



The Mclver family sold their Maple Ridge farms in the mid-1920s to the Municipality of Maple Ridge to be used in perpetuity as the Maple Ridge golf course.

a countryman of Hammond's, mulcted (stuffed) him the sum of \$70, over which item he was rather sore. It was not any credit to own land or appreciate salmon then. Mclver, who had his work as a cooper near the landing at Hammond, used to trade direct with the fishermen as they brought in their haul. He recollected their jibe, "Ya ya, Look at him. There goes a rancher and a salmon eater!"

In this ways it came about that the settlers spread over to the north bank of the river. The English Church, as related, was transported from Derby. Two years ago it celebrated the jubilee of the first service. Mclver, and the late John Hammond being the only survivors present who had witnessed the first dedication. Mrs. Howison's house at Maple Ridge, which was also the store and post office, then stood in the forest. The orchard planted there is the first in BC. Furthermore, the Town Hall and centre of things was in Maple Ridge until the CPR came through in 1885, when stations being opened up at Hammond and Haney, Maple Ridge shunned publicity for a short spell.

Early Days

By Mary McFarlane

My father, the late John Mclver, owned the first piece of land on this side of the Fraser River. In the year 1853 he and several other young men from Lewis Island, Scotland, came to Canada in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. They landed at Fort Churchill on the Hudson's Bay, went to Fort Carleton, then overland on snowshoes stopping at the different forts en route until arriving at Fort Langley, where my father was stationed for eight years until the company disbanded.

The men in the service had the choice of having their fares paid back to the Old Country or settling on a quarter section of land, most of them chose the latter, among them my father. The piece of land on which he settled is now divided among the eight members of our family—most of them are still residing here, including myself. He began to clear the heavy timber with the motto that "Man conquers as he achieves and achieves as he aspires."

She continued: "When settlement first began on the north bank of the Fraser River, roads were not a burning issue, for the early settlers located on the banks of the river and that was their highway. Later when incoming settlers were obliged to locate some distance from the river, the need for roads became apparent.

The following is a story of the first highway in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows by the late Sergeant John McKenney of the Royal Engineers at an entertainment in the Maple Ridge schoolhouse, where it was well received and judged the best number of the program.

When the residents who were located some distance from the Fraser River felt that they should have some better way of reaching the different landings on the river other than ordinary trails, they petitioned the government at Victoria, praying for a grant for road construction.

The powers that were at that time granted their prayer, and placed at their disposal \$1000 for the purpose sought, and appointed the late W. J.

Howison, one of the original settlers, foreman of construction, giving him instructions to purchase the necessary tools without delay.

This he did, purchasing tools in the amount of \$100 leaving \$900 for road construction. He then engaged nearly all of the residents as his road gang and instructed them to meet him at a certain point, on the day he appointed, and road construction would begin. On the day appointed all who had been engaged appeared. Mr. Howison led them to a small island on the prairie near the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows boundary line and south of the CPR main line.

And here without pomp or ceremony the first tree was cut on the first highway in the two districts; a road referred to locally as the Old Howison Road or Trail. When a small space had been cleared, Mr. Howison produced a compass with which he proposed to establish the direction of the road. As soon as he had laid it upon a log, a dog belonging to one of the party leaped upon it, smashing the compass. Thereafter the construction of the highway proceeded without the use of the instrument, and this may account for its winding nature.

From the starting point, the road was made to Pitt River, through the standing timber, all small to medium trees were closely chopped and all logs removed to a width of about twelve-feet, large trees were avoided. Very little grading was done. From the west side of the high land in Pitt Meadows to Pitt River it was only a foot path or trail, split cedar planks being laid lengthwise over the waterways.

When the western end was completed, the party returned to the starting point and construction began eastward through Maple Ridge, lacking the guidance of a compass, the course was what might be termed crooked, but mainly parallel to the Fraser River, not leading from the river to residents in the back district.

When the construction had reached a point somewhere in the vicinity of Kanaka Creek, those who laboured on the road being residents, began to say to one another "what particular good does this road do us?" and from that followed the natural, though delayed enquiry of the foreman

as to what he was doing. He gruffly answered “building a road to the Cariboo.” The storm broke then, and the dispute, to speak of it mildly, that followed was spoken of by those present and took part with deep feeling until the day of their death. While the money spent was wasted as far as advantage to the residents was concerned, the quarrel made up for their disappointment, seemingly they thought they got their money’s worth and let it go since by this time only \$100 remained of the original \$1000.

So the residents again petitioned the government. This time praying that Mr. Howison be removed from the position of construction foreman, and the late Mr. William Hammond appointed in his stead. This government acceded and William Hammond and his brother, John, worked out the remaining \$100, though where it is not definitely known.

And thus ended the first attempt at road building in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

This road did not serve any very useful purpose and the residents were as badly off as they were before the expenditure of the \$1000, but they had the money.

In 1874 the residents of Maple Ridge formed a municipality so as to enable them to build roads and bridges.

The election for the first municipal council of the Corporation of the District of Maple Ridge was held in my father’s home on October 3rd, 1874. The returning officer, coming from the Royal City, the first warden or reeve was Mr. W. J. Harris; the first clerk, Mr. James Thorne; the first assessor, Mr. John McIver. The first statutory meeting of the council was held in my father’s home on October 7th, 1874, where rules of order for regulating the meetings were made and titles of members, warden and councillors were given; rules of decorum and laws for governing themselves were also made at this meeting.

The first Presbyterian service in Maple Ridge was held in my father’s home in 1875. The late Dr. Alexander oooooo had just come from Scotland as a Missionary.

By this time quite a number of families had settled in the district, the Royal Engineers had disbanded

and Sergeant McKenney and Mr. Murphy settled near Pitt Meadows. Sergeant McKenney lived there until his death in 1897. Various settlers came from the east, some travelling overland through the Yellowhead Pass and over the Hope Mountains and through the US by the Southern Pacific Railway to San Francisco and up the coast by boat.

Leaving the Adam Irving family on his homestead, where they lived for some time, my father went to the mines in the Cariboo in 1875 or 1876. Then he took a trip to Lewis Island, Scotland. He had \$2,500 in gold that he panned while in the Cariboo, sewn in a belt made of canvas, also had some nuggets from which he had my mother’s wedding ring made. He married Catherine Morrison in April, 1877. She was born on the day that he left for Hudson’s Bay. Her two eldest half brothers came with him at that time, stopping at Fort Garry and Fort McLeod and returning later to Stornoway.

My father, mother and his sister came to Canada on one of the Allan steamships, landing at Point Lewis, Quebec, then travelling by Southern Pacific Railway to Omaha and San Francisco; then to Victoria by boat and onto New Westminster where they lived for two years, while there he worked at his cooper trade, which he learned while in the service of the Hudson’s Bay Company, making barrels, tubs, etc. for the fish canneries where they were used for curing fish to be shipped away.

I was born in New Westminster in March 1878, and in March 1879 my father decided to move back to Maple Ridge. The Irvings bought the farm next to him. Still the only means of transportation was the Fraser River, by canoes, rowboats and steamers, which went up the river as far as Chilliwack and sometimes as far as Yale.

There were landings along the river bank on Maple Ridge. [Adam] Irving’s, Nelson’s and Howison’s landings were made of planks laid on piles. The landing at Howison’s was a wharf with a house on it, where the mail, goods and groceries were brought for the store and post office.

Some of the settlers bought cordwood for fuel for the river boats. There were chutes made from the top of the hill down to the river bank and cordwood was sent down to be picked up by the boats.

The First Teacher

by James William Sinclair

Condensed from the 1942 article written by then 82-year old Sinclair about his early days in Maple Ridge.

In July 1874 17-year old Sinclair arrived at Nelson’s Landing with the clothes on his back, a battered valise and a rolled up map of the world to fill a teaching position. Born in Cowlitz, Washington State, both his father and grandfather had been HBC men, his grandfather being John McLoughlin, “The Father of Oregon.” Having just received his teaching certificate in Ontario, John Jessop, the Superintendent of Education, had the young Sinclair sent to Maple Ridge. His first class consisted of 16 pupils that ranged in age from 6 to 26 years.

Young Sinclair stayed with the Nelson family since they owned the only boarding house. School opening was postponed for two weeks until the mosquito plague subsided. In order to increase enrolment, Sinclair purchased a huge rowboat for \$25 and rowed twice daily across the Fraser River, sometimes through spring freshet and winter ice flows, to bring 7 Fort Langley pupils to his school. With such enthusiasm, he soon had the largest school attendance on the mainland and by 1878 was teaching algebra, geometry and bookkeeping. His accounting abilities soon landed him the additional job of Municipal Clerk.

Many of his students came to school barefooted.

In 1882 Sinclair eloped to Chilliwack and married a daughter of Adam Irving, an early pioneer. Because of the elopement with a former pupil, the school trustees asked for the young teacher’s resignation. The young couple moved to Fort Langley

and Paul Murray replaced Sinclair and took over his teaching position.

Pioneer settlers with oxen moved the original school from the water’s edge and inland where it was soon replaced with a larger building at the corner of River Road and Laity Street.

The district’s second school, called Haney School, was built in 1888 at the corner of Dewdney Trunk Road and Lillooet Road (14th Avenue and later 232nd Street). Pupils walked to it through the woods from as far as Yennadon and Webster’s Corners.

Mr. and Mrs. James William Sinclair, early 1880s.

