

Historical Origins and Collective Memory  
in British Columbia's Community-Based Museums, 1925-1975

by

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ABSTRACT

Community-based museums in British Columbia are testaments to the importance of belonging and social identity. Three case studies, the Saanich Pioneer Museum, the Kamloops Museum Association and the Langley Centennial Museum in Fort Langley demonstrate how community identity was the focus of collective memory construction. Museum buildings were also iconographic sites. This research draws on museum society minutes, records, journals and displays, and personal interviews. It examines the role of earlier groups and events, from agricultural fairs to fraternal organizations in these museums' origins. The influence of provincial and federal government policies and funding, Centennial celebrations, and umbrella organizations such as the British Columbia Museums Association are also analysed. Socialization, interaction, memorabilia, commemorations and celebrations were all part of the creation of collective memory, and demonstrate how belonging was vital to these museums' creation and histories.

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### **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of a good friend,  
Tina Strange, 1960-2001, a person of rare courage.

**Chapter 1**  
**Introduction**  
**Community-Based Museums: Collective Memory and Narrative**

The idea of the “museum” encompasses a wide range of institutions and understandings. Within the historical origins of museums lie valuable insights into the social identity of their communities. Museums themselves are artifacts of our society and their organizational structures continue to reflect older understandings of belonging and identity. Social interactions of the past are embedded in museums’ purposes and operations. Museums are also important sites for the creation and enactment of collective memory. Historians have many understandings of museums’ roles. In recent decades, the idea of the museum is often linked with the theories of Michel Foucault, and is examined as an institution of knowledge, reflective of greater ideas of power and authority.<sup>1</sup> Yet, museum visitors bring their own understandings of history into the dialectic exchange.

The western idea of the museum has its origins in the Renaissance and its “Cabinets of Curiosities.”<sup>2</sup> Museums in North America also have roots in the popularity of “spectacles,” public history displays, world fairs and exhibitions, all of which promoted nationalism and identity.<sup>3</sup> In western Canada, museums emerged both from the legacy of colonialism, and in the resurgence of national identity in the years following World War II-- although by the late 1950s, with many Centennials on the horizon, both the provincial and federal governments began aiding local museums with funding and technical assistance.

Unfortunately, the literature on museums tends to examine only larger, well-resourced institutions situated in urban areas. Historians also usually choose to examine the scope of collections, or resources, and size rather than the museum’s *relationship* to a community or place. As a result, such studies overwhelmingly ignore the origins of smaller community museums. In 20<sup>th</sup> century Canada, many museums developed in smaller cities and rural settings out of agricultural fairs, and annual or centennial celebrations. This thesis

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<sup>1</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York, Vintage Books), 1973.

<sup>2</sup>Ellis Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work* (Nashville, Tennessee: The American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 17.

<sup>3</sup>Burcaw, *Museum Work*, 25.

seeks to analyze community-based museums as institutions that developed within distinct settings of localized politics and economics. In particular, it seeks to uncover these museums' important roles in developing their local historical narratives, and considers the specialized nature of their museum relationships to their communities. It also will look at the ongoing creation and preservation of collective memory with museum societies and their memberships.

Of the more than 250 community-based museums in British Columbia, fewer than one-third are over fifty years old.<sup>4</sup> Often humourously characterized as the eternal homes of stories of the pioneers, with glass insulator collections and ever-present, rusting wagon wheels, these museums are rich in diverse approaches to history, and as individual in their origins as their myriad locations throughout the province. These museums were vital places for the building of historical narrative and collective memory and sources of the understandings of identity. They remain as powerful intellectual homes for collective memory and the preservation of local history.

In British Columbia, community museums began as extensions of the gatherings and activities of rural, socially-based organizations, such as the Native Sons and Daughters, or chapters of Natural History societies. Many were extensions of annual displays at agricultural fairs or founded as part of national or provincial centennial celebrations. Staffed primarily by volunteers, these museums often started in temporary buildings, operated on minimal, if any, public funding, and usually opened only seasonally. They did not, perhaps, set out to communicate a preconceived historical awareness, but simply to display artifacts, educate their communities and keep their doors open. Although usually based in rural surroundings or smaller towns, they were often imitative of larger institutions.<sup>5</sup> Some museums sought to recreate the architecture of grander palaces of community narratives: in Vancouver, or Revelstoke, for instance, Carnegie-style library buildings were used. Just as larger museums would limit visitors to the "correct sort," the community museum governed

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<sup>4</sup>British Columbia Museums Association, Annual Report, (Victoria, 1996), 4.

<sup>5</sup>While in general community museums could be imitative of their provincial institutions, the Provincial Museum in Victoria (now the Royal British Columbia Museum) did not include "settler" history in its displays until 1968.

and controlled its visitors through a strong sense of ownership and guardianship.<sup>6</sup> Museums were, for their community and people, the homes of cultural identity and belonging.

The community-based museum, as an institution, emerged in British Columbia between 1925 and 1975 (see Table 1), with significant growth during the Centennial years (1958, 1966, 1967, 1971). Many were built in the 1950s, when civic and rural identity was paramount to the rebuilding of a postwar national economy. Today these museums are frequently the main force in their towns or communities for historic interpretation and understanding of the past. Although historians use them for their archives and artifacts, far too little understanding exists of the frameworks and historical processes that surround their collections and presentations.

While some theorists such as Michel Foucault and James Clifford argue that museums are simply “salvagers” of material culture, others, particularly Tony Bennett, David Lowenthal, Susan Pearce, Gaynor Kavanagh and Susan Crane view them as part of the active and ongoing creation of collective memory and society’s notions of history.<sup>7</sup> Most theories of museums accept that many levels of communication occur between what is displayed and what the viewer interprets, a dialectic exchange. This is one significant aspect of how community museums are aligned with historical theories of “collective memory” or group memory through community identity. However, museums as organizations are also sites of the enactment and performance of set narratives of history. As community meeting places and in the exchanges that took place in annual general meetings, activities, school programs

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<sup>6</sup>Burcaw, Museums Studies, 19.

<sup>7</sup>Michel Foucault, The Order of Things (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) and The Archaeology of Knowledge (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974); James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997); Tony Bennett, The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); David Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Susan Crane, “Memory, Distortion and History in the Museum” History and Theory, 36, 4 (1997): 44-63; and Museums and Memory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). Susan M. Pearce, ed., Museums and Appropriation of Culture. Series: New Research in Museum Studies, Vol. 4, (London and New Jersey: The Athalone Press, 1994).

and fundraising socials, museums reinforced the collective memory of their communities.

Rather than simply acting as deliverers of existing historical messages and meanings, community-based museums actively participated in the creation of their community's understandings of its history. These museums were also a local, and in many ways more *personal* expression, a self-defined interpretation by a small group, or community, of what they considered to be "properly" historic. To assume that the small museums were solely copies of larger forums is to assume that the politics of a rural life were only the shadows of urban life. Therefore, an understanding of the origins of community museums is significant to understanding British Columbia museological history.

This thesis examines how collective memory of each community was formed in small museums, and how these institutions have come to be both historical objects and local symbols of their communities' histories. I will analyse the early histories of three community museums in B.C. as case studies, and look at how ideas of identity and community belonging, and how the creation of an actual museum was important to these communities in establishing historical narratives. This study will also look at the incentives-- such as community needs, provincial funding, centennial celebrations -- that prompted their creation

Local and provincial records, annual reports and papers of several "umbrella" organizations (particularly the B.C. Museums Association), and several provincial publications and newsletters and the records of provincial and federal ministries provide a wealth of information. Museums were organized within a greater sense of scientific order, and most have kept excellent records, and minutes of meetings. Many individuals who were active in developing these museums kindly offered their personal recollections, and shared some of their stories to provide perspectives on the origins of these museums.

The study of collective memory has seen a surge of interest in the last decade. Building on analysis of human cognition, particularly as theorized by Sigmund Freud and later, Carl Jung in the early 1900s, French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first proposed the notion of collective memory in the early 1920s. Halbwachs described "community as the holder of memory. . .since it is impossible to deny that we often place our remembrances

**Table 1**  
British Columbia Museums, Year Built

Based on results of a survey of “existing museums.”  
British Columbia Museums Association, ca.1970.

<b>When Built</b>	<b>Museum Name and Year</b>
1930-1935	Nanaimo Bastion 1931, Prince Rupert 1932, Saanich 1933 Kamloops 1935
1936-1950	<i>no records for this period in survey</i>
1951-1955	Kelowna 1951, Clinton 1952 , Surrey 1955
1956-1957	Chilliwack 1956, Penticton 1957, Nelson/Kootenay 1957
<b>1958</b>	Princeton, Alert Bay, Langley, Grand Forks, Kaslo
1959 - 1965	McBride 1959, Campbell River 1959, Ashcroft 1960, K’san 1960 Dawson Creek 1960, Powell River 1963, Parksville 1964, Osoyoos 1965, Duncan Forest Museum 1965
<b>1966</b>	B.C. Farm Machinery, Okanagan
<b>1967</b>	Invermere, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Castlegar, Grand Forks, Hope, Hudsons Hope.
1968, 1969.	North Peace 1968, Kitimat 1969, Lilloet 1969, Port Moody 1969 Abbotsford 1969, Ladner/Delta 1969

Shading indicates a Centennial year. Some of those museums were likely built through related funding.

within a space and time whose demarcation we share with others.”<sup>8</sup> He theorized that an individual does not create memory alone, but as part of a greater group consciousness, and that the retention of such “collective” memories lies in the shared activities of group interaction. Halbwachs examined how such interactions worked to create and retain this “collective” memory.<sup>9</sup>

Following on the work of Halbwachs, I would propose two main characteristics for construction of collective memory. First, these memories are constructed within the idea of belonging to a community (Halbwachs referred to this as the “necessity of an affective community”). Second, collective memory is reinforced through exchange that takes place within the group, or is communicated to other groups. Whether spoken or written, the re-statement of important events solidifies the group’s collective memory. Thus, collective memory is often associated with memories of traumatic events (such as the Holocaust, or war), where a city or place has been destroyed and what the community *remembers* is all that remains.

Significant to this discussion is how different theorists define what constitutes a community of memory. As well, the terms “collective memory” and “memory” are often used interchangeably within these writings, which can be confusing. It is therefore important to note that the “memory” to which they refer is the group memory, i.e., “collective” memory. Social historians like Susan A. Crane argue with Halbwach’s work, as she feels it is impossible to combine historical and collective memory. She believes that a group is only part of the construction process and sees collective memory as a “parallel narrative to past events: a conceptualization that expresses. . .the continual presence of the past.”<sup>10</sup>

The differences between collective and historical memory mark the separation between lived experience and the preservation of lived experience. . .rather than marking. . .two forms of historical consciousness. Collective memory is also

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<sup>8</sup>Maurice Halbwachs, The Collective Memory, Translation by Francis J. Ditter, (New York, London: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), 54.

<sup>9</sup>Halbwachs, The Collective Memory, 80.

<sup>10</sup>Susan A. Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” American Historical Review 102 (December 1997): 1373.

the framework in which historical remembering occurs.<sup>11</sup>

Crane refers to the work of historian Yosef Yerushalmi, who saw collective memory as selective and suppressive, not a benign process but one that too often supplants cultural tradition and identity.<sup>12</sup> Crane also considers the influence (through the *Annales* school of history in the early 1970's) of philosopher/historian Pierre Nora's idea of memory "sites: fixed, externalized locations -from objects to places- of. . .an internalized, social collective memory." Nora asserted that collective memory becomes frozen within such sites, and is "besieged" by history, which changes the natural flow of collective memory to a preservation of memory in historical ways, museums, memorials, and anniversaries.<sup>13</sup> Crane aims to deconstruct our representation of collective memory experiences, especially the role of historians speaking for the past through the written work. This latter point is particularly significant to the analysis of community-based museums. Crane urges that we acknowledge both the activities and the individuals determining that collective remembering. Furthermore, she sees this acknowledgment as an important point of access, allowing for the interpretation of collective memory by those who hold it. Such acknowledgment is visible in two of the case studies: in Kamloops, when the recording secretary notes how historic the meetings are, and in Saanich, where the recording of the meeting is as vital as the meeting itself.

In contrast, cultural historian David Gross sees collective memory as part of social knowledge, and the practice of retaining that which is useful.<sup>14</sup> Gross believes that preservation of collective memory occurs through societal traditions or by institutional bodies. This group decides the "charge" or effect a memory is to have, and that memory's specific valuation.<sup>15</sup> He points out that while socially constructed collective memory is an important "cohesive agent" for society, we must take care to see such memories as carefully

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<sup>11</sup>Crane, "Writing the Individual Back," 1380.

<sup>12</sup>Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York, 1989) cited in Crane, "Writing the Individual Back," 1380.

<sup>13</sup>Crane, "Writing the Individual Back," 1381.

<sup>14</sup>Gross, *Lost Time*, 77.

<sup>15</sup>Gross, *Lost Time*, 78.

monitored by society. There must be a notion of limits and boundaries at work in such memory construction; it is part of the interaction of groups. This creation of limits on collective memory is clearly visible in the case studies, particularly in the example of the Saanich Pioneer Society, and its membership rules.

Control of the telling of collective memory is important, as is the resulting representation of history. In his overview of the uses of collective memory within cultural history, Alon Confino notes how “many studies of the past are content to describe the representation of the past without bothering to explore the transmission, diffusion and . . . meaning of this representation.”<sup>16</sup> Confino sees the study of collective memory as more than just a method, but as a useful means to provide a clear view of past cultures. In his view, these studies increase our awareness of how identity is shared, and especially, reveal the “different issues and motivations” of people in the past. However, Confino warns against isolating studies of collective memory from a global historical context and symbology; if we look to collective memory for evidence, we should be careful to place it within its greater frameworks.<sup>17</sup>

Seeking further frameworks, social historian Iwona Irwin-Zareck finds collective memory located not only in the minds of individuals, but in the resources they share: “we all make sense of the past with the help of a whole variety of resources. . .public offerings that are a mix of presences and absences.”<sup>18</sup> Museums are part of those “public offerings.” Irwin-Zareck is interested in the construction of our “engagements with the past.”<sup>19</sup> She believes that groups establish boundaries for identity through the sharing of collective memories, and the social act of verbally sharing those memories creates and extends the memory:

not as a collection of. . .some magically constructed reservoir

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<sup>16</sup>Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” American Historical Review 102 ( December 1997): 1395.

<sup>17</sup>Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History,” 1390-1.

<sup>18</sup>Iwona Irwin-Zareck, Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 4.

<sup>19</sup>Irwin-Zareck, Frames of Remembrance, 9.

of ideas and images, but rather as a socially articulated and socially maintained “reality” of the past. . .the most basic and accessible means for memory articulation and maintenance: talk. These “communities of memory” often outlive the actual sharing of experience.<sup>20</sup>

Community-based organizations are such “communities of memory.” Through the conversation and recording of what is spoken by their members during meetings, and through the dialectic exchange that takes place in displays, as well as other museum functions such as education, collections, and research, a constructed collective memory is created, and continued.

The origins of community museums can also be examined within a wider scholarly context of narrative. The idea that somewhere there exists a story of set and definable truths that can narrate our historical past is strong in Western society.<sup>21</sup> Historical museums in particular were seen as repositories of traditional narratives, or as Hayden White proposed, greater “meta-narratives.”<sup>22</sup> The validity of these narratives is visible in the conventions of time and chronology within museums, in the ordering of collections, and the ordering of the knowledge displayed. Community museums’ internal spaces reveal how “the visitor’s experience of a museum may be understood as a narrative in space, the structure. . .governed by the spatial organization of the museum itself.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, as the case studies will show, community-based museums embraced an ideology of chronology in their architecture, building separate rooms or alcoves for separate periods, and sometimes completely new locations as the terms of their “collective memory” construction changed. New buildings, often proposed as needed for more space, were also needed to support the expanding collective memory. As well, buildings were spaces for the ritual practices of telling collective memory -- museum boards and committees met inside these spaces.

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<sup>20</sup>Irwin-Zareck, Frames of Remembrance, 52-55.

<sup>21</sup>As posed by Hayden White, or Robert Berkhofer, for example.

<sup>22</sup>Hayden White, Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 1-25.

<sup>23</sup>Roger Silverton, quoted in Sharon McDonald, The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 8.

The actual transmission of message through exhibits and interpretation to visitors has always relied deeply on narrative frameworks. It is not coincidental that these museums grew in number as immigration was on the rise. In many ways, community-based museums were bulwarks for retaining identity, and for the restriction and prejudices of race, ethnicity and gender. The pioneer story, for example, is common in B.C.'s community museums. In Saanich, it included notions of pioneers' "hard work" and "perseverance," a support on which personal and family stories could be placed. Greater narratives are often visible in displays, such as in the careful groupings of historical period in the Kamloops Museum. The finer constructions of gender become particularly visible in the example of the Langley Centennial Museum. Many other community museums echoed the prejudices of scientific systems of order, i.e., salvage ethnology, archeology, or natural science. Such frameworks often excluded certain groups; stories of other ethnicities, say Chinese immigrants or First Nations (beyond the archeological) did not fit into narratives of white pioneers or the British Empire. These groups' use of set narrative frameworks also helped to erect hegemonic borders.

These adopted narrative frameworks became a part of museum purposes and practice, yet are not always acknowledged as part of a community-based museum's narrative origins. The panels of text which guided the visitors' interpretations first went through a mesh of curatorial and museum narratives, with "the assumptions, rationales and compromises and accidents. . . [being] tidied away with the cleaning equipment."<sup>24</sup> An exhibit's message must negotiate for itself, translate to the viewer through the devices of museum exhibitions: text, form and chosen objects. It is like the children's circle game of "pass the message," where the original message whispered in the first person's ear will be a very different one after it has gone all the way around the circle.

Within the community-based museum, the game has been played for so long that often the original message is misunderstood, muted, or even forgotten. As we see in the civic hopes of the Kamloops Museum, some museums maintained narratives rooted in ideas of

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<sup>24</sup>McDonald, *The Politics of Display*, 2.

progress and modernity, believing that if one could better understand the past, one could therefore present it far more “accurately.” As Sharon MacDonald comments: “the museum [was] not . . . merely a product of or a site for displaying the narratives of modern developments, it is also *one of the technologies through which* modernity . . . [was] constituted.”<sup>25</sup> [italics mine]

It is important to note that such use of these frameworks was more inherited than perpetuated by museums, as they are part of an older code of narrative. As Hayden White has observed, narrative is a cultural code, a recognizable and familiar structure.<sup>26</sup> To relate history in the form of narrative implies that the actual past has a temporality, or sequence; museum exhibits supply an account with a visible, set chronology.<sup>27</sup> It also implies causality.

White noted “narration and narrativity [are] the instruments with which the conflicting claims of the imaginary and the real are mediated, arbitrated or resolved in a discourse.”<sup>28</sup> Similarly, history museums employed narrative not only as a framework but as a discourse. Viewers of museum exhibits exchanged and re-narrated the stories presented as well as observing them. This restatement occurs, for instance, when the Langley Centennial Museum, built in 1958, re-initialized the community’s connection between the Fort Langley site and a “new” museum, when the “birthplace of B.C.” narrative was extended to the new museum.

The narrative traditions of community museums can be placed within a wider context (for instance, the discourses of colonialism, embodying notions of “progress” or “pioneers versus the elements”) to provide narrative scaffolds. In early community museum displays, certain ethnicities such as First Nations or Chinese were not included, or, at best, marginalized from the dominant narratives within displays that presented them as “prehistoric” or “exotic” cultures. Recent attempts at a more inclusive viewpoint for

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<sup>25</sup>Sharon MacDonald, The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 9.

<sup>26</sup>Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” in The Content of the Form. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), 2.

<sup>27</sup>Jerome Bruner, “The Narrative Construction of Reality,” Critical Inquiry 18, no.1 (1991): 21- 24.

<sup>28</sup>White, “Value of Narrativity,” 4.

museum displays are overshadowed by these encompassing narrative themes. Contemporary exhibits may endeavour to work from minority ethnic viewpoints (by including ethnic groups and leaders in the planning) or attempt to reframe history outside conventional discourses. However, such efforts often still posit the reframing *against* the meta-narrative of colonialism.<sup>29</sup> In addition, an agenda to control the construction of cultural identity is embedded in such museums. An important facet of colonialism was its reconstruction of race and nation, and the overlaying of existing indigenous cultures with the values of the colonizer. Collections and displays were like permanently blazed trails through the culture of the other, as in the collections of the British Museum, representing conquests and colony. Observing the ambivalence and indeterminacy of identity within colonial discourse, Homi Bhabha noted that: “such a discourse. . .is an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/ historical differences.”<sup>30</sup> Mahmood Madami also noted how a colonized population tried to adapt the institutions of the colonial era to post-colonial purposes, echoing how colonial powers “privileged the customary” and simply re-employed colonial practices.<sup>31</sup> Of course, most museums today, large or small, are keenly aware of this internal mirroring and strive to move beyond the boundaries of their intellectual confines. At a conference on the role of museums in post-colonial society, museum curator Amareswar Galla noted that “the immediate challenge. . .for museums is to address colonial construction of what constitutes “indigenous” along with the associated discourse of control and

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<sup>29</sup>In recent years there have been much discussion in the literature on these issues, for British Columbia see Gloria Jean Frank “That’s My Dinner on Display; A First Nations Reflection on Museum Culture,” *BC Studies*, 125-6 (2000): 163-178, and Alan Hoover, “A Response to That’s My Dinner on Display; A First Nations Reflection on Museum Culture,” *BC Studies*, 128 (2000): 65-70. See also Misao Dean, “Managing Diversity in the Representation of B. C. History: Point Ellice House and “Chinatown,” *BC Studies*, 136 (2002): 57-72.

<sup>30</sup>Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 67.

<sup>31</sup>Mahmood Mamdami, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 22.

dispossession.”<sup>32</sup> Early community museums gave little acknowledgment of ethnicity, beyond the imperialist idea of the Empire or the Commonwealth. For example, First Nations collections were only represented through a kind of salvage ethnography, the collections classified as archaeological or prehistorical.<sup>33</sup>

Community museums also present the past within such multiple frameworks, the greater hegemonic discourses of nationalism and colonialism. These frameworks *assume* a shared collective memory. Just as larger museums skilfully employed narrative as a scaffold for historical truths, and as a sieve to filter those truths, community museums lie within various strata of their local politics and power. The “local” museum is a construction of local truths. As Foucault notes, we create our own frameworks for such a grasp of reality, and “truth is centered on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions that produce it.”<sup>34</sup>

Within the ideas of collective memory is also an enactment of this rationality. Museum educator/theorist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill sees the museum as a site for knowledge and the dissemination of that knowledge, in which the division between collecting (the practice of curators) and the visitor is part of the museum’s power relations.<sup>35</sup> Hooper-Greenhill suggests that museums needed to understand their own history, and will only do so when they adapt Foucault’s approach of “rejecting the notion of continuous, smooth, progressive history.”<sup>36</sup> Like Hooper-Greenhill, many authors (such as Susan Crane) work within the boundaries of museums and historiography, but again, they focus on larger

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<sup>32</sup>Camilla Turner, ed. Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Post-Colonial Societies - Proceedings Mercury Series Paper No. 8, (Victoria: University of Victoria, Canadian Museum of Civilization and Commonwealth Association of Museums, 1996), 84-85.

<sup>33</sup>For more discussion on the dominance of such narratives, see Elizabeth Furniss, “Pioneers, Progress and the Myth of the Frontier: The Landscape of Public History in Rural British Columbia.” BC Studies 115-116 (1998): 7-44.

<sup>34</sup>Paul Rabinow, ed., The Foucault Reader ( New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 73.

<sup>35</sup>Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge (London and New York: Routledge), 1992, 8-9.

<sup>36</sup>Hooper- Greenhill, Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge, 10.

institutions. This reflects current museum practices, which too often gives the museum's role as collector precedence over other activities.

Within the professional museum community, there has been more recent debate regarding these inherited frameworks, and on the meanings of museums. Such debates do not usually include the community museum, and are centered on practice versus museum philosophy in larger institutions, and on issues of training. Some work has been done on community museums in Ontario, but these institutions started earlier than museums in B.C.<sup>37</sup> Within the museum profession there are some excellent inquiries in recent years, especially the work of Peter Vergo, Stephen Weil, and Susan Pearce.<sup>38</sup> In general, histories of museums are usually proud chronological accounts of the progress of the institution, and do not closely critique historical origins, for example M. Caygill's The Story of the British Museum, or in Canada, Archie Key's Beyond Four Walls, or Peter Corley-Smith's White Bears and Other Curiosities. . . The First 100 Years of the Royal British Columbia Museum.<sup>39</sup>

We can examine how the community museum was a symbolic drift net through its own existence, capturing and containing representations of "nation" and definitions of cultural identity past and present. Many national and provincial museums are particularly connected to reconstructions of identity, and played a supporting role in developing colonial

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<sup>37</sup>See Dorothy Duncan, "From Mausoleums to Malls: What Next? 86:2, Ontario History, (1994), 107-118, and Mary Tivy, "Museums, Visitors and the Reconstruction of the Past in Ontario," 37: Material History Review, (1993), 35-51.

<sup>38</sup>For these greater debates between museum practice and theory, see Peter Vergo, The New Museology (London and New York: Reaktion Books, 1989); Stephen Weil, A Cabinet of Curiosities: Inquiries into Museums and Their Prospects (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), and Rethinking the Museum, and Other Meditations (Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990); Susan Pearce, ed., Museums and Appropriation of Culture (Series: New Research in Museum Studies, Vol. 4. London and New Jersey: The Athlone Press, 1994), also Interpreting Objects and Collections (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>39</sup>M. Caygill, The Story of the British Museum (London: British Museum Publications, 1981), Archie F. Key, Beyond Four Walls: The Origins and Development of Canadian Museums. (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1973), Peter Corley-Smith, White Bears and Other Curiosities: The First 100 Years of the Royal British Columbia Museum (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1989).

nations. Community museums, in their origins, adopted these hierarchies, and remained post-contact relics instead of “forums for exchange of ideas.”<sup>40</sup> Community museums are a part of the project of defining and setting boundaries on national identity. Benedict Anderson once defined official nationalism as “an anticipatory strategy adopted by dominant groups which are threatened with marginalization or exclusion from an emerging nationally-imagined community.”<sup>41</sup> State-mandated museums were part of the strategy for “imagining” identity, part of the “cultural governance of the populace.”<sup>42</sup>

The decision to create and build a museum, even in a temporary form (for a rural fair or special occasion) is an act of collective memory creation and collective memory preservation. Museums, like other institutions, were part of the greater construction project of nation building, and community museums in some ways followed the same agenda. This retention and re-use of such frameworks were also part of a greater collective memory project. Many museums unintentionally remain as colonial palimpsests, with rewritten and revised displays, but little change to their greater frameworks.

Community museums also echo the influences of a distinctive and regional historical narrative unique to British Columbia. During the 1950s and 1960s several centennial celebrations prompted greater historical awareness by incorporating community histories into their celebrations. In particular, community-based museums responded to the requirements of government-funded programs and training. British Columbia saw a new wave of local museum creation and development.<sup>43</sup> These “modern” museums, although determined to improve museum practice through training in conservation, interpretation and exhibit craft,

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<sup>40</sup>George M. MacDonald, former director, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa, once famously proposed that museums should act as literal forums, like the Roman sites of political exchange, at the Canadian Museums Association Conference in Calgary in 1994.

<sup>41</sup>Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 101.

<sup>42</sup>Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 21.

<sup>43</sup>The influence of B.C.’s Centennials is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

still narrated their stories through frameworks of colonial history and national identity. They perpetuated their traditional meta-narrative, posing “new” views of history *within older frameworks*. In addition, these museums worked within noticeable influences of the provincial government. B.C.’s political and cultural history itself is marked by diverse parties and political origins. The 1950s and 1960s were years of carefully orchestrated campaigns (many around Centennial celebrations) of pageantry and historical re-enactments, supported by funding, training and “helpful tips” on writing community histories.<sup>44</sup> This cultural boosterism was part of the character of W.A.C. Bennett’s Social Credit government, in office from 1952 to 1972. Through active public campaigns, towns were encouraged to “preserve your history.” These campaigns reflected back on the colonial past and “birth of a nation” narratives, that is, B.C. as an independent, pioneer-built province, B.C. as civilization in a wilderness.<sup>45</sup> There are strong overtones of an older narrative of the West: the empty land in need of populating, the great wilderness needing a firm hand. Echoes of these motifs rang strongly in the community museum, guided not only by provincial policy but by the development of provincial umbrella organizations, such as the B.C. Historical Federation (1925) and the B.C. Museums Association (1959).

The three case studies chosen for this research portray several levels of community identity and the intent of collective memory construction. The Saanich Pioneer Museum is an example of how collective memory is literally a physical construction. The Saanich Pioneer Society had deep roots in belonging, represented by the layering of collective memory and identity, literally log by log, into a building that was both a shrine and a site of memory. Chapter 1, “The Saanich Pioneer Museum: A Community’s ‘Hall of Memory’,” examines the building and collective memory created by the Saanich Pioneers, a small group, tied together by family and close friendship within a rural community, trying to retain their understanding of identity within a rapidly changing greater context.

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<sup>44</sup>BC Archives, GR 1448, 1958 Centennial Committee, Project Files, pamphlet, “Helpful Tips on Celebrating the Centennial.”

<sup>45</sup>British Columbia Archives, GR 1448, British Columbia 1958 Centennial Committee, Project files.

The second chapter, “Civic Memory and Civic Identity” looks at the origins of the Kamloops Museum Association. This chapter analyses how the museum conformed to ideas of civic identity. In Kamloops, historical narratives were fixed on a matrix of a small city’s yearnings to be recognized within greater provincial economies, and the museum’s collective memory as part of the civic spectacle of belonging. Chapter 3, “Local Memory and National History”, a case study of the Langley Centennial Museum, shows the dichotomies between local collective memory and national memory. We trace how that museum was nearly lost to the currents of provincial and national meta-narratives of Canadian identity. Langley’s museum was also a narrative of belonging, but was set within broader identities, and the strong influence of local and rural understandings. This chapter will also look at the influence of the 1958 British Columbia Centennial, and how collective memory was “rescued” through a centennial project. The Langley Centennial Museum was also a strong example of the endurance and strength of collective memory projects.

These three museums were chosen for several practical reasons—the availability of records, the ages of the museums and the evidence and influences visible on governing groups or societies. Certainly there is the knowledge that region and geography, so important to B.C.’s history, played a strong role in museum development and characters. For example, Saanich is close to the capital city of Victoria and developed within a milieu of provincial government influence. Kamloops was, historically, an area well-scoured by ethnographers and early archaeologists resulting in a wealth of collections, and again, provincial attention. Langley was always, as that chapter details, an important iconographic site for British Columbia historical narrative and writings. Yet these three case studies are within the southern third of B.C. Had it been possible to include a northern museum as case study, factors of isolation, differing politics and other regional influences would probably have been apparent. There is therefore an argument here for a larger, more encompassing study. This thesis does not intend to encompass the whole province, nor does it seek to represent the full range of its community-based museums, nor does it cover related institutions such as cultural centres and heritage sites. Given the current heavy workloads for community -museum staff,

the information and access provided by each facility to this research were most generous.

The three case studies show that community-based museums, especially in their formative years, worked to create collective memory through socialization, interaction, memorabilia, commemorations and celebrations, and through representational means in the styles of their museum buildings. Community belonging was vital to museum creation as was the creation, enactment, and the ongoing performance of collective memory. There are many vital and important intersections between theories of collective memory and B.C.'s community-based museums as representations and constructions of local history.

**Chapter 2**  
**The Saanich Pioneer Museum:**  
**A Community's "Hall of Memory"<sup>1</sup>**

The Saanich Pioneer Society Museum was imagined, planned, and constructed both as a building for the preservation of objects, and as a metaphorical home for a series of constructed memories. In the 1920s, the Society began to build the foundations for more than a museum, it also outlined the boundaries for a continuing project of collective memory. The building itself was a vital element in the safeguarding of memory. The Saanich Pioneer Society and its Museum are valuable testaments to the meaning of community for a small but significant group of people. They placed their personal stories of identity, family genealogy, community interaction and socialization within this lattice of collective historical memory, encased in the strong mythology of pioneer testimony. The idea of the "pioneer" as a hard-working conqueror of adversity and sufferer of hardship was deeply entrenched throughout North America.

Members of the Saanich Pioneer Society sought out this story of identity through memorializing their personal family histories as "pioneers" and "children of pioneers." These constructions - of a building, and of a specialized collective memory - took place within a small and narrowly defined community. Such collective memory also developed within a distinctive time and place, the 1920s and 1930s when the area was still largely rural. The Society was a distinct group that saw itself as both a significant carrier and the local authority for the community's history and memories. This assertiveness of the authority to remember echoes Benedict Anderson's theories of the nation-state as an "imagined community . . . a community . . . conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship."<sup>2</sup>

The beginnings of this "imagined" community are available within a unique and rich source: the detailed written minutes of the Society. The museum, that still exists, provides

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<sup>1</sup> Sub-title of Victoria Daily Colonist article, 2 July 1933, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 7.

Collective memory, then, is not just a practice of recalling but an enactment of belonging. The Saanich Pioneer Museum embodies a paradigm about the creation of such memory. Such memories are also influenced by the group process. The Society also worked to create collective memory through representational means, in the museum building. While the museum building was an actual shelter, where the physical purpose was to protect inhabitants and belongings, the building was also to be a shelter for identity. A museum can house the physical representations of collective memories.

A broad range of literature theorizes about museums as bases of power and authority. Tony Bennett writes fluently about the orders and hierarchies inherent to museum practice: collections, categories and the notions of the representations of truths. He proposes that museums act as authorities of information and more importantly, as representations of power for the nation state.<sup>4</sup> It is doubtful that the Saanich Pioneer Society saw itself as any kind of authority for anything more than its region and local understandings. Its members saw this historical authority as part of their inheritance of “pioneer status”.

Collective memory relates to these constructions of power in a manner similar to the interaction between text and context. Memory is the text, and the museum is the context into which that memory is placed. In his perusal of collective memory, David Gross notes the museum is a “memory-intensive site. . . stressing the past over the present.”<sup>5</sup> He sees hope for the collective memory when museums examine the representations of the past within their displays rather than seeing themselves as communicators of an actual past. When they see the past they display as constructed, museums can better acknowledge *their* own histories.

However, as noted earlier, the historiography of museums in roles of historic power and authority has neglected the smaller, community-based museum. The assumption that the

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<sup>4</sup>Tony Bennett, The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 193-198.

<sup>5</sup>David Gross, Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 110.

small museum was an attempt at imitation did not hold true in Saanich. The Saanich Pioneer Society consciously chose a pioneer-style log cabin rather than, say, a less-expensive and more impressively modern cement and stucco building.<sup>6</sup> They chose an architecture evocative of the period they wished to historicize: the simple log structure they could associate with as “pioneer,” a lone house, a homemade building, yet also made “properly” - sturdy and comfortable. These choices for the external shell also reflect inner understandings of the collective memory they wished to preserve and build. The founders of the Saanich Pioneer Society wanted to reestablish, or at least memorialize, their sense of order and authority in their greater community. We could qualify this rural community museum as a novelty. It was a reconstruction of a popular vernacular architecture, a fur trade cabin facade on the outside, and the embodiment of an imagined pioneer myth on the inside.

The Saanich Pioneer Society existed in a distinct time and place. Saanich in the 1920s and 1930s was rural, an area of large commercial farms and smaller family operations, with a sparse population and low density.<sup>7</sup> People connected through their relationships to the land. In introducing *Beyond the City Limits*, Ruth Sandwell commented on how “the ways in which people ordered their individual, family and community identity on the basis of specific relations to their rural environment provide us with a view of the creation of rural cultures.” Sandwell notes how the idea of “rural” defines characteristic relations of power in such areas. Yet in most histories, rural identities are often defined by comparison to urban understandings, not by their inherent qualities. Sandwell suggests that behaviours and interactions in the important issues of identity, agency and power were distinctive in rural

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<sup>6</sup>This choice was more in homage to the pre-existing idea of the pioneers than reflective of local settlement. They chose a round-log style more typical of eastern Canada; rough-squared timber buildings were the historic norm for this area. However, locally, there was one example, a gas station at Elk Lake built in 1924 was made of rounded logs, the “Log Cabin Service Station.” In Jennifer Barr, *Saanich Heritage Structures: An Inventory* (Saanich: Corporation of the District of Saanich, 1991), 93.

<sup>7</sup>Saanich in this era is characterized as a “pioneer” in several “local histories” and anecdotal accounts. For example, see Betty Bell, *The Fair Land: Saanich*. (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1996), 82.

areas, not just an imitation of the urban.<sup>8</sup> This is vital when we look at identity and power structures around the pioneer society and its meaning in the space.

Sandwell notes two hallmarks of rural society: a tendency toward “erasure of conflict and change” and an emphasis on commonalities.<sup>9</sup> The vital importance of belonging to groups and societies is a distinctive characteristic of rural life; fairs and societies are an important part of interaction. People are separated by distance, although roads and the telephones were in good order in Saanich by this time, and meetings and societies are the main place of interaction and of socialization. Such meetings were also useful for direct exchange of information and skills. By the 1920s, organizations that promoted social good or annual events were common and useful to rural living. Much of the construction of collective memory took place in such spheres of community interaction. This time, often referred to as the “Interwar” years, was also distinct. Losses in the community, particularly of sons due both to war and a changing economy may have been part of the impetus to start a Pioneer Society, and to memorialize a way of life threatened and deeply disturbed by world events.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, the Society built its museum during the Great Depression. Although its minutes make no direct mention of economic troubles, it was a time when community effort and interchange were unusually important, and people needed social interaction to help cope with growing uncertainty.

Of course, the museum was not the first important marker and significant part of the history of Saanich, that honour belongs to the Saanich Agricultural Fair, organized by the North and South Saanich Agricultural Society, which was founded in 1868. The objectives of this fair were “to encourage the activities of the farm, garden and home, and social life,” through an annual gathering “of farmers, residents, and . . . all those interested in the country

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<sup>8</sup>Ruth Sandwell, Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 12-13.

<sup>9</sup>Sandwell, Beyond the City Limits, 19.

<sup>10</sup>Bell, The Fair Land, 18.

life of the Peninsula.”<sup>11</sup> The Society drew up a formal constitution in 1873, securing five acres of land for \$70.00 from a Mr. Henry Simpson, and built a permanent Agricultural Hall in 1875. This first society was obviously the organizational root of the later Pioneer Society and there was overlap in the families involved. For example, Alexander McDonald, and Fred Turgoose were members of the Fair board from 1925 onward.<sup>12</sup> Richard Nimmo was the Saanich Fair’s convenor and Mrs. Nimmo held the title of “Lady Directorate”(sic) and head caterer. The Fair was the primary connection and main interaction for much of the community. It is not surprising that these same families appear on the register of the Pioneer Society at its first meeting. Their authority over and sense of responsibility for the local history was constructed through belonging.

The Pioneer Society grew out of the long-running Fair. Notes and local historical pamphlets claim that an earlier Pioneer group or society existed as early as the 1880s, but there was no activity until the 1920s.<sup>13</sup> This reflected an increasing awareness of history at a provincial level. Local historical societies appeared in rural British Columbia after the creation of the B.C. Historical Society in 1922. As Chad Reimer notes, these local “historians” typically had links to natural history societies and historic societies, and organizations such as the “Native Sons.”<sup>14</sup> In the early 1920s the Provincial Archives (established 1908) and Provincial Museum (1898)<sup>15</sup> were particularly active, and apparently

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<sup>11</sup>Stuart G. Stoddart, History of the Saanich Fair (Saanich: North and South Saanich Agricultural Society, 1968), 4.

<sup>12</sup>All were later in board positions of the Saanich Pioneer Society. Stoddart, History of the Saanich Fair, 37-39.

<sup>13</sup>This mentioned in several secondary sources, such as Stoddart and Virgin, and in the Pioneer Museum’s current brochure. However, no direct mention is made of this in the minutes.

<sup>14</sup>Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Idea of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914 cited in Chad Reimer, ““Provincial in Name Only:” the Great Birthday Debate of 1926, British Columbia Historical News, 35 (Winter 2001): 3. See also Chad Reimer, “The Making of British Columbia History: Historical Writing and Institutions, 1784-1958” (Ph. D. diss., York University. 1995).

<sup>15</sup>First created in 1886, the museum gained its first real home in 1898, in the Legislature’s east wing. Peter Corley-Smith, White Bears and Other Curiosities: The First 100 Years of the Royal British Columbia Museum (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1989).

had contacts with the Saanich Agricultural Fair Society.<sup>16</sup> There was ongoing communication with the Provincial Archives and the B.C. Historical Society.

For example, the discussion of the annual picnic in 1926 included a request to “forward the names of those Eligible” for a pioneer reunion in Victoria.<sup>17</sup> In March 1928, the group contacted Mr. John Hosie, the Provincial Librarian to ask that he provide information that would be relevant. While there is no copy of the letter, in September 1929, the minutes note discussion of a questionnaire for collecting records of pioneer families.<sup>18</sup> This mention of provincial links may indicate some envy at the progress of the South Saanich Division which apparently had formed a separate chapter of the B.C. Historical Society, and had secured a “Mr. Hartley, as stenographer from the Provincial Library, to take notes at two meetings of [its] pioneers.”

Other forces were also at work. Reimer comments on “the massive influx of immigrants to the province through the late Victoria and early Edwardian eras” and an aim to cultivate within the “newcomers” a strong attachment to the province’s history, or perception of it.<sup>19</sup> In the early 1920s there was a significant change to the rural life of Saanich farmers as three railway lines become defunct. Gravel roads were paved, and travel routes out to the peninsula increased. An agricultural pamphlet, “Saanich: Which is to say ‘The Fair Land,’” described the “ideal” climate and “upward of one hundred miles of fine roads, of which not less than one quarter are finished . . . with hard-surface pavement.”<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the population was declining. For example, the number of pupils in the local Saanichton school was dropped steadily through the 1920s, perhaps as families moved to

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<sup>16</sup>Reimer, “Provincial in Name Only,” 3.

<sup>17</sup>British Columbia Archives, (hereafter BCA) Minutes of the Saanich Pioneer Society, MS 2538, (hereafter SPS Minutes) 1924-1939: 20 March 1924, 10.

<sup>18</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 25 September 1929, 47.

<sup>19</sup>Reimer, “Provincial in Name Only,” 3.

<sup>20</sup>BCA, Pamphlet, “Saanich: Which is to say the Fair Land,” ca.1921.

urban areas for different work opportunities.<sup>21</sup> Saanich was changing, and modernizing, so it was likely that the Pioneer Society formed as partial resistance to these modern influences, and a further resolve to strengthen the perceived group identity.

The Saanich Pioneer Society did not initially set out to construct a collective memory or a hall to enshrine it. These members joined together as a group to create and promote a sense of belonging. However, to do so, they began an important process of social interaction, notation and enactment of local stories and understandings about their past, which reveal a grander story important to the notion of collective memory. This interaction took place first within the meetings, and later within the activity of planning, building, and furnishing a museum.

The history of these important interactions was recorded in the minutes, a few ledgers kept today in the Provincial Archives. The minutes of the society are a record of the Society's activity, and are in themselves a physical testament to how this "pioneer memory" is defined and delineated. Penned almost exclusively by one individual, Richard E. Nimmo, these minutes contain more than just the bare bones of the meetings' discussions.<sup>22</sup> They are rich in quiet commentary and marginalia with some minutes crossed carefully out and some occasionally rewritten for clarity. The minutes contain information on motions, recommendations, anecdotes, commentary, comedy, and constructions and reconstructions of past events. They were, however, meant to be concise, properly ordered to the form of Robert's Rules for meetings, and so motions were carefully recorded, and seconds noted. They are usually signed off by a president or other officer. The book itself is a business ledger (probably from the turn of the century by its binding), which has most likely been put

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<sup>21</sup>Province Of British Columbia, Sessional Papers, Public Schools: Reports of Superintendent for Rural Municipality Schools for 1920, 1924, 1927, 1930, 1934. Students enrollment for the Saanichton school declined as follows , in 1920: 56 , 1924: 39, 1927: 44, 1930: 28 , 1934: 20. These decreasing figures are echoed in neighbouring schools such as West Saanich and North Saanich.

<sup>22</sup>The first few meetings were recorded by E.A. John. BCA, SPS Minutes, December 1923, 1-3.

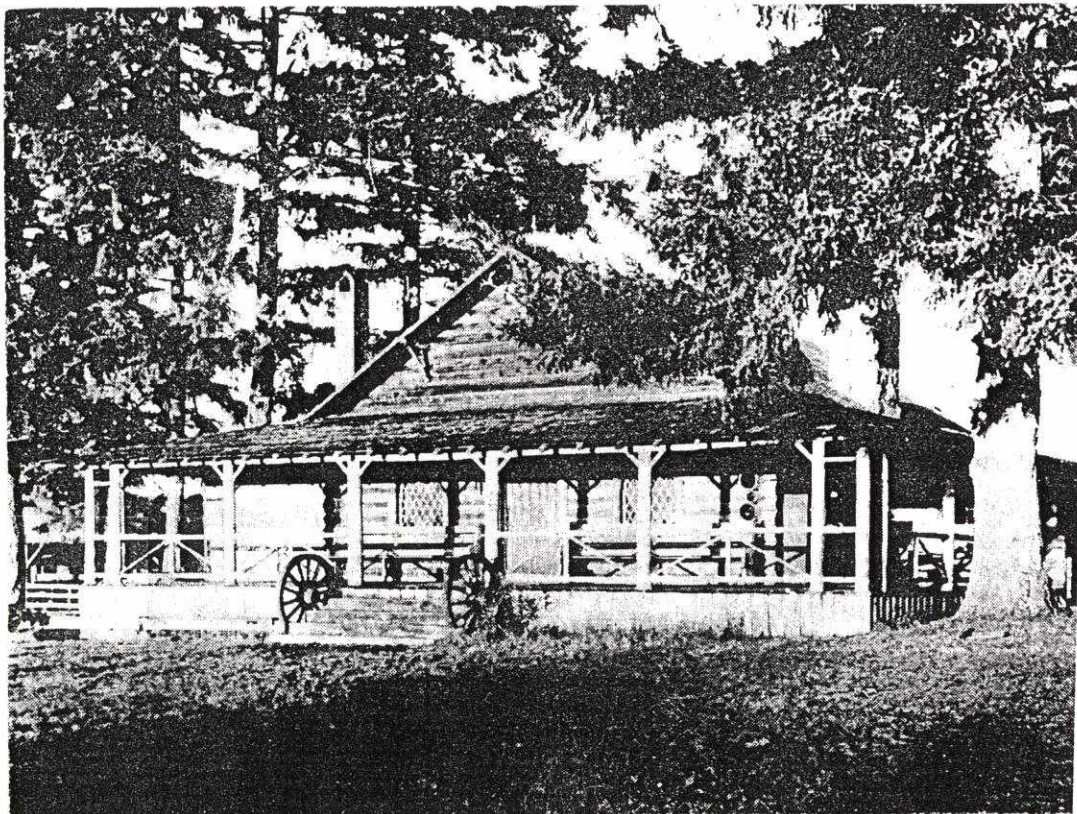


Figure 1. The Saanich Pioneer Museum ca.1958  
RoundUp cover, no. 3, July 1961.  
(By permission: British Columbia Museums Association)

to use as a properly “old” book in which to write the historic notes of a historic society. So even the encompassing form of the written text is a careful framing of collective memory. The Society was formed for collection of historical information, followed by planning and construction of what was later known as the “Log Cabin” museum (See Figure 1). However, the building was also a *physical* representation of the underlying project to construct a collective memory of origin, belonging, and memorialization of a group. The collective memory constructed was valid not so much in its “accuracy,” but in its reflection of the group’s needs and desires to be remembered, to have meaning put to their parents’ ways of life, and to preserve an understanding. It was a project of memory construction.

The early meetings of the Society were characterized by the delineation of membership, a “who belongs” stage. This took up much of the initial meetings and formed a powerful demonstration of how collective memory is structured within a sense of ownership and authority. A sense of genealogy was another steady thread throughout the meetings. Mention was often made of who is the son or daughter of an old pioneer family, or how a decision “was fitting” as a member was “the wife of the first white child born.”<sup>23</sup> Race was not noticeably present, except by its omission. Significant First Nations populations inhabited the Saanich peninsula, and although their numbers were somewhat diminished by the 1920s, they were still present. Those identified as Society members were (at least visibly) white European descendants, even though diverse ethnic groups, albeit in small numbers, resided on the peninsula.<sup>24</sup> This creation and emphasis of genealogy was not only an attempt to establish authority or importance, it was also a reassurance of the privilege, and of the belonging of certain individuals in the naming and creation of collective memory and history. It was an important notation and part of the character of the “pioneer” identity.

Another significant part of the enactment of this collective memory was a concern

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<sup>23</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes , 12 June 1933, 136.

<sup>24</sup>See introduction and the mention of “black pioneers” in Stuart G Stoddart, History of the Saanich Fair (Saanich: North and South Saanich Agricultural Society, 1968), 3.

with the parameters of membership. As Crane suggested, the perception and establishment of belonging was vital. The “Pioneer Club” strove to be composed of only those who could be identified as true “pioneers,” defined as members of a family that had lived within the area for more than twenty-five years.<sup>25</sup> Here also were the beginnings of the pioneer testament, the establishment of “founding families.” However, this aim ran into difficulty almost immediately, and the membership restrictions had to be amended. A “Membership Roll” was recorded of ninety-three names, plus several “honourable [honorary] Members,” although there no detail of exactly what this actually meant.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, although not of a pioneer family himself, the secretary and author of the minutes, Richard Nimmo was granted an “honorary genealogy” though his marriage to one of the daughters of William McKenzie “the second white man to settle in Saanich” and “the first real farmer in Saanich.”<sup>27</sup> However, Nimmo’s family could not join until the residency rule was reduced to twenty-five from thirty-five years. We can only wonder if Nimmo saw himself as a part of the group, initially, or as an outsider and recorder? Incredibly, Nimmo remained as secretary and an active member of the Society until 1959, so it is hard to say when he became a member in their understandings (See Figure 2). Still, his case points to the fact that the boundaries of this belonging were sometimes flexible.<sup>28</sup>

Gender was also at work. In 1926, Ladies’ and Men’s committees were formed.

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<sup>25</sup>This name only endures for the first two meetings, after that, the minutes are titled “Saanich Pioneer Society.”

<sup>26</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes 22 November 1923, 3, 6.

<sup>27</sup>Victor Virgin, History of North and South Saanich Pioneer and District (Saanich Pioneer Society 1985, 3<sup>rd</sup> printing), 14, 78.

<sup>28</sup>Richard Erskine Nimmo is a relative latecomer to Saanich in the early 1900s. However, his claim as pioneer was staked by a complex genealogy. Nimmo married Lilith Evelyn McKenzie, daughter of Alexander McKenzie. Alexander McKenzie had married Annie Sluggett, and she in turn was the daughter of a true “early” pioneer - John Sluggett. Sluggett was president of the Agricultural Fair in the 1890s, and ran a post office. Nimmo was a road foreman for the Municipality of Saanich for 37 years. He was famous for building an eccentric dwelling called the Stone House entirely of rocks taken from his land and from road projects. Interestingly, Nimmo helped run depression road work projects for Saanich, and may have been able to use his influence in the building of the museum. He is often pictured working on the building (see figure 2).

Their duties echoes the rural divisions of labour, and the resulting collective memory creation reflected these roles. For example, men held the officer positions and introduced motions in the minutes, but women often seconded them, allowing a gentle masking of who might actually be behind a decision. Women also arranged the catering and organization of the picnics, dances and socials. The men's roles in social affairs appeared to be formal approval of any plans and setting fees. Discussions of the building of the museum were in the men's domain, while the collection of information was relegated to women.

The Pioneer Society minutes start with the record of the first meeting on March 16, 1923, at the Turgoose residence. Recorded as present were: Alex Thomson, Richard Thomson, MacIntyre Dean, William Derriwberg, Eduard Marcotte, Fred Turgoose, William D. Michell and E.H. John. All were identified as being "of pioneer families."<sup>29</sup> Two resolutions were recorded, first that the name "be the Saanich Pioneer Club," and secondly, "that the qualification necessary for membership should be that of having been on the Saanich peninsula in 1886 or earlier [i.e. 35 years or more]."<sup>30</sup> These first minutes also stated that

the object of the club will be to promote Sociability among its members, to Preserve all records of early days and cherish the memory of the pioneers of Saanich Peninsula and they would [hold] a social reunion twice Annually<sup>31</sup>

The idea that the collective memory would be "cherished" was a visible symbol of the importance of collective memory to this group.

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<sup>29</sup> Their claims seem valid. Fred Turgoose, for example, was the son of an early farmer, William Turgoose who came to Saanich in the 1860s (d.1885). W. Turgoose also ran a post office in the district. For some members, this society would seem to be a retirement project. Fred Turgoose was about 60 years old at the time of this first meeting. Willam Brethour was also in his 60's. However, there were also family connections: Michell was Turgoose's brother-in-law, and in his 40's. McDonald, Marcotte and Thomson, and E.H. John also were sons or son-in-laws of earlier "pioneer" farmers. See Virgin, History of North and South Saanich.

<sup>30</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 16 March 1923, 2.

<sup>31</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 22 November 1923, 3.



Figure 2. Richard E. Nimmo at work on porch of museum  
2010 - 47 (By permission: Saanich Pioneer Museum Archives)

By the spring of 1924, the organization was planning social events and urging its members to participate in a Pioneer Reunion in Victoria. These social events represented the strengthening of the Society's collective purpose and enhanced their project of collective memory enacted continuously. They met in March, planning a summer picnic (which took place in early June), and again in October. Details of anniversaries and birthdays, deaths and local difficulties were often recorded in the minutes for many years, and were part of the process of holding collective memory.<sup>32</sup> By 1926, bylaws were established, and new officers recorded.

Although discussion of the annual pioneer picnic, and later, a fall dance, occupied the early meetings, a greater emphasis on gathering information was emerging. In March 1928, members asked Mr. Hosie, Provincial Librarian, to "furnish all available data of a historical nature . . . to be used in the compilation of [a] history." In addition, John Martindale suggested forming a historical committee on the earliest settlers to "secure historical data while there is still time."<sup>33</sup> Respect for age was an important consideration. Not only was much worth accorded to earliest, or "oldest" pioneers, but their needs were carefully considered. At the fall meeting in 1928, the historical committee took care to arrange "a get-together banquet . . . for the older pioneer who didn't care for the dance."<sup>34</sup>

The collective memory project gained further momentum with the formation of the historical committee. It collected data, apparently through visits from members, talked about the compilation of a reference book, and planned a questionnaire "after an exhaustive discussion. . .for the purpose of collecting records of the Pioneer and their experiences." So important was this questionnaire that another meeting was convened in October to discuss its distribution and to draft a covering letter. Still, reflecting the important emphasis on

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<sup>32</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 11 March 1930, 56, or 24 August 1930, 71. This practice continues. See also 24 August 1934; 157, 6 June 1938, 188.

<sup>33</sup> BCA, SPS Minutes, 17 March 1928, 33.

<sup>34</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 10 November 1928, 4.

exchange, a “very pleasant” social hour followed.<sup>35</sup> The need to establish historical authority was also evident, for example when the Municipality tried to modernize its road names. The committee urged that a strong appeal be made to Saanich Council to restore the “old names,” in other words, the names of pioneer families. Nimmo’s position as road foreman may also explain the concern. The historical committee was given charge of this recurring matter. Causes such as these characterized the sub-text of meetings for several years, and represent how collective memory had to be focussed, and issues revisited and restated.

The next few years of meetings were mainly characterized by the collecting and sharing of information. The collective memory creation project was well under way, and continued to be characterized by belonging, that is, by establishing genealogical links and artifacts associated with pioneer families. Other projects continued; Alex McDonald said that the time was “propitious” to have the early history of the Saanich Churches written.<sup>36</sup> Mr. Turgoose was asked to compile a history of the earlier schools.<sup>37</sup> At the 1931 Annual June picnic, Nimmo read family histories “aloud to the group’s delight.”<sup>38</sup> Photographs of women “living in Saanich prior to 1880 were to be collected.” Fred Turgoose discussed his enjoyment of John Hosie’s book “Overland in ‘69” and hinted at writing a book himself.<sup>39</sup>

The first discussion of the need for a building revolved around the need for a space to house historical objects. Nimmo noted the

discussion of Henry Brethour’s talk on collecting implements and other relics [that are] so fast disappearing. [They could be exhibited] in some public space to show the younger generation the tools and utensils their forebarers (*sic*) had [and] to store any antiques we might be able to collect. . .<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 25 September 1929, 47.

<sup>36</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 1 October 1929, 50.

<sup>37</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 3 June 1932, 98.

<sup>38</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 3 June 1932, 98.

<sup>39</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 1 October 1929, 51.

<sup>40</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 9 May 1930, 67.

The decision to build a museum was, in one way, a practicality. For one thing, the meeting places in use belonged to other groups. This interfered with the group's sense of belonging and membership. In March 1931, Secretary Nimmo reported on "the advisability of taking over the old Institute Hall . . . for a meeting place." After some thought, the group deemed the building "not worthwhile."<sup>41</sup> Furthermore although it was never directly stated, there must have been issues of ownership over the "pioneer memory" as the group sought to establish authority. With the prominence of the Agricultural Fair (well known both in the community and within B.C.), the Pioneer Society most likely sought ownership over memorialization. Gross's idea of valuation was also at work. By seeking their own building, the Society members were establishing a physical presence, and increased the value of their collective memory work. A building of their own would give them equal footing with the activities of the Fair.<sup>42</sup>

At the fall 1932 meeting, the Society discussed President McDonald's idea to build a Pioneer Hall

from many angles. One suggestion was that each Pioneer family provide a log for the building to be named for them . . . the bottom logs to represent the earliest families, [and] the logs . . . placed in the order of the arrival in Saanich of the respective families.<sup>43</sup>

This exciting proposition was only the start of a flurry of meetings and activity. Within a few days the Society created building committees and quickly put resolutions and clauses in place. Soon meetings were held once a week to make decisions and order work along. In the actuality of planning for a physical space, there were intersections of other valuations: negotiations for the site with the Agricultural society, searches for materials, and ways to raise funds. Partly to raise funds, but also to establish a greater community presence,

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<sup>41</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 20 March 1931, 78.

<sup>42</sup>Gross, *Lost Time*, 77.

<sup>43</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 19 November 1932, 100.

a dance was set for early December 1932.

One can't question the very real intensity of effort that took place planning the building. This period was a high point of collective memory exchange, and created an important focus for the Society. Yet this focus was created within social interactions. The meeting on appointing a committee for the building was so intense that before it ended, Nimmo's cocker spaniel puppy "chewed the cuffs of both legs of [L.B. Hagan's] trousers before he was aware of it."<sup>44</sup>

Ownership emerged as an important part of the planning. The discussions, which centred around how the building should be constructed and how the Society would stay involved in the work, reveal the importance of links to other groups, and the establishment of links and boundaries with other related societies.<sup>45</sup> Through a carefully worded motion, the committee ensured that in the event of a dissolution of the Pioneer Society, ownership should revert to the Agricultural Fair. They also outlined careful motions for use of the hall: it would be primarily for members and its use could not conflict with the Fair or other societies.<sup>46</sup> This careful delineation of boundaries also supports Irwin-Zareck's notion of "socially articulated" memory and sharing.<sup>47</sup>

In January 1933, debate circled around the finer points of architecture, and on what would be a proper and fitting style for the building

whether we [should] build the hall of round poles . . .  
which would have to be bought or of the sawn timbers  
donated by Arthur Neaves and which had been accepted  
by the Society at a former meeting.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 28 November 1932, 106.

<sup>45</sup>A further record of work progress is in brief form (lists names, hours, pay owed) in a notebook, BCA, Saanich Pioneer Museum, MS 2538. "*Memoranda of Work Performed on Pioneer Building Feb 1, 1933.*"

<sup>46</sup>Other groups were later, on occasion, allowed to rent the hall but it remained a sensitive issue. BCA, SPS Minutes, 3 December 1932, 108.

<sup>47</sup>Iwona Irwin-Zareck, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 9.

<sup>48</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 26 January 1933, 112.

There was a short debate about payment and construction: instead of donating a log, each family was asked to donate cash (\$5.00 each), and all present agreed this was a simpler idea.<sup>49</sup> No matter how mundane the topics, whether details on prices of bags of cement or other materials, the meetings were always followed by socialization and refreshments. This notably congenial atmosphere reinforced the collective memory building alongside the museum-building. The vital social nature of a such a meeting was revealed in a brief anecdote:

George Michell offered a suggestion that the single men present retire to the kitchen and help the ladies with the dishes met with unanimous support. . .and Sandy McDonald officiated with the dish towels. . .being with difficulty brought back to the meeting<sup>50</sup>

Evidently, more than motions and collective memory building were sometimes at work.

The event on which collective memory and memorialization pivoted for the Pioneer Society was clearly the “laying of the first log.” Premier S. F. Tolmie, himself a Saanich Pioneer and member, was invited to carry out this ceremony on February 8, 1933. Nimmo made carefully worded entries in his best hand, noting the taking of a group photograph, the reading of messages of regret, and the brevity of the ceremony because of inclement weather.<sup>51</sup> To mark and solidify the occasion, Tolmie presented a copy of the “original agreement of purchase . . . by Sir James Douglas with the Indian Chiefs of Saanich when they sold their land . . . to the Hudson’s Bay Company.”<sup>52</sup> The deed of ownership was then buried in the cornerstone. In reporting the event, the Daily Colonist displayed a fine use of memorial rhetoric

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<sup>49</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 3 December 1932, 109.

<sup>50</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 10 December 1932, 111.

<sup>51</sup>Notation: “too cold to work. . .first log pinned by Premier Tolmie,” in “Memoranda of Work Performed,” 2.

<sup>52</sup> This “deed” actually was not a true treaty, and later rescinded. BCA, SPS Minutes, 8 February 1933, 116-118.

Of a pioneer family himself, Premier Tolmie took a leading part in the simple rites, launching the working bee . . . and contributing valuable documents [noting] “You could perform no worthier task.”<sup>53</sup>

Tolmie also noted the “tremendous progress and work of the pioneers.” He praised the return to “thrifty ways . . . and neighbourliness.” Tolmie’s polemic became an important part of the pioneer collective memory, the “cohesion” David Gross notes as vital to collective memory.<sup>54</sup> In the words of this ceremony and the restatement of the pioneer myth, the purpose of the Society was carefully enshrined and delineated.

Construction of the exterior was completed and the finishing of the interior pushed along. It was obviously an important year for the Society and a solidification of their collective memory. In March 1933 Society President, Alex McDonald asked “that all the members unite in making it a monument to the Pioneers who have passed on and a proof of appreciation of the difficulties they had to overcome.” As construction progressed there was a growing awareness within the group that they had, or needed to have, further reasoning for its construction. Nimmo noted the president’s further comments that, “Likewise it had an educative feature that we today could hardly appreciate [as] in few years it would be impossible to erect such a [log] building except in the more remote places of the province.”<sup>55</sup> This note was also a greater statement about the intended audience for that construction of collective memory, to educate a wider public, and to leave a physical reminder of those memories. Overcoming difficulties was also an integral part of their memory creation; it was a past worth remembering, a past perceived to be rife with hardships.

In early June, a few weeks before its “official” opening, the new building was used as a meeting place for the first time. In a rhetoric of ceremonial awe, there was an almost ritualistic lighting of the newly-built fireplace. It is perhaps slightly comical (and racist)

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<sup>53</sup>Daily Colonist, 8 February, 1933, 2.

<sup>54</sup>Gross, Lost Time, 21.

<sup>55</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 27 March 1933, 120.

from today's perspectives, but it was essential to the Society's understanding of historical meaning

The room was gaily lighted by two stable lanterns assisted by the light of a cheerful fire in the new fireplace . . . The fire was built by J.J. White and Landy [?] McDonald and lighted by Mrs. Alex McKenzie thus the first white girl born in Saanich lit the first fire in the Pioneer Memorial Log House.

In spite of the fire burning brightly, "the subject of lighting the building was under discussion for a considerable period."<sup>56</sup> The details of the opening ceremonies are outlined at this same meeting, from costumes for Maypole dances, to positioning of photographers, the attendance of the Premier, conveners, dancing and the placement of the piano. The planning for museum and for collective memory was complete.

On Dominion Day, July 1, 1933, the official opening took place as planned (See Figures 3 and 4). It was not recorded in the minute book, but was generously covered by local papers. It made front page news in the Daily Colonist with a picture of Premier Tolmie and "prominent" members of the Society, in front of the porch of the "Log Cabin." Phrases in the report echoed the collective memory they hoped to build:

"Log Cabin erected as Enduring Memorial to Men and Women of Saanich; . . . realizing a fond expectation that some day the spirit of the pioneer of Saanich would be memorialized with an enduring emblem that would tell . . . of the experience of those brave souls."<sup>57</sup>

Again, this was a public statement of the pioneer story and the importance of the memory. A brief entry in the next minutes, on July 4, noted a profit of \$50.06 (a substantial amount for the 1930s) after receipts.<sup>58</sup> Apparently, and for good reason, the committee was tired, and did not meet again until the fall. They quickly resolved a bank overdraft for building materials by organizing a fund-raising card party. With the opening and completion of the

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<sup>56</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 12 June 1933, 136.

<sup>57</sup>Victoria Daily Colonist, 2 July 1933, 3.

<sup>58</sup>Presumably, the donations for logs had gone beyond the actual costs.



Figure 3. Museum Pageant, Saanich Pioneer Museum, July 1, 1933  
2010 - 45 (By permission: Saanich Pioneer Museum Archives)



Figure 4 Saanich Ladies participating in Opening Pageant, July 1, 1933.

2010-25 (By permission: Saanich Pioneer Museum Archives)

Society's "Hall of Memory," the Society viewed their collective memory project as settled, and, in many ways, fully formed.

However, the Society's efforts quickly turned to adding another layer to the created memories and solidifying these further constructions. With a building and displays open to the public, the Society needed a substitute for its earliest collective memory action of sharing stories within the group. So, its focus shifted to collecting artifacts and to interacting with others *outside* of the original group, that is, museum visitors. The Society had, in many ways, again extended its membership parameters, allowing a new group into the collective memory creation, and their memory hall.

The furnishing of the museum's interiors, from floors to special artifacts, dominated the next few years of the Society meetings. More gifts to the cabin museum started to appear, and lists of letters of thanks, as in the fall minutes of 1933:

- ~ To Mrs. R. R. Taylor. . .for the book "Pioneer Women of Vancouver Island"
- ~ To E. B. Andros, Esq., Of Brentwood Bay for a gift of three antique lanterns
- ~ To A.W. Newcombe, Esq., Of Victoria for a gift of books. . .
- ~ To Mrs. T.W. Patterson. . .spade that turned the first sod on the National Railway [*sic*] on Vancouver Island<sup>59</sup>

The displays reflected the understanding of belonging, and focussed on family and genealogical connections, and "first" homes, schools and post offices. Stories of farm and agriculture were the focus; the parameters of belonging did not allow much mention of other immigrants, or other groups, until later in the museum's existence.<sup>60</sup> The traditional card parties, dances and the June picnic continued. Even more dinners were held, and important people gave talks on important events such as the Boer War. Within this was a healthy dose

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<sup>59</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 142. 16 October 1933, 142.

<sup>60</sup>As many exhibits are still in place today, the displays are a time capsule of the first members, with agricultural tools, domestic items of kitchen and home, and photographs figuring prominently. In later years, exhibits on black pioneers, Chinese farmers and First Nations would be added, mostly after 1960.

of self-praise for the work doled out by members: “we are pleased. . .with the building of the Pioneer Hall and the enthusiasm of the younger generation.” When the President, Alex McDonald, was elected to the provincial legislature, a new president was appointed.<sup>61</sup> Committees continued to meet, and the picnics could now be held at the hall. The Society returned to its fixed schedule of social affairs and interaction. They appeared to feel that through the museum construction, their collective memory had taken its place in B.C. history, and they shared a “Field Day” with the B.C. Historical Society.<sup>62</sup>

With a place to meet, interactions were initially more frequent, every few months and more often when an event was pending. Finances and attendance seemed healthy, with little mention of the hard times or the Depression. Things seemed to go on as before. Noticeably, there was no further mention of collecting information on pioneer families, or of what may have happened with the survey of five years previous.<sup>63</sup> It was, as if with the solidifying of the making of collective memory into a physical reality, the museum became a part of everyday life, and concern about the construction of collective memory or memorialization declined. School groups visited, the public was welcomed in. Perhaps after such an expense of energy, a short slump was unavoidable; in the fall of 1936, Nimmo noted regretfully that “attendance is poor.”<sup>64</sup> Many of the original Society members were aging, and less willing or able to give the Society their full energy. A Junior Pioneer Club existed briefly, but showed little enthusiasm to gather information. By the next year, membership itself was dropping, evident in a motion that each member “bring in another” to meetings.<sup>65</sup>

Yet, the continuance of collective memory was a tidal force; the restatement depended on the surges of energy brought by new members as older ones retired or passed

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<sup>61</sup> BCA, SPS Minutes, 28 March 1934, 148.

<sup>62</sup> BCA, SPS Minutes, 28 May 1934, 153.

<sup>63</sup>The survey forms were not apparently retained, although some traces of the information exist. The accompanying letter is still on file. F-438, S14, Richard E. Nimmo, Saanich Pioneer Museum Archives.

<sup>64</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 31 March 1936, 171.

<sup>65</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 31 December 1937, 182.

away. After deciding in April 1938 to gather more often, the Society seemed to regain some of its original momentum and energy, symbolized by the presentation of a new minute book. With regular meetings, there was a new focus on the Pioneer Hall as an exhibit centre, with the acquisitions of photographs, books, and memorabilia such as “a set of buffalo horns from the Prairies.”<sup>66</sup> The minutes also grew noticeably more informal, with fewer motions and more conversations, such as recording the president’s traffic accident and the former president’s wedding. One of the last entries in this set of minutes was a restatement of the project of collective memory: a request for “collecting pioneer photos for hanging in the Pioneer Hall . . . all photos to be postcard size.”<sup>67</sup>

The next four decades were characterized by ongoing acquisitions that developed into a sizeable collection of artifacts and information. The tone for the design of those memories, the boundaries and the limits, however, was clearly set in the first decade (See Figure 5). Nimmo continued as secretary until 1959 and was clearly a unique voice and valuable recorder of the group’s collective memory. Nimmo lent stability to this narrative of collected memory. Certainly, we need to know more of the person behind the notes, his life, and his views. Perhaps because he was in some ways outside of the genealogy, his name is not in the lists and notes of pioneer families, but a picture of Nimmo and his wife still hangs on the wall of the Saanich Pioneer Museum, noting his long role as secretary.

Today’s Saanich Pioneer Museum reflects both the ongoing layering and the deeply entrenched setting of memories. Still run solely by volunteer effort, the museum is in good physical condition, with a small archives and a rich and varied collection. Continuing its sharing of collective memory, it makes visitors welcome two days a week, year round. On many levels, there is a profound success in the survival of the memory project, and in the great affection that the Museum and the Pioneer Society still enjoy and foster in their surrounding community. One of the strongest links to the first creation of collective memory

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<sup>66</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 3 May 1938, 187.

<sup>67</sup>BCA, SPS Minutes, 1 November, 1938, 193.



Figure 5. Invitational “Pioneers” Tea, ca.1955  
2010 -10 (By permission: Saanich Pioneer Museum Archives)

is the displays, many of which remain in their original positions, literally still hanging where they were placed in the 1930s.<sup>68</sup> We must keep in mind that unlike groups that work to create larger museums, museums that develop out of rural societies, while sharing some hallmarks of museums in a greater context, have different patterns of development and distinct reasons for the nature of their collective memory projects. Saanich was also the beginnings of greater museum community on the Saanich Peninsula, which led to the establishment of a Farm Implement Museum on the main highway (now known as Heritage Acres), the present-day Sidney Museum (1971), and some of the holdings of the Saanich Municipal Archives.

A clearly collective framework of memory, characterized by pioneer testament and genealogy, was constructed by the Saanich Pioneer Society before it ever finished the building that currently houses their memories and memorabilia. The museum, although an important entity in itself, was the remaining artifact of an early enactment of collective memory building. Embedded within this construction of collective memory are the identities important to the society of rural Canada, and their understandings of what is, and what was, historical. The Saanich Pioneer Society Museum was also a unique reflection of the meanings characterized by the finer delineations of gender and family ties, the local senses of pride people connected to their rural existence, and the variable intersections of identity. The museum, and the memories it encases, are testaments to community effort, and the lasting endurance of collective memory in society.

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<sup>68</sup>It is important to note that over the years the museum's displays have received the important basics of conservation and cleaning. In particular, many photographs have been safeguarded through the hard work of museum volunteers.

### Chapter 3

#### The Kamloops Museum Association: Civic Memory and Civic Identity

In the first half of the twentieth century, community change was often interpreted within a ideologic framework of modernism. Ian McKay has noted how rapidly changing modes of production brought expectations of “constant and radical transformation, dramatic growth, [and] development at an ever more rapid rate” and how these rapid changes involved “new ways of seeing space and time.”<sup>1</sup> In British Columbia, this meant civic drives for progress, new buildings, and improvements to services and land. Part of becoming a more “modern” community was to open schools and libraries, thereby ensuring a firm hold on modern thought and progress, and to be seen as aware of the greater world.

Museums, constructed as homes for community knowledge, were an important part of cementing and fixing a progressive civic identity. Many community museums in B.C. have their origins in such marches of modernity. Even to name a building as a museum was to create a specialized space for knowledge. Although they sought to preserve ideas of the past, these museums employed a framework of modernity for their collective memory. This worked in two ways - to study and understand objects provided new, and improved contexts. Secondly, using the past to explain progress was (and remains) an essential element of the historical museum.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, these museums performed as two-edged swords, on the one hand praising the past but in doing so, always controlling and restating these pasts to ensure a modern vision. The Kamloops Museum Association was created within a framework of modern civic identity and local politics. The memories created and celebrated were linked to the evolution of the city, and its growth, both economic and social. As the museum grew in scope and function, it created for itself a more “modern” and “knowledgeable” identity.

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<sup>1</sup>Ian McKay, The Challenge of Modernity. A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada (Toronto: McGraw - Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1992), ix.

<sup>2</sup>James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 10.

Within this growth, we can also trace the shifting understandings of purpose in the Kamloops Museum Association, from a local collective memory project, through a period of collection and acquisition of artifacts and archival material, to an important city establishment, with staffing and funding provided by the city.

Space was always a significant issue for museums in a civic setting.<sup>3</sup> This case study examines how a community controlled both the physical space to display collections, and the intellectual space of setting collective memory through the activities of group interactions. A permanent location was a means of establishing both importance and status within a community, and a practical means of housing and displaying collections. It also brought together a diverse group of people, some who saw themselves “pioneers,” those with local political aspirations, and many newcomers.

The rich, silted lands at the confluence of the North and South Thompson rivers in the centre of the southern Cariboo region have long been home for the Shushwap, Quatsino and Secwempemc Nations. The natural beauty and comparatively mild climate attracted new residents and visitors. In 1812, the fur trade post of Fort Thompson was built.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the 19th century Kamloops had a population of well over 700, and enjoyed a thriving economy through its importance to trade and the railway. The Canadian Pacific Railway came to Kamloops in 1885, the Canadian Northern (later the Canadian National Railway) in 1915; by 1926 the city was an important divisional centre for freight and passengers.<sup>5</sup> This prosperity stayed strong throughout the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1930s, numerous schools, two hospitals, (the Royal Inland, and the provincial Tranquille Sanitarium

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<sup>3</sup>Carol Duncan, Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums (London and New York: Routledge 1995), 8.

<sup>4</sup>Fort Thompson was actually built by the Pacific Fur Company, which would merge with the North West Company (1811) which eventually joined with the Hudson’s Bay Company (1821). Mary Balf, Kamloops: A History of the District up to 1914 (Kamloops, B.C.: Kamloops Museum Association, 1981), 21.

<sup>5</sup>Ruth Balf, Kamloops, 1914 - 1945 (Kamloops: Kamloops Museums Association, 1975), 27-28.

for tuberculosis), and many businesses were well-established.<sup>6</sup> There were numerous and diverse community organizations, ranging from the Templars, Foresters, the Free Masons, Kinsmen and the Native Sons of British Columbia, and of course women's groups of many kinds, social and service oriented, ranging from a short-lived Political Equality League, to the Pythian Sisters, humanitarian groups, the I.O.D.E. "garden club," and, of course, many branches of the Womens' Institute.<sup>7</sup> These organizations also included a wide ethnic range, from a Chinese Free Masons to Italian community associations. The presence of these identity-based organizations demonstrates how significant *belonging* was in the early years of Kamloops.

After the Second World War, Kamloops moved quickly from a cattle and railway town to a prosperous city framed by modernity. Connected by pavement to the rest of British Columbia through the abundant highway projects of the Social Credit government, and especially through the highway minister, the Reverend "Flyin' Phil" Gaglardi,<sup>8</sup> a charismatic preacher and Kamloops M.L.A. Kamloop's provincially-supported growth increased both opportunities for business (the cannery, export of fruit, grain, and cattle and tourism) and its potential for centrality in the region.<sup>9</sup>

The Kamloops Museum Association, or KMA, formed in the 1930s within this milieu of established civic pride. Unlike the rural pioneer cabin of Saanich, and a membership based on the tales of pioneers, the KMA strove to establish civic presence and connect to the other groups of belonging already at work in the city of Kamloops. From its inception, it was both an adjunct and an extension of civic pride and political understandings. Initially,

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<sup>6</sup>A public school system was in place by 1914, as well as St. Ann's Academy, a Catholic boarding school built in 1880 by the Sisters of St. Ann, an Oblate industrial school, and a Miss Beattie's Private school. See Balf, Kamloops, 1914 - 1945, 63-71.

<sup>7</sup>Balf, Kamloops, 1914 - 1945, 110-116.

<sup>8</sup>Gaglardi had established a large church and was well-known in the area. Mel Rothenburger, Friend o'Mine . The Story of Flyin' Phil Gaglardi (Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1991).

<sup>9</sup>Kamloops was not immune to the fluctuations of changing markets and demands--some industries, in particular the canneries, were in decline by the late 1950s. See John Stewart, "The Kamloops Canneries: The Rise and Fall of a Local Industry, 1913-1990," BC Studies 93 (Spring 1992): 30-47.

the Kamloops Museums Association framed its early memories in stories of “founding pioneer” families and long term residents. Many stories were about individuals prominent in city politics and who themselves worked to construct ideas of civic pride and identity. Local histories have documented the diverse range of peoples, settlement, and industries that were so vital to the development of Kamloops as a city. The wide range of such works testifies to the importance of history to this community.

Locating the story of this group was also an exercise in collective memory reconstruction. A society such as the KMA kept careful minutes and ordered its meetings through the principles of “Robert’s Rules” with frequent motions and recorded votes. They also wrote annual reports and statements of purpose. While these are good sources for a historian, they are also problematic in their method of creation. Such minutes were part of the *created* collective memory, the need to memorialize and establish community presence and meaning. The distinction between actuality and the reporting within KMA minutes is vital to the discussion in this chapter. The KMA always viewed itself as *distinct* from city operations, as a clearly independent group that perceived its control as extending to the hiring and direction of staff, the acquisition and use of space, and all museum operations. However, the KMA’s existence clearly relied more on civic generosity than visitor donations or outside support. Since the mid-1950s it has been an evolving city department. At the same time, by creating and reinforcing statements of self-sufficiency, the KMA achieved a rare level of freedom of purpose in later years. It was able to enjoy the benefits of city support but maintain control over staffing and funds.

The first idea for a museum was through the efforts of George Duncan Brown. Brown had been a “well-respected resident” for more than 50 years, coming to Kamloops in the 1890s and serving as alderman since 1903. He was also involved with many other organizations, from the Knights of Pythias to the Board of Trade.<sup>10</sup> In the mid 1930s, he operated a small newspaper, the Advertiser, which included historical articles. One of his short treatises, “*A Historical Association for Kamloops?*” noted the proximity of new

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<sup>10</sup>Kamloops Sentinel, 9 August 1956, 2.

historical societies in Princeton, the Okanagan and Revelstoke, and suggested that it was time for Kamloops to do the same. Brown felt that a new organization could supervise a local collection. He warned “we should be alarmed at the threatened destruction of old photographs, . . . documents [and] relics [and these] should at least be preserved in a fireproof building.”<sup>11</sup>

The familiar path of the “pioneer” memory was also woven into Brown’s warning that “families of pioneers will have lost track of valuable material unless something is done and done soon.” The most significant part of Brown’s letter, however, was its mandate for civic involvement:

A far-seeing city council may some day set aside a room. . .  
for the preservation of local historical material . . .relics and  
manuscripts should be gathered and preserved . . .there is a  
wealth of romance and material to work on in Kamloops. . .<sup>12</sup>

A local library was already proudly operating, and was locally viewed as the holder of history and knowledge. Brown was one of its founding members.<sup>13</sup> The concept of providing an even greater range of knowledge formed a significant part of Brown’s argument, if materials relating to the “opening up and settlement of this district could be gathered together, what an asset it would be.”<sup>14</sup> If Kamloops is now truly “civilized,” proof of this civilized nature could be provided through a proper museum. Brown also focussed on relics and unique artifacts, especially “Indian relics . . . of great historical value.” The letter echoed the collecting and acquiring focus of many early historical museums, concluding that these “relics should be gathered, *segregated*, and written up for proper

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<sup>11</sup>Kamloops Archives (hereafter KA), Vertical Files, Museum, Mimeograph, George D. Brown, Jr. “A Historical Association for Kamloops,” circa 1935.

<sup>12</sup>K.A Brown, “A Historical Association for Kamloops,” Kamloops Sentinel, 17 July 1941, 6.

<sup>13</sup>The Kamloops Library was established in 1928, an opened to the public in the Federal building in 1929. It operated through membership fees of \$1 per year. The group encountered slim funding in the late 1930s after opting out of the provincial government’s library system and joined forces with the museum after this. In the 1980s, the library moved to its own building . See Balf, Kamloops, 1914-1945, 105-106.

<sup>14</sup>KA, Brown, “a Historical Association for Kamloops.”

study” [*Italics mine*]. It also reflected the drive of the modern, the past explained to build for a correct future. Brown concluded

Without a sound grounding in knowledge . . . [of] the past, we and our children will inevitably become the victims of any ignorant quack who has learned a certain jargon of impressive pseudo-intellectuality . . . to ignore that experience [of the past] *is not modern* . . . local history should be taught [to] the student in our schools [*italics mine*]<sup>15</sup>

The KMA, formed later in 1935, was the result of Brown’s tract. B.C.’s early historical societies strove to acquire, reorder, and consequently, re-contextualize the “remnants” of the past. Kamloops had much in its favour for such “collection.” For example, in central BC, many First Nations communities had been decimated and marginalised early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through residential schools and reservations, disease and politics. Local villages were abandoned in the face of these forces, and artifacts were easily found.<sup>16</sup> The region had a long tradition of study by archaeologists and by ethnologists such as Franz Boas and James Teit. By the 1930s, competition for such perceived “treasures” was growing. All of these factors helped drive the push for a more “local” collection. Economic changes also meant the breakup and abandonment of some larger, older ranches and farms, which provided many historical collections were gained from these.

The first home for the museum collections was itself a “relic” from Kamloop’s fur trade past. In 1937, a log ‘cabin’ was located and reconstructed from logs at the site of Fort Thompson. This salvage of logs echoed the Saanich Pioneers Societies’ “one log for every native son” project, and was proudly opened to the public in July 1937. Whether the “cabin” was a complete one, salvaged and rebuilt, or more a reconstruction of such from “found” logs is somewhat uncertain, and undocumented within minutes or archival material. More important, it is the creation of the idea of an original building that is vital here. The KMA

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<sup>15</sup>KA, Brown, “a Historical Association for Kamloops.”

<sup>16</sup>This is not to suggest any illegal activity, as such collection took place long before any archaeological acts were established. This kind of collecting was viewed at the time as *protective* of artifacts.

believed it to be completely original.

The KMA's log cabin, however, was used as the museum only briefly. Two years later, the newly formed "Kamloops Museums and Historical Association" made an agreement with the Kamloops Public Library Association to move into the vacated Smith home "donated to the city for Museum and Library purposes" by Mrs. Burris.<sup>17</sup> This older Edwardian edifice had multiple rooms and was situated on a pleasant corner with large trees (see Figure 6). It had ample space, was a historic home, and was near other "civic" buildings such as the city hall.

The next decade was a quiet one. As in other museums there was a noticeable gap in the minutes during World War II, because museum activities were seen as secondary to the greater threats to the world. Brown, who had been so instrumental in starting the museum fell ill and died in 1941. So the first president of the KMA was another city "father," Burt R. Campbell, a linotype operator for *Sentinel* and a dedicated amateur historian. Campbell later served as president of the British Columbia Historical Society and board member for the Royal Inland Hospital.<sup>18</sup> Under his leadership, the KMA held a "re-organizational" meeting in 1944, noting that the "hard years" had taken a toll, with "very few to carry on the work [very] few meetings held . . . museum open twice a week until Oct '43."<sup>19</sup> Still, the original mandate of city support had not completely vanished, and the KMA recorded a \$150.00 grant from City council. The log cabin, although quickly outgrown, was not forgotten either. It became an artifact and talisman for Kamloops' collective imagining. The cabin was reverently relocated to the Smith house site late in 1949

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<sup>17</sup>KA, Kamloops Museum Association, Minutes (hereafter KMA Minutes), records of the Kamloops Museum Association, journals bound by year, 1 April 1939. There were many people named "Smith" from Indian Agents to steamship captains in Kamloops at this time, but this house apparently belonged to an early alderman. The donor of the property was Mrs. J. S. Burris, widow of a locally famous doctor, Howard L. Burris. She was historically well-connected as the daughter of a pioneer, James McIntosh, who had come to Kamloops in the 1860s gold rush and stayed on as a notable land developer and business man. See Balf, Kamloops, 1914 - 1945, 111, 117.

<sup>18</sup>Kamloops Sentinel, 14 September 1955, 4.

<sup>19</sup>KMA Minutes, 30 November 1944.

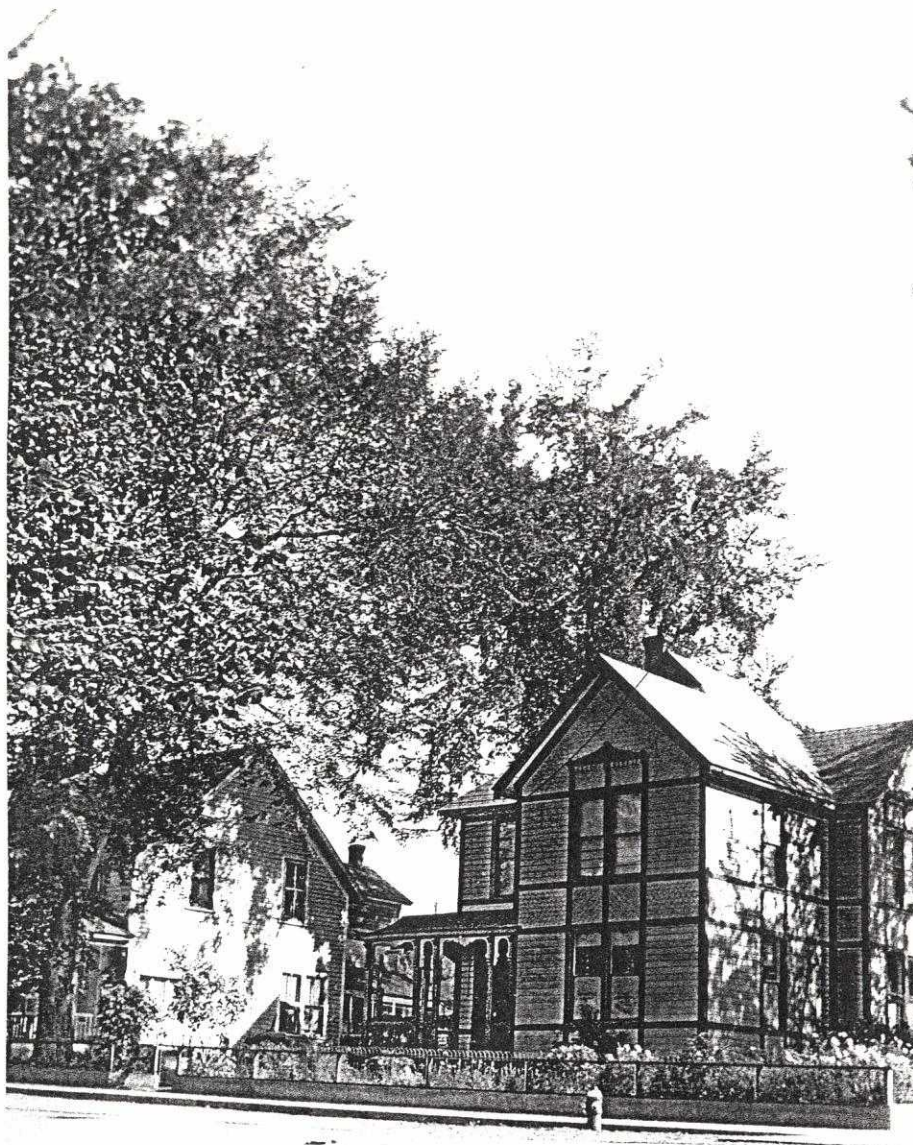


Figure 6. The Smith House, Library and Museum Building:  
donated by Mrs. Burris. K2578 (By permission: Kamloops Museum Archives)

(See Figure 7). While the move was in one way simply conservation of an historic building, it was also the careful staging of the KMA's collective memory.<sup>20</sup>

Some savvy photographer even posed the truck in front of the local Hudson's Bay store. This move would be only the first for the "cabin" in an ongoing process of enshrinement. By this point, the donated historic home that housed the museum was a firm part of the city "precinct." The museum had gained a diverse membership and a city council member regularly attended meetings. The Chamber of Commerce (formerly the Board of Trade) recognized the museum as a good draw for tourists. At a meeting in 1950, notably held at the Masonic Temple, representatives from several interests began to consider the meaning of their museum to the community.<sup>21</sup>

Several distinct stages of collective memory creation were visible through the next twenty years of the KMA. First was a stage of cementing civic presence and identity through space. Creation and use of a civically funded building gave the KMA more opportunity for city support and funding. The next stage, in the mid-1960s, was to seek support for "professional" staffing, and increase funding. Through a provincial centennial project, the museum tried to expand its range of collective memory projects with mixed results. Ongoing concerns for space were often blamed on growing collections, however, this concern also reflected the KMA's need for authority over space, a space for collective memory creation.

The parameters of *belonging* were also an important part of how the KMA sought to enact the collective memory. The KMA was not as directly tied to perceptions of genealogy or as "the first Saanich pioneers. Rather, membership in the museum was tied to a sense of civic belonging. In the early 1950's, the KMA adjusted its membership categories accordingly, allowing for "individuals who . . . assist the Museum Association such as honorary, associate and members without vote."<sup>22</sup> Secondly, the KMA felt that attracting visitors and keeping the museum doors open was partly a civic responsibility, and one that

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<sup>20</sup>KMA Minutes, 21 September 1949.

<sup>21</sup>KMA Minutes, 29 December 1948.

<sup>22</sup>KMA Minutes, 19 January 1951.

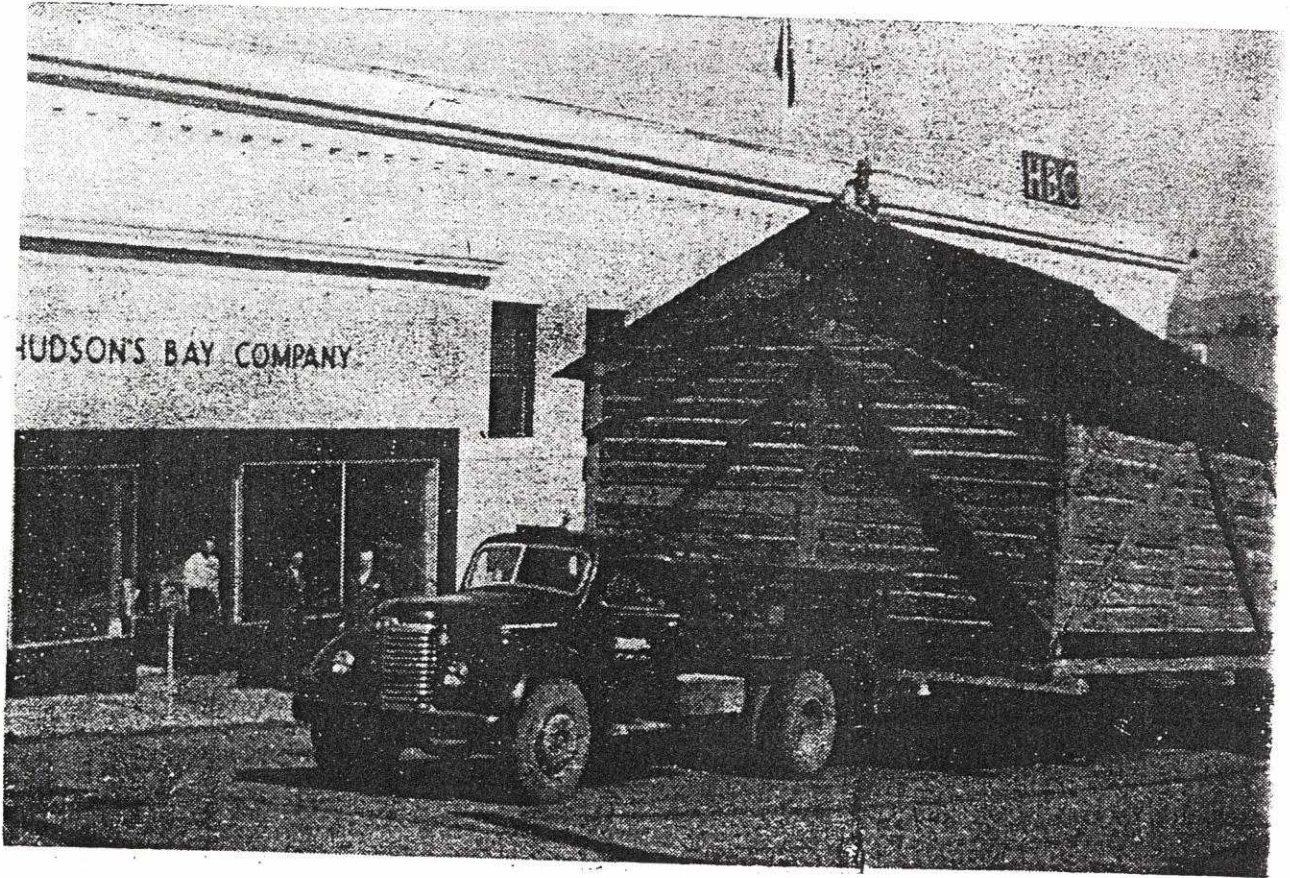


Figure 7. Moving old log cabin to Smith House site, (posed by Hudson's Bay Store)  
(Kamloops Sentinel – By permission: Kamloops Museum Archives)

perhaps should be supported by other levels of government. The AGM in 1950 agreed to seek funding from the Dominion government. While no formal federal funding programs were in place at this time, there was a growing emphasis on heritage and museums (See p.78). Although this endeavour was not successful, it signified how the KMA was increasing its identity parameters. More funding would mean “more assistants . . . so that the museum can be opened every night during the tourist season.”<sup>23</sup> After all, over 100 visitors had been recorded in June alone. The KMA also wanted to belong to greater visions of history, and so maintained its connections with other historical organizations, such as the Okanagan Historical Society and B.C. Historical Association.<sup>24</sup>

Through these activities, the museum established a clear role as a “local authority” for history. Much of the enactment of this authority was through being publicly *available*. The meetings in the first half of the 1950s focussed on acquiring and displaying more artifacts, as the overall drive was to attract visitors. As figures 8 and 9 illustrate, the exhibits (typical of a community museum of the time) displayed a maximum amount of artifacts in a minimum of available space, and employed a generous use of informative labelling. Objects were grouped by historical association, or other “scientific” categorizations such as archaeological order for objects associated with “prehistory,” hierarchies of historical periods for household artifacts. Historical accuracy, and attention to an object’s perceived rarity and uniqueness were vital, and donors were almost always carefully noted. A “typical” display was the example in figure 9, with photographs of an important Kamloops family in close proximity to household objects of the period, a saw, an ox’s bridle and a photograph of the same era. There were always compromises between protecting such valuable “things” and allowing visitors some type of access so they might “experience” the period or story portrayed. Glass-fronted, locked cases, or posts and stanchions formed at least psychological barriers. The KMA sought to “educate” the public with such displays, often modelling its techniques on larger, national collections. Creating and ensuring community involvement were also key

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<sup>23</sup>KMA Minutes, Annual Meeting, October 1950.

<sup>24</sup>KMA Minutes, 16 May 1951.

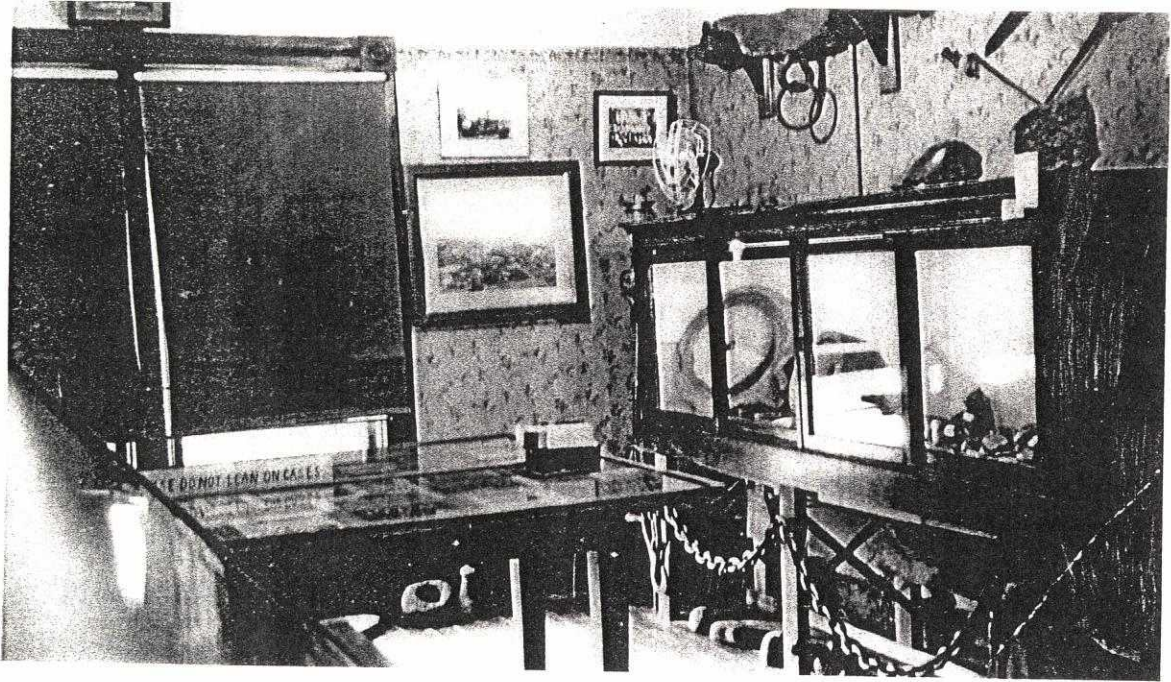


Figure 8

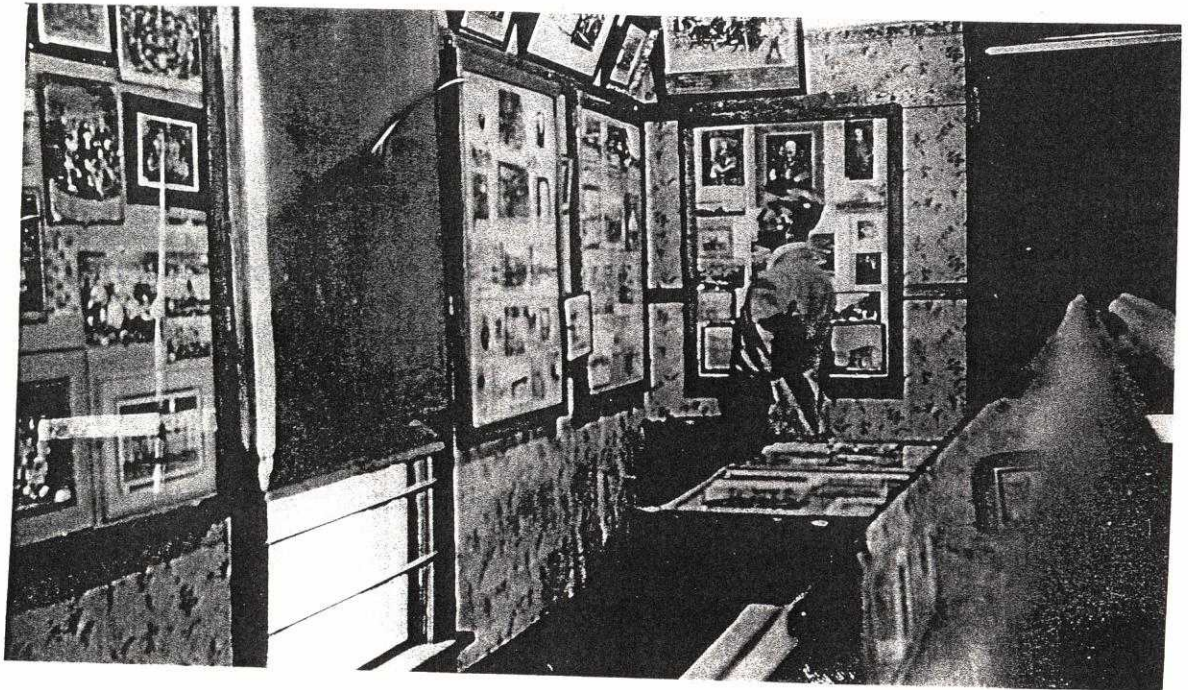


Figure 9

Figures 8 & 9. Interior exhibits, Kamloops Museum. ca.1950  
3834 and 3832 (By permission: Kamloops Museum Archives)

and not without traces of conflict. There was some tension between the library, with its earlier roots and the needs of the “newer” Museum Association. For example, when the Library Association would not agree to a larger sign, the Museum put up a small one of its own.<sup>25</sup> Use of space was also a subject of many discussions. Nevertheless, exchange was mainly congenial and extended to preliminary discussions of a combined Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the 1950s the group concentrated on ensuring a civic alignment, and affirming relationships to local organizations. The KMA could not proceed without these alliances that provided the solid base of civic *presence*. For example, when the KMA met in the Masonic Hall, it was probably not so much for need of a meeting space as to place itself in alignment politically - probably one of their members were Masons. Holding a museum meeting there was a public display of the relationship. It was also an essential part of the KMA’s role in ensuring the success of the 1955 city referendum for a new building. Another example was the motion to “affiliate with Kamloops Local Council of Women [who] could do to help the Museum further its work. [Further], discussion took place re: the proposed Museum building.”<sup>27</sup> Alderman Millard even offered to run an ad in the Sentinel to promote membership although it appears her concerns were mainly about establishing a greater presence in the minds of city council.<sup>28</sup>

To further establish its belonging in the civic world, the KMA sought a stronger physical presence. The drive in the mid-1950s for a new museum building reflected its success in creating a collective idea of the museum as a home for historical memories. To gain that space meant demonstrating that the museum organization was part of civic life. In January 1952 a resolution concerning a request for funds to build a new Museum building,

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<sup>25</sup>KMA Minutes, 5 January 1946.

<sup>26</sup>KMA Minutes, 9 January 1951.

<sup>27</sup>While the Local Council of Women receives occasional mention in the minutes, it did not seem to take on any particular projects. KMA Minutes, 12 December 1951.

<sup>28</sup>KMA Minutes, 12 December 1951.

“stressing [the] location, site, age of building, organization and other pertinent data was read and forwarded to city council.”<sup>29</sup> The KMA was campaigning to create a *collective* support for local history at a civic level, through interaction and exchange with other civic groups. They also campaigned through their own personal connections to other organizations. President Campbell was a member of the Knights of Pythias and the local Typographical Union.<sup>30</sup> Alec Cragg on the board since the late 1940s, was also a union member, and a member of the Elks Lodge.<sup>31</sup> J.J. Morse, another longtime board member, addressed the Junior Chamber of Commerce, and was a member of the Gyro Club.<sup>32</sup> All promised to speak to their respective organizations. Alderman O’Neill continued the city council connection. Through this web of interaction, the creation of the KMA’s of civic identity flowed.

Spirited speeches to service groups were not without a background. Some of the drive for the museum may have been part of an ongoing ambition to appoint a recreation commission, a drive that O’Neill was trying to foster at the council level. A recreation commission would secure annual government funding toward a director’s salary of \$3,000-\$6,000. In May 1955, thirty-five representatives “of more than a dozen recreational and community service groups” met to discuss the question of a recreation council. The Sentinel reported that “the suggested recreation commission . . . consists of four members, one each from the city council, parks board, school board and arena commission and three to seven additional members.” Mr. Mathisen, a provincial representative for the Community Programs Branch, noted how

our parents worked a 14-16 hour day . . . where we live in the 40-hour week era . . . will our children be able to utilize their free time in healthy activities? . . . Education for leisure is . . . essential to our way of life . . . and to the normal ingenuity of mankind<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>KMA Minutes, 9 January 1952.

<sup>30</sup>Kamloops Sentinel, 14 September 1955.

<sup>31</sup>Kamloops Sentinel, 23 January 1981.

<sup>32</sup>KMA Minutes, Annual meeting, n.d. 1954. See also Kamloops Daily Sentinel, 16 March 1967.

<sup>33</sup>Kamloops Daily Sentinel, 28 May 1956.

The glowing report was countered by a frustrated Mayor who claimed the Sentinel had “worn rose-coloured spectacles to the meeting.” Not all costs were mentioned by the report, and no-one was looking at the amount of work involved. The question of whether recreation was “necessary” was in the news for the rest of that week. T.J. O’Neill, the city councillor on the museum board, was present, and would have also heard about the plans and, importantly, special funding for the upcoming British Columbia Centennial.

These ongoing discussions on the importance of recreation, and especially, “education for leisure,” bolstered the drive for a museum. Through Alderman O’Neill, the KMA proposed a four-floor cement construction building as a shared space for Library and museum, as the Smith house had been. Unlike the log cabin and historic house, plans were for a sturdy, practical, and plain building, a progressive modernist structure without adornment or architectural decoration. The building and floor space would be new, but the partnerships established between library, museum and city would remain. A secondary agenda was the rather practical need for a public washroom downtown. The latter was often a sore point; the appropriateness of including something as mundane as a public washroom as part of a civic project was a matter brought up at more than one KMA meeting.<sup>34</sup>

Planning soon focussed on simple practicalities and a growing concern for safety of artifacts in the collection, for example, fireproofing the proposed building “as we have irreplaceable documents now inadequately stored and have been refused additional valuable material unless we can assure fire protection.”<sup>35</sup> The need for funds for display cases and other equipment would plague the society for years to come. Ald. Millard suggested a “buy a brick” campaign.<sup>36</sup> There was an increasing emphasis on artifacts and display. The financial records for 1952 noted a balance of just \$256.66.<sup>37</sup>

It also dawned on the KMA that perhaps, with the exciting prospect of a larger facility,

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<sup>34</sup>KMA Minutes, 3 February 1953 (Annual Meeting).

<sup>35</sup>KMA Minutes, 20 February 1952.

<sup>36</sup>KMA Minutes, 26 March 1952.

<sup>37</sup>At this time the annual budget was approximately \$2000.00 annually. KMA Minutes, 13 February 1952.

they should try again for federal or provincial funding. They used an interesting set of statements as they created a historic collective memory to “bring about this *dream*.” O’Neill even suggested that it was “an historic meeting.”<sup>38</sup> The expression of a “dream” and a “historic meeting” show how through the writing of minutes, this group sought to frame its collective memory within a civic history: the new museum in Kamloops would be part of greater hopes for the city itself. The next few years were busy, continuing museum operations during construction occupied the group’s attention. They retained their sense of humour, proposing that Arnott attend to the apparent signs of mice in the storage room provided by city hall, as he was the “Chairman for Wildlife.”<sup>39</sup>

By this time, the museum felt quite secure in its civic positioning and power as a local “authority” for matters historical. The city had placed some recreation concerns on a December referendum, including a swimming pool and the museum/library facility. Speaking at a Rotary Club meeting, “giving details of the money bylaws to be voted upon,” Alderman O’Neill noted that “as many as 90 visitors a day thronged through the museum this summer, and were loud in their praises, even though many exhibits could not be displayed for lack of space.”<sup>40</sup> He further noted that the museum was

evidence that an early awakening in children of our museum treasures not only stimulates the young mind . . . but . . . to the creation of a life-long interest . . . If our adults too, realise the value of the museum exhibits, and the lasting influence of historical reminders, they will undoubtedly vote in favour of the money bylaw to provide a new library/museum building.<sup>41</sup>

The passing of the referendum was not recorded in the KMA minutes. This suggests that many saw the vote as a mere formality. The Kamloops Daily Sentinel, quietly recorded the referendum questions and their passing. Somehow the museum and library building won

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<sup>38</sup>KMA Minutes, 3 November 1954.

<sup>39</sup>KMA Minutes, 15 April 1954.

<sup>40</sup>Kamloops Sentinel, 1 December 1955.

<sup>41</sup>Kamloops Sentinel, 9 December 1955.



Figure 10. Kamloops Museum and Library. Photograph ca.1963  
Cover of Roundup, no.20, October 1965  
(By permission: British Columbia Museums Association)

over other recreational concerns, and it is not recorded whether Alderman O'Neill influenced the outcome. The win was quite significant; of a total 1781 voting, more than 70% voted in favour of the project.<sup>42</sup> A new swimming pool and water fluoridation (the latter a contentious issue, regardless) were also on the ballot, and lost. Evidently, in Kamloops, the preservation of collective memory took strong precedence as a recreational activity.

The actual construction of the museum received minimal attention in the KMA minutes, although photographs and brief progress reports appeared occasionally through the winter and spring in the Daily Sentinel.<sup>43</sup> The group did seek some expert advice from the provincial archivist, Willard Ireland who expressed disappointment that the new building was not fireproof but only fire resistant.<sup>44</sup> The KMA did follow its "dream" in one sense --by ensuring yet another enshrinement of its original representation of collective memory. In the chaos amidst the new building's construction, it asked the contractors to make sure that the original log cabin museum be placed *inside* on the second floor. The installation of the old "fort" ran into technical difficulties. The architect claimed that such a task was certainly not in the original contract. It also meant dismantling and reassembling the cabin. Further, a wall had to be extended and there were not enough logs. Eventually the log cabin was safely enshrined on the second floor, and the building could be considered complete: "The Old Fort up in place in new building from floor to ceiling, the back being made up of new logs as far as [the contractor] knows."<sup>45</sup> The KMA's collective memory was safely contained and preserved. Within the minute book, an editorial clipped from the Kamloops Daily Sentinel was carefully taped:

"The Faithful Few - How much we owe them!" It seems that a community which has been farsighted enough to support the need for adequate quarters for this enterprise should also find in its heart to give the support of a large associate membership and

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<sup>42</sup>City of Kamloops: Records Department, Minutes for City of Kamloops, 1955, City Council Resolutions, 8 December 1955.

<sup>43</sup>Kamloops Daily Sentinel, 22 December 1955, 15 January 1956, 3 April 1956.

<sup>44</sup>KMA Minutes, 11 June 1956.

<sup>45</sup>KMA Minutes, 24 October 1956.

active assistance during this period of change and readjustment.<sup>46</sup>

This public statement signalled the success of the museum in establishing, and maintaining for a future audience, a civic presence. The KMA had its building, had incorporated its original building literally as a supporting wall, and had a firm grasp on the creation of historical memory in Kamloops (see Figure 10).

With a new space to occupy, the KMA's attention shifted forward again. Details of cataloguing, conservation and other finer points of museum practice dominated the minutes, with motions, discussions and planning for work on systems of cataloguing, and choosing the right people to do the work.<sup>47</sup> There was a renewed frequency of meetings and sense of a renewed focus. Partnerships continued, exemplified by a spirited correspondence with the Moose Lodge, who sought to exchange their full-size stuffed moose for a moose head (the request was finally denied, due to lack of space for an entire stuffed moose). Use of space continued to be negotiated. Offices for the Tourist Bureau, and the Board of Trade were proposed for the large (7000 square feet) building.<sup>48</sup> There was also the suggestion of a live-in caretaker. Both the KMA and the Library board felt that their space needs would be compromised, but agreed to accommodate the Tourist Bureau and to rent out the basement for various meetings.

With a new building, the KMA also moved toward professionalization of the museum. This move toward better museum practices was part of a wider sensibility of the significance of history and museums that was developing in British Columbia. When the B.C. Museums Association offered a Short Course on Museum Management, Mrs. Candido, a board member and local artist was proposed as "an ideal candidate" and attended.<sup>49</sup> The KMA was also one of the first smaller museums to take advantage of visits by the new "museum advisor,"

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<sup>46</sup>Kamloops Daily Sentinel, 6 February 1957.

<sup>47</sup>The 1957 minutes listed committees and projects such as: "Cleaning Birds and Animals, Pictures, Coin Collection, Cleaning the Fitzwater desk, the Book of the Centennial." See KMA Minutes, 13 March 1957.

<sup>48</sup>KMA Minutes, 31 August 1955.

<sup>49</sup>KMA Minutes, 16 April 1957.

sponsored by the Provincial Museum in Victoria.<sup>50</sup> Work again focussed on care of the collection and the ever-present file card catalogue. The catalogue details, especially the size of card to use, the colour to represent each category, and who might provide these cards dominated several meetings, until the museum advisor gently suggested other priorities.<sup>51</sup> There was also an ongoing social aspect to the minutes. Humour was often evident, for example, when the group discussed conservation pamphlets after a visit of the museum advisor, when a member suggested that soaking in whisky may promote longevity [of wicker baskets] . . . but nobody offered [him] any whisky.”<sup>52</sup>

As the museum prospered, work loads increased. By the mid-1960s, it was obvious that the museum should have a regular staff position. Discussion initially focussed on whether a “paid” staff person was actually needed and who would be responsible for funding. In a letter to City Hall, the KMA expressed its agenda quite clearly, noting how the

Kamloops Museum has reached a point of stalemate and frustration in its efforts to serve the people of Kamloops. Voluntary labour . . . has been stretched to its full capacity but is inadequate to handle all of the work that need to be done. This Museum needs help and this help must take the form of a full-time employee. The wage for such an employee should be in the neighbourhood of \$5,000 annually with . . . the usual benefits.<sup>53</sup>

The title of “curator” or “factor” for this position was a matter of some debate and an interesting reflection of the KMA’s collective understandings. The latter title was often given in the minutes to Mr. Alec Cragg, a board member since the early 1950s. “Factor” borrowed indirectly from the fur trade, through another organization with strong historical identity, The Native Sons of B.C. called its presidents and councillors “chief factors” and “factors,” its

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<sup>50</sup>KMA Minutes, 9 January 1961. The Museum Advisor was a program that funded a Provincial museum staff member to visit other museums in the province with technical pamphlets, supplies, information and advice. Funding was not generous - one of the first museum advisors operated his program out a Volkswagon van. The program operated from 1958 into the 1980s. John Adams, former museum advisor, interview by author, Victoria B.C., 30 December 2002.

<sup>51</sup>KMA Minutes, 24 September and 17 December 1962.

<sup>52</sup>KMA Minutes, 25 March 1963.

<sup>53</sup>KMA Minutes, 7 February 1966.

chapters were “posts.”<sup>54</sup> Cragg, a KMA board member, had evidently been a member of the organization, and he, and possibly others, carried this sense of identity along to the KMA.<sup>55</sup> Somehow, “curator” was eventually the term of choice. Cragg, however, would still be referred to by his “factor” title, even though he offered to resign the title, as its use would be redundant.<sup>56</sup>

The city accordingly agreed to fund a curator and archivist, not a factor. Mrs. Mary Balf was appointed as Curator/Archivist June 6, 1966. Mary Balf was certainly not a newcomer to the KMA. She had been a volunteer since 1956 and a board member. Often, in community museums of this time, the first paid positions went to women, perhaps within a prejudice of gender, perhaps because in some communities lower wages could be paid to women, or, there was an assumption that women made better caretakers.<sup>57</sup> However, in this case the appointment was also a gesture of support, as Balf’s husband, Charles, had died earlier in the year.<sup>58</sup> She was a pediatrician by training, although retired, and she did not like to hear the title “Dr.,” feeling it to be “too pretentious.” Although she and her husband had only come to Kamloops in 1955, she began volunteering at the museum almost immediately.<sup>59</sup>

Mary Balf was famous both in Kamloops and in the B.C. museum community for her fiery temperament, steadfast devotion to Kamloops history and prolific writing. She had a phenomenal memory for individuals and the finer details of history. She was an unapologetic and determined person, and very characteristic of early museum professionals. Such people were chosen because they had strong senses of their community’s memories - or rather, the collective memory as it *should* be. Balf certainly fit the bill.

Balf appears frequently in the meeting notes of the KMA, both as curator and as

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<sup>54</sup>The influence of this organization on B.C.’s museums is examined more directly in Chapter 4.

<sup>55</sup>For more information see also Chad Reimer, “The Making of British Columbia History,” 201, where he comments on the inherent racism of this organization.

<sup>56</sup>KMA Minutes, 5 October, 1966.

<sup>57</sup>For a more complete discussion on gender, see Chapter 4.

<sup>58</sup>Elizabeth Duckworth, Kamloops Museums Association, “Good-bye, Mary,” eulogy, October 4, 1996.

<sup>59</sup>Duckworth, “Good-bye Mary,” see also Kamloops Daily Sentinel, 11 February 1972.

recording secretary. Her numerous submissions to the British Columbia Museums Associations quarterly newsletter, Museum RoundUp described the work typical for a curator in the 1960s. The KMA's old agenda of gaining supporting members was still important as she reported, "the past year has been a very successful one, we have a considerably increased . . . membership, including a number of younger folk." The KMA also continued to connect to its public: "we have held several special meetings devoted to films, talks. etc. . . open to the public and have met with an excellent response."<sup>60</sup>

Like many curators of the era, Balf saw the cataloguing of archival holdings as the museum's most urgent task. This likely put her at odds with older members who wanted to focus on collecting more artifacts. In a report to Museum RoundUp she noted "we are indexing our files of the local newspaper . . . it will be many years before the cards are up to date [they will] eventually provide a complete quick reference record . . . for research."<sup>61</sup> Balf also grumbled about lack of local support in a roundabout way--"although it took 25 years to sell the people of Kamloops on the idea of building a Library- Museum building, members of the City Council are most cooperative."<sup>62</sup> She had a sense of humour, noting as her motto for Museum managers "myself doing least of any but pretending most," a phrase she found in "Manson's HBC Journal of 1861 (*sic*). As a historian, she was determined to produce a history of Kamloops, commenting that it would be "a factual record and . . . ignore the delightful fictions that have grown up around some of our more colourful characters."<sup>63</sup> Kamloops: A History of the District up to 1914 was published in 1969, and a second volume, Kamloops, 1914 - 1945, in 1975.<sup>64</sup>

Having an "official" staff member brought up other issues within the dynamic of the group. Balf's appointment was also the beginning of noticeable tensions between those who traditionally made decisions about the museum and there were some pointed discussions

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<sup>60</sup>BCMA RoundUp, January 1962, 34.

<sup>61</sup>BCMA RoundUp, January 1962, 34.

<sup>62</sup>BCMA RoundUp, Vol. 23 October 1964, 39.

<sup>63</sup>BCMA RoundUp, Vol.25 July 1965, 16.

<sup>64</sup>Under Mary's supervision, her niece, Ruth Balf, wrote the second volume.

requesting “clarification . . . of the curator’s duties.”<sup>65</sup> Yet, little evidence of these rumoured squabbles made its way into the minutes. The group endeavoured to keep, at least, a friendly record of its meetings though an exasperated secretary once noted:

Alderman late . . . as another meeting to attend, Pres. Morse absent due to previous commitment and Mr. Forster had to leave early . . . thus meeting took on aspect of a square dance, with sashaying in and out . . . [Marginalia *What a meeting!*]<sup>66</sup>

In the 1960s, the KMA moved into another intense period of collective memory creation and display. Partially through funding from the 1966 Provincial Centennial of Confederation, and encouraged by City Council, the museum tried to expand its civic presence by building a replication of Fort Kamloops near the river, just a few blocks south of the museum.<sup>67</sup> However, this drive to extend collective memory was never successful. The fort stretched the KMA’s resources very thin and was plagued by staffing issues. It saw poor attendance, funding problems, and, noticeably a lack of interest from other organizations. The replicated fort operated seasonally until 1972 when a flood of the Thompson River damaged it severely. The fort (later known as the Ranch Museum) struggled on a few years more and was eventually taken down.<sup>68</sup> Like the damaged fort, the KMA’s original memory project was watered down as members aged and died, and ties to other local organizations faded.

The KMA eventually regained its solid community support by concentrating efforts around the main museum and building. The 1955 building underwent major facelifts and interior upgrades in the 1970s and again in 1999. The library and art gallery mounted their own campaigns for space, securing civic buildings in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. Today, the Kamloops Museum is a thriving city operation, 98% city- funded, yet with an independent advisory board. It has excellent local and tourist attendance, and is well-known

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<sup>65</sup>KMA Minutes, 5 October, 1966.

<sup>66</sup>KMA Minutes, 28 April 1958.

<sup>67</sup>British Columbia Archives, GR 1448 British Columbia Canadian Confederation Centennial Committee Records, 1966-67, Permanent Projects, Kamloops.

<sup>68</sup>KMA Minutes, 28 February 1972.

for its fine displays and interpretive programs, and an excellent archive. The original log cabin is still securely in place on the museum's second floor, forming both an exhibit space and a remarkable symbol of the interior core of pioneer and fur trade memory.

Throughout, the KMA valued its independence from other concerns and its need for its own space and choices. Yet at all times the creation of the historic memory was linked to ideas of civic pride. The fervour of a small community seeking a place in modernity were the frameworks encasing the museum's development. The two eras show how the KMA's collective memory project was frequently proposed as essential to a sense of place and vital to community strength. Kamloops was, like other museums, linked to the memorialization of identity and the stabilization and the enactment of creative memory. Other factors were always at work, such as the external influences of provincial concerns, or availability of funds, but these were tied to the more essential issues of identity and establishing/creating collective memory. The Kamloops Museum Association was a vital part of the performance of progress, moving buildings, improving displays and practices, and most importantly, always connecting to the civic life of the community. The erection of a permanent building changed the project of collective memory creation from fur trade and settlers to one of civic identity, forever redirecting the collective memory project. The museum was an important part of the performance of modernity and progress, the civic collective memory of Kamloops.

## Chapter 4

### The Langley Centennial Museum: Local Memory and National History

Collective memory projects often are a response to a threat of eradication of memory. An extreme example is the enduring strength of testimony by Holocaust survivors. A less dramatic but similar impulse created community museums, local safe spaces for the housing of memories. The story of the Langley Centennial Museum is a significant example of such collective memory, its interruption, and its redirection. The Langley Centennial Museum was both a rescue mission of collective memory and the primary site for creation of a set historical narrative, encased within shifting community identities.

The pivotal point<sup>1</sup> of Langley's historical memory was the founding of Fort Langley, a Hudson's Bay Company outpost, in 1827. Later famous as the "birthplace" of the province of British Columbia, the fort site was preserved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a primary symbol for narratives of colonialism, provincial creation, local history and pioneer memory. Increasing federal control in the 1950s marginalized the community-based collective memory, but the construction of a new "centennial museum" in 1958 merged the localized "pioneer" memory with a new agenda of *civic* presence. Within a complex archipelago of historical understandings, surrounded by the currents of federal, provincial, and local interests, the Langley Centennial Museum retained and strengthened its community's identity.

In *The Quest for the Folk*, Ian McKay detailed the frameworks of cultural production at work in Nova Scotia, and how individuals like Helen Creighton sought out and preserved a preset notion of culture and folklore.<sup>2</sup> In the same way, the group interactions that built collective memory worked with preconceived narratives of history. In his examination of historical institutions and writing in British Columbia, Chad Reimer noted that "while writers constructed historical narratives on paper, monuments and historic sites were a means of

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<sup>1</sup>My thanks to Warren Sommer for this idea of the Fort's establishment as a pivot point.

<sup>2</sup>Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), 33.

publicly and physically inscribing an approved history upon the region.”<sup>3</sup> Langley’s historical narrative would be reworked and strengthened through the actions of local organizations, and later through federal and provincial government involvement and funding.

The fort site was the beginning of a winding path of yet another “community of memory” that eventually continued into the Langley Centennial Museum. Interaction between these different levels was often complex. As the Langley Centennial Museum had several committee and operating structures between 1958 and 1975, records were often difficult to access and many were unavailable. The enactment of the historical memory, however, continually reemerged in other community efforts. So this museum’s origins were viewed through personal interviews, and correspondence, and through the lens of the records of other community groups.

Fort Langley was established in 1827 on the Fraser river, just 25 miles east of what is now Vancouver.<sup>4</sup> This part of the river has long been home to the Stó:lo and Kwantlen Nations. By 1900, only the small farming community adjacent to the site of the fort retained the full “Fort Langley” name. The economy of the region was supported by private and commercial farming, orchards, and fishing. The municipality of Langley was established in 1873, seven miles inland. In 1955, over issues of taxation and land use, Langley split into city and township, with the community of Fort Langley remaining part of the township.<sup>5</sup> The conflicts between city and township were reflected in later issues of ownership and organization of the Langley Centennial.

As in other communities, Langley’s first museum was established in a historic building reworked as a home for history. The presence of the fort site as a draw for tourism

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<sup>3</sup>Chad Reimer, “The Making of British Columbia History: Historical Writing and Institutions, 1784-1958” (Ph. D. diss., York University, 1995), 200.

<sup>4</sup>The first site of Fort Langley was a few miles south-east of its present location, at Derby. The Fort moved to the current site in 1839 due to overcrowding. In B. A. McKelvie, Fort Langley, Outpost of Empire (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1957), 55.

<sup>5</sup>The separation into Township and City in 1955 appears to have been a matter of taxation and distribution of land. Information courtesy of the Corporation of the City of Langley, and Sue Morhun, Manager, Community and Heritage Services, Interview by author, February 4, 2003, tape recording, Fort Langley B.C..

was vital early on. By 1880, the fort site had just three remaining buildings with only one still in usable condition. The Hudson's Bay Company had moved to a shop front in the nearby village, and no longer used the property. Even the log palisade had been dismantled and sold for fence posts.<sup>6</sup> In January 1888, Alexander Mavis bought the property, and took over the soundest building, the manager's house, for his family home.<sup>7</sup>

The initial historical production truly began in the 1920's, when a chapter of the fraternal organization, the Native Sons of British Columbia, recognized the fort site as an ideal home for their collective memory.<sup>8</sup> Formed in Victoria in 1898, the Native Sons were an outgrowth of an earlier provincial Pioneer Society, which had lapsed sometime in the 1880s as original "pioneers" died off.<sup>9</sup> The Sons' mandate was to "perpetuate and cherish the Memories of the Pioneer's names and deeds, to collect the data and history of this province and [to] preserve and . . . establish museums . . . for them."<sup>10</sup>

Through the influence of one of its more notable members, Judge F.W.Howay, the Sons ensured that Fort Langley would physically house their emerging agenda of memory.<sup>11</sup> Howay was appointed to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) in March 1923 and successfully focussed the Board's attention on the site. The HSMBC identified the last few buildings as "original" structures of national importance and made a commitment to preservation, starting an ongoing cycle of federal and provincial involvement. Howay also secured a grant of \$500.00 from the Langley municipal council.

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<sup>6</sup>Langley Centennial Museum and National Exhibition Centre Archives (hereafter LCMA), MS 80, Vancouver Daily Province, 2 June 1947.

<sup>7</sup>Jamie Morton, Fort Langley, A Site History, 1986-1986, (In-house report for Fort Langley National Historic Site, 1986), 2. This building was apparently a second-generation (ca.1859).construction, and was renovated in the last active years of the fort, about 1871. Vancouver Daily Province, 2 June 1947. MS80, Archives, Langley Centennial Museum and National Exhibition Centre.

<sup>8</sup>For more discussion of this group see Robert Leece, "Making British Columbia History: The Native Sons of British Columbia," B. C. Historical News, 1, no.4 (Winter 1995/96): 30-33.

<sup>9</sup>Reimer, "The Making of British Columbia History," 196 - 197.

<sup>10</sup>Cited in Reimer, "The Making of British Columbia History;" City of Victoria Archives, Constitution of the Native Sons of British Columbia (1923), 12.

<sup>11</sup> See discussion of Howay in Reimer, "The Making of British Columbia History", 89-136.

The Sons worked to mark and commemorate a colonial and local collective memory. Their first inscription was literal, the erection of a stone cairn, which literally carved their mandate and narrative for Langley permanently onto the site (see Figure 11). Erected in May 1925, the plaque stated:

The first trading post on the Pacific coast of Canada. Built in 1827 by the Hudson's Bay Company. Destroyed by fire and rebuilt here in 1840. The scene of the first agriculture and the first fishery in British Columbia. The birthplace of the Colony of British Columbia, 19<sup>th</sup> day of November, 1858.<sup>12</sup>

In another act of claim, the Native Sons raised a ninety-foot flagstaff on the property. When the Native Sons acquired the Mavis farm and home building for a museum in 1929, work immediately began on “improvements” to the remaining building, including a new roof, concrete foundations and piers, new windows and shutters. The building had to be made over into a secure home for collective memory.

This first museum run by the Native Sons was in place from 1931 until 1958. It delineated the ongoing historical narrative for Fort Langley, but the local history of the rural community was an inseparable element. The displays and artifacts built and collected by the Native Sons reflected their pride in many facets of the area’s history. As in other rural centres, collective memory was constructed through the activities of meeting, making physical improvements to the museum, and collecting.

The fort site was central. Great attention was given to a detailed scale model of the fort, built by John Worrall, a museum caretaker and Native Son (see Figure 12). The model was the main attraction of the museum, with a seven-inch high palisades and carefully detailed scale guns and flag pole. Such displays reinforced the idea of the fort as a historical “pivot point” and were always given special prominence. The Sons installed larger windows so visitors could view the artifacts even when the museum wasn’t open. “Original” items such as an old account book, firearms and “Indian relics” were also prominently displayed to show way of life in the fort. Tools of more recent rural life were also shown and their donors

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<sup>12</sup>Morton, *Site History*, 4.

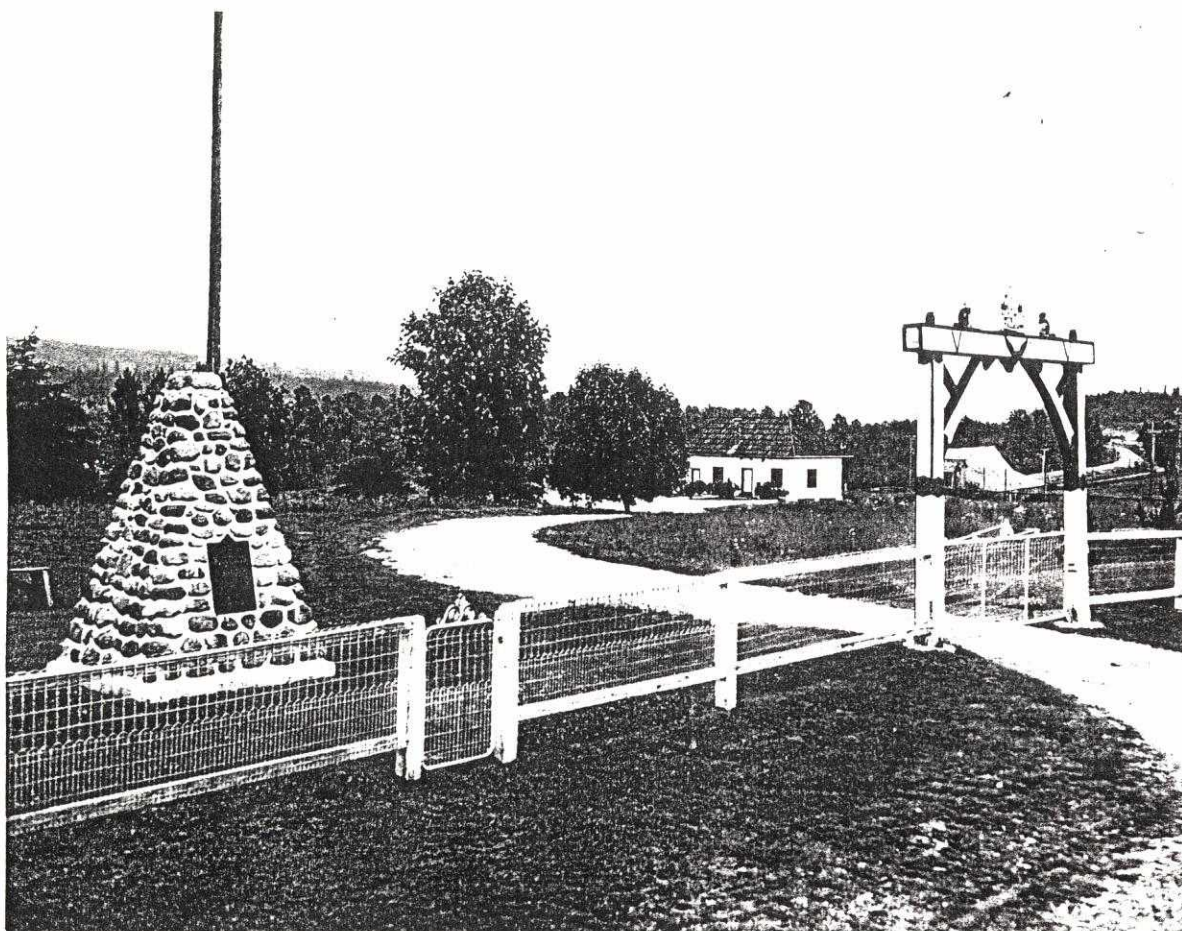


Figure 11. Cairn at Fort Langley erected by Native Sons  
BCA 77957 (By Permission: British Columbia Archives)

carefully noted. A general historic authority was represented through more eclectic displays, that included Spanish armour and “personal items of the Japanese Empress.”<sup>13</sup> In these early efforts to recall and memorialize, the pathway of Langley’s historical memory was deeply established.

The Native Sons worked steadily to maintain their displays, with a quiet period during the war years and renewed efforts in the early 1950s. However, an aging membership weakened the vitality of the organization. The revival of the collective memory project came from within the civic, the Fort Langley and District Board of Trade who established the Fort Langley Restoration Society in 1953.<sup>14</sup> This group lobbied the federal and especially provincial governments for funding. It was not a completely autonomous group, but was strongly reinforced by the attention and activities that preceded the upcoming 1958 Centennial. Through the Restoration Society’s efforts, the Social Credit government appointed Willard Ireland, the Provincial Archivist, and three deputy ministers to a new Provincial Centennial Committee.

By the mid-1950s, the federal government gave its sites renewed attention as it undertook new projects in each province (Fort Langley and Fort Rodd Hill were the two sites of significance in B.C.).<sup>15</sup> Fort Langley was named a National Historic Site on September 24, 1954, and by 1955, formal studies of the site’s structures, along with feasibility studies and cost estimates were underway.<sup>16</sup> A goal was set toward completion and restoration of the buildings by Dominion Day, 1958. Through these efforts the fort was well on its way to

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<sup>13</sup>Apparently the woman, not the CPR ship of that name. Vancouver Daily Province, 21 June 1947.

<sup>14</sup>The group had at its head Alex C. Hope, an M.L.A. See Morton, Site History, 7.

<sup>15</sup>The renewed federal interest was apparently a result of new people such as Robert Winters and later Ernest A. Côté and also focus on architectural conservation, which led toward amendments to the Historic Sites and Monuments act in 1954. For a full discussion, see C.J. Taylor, Negotiating the Past: the Making of Canada’s National Historic Parks and Sites (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 144-154 and Morton, Site History, 7. Also see Robyn Gillam, Hall of Mirrors: Museums and the Canadian Public, (Banff: The Banff Centre Press, 2001, 74-81.

<sup>16</sup>Morton, Site History, 8.

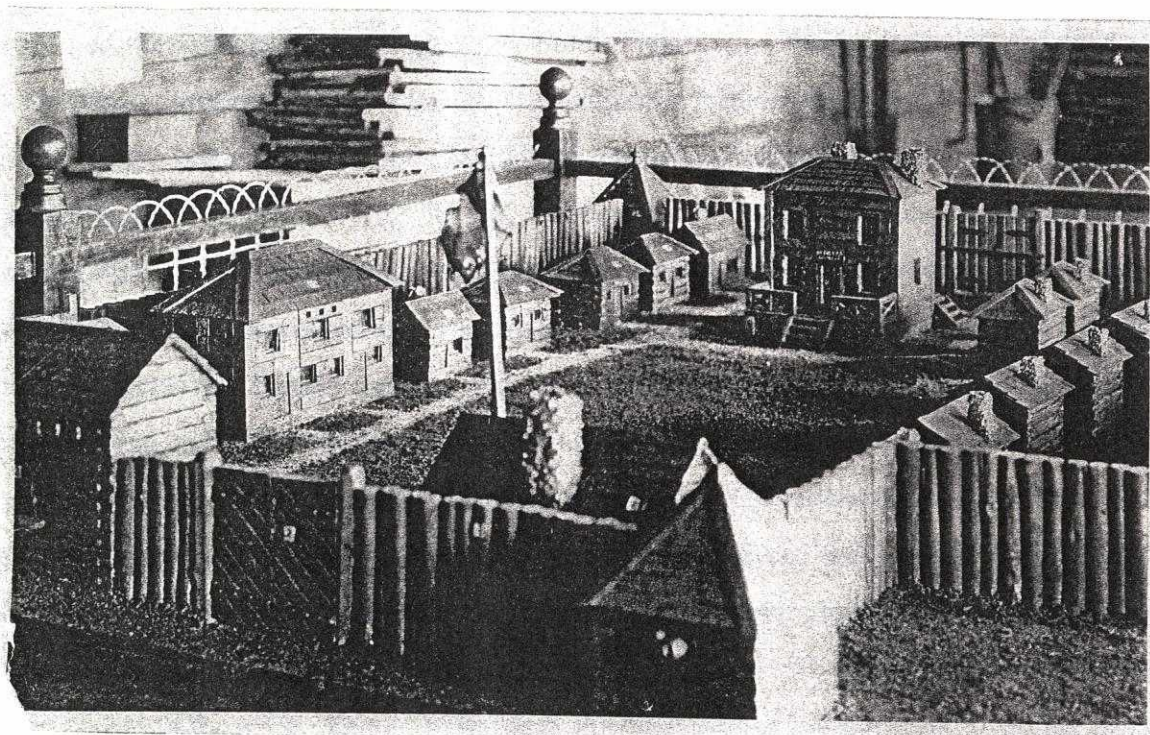


Figure 12 John Worrall's model of Fort Langley  
BCA 20242 (by permission British Columbia Archives)

becoming a fully federal site. However, with the advent of an “official” site status for the fort, federal and provincial views and policy and procedure began to replace the identity perpetuated by the Native Sons.

As the fort became a federal site, there was a rapid renegotiating of memory for both the community and the collective memory project.<sup>17</sup> The renewed efforts to restore the fort interrupted the activity of the community-based memory. More importantly, the federal government’s “improvements” to the fort challenged the primacy of the Native Sons’ original museum as the slated “restoration” of buildings meant that the Sons could no longer use the fort site for their museum. This loss of a space for the collections meant a loss of the museum’s context and the loss of a location to enact and perform collective memory. While the Native Sons had perceived local history in Langley as somehow seamlessly linked to the Fort’s narratives of fur trade and pioneers, the federal government, with an assumed greater understanding and authority of the historical, worked within larger meta-narratives of Canadian identity. To the Native Sons, however, imposition of greater narratives arrested the flow of local collective memory. Worse, many of the Native Sons’ artifacts and displays were “outside” of the site’s newly “official” historic eras (with an emphasis on the fur trade, this was reasonable), and would not be kept.<sup>18</sup> The federal site *did* want to retain any items reflective of the fur trade. To add to the fuss, the Native Sons did not want to simply hand over what they viewed as *their* prized and cherished artifacts to a federal agency.<sup>19</sup> The original Native Sons’ museum took many artifacts on a loosely-defined “temporary loan” basis. For local people, it was one thing to lend items to the Native Sons, who were local

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<sup>17</sup> British Columbia’s Historic Objects Preservation Act was drafted in 1948, and revised to the Archeological and Historic Sites protection Act in 1960. The latter was partially based on the federal government’s Historic Sites and Monuments Act of 1953 (a result of the recommendations of the Massey Commission). See also Taylor, Negotiating the Past, 130-136.

<sup>18</sup>Morton, Site History, 13. The Native Sons even appointed a committee to raise their concerns.

<sup>19</sup>Few museums had clear accession policies or even legal ownership of their artifacts in this era, which would only have added to complications. Many items would have been perceived as being on “permanent loan” from the local community, safeguarded in the Native Sons’ museum but not meant to go elsewhere. The fort had a different view, that artifacts were part of a greater federal collection.

people with local ties, and another to donate them to the Federal Government which they viewed as an outsider. Rumours circulated of items being shipped back to Ottawa or to other historical sites. Both sides questioned the ownership of artifacts, with many misunderstandings and concerns. The issue was never completely resolved and shows how deeply the flow of collective memory was disturbed.

This change in historical view however, was only a temporary interruption of the collective memory project for Langley. The solution ironically lay in a provincially-driven celebration of the Centennial of British Columbia in 1958.<sup>20</sup> The Centennial year itself was planned as a detailed spectacle of the historical, with recognition, commemoration and a renewed project of *provincial* collective memory. Many of the planned Centennial events were part of a constructed pageantry with visiting royalty and dignitaries, re-enactments, Centennial Caravans and the display of flags and logos. However, the year's events were also the culmination of ongoing efforts of the local Board of Trade, City and Township Councils, and the legacy of the Native Sons. Within the Centennial celebrations were important statements of reclamation of the historical path and in a sense, another "inscription" was made of the community's collective history. This was the construction of a new museum building, just a few hundred feet from the fort entrance.

In Victoria, a Provincial Centennial committee headed by Laurie Wallace (later Deputy Provincial Secretary) had been appointed, and the people of Fort Langley were concerned that they be part of those plans, with access to the available funding.<sup>21</sup> By 1956, a local Centennial committee was in place.<sup>22</sup> In their urgency to have a successful place in provincial Centennial celebrations, they dropped old conflicts and negotiated a peace. The

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<sup>20</sup>1958 the Centennial of the creation and the granting of the name "British Columbia" to the mainland colony and was named as "the birthday" of the province, a fact contested by many on Vancouver Island, and also later by historians.

<sup>21</sup>Correspondence between Laurie Wallace, Chairman, British Columbia 1958 Centennial Committee and Langley Board of Trade, also the Fort Langley Community Improvement Association, all March 1958, 1958. British Columbia Archives (BCA), GR 1448, B.C. 1958 Confederation Centennial Projects, Folio 1, Box 5.

<sup>22</sup>Langley Advance, 9 January 1958.

Langley Centennial Committee was a careful balance of influential local people from both the City and Township. Township and City agreed to combine committees and therefore money available through centennial grants and to work on projects as “cooperating communities.”<sup>23</sup> The Langley Centennial committee learned early on, from the Provincial committee, that events would be concentrated on Fort Langley, where the fort was central. They began to discuss the sixty cents per capita available for “permanent projects.” For the next two years, they planned and looked at ideas and met with delegations for everything from re-enactments to compositions of song and poetry. By December 1956, they chose a museum as “the most desirable project.”<sup>24</sup>

For Langley, the Centennial rekindled the drive of the Native Sons’ original collective memory project. In early 1958, the collective memory of fort and town and the funds of Township and City gracefully merged as “a large British Columbia Centennial flag was presented [and] draped over the Mayor’s desk for the balance of the meeting.”<sup>25</sup> The Fort Langley and District Board of Trade enjoyed praise, “jubilant . . . in the realization [of] what seemed more like a dream two years ago.”<sup>26</sup> Public emphasis was on tourism opportunities, particularly facilities, “direction signs, publicity and arrangements [and] preparation of a . . . brochure. The Langley Advance praised the “foresight” of the Committee. A special insert suggested that local people make their town as beautiful as possible, with “paint, flower seeds [that are] inexpensive, [and there are] many ideas and designs for home improvements . . . Let’s be worthy hosts to our visitors this summer.”

Although the Committee represented interests of both Township and City, the old fort still shone brightest in provincial imaginings. Now a federal site, it continued to enjoy

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<sup>23</sup>Part of the form for registering for provincial centennial funds asked “if there is to be a pooling of effort, please state other cooperating communities. BCA, GR 1448, British Columbia 1958 Centennial Committee, Projects.

<sup>24</sup>BCA, 1958 Centennial Projects.

<sup>25</sup>Langley Advance, 9 January 1958.

<sup>26</sup>Langley Advance, 16 January 1958.

significant provincial funding and involvement.<sup>27</sup> The museum was, at least within the Committee's minutes, meant to represent the entirety of Langley: city, township, and the fort community. So the Township gave the new museum rights to use its property directly across the road from the fort site. It was as if the historical narrative of Langley could not be completely separated from the main site of collective memory. The fort remained in view.

However, the proposed Langley Centennial Museum would also embrace the modernistic march forward. The Langley Advance enthusiastically proclaimed "New Museum Goes to Tender."<sup>28</sup> The awarding of the building contracts for design and construction received much local attention, as the narrative of Langley was brought onto a contemporary stage "following an ultra-modernistic design to contrast with the 17<sup>th</sup> century [*sic*] architecture of the fort."<sup>29</sup> The design had no windows to save on construction costs and allow more room for displays. Behind the scenes, the project was full of difficulties that were carefully detailed in the minutes of the committee: securing land and title, removing of older buildings including a "20" x 40" foot chicken house" and some difficulties convincing the local architect, J. Calder Peeps, to get on with the work.<sup>30</sup> All was happily resolved and by spring construction was well under way. An April 3 photograph of the museum construction showed the roof and joists in place, and noted that "construction has been proceeding rapidly on the new museum . . . completion of the \$14,000.00 museum is expected at the end of May."<sup>31</sup>

Within the Langley Centennial committee, exchange of story and the ongoing reproduction of the historical narrative characterized the year. Among the other projects and ceremonies, the original "old guard" of the historical memory of Langley, the Native Sons, held their provincial conference in Fort Langley. The Advance reminded readers that

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<sup>27</sup>In January 1956, the province "agreed to share restoration costs equally with the federal government providing the total was under \$250,000.00." Morton, Site History, 9.

<sup>28</sup>Langley Advance, 30 January 1958.

<sup>29</sup>Langley Advance, 6 March 1958.

<sup>30</sup>See Morton, Site History, 9-12, for more information on J. Calder Peeps, a professor at UBC, and his often-troubled dealings with the federal government.

<sup>31</sup>Langley Advance, 3 April 1958.

The Native Sons of B.C. represents male persons born in the province, other than those of Oriental extraction . . . seeks to advance the interest and promote the welfare of B.C., Canada and the Empire . . . is against any movement that tend towards weakening the bonds of Empire and to ensure the emulation of progress in vital questions of the present and future.<sup>32</sup>

The Centennial year also was a strong example of the ongoing traditions of exchange between community groups. At one meeting fourteen women’s groups joined forces to display local pride, as they “discussed wearing old-fashioned dresses at the Centennial functions and the need for catering services at Fort Langley” (see Figures 13 and 14).<sup>33</sup> Even religious understandings were woven into the historical; an ecumenical church service on May Day recognized one hundred years of church services in Langley.<sup>34</sup> In a burst of inspired rhetoric, Fort Langley briefly ignored the history of the province, to claim “the centennial [of the] first [Protestant] missionaries . . . first services . . . first conversions of Indians [at a] sun-drenched . . . prayer service within the palisade of Fort Langley.”<sup>35</sup>

The museum was completed on schedule and previewed by the Centennial Committee a few days before the official opening. The architecture was praised and exhibits admired. The Advance included a gentle reminder on the issues of ownership surrounding the new museum, when it noted that any exhibits “in the old museum” i.e, the building in the fort would be retained in the national park buildings”.<sup>36</sup> The designers of the museum also permanently marked local history by literally imbedding artifacts in the cement of the courtyard: “Each square in the arcade has old tools imbedded into the pavement, the type used in developing this part of the country: horseshoes, construction tongs, rakes, sprockets,

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<sup>32</sup>Langley Advance, 10 April 1958.

<sup>33</sup>Langley Advance, 6 March 1958.

<sup>34</sup>The Advance did not note how ecumenical the service was.

<sup>35</sup>Langley Advance, 1 May 1958. The event appears to have been based in the Anglican tradition. This was rather dubious rhetoric, considering that other religious groups such as the Roman Catholic Oblates were in B.C. well before 1858.

<sup>36</sup>Langley Advance, 26 June 1958.



Figure 13



Figure 14

Figures 13 and 14. Ladies in costume for the 1958 Centennial, Langley  
(By permission: Langley Centennial Museum and National Exhibition  
Centre Archives) 1958 Centennial, MSS 81.

hatchets, wrenches hooks, etc.”<sup>37</sup> Even the opening of the museum re-traced the deeply etched collective understandings of the historical. The landing of Simon Fraser in 1808 and the founding of the first fort site were dramatically reenacted. An “accompanying band of colourful Indians” was welcomed by “pioneers” and everyone followed a piper up to the site of the Native Sons’ cairn.”<sup>38</sup> Afterward, at the museum itself, Chairman A. Hope pointed out that history “had been made that day.” In the museum, it would be preserved so folks could “relive portions of our past whenever they desired.” The home for historical production had been restored.

Meanwhile, at a provincial level, much of the Centennial pageantry was focussed on the newly-designated site of the fort. It had seen much reconstruction of buildings, including the palisade fence over the last two years. Dominion Day celebrations had been set as the goal for its full reconstruction. Princess Margaret opened the partially “restored” fort and at the new museum across the road, she showed “a keen interest” in the exhibits (See Figures 15 and 16).<sup>39</sup>

While the Centennial celebrations provided solutions for the performance of collective memory, they also permanently divided the connection between the collective idea of history and the fort. The construction of local collective memory building continued, but on a new site and in a new context. The “new” museum replaced the fort building as focal point for *local* historical memory. The fort site, once central to Langley’s historical narrative, retained its role as British Columbia’s birthplace, with its own “producers” and federally-mandated history.<sup>40</sup> As the Centennial museum explained in a 1958 publicity flyer, “while the nearby

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<sup>37</sup>These imbedded tools have weathered surprisingly well through the last 40 years and are still visible in the museum courtyard today.

<sup>38</sup>Note: The “Indians” may have been non-natives playing the part, however, this is not documented. Langley Advance, 5 July 1958.

<sup>39</sup>Langley Advance, 5 July 1958.

<sup>40</sup>The emphasis was on architectural preservation, but this meant much discussion and many committees on what could be considered as *significant*. For a full discussion, see Taylor, Negotiating the Past, 157-171.

Fort Langley restoration places emphasis on the activities of the Hudson's Bay Company, our field of endeavour is the historical interpretation of the Langley area."<sup>41</sup>

Historical production of *local* memory also continued in other parallel streams beyond the fort and new museum. A local pageant, Douglas Days, was celebrated each November in honour of Sir James Douglas, the first governor of British Columbia. Collective memory was also enacted in a secondary museum collection in the mid-1960s, the Farm Machinery museum. Relations between these different community events, the "new" Centennial museum and the fort were complex, and echoed the primacy sought by older historical pathways, yet, at the same time reinforced collective memory because the interaction was a restatement of local history. However, the Langley Centennial Museum remained the primary site for the interpretation and narration of the Langley's history. It continued the original collective memory enactment first carried out by the Native Sons.

The first era of the Langley Centennial was typical of a smaller museum for British Columbia in the 1960s.<sup>42</sup> Activities were dictated by the ebb and flow of visitors. Volunteer guides (commonly known as docents) would greet visitors, point out the most interesting displays, answer questions, and be sure to indicate the ever-present donation boxes. Community museums operated on minimal budgets, perhaps having only enough to open their doors a few days a week. They were almost always seasonal operations, open more in summer when tourists meant more donations. Rarely provided with training, volunteers did their best to cover a wide variety of information. Their interpretation operated within the scope of the prescribed historical production: Fort Langley as an extension of the birthplace of British Columbia, rural life combined with fur trade explorers. As in the Saanich and Kamloops, such telling of "stories" was vital to the production and continuance of collective memory. The Native Sons' model of the fort moved to the new museum, as did many other artifacts of local significance. Volunteers worked closely together to maintain the "correct"

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<sup>41</sup>British Columbia Museums Association (hereafter BCMA), insert to Museum RoundUp, 9 (July 1961): 16.

<sup>42</sup>The information for this section draws on the author's working knowledge, reports in the BCMA RoundUp, and interviews.

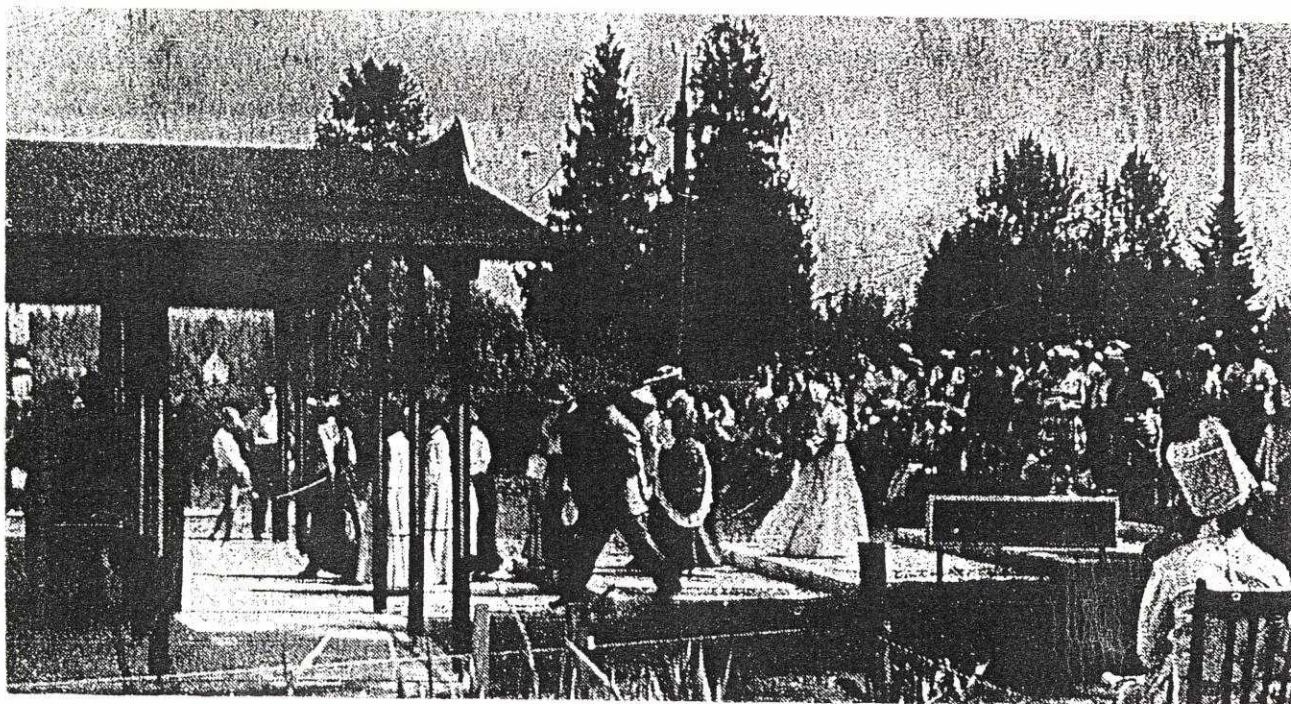
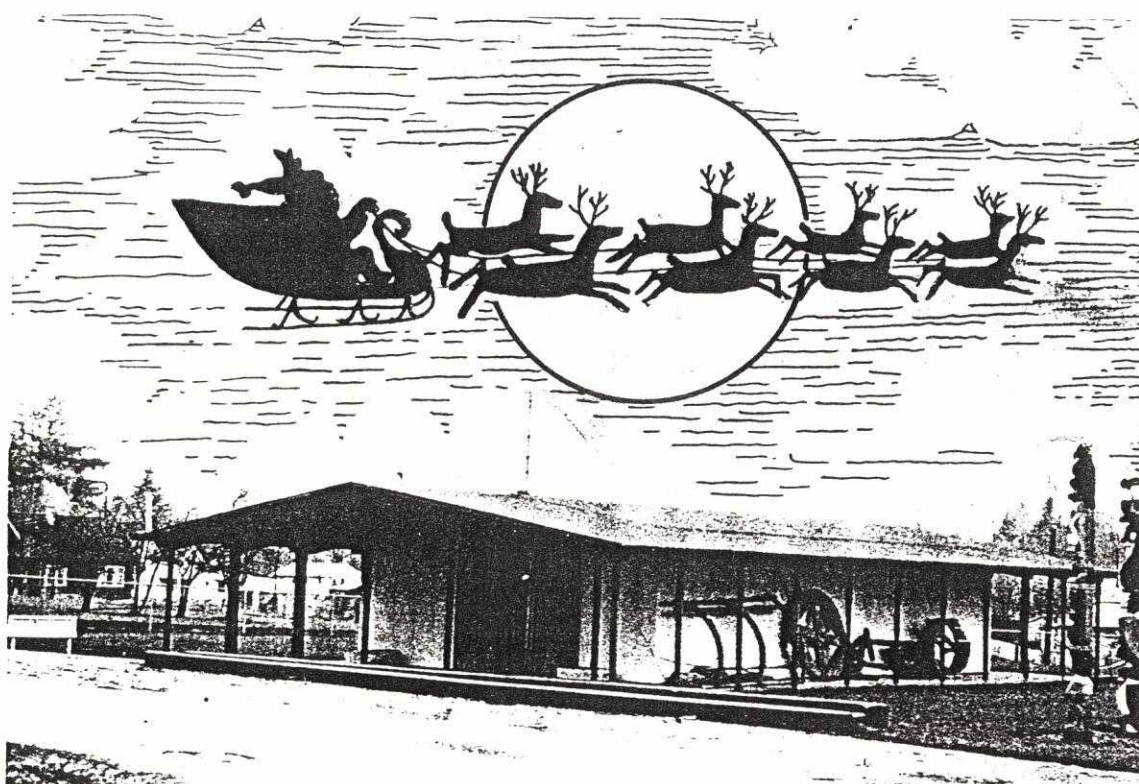


Figure 15. Going into the new Langley Centennial Museum, July 1, 1958.  
Langley Advance (By permission: Langley Centennial Museum and National  
Exhibition Centre Archives)

MUSEUM ROUND-UP 86

NO. 9 JANUARY 1963



LANGLEY CENTENNIAL MUSEUM

This museum demonstrates how a basic design can be both simple and attractive. Windows would add to the cost and only complicate the display problem. 'Eye-catchers' along the walls quickly stimulate interest

and a

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!

Figure 16. The new Langley Centennial Museum, cover of *RoundUp*, no. 9, January 1963. (By permission: British Columbia Museums Association).

versions of narratives. “We sat around the table and shared . . . what we [were] going to talk about.”<sup>43</sup> The volunteer docents took their work very seriously. At the Langley Centennial, many who volunteered had teacher training, and the museum was an opportunity to put their knowledge to work, but still be able to “stay at home” with younger children. One former docent spoke of how there was “some office work . . . [and we] took tours of children through.” She noted that interaction of the volunteers was equally important and that “maybe nine women . . . would stay all day, and take their lunch.”<sup>44</sup> Her main reason for being a docent, was, however, “I had to be involved with kids.”<sup>45</sup>

In the 1960s, a typical “school program” at the Langley Centennial consisted of pointing out the differences of a kitchen of yesterday. In most community museums of this period, a kitchen display was an accumulation of periods, 1930 butter churns next to blackened 1880s wood-stoves, modern curtains in a heritage-look fabric, with no single historical period. The utensils on display might cover a technological span of more than 100 years or more. By the mid-1960s, most museum programs had embraced the idea that some teaching should be “hands-on,” in other words, artifacts would be taken from the displays and demonstrated, passed around, or carefully held up for one touch. Artifacts on display were the docents’ props for their stories. “[Our] mandate was not to teach them . . . not try to drag facts into their heads . . . [the] idea [was] to get the kids to go home and bring their parents.” Another former docent noted “we were just . . . a group of women . . . [there had] always been good feeling amongst the women, the group, [was] welcoming.”<sup>46</sup>

The volunteer group was also partly an extension of the Native Sons. The women’s wing of the Sons, the Native Daughters, formed a post in Langley in 1954. Their purpose was similar to the Sons, but focussed on a service role --“to engage in patriotic and charitable

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<sup>43</sup>Anonymous subjects, two former docents, interview by author, taped recording, Langley, B.C., 3 February 2003.

<sup>44</sup>As in many museums of this time, docents were usually female, again, following rural divisions of labour.

<sup>45</sup>Anonymous subjects, interview by author, 3 February 2003.

<sup>46</sup>Anonymous subjects, interview by author, 3 February 2003.

activities that would promote British Columbia, Canada and the empire."<sup>47</sup> The Daughters were an important factor in extending and redirecting the historical memory. They were willing to directly help with operations, and through this, embodied earlier understandings of Langley's historical knowledge, and continued the first historical production of the Native Sons.<sup>48</sup> The organization undoubtedly influenced the sense of belonging among the docents.

Like Langley, several small museums built new quarters and developed their operations through 1958 centennial funding.<sup>49</sup> In 1959, the Provincial Museum in Victoria started an umbrella organization to provide information and exchange, the British Columbia Museums Association. Their program of annual seminars grew in popularity and their publication, Museum RoundUp, was widely read in the museum community. Member museums sent in short reports on their activities. The first curator of the Langley Centennial, Dagmar Umphrey, was a faithful correspondent.

Mrs. Umphrey was apparently hired as soon as the museum opened to assist the volunteer docents. The township and city of Langley had agreed to take on the cost of staffing.<sup>50</sup> We can only conjecture as to why they were so willing to fund the position. Paid staff were still a relative rarity in community museums in the late 1950s. It may have been an issue of establishing civic ownership. The salary was, most likely a nominal amount, or may have reflected some pride in a highly successful Centennial year. The move certainly indicated the waning involvement of the Native Sons, who indicated that they could not afford to staff the position. Mrs. Umphrey, a one-time member of the Native Daughters, had been

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<sup>47</sup>Brochure, ca. 2000, Vancouver, B.C., Native Daughters of B.C.

<sup>48</sup>Post No. 6 of the Native Daughters was established in Langley in 1954. The Native Daughters were increasingly involved in museum activities in the 1950s, and may have benefited from the previous museum experience of the main post, No.1 in Vancouver, who had saved and run the Hastings Mills Store museum. Sadly, any formal documentation of this connection no longer exists. Research found only superficial information was retained by the Main Post No.1 (now at the Vancouver Archives), and sadly, the Fort Langley post's original records were lost in a house flood several years ago.

<sup>49</sup>As a 1970 British Columbia Museums Association survey indicates, at least 8 museums were built between 1956 and 1958. See Table 1, also British Columbia Museums Association Archives, File 12, Box 1.

<sup>50</sup>Langley Advance, 5 July 1958.

active in the Centennial celebrations. Not surprisingly, as curator she did not always have an easy role. For example, the Township authorized her to “close the museum for 45 minutes to go home for lunch,” and also to “purchase one shovel, suitable for the removal of snow, around the museum.”<sup>51</sup> The latter chore seems rather extreme, as Mrs. Umphrey was in her mid-50s at the time. For Mrs. Umphrey, the museum must have been another home to her to care for:

We closed the museum. . .and did not reopen because of the severe winter. . .the floor was cleaned and new vermiculite was added, which the kids happily throw all over the place and I curse every day as I go around with a dust pan and broom.<sup>52</sup>

Mrs. Umphrey took care of the museum and kept volunteers organized, and acted as liaison between the needs of the public museum and the Langley township’s museum committee. For example, a touring museum expert, Dr. Carl E. Guthe, a promoter of museums as “important services to their community,” came out to admire the museum and arrangements.<sup>53</sup> He at first was admiring and polite, and then Mrs. Umphrey noted, “He proceeded to tear everything to pieces in a nice sort of way.” She commented that she did not really mind as “this I had expected but only wished he could have lectured to my committee.” Mrs. Umphrey and her volunteers were often at the mercy of local politics and priorities. Later, when the board did not come through on promised improvements, she noted her frustrations: “the winter works program has gone the way of all good things. This building would have had washrooms, work room storage space. . .and tourist information. . .I am not sure. . .what happens now.”<sup>54</sup> Still, things improved again -- “when the money is forthcoming,

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<sup>51</sup>LCMA., MSS 81, from Mrs. E.V. Coates, Deputy Clerk, Township of Langley, to Mrs. D. Umphrey, Curator, Langley Centennial Museum, 15 December 1958.

<sup>52</sup>RoundUp, no.24, October 1965, 16.

<sup>53</sup>BCMA RoundUp, no. 7, July 1961, 26. Carl E. Guthe was touted at the time to be “the highest authority in North America in the field of museum organization” and was a research associate of the American Museums Association.

<sup>54</sup>BCMA RoundUp, no.10, January 1962, 36.

we are ready to expand, and, best of all, we will have a washroom.”<sup>55</sup> She also dealt firmly with less cooperative visitors, “we have had two signs put in the museum, “Do not handle exhibits” and “do not leave children unattended”--this has been a great help to me.”

Displays were usually organized thematically, with unique personal touches to style of representation and exhibit “flow.” These smaller museums operated before the days of the exhibit designer, storylines, fancy graphics and artistic considerations. Still, the displays were imaginative and creative, and rich in information. In a report to the British Columbia Museums Association, the Langley Centennial Museum proudly noted how:

New cases have been installed. These are larger and have all-glass tops and fronts, a great improvement over the wood cases with glass tops. . . Each bay represents one subject. The first. . . is on early travel, on the panel are snowshoes, canoe paddles, ox shoes, etc.

From the displays, the docents created their stories and most likely, the narratives of the displays were created by earlier collective memories. An example was a set of “historical figurines” made by the local Women’s Institute. These carefully costumed dolls, 12" tall, portrayed everything from fur traders and factors to voyageurs.<sup>57</sup> Like the Native Sons’ model of the fort, women’s organizations literally modeled historical understanding, in a form familiar to women.

Another side of the Langley Centennial’s project of collective memory was visible in its advisory committee. The committee saw its role as preserving collective memory and maintaining the correct version of history. Ernie Brown, a Native Son, worked on the original committee for Centennial Museum. In his early fifties when he worked on the board, he was remembered as a true raconteur, who loved to tell stories of life in the early days of the Fort Langley community, of his childhood and that of his father. He apparently had “a very good

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<sup>55</sup>BCMA RoundUp, no.24, October 1965, 36.

<sup>56</sup>BCMA RoundUp, no.32, October 1968, 47.

<sup>57</sup>The dolls were on display both at the museum and in the fort for many years, and recently made a return appearance in an exhibit on the development of the fort and museum, LCMA, “Coming home: Objects from Fort Langley’s Past.”

memory.” Mr. Brown worked as fisherman, logger, and later at the New Westminster shipyards. He was a member of the Native Sons from an early age --just for fun, the Native Sons came and “captured” him for an initiation ceremony. He was also involved through his family’s traditions: his father, Alec Houston had been Factor for the Native Sons; his mother, Anne Medd, an active member of the Women’s Institute, once noted that she had “just baked 20 pies for Douglas Days.”<sup>58</sup>

In his role as committee member, Mr. Brown often expressed his concerns about the ownership of artifacts once the Federal government took over the fort. Since the local people had put in so many years safeguarding the Fort’s contents, it was not entirely surprising that feelings of mistrust and uncertainty emerged. Brown often told his family how ownership issues dominated much of the minutes early meetings, which items would be accepted, how cataloguing might be carried out, and importantly, whether articles that tied in with “the Hudson’s Bay Restored Fort” should be transferred, or retained.<sup>59</sup> The other half of the committee’s discussions were devoted to the duties of the Custodian, which, it was decided, “shall not include cleaning out eaves-troughs, cutting of grass or painting.”<sup>60</sup> Such ongoing discussions of duties, roles and ownership reflected how intellectual ownership of the historical was always being renegotiated. It ensured possession both in the legal sense, and in the protection of the right to remember.

The ongoing evolution of gendered roles was clearly visible in these volunteers. It was not unique that the operation and activities of Langley Centennial was a women’s domain, while the committee and town council were primarily men. Few women served on museum boards or committees in the late 1950s, although this certainly changed significantly by the mid-1960s. Definitions of responsibility, and whether roles were public or private were constantly being renegotiated. Yet such group interaction ensured collective memory survival

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<sup>58</sup>Marilyn Yates, (daughter of Ernie Brown) interview by author, by phone, Langley, B.C., 2 April 2003, untaped.

<sup>59</sup>LCMAC. Minutes, Langley Centennial Museum Advisory Committee (hereafter LCMAC), 16 March 1960.

<sup>60</sup>LCMAC Minutes, October 1963.

and was the tenacity needed to continue the museum. Community museums had a tenuous existence in this era; sparse funding was a constant concern. As only one person usually in charge, any illness or the death of a volunteer or staff member could mean a loss of continuity. The interactions and conflicts of maintaining the museum, and ensuring enough volunteers also retained collective memory.

The creation of collective memory took place in other sites of production. The Douglas Day banquet was a direct extension of pioneer memory, a local spectacle held on November 19th, the date of the establishment of British Columbia by Sir James Douglas. Douglas Days (and later on, a secondary event called Langley Days) paralleled the Native Sons' efforts and Centennial events, the first enactments of the historical path. First held in 1946, the main part of the event was a formal dinner, by invitation only, limited to "original pioneers," their spouses, and a varying host of dignitaries. The latter ranged from local Mayors to provincial premiers, and even Governors General. Often Governor Douglas himself was present (portrayed by an actor) much to the delight of participants. Douglas Days was a direct restaging of Langley's first historical narratives, reestablishing of the importance of the fort, not in the way it was recognized by the federal government, but how it was connected locally. In the staging of Douglas Days, pioneer memory and the fort were reunited, and local collective memory reconnected to national memory.

The 1958 Centennial banquet was the "largest gathering of the pioneers" since its inception. The Mayor's speech was a masterpiece of colonial mandate, as it noted the important presence of "those people who. . .stayed to carve a home from the wilderness. . .day by day, built log upon log, stone upon stone. . .slowly but surely started the wheels of progress in motion."<sup>61</sup> The Advance noted that the large attendance was a challenge for the seven Women's Institutes who cooked and served the meal and meant a change of venue to accommodate everyone.

The event recaptured the pageantry of the fort, but the dinner itself usually took place in the 1932 Town Hall, on the main street of Fort Langley. The hall was an imposing building

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<sup>61</sup>Langley Advance, 27 November 1958.

signifying local pride and with an architecture that echoed a colonial seat of government. A typical programme would consist of a fine dinner, followed by toasts to the queen and province.<sup>62</sup> Usually a re-enactment pageant by local students highlighted the celebrations, with “emphatic scenes. . .animate[ing] the story of the birth of British Columbia at Fort Langley.”<sup>63</sup> Often a visiting historian gave a scholarly lecture on pioneer history. The evenings ended with a carefully worded toast to the pioneers themselves. Fort Langley, *the community*, made sure it remained as the birthplace of British Columbia, part of the fort. Douglas Days reenacted that birthing.

Sometimes the restatement of the Langley Centennial’s collective memory appeared in renewed conflict. Just as the Centennial museum was firmly established, another building was going up, literally on the lot next door. Opening in 1967, the Farm Machinery Museum was built next door to the Langley Centennial. The official brochure drew visitors’ attention to “a remarkable evolution in farm equipment from primitive horse drawn tools to powerful automated machines.”<sup>64</sup> The Langley Centennial was too much the domain of women, or perhaps for some, too connected to the fort. Perhaps it was nothing more than an opportunity to house an interesting collection. Although the Farm Machinery museum was only ten feet away, the two operations remained separate.<sup>65</sup> However, its building reflected the ongoing drive to retain the rural path within the small Fort Langley community.

By the late 1960s, the Langley Centennial Museum had an uncertain mandate, little funding, over-crowded, aging exhibits and aging volunteers. All of these factors put the continuance of the museum at risk. Yet once more, the collective memory project of Langley renewed itself, not in the form of a new building, but in adaptation. While community-based

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<sup>62</sup>The menu for 1958 dinner was straightforward and hearty, featuring roast beef, and gravy, mixed vegetables, and strawberry shortcake. Originally the Women’s Institute and other organizations provided the meal; by the 1960s, caterers were hired.

<sup>63</sup>Langley Advance, 2 December 1958.

<sup>64</sup>Early brochure from the Farm Machinery Museum, c 1967. Insert to BCMA RoundUp, no.36, October, 1968. The museum’s current brochure is worded almost identically.

<sup>65</sup>Although today there is far more amiability, the relationship between the two museums is still an arm’s length one; they share some publicity but no staff or funding.

operations struggled to survive in most of Canada, the national perception of museums had improved. Colonial views of Canadian history and pioneers enjoyed a popular revival after the Centennial of 1967. The 1970s was also time of change in the museum profession, with increasing attention on professionalization of practice as museum programs were initiated.

In B.C., this revival was also bolstered by the celebration and pageantry (not to mention the significant funding) of the 1966, 1967 and 1971 Centennial years. For Langley, an opportunity appeared with the advent of National Exhibition Centre Program (N.E.C.). This program developed from the continuing attention and improvements to the National Museums Act of 1967.<sup>66</sup> In 1973, 30 museums were recommended (apparently by local MP's) for this program, which provided for staffing, services and a program of travelling exhibitions. Here, the museum's proximity to a federal site was likely a benefit in the selection process. The selected museum had to provide space and an ability to display such exhibitions.<sup>67</sup> Four museums were chosen in British Columbia. For the Langley Centennial, acceptance into the N.E.C. program was one of the few options for survival. This did not come without responsibilities: the town had to match funding and ensure that the space would be in good repair and open to the public. This structured re-invention, however, meant that the Langley Centennial retained the site for its collective memory and again linked local history with national narrative. With federal money keeping the museum open, the local collective memory project went into quiet hibernation, effectively displaced, and for a time, the displays of the Centennial Museum remained as an adjunct to a greater national agenda.

The 1970s proved to be lean years for the community's collective memory. A later director characterized the museum in the mid-1970s as "a view of the aftermath – of an ugly battle." The NEC program provided funding and rotating exhibits, but its "brutal reporting process" meant a fight for every dollar. Worse, the federally appointed curator was a former

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<sup>66</sup>Much of this occurred through the influence of Gerald Pelletier, who helped the National Museums Board gain cabinet approval that ensured an outreach mandate for the Museum through a program of "associated" museums. See Archie F. Key, Beyond Four Walls: The Origins and Development of Canadian Museums (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart Ltd., 1973), 234-5.

<sup>67</sup>Key, Beyond Four Walls, 234.

military historian with little interest in local matters.<sup>68</sup> The museum meetings, so vital for local history, stagnated in the face of heavy federal bureaucracy; at the local level this became a continuing struggle with the burdens of paperwork and bureaucracy rather than a production of collective memory. The Centennial rebirth of the local museum and the early efforts of volunteers had little meaning to visitors or federal committees, and as a result, the local history was lost and blurred.

Happily, the last twenty years have seen a strong revival of the original motivations of the Langley Centennial Museum. Community and civic efforts have resulted in a solid and supported funding base; the museum became part of the Parks and Recreation division in the late 1970s.<sup>69</sup> A professional staff, great local interest and, of course, countless volunteer hours have revived the museum. Today, the Langley Centennial Museum is the thriving centre of the Township of Langley's Heritage Advisory Program, with its current director responsible both for the Advisory programme and the direction of the museum. The museum is a strong partner within a strengthened and wiser program of National Exhibit centres. The fort, while still federally operated, partners with the community's efforts to preserve heritage. The Farm Machinery Museum keeps its doors open, and Fort Langley is now a bustling tourist town. The museum has over 28,000 visitors annually, and is currently planning a much expanded facility that will incorporate many facets of history. Through a blend of older and more contemporary historical displays, and trained interpreters, there is a stronger connection between local narratives of history, such as the farming and fishing town of the early twentieth century, and the Township's changes and growth postwar, and greater meta-narratives of Canada as a nation. A recent exhibit title "Coming Home" combined efforts and artifacts of the federal site and the museum to look back at the Fort's growth as a site, and the development of the Centennial museum. Locally, the production of history is still rooted in the rural, at least in a tourist friendly representation of what is historical. "Heritage" inns,

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<sup>68</sup>The choice for curator, in charge of museum and docents, was apparently a federal one. Warren Sommer, Former Director, Interview by author, untaped, Fort Langley, B.C., 3 February 2003.

<sup>69</sup>Unlike Kamloops, this process was also turbulent at times.

quaint “pioneer” restaurants and shops provide for the tourist seeking an idealized view of the past.

Community museums like Langley are more than storehouses for collections of identity. The Langley Centennial Museum is an example of how collective memory is built by the collective *celebration* of memory. A unique local collective memory was retained, and in many locations. In many ways, the fort, although long administratively and interpretively a separate entity, remained the pivot of Langley’s historical production. In both the successes and the day-to day conflicts of the Langley Centennial Museum and of those who nurtured and created it, collective memory was retained. The path of collective memory was also deeply characterized by the pioneer revival atmosphere of the 1958 Centennial, which, in turn was a not-so-distant echo of the earlier agendas of the Native Sons. The Langley Centennial Museum was a saga of the permanence and the rescue of local collective memory: from a fur trade fort, to a marker cairn, to fort building, to the split of a federal site, and then a museum with provincial roots, another federal rescue, and now stabilized into a community-based museum. A significant part of this saga were the people who collectively and individually who worked to preserve the making of collective memory.

By the mid-twentieth century, historic sites in Canada were increasingly part of greater societal notions of historical identity and belonging. In the 1950s, Canada looked toward celebrating the first century of Confederation, and infused the path of local history with tales of pioneers and explorers. The fort, as a symbolic site for remembering, was key. As heritage theorist David Lowenthal noted “we require a heritage with which we continually interact, one which fuses past with present.”<sup>70</sup> The site of the original Fort Langley was Langley’s touchstone for collective memory. It is also a story of collective memory survival. In many ways the Langley Centennial museum emerged from an identity crisis, when the collective memory was threatened. Unlike McKay’s cultural producers, it was not a search for academic prowess that drove collective memory in Langley. It was a wish to preserve the local

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<sup>70</sup>David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 410.

memories under siege from greater narratives of provincial and national history, and the need to preserve a link to the past as much as to tell about the past.

In the creation of historical memory, there is also forgetting. The difficulty of accessing records of the museum committees, lost between politics of the township and city and simply to the many cycles of the museum itself, clouds detail of the story of the Langley Centennial Museum. Clearly, the museum's story is a saga of the importance of local politics, and local resistance to outside narratives, and this needs to be further explored. In spite of the influence of national narratives, this museum retained its local understandings of history. Fort Langley and the community-based history of the museum are still connected, and the local memory is still firmly anchored to the fort, which remains an icon for the local. The federally-owned fort does not direct the collective memory; the continuing memory project is directed by the museum. The Langley Centennial Museum shows how the strength of collective memory making is the retention of "fixed" understandings of history. Yet even now that memory is at risk of marginalization from the growing nearby tourist town, whose economy is driven by tourism's demands for a pastoral and national view of history, not one of local understandings.

Fort Langley has remained as an island of idealized national history, protected by the tall log palisade, its national memory distant from the local history it once helped to create. The two groups meet in ritual enactment through events like Douglas Days and the cooperation of local heritage initiatives. In many ways, the local museum is a sensible compromise for a divergent historical narrative. In a stronger form, the Langley Centennial Museum carries on a locally chosen collective memory and holds a richly detailed collage of local history and community, still living and evolving.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

### **Community Museums and the Creation of Local Memory.**

The research has revealed many of the historical origins of community-based museums in British Columbia. These museums were important mirrors of meaning for their communities, both creating, and continuing their historical narratives. The origins of these museums lie in even earlier “communities of memory,” group processes that actively created and performed collective memory and history.<sup>1</sup> Such museums clearly did not begin with the construction of a building, but within the pursuit of a sense of *belonging*. The buildings, whether they were resurrected log cabins or modern cement and brick, were equally vital as the often-ritualized spaces that fostered the creation of collective memory. Community-based museums began as group acts of remembering (and, some would say forgetting). The original impulse behind these museums was preservation of identity, and their founders also sought to preserve their understanding of their community’s history. These museums also revealed deeply-established dialectics with their respective communities. As the individual case studies show, there are diverse methods of collective memory creation within groups. Whether it was the purposeful repetition of set views of history, collective memory created by linking into other forms of belonging, or, employing collective memory as a way of preserving a genealogical understanding of identity, these groups employed more than a simple nostalgia for the past.

Within the greater historiography for museums, the community-based museums are unique examples. In style of presentation and adoption of policies they superficially echo some of the intellectual constructions of larger museums, as authority bases, and as local temples for local knowledge, but they were carriers of local traditions, more dedicated to the collection of family memory than of artifacts, although collection was part of the construction.

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<sup>1</sup>Iwona Irwin-Zareck, Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 4.

It is not only the contents of a museum we need to study closely. This material history aspect, of objects in new contexts, is distracting when examining the origins of smaller museums. The collections are a reflection of deeper organizational roots, far deeper courses of memory and greater meanings. Such collective enactment was often marginalised in the administrative burdens. Still, community-based museums continued their community traditions of annual pioneer gatherings and commemorative activities, from fairs and parades to community dinners.

The deeply embedded frameworks of greater meta-narratives and wider concepts of the structures of knowledge are also evident within these museums. They are strong examples of Foucault's theory of *epistemes*, the adopted frameworks of one reality.<sup>1</sup> As these museums sought to preserve their pasts, they also embraced greater constructs of what knowledge was, or at least, should be. They showed the inherent taxonomies and "archaeologies" of knowledge, orders of natural history collections and hierarchies of the archive, historical understandings as ordered and measurable sets.<sup>2</sup> They also were linked to other orders of who belonged (and who did not) and what was locally seen as historic, creating their own set of historical understandings. This research also has revealed the range of collective memories: federal, civic, local, and personal that were embedded in such museums.

Frameworks of greater meta-narratives show in the names of these museums, and in their first efforts: the pioneer memory and the stories surrounding Hudson's Bay Company era fur-trade posts, complete with factors and palisades. Built onto these basic scaffolds of Canadian history were the local narratives of settlement, hard-working people and challenges met. As Elizabeth Furniss has noted, these were also narratives of omission, and the legitimization of white dominance. What was left out of these stories was equally important.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).

<sup>2</sup>Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 41.

<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Furniss, "Pioneers, Progress and the Myth of the Frontier: The Landscape of Public History in Rural British Columbia" *BC Studies* nos.115-116 (1998): 7-44.

The local blended with imperial history that distanced any record of First Nations into objects from the distant past, favouring the tales of the “first white child born.” These constructed narratives were clearly the reaction to a rapidly changing Western Canada in the 1920s and 1930s, showing evidence of intolerance and racism. Many of these local narratives were further confined by the activities of local politics, uncertain economics, and, obviously, the discourses of rural life and gendered roles. Winding in and out of the greater stories that enveloped Canada, these museums added in their memories and their stories, and literally embedded them into their organizations and their practices.

Each case study had a unique focus. The Saanich Pioneer Museum is the most unique and yet tells such a familiar tale. The construction of the log cabin museum in rural Saanich was also the construction of identity through the definition of belonging. The Society was occasionally willing to expand its boundaries for this belonging, yet at the same time it rigidly enforced older boundaries within the fixed space of the museum. The construction of the log cabin “hall of memory” was an activity of collective memory, demonstrating ritual, performance, and colourful rhetoric that continued the understandings of “the sons and daughters of the pioneers.” The Saanich Pioneer Museum continued to enact collective memory through meetings, collection and display, yet always retained the first framework of “pioneer memory.”

This framework was so deeply imbedded that it has endured to the present day. The idea of the pioneer, the first “civilized” settler, is perhaps no longer a valid tale given the wider understandings of the flow of settlement, and ethnic identity in modern Canada. However, it is a story that is still sentimentally revered, and museums like Saanich honour its existence. The Saanich Pioneers invented their own identity, and secured it, log by log. However, while the building is an important part, it is only the physical representation of a deeper path of collective memory creation, and memorialization of such memories. Museums that exist in the timeless manner of the Saanich Pioneer Museum, with exhibits little changed from seventy years ago, and the original building still standing are increasingly rare. It is an

artifact of deep meaning to many, and should be far better recognized for the strength of those memories.

The Kamloops Museum Association is an artifact of a later time the 1950s. The significance of the KMA as a case study is revealed in its constant emphasis on “civic identity” over two decades, as it secured a hold in the growing city of Kamloops. From its first origins, the KMA sought to establish a presence in both city and community. The KMA’s project was to take a community’s pursuit of modernity, and work to connect a building (and its builders) with the growth sought by the city. The group established an identity linked to and supported by the greater community, and other organizations, through drives for more collections and more exhibits, and the need for more space, more funding, and an expanded membership. Yet it was also building and setting collective memory, establishing within its historic narrative ideas of progress and development. This narrative had links to greater provincial forces, as Kamloops was a central part of the 1950s Socred government’s highway developments. Here, the narrative scaffold for collective memory was linked to a civic belonging, so the society of the Kamloops Museum continually re-wove their collective understandings with those of other local organizations. Through multiple shifts of identity, the Kamloops Museum Association maintained and reinforced its civic presence.

The KMA also retained its earliest idea of a museum by literally encasing the first building in its displays. The first memory was collected and became a literal artifact of meaning in the new building, in a sometimes humourous but also profound enshrining of historical narrative. As a result, newer senses of the historical literally surrounded the old log cabin on the Kamloops Museum’s second floor, just as a newer city surrounds the 1957 building. Kamloops is a layered, more complex collective memory.

The final example of The Langley Centennial Museum revealed both an initial establishment of collective memory, through the Native Sons and the later “rescue” of this same memory project. From the first cairn through to the recognition of Fort Langley “national historic site,” and the bifurcation of local and national memory, the community

statement of the importance of local narrative grows stronger and keeps pace with the Fort's nationalized story. The resulting Centennial Museum in Langley was a response to a perceived threat that the local collective memory would be overwhelmed or even lost within a greater narrative.

In Langley, part of this "rescue" came from an external force of history, when the iconographic fort was employed by the Provincial government as a focus for the Centennial. This 1958 Centennial of the colony of British Columbia, with a provincially-boosted pageantry and carefully-funded public spirit reinforced the local performance of collective memory. Langley's museum reflected how the changing political realities of the surrounding community were echoed in the collective memory creation. Langley's case may also be in some ways a government-promoted solution. As records become available, more research would be useful to establish whether federal and provincial departments officially promoted the Centennial museum to placate the Native Sons' loss of their first museum, or whether it was completely a local Centennial project. In addition, the Langley Centennial was part of a greater extension of the performance of collective memory, the Farming Implements Museum next door, and the commemorative re-enactment of Douglas Days. As a case study, the Langley Centennial Museum reflects the typical path of a community-based museum, as an entity not always recognized as the holder of the historical, but as a force that both retains, and reinforces the collective memory of a community.

While a thorough analysis of the clear gender politics at work at the Langley Centennial is not within the scope of this research, certainly it showed most strongly in Langley's women docents, and their roles as keepers and communicators of the collective memory. The closeness of such a group of women, which would stay and talk "all day" was an important force in the retention of local history. The Saanich Pioneer Society's men also seemed to have chatted, and while Kamloops meetings started with interactions of men, women soon came to the fore. Yet women's roles were often downplayed or omitted in the "official" records of meetings and committees. The role of community museum volunteers

and docents, men and women, and the gendered spaces they worked within is an area that deserves more investigation.

This study took the author into rich sources. The Saanich Pioneer Museum's journal of annual and monthly meetings, with just one author, was a rare and bountiful source for the path of collective memory. The other two case studies were more problematic, first in sheer scope - the Kamloops Museum Association archive, for example, contained over six metres of material. The Langley Centennial Museum has seen increasingly complex issues of ownership and governance since its earlier days, and this clouded the research. Records were variously located in three different areas between the Archives (at the museum) and the holdings of Township and City.

The interviews conducted for this research also revealed a myriad of understandings about museum origins and the technical difficulties of using interviews for sources. There was a surprisingly high correlation between the memory of those interviewed and the memories in written sources, suggesting at least a strength of collective memory. In these interviews, however, stories of *personalities* and people took precedence over policy or politics: what these individuals *remembered* were the different characters and the interactions at meetings or during events, and the stories of cooperation and conflicts, rather than the particulars and forces of change. Repeatedly, the people of these museums, such as Mary Balf, Mrs. D. Umphrey or J. J. Morse were the focus of those interviewed. The complexities of local and provincial government agencies and local groups, and the stories of "who knew who" beg for more investigation, and were far too complex to be fully included in this study. This area needs more research, and it suggests that there would be a gain in understanding of museum origins if we could find out more about such individuals.

The process of research also reflected the discussions of recent theory on the uses of collective memory. To read and record the particulars of these minutes, meeting records and archival holdings also meant entering into the dynamic of collective memory creation and preservation, sorting and editing through myriad pages to emerge with what fragments of

collective memory remained among the motions. When using the minutes to reconstruct the history of these museums and associations, one must peer between the layers to try to unravel the memories written. As Susan Crane noted, in doing so, one is part of the process of collective memory creation.<sup>4</sup>

One of the areas sought in this research was the significance of the role of the many provincial and federal Centennials in the development of community-based museums. While some influence of funding and assistance was evident, it would seem that the ongoing building of collective memory and narrative was only occasionally assisted by such efforts. In other words, while the Centennials gave these museums brief respite from ongoing financial struggles, did such funding truly play a role, or was it just a reflection of societal desire for more pageantry? There is a continuing assumption amongst museum professionals in British Columbia that most museums were created through Centennial grants. As the first table showed (see p 5) there is some validity in this view. The money and boosterism of Centennial pageants certainly helped construct buildings and fund projects and improvements, the will to do so, however, started for earlier in these communities. Such grants and programs often helped with buildings, or specialized projects, but they do not seem to drive the collective memory - the exception may be Fort Langley, where the continued attempt to recreate spectacles or the depth of an original site such as the fort hold sway (especially as evidence by the continuing force of an event like Douglas Days). The politics of smaller communities trying to gain provincial and federal funds were also important, and is an area that needs more research. Political connections definitely mattered for at least the initial creations of these museums, whether it was funding for a recreation commission, as in Kamloops, a visit from Premiers and Royalty during a Centennial year in Langley, or the opening of a museum building by Premier Tolmie in Saanich.

Other significant areas emerge as needing more research in the role of British Columbia's community-based museums. First, it was not within the scope of this study to

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<sup>4</sup>Susan A. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory," American Historical Review 102 (December 1997): 1381-3.

investigate the role that provincial agencies, governmental and non-profit umbrella groups had on these museums. It was obvious that they, like the Centennials, often influenced and funded many early museums and related societies. Part of this was because that influence was more noticeable, and better documented in the 1950s and 1960s. Access to these records was more difficult than anticipated, as many are protected under provincial statutes and boxed with other more sensitive records under the Provincial Secretary's office. Secondly, non-governmental organizations have, like the museums they have assisted through the years, suffered large cuts to staff and funding, which makes some access of information awkward, although this researcher is grateful to the generous assistance that was given.

Another area that seemed too thin in scope was studies of postwar economics and society within British Columbia, especially in definitions of the rural versus the urban settings. Here, Ruth Sandwell's book was one of the few sources available. We need more work on the delineation between urban and rural settings. The three case studies show important similarities (beyond the preference for log cabins). These museums grew in a time of relative peace and relative economic ease. However, interestingly, their roots are seated in leaner times of the interwar years and the depression. Research of more museums could in turn reveal factors that were at work within British Columbia, especially after the Second World War, in an atmosphere of economic changes and shifting government power.

In general, what can be gained from this kind of research, of institutions and small societies that work with history? Part of the answer is that these three examples are but a small glimpse of how museums actively created and narrated history, and continue to do so. It might have been more useful, in some ways, to trace a longer path for just one of these institutions. The Saanich Pioneer Society Museum, for example, was part of the origin of several other museums on the Saanich Peninsula. All of these museums continue their stories and reflect their communities in these ongoing narratives. Community-based museums were not the only forces at work in collective historical memory. As the example of Langley showed, strong collective memory projects result in "spin-offs" of other memory-making

activities and enactment. Furthermore, museums often publish community histories, and should include their organizations and the roots of those memories as part of their history. How such groups perform, and in doing so, create, and retain collective memory is as important as what sort of collective memory is created, and there needs to be a better understanding of this. A wider survey is another option: as noted earlier, it was not possible to look at regional differences between museums, say, northern communities in contrast to southern communities. More analysis would be useful on other local creators of collective memory: provincial historic sites, First Nations and other ethnic cultural centres, and many other groups, from natural history to environmental concerns that so often played a role in setting the local historical narrative. All of these deserve further investigation.

Collective memory, then, is not just a practice of recalling but an enactment of the importance of community belonging. These memories are in turn re-stated and influenced by group process. Community-based museums in British Columbia show these many facets of collective memory and memory building in their early origins as societies and groups. They are further characterized by the hallmarks of membership, and their work on common causes.

Social change and community growth spurred these groups to seek the boundaries of belonging in many different ways. Collective memory was reinforced both through resistance to these changes, and through the desire to be part of the change. That is why on the one hand, the “children of pioneers” in Saanich built a log cabin, yet in Kamloops, a modernist building is constructed as a home for memory. Both are a result of the urge for preservation of identity and through the creation of museums, these groups redefined who they thought they were. In Langley, belonging lay in the safeguarding of a specific place, and collective memory was linked to the local history. Regardless, collective memory and historical narrative were created and strengthened when these groups sought to define the borders of their belongings.

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