

Langley Heritage Society

{ Summer 2021 }

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@LangleyHeritageSociety

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

President's Message

This year again we will be conducting our AGM by mail to meet the requirements of the *Societies Act*.

The percentage of people refusing to be vaccinated is a concern, however, it may be possible to resume meetings in the fall. The directors have been busy using zoom, email, and phone to communicate and manage our activities. Helen has been working with the station committee and other volunteers to prepare for reopening. The gardens and improved security have been the focus of many hours of effort.

We thank Envision Financial for their grant in support of our school children to the museum program.

The directors have approved the sponsorship of amenities for the school program meeting rooms in the new museum. Work on the site has begun and will soon pick up pace.

I hope you will enjoy your summer and that we will meet again in the fall.

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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Railway Station Agents: The Original Multi-Taskers

When most transportation and communication depended upon the railway, the station agent WAS the "railway" for farmers, businesses, and villagers alike depended upon him to ship their crops or goods as well as receive their needs. His tasks included selling passenger tickets, handling express and freight shipments, and telegrams, as well as taking and delivering orders to train crews.

His primary task was soliciting and selling the railway's services to businesses and the general public alike. This included such diverse things as **freight shipments**, be it a full carload or less-than-carload (LCL) all of which required finding the applicable freight rate and routing if sent off-line to another railway. This was a very elaborate matter involving thousands of tariffs filed away in huge loose leaf binders that had to be kept constantly up-to-date. Helping to load this freight into a Way car (box car) was another job, as well as the unloading of inbound shipments. At busy locations checking car numbers by walking along tracks was required to maintain records and provide train crews with information and instructions. This would include private sidings in town as well. Issuing revenue waybills for where cars originated, collecting payment on shipments received collect or sent prepaid was a very important part of the agent's responsibilities, as was assessing demurrage charges and doing claims inspections of damaged freight.

Shipments requiring faster handling were sent by **express** on a passenger train that would stop briefly at his station. Valuables, including cash, sometimes for the local bank, were handled and this necessitated being armed with a revolver. He would have to hold and protect these express shipments locked up inside the station and its safe until train time and then load a four-wheeled wagon he pulled along the platform and helped load into the express car. The agent was also a representative of the separate express company and paid a small commission for handling their business.

Telegrams were a way of handling important or urgent messages especially those requiring a written record for business purposes and continued to be so for many decades until newer methods of communication replaced telegrams in the last half of the 20th century.



Photo: Graeme Roy, son of a railway station agent, wrote his CNR rules as a telegrapher in 1970. He picked up Morse on his own over the years. Now retired, Graeme is a volunteer at the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario at Smith Falls, Ontario where he continues to tap messages out on his operating telegraph system.

Again, the station agent handled these "commercial" messages on behalf of the Telegraph Company, also a separate company that paid him a small fee. Separate telegraph wires were used for these **public telegrams**. News was sent by wire and important events were relayed to eager people who gathered around the station waiting word. So, too, did unwelcome news get sent to the station, and it was the duty of the agent to deliver this news in person if it involved a death.

As Graeme Roy recalls, "Commercial telegraph messages at Cardinal were handled through CNR just as the public messages were. In the larger centres, there were dedicated commercial telegraph offices run by CNR and CPR. My dad was paid a commission on each telegram he sent, depending on its length. Many folks decided to send telegrams at night since the rate per word was far cheaper. My dad's monthly salary depended upon the volume of work and revenue each station generated. In 1951, his annual rate at Cardinal, ON was approximately \$262.00 per month plus telegraph commission which may have amounted to \$10-20. A week's groceries for a family of three back then was around \$20, so the commission was welcomed."

Selling tickets for passenger travel including making reservations where required for sleeping accommodation etc. was another part of his duties. This important task brought revenue to the railway and its hotels and ships as well.

Mail was sent and received by train with a Royal Mail box being located on the station's exterior wall. Mail was handled by a person contracted by the government. Even milk was shipped and newspapers were once delivered to stations for the community.

Cleaning and filling oil lamps including trimming the wick for the train order board and track switches at his location was another duty. Even indoors oil lamps were used at some places.

The Station Agent was in fact an Agent-Operator, someone who was qualified in sending and receiving Morse code telegraph messages for railway and public use. The railway use was of course **train orders** to be delivered, either by "hooping them up" to the engine crew and van (caboose) crew as the train passed his station or, in person to stopped trains. This task required not only knowledge of the intricate clicks of the telegraph but, also passing an exam on the complex rules governing train operations. Although telephones on private railway lines replaced most telegraph use, the "wire" remained as backup on all lines for many years and in some cases were the only method available.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAPHS TELEGRAM RECEIVED BY TELEPHONE			
RECORDERS SIGN	CHECK	TIME FILED	SENDER'S FULL NAME IF NOT SHOWN IN SIGNATURE
	40/36 NL DUEBILL		
TOLLS TO BE PAID BY OR NAME OF ACCOUNT TO BE CHARGED TO:		ADDRESS	SENDER'S PHONE NUMBER
JAN. 24/56			
F BLACK			
SUPT OF VETERANS INSURANCE DEPT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OTTAWA ONT			
RE VETERANS INSURANCE APPLICATION NO 41736 REFERENCE			
YOUR LETTER OF JANUARY TWENTY THIRD ETC.			
ROBERT P. THOMPS			
H0R 23			
50			
OTHER OFFICE COLLECTIONS			
CNT 6195	OFFICE	FEB 8/56	
3-41	MANAGER		
ROBERT P THOMPS			
TUMBLEWOOD			
BRI			
THE ACCOUNT LISTED ABOVE HAS BEEN COLLECTED BY THIS OFFICE, AND YOU			
SHOULD NOW TAKE CREDIT ON YOUR NEXT BALANCE SHEET, ATTACHING THIS			
MEMORANDUM AS AUTHORITY.			
TELEGRAM JAN 24/56 TO C F BLACK,			
THIS REFERS TO YOURS OTTAWA, ONT.			
THIS ADVICE TO BE FORWARDED IN DUPLICATE TO OFFICE REQUIRING CLEARANCE			

Telegraph Forms used by the station agent. Note the detail required by the agent to account for every cent received or returned as change. Several forms used remained unchanged in style for years, for example, Form #4 prepared in August 1929 and was still in use in 1956. (CNR Employee Handbook, 1956—courtesy G.W. Horner)

Grow Your Family Tree with British Columbia Genealogical Society



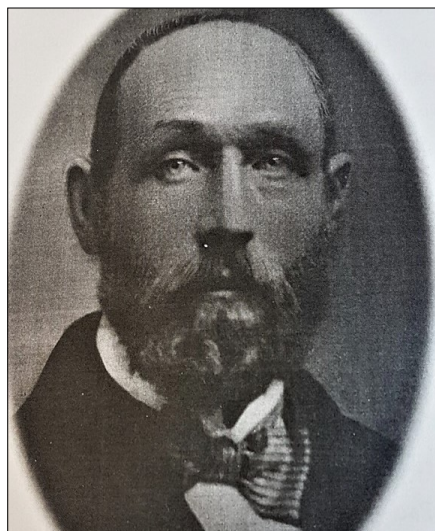
To forget one's ancestors is to be a brook without a source, a tree without a root. – Chinese Proverb

Langley Heritage Society is now an affiliate member of the British Columbia Genealogical Society which is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a special seminar series. LHS members can access online Coffee Chat groups and seminars to help search out family history — at no cost.

The month of July will feature sessions about exploring genetic genealogy; Ontario, Quebec and Prairie Coffee Chat groups; Parental Puzzles and tips on tracing German/Russian ancestry. There is a remarkable range of offerings from BCGS for beginners and the more seasoned researcher. Learn more by visiting their website at www.bcgs.ca Register for events by using this code: Affiliate #5862

The website also features short profiles researched by its members, including this one from Ann Buchanan:

"Count Jean Marie Isidore Versepuech-Gaspard is my son's great-great grandfather once removed. He was born a count in France Nov. 1, 1830 but in his twenties, he travelled to try his luck in the California Gold Rush. In 1860 he followed other gold diggers to the Fraser River Gold Rush and eventually settled in Dog Creek, B.C. In about 1864 he met a First Nations woman and they had eight children together. They married June 16, 1882 in Dog Creek. It had taken a long time for Versepuech-Gaspard to arrange to have his wife's name legally changed from Mootla to Marguerite Bates so they could marry.... By April 14th, 1861 he had arrived in Victoria to purchase for \$90 a complete set of workings for a grist mill. It was not until 1862 that the equipment was packed to Dog Creek along with 1,000 pounds of wheat that he purchased for 33 cents per pound. Many people did not believe that wheat could be grown in the Cariboo. The first year the partners planted 10 pounds of wheat to prove that the crop would grow. It was official, the Cariboo had its first grist mill and the Count had found his fortune in the gold rush."



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A station agent had the **most diverse and complicated job on the railway**; one that dealt with both public and private matters and some of which required discretion. Rural agents would often help illiterate folks with order forms for the famous Eaton's catalogue after being shown pictures in the catalogue. Company business was both important and often urgent when it involved the movement of trains, or, more importantly, stopping trains that might otherwise be headed for disaster.

Article provided by Graeme Roy. Source, *Old Time Trains*.

LHS Sponsors Student Space at New Museum

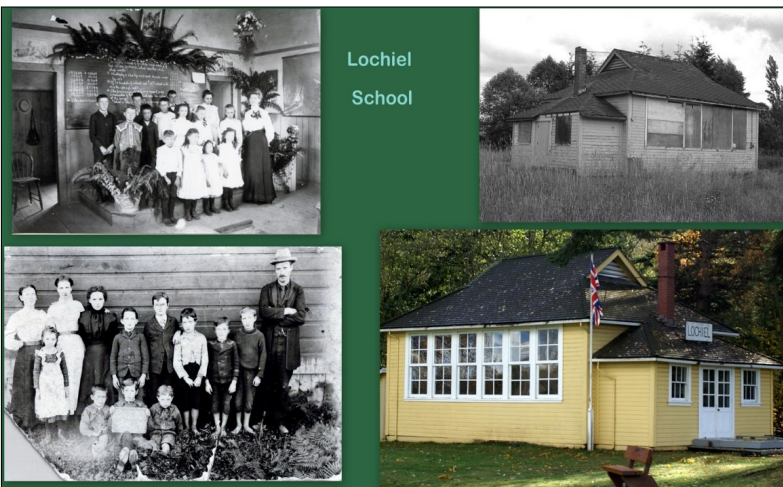
The site is cleared and shovels are in the ground as construction begins on a new museum and cultural centre complex in Fort Langley.

Salishan Place By The River is a partnership between the Township of Langley and Kwantlen First Nation, in collaboration with the Katzie, Matsqui and Semiahmoo First Nations, Waceyá Metis Society and the Lower Fraser Valley Aboriginal Society. This is an exciting project that the Langley Heritage Society has supported through its many stages, and we are now contributing \$60,000 to equip and furnish two classrooms. This will enhance the Society's ongoing sponsorship of school programs and provide a creative and comfortable environment for local students exploring the new cultural centre. The Township of Langley continues to seek sponsorship partners to complete spaces inside the new facility.



LHS Receives 5K for School Sponsorship Program

Envision Financial, a division of First West Credit Union, has made a donation to Langley Heritage Society's school sponsorship program. "At Envision Financial we know how important it is to preserve family and cultural heritage in our communities and are proud to donate the \$5,000 to support your heritage educational programs – thank you for all you do to help our community thrive!"



Langley Heritage Society saw a need for children at inner city schools to access programs at the Langley Centennial Museum and Lochiel One Room School at Campbell Valley Regional Park. Many schools and parents do not have the resources to cover transportation and programming costs; our Society now funds these expenses for schools that demonstrate a need. We began with 5 schools and have expanded to 9 schools in District #35, assisting about 2,500 students each year.

The donation from Envision Financial will help us sustain the program, and possibly expand it. The Museum also hosts a district Heritage Fair that Langley Heritage Society supports financially. We are committed to connecting young people with our rich history and heritage which helps build engaged citizens who grow up to support museums, cultural institutions and their community.

Down By The Langley Station

The original railway gardens at the Canadian Northern Railway 'Langley' Station were designed, planted, and tended from 1917 to 1929 by Richard and Mary Simpson. Railway gardening was a British import to Canada. We know in 1861 that the editor of *Canada Farmer* wrote that railway gardens were highly visible on the British landscape. Ten years later he declared English railway gardens were "the rule instead of the exception." (Manitoba Historical Society, no.16, 1996, p. 2.)

Nationwide, Canada's railway gardens transformed unsightly right of ways and beautified the "newly hacked from the forest" (*Iron Road West*, 2019.) look of railway stations. Once Canada's railways were past the pioneer stage of laying track and installing telegraph lines, passenger and freight rail became fiercely competitive. Railway stations went from being wooden boxes with simple gables and plain rooflines to having turrets, towers, and arches. Agents were encouraged to plant gardens and competitions with prize money were offered within each district and division. Railways developed nurseries and built greenhouses for the thousands of annuals, shrubs, and trees needed each year.

Canadian Pacific Railway Company (CPR) led the Canadian railway gardening movement in the 1890s. Having employees cultivating bits of ground near stations and railway buildings had many benefits, like:

- lessening fire on weed-filled embankments
- improving look of right of ways
- increasing immigration by showing how good the soil is, thereby increasing rail traffic

Railway gardens were often a Canadian town's only parkland. Residents and passengers alike admired the beauty and sought to add flowers and shrubs in their own yards. This became a financial spinoff for railway companies as people sought garden ornaments, trees, shrubs, and plants which the railway company could freight in.

It wasn't until 1916 before CNoR (later to become Canadian National Railways (CNR)) started a campaign with all their agents to beautify station grounds in western Canada. The company



LHS Collection, CNoR Langley Station. Richard Simpson in a perennial garden across from the mainline tracks. This bed is in addition to the flower garden he and Mary created on the station's western grounds.



LHS Collection, CNoR Langley Station. Early garden.



CNR Collection. Railway gardener John Cameron at Moncton with a barrow full of plants to be loaded into a car along with others and shipped to stations, roundhouses, and shops.

opened a new department through the general passenger department whereby agents could submit their application for seeds at no cost. Having surpassed the CNoR's expectations, the company boasted that they had some of the nicest station grounds on the American continent by 1917. (Source: LHS, *Fort Langley CNR Station 2011 Heritage Site Operational Plan*)



LHS Collection, CNoR Langley Station. Richard and Mary Simpson.

During the First World War, Canadian families were encouraged to grow and preserve their own fruits and vegetables to reduce demand on the domestic food supply. "Canadian railway companies plowed up lawns and flower borders along the right of way and supported the effort by also supplying detailed vegetable gardening instructions to participating employees. The CPR even provided free fertilizer. It was estimated that one-third of CPR war gardens were devoted to potatoes." (Manitoba Historical Society, no.16, 1996, p. 6.)



CWM 19730004-014, Canadian War Museum.

Langley's railway garden is situated on the eastern grounds of the station today and provides a yearly show of blooms from many of the 37 plant varieties grown originally by the Simpsons. This spring a variety of heritage perennials were donated to the station by LHS member Toots Tucker, Theresa Peters, and Kelly Robinson. Kelly invited Station Manager Helen Williams and volunteer Juli-Anne Pater-son to her family's Langley farm to dig up peonies, columbine, foxglove, bleeding heart, and poppies planted by her mother Bernice.

Station plantings are damaged each year by people walking through the beds, picking flowers, and allowing dogs off leash. Your support of Langley Heritage Society is greatly appreciated as it maintains and interprets Langley's historic railway history, complete with garden and railcars, for the community. We thank Toots, Theresa, and Kelly along with a team of devoted volunteers that give their time to keep the site open each season.



(Photo: Ken and Bernice Robinson) Kelly Robinson's father Ken worked closely with LHS president Fred Pepin in saving, moving, and restoring Lochiel One-Room School to Campbell Valley Regional Park. The initiative began in 1987 after a former teacher contacted the LHS.

Lattimer House

LHS Restored Building Highlight



When David Andrew Lattimer returned home after serving with the Canadian infantry in the Great War, he moved into this simple wooden house at Milner. It was built in 1910 by Robert Burns Hutchinson (nephew of the famous poet), on land that was once part of the 2,000 acre Hudson's Bay Company Farm. The house was constructed just as the B.C. Electric Interurban rail line reached this part of the Fraser Valley.

The family lived in the house until 1961. Lattimer was something of a horseman in Ireland, and later ran the livery stable in Milner; with the arrival of the automobile he operated a garage.

The Langley Heritage Society leased the house from the Township of Langley in 2012 and spent a year-and-a-half restoring it. It was raised and moved 7 metres back from the road; a crawl space was added to accommodate a furnace, new wiring, and plumbing. Insulation completed the project.

LHS president Fred Pepin remembers

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discovering that the board & batten siding was put on when the house was sagging, which meant it was crooked. It was torn off and redone.

You'll find a short video that tells the story of Lattimer House, produced with students from Brookwood Secondary School on the LHS website, www.langleyheritage.ca

Bays Blackhall Memorial Scholarship

This year's recipient is Huiwon "Chloe" Kim from Walnut Grove Secondary.

Her school counsellor writes: "Chloe is a cheerful and empathetic individual. A musician, a hardworking scholar, and an avid contributor to her community. Chloe has been a leader in many school and community organizations such as; WGSS Leo Club, WGSS Social Justice and founder of the WGSS Mental Health Club. Then outside of the school her contributions and leadership continue to name a few highlights of her community works; TEDX Youth, Director of Worldwyde and Youth Advisory for Langley Council. Chloe will be heading to UBC next year to pursue her dream of becoming a pediatrician."

Langley Heritage Society congratulates Chloe, and we wish her much success as she continues on her exciting journey.

Supporters & Suppliers

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

David Hockin @ **DJ Hockin Painting & Decorating**
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Ken Wong @ **Genesis Alarms**
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Barbara Bryson @ **Wisteria Guest House in the Fort**
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