

Museum Corner: A Page From History

September 2019- History of Ashcroft's Schools

Cache Creek Boarding School

In 1874, two Cache Creek men, Phillip Parke and James Campbell donated 25 acres where their properties adjoined at the confluence of Cache Creek and the Bonaparte River on the condition that the land be solely used for school purposes. 4 Trustees were appointed by the government: Semlin, Parke, Campbell, and Senator C. Cornwall

The school opened in June 1874 with 18 registered pupils who attended from the outlying areas including Ashcroft.

By 1890 it became apparent that the school had outlived its usefulness and in 1894 it ceased to operate as a boarding school but continued to operate as a day school. (Right: Photo of Cache Creek boarding school)



Boarding school at Cache Creek in the early 90's

The House of Blazes

The first school in Ashcroft was established in 1886 and called "The House of Blazes" which was originally used as a drunk tank for the Ashcroft Hotel. James Haddock moved the old jailhouse to a more convenient location (at the northern end of Railway Street facing the town), fixed the place up with a new floor, new door, installed two large windows and desks for the students. When this was done, he went to Victoria and secured the services of a Mr. Smith with Haddock paying all the expenses and the teacher salary.

Mr. Smith came back to Ashcroft and taught school until 1887. One Monday morning students went to school but there was no Mr. Smith, he had headed up to the Cariboo country. Once again the students of Ashcroft attended the Cache Creek School.

After 1887, the building was no longer used as a school and burned down in the 1916 fire. (No photo of this building)

The second school was built in 1890 and was a one room building built by the Ashcroft School Board on the grounds where the present community hall now stands. Later, another room was built as the population increased. (Below: Second school)



People left to right:

S.O. King (Teacher), Ruth Haddock, Ethel Ferguson, Mary Lehman, Katie Newland, C. Nesbitt (in front of Katie), Alice Lehman, M. Higginbottom, Charles Haddock, Arthur Haddock, Bob Nesbitt (in front of Arthur), ? Ferguson, Harry Ferguson, Bert Lehman

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Schools continued

By 1899, this school was too small and the government and local board of school trustees decided a new school needed to be built. The old school was taken down and a new two story building was constructed by William Higginbottom, "Ashcroft" carpenter.

In the two school rooms there were 4 rows of desks. Two pupils to a desk, girls sat with girls and boys with boys. The yard for playing had an 8 ft. fence between the girls playground and the boys, with the toilets situated on their respective sides. An outside water tap was at the front of the school where all pupils and the teacher drank from an enamel cup that hung beside the tap. The classrooms were heated by a wood stove at the back of the room. In 1916 a third classroom was added at the back.

This school was later used as a community hall (where it still stands today) with the additional school room at the back of the building enlarged and turned into a dance hall/ gymnasium.



Lady Byng School

In 1922, the Lady Byng School was built on the south end of town (near the corner of Brink and 8th). It covered grades 1-12 and Mr. J.M. Orr was principle for 21 years and taught all subjects from grades 8-12. It was a 4 room school and cost \$16,000 to build. The building was equipped with all modern conveniences, including furnace heating and electric lighting.

Ashcroft High School

In 1950, a 4 class room secondary school was built a short distance from the Lady Byng School (closer to the cemetery). In later years, a multiply purpose science room, industrial education shop and a gymnasium were added to this school. Later, more additions were made included a home economics room, library and commercial room.

By the early 1970s, 10 classes were being taught outside in portables and the old Lady Byng Annex. In September 1973, pupils were transferred to the new Ashcroft Secondary School in north Ashcroft. This school is now known as Desert Sands and is a K-12.



The Ashcroft Museum is open from Monday to Sunday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Come on down and learn some fascinating history about the area.

Located at 151 and 4th Street.

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In 1964, a 2 room elementary school , grade K-7 (Ashcroft Elementary School) was built in north Ashcroft to help with the expanding enrolment. In 1973, this school grew to almost 500 students (now the HUB)



The newly vacated Ashcroft High School was renovated and became Coppervale Elementary School (burned down c. 1990s)