

Mrs. Mohun and the Hammond Brothers

Prepared by Fred Braches for the Community Heritage Commission for the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at Hammond Park on 14 June 2008

John and William Hammond started farming at Codd Island around 1863. William soon pre-empted land on the Fraser River that was adjacent to property owned by Emmeline Jane Newton.

Emmeline was the oldest daughter of John Tod, a Chief Trader of the Hudson's Bay Company, and she had married William Henry Newton in Victoria in 1886. Her husband, also employed by the HBC, took charge of Fort Langley between 1859 and 1864. Mr. Newton died in 1875, leaving, as a newspaper said, "his wife and 6 children to mourn."

As early as 1860, as soon as Governor Douglas issued a proclamation allowing settlers to take possession of "unoccupied and unreserved" crown land in British Columbia, the Newtons purchased substantial lands east of the Katzie First Nation reserve. After Newton's death a total of 555 acres northeast of the reserve was registered in the name of Emmeline Newton.

In 1878 the widow married civil engineer Edward Mohun, who at the time of the wedding was one of three land surveyors establishing boundaries of Indian Reserves. Immediately after British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871, Edward Mohun worked for a year as divisional engineer for the CPR and made the first survey in British Columbia for the promised transcontinental railway. William Hammond, also a civil engineer, participated in the CPR survey as well.

When, in 1882, Andrew Onderdonk signed the contract to build the section of the railroad between Port Moody and Savona, the Mohuns and the Hammond brothers probably already knew that the planned railway on its way to Port Moody would curve away from the Fraser through William Hammond's riverside properties and cut through a corner of Emmeline Mohun's land. Anyway, William Hammond would quickly have been made aware of the plans for a CPR rail station and warehouse on his land as well as a dock for CPR steamers connecting with the trains and carrying passengers and freight to and from Victoria.



John Hammond, who with his brother William gave their name to Port Hammond.



Pink violets adorn the lawn of John Hammond's residence on Lorne Avenue, 2008.

The Hammond brothers and the Mohuns acted promptly on the information and became partners in the planning of a new town. A "Plan of the Town of Port Hammond Junction" was drafted by Edward Mohun and registered in Victoria on behalf of Emmeline Mohun and William and John Hammond.

The newly laid out and subdivided town promised to have a bright future. There was initially much interest in purchasing properties and opening businesses in Port Hammond. But the dreams came to a quick and unforeseen end when the CPR main line was extended west from Port Moody, the original terminus, to what became the city of Vancouver, where the first train arrived on Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, May 23, 1887.

As the focus on rapidly growing Vancouver increased, interest in investing in Port Hammond quickly faded. In 1889 the *Weekly Columbian* writing about an application for a licence for the sale of liquor at the "Westcott house" tells us that the house was "deserted...after the collapse of the Hammond boom."

However, Port Hammond survived and it became and remained for many years the commercial centre of Maple Ridge.

Following Pages

Now the Ridge Meadows Industrial Park, the site was originally part of the Mohun estate.

