

Maple Ridge's First Auto Dealership

Top

Offloading the first cars at Port Haney CPR Station, 13 March 1924.

Left to right: Hal Menzies, salesman, Bill Eaton, Bert Bokstrom, Abe Eaton, Mary, Lilly and Helen Mussallem (in car), CPR worker and Solomon Mussallem (in top hat).

Bottom

Mussallem's first garage on Ontario Street south of Haney House.

IN 1919 SOLOMON MUSSALLEM visited Maple Ridge to scout out the possibility of setting up his own auto repair shop. A native of Lebanon, Mussallem had left his wife to manage a jewellery store in Prince Rupert while he worked as a repairman free of charge in Vancouver to learn the trade. He scouted out the district and soon discovered that he had little competition and a potential for an excellent clientele. By a combination of mechanical knowledge and native shrewdness, Mussallem captured most of the Abernethy and Lougheed Logging Company business for his repair garage on Ontario Street south of Haney house. By this time the municipality had a network of gravel roads, and was connected to New Westminster by River Road and the first Pitt River Bridge, built in 1913.

It didn't take long before Mussallem encountered realtor Hal Menzies sitting in the local café waiting for potential customers coming into Port Haney either by river steamer or on the train. Their friendship would result in huge benefits to both. When Mussallem got into the auto business, he hired Menzies to be his top salesman. It was a win-win situation for both. Menzies would drive prospective clients out to view parcels of land in a brand new car and often was able to arrange financing through the Bank of Montreal and was thus able to sell both a car and a home. As time went on Menzies sold larger properties to Mussallem north of the Lougheed Highway and then arranged to have them subdivided and sold off in smaller parcels making good profits for both men.

Mussallem went on to become the longest running Reeve ever in Maple Ridge and was the Chief Magistrate or Reeve from 1930 to 1934, 1936 to 1943 and from 1946 to 1953.

