go into a bottle, not into my mouth. The scene is bizarre enough that a Langley Times reporter has come to photograph and document it. What has made us behave like anteaters?

To be truthful, anteaters snack mostly on ants, not beetles. There is no doubt, however, that our behaviour looks odd. But we are under the supervision of Madlen Denoth, UBC Ph.D. zoology student, and have carefully raised these beetles for one reason.

Our target is a patch of purple at Brydon Pond, located in the Nicomekl floodplain southeast of Brydon Lagoon. The purple is Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*); its tall pinkish-purple flower spikes look attractive to people and to bees. If only this plant knew its place, and stayed in it, we might not be so concerned. Unfortunately, it doesn't.

Originally from Asia and Europe, it spreads "like wildfire", choking out our native wetland plants and eliminating habitat for native fish and wildlife. Worse, one plant can produce up to 3 million seeds, seeds that are able to stay viable in the mud for up to 20 years. Small wonder that this species has earned the labels of "highly invasive" or "noxious weed" in North America.