



Museum Muse

October 2010

Box 331 – 1775 Shawnigan-Mill Bay Rd
Shawnigan Lake, B.C.
Shawniganlakemuseum@shaw.ca

"OVER THIRTY YEARS IN THE COMMUNITY"

www.shawniganlakemuseum.com

MUSEUM



There has been a lot of press attention lately regarding the funding for local historical societies. *The Shawnigan Lake Historical Society* (est. 1977) opened the Shawnigan Lake Museum in 1983. Over the 27 years of operation, volunteers have been the life force behind the museum. For several years, in the 1980s, the Historical Society was involved with the Ecomuseum Society. This relationship provided a small salary for the curator of that time. For two or three years, Federal grant money enabled the society to hire summer students at the museum. Currently, there are no paid positions at the museum but the curator does receive an honorarium.

When the Historical Society took over the old fire hall to create a museum, it was with the understanding that they were responsible for all capital and operational costs of the building, the grounds and the museum collection. If the roof leaks, the repair comes out of the pocket of the historical society.

Fundraisers, government grants, donations, membership dues, admissions and gift shop income have provided the money to run the museum over the years. Several small grant-in-aids from the CVRD have helped augment the budget in the past. Over the past 27 years, there has been no "regular" funding to operate the museum. Two years ago, the area director, Ken

Cossey, established an annual grant through the CVRD, assessed from the local taxpayers. This assessment provides basic funds so that the historical society can, at the very least, continue to open the museum doors on an annual basis. The current assessment amount does not provide for salaries, for future capital expenditures or frills. We are constantly looking for grants and other methods of increasing our income.

We are fortunate to have received additional support for this budget year through the Thrifty's Smile Card Program and from a small B.C. Gaming Grant.



Our Smile card program could use your help. If you shop at Thrifty's, please consider using a dedicated Shawnigan Lake Historical Society Smile Card. We issue the cards at the museum. Every time you load your dedicated card, Thrifty's donates 5% of the total to the society. It adds up quickly if we have several cards in use. It does take a few minutes extra at the till to load the card, but it makes a big difference to our budget...and, you can still collect your own Thrifty's points as well.

One of our objectives for the Smile Card money is to buy lighting for a special project that we would like to complete early in 2011. Our plan is to convert a small storage area into a dedicated gallery space for our incredible E.J. Hughes collection.



PEOPLE WATCH

William Losee by Lori Treloar

Have you ever wondered about the street names in our community? Losee Road is a short road that runs south off Baldy Mountain Road.

Other than the occasional traveler along the Goldstream Trail, there were few visitors in the “uninhabited wilderness” at Shawnigan Lake until the mid 1880s. The first permanent development at Shawnigan Lake was the hotel, *Morton House*, built in 1885. The E & N railway, completed in 1886, made further development in the area a reality.

William Losee arrived in BC with the credentials to earn him the position of Master Mechanic with the E & N. In his job, he travelled regularly up and down Vancouver Island. Losee recognized the value of the timber around Shawnigan Lake, and taking a risk, he approached James Dunsmuir for a lease on the timber in the area. Dunsmuir granted Losee the rights to all of the timber within one mile from the lakeshore all the way around the lake. In exchange, Losee agreed to pay the E & N 50 cents per 1000 ft of sawn lumber. With a timber agreement in hand, he bought Lot 13, for \$105, on June 3, 1890. The 4 ¼ acre site was nestled between the lake and the railway and Losee wasted no time building his mill.

Losee’s decision to place his mill next to the railway was deliberate. Most mills of the day were located near to their market or at an ocean port facility. Instead, Losee, thinking outside the box, decided to transport his product by rail. He knew that it was cheaper to transport lumber than to ship logs. The railway connection gave him access to several markets close by including Victoria, Nanaimo and Cowichan. In addition, he was central to four ocean-going ports on the island.

Losee realized that he needed an experienced sawmill man to help and took on Ewan Morrison, a foreman at the sawmill in Chemainus, as a partner. By the fall of 1890, the mill was in business under the name *Losee and Morrison*. They soon realized that they needed more machinery and more power. Losee traveled to Ontario to acquire the equipment and left Morrison to oversee mill operations. When Losee returned in March 1891, he found that Morrison had neglected the mill and it was in such bad shape that it had to be shut down. Morrison had also spent the money in the bank and left the crew half paid. It was a critical situation and it forced Losee to sell his mill. Losee then moved to Victoria and established a shingle mill...that didn’t last long either. Obviously, he was a man of vision but lacking in business acumen.

Mr. Losee’s contribution to the development of Shawnigan Lake was short lived but significant. Although *Losee* didn’t make a success of his mill, the owners that followed built the mill into an economic mainstay in the community. It is somewhat surprising that Losee’s name wasn’t used on a more prominent road.

DID YOU KNOW?

The long term care facility, *Acacia Ty Mawr*, was named by a previous owner for the *Acacia* trees in the gardens, and *Ty Mawr* which suggests “the good house” in Welsh. The original house built in 1914 for the Clark family is incorporated into the current set of buildings. The lovely house has served as a family home, a guest house, a rest home and a care facility.

KINSOL UPDATE

We are still hard at work on our online exhibit, *Abandoned, Then Embraced: The Kinsol Experience* for the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN). This was another Grant opportunity that we applied for and received this year. We are working in partnership with the *Cowichan Valley Museum and Archives* on the project.

CHIN has a series of online exhibits that tell local stories from across Canada. Our story about the Kinsol Trestle will provide a comprehensive look at this remarkable structure. We are collecting stories and pictures from the community to enhance the exhibit. If you have anything to add, please let us know.

The Kinsol Trestle rehabilitation is now underway and until the project is completed access to the trestle is from the north end only. If you are interested in the progress of the rehabilitation, go to the museum website and click on the Kinsol webcam button. This webcam takes pictures every fifteen minutes daily. You can also access an archive of pictures that go back to the beginning of the project.

MEMBERSHIP/VOLUNTEER

We believe that the Shawnigan Lake Museum is an integral component of our community. As a charitable, non-profit, we exist for the benefit of society and it is our responsibility to ensure that we remain viable for years to come.

To do so, it is essential to enlist the support of the community to guarantee its ongoing success. Membership is a big part of our success and we encourage you to keep your membership up to date.

We encourage you to support the museum by becoming either a single (\$10) or a family (\$15) member. This entitles you to

- *free admission to the museum*
- *the current Museum calendar (\$10 value)*
- *Newsletters*
- *advance notification of any special activities*
- *attend Society meetings and gives you the opportunity to sit on the board.*

We thank our members and volunteers who are already involved and encourage new members and volunteers to come forward. We also welcome new ideas and new faces.

“If not you, who? If not now, when?”

Talmud

Please share this newsletter with friends, family or anyone who might be interested in the history of Shawnigan Lake.

NEXT MEETING – TUES. NOV 9th @ 6:45

Brainstorming session: Bring your ideas for future speakers, workshops, how to increase/improve membership & community awareness

Followed by a movie and popcorn @7:30

Please RSVP for the movie –space is limited!

Contact us:

Email: shawniganlakemuseum@shaw.ca

Web: www.shawniganlakemuseum.com

Location: 1775 Shawnigan-Mill Bay Road
Shawnigan Lake, BC

Mailing: Box 331, Shawnigan Lake, BC
V0R 2W0

Hours:

September through June

Friday through Sunday 12-4

July & August

Thursday through Sunday 11:30-4

Closed in January